Annex B

Summary of issues discussed by the Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee at the meeting on 13 September 2013 – EIA report on "Development of Lok Ma Chau Loop"

The Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee (EIASC) considered the supplementary information on the EIA report on "Development of Lok Ma Chau Loop (LMC Loop)" submitted by the project proponent (i.e. the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD)) at the meeting on 13 September, including its latest proposal to carve out the proposed Eastern Connection Road (ECR) from the current EIA report. The issues discussed are summarized below.

Eastern Connection Road (ECR)

2. The project proponent briefly recapped the justification for planning the proposed ECR to cater for traffic demand upon full development of LMC Loop from operational/emergency/traffic demand perspectives as well as connectivity/synergy of the Loop with the neighbouring areas. They explained that the Loop development would be in two phases, and the proposed ECR would only be required in Phase 2 development planned for 2027. The project proponent acknowledged Members' concerns on the ECR and the planning uncertainties of major transport infrastructure around the Loop development, e.g. the proposed Northern Link and the new pedestrian link with Shenzhen involving new boundary control facilities, which would have potential bearing on the ECR traffic demand. They confirmed to voluntarily exclude the ECR proposal from the current EIA report. Members welcomed the information.

3. As regards connectivity of LMC Loop with the neighbouring areas, the project proponent explained that the Direct Link was only linked to the MTR LMC Station/LMC Spurline Boundary Control Point (LMC Station) and spanned across and along the Frontier Closed Area (FCA). In view of boundary security considerations, public access was restricted to vehicles and rail only. The public could cycle or walk directly to the Loop area via the Western Connection Road (WCR) which was not situated in the FCA. Cycle tracks and footpaths would be provided to facilitate non-bus and non-rail users to commute to the Loop area via WCR.

4. Members were mindful of the existing security policy/restrictions on the frontier closed area which were applicable to the whole of Hong Kong. For the situation in Lok Ma Chau, the public were banned from direct pedestrian access to the LMC Station and the FCA from the Loop. They suggested that the project proponent

should actively explore the possibility to facilitate the public to walk directly from the LMC Station to the Loop. They also suggested the project proponent to incorporate in the detailed design a pedestrian walkway reserve in the Direct Link for facilitating this direct pedestrian access. The walkway reserve was for planning purposes in the event that there were changes in the existing policy/security restrictions. The project proponent advised that the proposed provision of a walkway reserve had to be reviewed having regard that the construction might involve changes to the configuration of the bridge structure as well as other ancillary works.

5. Members took note that without the proposed ECR in place, there was a secondary exit route for emergency vehicles which connected the Loop area to the Kwu Tung North New Development Area (KTN NDA) via Ma Tso Lung Road without the need to detour into the Ho Sheung Heung area. This involved a shorter travelling time than routing through the existing old and narrow Border Road and Ho Sheung Heung Road from Fanling Highway. Requests were also made for the project proponent to explore the 'park-and-ride' option which was well practised in major cities like London to control vehicular traffic to and from the Loop area. A permit system could also be explored to restrict private vehicular traffic within the Loop.

Integrating some reed beds into the Amenity/Activity Corridor (A/A Corridor)

6. Members welcomed the project proponent's proposal to retain some 3 ha of existing reed beds within the proposed A/A Corridor and the proposed Ecological Area (EA) in the southern/southeastern part of LMC Loop. The reed marsh area would be hydrologically linked and would make a positive contribution towards enhancing the overall ecology/landscape values of the Loop area. The northern/northwestern part of the A/A Corridor would be used as a functional space to provide an open landscape for human activities and social interactions.

7. Members suggested to the project proponent to extend the reed marsh area further north by retaining the more isolated reed beds currently in fragmented patches. The purpose was to enhance the amenity, landscaping and feeling of open spaces in the whole LMC Loop. Suggestions were made for the project proponent to upgrade the quality of reed beds and the water channels to improve connectivity. The project proponent was also advised to build boardwalks for access to these patches of isolated reed beds to further enhance the amenity values of the reed marsh area and the feeling of openness. Members were also concerned about the importance of an integrated system connecting the water bodies, reeds and people frequenting the area. They also appealed to the project proponent to avoid forming the open space on hard ground as far as practicable.

Urban design considerations

8. The project proponent briefly explained the "embracing hands" urban design concept adopted for the LMC Loop development. The concept was based on delivering a flexible and permeable urban layout, an accessible urban structure via a network of access routes interlinked with landscape routes and a diversified mix of land uses. Regarding its commitment in promoting a people-oriented community in the Loop, the project proponent proposed extensive landscape features and planting in the open spaces so as to create a comfortable and pedestrian-friendly environment. The east-west running Pedestrian Boulevard was also planned to serve as a major wind corridor, contributing to a low carbon and green development in the Loop. The proposed EA at the southern/southeastern boundary of the Loop would help enhance its connectivity to the surrounding wetlands.

9. Members took note that extensive greening would be provided in the open spaces and development plots to help reduce heat island effect and energy consumption on air conditioning uses. Green features such as centralized district cooling system, roof-top and vertical greening, reuse of treated sewage effluent and green building design etc. would be further explored with a view to taking forward in the Loop development. The east-west running corridors planned would also provide a comfortable wind environment.

10. Members commented that the "embracing hands" concept of integrating different features in LMC Loop had not come out clearly in the plot layout and the perspective drawing spatial-wise and ecological-wise. They requested the project proponent to enhance the people-oriented approach in the design as it had committed in the Loop development as well as the implementation process. These could improve the connectivity between reed beds and the water bodies for further integration with the surrounding natural environment. The water bodies should also connect to Shenzhen River in creating a micro climate to cool off the surrounding temperature. They also suggested the project proponent to draw up a scheme design of the project to realize the proposed "embracing hands" concept to develop the Loop into a green community/neighbourhood ecologically, environmentally, spatially and landscapingly. These would include an overall waste management strategy, rainwater harvesting system, low-carbon initiatives including waste recycling and sorting and use of green shuttle buses within the Loop.

Green transport management scheme

11. Members discussed the control of private vehicular traffic going into and within LMC Loop. The project proponent informed that the public commuting to the Loop in private vehicles had to stop and park at the centralized car parks near the entrances within the Loop. Commuting within the Loop would be on foot, cycling and other mode of green transport, such as green buses. There would be no unauthorized private vehicles travelling within the Loop. Comprehensive cycle tracks and footpath networks within the Loop and connection to external road networks would be provided.

12. Members reiterated the request for the project proponent to explore the 'park-and-ride' option. They pointed out that there were ample car parking spaces in the San Tin area where people could park their cars and change to shuttle buses to commute to the Loop. Comments were also made that those professionals working in the Loop should be receptive to new technologies and innovative ideas on green transport initiatives. With technological advances, there should be more creative modes of green transport.

Other issues

13. Members were concerned that the project proponent had not clearly addressed the extent and treatment of arsenic in soil in the EIA report. They considered that similar to the case of the North East New Territories New Development Areas (NENT NDAs) project in which CEDD was also the project proponent, CEDD's consultants should also conduct investigations to identify sites with high levels of arsenic and to propose detailed treatment and disposal plans prior to commencement of construction works in the Loop.

14. Suggestions were also made to explore the introduction of a permit system to restrict authorized private vehicular traffic to and within the Loop. The suggestion echoed the green transport management scheme which the project proponent had proposed for the Loop development.

15. There were strong recommendations from Members that the project proponent should ensure building typology and open/public spaces of the Loop development should be in harmony with the surrounding environment.

16. As regards the proposed ECR excluded from the current EIA report, Members urged that should the connection road was to be brought up in future, the

project proponent should fully assess and demonstrate the need for the road and prepare a detailed design for a harmonious interface with the natural environment when the road entered the Loop.

Recommendations to ACE

17. Having regard to the findings and recommendations of the EIA report and the further information provided by the project proponent at the meeting, EIASC agreed to recommend to the full Council that the report could be endorsed with conditions. The Subcommittee had also made a number of recommendations for the project proponent to consider.

EIA Subcommittee Secretariat
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