

1. The meeting was resumed at 9:10 a.m. on 20.10.2014.
2. The following Members and the Secretary were present at the resumed meeting:

Mr Thomas T.M. Chow

Chairman

Mr Stanley Y.F. Wong

Vice-chairman

Professor P.P. Ho

Professor Eddie C.M. Hui

Dr W.K. Yau

Ms Bonnie J.Y. Chan

Professor K.C. Chau

Mr Sunny L.K. Ho

Mr Lincoln L.H. Huang

Ms Janice W.M. Lai

Mr Stephen H.B. Yau

Mr F.C. Chan

Mr Francis T.K. Ip

Mr David Y.T. Lui

Mr Peter K.T. Yuen

Assistant Director of Lands/Regional 3,

Lands Department

Mr Edwin W.K. Chan

Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Strategic Assessment)

Environmental Protection Department

Mr Johnson M.K. Wong

Principal Assistant Secretary (Transport) 3,

Transport and Housing Bureau
Miss Winnie M.W. Wong

Chief Engineer (Works), Home Affairs Department
Mr Frankie W.P. Chou

Director of Planning
Mr K.K. Ling

Presentation and Question Sessions

[Open Meeting]

3. The following representatives of the Planning Department (PlanD), representers and representers' representatives were invited to the meeting at this point:

Ms Maggie M.Y. Chin District Planning Officer/Fanling
Sheung Shui and Yuen Long East
(DPO/FS&YLE), PlanD

Mr Otto K.C. Chan Senior Town Planner/Fanling Sheung
Shui 1, PlanD

Mr Kevin C.P. Ng Senior Town Planner/Fanling, Sheung
Shui 2, PlanD

FLN-R2223, KTN-R1771 - Chan Chi Man

FLN-R2505, KTN-R2053 - Yuen Yuet Hing

Mr Chan Chi Man Representer

FLN-R2069, KTN-R1597 - Yu Hin Pik

Ms Yu Hin Pik Representer

FLN-R2115, KTN-R1665 - Leung Lok Shan

FLN-R2606, KTN-R2157 - Ms Chau

FLN-R2330 and KTN-R1878 - Lam C.L.

Ms Yuen Yuet Hing (東北城規組) Representers' representative

FLN-R2581, KTN-R2131 - Cheung Hoi Keung

Mr Tong Wai Chun, Mayson Representer's representative

FLN-R2489, KTN-R2037 - Lam Chi Fai

Mr Lam Chi Fai Representer

FLN-R2019, KTN-R1569 - Industrial Relationship Institute

FLN-R2022, KTN-R1572 - Ho Yee Yan Ruffi

Ms Ho Yee Yan Ruffi Representer and representer's
representative

4. The Chairman extended a welcome and explained the procedure of the hearing. He said that the meeting would be conducted in accordance with the "Guidance Notes on Attending the Meeting for Consideration of the Representations and Comments in respect of the Draft Kwu Tung North Outline Zoning Plan No. S/KTN/1 and the Draft Fanling North Outline Zoning Plan No. S/FLN/1" (Guidance Notes) which had been provided to all representers/commenters prior to the meeting. In particular, he highlighted the following main points:

- (a) in view of the large number of representations and comments received and more than 3,400 representers/commenters had indicated that they would either attend in person or send an authorised representative to make oral submission, it was necessary to limit the time for each oral submission;
- (b) each representer/commenter would be allotted a 10-minute speaking time. However, to provide flexibility to representers/commenters to suit their needs, there were arrangements to allow cumulative speaking time for authorised representatives, swapping of allotted time with other representers/commenters and requesting an extension of time for making the oral submission;
- (c) the oral submission should be confined to the grounds of representation/comment in the written representations/comments already submitted to the Town Planning Board (the Board) during the exhibition

period of the Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) or the publication period of the representations; and

- (d) to ensure a smooth and efficient conduct of the meeting, the presenter/commenter should not repeat unnecessarily long the same points which had already been presented by others earlier at the same meeting. Presenters/commenters should avoid reading out or repeating statements contained in the written representations/comments already submitted, as the written submissions had already been provided to Members for their consideration.

5. The Chairman said that each presentation, except with time extension allowed, should be within 10 minutes and there was a timer device to alert the presenters and the presenters' representatives 2 minutes before the allotted time was to expire and when the allotted time limit was up.

6. The Chairman said that the proceedings of the hearing would be broadcast on-line, and the video recording of the presentation made by the representative of PlanD on the first day of the Group 4 hearing (i.e. 13.10.2014) had been uploaded to the Board's website for the meeting and would not be repeated at the meeting. He would first invite the presenters/presenters' representatives to make their oral submissions, following the reference number of each presenter who had registered with the Board's Secretariat on the day. After all registered attendees had completed their oral submissions, there would be a question and answer (Q&A) session which Members could direct enquiries to any attendee(s) of the meeting. Lunch break would be from about 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. and there would be one short break each in the morning and afternoon sessions, as needed.

7. The Chairman then invited the presenters and presenters' representative to elaborate on their representations.

FLN-R2223, KTN-R1771 - Chan Chi Man

FLN-R2505, KTN-R2053 – Yuen Yuet Hing

8. The Chairman agreed that FLN-R2223 and KTN-R1771 could speak for a total of

20 minutes as authorization had been obtained from FLN-R2505 and KTN-R2053 for an additional speaking time of 10 minutes.

9. With the aid of Plan FLN-2 of the Paper on the visualizer, Mr Chan Chi Man made the following main points:

- (a) he would share stories of his own and those gathered from people living in areas zoned “Conservation Area” (“CA”) and “Green Belt” (“GB”) on the eastern bank of the Ng Tung River around the meander near Ting Ping Shan Tsuen to supplement qualitatively what was not reflected by the land use plan prepared by PlanD. Those stories of the local people were called 「鄉土的故事」(‘stories of the native soil’), another version of the more well-known 「獅子山下的故事」(‘stories under the Lion Rock’);

[Mr Francis T.K. Ip returned to join the meeting at this point.]

- (b) Ng Tung River was known as Ng Tung Nullah to the locals who did not realize that there was conservation value of the river although the environmental impact assessments conducted by the Government recommended that the ecological value of the river should be adequately compensated. They called the areas zoned “CA” and “GB” near the meander to the south of Wa Shan ‘Freedom Island’ because people were free to carry out leisure and recreational activities, e.g. morning exercise and playing music there. The area had already been used for recreational purpose by local residents spontaneously representing formation of a community naturally and organically by human activities;
- (c) many immigrants from the Mainland in the 1950s and 1960s had chosen to settle in Wa Shan and practise farming. It was against that history that Hong Kong was built up to its present state. When an old lady who owned an orchard in Ma Shi Po was asked what she wanted Hong Kong people to know about her story, she replied that she loved her home dearly. Another farmer in Ma Shi Po told him that his market gardening had raised his whole family in the last thirty years. Farming was a life-style. Land did

not belong to anybody. On the contrary, it belonged to people who dwelled on it;

- (d) people in the area witnessed how land was changed by natural phenomenon, such as flooding and could tell why a certain place was called ‘ox-bow’ lake in the lease. It was those farmers who had sustained Hong Kong and let people learn about nature and the environment through agricultural activities. Farming formed the basis for Hong Kong’s development. People should conserve agriculture and pay due respect to nature. The community farm in Ma Shi Po run by the “AU” family had proven that it was feasible to combine agriculture, living and learning together. Learning was not just limited to schools. The lack of an integrated approach had crippled people’s understanding of agriculture comprehensively;

- (e) the new development areas (NDAs) were not promoting “urban-rural integration” (城鄉共融) but swallowing up the rural areas by urban development. The future development of the area should base on “urban-rural symbiosis” (城鄉共生) as suggested by those residing in Ma Shi Po. In fact, “urban-rural symbiosis” had been practising in the area. Kitchen waste collected from residential developments in Luen Wo Hui to the south of Ma Sik Road was turned into compost for use in farming activities. It could demonstrate to students how kitchen waste could be re-used in the agricultural system to minimize the need for waste treatment facilities. It was estimated that 0.95 acre of land could handle about 300 to 400 kilograms of kitchen waste weekly. A considerable amount of the territory’s kitchen waste could effectively be treated if all “GB” zones were used for agriculture; and

- (f) besides, there were statistics showing that if all fallow agricultural land was to be rehabilitated, Hong Kong’s self-sufficiency ratio in food supply would be 3% to 5%. Unlike cities in the Mainland, there was no agricultural policy in Hong Kong and no self-sufficiency ratio in food supply had been formulated by the Government. It was an irresponsible act for Hong Kong

to rely on the Mainland for food supply. Each city should have its own self-sufficiency ratio and have a certain amount of land set aside for farming to comply with the national agricultural policy.

[Actual speaking time: 20 minutes]

FLN-R2069, KTN-R1597 - Yu Hin Pik

10. Ms Yu Hin Pik made the following main points:

- (a) speaking as a youngster in her twenties, she objected to the proposed development in Northeast New Territories (NENT);
- (b) NENT was not just an area of about 600 to 700 ha, but a remnant area for agricultural production in the countryside. Agricultural development had all along been neglected by the Government. It was not due to the reason that there was no agricultural land in Hong Kong, nor was it because no people wanted to be farmers. It was the Government which intended to play down the importance of farming to give way to development. During her school years, she was taught that agriculture was only for the backward areas. No one had ever told her the importance of agriculture. There was no policy in Hong Kong for a self-sufficiency ratio in food supply and farming in Hong Kong was dwindling. Food found in supermarkets was mainly imported;
- (c) although the Administration had kept on stressing that the proposed NENT development was for the benefit of the future generations, whether the Government could speak on behalf of the young generation was doubtful in the first place. It was noted that the value and acts of the youngsters were being denied and ignored;
- (d) vacant land, including the brownfield sites, land under short-term tenancy, military land and area reserved for Small House development amounting to over 4,000 ha should be used for residential developments but not the

agricultural and “GB” sites. Once agricultural land was used for development, it could not be reverted back for farming purposes. Proposals such as using an existing golf course in the area for development were ignored, and the various efforts made by the community to preserve farmland, to encourage urban dwellers to take part in rural living and to pursue a sustainable way of development might end up in vain;

- (e) people of the next generation needed not only housing but also a sustainable development with urban-rural symbiosis and a countryside that city dwellers could experience; and
- (f) the promise made by the Government that housing in the NDAs was for the younger generation and grass-root people was empty promise as land would be used for housing or shopping malls for the people from the Mainland. A NDA with just high-rise buildings, shopping malls, jewellery shops and pharmacies for the Mainlanders was not what people wanted. The right of the general public and the future generations to enjoying the countryside should not be sacrificed for that kind of development.

[Actual speaking time: 12 minutes]

FLN-R2115, KTN-R1665 - Leung Lok Shan

FLN-R2606, KTN-R2157 - Ms Chau

FLN-R2330, KTN-R1878 - Lam C.L.

11. With the aid of a slide presentation, Ms Yuen Yuet Hing made the following main points:

- (a) she studied agricultural economics and village development. She had worked for over ten years in village development and objected to the NENT development;

Further Capitalization of Land for the Benefits of Big Capitalists

- (b) there was a saying in the Mainland that “the cause and solution of the

agricultural problems were outside the ambit of agriculture'. By the same token, the cause and solution of the NENT development also laid outside the sphere of land use development;

- (c) Hong Kong had entered into the financial capitalism stage. Agriculture was waning and industrial uses were almost non-existent. It was absurd to propose a business and technology park in NENT as Hong Kong lacked a solid base supported by heavy or light industries for Hi-Tech developments. Real estate development and the financial sector characterized by high capital liquidity were the only businesses left behind in Hong Kong for profit-making and fervent capitalization of land resources. The drawback of capitalization of land resources had been demonstrated in the revitalization of industrial buildings in Kwun Tong. With a view to increasing land value, the Government had broken up the original community of small companies for wholesale conversion of industrial buildings for office use, which could only be made possible by big investors or large consortia. Similarly, the same would happen in NENT with the major players being the big developers. The proposed housing projects and infrastructural facilities could only be provided by the Government or the big developers. Development was a process through which resources were capitalized. Hong Kong had experienced a continuous succession of land use from agriculture to entrepot trade in the early days and then from industrial production to financial development in the recent years. The NENT development was seen as an opportunity to capitalize the remaining land in the countryside;

Transfer of Development Cost to the General Public

- (d) there was a cost for development. While the large consortia would enjoy the biggest share of profits of the NENT project through monopolization of development, the cost would be transferred to the displaced villagers who were reluctant to leave their homeland and were compelled to sell their land at a low price. The Government should not adopt the old thinkings in the 1960s and 1970s to tackle the current problems in the 21st Century. In the past, it was a top-down approach for the production industry to replace

agriculture and subsequently the production industry to be replaced by the financial sector. Reversion of land to agricultural use was impossible when it had been turned to other high value production and the change caused to the ecology would also not be reversible. The ecology was forced to pay an extremely high cost for development. Under the current system, farmers and the ecology at the bottom level of the ecological pyramid would continue to bear the cost while the big consortia would keep on monopolizing the profits of development. Although environmental impact assessments were required for development, they were just technical means adopted by government technocrats to justify development and provided no solution to the agricultural problems;

Food Security

- (e) NENT was a large piece of quality agricultural land of high ecological value. As there was no bureau responsible solely for agricultural affairs in Hong Kong, there was no comprehensive agricultural policy and no thorough understanding of the agricultural operation. The Board was not seen as a body which could handle the three farming issues (三農問題), namely, farmers, farming villages and farming production (農民、農村及農業). Agriculture/farming required appropriate soil and environment, and relocation was not just a simple exchange of land. Whether farmers could continue to farm in the new location was subject to a matrix of considerations;

- (f) diminishing of the agricultural sector had given rise to concern on food security. The Mainland had all along been Hong Kong's main food supplier. Many people considered it not necessary for Hong Kong to retain agricultural land for food production in anticipation that the Mainland would continue to be a reliable source of food supply, thinking that agricultural land could better be used for developments that would yield much higher returns. However, due to low-return of agricultural production, agriculture had not been properly protected in the Mainland in recent decades, food security had already become a serious concern in China. Should there be any food crisis in the Mainland, Hong Kong

would inevitably be hard hit first, e.g. by imported inflation as a result of soaring food prices in the Mainland;

- (g) the Board should be more proactive in protecting agriculture from being eliminated by approving the NENT development. The compensation proposal for loss of agricultural land was not enough to sustain agricultural development. It was very difficult, if not impossible, to reinstate agricultural land or “GB” sites once they had been destroyed. Even having to rely on hydroponics, which was quite unsustainable, Singapore strived to maintain a certain ratio of self-sufficiency for food security. Hong Kong as a densely populated city should be more forward looking and conscious in formulating an agricultural policy on food supply. Agriculture also played a very important socio-economic role in stabilizing the society. Finance was subject very much to external influences and global fluctuations of market conditions. In times of financial crisis, agriculture would play a refuge effect to stabilize the community by maintaining basic food supply; and

Lack of Credibility of the Government for Successful Implementation

- (h) the discontent of the community on constitutional matters had already caused tens of thousands of people to take to the street. The proposed NENT development, which would have adverse impacts on the rural environment and was seen as a project benefitting mostly the Mainlanders, had also been met with great resistance due to the contentious nature of the proposal. The community saw that they were coerced to accept a development that would not be beneficial to them and it was envisaged that implementation of the project would not be successful noting that there was no public support. Members were therefore invited to consider the proposed development from a new perspective. Whether the proposed development involving huge capitalization of land resources was sustainable and whether the large-scale bulldozing of homes of the villagers was desirable before making a decision on the proposed development. There would be far-reaching effects on Hong Kong if a wrong decision was made.

[Actual speaking time: 30 minutes]

FLN-R2581, KTN-R2131 - Cheung Hoi Keung

12. With the aid of a video presentation, Mr Tong Wai Chun, Mayson, made the following main points:

- (a) he was an artist and had been involved in research on dancing;
- (b) while playing a video entitled “Habitat Here”, he conveyed the message of “when city planning restricts our body, we anti-colonize the city with our body” through graphic presentation and body movements;
- (c) he considered that people’s daily life and behaviour were influenced by town planning. Artists in Hong Kong had been at work to draw people’s attention to social concerns and help Hong Kong people recover their identity. The 10-minute trailer of “Habitat Here” was just the beginning to reconstruct Hong Kong’s history of how people’s homes and culture were being destroyed by the Government;
- (d) there had been overseas artists demonstrating in their artwork how architecture and town planning, e.g. those regarding the Kai Tak Nullah and Kwun Tong pier, of Hong Kong had been destroyed. Artists, such as Alessandro Carboni and Kanta Kochhar-lindgren, had done a lot of researches with respect to human behaviour. They showed that human behaviour, such as farming, which required years to be built up could be destroyed overnight; and
- (e) Members were invited to consider why agriculture was waning in Hong Kong, and the reason why people started farming on roof-top.

[Actual speaking time: 11 minutes]

[Dr W.K. Yau left the meeting temporarily at this point.]

FLN-R2489, KTN-R2037 - Lam Chi Fai

13. Mr Lam Chi Fai made the following main points:

- (a) he intended to discuss about the NENT development from the legal perspective;
- (b) the Basic Law had provisions that guaranteed that the living standards before reversion of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China would remain unchanged, particularly the rights of the indigenous villagers. People who were practising farming in the New Territories could also be considered as indigenous villagers in the broad sense. To change their lives and to displace them from their farmland, one would run the risk of being challenged by way of judicial review (JR) because the existing living style and habits of those farmers before 1997 were protected by the Basic Law;
- (c) Hong Kong had a land reserve of over 4,000 ha, of which 1,200 ha (about 30%) had been reserved for Small House developments. The reservation of 1,200 ha of land for Small House development would be subject to JR as the Small House right referred only to right of application but not right for approval. It would be subject to legal challenge that whether reservation of some 1,200 ha of land for Small House development was necessary for compliance with the law;

[Ms Bonnie J.Y. Chan returned to join the meeting at this point.]

Tests of JR

Necessity

- (d) the NENT development would be subject to the test of necessity, i.e. whether land was necessary for the development. If affirmative, why not use the some 1,200 ha of land reserved for Small House development. If

reservation of 1,200 ha of land for Small House Development was not necessary and such land could be released for development, then resumption of land for the proposed NENT would become unnecessary;

Proportionality

- (e) even though it might be argued that the 1,200 ha of land could not be released for NENT development, the proposed development would still be subject to the test of proportionality. If the rights of the indigenous inhabitants were to be respected, why not the rights of the farmers. It was discrimination and differential treatment under both the Basic Law as well as the Hong Kong Bill of Rights. It was disproportionate;

Availability of proper alternative

- (f) the third test was proper alternative, i.e. whether there was an alternative for the current policy or action of the public authority to minimize the impacts or cost. The use of the Fanling Golf Course site or any other recreational land for NENT development would definitely cause less harm to the environment and less social impact than expropriating farmland and displacing the farmers; and
- (g) as the proposed NENT development would fail all the three tests above, Members were invited to consider whether it was worthwhile to run the risk of being challenged in Court on the Board's decision.

[Actual speaking time: 10 minutes]

FLN-R2019, KTN-R1569 - Industrial Relationship Institute

FLN-R2022, KTN-R1572 - Ho Yee Yan Ruffi

14. With the aid of a slide presentation, Ms Ho Yee Yan Ruffi made the following main points:

- (a) she was from Cheung Sha Wan and Shum Shui Po district representing a labour organization;

- (b) agricultural land in NENT was good quality farmland which should be retained for agricultural purpose for healthy food supply;
- (c) although people residing in sub-divided units in the urban areas desired to be housed in public housing flats as soon as possible, since most of them were new immigrants from the rural areas of the Mainland, they realized how important the farmland was to the villagers and how they would not be adapted to live in modern high-rise housing blocks. People living in sub-divided units did not want to be re-housed in public rental units which were built on agricultural land where farmers were displaced unwillingly;
- (d) NENT was not the only place for development. There was still vacant land in the urban area, but those sites were used for building hotels. In the past ten years, there had been a 100% increase in the number of new hotel rooms but the increase in residential units for the general public was only 10%. In Sham Shui Po, many of the residential and factory buildings were approved by the Board for hotel development for visitors from the Mainland;

[Dr W.K. Yau returned to join the meeting at this point.]

- (e) NENT was producing fresh vegetable for Hong Kong people. Through that food supply, urban and rural dwellers were linked together. Although organic farm produce was usually more expensive, some people in the urban area still ordered vegetable from the farmers for food safety and better taste. The United Nations had declared 2014 as 'Year of International Family Farming' seeing that small-scale farming was inextricably linked to world food security, preserving traditional food products and safeguarding the world's biodiversity. That kind of family farming was found in Mapopo and Choi Yuen San Tsuen. Kitchen waste collected from the community was turned into compost to reduce the need for landfill. Such kind of waste treatment could be an example for all the 18 districts in Hong Kong to follow. Urban farming in the urban areas

would also reduce the need of transportation and cause less environmental pollution;

- (f) views were collected from the community of Sham Shui Po and Cheung Sha Wan district on the proposed NENT development. There was a view that development did not necessarily mean construction of buildings. The current housing problem was caused by mistakes made in the housing policy, which should be rectified. Land in NENT was the best agricultural land which should be used for agricultural production. She knew that the monetary value of land would be lower if land was used for farming instead of property development. However, the preservation of agricultural land was not just for food security. It was also for diversification of trades/industries to avoid over reliance on finance and tourism;
- (g) a member of the public welcomed fresh food supply in Hong Kong and others were very grateful for the produce they got from Mapopo community farm. There were still land, other than the active and fallow agricultural land in NENT, for development. Agricultural land should be kept for sustainable development. There were examples abroad to revive farming in the countryside. The Government should promote the same in Hong Kong and encourage youngsters to take part in sustainable farming; and
- (h) it was important to continue the traditional agricultural legacy and wisdom of small-scale farms. Unlike capital intensive farming, small farms did not need to use insecticides. Hong Kong people should be more far-sighted and farmland was needed for understanding nature and access to healthy food. It was the responsibility of the more educated and those with power to safeguard urban-rural symbiosis.

[Actual speaking time: 20 minutes]

[The meeting was adjourned for a short break of 10 minutes.]

[Ms Janice W.M. Lai and Mr Frankie W.P. Chou left the meeting temporarily at this point.]

15. As the presentation from the representers and representers' representatives had been completed, the Chairman invited questions from Members.

16. The Vice-chairman raised questions on how the planning for NENT development could help preserve the ecological value and character of Ng Tung River, how the planning work had taken into account the agricultural consideration, whether there was an agricultural policy in Hong Kong, why farmland was decreasing and whether the compensation policy for loss of agricultural land could help preserve the existing farming practices in the NENT area. In response, Ms Maggie M.Y. Chin, DPO/FS&YLE, highlighted the following:

- (a) areas adjoining the mitigation meanders of Ng Tung River in Planning Areas 2 and 7 in FLN NDA had been zoned "CA" to conserve the habitats for rare freshwater fish species and egrets. Some areas within the draft Fu Tei Au and Sha Ling OZP No. S/NE-FTA/13 were zoned "Agriculture" ("AGR") or "GB" within which 'Agricultural Use' was always permitted;
- (b) according to the Town Planning Ordinance, through preparing draft plans for Hong Kong, the Board was to promote the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the community. In doing that, the Board would balance various community needs;
- (c) to assist local agricultural development as well as to promote agricultural productivity and modernization in an environmentally friendly manner, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) provided the necessary infrastructure, technical advice and support, and dispensed the agricultural development fund through the Vegetable Marketing Organization to support various agricultural developments, including organic farming and eco-sustainability. According to AFCD, there were 4,530 ha of agricultural land in the territory, of which 730 ha were active agricultural land and the remaining 3,800 ha were fallow agricultural land with potential for rehabilitation;

- (d) in recognizing the importance of agriculture to Hong Kong, agricultural land had been retained within the KTN and FLN NDAs to allow continuation of farming practices in the areas. In the KTN and FLN OZPs, a total of 95 ha of land, including about 58 ha of land zoned “AGR” and “AGR(1)” and 37 ha of land reserved for the Long Valley Nature Park (LVNP), would allow continuation of current farming activities and facilitate provision of infrastructure. The “AGR” and “AGR(1)” zones were intended primarily to retain and safeguard farmland and fishponds as well as serving as a buffer to provide added protection for LVNP against urban sprawl. The Government would also resume land for LVNP, where wetland farming could be conserved. Besides, agricultural use was always permitted within areas zoned “GB” on the OZPs; and

- (e) in Fu Tei Au, about 12 ha of land had been retained as “AGR” for agricultural purpose. In sum, about half of the land area within the NDAs were designated with land use zones, in which agricultural use was always permitted. Farmers affected by the proposed NENT development could purchase or rent farmland at suitable locations to continue farming activities. To facilitate agricultural resite/rehabilitation for affected farmers, about 103 ha of agricultural land had been surveyed in Kwu Tong South, of which about 53 ha were fallow agricultural land having potential for rehabilitation. The Government would endeavour to assist the affected farmers to rehabilitate agricultural land.

17. In response to the Vice-chairman’s question on whether the self-sufficiency ratio in food supply should be raised in view of the decreasing number of farmers and agricultural land, Ms Yuen Yuet Hing made the following points:

- (a) it was a general impression that farming was not a popular career. In the Mainland, some people, nevertheless, wanted to retain their agricultural land in the rural area as a fall back option for a living when there was economic recession in the cities. During the economic crisis in 2008, the laying off of thousands of workers in the coastal cities of the Mainland had not led to a general riot mainly because farming offered refuge to the

unemployed and provided a safety net in times of economic difficulty;

- (b) however, due to the low production value of agriculture, agriculture was doomed to be replaced by industrial or financial capital should there be no government sponsorship or support. Even the Government of the U.S.A. and Japan had to greatly subsidize agriculture for its continued existence. As such, the Government of Hong Kong had to look at agriculture from a new perspective and be aware of any possible food crisis in the Mainland caused by shortage of land, population increase and pollution of water resources which would in turn affect food supply to Hong Kong;
- (c) the current technical support and rehabilitation program provided by the Government could not be regarded as agricultural policy. They were just piecemeal measures and not sustainable. Even though land was zoned “AGR”, due to the great difference in capital gain from land used for farming and land for residential purpose, land would subsequently fall into the hands of big developers; and
- (d) the Government should not just look at the present value of agriculture but also how it could serve as a buffer for unemployment and contribute to the realization of a harmonious society. Many people nowadays wanted to practise farming as a trendy living style. However, if there continued to be no policy and capital support from the Government, agricultural development in Hong Kong would not survive.

18. To supplement, Ms Ho Yee Yan Ruffi made the following points:

- (a) an article entitled 「用新界(東北) 規劃香港而不是中環」(‘Use the New Territories (North East) to plan Hong Kong, but not Central’) by 袁易天 (Yuen Yik Tin) had already given an account of how agricultural land had been left fallow for better selling value at the right time since the 1980s when people were aware that they could earn much more in the realty business than in agriculture;

- (b) in 2012, Hong Kong was ranked the 'best city' in the world by the Economists because Hong Kong had lush vegetation, many beautiful islands and green parks. The countryside and farmland had revitalized the densely populated Hong Kong;
- (c) according to data of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the starving population of the world was close to one thousand million, one quarter of agricultural land in the world was deteriorating and it was estimated that in 2050, the world's population would be nine thousand million and food production had to increase by 70% to meet the demand. The food crisis was imminent and Hong Kong as an international city had an exemplary duty to take initiative to promote food production;
- (d) although the representative of PlanD said that there was land in NENT having potential for rehabilitation, on-site observation revealed that most of such land had been fenced off and had already been acquired by developers from 1992 to 1997. The use of such land for farming was doubtful; and
- (e) farmers were continuously being forced out of business. Before agriculture could survive, measures had to be taken to diminish developers' hope of hoarding land for profit. Agriculture was a culture which could never be adequately rated in monetary terms. It would be a pity if Hong Kong would continue to pursue purely financial achievement in the sacrifice of agriculture and food supply.

19. Mr Chan Chi Man said that according to his observation as a farmer, more and more young people with high academic qualification had joined the agricultural workforce. He concurred with Ms Yuen that agriculture was important for city security and stability. Through community education and promotion, more youngsters recognized the importance of agriculture. To facilitate agriculture, the Government might consider levying vacancy tax to help discourage hoarding of agricultural land. Without active Government involvement, agriculture would be phased out in time. If the Government considered it important to

develop agriculture, agriculture should be accorded the right priority in rural township planning.

20. In response to the Chairman's question on whether his farm in areas zoned "CA" and "GB" adjoining the meander of Ng Tung River would be affected noting that agricultural use was always permitted there, Mr Chan said that his farm alone might not be affected but what was needed was a comprehensive planning for agriculture in a broader area.

[Mr K.K. Ling returned to join the meeting at this point.]

21. A Member asked how much land was in active agricultural use, how much land was required to meet the long-term farming needs and whether area of concentration of farmland could be zoned "GB" or "AGR" for continual agricultural use. In response, Ms Maggie M.Y. Chin, DPO/FS&YLE, said that agricultural land had been retained within the two concerned OZPs to allow farmers to continue their farming practices. In the draft KTN and FLN OZPs, a total of 95 ha of land including 37 ha of land reserved for LVNP would allow continuation of current farming activities. The northern and southern side of LVNP were zoned "AGR(1)" and "AGR" respectively. In addition, in areas zoned "GB", agricultural use was always permitted. An area of about 12 ha had been reserved in Fu Tei Au for continuation of the existing farming practices. To take forward the NENT development to meet Hong Kong's housing, economic and environmental needs, it was unavoidable that some existing farmland would be affected. It was estimated that about 4 ha of active agricultural land in KTN and about 24 ha in FLN would be affected. Besides KTN and FLN, there were "AGR" zones on the other OZPs. In areas where 'agricultural use' was a Column 2 use, the Board would consider each application on its individual merits for granting approval. According to AFCD, there were 4,530 ha of agricultural land in Hong Kong, in which 730 ha were under active use and the remaining 3,800 were being left fallow. Of the 103 ha of agricultural land surveyed in Kwu Tong South, about 34 ha (including about 5 ha of government land) were fallow agricultural land that had potentials for agricultural resite/rehabilitation.

22. Ms Yuen said that it was beyond the Board's capacity to decide how much land was required for Hong Kong's food supply. The Development Bureau (DEVB) had to decide on the self-sufficiency ratio in food supply and a road map for achieving the objective.

Although it was mentioned that there were 4,530 ha of agricultural land in Hong Kong, what agricultural development needed was an agricultural policy and quantifiable objectives, such as self-sufficiency ratio, so that the Board and PlanD could plan the land uses accordingly. There should be a comprehensive agricultural policy covering not only market gardening, but also poultry and pig rearing. There were new and advanced non-polluting methods of rearing pigs and Hong Kong should import such skills and technology for agricultural development. The 12 ha of land retained at Fu Tei Au were very vulnerable to external influence due to its small size and isolated location. Agriculture needed appropriate infrastructure and planning for its continuation. The Chairman clarified that agricultural policy fell under the purview of the Food and Health Bureau (FHB).

[Professor P.P. Ho left the meeting temporarily at this point.]

23. A Member asked how the NENT development was related to Hong Kong-Mainland integration and urban-rural integration, how the concept of urban-rural integration was different from that of urban-rural symbiosis, whether there were any urban-rural symbiosis proposals, and how agricultural land in Fu Tei Au and in the southern and northern parts of KTN could be rehabilitated. In response, Mr Chan Chi Man said that Hong Kong-Mainland integration could be demonstrated by customers in Shenzhen crossing the boundary to buy agricultural produce from Mapopo community farm. This might be the direction of development for the area. In response to the Chairman's further question on whether Mainlanders' crossing the boundary to buy farm produce would give rise to problems similar to those of their buying of milk powder from Hong Kong, Mr Chan said that he did not consider Hong Kong-Mainland integration necessarily a bad thing. The integration might be seen as an opportunity. To avoid abuse, the Government might impose appropriate custom tax, which on the one hand would increase government income and on the other hand minimize disturbance to the residents due to excessive flow of visitors. With respect to the concept of urban-rural symbiosis, Mr Chan said that it was introduced by two Australian experts, namely Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, in environmental and agricultural studies. They suggested the concept of permaculture, which meant permanent agriculture or permanent culture, in the 1970s for a sustainable system through design of agriculture and other aspects of living. Mr Chan and his friends had adopted the edge effect to interpret the urban-rural symbiosis phenomenon. Traditional Chinese would see rural and urban as two very distinct and segregated places. However, the Belair Monte in Fanling

was an example demonstrating how urban and rural living could co-exist. Ma Sik Road was a physical boundary between Mapopo and Belair Monte. People in Belair Monte would go farming at and bring their kitchen waste to Mapopo. They respected the symbiosis of the urban and rural communities on the two sides of Ma Sik Road and allowed exchange of resources and experience. However, if urban sprawl was allowed, the rural area would keep on shrinking until complete dissolution of the rural community. It was hoped that the urban-rural symbiosis concept could be materialized in the NENT development.

[Mr Stephen H.B. Yau left the meeting temporarily at this point.]

24. Ms Yuen Yuet Hing made the following points:

- (a) if housing supply was a main objective of the NENT development to address the acute housing shortage problem of Hong Kong, housing production should be in the urban area for convenient transportation. The Tin Shui Wai experience was a nightmare to Hong Kong people. The anticipated heavy commuter traffic during the morning and evening peak hours was a deterring factor for people to move into NENT. The low-income groups would not find public housing in NENT attractive and the housing flats would be left in a derelict state;
- (b) as for the proposed private housing in the area, they would not be affordable to the youngsters. The social mobility of the younger generation had continuously been undermined by increasing capitalization of housing units. The high-end housing in NENT would end up in the hands of the rich people in the Mainland who wanted to invest in Hong Kong's property market, resulting in Hong Kong-Mainland integration;
- (c) regarding the potential for rehabilitation of agricultural land, it required appropriate agricultural policy, particularly that on compensation. Agriculture relied very much on soil, sunlight and supporting infrastructure; and

- (d) for relocation of farms, the setting up of a system which was favourable for agricultural production was necessary and it required huge capital investment. Without support or assistance from the Government, the relocated farm would not sustain because the surplus value of agricultural production was very small which would not enable farmers to have sufficient capital to set up a new farming system on their own. As such, the best arrangement was not to relocate farms but leaving them at where they were and provide farmers with various technical supports to help them carry on agricultural activities in their own farms.

25. To supplement Mr Chan's comments on urban-rural symbiosis, Ms Yuen said that agriculture was itself a vulnerable production process and could not compete with realty and finance on equal footing. If those sectors were put together, it would lead to vanishing of the agricultural sector according to economic principles. In the Mainland, there was a policy that agricultural land could not be less than 18 hundred million acres. When agricultural land was required for other uses, a corresponding amount of land should be identified elsewhere for farming purpose to compensate for the loss of agricultural land. If the Government provided no support to the agricultural sector, agriculture would not be able to co-exist with the other higher value productions. Although it was advised by the Chairman that policy making for agricultural matters fell within the purview of the FHB and not DEVB, she was advised by the staff of FHB that they did not concern about land matters. As there was not a single bureau to deal with all agricultural matters, agriculture in Hong Kong had become so helpless and vulnerable. Hong Kong had to make reference to what had been achieved in the Mainland in the last decades for agricultural development.

[Dr W.K. Yau left the meeting temporarily at this point.]

26. In response to the question on whether there were any detailed urban-rural symbiosis proposals, Ms Ho Yee Yan Ruffi said that it was very difficult for the general public to provide such planning proposals. Instead, it should be the government's responsibility. Mapopo community farm was a good demonstration of urban-rural symbiosis, in which reliable food was produced for the city, kitchen waste was collected and turned into compost to ease the tension arising from shortage of landfill space. In future, the Government could consider whether industries related to agriculture and waste treatment

could be promoted to further link up the urban and rural areas.

27. In response to the Member's further questions on the amount of active agricultural land in the two OZPs, their distribution and the major stakeholders in the area, Ms Maggie M.Y. Chin said that areas to the north and south of the Long Valley were areas of comparatively active agricultural land and the major stakeholders were the farmers in the wetland. AFCD and the Conservancy Association were arranging rehabilitation programmes for those farmers. It was estimated that about 7 ha of land in Fu Tei Au had potential of rehabilitation.

28. In respect of Hong Kong-Mainland integration, Ms Yu Hin Pik said that it would be realized by completion of the infrastructural developments in the territory. Those large-scale infrastructural projects, such as the Hong Kong-Macau-Zhuhai Bridge, the third airport runway and the man-made island in Hong Kong water were planned for Hong Kong-Mainland integration and designed not simply for the benefits of Hong Kong people. The adverse impacts arising from the implementation of the individual visit scheme of the Mainlanders had already been experienced by residents in the Northern District. If the proposed NENT development was not handled carefully, the undesirable experience would repeat itself in NENT.

29. Mr K.K. Ling, Director of Planning, said that there were many aspects of Hong Kong-Mainland integration involving various socio-economic interactions amongst Hong Kong, Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta area. Those interactions, including flow of visitors, goods, capital and information, would on the one hand bring about pressure to cross-boundary arrangement and on the other hand create economic opportunities for Hong Kong's retail industry and tourism, and provide employment opportunities to the local people.

[Professor Eddie C.M. Hui left the meeting temporarily at this point.]

30. A Member, observing that a lot of agricultural land in NENT had been fenced off and was severely under-utilized, asked how much agricultural land was under active cultivation, how much had been used for other purposes and how much had been left fallow. In response, Mr Chan Chi Man said that the fenced-off land was hoarded by private

developers pending development or selling opportunities. Should there be agricultural policy restricting the use of agricultural land or policy requiring payment of vacancy tax, the phenomenon would not have appeared. Ms Yuen Yuet Hing said that it would be difficult for agriculture to sustain in view of its low economic return. In the Mainland, agriculture needed to be supported by the tertiary industry, such as by provision of treatment services to kitchen waste as an additional source of income for farmers. Agriculture could have medical, service, educational and environmental functions. To explore and develop such functions of agriculture would supplement the low economic returns of farm produce. The organization of guided tours by Mapopo community farm was an example of how to use the service function of agriculture to increase farmers' income. It was through the development of the sideline functions would the continuation of agriculture's existence be helped, otherwise, agriculture would be phased out and replaced by higher value production.

31. A Member asked if the representers and their representatives had any suggestion on an appropriate self-sufficiency ratio of food supply for Hong Kong so as to keep Hong Kong secured in food supply, the amount of land and labour that were required to achieve the ratio, whether Hong Kong had sufficient resources to support agricultural development, including the provision of technical support and research opportunities taken into account that agriculture was highly subsidized by the Government in some countries, and whether development of NENT was necessary for long-term comprehensive planning for provision of affordable housing for the youngsters considering that there was a lack of housing sites in the urban area and the new towns such as Tuen Mun and Sha Tin had almost been fully developed.

32. In response to the Member's question on the need of land for housing, Ms Yuen Yuet Hing said that as there were vacant land in the urban areas, and the Government should consider developing the land or converting land reserved for GIC facilities or other uses to residential use first because housing development in the urban areas was less costly and faster to implement due to the presence of existing infrastructure. The unaffordable housing price was a structural economic problem arising from the influx of a large amount of investment from foreign countries and the Mainland in the property market, rather than a problem caused by shortage of housing supply.

33. In response to the Member's further question on whether Hong Kong needed

long-term comprehensive planning for housing in NDAs rather than sporadic, piecemeal housing development in the urban areas, Ms Yuen Yuet Hing said that without a population policy, there would be no basis for long-term town planning. Regarding the self-sufficiency ratio in food supply, she said that reference could be made to those in the Mainland and in foreign countries. The self-sufficiency ratio for Nanjing was 30% and Japan had in many years attained a 100% self-sufficiency ratio of rice. The current self-sufficiency ratio of vegetable in Hong Kong was only 1.9%. There should be an agricultural policy to determine the self-sufficiency ratio so that the city would be comparatively safe and stable. It was generally considered that the higher the self-sufficiency ratio the better in terms of a city's ability to defend itself against social and environmental crisis. However, for an increase in the self-sufficiency ratio from 1.9% to, for example, 5% to 7%, there must be corresponding increase in financial and technical support from the Government in the agricultural sector. A more practical approach to determining the self-sufficiency ratio was for PlanD to carry out a study to see how much more food would be produced if all the non-active agricultural land was put back to production.

34. In response to the Member's questions, Ms Ho Yee Yan, Ruffi drew Members' attention to an article entitled 「香港農地一塊都不能少」 ('Not a single piece of agricultural land in Hong Kong could be forgone'). It was stated in the article that the self-sufficiency ratios of food supply for Nanjing, Shanghai and Singapore were 30%, 50% and 5% respectively. The self-sufficiency ratio of vegetable for Hong Kong was 30% in 1985 and 2.3% currently. If all the 4,500 ha of agricultural land were used for active farming, it was estimated that Hong Kong could attain a self-sufficiency ratio of about 45%.

35. As regards the housing issue, Ms Ho said that the sites of the Urban Renewal Authority were all for 'pseudo-luxurious residential development' not affordable by the general public. According to the 2011 census, there were some 2,600,000 residential units but the number of households was only some 2,300,000. From 2004 till the present, 91.6 ha of land had been taken up for construction of hotels but only 88.3 ha of land in the NDAs would be used for housing. The Government should show clearly to the public where the some 4,000 ha of vacant land and the some 2,000 ha of land under short-term tenancy were and whether they were suitable for housing development. It was also noted that the Government had let 47 pieces of land for recreational purposes, such as the Fanling Golf Course, at a nominal rent of a dollar. It was estimated that 170 ha of land could house about

80,000 people. Those recreational land, instead of the some 600 ha of agricultural land, should be used for housing development. Agricultural land should be retained for agricultural production for food security.

36. The Chairman asked Ms Chin to comment on whether subsidized housing sites could be on urban renewal sites, why the Fanling Golf Course site was not considered for development, the status of vacant land and whether land reserved for Small House development could be used for development. In response, Ms Chin highlighted the following:

- (a) the ratio of public and private housing in the NDAs were 60% and 40% respectively, which was in line with the Long Term Housing Strategy. Land acquired from urban renewal or land use review, such as that for the “GB” zone, would follow the said ratio for public and private housing developments to meet the short, medium and long-term housing demand;
- (b) the Government would take into account the characteristics of a site and its surrounding areas before the use of the site was determined. Whether the infrastructural provision of the area could support the proposed development and whether the proposed use was compatible with the surrounding developments were important considerations. Hong Kong needed different types of developments in addition to housing, and a balance should be struck among the various needs for land;
- (c) regarding the future use of the Fanling Golf Course, it was one of the subjects to be examined in the New Territories North Study. Since the study would take time to complete, even if the golf course was subsequently considered suitable for residential development, it would not be a timely solution to the imminent housing problem;
- (d) the demographical trend showed that the population in the territory would increase by 1,400,000 in the next 30 years while the average household size would keep on falling. As the number on the waiting list for public rental housing had reached 125,000, there was a genuine need to provide

housing to meet the shortfall;

- (e) information regarding the vacant land could be viewed at DEVB's website. Some of the vacant land, including areas of road, narrow gaps between developments etc, might not be suitable for development. Nevertheless, suitable vacant site would be considered for development; and
- (f) as for sites reserved for Small House development, their availability was subject to the Small House Policy Review. Besides, some of these sites were in remote area and might not be suitable for large-scale housing development which required a convenient location.

37. As Members did not have any further questions, the Chairman thanked the representers and their representatives and the representatives of PlanD for attending the hearing session. They all left the meeting at this point,

Any Other Business

Request for time slot rearrangement

38. The Chairman reported that a representer who had arrived late in the morning, when realizing that powerpoint presentation was permitted to assist oral submissions, requested a rearrangement of her hearing session to a later day for preparation of the necessary presentation materials. After deliberation, Members agreed that the hearing of the relevant representations could be rearranged to a later day, and that for future requests from representers and their representatives on the rescheduling of the hearing sessions, those could be handled by the Secretariat on the Board's behalf based on individual circumstances.

Means of presentation by representers and their representatives

39. In response to the Chairman's question on whether there should be restrictions on the representers' or their representatives' means of presentation, Mr K.K. Ling said that presentation should be restricted to oral submission because some means, such as music, play and dancing would be abstract. The Vice-chairman said that video, song etc. ancillary to

and in support of the main oral submission might be allowed. A Member said that the use of lyrics to represent views was acceptable. After deliberation, Members agreed that the presentation of representers and their representatives should be restricted to oral submission including singing of songs.

40. The meeting was adjourned for lunch break at 1:25 p.m.