(ACE Paper 24/2004)

For discussion

Feasibility Study for Land Formation and Infrastructure Works For Prison Development at Hei Ling Chau

Introduction

This paper is to report the key findings of the stage 1 of the feasibility study and seek Members' views on the preferred option of land formation and infrastructure works for the proposed prison complex at Hei Ling Chau.

Background

2. Overcrowding is a long standing problem of prisons in Hong Kong. Also, many facilities are in archaic conditions. In the long run, the problem is predicted to deteriorate. The Government therefore proposes to build a new prison complex with 7,220 penal places. It will group all the existing penal facilities on Hong Kong Island and in Kowloon together with the reception facilities scattered around the territory plus an additional 2,600 places to meet the forecast growth in the penal population up to 2015.

3. Given the scale of the project, the Government proposed to carry out a two-stage feasibility study and preliminary site investigation for the land formation and infrastructure works. Stage 1 of the study includes identifying various development options, carrying out preliminary assessments, and drawing up a preferred option. Detailed assessments of the preferred option will be carried out in stage 2, which will include a statutory environmental impact assessment. At the meeting of the Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council on 16 May 2003, the Government undertook to report the findings of the feasibility study to the FC upon completion of stage 1; and to seek the FC's approval before proceeding to stage 2 of the study.

The Study

4. We, the Civil Engineering and Development Department, commissioned in September 2003 the two-stage study (the Study) to examine the engineering feasibility of the land formation and infrastructure works for a new prison complex at Hei Ling Chau. Currently, we are in the stage 1 of the Study.

5. We conducted the first round of public consultation from December 2003 to February 2004. We met representatives from local communities, environmental groups and other interest groups to gauge their views on the preliminary options.

6. We have assessed eight preliminary land formation options and four preliminary fixed crossing options based on a set of criteria covering various aspects including landscape and visual impact, ecology and other environmental aspects, social issues, land uses, transport, engineering and cost. Having balanced the merits and demerits of the options and taking into account the public views collected in the first round of public consultation, we have drawn up a preferred option for public consultation.

7. The preferred option comprises reclamation of about 80 hectares within the Hei Ling Chau Typhoon Shelter, a 2.2 km long bridge fixed crossing linking Hei Ling Chau and Mui Wo, and a 350m long bypass around the Mui Wo town to South Lantau Road. New breakwaters will be constructed for the reprovisioning of the anchorage area (about 35ha) affected by the reclamation.

8. The preferred land formation is an optimized layout of the preliminary options within the typhoon shelter. It will not require massive site formation works on Hei Ling Chau. The shoreline, foreshore and seabed within the typhoon shelter are generally of low ecological value. Also, the topography of Hei Ling Chau will provide effective screening to the proposed prison complex.

9. The preferred land formation has the advantages of lesser visual impacts, minimal impacts on the natural topography and vegetation on Hei Ling Chau, minimal impacts on terrestrial and marine ecology, and lesser impacts on water quality and tidal flow. The conservation potential of Hei Ling Chau and Sunshine Island would not be affected.

10. For the fixed crossing, the preferred alignment has the advantages of minimal impacts on terrestrial and marine ecology, minimal impacts on Lantau South Country Park, and minimal impacts on existing and planned land uses. No known archaeological sites would be affected. We have also assessed the merits and demerits of the bridge and tunnel options. Although the bridge option will have greater visual impacts to the environment, it will not require additional reclamation for the approach roads and have lesser temporary impacts on the water quality during construction. Also, the capital and recurrent costs of a bridge will be significantly lower than that of

a tunnel.

11. Since the preferred land formation will be sited on reclamation within the existing typhoon shelter, and the landing pointing of the fixed crossing at a developed area on Hei Ling Chau, we expect that the habitat of Bogadek's Burrowing Lizard, previously found on the island, would unlikely be affected.

12. In the stage 2 of the Study, we will carry out detailed assessments of the preferred option, which will include a statutory environmental impact assessment. We will carry out detailed field surveys and propose mitigation measures to minimize environmental impacts for the construction and operation stages.

13. The key findings of the option assessments and a summary of the preliminary assessments of the preferred option are given in the attached Consultation Digest.

Second Round of Public Consultation

14. We have commenced the second round of public consultation to seek the views of the public on the preferred option. We will consult local communities, environmental groups and other interest groups. We will also seek the views of the District Councils (DC) that will be affected by the project, including Islands DC, Central & Western DC, Eastern DC, Southern DC and Sham Shui Po DC.

Way Forward

15. After completion of the Stage 1 of the Study, we will present the findings and recommendations to the FC. Upon the approval of the FC, we will proceed to the stage 2 of the feasibility study.

Views Sought

16. Members are invited to give their views on the preferred option.

Civil Engineering and Development Department
July 2004