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**ACE 2/95**  
for information

## **Information Paper on** **Study on Port Back-up Land and Open Storage Requirements**

### **Introduction**

1. This paper informs Members of the findings and recommendations of the Study on Port Back-up Land and Open Storage Requirements.

### **Background**

2. The judgement on the Melhado case in 1983 led to the proliferation of container back-up and open storage uses on agricultural land in the New Territories, which soon created serious environmental, transport and land use interface problems. The Government recognised the need to control further proliferation of these uses on the one hand, and to accommodate their requirements on the other. The enactment of the Town Planning (Amendment) Ordinance 1991 has largely put unplanned spreading of these uses under control. Action has also been taken in parallel by the Planning Department to identify suitable sites for these uses in the preparation of development permission area plans and rural outline zoning plans.
3. The Study on Port Back-up Land and Open Storage Requirements, commissioned by the Planning Department in June 1993, represented a comprehensive effort to look into the detailed operational needs and land requirements of these two sectors of the economy. The Study is now completed and a copy of the Executive Summary of the Final Report is attached to this paper.

### **Main Findings and Recommendations**

#### **The Study**

4. The Study examines the impacts and future requirements of port back-up and open storage activities in the Territory. The main objectives of the Study are to project demand for port back-up and open storage uses over the short, medium and long term; to identify sites to meet future land requirements; and to include recommendations to improve problems currently caused by such operations.

### Existing Provision

5. A total of 237 port back-up sites, covering 198 ha, were recorded by the survey in 1993, compared to only 23 sites covering 28 ha of land in 1983. Open storage sites were more numerous, comprising 1453 sites and covering 362 ha of land in 1993, compared with 586 sites covering 276 ha of land ten years before.
6. Four main concentrations of port back-up activities were identified at Kwai Chung and Tsing Yi, Lau Fau Shan and Ha Tsuen, San Tin, and Tuen Mun. Open storage uses are more dispersed and proliferate mostly in a ribbon form along major road corridors, such as Castle Peak Road, and on the periphery of developed areas, such as in Fanling and Yuen Long. Distinct concentrations are nevertheless observed in the Kam Tin valley, east of Fanling along the Sha Tau Kok Road, and at Ping Che in the north east New Territories.
7. The Study identified the driving force behind the proliferation of port back-up sites as increasing demand for cheap and relatively large sites, improved accessibility to rural areas, and the economic benefits arising from converting agricultural land to storage uses. This rapid growth of sites has been the cause of severe environmental, drainage, transport and land use planning problems.

### Demand and Supply

8. Strong demand for additional port back-up and open storage land has been identified by the Study. A maximum total port back-up land demand of 380 ha has been estimated by 2001, rising to 507 ha by 2011. Corresponding demand for open storage is estimated at 555 ha and 753 ha for 2001 and 2011 respectively.
9. Potential sources of supply to meet demand comprise :-
  - (a) 254 ha of land already planned as part of the new container terminal development at Kwai Tsing and north east Lantau;
  - (b) land zoned for such uses under outline zoning plans. A total of 71 ha for port back-up land and 125 ha for open storage are confirmed by this Study; and
  - (c) long term sites such as Tuen Mun west and north east Lantau. These areas are, however, dependent on new road infrastructure.

### Key Issues

10. The effectiveness of the port is dependent on sufficient land being available for both on-port and back-up activities. The limited land available around the existing container port is fast reaching saturation point, and immediate measures are required to increase land for container handling (given delays to Container Terminal 9) and port back-up activities. The Study concluded that the shortage of land near to the existing port at Kwai Chung and the considerable time taken for new sites to be made operational will create serious shortfalls over the next three to five years. Similarly, serious shortages of open storage land are anticipated in the short term due to the considerable time required to make new sites operational.

### Planning Principles

11. To address to the shortfalls of and environmental problems created by port back-up and open storage uses, a number of planning principles were proposed. These include :-
  - (a) encouraging concentration of uses to avoid further proliferation of sites, to avoid unnecessary trip making and focus investments for improvements to specific areas;
  - (b) encouraging port back-up activities to locate on land reserved as part of the new container terminal development, and on designated sites near the border;
  - (c) directing open storage uses to specially designated sites which are environmentally acceptable and easily accessible to urban areas and major construction sites;
  - (d) making use of existing and new strategic road infrastructure to concentrate traffic on major road corridors, thus reducing local noise and air pollution impacts and enhancing road safety in rural areas; and
  - (e) improving existing sites and adopting land use restraint policies to arrest the degradation of the natural environment, reduce impacts on rural communities and reduce flood risk.

### Implementation Policies and Measures

12. Two major policies are recommended to achieve the above planning principles: a broad area policy and a site planning policy. The broad area policy is based on an evaluation of 25 broad areas where sites are currently concentrated. Each broad area has been assigned one of five categories, ranging from intensification of uses to discontinuance of sites in the long term. It is to be implemented through processing of planning applications and zoning of land by the Planning Department and the Town Planning Board. With regard to the site planning policy, 154 existing problem sites covering 64 ha are identified as creating severe environmental problems and should be discontinued once alternative land becomes available. A further 79 sites covering 26 ha, also with significant environmental problems, have potential to be improved through mitigation measures.
13. Proposed pro-active measures to increase land supply and improve existing sites comprise :-
  - (a) Government to resume land and designate projects under the Public Works Programme for a site of 68 ha at San Tin, adjacent to the Lok Ma Chau border crossing, to form a major container lorry parking and empty container storage centre; and at Ping Che and Ta Kwu Ling for open storage on 34 ha of land;
  - (b) development of a multi-storey building on a 4 ha site near Container Terminal 8 to include container lorry park, container freight station and other compatible uses;
  - (c) re-zoning some of the Industrial (Group B) and (Group C) sites (about 10 ha) on the West Kowloon Reclamation to maximise the use of these prime sites for port-related activities;
  - (d) encouraging open storage activities in shed-like accommodation on part of the land zoned for Industrial (Group D) use in the New Territories;
  - (e) temporary use of land on reclamations where environmental conditions permit; and
  - (f) reserving possible cavern development on Tsing Yi for port back-up use for the long term, when sufficient traffic capacity from Route 9 is provided by 2008.
14. Regulatory measures to improve existing and new sites comprise:-

- (a) enforcement actions against unauthorised sites under the Town Planning Ordinance, and discontinuance of existing problem sites through amortisation provisions proposed to be introduced under the new Planning Ordinance;
  - (b) application of existing regulations to limit impacts such as noise, discharge of untreated waste, substandard drainage connections and illegal parking; and
  - (c) setting up of a Code of Practice, for application by major operator bodies and associations, to educate operators about the existing regulations and propose practical measures by which sites may be improved.
15. To carry out the above diverse measures effectively and to encourage integration of efforts, the consultants recommended that a co-ordinating body be set up to oversee all initiatives and interests of port-related activities. This will be supported by the actions of the Black Spots Task Force of the Lands Department, and other concerned Government departments such as the Planning Department and Environmental Protection Department.
16. A long term aim would be to encourage relocation of port back-up activities and some open storage operations to China, where land is more plentiful and cheaper. Relocation could provide a major solution to relieve land pressures in Hong Kong. To achieve this, more dialogue with Chinese authorities is recommended. Finally, monitoring of both demand and supply of sites would have to be constantly undertaken to assess the degree of relocation of activities to China, to review policy towards land provision and determine the amount of discontinuance needed towards existing problem sites.

#### Attachment

Study on Port Back-up Land and Open Storage Requirements -  
Executive Summary

Planning Department  
January 1995