

Hong Kong 2030+

Comments from Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects in response to the public engagement document

It is considered an appropriate time to update the territorial development strategy to guide the future planning, land and infrastructure development and the shaping of the built environment of Hong Kong beyond 2030. It is welcomed to note that when compared with the previous version, the current Hong Kong 2030+ has placed more emphasis on enhancing the quality of the living environment and the sustainability of development through a more balanced approach.

Three building blocks are easy to perceive and therefore supported. However there are overlaps between the building blocks on some subjects (as an example the impact of landscape and ecology in urban and rural areas in terms of enhancing sustainable environment, creating more liveable city, and enhancing the social environment for residents). The subject of land supply for recreation, ecology and conservation should be separately identified, thoroughly studied and presented to the public.

In general, there are a lot of initiatives/ concepts worthy of pursuing in particular in the section of 'planning for a liveable high-density city'. However, we are concerned about how these concepts can be further developed into policies, and properly implemented eventually instead of remaining as a set of good ideas on paper. More importantly, there should be a mechanism for coordinating bureau policies and interdepartmental efforts for effective implementation.

The enhancement of the green and blue network should be given priority in planning and development instead of considering them as 'good to have'. The green and blue network should be the backbone of development that sets out the basic framework for development. Both the quality and quantity of the public space should be enhanced. An overall effective policy and mechanism of implementation which currently are absent should be put into place.

Specific comments are as follows:

a) Open Space Provision

In the planning of land requirement for GIC uses, the proposed increase is about 60% per person (from 2.2m² to 3.5m²) but the proposed increase in open space requirement is only 25% (from 2m² to 2.5 m² per person). The proposed increase

in open space is considered too conservative as most districts have already fulfilled the proposed space of 2.5m². The open space provision per person in Hong Kong is still low and it cannot meet the need to raise the standard of liveability or to cater for the need of growing aged population in the future.

With the increase in development area and measures to regenerate urban areas, the open space provision per person should be further increased. For example, we can raise the quality of leftover pocket spaces along pedestrian network in the city and change them into sitting-out areas so that they can be zoned as open space. We can also relax building height control, set back building line and relocate non-pedestrian friendly uses in streets to underground space in order to generate more at grade area for open space. In addition, streets which are fully pedestrianised can be regarded as open space.

b) Green and blue space planning

The 'green' & 'blue' elements are not just 'assets' as stated. They are dynamic organisms and subject to change from the changes of the living organisms within. As such these 'assets' need to be managed. A management plan need to be provided for these 'green' and 'blue' elements and this management report should be included in the 2030+ study.

Waterfronts need to be comprehensively planned as part of the overall urban public space, rather than the 'sectional linkages' currently shown.

Open spaces indicated in the urban areas are disjointed. There needs to be a coordinated plan for the vision of a networked open space. To do this, street corridors, green belts, and coastlines must be included in the open space plan. 'Flagship parks' should be part of the planned open space network. They also provide an important level of recreation for local residents and this purpose need to be catalogued in the open space plan. The rationale for 'priority improvement open space' needs to be explained, particularly in relation to the overall public space planning for the whole territory.

c) Conservation

Conservation is an important subject. Hong Kong 2030+ should include this subject in its report. Country parks are part of our legacy and should be conserved. All environmentally and ecologically sensitive areas should be conserved and protected. Culturally significant areas (such as Sha Lo Tung) should also be conserved and

protected.

d) Environmental capacity and biodiversity enhancement

To 'create, enhance, regenerate environmental capacity', government needs to develop a comprehensive biodiversity plan for the city. Other than urban sprawl, one of the greatest threats to biodiversity is the proliferation of invasive plant species. Only a coordinated biodiversity plan can help to eradicate invasive species. Key strategic direction and action for removing invasive plant species should be included.

We would like to see more specific proposals on what actions would be taken to 'change the mindset' of Hong Kong people for 'climate-change readiness'.

The report should be more specific in outlining the planning strategy for a 'low-carbon city'.

e) Urban Regeneration - Pedestrianisation

Hong Kong has been positioning itself as Asia's World City. However, the development of pedestrianisation in urban areas in terms of quantity and quality is far behind the neighbouring cities, including those in Mainland China. A well-developed pedestrianisation framework in urban areas can assist urban regeneration by improving the streetscape setting and enhancing local distinctiveness. This benefits both the local people and tourists by creating more pleasant and interesting places as attractions for visit. There is inadequate emphasis and focus on this aspect and key strategic direction and action for pedestrianisation should be strengthened.

The current pattern of urban renewal is very piecemeal and fragmented. Better planning and coordination would be necessary. For streetscape improvement, there is a need to stipulate the requirements for provision of greening, seating facilities and amenity features to create a pedestrian friendly environment.

f) Harbourfront

To develop a world-class harbourfront for people, key strategic direction and action for development of a continuous promenade framework around Victoria Harbour with cycle track facility should be strengthened.

g) Urban forestry

The urban forestry strategy should include a systematic replacement of senescent

trees/ trees with structure/health issues by those with higher landscape and/or ecological values.

h) Sustainable built environment and capacity for growth

To achieve a healthy physical living environment, key strategic direction and action for introducing a 'green index' is supported in which the concept of green coverage/ green plot ratio in public and private developments should be developed.

Committed and planned projects provide 3,600 ha of land and the report stated a need for 4,800 ha of land. Government should relax the density requirement of planned projects to increase the building floor area provisions. This is preferred to developing greenfield sites or country parks, and is appropriate for the scale of a dense city.

Further expansion of village zoning to cater for development of small houses which would erode our natural rural setting should not be allowed. Key strategic direction and action should be formulated to address the landscape impact associated with land occupation for open storage uses which adversely affect the landscape setting of our rural area. The total land area associated with these uses should be included in the report and the 'framework' plan must show the spatial strategy to deal with these uses in order to improve the landscape of the rural area.

i) HK planning standards and guidelines (HKPSG) and others

To achieve the 'smart, green, resilient' city planning framework, several government documents need to be updated: the HKPSG, the Metroplan (to include the new towns), and Landscape Value Mapping.

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