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For information

Landscape Character and Value Maps of Hong Kong

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the main findings of the “Landscape Value Mapping of Hong Kong” (the Study). An Executive Summary (ES) of the Study is at **Annex A**.

Background

2. The quality of Hong Kong’s landscape is a vital part of our environment and a key community concern. However, there is the lack of a systematic framework for assessment as well as baseline information. The purpose of the Study is to fill the landscape information gap.

3. The Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) was consulted on the initial findings of the Study on landscape classification and evaluation framework on 29 July 2002 (ACE Paper 26/2002 “Landscape Value Mapping of Hong Kong – First Stage Consultation” refers). The Study is now fully completed. The opportunity is taken to present the Landscape Character and Value Maps prepared by the Study for Members’ information.

Landscape Character Map

4. Six broad landscape types (termed “Landscape Character Types (LCTs)”) are used to classify the landscape areas of Hong Kong. **Figure 1** shows their general distribution. They are briefly described below (details at Pages 5 to 10 of the ES):

(a) *Upland Countryside Landscape*

This broad LCT generally lies above 40 metres above Principal Datum (mPD) with high levels of topographic relief; a very low density of built development; largely unaltered topography and high levels of vegetation cover. The Upland Countryside Landscape dominates the southern, central and eastern New Territories, as well as northern Kowloon, Hong Kong Island and Lantau Island. It covers about 66,830 ha of land, or 58.9% of the total land area.

(b) *Lowland Countryside Landscape*

This broad LCT generally lies below 40mPD with low levels of topographic relief; a low density of built development; traditional patterns of rural land use and high levels of vegetation cover. The Lowland Countryside Landscape is found in a belt between Lau Fau Shan and Sha Tau Kok, as well as the narrow coastal plains in the south-east and north-east New Territories and Lantau Island. It covers about 9,140 ha of land, or 8.1% of the total land area.

(c) *Rural Fringe Landscape*

This broad LCT generally retains the rural characteristics but intermixes with significant ongoing changes from traditional rural land uses to non-intensive development. Vegetation coverage is generally high. The Rural Fringe Landscape scatters in patches across New Territories, but particularly concentrates in the lowlands of the north-west and northern New Territories. It includes 11,210 ha of land, or 9.9% of the total land area.

(d) *Urban Fringe Landscape*

This broad LCT contains a more or less equal mixture of developed and undeveloped land; moderate densities of built development; fragmented or dispersed patterns of development; extensive land uses, such as public institutions and cemeteries etc. The topography is altered with moderate levels of vegetation coverage. The Urban Fringe Landscape is found mainly at the peripheries of the urban areas of Hong Kong Island and

Kowloon, and also around new towns. It includes about 11,630 ha of land, or 10.3% of the total land area.

(e) *Urban Landscape*

This broad LCT is characterized by high densities of development, intensive land uses, highly altered topography and low levels of vegetation coverage. The Urban Landscape occupies the land areas on both sides of the Harbour, older urban areas and new towns. It includes about 9,320 ha of land, or 8.2% of the total land area.

(f) *Coastal Waters Landscape*

This broad LCT consists of offshore and inshore waters, bays and straits and may include other related features such as mud flats, small islands, typhoon shelters, marinas, vessels and other maritime features. The Coastal Waters within Hong Kong boundary is about 1,636km². The intertidal coasts and small islands account for about 5,140 ha of land, or 4.6% of the total land area.

5. In the Study, these six broad LCTs are sub-divided into 41 more refined LCTs at the district level, covering the full range of landscapes found in Hong Kong. A list of the district LCTs and their distribution over the territory is at **Appendix 1** of the ES.

Landscape Value Map

6. Landscape value represents the importance we attach to a landscape. Landscape value is attributable to the combination of a number of factors including visual coherence, complexity, rarity, relief and condition, key heritage/natural features and visual attractors/detractors. In the mapping exercise, landscape value is ranked as either 'High', 'High(Qualified)', 'Moderate' or 'Low' on the basis of the criteria at **Appendix 2** of the ES. The criteria have been devised through an engagement process involving all relevant stakeholders. The various values of landscapes across the territory are mapped on **Figure 2** and briefly described in the table below:

Landscape Value	Major Landscape Character Types	Major Locations	Percentage*
High	Upland Countryside, Lowland Countryside and Coastal Waters Landscapes	SENT, NENT, central NT, Lantau Island and central Hong Kong Island	82.5%
High(Qualified)	Lowland Countryside, Rural Fringe and Urban Fringe Landscapes	Foothills or lowland areas of NWNT, northern and central NT, SENT and Hong Kong Island	8.1%
Moderate	Urban Fringe and Urban Landscapes	Urban areas of Kowloon, Tsuen Wan, Hong Kong Island and new towns	8.1%
Low	Urban Fringe and Urban Landscapes	Coastal areas and edges of Tsuen Wan and Kowloon Bay	1.3%

* Coastal Waters are included in the calculation of the percentages.

7. We have conducted a detailed trawling exercise on all statutory Outline Zoning Plans (OZPs) as well as other relevant plans to ascertain the status of planning control, particularly in the areas with high landscape value. The trawling exercise reveals that all high landscape value areas are, by default, already protected under various planning mechanisms.

Use of Information

8. The deliverables of the Study include the Landscape Character and Value Maps and a geographical information system (GIS) based database on landscape resources. These deliverables would not only be used by Planning Department for reference in plan making and in the assessment of major development proposals, but would also be used by other bureaux/departments and professionals in landscape assessment and broad environmental assessment of major projects at the territorial level.

9. The Landscape Character Map, Technical Reports of the Study and the ES have been uploaded to Planning Department's Homepage for public information. The Landscape Character Map at suitable scale, with a short explanatory note will be put up for sale to the public. Details of the study findings in particular the survey records are highly technical and specialized in nature. Such detailed

information will be made available to the public on request at Planning Department's Public Enquiry Counters.

10. During the study process, all relevant parties are aware that whilst the deliverables of the Study will be contributive to and facilitate better planning, at the end of the day landscape impact is but one of the many socio-economic and environmental factors that need to be taken account of in the planning and development process. In vetting development proposals, landscape should be given due care but it is necessary to strike a balance among all relevant factors to meet the needs of the community.

Conclusion

11. Members are invited to note the main findings of the Study contained in the Executive Summary of the Study (**Annex A**).

Attachments

- Figure 1 Landscape Character Map of Hong Kong
(Broad Landscape Character Types)
- Figure 2 Landscape Value Map of Hong Kong
- Annex A Executive Summary

PLANNING DEPARTMENT
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