

**Minutes of 1327th Meeting of the
Town Planning Board held on 29.11.2024**

Present

Permanent Secretary for Development
(Planning and Lands)
Ms Doris P.L. Ho

Chairperson

Mr Stephen L.H. Liu

Vice-chairperson

Mr Daniel K.S. Lau

Mr Stanley T.S. Choi

Mr K.W. Leung

Professor Jonathan W.C. Wong

Mr Ricky W.Y. Yu

Professor Roger C.K. Chan

Mr Vincent K.Y. Ho

Mr Ben S.S. Lui

Mr Timothy K.W. Ma

Ms Kelly Y.S. Chan

Mr Daniel K.W. Chung

Mr Ryan M.K. Ip

Mr Rocky L.K. Poon

Mr Derrick S.M. Yip

Chief Traffic Engineer/Hong Kong
Transport Department
Mr Horace W. Hong

Chief Engineer (Works)
Home Affairs Department
Mr Paul Y.K. Au

Assistant Director (Environmental Assessment)
Environmental Protection Department
Mr Gary C.W. Tam

Director of Lands
Mr Maurice K.W. Loo

Director of Planning
Mr Ivan M.K. Chung

Deputy Director of Planning/District
Ms Donna Y.P. Tam

Secretary

Absent with Apologies

Ms Sandy H.Y. Wong

Dr Venus Y.H. Lun

Professor Bernadette W.S. Tsui

Dr C.M. Cheng

Dr Tony C.M. Ip

Professor B.S. Tang

Professor Simon K.L. Wong

Mr Simon Y.S. Wong

In Attendance

Assistant Director of Planning/Board

Ms Caroline T.Y. Tang

Chief Town Planner/Town Planning Board

Ms W.H. Ho

Senior Town Planner/Town Planning Board

Ms Kitty S.T. Lam

1. The meeting was resumed at 9:00 a.m. on 29.11.2024.

Hong Kong District

Agenda Item 1

[Open Meeting]

Confirmation of Minutes of the 1327th Meeting held on 1.11.2024, 4.11.2024 and 5.11.2024

[The item was conducted in Cantonese.]

2. The draft minutes of the 1327th meeting held on 1.11.2024, 4.11.2024 and 5.11.2024 were confirmed without amendment.

Agenda Item 2

[Closed Meeting]

Consideration of Representations in respect of the Draft Pok Fu Lam Outline Zoning Plan No. S/H10/22

(TPB Paper No. 10987)

[The item was conducted in Cantonese.]

Deliberation Session

3. The Secretary reported that Members' declaration of interests had been made in the morning session of the hearing on 1.11.2024 and was recorded in the relevant minutes of meeting. No further declaration of interests had been received from Members since then.
4. The Secretary said that all Members attending the subject deliberation session had participated in all or part of the 3-day hearing sessions, and Members should apprise themselves of the views expressed during the 3-day hearing, particularly the part they did not attend, through reading the minutes circulated to Members before the meeting.
5. The Chairperson said that the hearing sessions for the consideration of the

representations on the draft Pok Fu Lam Outline Zoning Plan No. S/H10/22 (the draft OZP) were held on 1.11.2024, 4.11.2024 and 5.11.2024, and relevant minutes of the meeting were confirmed under Agenda Item 1. The meeting would now proceed to the deliberation of the representations. The Chairperson then invited the Secretary to briefly recapitulate background of the draft OZP, major views/grounds/proposals of the representers in their written and oral submissions, responses from relevant government bureaux/departments (B/Ds) and the Planning Department (PlanD)'s recommendations.

6. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Secretary recapitulated the following main points covered in the hearing meeting:

Background

- (a) amendments to the Pok Fu Lam OZP involved rezoning a site on Pok Fu Lam Road (PFLR) (Item A Site) from “Green Belt” (“GB”), “Residential (Group C)6” (“R(C)6”) and an area shown as ‘Road’ to “Other Specified Uses” annotated “Global Innovation Centre” (“OU(Global Innovation Centre)”) for the proposed Global Innovation Centre (the Centre) of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) (Item A), and rezoning narrow strips of land along Victoria Road and a strip of land to the south of Wah Mei House, Wah Fu Estate, to suitable zonings to reflect the as-built conditions (Items B1, B2 and C);
- (b) according to HKU’s indicative scheme, the Centre, with a total gross floor area (GFA) of about 222,720m², was planned to accommodate about 7,000 employees with a maximum of 1,500 world-class research teams. Research facilities (about 39% of the total GFA) would be complemented by other academic, conference/exhibition and office facilities and scholars’ residences/staff quarters. Phase 1 of the Centre was expected to be completed in 2028/2029;
- (c) since the Government’s announcement in the 2021 Policy Address (PA) to accept in principle HKU’s proposal to reserve a site in Pok Fu Lam for deep technology research facilities, HKU had formulated an indicative scheme supported by technical assessments for the Government’s scrutiny. Relevant

B/Ds had no in-principle objection to the development of the Centre. In January 2024, HKU consulted the Development Planning Committee of the Southern District Council (SDC);

- (d) on 22.3.2024, the draft OZP was gazetted for public inspection. A total of 3,677 valid representations, predominantly opposing Item A, were received. On 3.10.2024, HKU informed the public through a press statement that it had decided to strategically amend the development plan of the Centre to address stakeholders' opinions as much as practicable, and committed to step up engagement with the community. In view of the latest developments, it was considered inappropriate to maintain the "OU(Global Innovation Centre)" zoning or propose other specific zoning before HKU's submission of a revised proposal. Thus, PlanD recommended to rezone the Item A Site to "Undetermined" ("U") in the interim, serving as a stopgap arrangement pending HKU's completion of the review;

Supportive Representations

Major Grounds/Views

- (e) the Centre, being Hong Kong's first research facility for upstream deep technology, was in line with the National 14th Five-Year Plan, Innovation and Technology (I&T) Development Blueprint and the Central Government's direction of 'new quality productive forces' (新質生產力). It would foster I&T development and economic growth, attract talents, and facilitate collaboration among local, Mainland and international institutes and researchers;
- (f) the Centre's strategic location near HKU, Queen Mary Hospital (QMH) and Cyberport leveraged strong research and development infrastructure and synergies. International experiences revealed that upstream research would be benefited by proximity to universities. The San Tin Technopole (STT) and the Loop in the Northern Metropolis (NM), which focused on midstream and downstream research, were considered less strategic and complementary locations for the Centre;

- (g) the planning and design merits of the Centre for the community included terraced design, building separation, pedestrian access between PFLR and Victoria Road, communal open space, etc. The existing watercourses within the Item A Site would also be preserved;

Response from Government B/Ds

- (h) the supportive views were noted;

Adverse Representations of Amendment Item A

Site Selection and Alternative Locations

Major Grounds/Views

- (i) the location and scale of the Centre could not be justified. No information on the site selection criteria was provided;
- (j) alternative locations (e.g. NM including STT and the Loop, the adjacent undeveloped “R(C)6” site, Science Park, Cyberport and HKU’s under-utilised facilities) should be explored for a more efficient, cost-effective and environmentally friendly development;

Responses from Government B/Ds

- (k) the strategic directions of the I&T Blueprint could be realised in various locations by stakeholders. STT, the Loop, Science Park and Cyberport were not intended to substitute other I&T initiatives. Other sites suggested by representers were planned for specific uses, and their technical feasibility had yet to be demonstrated;
- (l) according to HKU, while the Item A Site was considered the most suitable location, it would still consider alternative locations such as STT and the

adjacent “R(C)6” site. Besides, HKU would review the necessity and floorspace requirements of various components of the Centre and explore the potential for shared facilities;

- (m) if HKU inclined to explore other locations, the Government would be prepared to consider the option with HKU;

Land Use Compatibility and Development Intensity

Major Grounds/Views/Proposals

- (n) the Centre was considered incompatible with the green, tranquil, and low-rise character of the Pok Fu Lam neighbourhood. It was too close to the residential area (e.g. Baguio Villa) and was of excessive scale, blocking natural sunlight and adversely affecting the visually impaired students in the Ebenezer School and Home for the Visually Impaired (the Ebenezer). The scale of the Centre should be reduced to preserve the mature woodland at the Item A Site;
- (o) the proposed building height (BH) of 158mPD was not in line with the planning intention to keep developments below the level of PFLR;
- (p) only 39% of the GFA was for research purpose under the current scheme. Non-research facilities such as accommodation and restaurants could be accommodated in other locations. The BH could be lowered by optimising floor space in the lower zone and reducing setback from Victoria Road whilst the development intensity could be reduced by about 60% to accommodate research and supporting facilities only. Besides, the proposed buildings between Woodbury Court and Baguio Villa should be eliminated or relocated;
- (q) major proposals raised in the representations included (i) reverting the Item A Site to “GB” and “R(C)6” zones; (ii) incorporating the requirement of layout plan submission under section 16 of the Town Planning Ordinance (the Ordinance) into the OZP; (iii) stipulating a gradation of BH profile (from 123mD to 188mPD) or BH sub-areas of 130mPD and 137mPD on the OZP; and

(iv) designating a minimum 32m-wide non-building area between the Centre and the Ebenezer;

Responses from Government B/Ds

- (r) the Centre was considered not incompatible with the surrounding educational, institutional, hospital and medium-rise residential uses, with several developments already exceeded the level of PFLR. The proposed BH was generally in line with the existing stepped BH profile descending towards the sea;
- (s) according to HKU, the main research uses should be complemented by supporting facilities (e.g. scholars' residences) to attract talents. Lowering building structures and reducing the setback from Victoria Road would affect pedestrian circulation and create adverse visual impact on Victoria Road. That said, HKU would strategically review and amend the development plan, e.g. making better use of the site, reducing density and bulk, lowering BH, increasing setback from neighbouring buildings, etc.

Traffic

Major Grounds/Views

- (t) the capacity of local roads, such as PFLR, Victoria Road and Sassoon Road, could not support the additional traffic. The development of the Centre would aggravate traffic conditions in Pok Fu Lam area and affect ambulance access to QMH. Local residents would suffer from prolonged road closures and diversions during construction;
- (u) the Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) was flawed as the design year of 2032 could not fully reflect the traffic situation upon completion of the Centre, the redevelopment of Wah Fu Estate and QMH's expansion; the traffic survey conducted during weekdays in 2022 only reflected lower traffic levels during COVID-19 epidemic; and no construction TIA was provided;

- (v) partial lifting of the Pok Fu Lam Moratorium (PFLM) for the Centre, but not for other developments, was considered unreasonable;

Responses from Government B/Ds

- (w) the TIA confirmed that the proposed development would not create adverse traffic impact on the local road network. Except four junctions (J1, J8, J16, and J17) where HKU had proposed junction improvement measures, all other junctions in the TIA would operate satisfactorily in the design year of 2032;
- (x) the traffic survey had taken the existing ambulance traffic into account and additional verification survey was conducted in September 2023 after the epidemic. The Commissioner for Transport had no adverse comments on the TIA and its assumptions. According to HKU, an updated TIA covering the full completion year of the Centre would be undertaken at the detailed design stage and a construction TIA and a traffic review would be conducted prior to the project commissioning;
- (y) there were precedent cases for partial lifting of PFLM. Any lease modification for higher development intensity within area covered by PFLM would be subject to approval by the Executive Council;

Visual Impact and Air Ventilation

Major Grounds/Views

- (z) the Centre would affect the green buffer between Sassoon Road and Baguio Villa, and obstruct public and bus passengers' transient views. The removal of the current air ventilation corridor would adversely affect natural ventilation and local residents' health;
- (aa) the Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) was inadequate in addressing local residents' unobstructed views. More viewpoints (VPs), representing travellers'

views along PFLR, should be incorporated;

Responses from Government B/Ds

- (bb) the VIA and Air Ventilation Assessment (AVA) confirmed that there would be no unacceptable visual and air ventilation impacts. The Chief Town Planner/Urban Design and Landscape of PlanD had no adverse comment on the VIA and AVA;
- (cc) the six VPs identified in the VIA, which covered VPs at PFLR, Victoria Road and transient views, complied with the requirements of the relevant Town Planning Board Guidelines. According to HKU, the VIA would be suitably reviewed in consultation with relevant B/Ds;

Tree Preservation, Landscape and Ecology

Major Grounds/Views

- (dd) the removal of about 2,000 trees would adversely affect residents' well-being. The proposed tree compensation ratio of 1:0.48 was considered too low and HKU should explore a 1:1 compensation ratio by preserving/transplanting trees and off-site planting;
- (ee) the development of the Centre would lead to an irreversible loss of habitat and wildlife, including the endangered yellow-crested cockatoos (*Cacatua sulphurea*) (小葵花鳳頭鸚鵡). The comprehensiveness of the Ecological Impact Assessment (EcoIA) was questionable due to the limited baseline ecological survey period;

Responses from Government B/Ds

- (ff) the 2,250 surveyed trees were predominantly common species, with no registered Old and Valuable Trees. A tree preservation clause would be incorporated into the future land document where appropriate;

- (gg) the EcoIA covered both the wet season in 2022 and the dry season in 2022-2023 and the concerned woodland was classified as having low to moderate ecological value. Besides, a 5m preservation zone offset from existing watercourse edges was proposed. The Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation had no adverse comment in that regard;
- (hh) according to HKU, representers' suggestions on minimising tree felling and increasing tree compensation would be explored. HKU would also continue consulting experts and conducting research in ecological conservation in the upcoming review of the development proposal;

Geotechnical and Public Health Aspects

Major Grounds/Views

- (ii) massive removal of trees and excavation of steep slope would compromise slope stability;
- (jj) construction on steep slope was not cost-effective and would involve a prolonged construction period. It would result in substantial noise and vibrations due to rock blasting, causing disturbances to local residents and students with visual impairment at the Ebenezer;
- (kk) there was risk of leakage and other biohazard from the laboratories, but no risk assessment had been conducted for the proposed chemical and biomedical laboratories, dangerous goods storage, animal storage/testing areas, and nitrogen tank. The health of nearby residents would be threatened;

Responses from Government B/Ds

- (ll) necessary remedial or upgrading slope works would be proposed during the detailed design stage;

- (mm) the Preliminary Environmental Review had assessed environmental impact during construction and operational phases and concluded that no significant environmental impacts were anticipated. Good site practices and noise management measures were proposed, e.g. using quiet powered equipment and scheduling construction activities outside school periods, to minimise disruption. According to HKU, adopting a terraced building design to integrate into the undulating slope profile would incur lower construction costs than flattening the entire slope;
- (nn) according to HKU, the laboratories would comply with relevant legislation, regulations, and international environmental and safety standards. The location of the nitrogen tank would be reviewed in the revised proposal;

Proposed "U" Zone

Major Grounds/Views

- (oo) rezoning the Item A Site as "U" was merely a delay tactic and there would be no proper planning control for the "U" zone;

Responses from Government B/Ds

- (pp) the "U" zone was intended to serve as a stopgap arrangement pending HKU's completion of the review. If the Government accepted HKU's revised proposal, another round of statutory planning procedures would be required to rezone the site to an appropriate zoning;

Public Consultation

Major Grounds/Views

- (qq) HKU failed to conduct meaningful consultation with the local residents. There was no public consultation conducted before arriving at the initial design and the two briefing sessions for local residents were conducted only shortly before

the deadline for submission of representations;

- (rr) rezoning the Item A Site without the need to submit an application to the Town Planning Board (the Board) under section 12A of the Ordinance had bypassed the town planning procedures;

Responses from Government B/Ds

- (ss) according to HKU, it had consulted SDC in January 2024, conducted two briefing sessions in May 2024 and launched a website to disseminate information and gather feedback from the local community;
- (tt) HKU committed to enhancing engagement with the community, including local residents, neighbourhood stakeholders, green groups and SDC, through a comprehensive public engagement exercise so as to improve the developmental proposal for the Government's scrutiny;

Adverse Representations on Amendment Items B1, B2 and C

Major Grounds/Views

- (uu) Items B1 and B2 had expanded the area designated for road usage and reduced the size of the "GB" zone. Efforts should be made to preserve the trees between Wah Fu Estate and the shoreline at the Item C site;

Responses from Government B/Ds

- (vv) Items B1, B2 and C were only to reflect the as-built conditions, i.e. the existing alignment of Victoria Road and land grant boundary of Wah Fu Estate. The rezoning involved no change to the as-built conditions;

Way Forward

- (ww) PlanD recommended amending the draft OZP by rezoning the Item A Site

from “OU(Global Innovation Centre)” to “U” to partially meet some adverse representations. Subject to the Board’s agreement, the proposed amendment would be exhibited for three weeks under section 6C of the Ordinance for further representation. The Board would then consider the further representations, if any, in accordance with the Ordinance before submitting the draft OZP to the Chief Executive in Council for approval; and

- (xx) upon HKU’s completion of the review and engagement with the community on the revised proposal, it would need to submit a revised proposal supported by technical assessments for consideration by relevant B/Ds. Should the revised proposal be accepted by the Government, PlanD would propose appropriate zoning amendment(s) to the OZP. Subject to the Board’s agreement, the rezoning would then undergo another round of statutory planning procedures in accordance with the Ordinance, during which members of the public would have the opportunity to submit written representations and attend hearings to express their views to the Board directly.

7. The Chairperson thanked the Secretary for her presentation. The Chairperson said that the Board should decide whether to accept PlanD’s recommendation to rezone the Item A Site from “OU(Global Innovation Centre)” to “U”, taking into consideration the representers’ views. Members’ views would be conveyed to HKU to facilitate the latter in reviewing the development proposal and consulting stakeholders. The Chairperson then invited Members’ views on the consideration of the representations.

General

8. Members generally supported the development of the Centre and noted that most representers supported HKU’s proposed development to consolidate Hong Kong’s leading position in deep technology research. The representers’ objections/concerns were mainly related to site selection and hence land use compatibility, development intensity, impacts on traffic, visual, landscape, ecological, environmental, geotechnical, public health and safety aspects, as well as the lack of proper consultation. Members also noted that HKU had committed in its press statement in early October 2024 and at the hearing to consult relevant stakeholders in strategically reviewing and amending its development plan to address their

opinions as much as practicable. HKU would also explore the possibility of identifying alternative sites for the development of the Centre.

Site Selection and Alternative Locations

9. Majority of Members shared similar views regarding site selection for the Centre, and their views and suggestions were as follows:

- (a) not all representers who raised objections were against the Item A Site or the development of the Centre in Pok Fu Lam. The crux of the matter was whether the development proposal was acceptable. HKU should provide strong justifications for choosing the preferred site and conduct adequate technical assessments on the revised development proposal to address local concerns;
- (b) there was a genuine need for Hong Kong to develop deep technology research facilities, and it was logical for HKU to develop the Centre near its Main Campus in Pok Fu Lam, where the research atmosphere was well-established with the presence of QMH and Cyberport, creating clustering and synergy effects and facilitating collaboration across the research and academic sectors. In particular, the advancement of financial technology often leveraged its proximity to universities;
- (c) HKU should consider alternative locations in Pok Fu Lam and other areas such as NM. If HKU concluded after review that the Centre should be in Pok Fu Lam, it should provide more justifications for why other locations were not ideal for the development of the Centre. Besides, further clarification from HKU was required regarding the idea of establishing a self-contained facility while also promoting a synergy effect with the surrounding developments;
- (d) HKU should consider whether the Item A Site or other sites in Pok Fu Lam, including but not limited to the adjoining undeveloped “R(C)6” site, were more suitable for achieving HKU’s objective while minimising impacts on

neighbouring communities. From the planning perspective, it was desirable for HKU to integrate the Item A Site with the adjoining “R(C)6” site to offer greater design flexibility, accommodate setbacks for road improvement/widening to improve traffic flow, and allow room for future expansion. This could reduce the site area and building bulk at the Item A Site, particularly when viewed from Victoria Road, and provide opportunity for more compensatory planting. While developing the Centre at the “R(C)6” site with a BH restriction of 137mPD might be less controversial, it was still crucial to strictly control the plot ratio and BH to avoid adverse impacts on the surrounding area. Besides, HKU should fully address the noise impact of the Centre, in particular during the construction stage, on students with visual impairment at Ebenezer School; and

- (e) HKU might consider redeveloping the existing Stanley Ho Sports Ground at Sandy Bay by adopting the ‘Single Site, Multiple Use’ approach to optimise land utilisation, or redeveloping its sites currently occupied by other facilities/staff quarters to facilitate the development of the Centre or provide scope for its future expansion. Alternatively, HKU might consider exchanging land with the Ebenezer, allowing the Item A Site, “R(C)6” site and the Ebenezer site to form a more cohesive area for the development of the Centre.

10. Two Members had reservation on developing the Centre at the “R(C)6” site and opined that the site should be retained for disposal through land sale for generating revenue to the Government. Similar to the Item A Site, development at the “R(C)6” site might also have adverse visual impact on the surrounding area. In addition, relaxation of the current BH restriction (137mPD) of the “R(C)6” site to meet the design and space requirements of the Centre might attract public objections.

11. A Member opined that relocating the Centre to another location in Pok Fu Lam would only shift the problem and local objections would likely arise. Another Member expressed the view that the planned NM University Town might not be suitable for the development of the Centre as land parcels thereat would be allocated to several universities with different nature and mode of operation, and could not create a synergy effect and a collaborative

atmosphere required by the Centre. Two Members considered that since the Centre would primarily focus on upstream research, development in NM and the Centre were not mutually exclusive. They could perform complementary functions and roles.

Floorspace Requirements

12. A few Members had the following observations and views on floorspace requirements:

- (a) there was a lack of details from HKU to support the need for about 222,720m² GFA for the Centre. Noting that less than 40% of the GFA was reserved for research purpose, HKU should provide detailed information to justify the need for other facilities and explore opportunities to scale down the development intensity and bulk of the Centre to minimise adverse impacts on the surrounding environment;
- (b) HKU should critically review the necessity and floorspace requirements for various components of the Centre, including accommodation and conference facilities. Consideration should also be given to optimising the utilisation of the HKU's existing premises/facilities to meet such needs. Noting the availability of vacant residential premises managed by HKU in Pok Fu Lam, the need for the accommodation component in the Centre should be justified; and
- (c) if HKU decided to provide some essential components in the Centre after the review, the floorspace should meet the requirements for such components with room for expansion. As the types of laboratories in the Centre were an area of public concern about safety, careful consideration should be given to the location and risk management of those facilities.

Traffic and Transport

13. Noting the existing traffic issues in Pok Fu Lam, majority of Members agreed that HKU should spend more efforts to address the representers' concerns, and their major views

and suggestions were as follows:

- (a) HKU should address the traffic impacts of the Centre comprehensively with a view to minimising impacts on the neighbouring community and residential developments during both construction and operation phases. The traffic impact during the construction phase could be substantial due to the challenges associated with site formation on slope and the extended construction timeline for the three-phased development. HKU might consider advancing the construction TIA and some of the traffic studies so that it could provide more information on the findings and mitigation measures to SDC and local residents in the next round of public engagement to address local concerns at an early stage;
- (b) PFLM was in place due to traffic concerns. Currently, there were problems of traffic congestion on PFLR and Victoria Road. Under the current indicative scheme, two vehicular accesses were located on Victoria Road and there was no internal vehicular connection between PFLR and Victoria Road to allow traffic diversion between the two roads under emergency situations. The Centre would generate additional traffic burden on Victoria Road, which was a two-lane single carriageway without much capacity for further improvement. Vehicular accesses on PFLR and Victoria Road and possible connection between the two roads should be carefully considered in the revised scheme with a view to minimising adverse traffic impact on the surrounding area;
- (c) regarding the TIA in support of the revised development proposal, HKU might adopt the worst case scenario with more detailed information in the assessment to identify potential problems and propose mitigation measures to address traffic impact in a wider context. The TIA should take into account all known major planned and committed developments in the surroundings, address the traffic demand for daily commuting trips during peak hours, and propose traffic measures to cater for special events at the conference/exhibition facilities (about 40,000m²); and

- (d) the Centre would generate additional burden on existing public transport facilities and exacerbate traffic problems of the local road network. To cater for anticipated increase in demand for transport services for researchers, staff, visitors and students in the Centre and the medical campus of HKU, HKU might make reference to the arrangement of Cyberport and Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks by providing shuttle bus services during peak hours to mitigate traffic impact. On-site bus parking spaces were required for such arrangement. Besides, in the section 12A application to facilitate residential development at the Ebenezer site, the Transport Department requested site boundary setback to facilitate the conversion of the existing bus stop on PFLR to a bus lay-by and footpath widening. Similar arrangement might be considered in the revised scheme for the Centre.

14. Regarding the construction traffic, a Member pointed out that according to observations from the redevelopment of Wah Fu Estate, traffic along PFLR was adversely affected due to temporary blockage of one lane leading to the construction site. Construction traffic generated by the Centre would likely create adverse impacts on the local road network, particularly on Victoria Road. Another Member said that construction time and trip generation, as estimated by a representer (R3320), would be affected by various factors, including the number of temporary ingress/egress points and frequency of construction vehicles trips. A Member remarked that construction wastes and traffic might be reduced with the adoption of Modular Integrated Construction method.

Design Aspect and Visual Impact

15. Regarding the design of the Centre, some Members expressed the following views for HKU's consideration when reviewing its proposal:

- (a) HKU should enhance the design including reducing building density and bulk, lowering BH and providing building gaps from neighbouring buildings. The revised development proposal should incorporate additional planning and design merits and facilities that could benefit the local community. The community gains could be in various forms, e.g. increasing the provision of communal open space and conducting research in collaboration with the

Ebenezer for mutual gains;

- (b) given the elongated configuration and steep terrain of the Item A Site, HKU should take into account the topographical context to protect the natural environment and minimise adverse visual and air ventilation impacts in the revised proposal. The revised design should take into consideration public views from PFLR towards the sea as indicated by a representer (R260); and
- (c) as there would be substantial building bulk when viewed from Victoria Road, considerations should be given to reducing the building bulk along the Victoria Road frontage to avoid adverse visual impacts on the surrounding developments. Besides, the revised scheme should minimise the adverse impacts on the Ebenezer.

16. Noting that there were many developments/redevelopments in the Southern District in recent years, a Member considered that the overall BH profile for Pok Fu Lam could be reviewed when opportunity arose.

Noise Impact

17. Two Members expressed that the Noise Impact Assessment prepared by HKU's consultants might have underestimated the potential noise impacts on the Ebenezer, in particular, during the construction phase. Since students with visual impairment at Ebenezer School were more sensitive to noise disturbance, consideration should be given to adopting a different set of assessment standards for this specific case. Besides, HKU should engage more proactively with the Ebenezer at the early design stage to better understand their needs and address their concerns.

Tree Preservation and Ecology

18. Members generally agreed that HKU should minimise tree felling and disturbance to the natural habitats, enhance tree compensation and provide more green spaces. The proposed tree compensation ratio of 1:0.48 was relatively low as compared to the 1:1 ratio generally adopted in development proposals previously considered by the Board. Noting that about 2,000 trees would be felled, a Member opined that the revised proposal should strike a

balance between environmental protection and development. Noting that the trees at the Item A Site were common species, two Members considered the proposed tree felling not unacceptable.

19. Regarding the ecological impacts of the Centre, a Member said that according to the EcoIA, the ecological value of the woodland habitat at the Item A Site was relatively low. Another Member considered that HKU should address the impact of the proposed development on yellow-crested cockatoos (*Cacatua sulphurea*) (小葵花鳳頭鸚鵡).

Geotechnical and Public Health Concerns

20. Regarding the concerns of some representers about the risk of landslides, a Member said that natural slopes were generally less stable than man-made slopes. Upon development, man-made slopes would be stabilised and the risk of landslides would be substantially reduced. Past records indicated that most landslides in Hong Kong occurred on natural slopes.

21. A Member said that local residents' concerns about the potential hazards associated with the chemical and biomedical research laboratories, animal storage and nitrogen tank in the Centre were understandable as these might pose risks to the surrounding developments. HKU should provide more information on precautionary measures to minimise the risks and address local residents' concerns.

Time and Cost of Development

22. A Member said that HKU's submission could not accurately reflect the construction impacts. Referring to a section plan shown in the PowerPoint presentation, the proposed development would likely require substantial slope stabilisation works and construction of retaining structures. HKU's development programme with completion of Phase 1 by 2028/2029 was questionable. The prolonged construction period would generate long-term impacts on the surrounding area. The proposed development would also incur high construction costs given the constraints of an elongated site with steep terrain. Another Member remarked that in the absence of details from HKU, it was uncertain whether site formation works would be carried out in phases. HKU should inform SDC and local residents about details of the proposed development including the timeline and mitigation measures for environmental impacts

generated by the project.

23. A Member pointed out that the development timeline estimated by a representer (R3320) was not optimised as some tasks in the development programme could be carried out simultaneously in practice. The same Member cited examples of large-scale projects such as the Third Runway and the West Kowloon Station, which involved more complicated and large-scale construction works than the Centre, including land reclamation and settlement, land excavation, site formation, foundation and construction works. Despite those complexities, both projects were completed in about 7 to 8 years. Given that most HKU's campuses/developments were on sloping sites, HKU should have accumulated sufficient experience in construction involving slopes.

24. A Member was concerned about the financial viability of the proposed development and queried whether the project was cost-effective. Another Member remarked that financial viability was not a planning consideration of the Board.

Interim "U" Zoning

25. Members generally supported the proposed amendment of the Item A Site from "OU(Global Innovation Centre)" to "U" and expressed the following views:

- (a) the interim "U" zoning was appropriate to allow time for HKU to review the development proposal of the Centre, conduct relevant technical assessments, further consult the local community and submit the revised proposal for consideration by the Government and the Board;
- (b) there was a lack of developable land for HKU in Pok Fu Lam. The development of the Centre could facilitate the provision of deep technology research facilities in Hong Kong. The proposal of some representers to revert the Item A Site to "GB" and "R(C)6" was not a viable solution as such an arrangement would only shift the problem elsewhere. The "U" zoning would provide an opportunity for HKU to strategically review the development proposal including exploring the feasibility of integrating the Item A Site with the adjoining "R(C)6" site and retaining some areas within the original "GB"

site. Given the pressing need to develop the Centre and upon further consultation with the local community, HKU should submit a revised development proposal supported by technical assessments to demonstrate the feasibility of the proposal as soon as practicable; and

- (c) noting that some representers were of the view that there was no planning control under the “U” zoning, local residents should be clearly informed that there would be adequate planning control under the “U” zoning, as any development in the “U” zone would require planning permission from the Board.

Public Engagement

26. Members generally considered that there was room for improvement in HKU’s public consultation and community engagement efforts. Since many representers had expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of communication and respect by HKU during the previous project planning process, HKU should engage the local community more proactively in revising the development proposal. The consultation exercise should commence at an early stage and adopt a two-way and bottom-up approach to address various concerns raised by stakeholders, including local residents, the Ebenezer and green groups. The focus should be on the design of the Centre and mitigation measures to alleviate potential adverse impacts, e.g. provision of more communal open space and addressing construction traffic. HKU should also engage in continuous discussions with the Ebenezer regarding the design constraints and approaches to minimise noise impacts on its students with visual impairment.

27. A Member suggested that HKU should set up focus groups to collect views of stakeholders, including local residents and the Ebenezer, and address their concerns more effectively. The previous consultation approach adopted by HKU’s project team was considered ineffective.

Procedural Matters

28. Noting a representer (R3657)’s view that rezoning the Item A Site for developing the Centre without the need to submit section 12A application had bypassed the town planning

procedures, a Member enquired about the rationale for such an arrangement. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr Ivan M.K. Chung, the Director of Planning, explained that it was the 2021 PA's initiative to reserve a site in Pok Fu Lam for the construction of deep technology research facilities. The Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau affirmed that the Centre was in line with the policy initiative to enhance Hong Kong's status as an international I&T hub while consolidating its strength in upstream basic research. Subsequently, HKU submitted a development proposal supported by technical assessments to the Government for consideration. HKU had addressed technical issues in consultation with relevant government departments and consulted SDC prior to the submission of the proposed amendments to the OZP for the consideration of the Metro Planning Committee (MPC) of the Board in March this year. The same approach had been adopted for other projects with policy support and technical assessments conducted to the satisfaction of relevant government departments, such as residential and/or commercial developments by MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) in association with railway station/facilities, and development of social welfare facilities by non-governmental organisations, in which proposed amendments to the relevant OZPs were submitted to the PCs/TPB for consideration without going through the s.12A procedures. In the subject case, the proposed amendments to the OZP agreed by MPC were exhibited under section 5 of the Ordinance for 2 months for public inspection, and any person might make representation to the Board during that period. Apart from written representations, the representers were invited to present their views directly before the Board. Such an approach had not undermined public consultation for the subject zoning amendment.

29. In response to a Member's question on whether the Board was obliged to follow the policy direction of the 2021 PA and accept HKU's proposal, the Chairperson said that even though the proposed development originated from the 2021 PA, the Executive Council's subsequent agreement-in-principle for the land grant to HKU was conditional upon the University being able to secure the Board's approval for the rezoning proposal amongst other things. Hence the Board with its statutory functions was fully entitled to consider the rezoning proposal independently and professionally. While PlanD would adopt a facilitating role in taking forward the rezoning proposal if such was given policy support and found technically feasible by government bureaux and departments, it would be incumbent upon HKU as the project proponent to resolve all technical issues to the satisfaction of relevant government departments. The Board, as a statutory body, would exercise its independent judgement to consider the amendments to the OZP and the representations in the interest of society as a whole.

30. The Vice-chairperson said that the Board had previously agreed to rezone “GB” sites for residential use to increase housing supply if the amendments were in the public interest, e.g. public housing developments in Ma On Shan. The same consideration was applicable to the development of the Centre to promote deep technology research in Hong Kong, which was in the public interest, albeit the area was subject to PFLM. From the planning perspective, the need for developing the Centre was more important than financial gains from the land sale of the “R(C)6” site. HKU should consider alternative locations in Pok Fu Lam such as integrating with the adjoining “R(C)6” site to allow flexibility in design. Other options such as land adjoining HKU’s main campus in Lung Fu Shan and areas near the Stanley Ho Sports Ground at Sandy Bay could also be considered. Regarding the impacts of the Centre on the Ebenezer, it might be desirable for the Ebenezer to relocate to another location. Upon relocation, land currently occupied by Ebenezer could be released to HKU for the Centre’s future expansion.

31. The Vice-chairperson further said that PFLR was a road with two lanes in each direction and Victoria Road was a two-lane single carriageway. The influx of construction vehicles might overload the road network and exacerbate traffic congestion in the area. Based on recent experience from the redevelopment of Wah Fu Estate, one lane on PFLR near the redevelopment site was frequently blocked by construction traffic and only one lane was available for vehicles travelling from Pok Fu Lam towards Tin Wan direction. There was a need for the provision of bus lay-by(s) to support the future development. Consideration might be given to widening Victoria Road to three lanes by decking over the slope. Noting that there were planned developments in Pok Fu Lam such as redevelopment of Wah Fu Estate and Cyberport expansion, the Government should review the need to improve public transport facilities, e.g. extension of MTR South Island Line (West) (SIL(W)). From the design perspective, the building bulk of the development as well as the frontage along Victoria Road should be reduced. To enhance communication with the local community, HKU should engage its neighbours including the Ebenezer and the local residents at the early planning stage.

[Mr Ricky W.Y. Yu joined and Ms Kelly Y.S. Chan, Messrs Timothy K.W. Ma and Daniel K.S. Lau left the meeting during the discussion.]

Conclusion

32. The Chairperson concluded that all Members supported rezoning the Item A Site from “OU(Global Innovation Centre)” to “U”. Members generally considered that other grounds and proposals of the representations had been addressed by the departmental responses as detailed in TPB Paper No. 10987 as well as the presentation and responses made by the government representatives in the hearing.

33. The Chairperson summarised the major views of Members as follows:

- (a) the “U” zoning was appropriate as an interim measure to allow time for HKU to review and adjust the development proposal for the Centre and consult the local community in response to the views expressed by the representers;
- (b) as part of the review, HKU should consider alternative sites in Pok Fu Lam and other areas. If HKU concluded after review that the Centre should be in Pok Fu Lam, HKU should consider whether the Item A Site or other sites, including but not limited to the adjoining “R(C)6” site, was more suitable for achieving HKU’s objective;
- (c) HKU should critically review the necessity and floorspace requirements for various components of the Centre, including accommodation and conference facilities, and consider optimising the utilisation of HKU’s existing premises/facilities to meet such needs;
- (d) HKU should enhance the design of the Centre, including reducing density and bulk, lowering building height and increasing setback from neighbouring buildings;
- (e) it was necessary for HKU to minimise traffic impacts on the neighbouring community and residential developments during the construction and operation phases. HKU should consider advancing the construction TIA with proposed mitigation measures to address local residents’ concerns;

- (f) the environmental impacts, tree felling, disturbance to natural habitats and safety concerns associated with the laboratories should be properly addressed by HKU. Tree compensation should be enhanced and more green spaces should be provided;
- (g) additional planning and design merits and facilities that might benefit the local community should be incorporated into the revised development proposal;
- (h) there was a need for HKU to conduct bottom-up and two-way communication with the stakeholders including local residents, the Ebenezer and green groups at the next round of public engagement; and
- (i) given the pressing need to develop the Centre, HKU should prepare a timeline together with the revised proposal for consideration by relevant B/Ds.

34. The Chairperson further informed Members on the following:

- (a) noting the existing traffic congestion problem in Pok Fu Lam, the MTRCL had commissioned a study to explore the technical feasibility of the SIL(W). When the railway extension was in place, traffic conditions in Pok Fu Lam could be improved with the availability of a mass transit system;
- (b) regarding the relocation of the Ebenezer, there was a plan to relocate the existing facilities to Tung Chung. The general building plans of the new facility were approved by the Building Authority. Discussion with the Lands Department for the land exchange was underway; and
- (c) given the constraints of the Item A Site, if HKU decided after review that the Centre should remain in Pok Fu Lam, it should explore the possibility of integrating the Item A Site with the adjoining “R(C)6” site. The latter was zoned for residential use for about 40 years and had not yet been developed due to PFLM. The Government would be prepared to consider the option with HKU. There were planning and design merits to integrating the Item A

Site with the “R(C)6” site. The main frontage of the development would be on PFLR and traffic impact on Victoria Road, in particular traffic generated by construction vehicles, could be reduced. There would be greater flexibility in design to provide community gains, e.g. connection between PFLR and Victoria Road. The topography of the “R(C)6” site was less steep than the Item A Site and would likely be subject to fewer technical constraints. HKU should critically review the necessity and floorspace requirements for various components of the Centre, including accommodation and conference facilities, with a view to minimising the scale of development.

35. As Members’ views and suggestions related to alternative locations, development scale and bulk, design, traffic concerns, tree felling and ecological impact, additional planning and design merits, community gains and public engagement, etc. would be recorded in the minutes of meeting, HKU should take them into account in amending its proposal and taking forward the Centre project.

Amendment Items B1, B2 and C

36. Members also supported Items B1 and B2 to reflect the existing alignment of Victoria Road; and Item C to reflect the land grant boundary of Wah Fu Estate.

37. After deliberation, the Town Planning Board (the Board) noted the supportive views of **R1 to R54, R55 (part), R56 to R143, R145 to R205, R206 (part) and R207 to R250**, and views of **R3662 to R3677**.

38. The Board decided to partially meet **R55 (part), R206 (part), R251 to R3189, R3191 to R3372, R3374 to R3523, R3525 to R3615 and R3634 to R3659**, and to propose amendments to the draft OZP by rezoning the Item A Site from “OU(Global Innovation Centre)” to “U”. The proposed amendments to the draft OZP, Explanatory Statement and Notes as set out in Annexes VIII, IX and X of TPB Paper No. 10987 respectively would be exhibited for public inspection under section 6C(2) of the Town Planning Ordinance (the Ordinance).

39. The Board decided not to uphold **R3190, R3373, R3524, R3616 to R3633, R3660 and R3661**, and considered that the draft OZP should not be amended to meet the

representations for the following reasons:

“Item A

- (a) Item A is to take forward the initiative of the 2021 Policy Address to develop the proposed Global Innovation Centre (the Centre) for deep technology research in Pok Fu Lam to consolidate Hong Kong's leading position in basic research. Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau (ITIB) affirms that the Centre aligns with the policy goals to enhance Hong Kong's status as an international innovation and technology (I&T) hub while consolidating its strength in upstream basic research. ITIB also takes the view that the Centre is a distinct initiative pursued by the University of Hong Kong (HKU) concerning mainly basic research in the upstream and related teaching/academic facilities near its existing campus, while government-initiated initiatives such as San Tin Technopole in the Northern Metropolis have different foci and functions in the I&T ecosystem and that the latter is not meant to supersede or substitute the former;
- (b) in planning terms, the proposed use at the Item A site is not incompatible with the surrounding educational, institutional, hospital and residential uses;
- (c) taking into account the HKU's recent announcement that it would take some time to strategically review and amend the development plan of the Centre, including reducing the density of the proposed development and bulk of the building(s), increasing the setback area from neighbouring buildings, designating more green spaces, etc. to address stakeholders' opinions as much as practicable, and its indication that the project team will endeavour to step up engagement with the community through various channels so as to improve the development proposal and provide timely project updates in the upcoming process, the Item A Site is proposed to be rezoned to “Undetermined” as an interim land use zoning to allow the HKU to review its plan; and

Items B1, B2 and C

- (d) Items B1, B2 and C are to reflect the as-built conditions, and the rezoning of the respective strips of land to “Green Belt”, area shown as ‘Road’ and “Residential (Group B)” is considered appropriate.”

40. The Chairperson suggested and Members agreed that a press release to inform the public of the Board’s decision and major considerations and suggestions made by the Members would be issued after the meeting.

Agenda Item 3

[Open Meeting] [The item was conducted in Cantonese.]

Any Other Business

41. There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 12:30 p.m.