

Topical Note 2 – People-Oriented Communities

Purpose of the Topical Note

The main purpose of the Stage 1 Public Engagement of the “North East New Territories New Development Areas Planning and Engineering Study” is to enable the public to appreciate the Study objectives and key issues relating to the development of the Kwu Tung North, Fanling North and Ping Che/Ta Kwu Ling New Development Areas (NDAs), and to express their visions for the NDAs. It is the intention to solicit public views through discussion on four topics, namely, strategic roles of NDAs, people-oriented communities, sustainable living environment and implementation mechanism. This topical note is prepared to provide background information on people-oriented communities with a view to facilitating public discussion on this topic.

1 Background

Most of our existing new towns were conceived at times of high development pressure and hence they were tasked to provide housing for the rapidly growing population. Similarly, “The Planning and Development Study on North East New Territories” (the NENT Study) commissioned in the late 1990’s, which identified Kwu Tung North (“KTN”), Fanling North (“FLN”) and Ping Che/Ta Kwu Ling (“PC/TKL”) as suitable New Development Areas (NDAs), was carried out during the time when we were facing vigorous housing demand.

In the light of slower population growth and housing demand than originally anticipated in the late 1990’s, the NDA proposals were shelved in 2003 pending further consideration on the need for strategic development areas in the Study on “Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy” (the HK2030 Study). The HK 2030 Study was completed in 2007. It recommended to proceed with some NDA developments to address the long-term housing demand and provide employment opportunities. The Chief Executive announced in his 2007-2008 Policy Address the planning for NDAs as one of the major infrastructure projects for economic growth. Subsequently, the “North East New Territories New Development Areas Planning and Engineering Study” (the NENT NDAs Study) was commissioned in June 2008 to formulate a revised proposal for the KTN, FLN and PC/TKL NDAs.

In revisiting the NDA proposals, the HK2030 Study provides the following strategic planning guidance - *other than providing housing land, NDAs will also provide employment. NDAs offer an alternative choice of living through the development of lower-density buildings in a quality living environment, with convenient access to mass transportation and community facilities.*

With a view to promoting people-oriented communities in the NDAs, the land use mix and physical design of the NDAs have to be conducive towards achieving social integration, recognising sense of community, social well-being and social equity. Consideration should be given to the needs of people of different backgrounds and abilities to ensure adequacy, diversity and inclusivity in the planning for facilities, hard and soft infrastructure, and other social resources. The effective and efficient planning of such resources will help to build up a well supported community. A people-oriented community is also reinforced by a good plan for people, i.e. a harmonised and balanced built environment with good urban design.

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2 Socially Integrated Community

A socially integrated community is one which nourishes social interaction. There are fair opportunities for all residents to be engaged in jobs, and to participate in social and community activities. The relevant attributes that we have to consider in the planning for a socially integrated community include population profile, housing mix and job provision ratio, etc. Within the NDAs, there should be a diversity of housing types, employment opportunities and community facilities to cater for all sectors of the population, without marginalising any specific group or socio-economic stratum.

Under the previous NENT Study, the following parameters were proposed for each NDA.

	KTN	FLN	PC/TKL
Population (approx.)	100,000	80,000	NA (no residential development proposed)
Max. Plot Ratio	6.5	6.5	-
Employment (approx.)	16,000	2,500	2,300
No. of Flats (approx.)	40,900	30,800	-
Housing Mix (Ratio of Public*: Subsidised*: Private)	26:18:56	36:33:31	-

* Public refers to public rental housing. Subsidised refers to Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) and Private Sector Participation Scheme (PSPS).

The above proposals were formulated in the late 1990's. They may not be able to meet today's public aspiration for a better quality living environment. To meet the rising public aspiration for lower density development, the optimal development intensity and hence the total population capacity in the NDAs will need to be assessed critically. Apart from this, the appropriate proportion of public rental housing and private housing in the NDAs will need to be assessed prudently for the development of balanced communities. Although we do not have a fixed ratio on public: private housing, experiences have demonstrated that a community with a mixture of population of various income groups accommodated in different types of housing is more favourable than a community with predominately a single type of housing. We also have to take into consideration the changing housing policy in respect of the cessation of HOS construction and termination of PSPS.

The provision of adequate and diversified employment opportunities is another important element contributing to a socially integrated community. The HK2030 Study suggests that other than providing housing land, NDAs could serve to meet other strategic land use requirements, such as special industries and educational uses, which will also provide employment. While the feasibility of provision of these two special uses within the NDAs will be further explored, population-related economic/social facilities such as local retail, services and community facilities together with the commercial/business/industrial activities will also need to be planned for the NDAs, to generate employment opportunities for the residents within the NDAs as well as for the existing nearby new town dwellers. However, in view of the fact that most of the job opportunities are still concentrated in the main urban areas, there is also a need to put more emphasis on enhancing the mobility of future residents in the NDAs to ensure that they will have easy access to the main urban areas in the planning of the NDAs.

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3 Well Supported Community

NDA should be planned to be self-sufficient in terms of local community and recreational facilities as well as commercial facilities such as market, supermarket, and shops for basic consumer goods and accommodation for doctors, lawyers, travel agents and estate agents to serve the local community. This is achieved through the reservation of sufficient retail and Government, Institutional & Community (G/IC) spaces in the planning process by designating appropriate sites for commercial, shopping, public open space and Government, Institutional & Community (G/IC) uses. This is to ensure residents can be provided with efficient and convenient access to their daily needs and facilities at affordable prices, without the need to travel afar. The provision of Government, Institutional & Community (G/IC) and public open space facilities will also help to strengthen the community network by providing opportunities for increased community interaction.

The Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) provides the necessary guidance for determining the scale, location and site requirements of various social and community facilities, and the minimum standards of the provision of various facilities. Yet, the planning standards and guidelines should be applied with a degree of flexibility, having regard to local conditions of NDAs.

In terms of timely provision of various facilities, it is fundamental to ensure the implementation of the community projects in tandem with the population build-up of the NDAs. From the experiences of other new towns such as Tin Shui Wai, the percentage of young population and non-working mothers at the early stage of the town development is on the high side. The provision of recreational and social facilities catered for these special groups perhaps should be introduced as early as possible in the development cycle of the NDAs to strengthen the community network. Similarly, adequate consideration and social support should be provided to any existing communities or villages falling within or in the vicinity of the NDAs.

In terms of appropriateness of the provision of facilities, as far as sufficient spaces have been planned, a flexible approach would also need to be adopted in mobilising resources to address the particular need of the population taking into account their unique demographic and social characteristics in adjusting the nature of the services to be provided.

4 Planning for People

In response to public aspirations for a better living environment, a new approach in the planning and design of NDA would be necessary. The HK2030 Study envisages that NDAs will be of an appropriate scale and development intensity, providing an alternative choice of living environment. There is a need to put more emphasis on the building mass and urban design considerations in the planning for the NDAs.

According to the HK2030 Study, massive construction in the form of the conventional new towns is not recommended for NDAs. NDAs should be no more than a quarter of the size of most of the current new towns and NDAs should provide lower-density buildings (with plot ratios comparable to earlier-generation new towns like Sha Tin). While the optimal development intensity in the NDAs will be assessed critically in the current NDAs Study, two factors should be carefully balanced, i.e. the rising public aspiration for quality living environment and capitalizing the opportunities provided by planned railway infrastructure.

In considering the appropriate building mass, the suitable building height will of course be addressed in parallel. The conventional build form with graded building heights, with the tallest buildings being located at the town center and the lowest buildings being located on the

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periphery of the town could be a reference. Due considerations should also be given to green buildings, environmentally sensitive building design etc.

It is the planning intention to create liveable environment in NDAs that are pleasant to live, work and play. It is closely associated with good urban design in respect of provision of view corridors, breezeways, well-organised open space, comprehensive and barrier-free pedestrian way networks, access to water, high quality 'micro-environments' and a vibrant and diverse street culture with an aim to enhance the sense of community.

5 Your Views

To facilitate the next step of work, we hope to know your views and aspirations with regard to People-Oriented Communities. For example,

- How can we create socially integrated communities in the NDAs?
 - Balanced Population Profile
 - Private vs. Public Housing Ratio
 - High/Medium/Low density (with plot ratios comparable to earlier-generation new towns like Sha Tin as suggested by the HK2030 Study)
 - What types of local employment opportunities should we cater for

- What are the facilities that will encourage social interaction and sense of community/well-being?
 - Public Squares and Civic Piazzas
 - Parks and Gardens
 - Community Halls
 - Cultural Centres
 - Day Care Centres
 - Resettlement of affected villages/communities
 - Others

- How can we achieve people-oriented design/layout in terms of urban design?
 - Building Heights
 - Building Mass
 - Open Space Networks
 - View Corridors
 - Breezeways
 - Building Setback

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- What are your views on the planning for future pedestrians in the NDAs?
 - Opportunities for walking in the community
 - Pedestrian-oriented streetscapes: e.g. greening along footpaths, way-finding signage, rest areas, barrier-free access, etc.
 - Enhanced accessibility: vehicle free zones/pedestrianised streets, footbridges & subways, public transport interchanges, energy efficient transportation
 - Promote street-level activities
 - Others