

Government response to media enquiries on public housing development plan at Wang Chau
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In response to media enquiries on the public housing development plan at Wang Chau, a spokesman for the Government said today (September 30) that, after checking various documents, a consolidated reply is given as follows:

As explained earlier, the Planning and Engineering (P&E) feasibility study for the public housing development plan at Wang Chau, which commenced in 2012, comprised a number of technical parts, including assessments on traffic and transport impact, geotechnical feasibility and site formation, natural terrain hazard, drainage impact, sewerage impact, water and utility impact, environmental impact, air ventilation, land requirement, tree survey, financial assessment and so on. Different parts were completed at different periods. The Government originally planned to develop Phases 1, 2, 3 and Yuen Long Industrial Estate Extension (YLIEE) at the same time. But after the Government decided in early 2014 to develop Phase 1 first, followed by phases 2 and 3 later, we asked the consultant, who were carrying out the study then, to conduct supplementary assessment on the traffic and transport impact, air ventilation, drainage impact, sewerage impact, water supplies and environmental impact to confirm the feasibility of commencing Phase 1 first.

We have stated earlier that the P&E feasibility study reports for the public housing development plan at Wang Chau contain some sensitive information, and the Government will submit them to the Legislative Council when the new term comes into session officially and make them available to the public after processing the relevant sensitive information in an appropriate manner.

Assessment reports have to be submitted to the Town Planning Board (TPB) when processing the rezoning application for the Phase 1 development. Therefore, the supplementary assessments on traffic and transport impact and air ventilation in the feasibility study were attached to the submission to the Rural and New Town Planning Committee (RNTPC) of the TPB on October 17, 2014. (Reference number: RNTPC Paper No. 13/14).

Prior to the submission to the RNTPC, we had ascertained that there was no sensitive information in it. But the staff concerned did not delete the wording "please keep confidential" when preparing the submission.

The aforesaid traffic and transport impact assessment stated that "planning parameters are yet to be confirmed at the stage of the study. As for a

conservative approach, it is assumed that the total number of flats is capped at 5 000 units with PRH/HOS ratio of 50:50 for technical assessment purpose....." This illustrates clearly that the "planning parameters" of the Phase 1 housing project has not yet been decided. The assessment adopted a "conservative approach" that "assumed" the total number of flats was to be "capped at" 5 000 and, for "technical assessment purpose", the proportion of public rental housing/home ownership scheme flats was "assumed" to be 50:50 so as to maintain the flexibility to ensure that results of the technical assessments will be applicable to future development. The paper (RNTPC Paper No. 13/14) itself stated clearly that the proposed number of flats was 4 000. As regards the actual number of flats and the proportion of rental housing and subsidised sales flats, it has yet to be decided.

In the traffic impact assessment submitted to the RNTPC, routing of the road connecting Wang Chau Phase 1 was different from the one outlined in the paper submitted by the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) to the Yuen Long District Council's Traffic and Transport Committee (TTC Paper No. 39/2015) on May 21, 2015.

As for the reason for the re-routing, the CEDD had already given a detailed account in the paper for the aforesaid meeting of the Yuen Long District Council. It was stated that "Through enhancing the road routing and moving it northward within the development boundary by the CEDD, members of the public will have the convenience of passing in and out the burial ground located to the north of the development area without the need to enter into the future housing estate."

As regards the planning application by a private development at the locality of the Wang Chau public housing development, when the Planning Department consulted related government departments on it, the Housing Department raised objection on the ground that ingress of the road proposed by the private development would encroach into the boundary of the Phase 1 public housing development at Wang Chau and the original design of the public road for Wang Chau Phase 1 had not taken into account the private development.

There are views commenting on our decision of rolling out firstly Phase 1 of the Wang Chau public housing development and then phases 2 and 3 later. We reiterate that the decision aims at an early production of 4 000 public housing flats in the Phase 1 of the Wang Chau public housing development. Some of the technical details are outlined herein.

On the part of road traffic, Phase 1 only involves the improvement of the junction at Long Ping Road and Fung Chi Road and the construction of a road to the Phase 1 of Wang Chau development. The concurrent development of phases

1, 2 and 3 of Wang Chau will require road works at various locations in Yuen Long District such as Long Ping Road, Wang Lok Street, Fuk Hi Street, Shui Pin Wai Interchange and so on as well as the construction of a public transport interchange. It involves more complicated works and requires longer time for working out a proposal and completing the works.

On drainage facilities, it only needs to improve local drainage pipes there in Phase 1. The concurrent development of phases 1, 2 and 3 will require a larger scale of improvement works on drainage pipes in the area concerned and in Yuen Long District. The Yuen Long Sewage Treatment Works will also need to be improved, involving more complicated works and longer time for working out a proposal and completing the works.

In respect of power supply, the existing transformer station can cope with demand generated by Phase 1. If phases 1, 2 and 3 are to be developed simultaneously, a new 132kV transformer station will have to be constructed.

As regards brownfield operations, about 0.1 hectare of land on the sites of Phase 1 are occupied while such operations occupy about 17 hectares on the sites of phases 2 and 3 and YLIEE. The sizeable brownfield operations in phases 2 and 3 include supportive activities such as logistics, port back-up, waste recycling, car repair and so on. They also offer employment opportunities. The Government wishes to handle them more properly.

Moreover, there are various environmental issues that have to be dealt with in phases 1, 2 and 3. The more critical one is pollution generated by operations on the brownfield sites in the district. In terms of location, Phase 1 is farther away from those brownfield operations at phases 2 and 3 and the pollution brought by it. When bringing forward Phase 2, we have to resolve the pollution problem caused by brownfield operations at Phase 3 on the north of the development. When we move on with Phase 3, we have to resolve the pollution problem caused by brownfield operations on site of YLIEE on the north. Thus, it will require more time to resolve the environmental pollution problem when we implement phases 2 and 3, including the pollution caused by brownfield operations on sites of phases 2 and 3 and YLIEE.

Taking the above into account, the Government decided in early 2014 to roll out the Phase 1 development at Wang Chau first with the objective of completing 4 000 public housing flats in 2024/25 with the early commencement of various formal procedures within a relatively short period of time.

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