

Sustainability Assessment Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the Sustainability Assessment (SA) under the revised Recommended Outline Development Plans (RODPs) of the North East New Territories New Development Areas (NENT NDAs) Planning and Engineering Study (the Study). The guiding principles and sustainability indicators recommended by the Council for Sustainable Development were adopted for assessing the sustainability of the proposed developments under the revised RODPs. The SA has been carried out with reference to the indicator-based Computer Aided Sustainability Evaluation Tool (CASET).

SCENARIOS CONSIDERED

The SA has examined two scenarios: the first one assumes no NDAs development ('Without Development Scenario') and the second one assumes NDAs development according to the revised RODPs ('With Development Scenario').

AFFECTED INDICATORS

After responding to the prescribed questions of CASET, 27 indicators were triggered in the SA process. Of them, 17 indicators are considered to be 'affected indicators' and 10 are considered not or insignificantly affected by the development. 10 social indicators and 5 non-quantifiable indicators were also identified as "affected indicators". The SA has also responded to 3 questions under 'First SD Strategy Checklist'.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Overall, the SA indicates that the proposed development will result in net improvements in social, environmental and economic opportunities for the community. Collectively, these gains will contribute towards the longer term goals set out in the Study of Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy. The NDAs development will also provide additional supplies of land to meet the medium-to long-term housing, economic and social needs.

While acknowledging that there will be impacts to local communities and the existing rural landscape, due consideration has been given to minimise them. The revised RODPs have been formulated with a view to respecting the local heritage and cultural characteristics, minimising the affected population, and protecting natural assets. The recognised villages will be conserved, with low density development in the surrounding areas to minimise potential negative landscape impacts.

Noise and air impacts from the new roads will be suitably mitigated by proper mitigation measures, such as noise barrier, low noise surfacing, adequate amenity strips and setback in the road design. Impacts from other noise and air sources, such as District Cooling System and Sewage Treatment Works, will be mitigated by locating them away from sensitive receivers and providing suitable noise and air mitigation measures.

Sites of historical and archaeological interests have been identified. Appropriate planning and proper land use zoning designation will be adopted to incorporate the valuable historic resources into the NDAs development for the benefits of existing and future residents.

Sustainability Assessment Executive Summary

Affected terrestrial habitats have been identified. Important landscape features and ecologically significant sites would be preserved under the revised RODPs to create a quality living environment.

On the other hand, the proposed development and infrastructures will bring positive impacts to the community and economy including the creation of additional business activities and employment opportunities as well as improved social services such as education, health and recreational facilities. Such development opportunities will not only benefit the existing residents but also encourage more population moving to the two NDAs from other areas, thus creating a more vibrant, diverse and sustainable social and economic environment.

Better access and transport linkages to surrounding areas including the construction of the proposed Kwu Tung Station, Fanling Bypass and widening of Fanling Highway will improve the efficiency and productivity through reduction of traffic time. The NDAs development will also help developing and promoting linkages with Shenzhen and the Mainland and delivering long-term economic sustainability to the Pearl River Delta Region.

As a result of population and economic growth as well as improvement to supporting infrastructure and transport networks, the income level of the two NDAs will likely rise. In addition, employment opportunities including lower-skilled jobs created during construction and operational stages in the two NDAs will benefit the less wealthy households and the unemployed.

Improvements in the quality of living, economic well-being and a sense of belonging will contribute towards an inclusive and caring society. Promoting social equality through fair access to urban infrastructure and reducing income inequalities together with providing affordable housing, public transport, health services and education will accumulate the social capital that underpins it.

During the formulation of the Preliminary Outline Development Plans and RODPs, public engagement activities have been undertaken to collect comments from the public at large. In formulating the revised RODPs, due consideration has been given to the public comments received. This is to respond to the trend that members of the public are more proactive in engaging in social activities nowadays.

In summary, the development of NDAs will inevitably bring about some adverse impacts to the existing local communities and rural landscape. However, it would also result in opportunities for economic development and improvement in regional mobility. Efforts have been made to minimize adverse impacts to the existing social fabrics and physical environments as far as possible. The SA indicates that there would be no insurmountable problems arising from the proposed developments in terms of sustainability.