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ACE Paper 24/2017

For advice on 6 November 2017

**Report on the 141st
Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee Meeting**

PURPOSE

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Subcommittee considered the EIA report on “Housing Sites in Yuen Long South” (YLS) under Section 6(2) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO) at the meeting on 16 October 2017. The EIA report was submitted by the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) (the Project Proponent).

2. Members are requested to note the views of the of EIA Subcommittee at paragraph 12 below and advise whether the EIA report should be endorsed or not.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

3. To address the demand for land for housing, the Policy Addresses from Year 2012 to 2015 announced the review of agricultural land in the North District and Yuen Long, which is currently used mainly for industrial purposes or temporary storage, as one of the potential land supply measures. The Policy Addresses in Year 2016 and 2017 further highlighted the YLS development as a medium and long-term land supply measures.

4. Back in 2012, the Project Proponent commissioned a Planning and Engineering Feasibility Study for Housing Sites in YLS to examine the future land use; to optimize the development potential; and to ascertain the feasibility for public and private housing development in YLS Potential Development Area (PDA).

5. Public views, including the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE), green groups, district councils and other stakeholders were solicited through three rounds of community engagement in 2013, 2014 and 2016 in preparing the development plan.

6. The YLS PDA is currently rural in character with a mixture of land uses. The predominant uses are brownfield operations including open storage yards, warehouses and industrial workshops. These brownfield operations are intermingled with rural settlements and residential developments, agricultural land, livestock farms and vacant land. The YLS PDA would create land for approximately 28,500 new flats and industrial and commercial buildings to provide about 10,500 new employment opportunities in the region. The first population intake is scheduled for 2027 with full population intake in 2038.

7. The YLS development also provides the opportunity to transform the degraded brownfield sites into more optimal uses and better land utilization for future development of the community and promote urban-rural symbiosis.

8. Please refer to the ACE-EIA Paper 6/2017 at *Annex A* for details.

VIEWS OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

9. The Director of Environmental Protection (DEP), in consultation with all the relevant authorities, considered that the EIA report had met the requirements of the EIA Study Brief and the Technical Memorandum on EIA Process (TM), for the purpose of exhibiting the report for public inspection under the EIAO. Comments from the public and the ACE will be taken into account by DEP in deciding whether or not to approve the EIA report under the EIAO.

VIEWS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

10. Members noted that the EIA report was made available for public inspection from 8 August 2017 to 6 September 2017. During the inspection period, a total of 11 public comments had been received by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD). The main environmental concerns raised by the public are related to ecology, preservation of agricultural land, odour impact and noise impact assessments of the Project. The public comments and the gist of the public comments for the EIA report were issued to EIA Subcommittee Members on 4 October 2017 for reference, with copies to non-EIA Subcommittee Members for information.

11. Relevant extracts of the draft minutes of the EIA Subcommittee meeting held on 16 October 2017 is at *Annex B*.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

12. Having considered the findings of the EIA report and the information provided by the Project Proponent, the EIA Subcommittee recommended that the full Council endorse the EIA report with the following conditions and recommendations –

Conditions of Endorsement

The Project Proponent shall -

- (a) submit a detailed Landscape and Visual Plan (the Plan) for the revitalization of the Yuen Long Nullah along Kung Um Road / Kiu Hing Road and the conservation of existing watercourses with high ecological values within the project site. The formulation of the Plan should engage various stakeholders with a view to introducing special features and spatial articulations along the nullahs and the watercourses with a view to generating a natural outlook and enhancing the ecological functions while preserving the hydraulic performance, operation and maintenance of the facilities, as well as allocation of adequate space for creating a water-friendly culture and enhancing social, economic and environmental sustainability. The Plan should be submitted to the DEP for approval before commencement of construction of the relevant phase of the project;
- (b) conduct a survey to ascertain the existence of egretty at Tai Tong. The findings of the survey and corresponding recommendations should be submitted to the DEP for approval before commencement of construction of the relevant phase of the project;
- (c) subject to item (b) above, submit a detailed Noise Mitigation Measures Plan (the Plan) with a view to minimizing the construction noise impact on the egretty at Tai Tong. The Plan should include but not limited to details on the deployment of low noise construction method in the vicinity of the egretty, especially during their breeding season. The Plan should be submitted to the DEP for approval before commencement of construction of the relevant phase of the project;
- (d) submit a detailed Landscape and Visual Plan (the Plan) of the district distributor roads and the nearby activity nodes with a view to reducing the extent or the negative visual impacts of the noise barriers and / or enclosures. The Plan should include but not limited to a review to minimizing the spare capacities of the district distributor roads within the project development area; restricting the speed limit for internal roads to 50 kilometres per hour or below; controlling the entry of heavy vehicles into the residential areas; and strengthening residents' accessibility to the public transport interchange system. The Plan should be submitted to the DEP for approval before commencement of construction of the relevant phase of the project; and

- (e) submit a detailed Noise Mitigation Measures Plan (the Plan) with a view to minimizing the adverse noise impacts of the district distributor roads to nearby sensitive receivers. The Plan should be submitted to the DEP for approval before commencement of construction of the relevant phase of the project.

Recommendations

The Project Proponent is recommended to –

- (f) mitigate the environmental, operational and cultural impacts on the agricultural land within the project site, especially during the construction stage, with respect to the flooding risks and impact on the irrigation system resulting from the possible changes in hydrology;
- (g) facilitate the integration of the three activity nodes by considering better allocation and design of district open space to enhance the connectivity and accessibility by nearby residents;
- (h) enhance the environmentally friendly and sustainability of the buildings and neighbourhood development by achieving at minimum “Gold” rating under the BEAM Plus rating system for new buildings and neighbourhood; and include in the Deed of Mutual Covenant terms and / or lease documents for conducting BEAM Plus (existing buildings) assessment with a view to ensuring that the buildings, including the multi-storey buildings are managed in a sustainable manner after the buildings have been occupied;
- (i) adopt the urban ecology concept for planting within the project site;
- (j) develop a plan for integrated solid waste management within the project site including food waste collection, treatment, separation and recycling;
- (k) explore the reuse of rain water and grey water in-situ for purposes such as irrigation and toilet flushing;
- (l) adopt a stepped height profile with building heights diminishing towards the egretry and the major flight lines, and consider early planting of suitable species of trees, bamboo and plants at potential foraging / resting / nesting sites for ardeids to minimize the impact of construction activities on their livelihood; and
- (m) facilitate better connection between the Tai Lam Country Park and the nearby artificial wetland, while providing a notable entrance of the country park and some popular facilities (e.g. sitting areas, BBQ corner or children playground) at its entrance for residents and visitors.

13. The EIA Subcommittee has agreed that the Project Proponent is not required to attend the full Council meeting on 6 November 2017.

**EIA Subcommittee Secretariat
November 2017**