

**Minutes of 844th Meeting of the
Town Planning Board held on 7 October 2005**

Present

Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands
(Planning & Lands)
Mrs. Rita Lau

Chairperson

Hon. Patrick S.S. Lau

Vice-Chairman

Dr. Rebecca L.H. Chiu

Mrs. Angelina P.L. Lee

Dr. Peter K.K. Wong

Mr. Michael K.C. Lai

Professor K.C. Ho

Mr. Alex C.W. Lui

Mr. S.L. Ng

Mr. C.K. Wong

Ms. Carmen K.M. Chan

Mr. Erwin A. Hardy

Professor Nora F.Y. Tam

Mr. Tony W.C. Tse

Mr. David W.M. Chan

Mr. Nelson W.Y. Chan

Mr. Leslie H.C. Chen

Dr. Lily Chiang

Professor David Dudgeon

Mr. Tony C.N. Kan

Mr. Edmund K.H. Leung

Professor N.K. Leung

Professor Bernard V.W.F. Lim

Dr. C.N. Ng

Mr. Daniel B.M. To

Mr. Stanley Y.F. Wong

Mr. Alfred Donald Yap

Ms. Sylvia S.F. Yau

Principal Assistant Secretary (Transport)
Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
Ms. Ava Chiu

Assistant Director (2), Home Affairs Department
Ms. Margaret Hsia

Deputy Director of Environmental Protection
Dr. Michael Chiu

Director of Lands
Mr. Patrick L.C. Lau

Director of Planning
Mr. Bosco C.K. Fung

Deputy Director of Planning/District
Miss Ophelia Y.S. Wong

Secretary

Absent with Apologies

Dr. Alex S.K. Chan

Mr. Francis Y.T. Lui

Mr. Keith G. McKinnell

Dr. Greg C.Y. Wong

Professor Peter R. Hills

In Attendance

Assistant Director of Planning/Board
Mr. P.Y. Tam

Chief Town Planner/Town Planning Board
Ms. Brenda K.Y. Au (a.m.)
Mr. C.T. Ling (p.m.)

Senior Town Planner/Town Planning Board
Mr. Tom C.K. Yip (a.m.)
Ms. Teresa L.Y. Chu (p.m.)

1. The Chairperson extended a welcome to all Members.

Agenda Item 2

Matters Arising

2. The minutes of sub-item (i) under this item were recorded under confidential cover.

[Open Meeting]

[Mrs. Angelina P.L. Lee and Dr. C.N. Ng arrived to join the meeting at this point.]

Agenda Item 1

Confirmation of Minutes of the 843rd Meeting held on 16.9.2005

3. The minutes of the 843rd meeting held on 16.9.2005 were confirmed without amendment.

Agenda Item 2

Matters Arising

- (ii) Resignation of Dr. Pamela R. Rogers

4. The Secretary reported that a letter was received from Dr. Pamela R. Rogers on 3.10.2005 tendering her resignation from the Board with immediate effect. The Chairperson proposed and Members gave a vote of thanks to Dr. Rogers for her past service and invaluable contribution to the Board.

- (iii) Town Planning Appeal Decision Received
Town Planning Appeal No. 23 of 2003
Temporary Warehouse for Storage of Stainless Steel Sheets and Coils
for a Period of 3 Years in “Other Specified Uses” annotated
“Comprehensive Development to include Wetland Restoration Area” Zone,
Lots 3719P1A(Part) and 3719P3(Part) in DD 104, Tai Sang Wai, Yuen Long
(Application No. A/YL-NSW/121)
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5. The Secretary reported that the decision of the Town Planning Appeal Board (TPAB) in respect of the captioned appeal was received. The appeal was allowed by TPAB on 22.9.2005.

6. The appeal was received by TPAB on 25.11.2003 against the decision of the Board to reject on review an application (No. A/YL-NSW/121) for temporary warehouse for storage of stainless steel sheets and coils for a period of 3 years at a site zoned “Other Specified Uses” annotated “Comprehensive Development to include Wetland Restoration Area” (“OU(CDWRA)”) on the approved Nam Sang Wai Outline Zoning Plan No. S/YL-NSW/4.

7. In considering the appeal, TPAB had taken into account the following:

- (a) the warehouse was not in line with the planning intention of the “OU(CDWRA)” zone. However, the planning intention per se did not mean that the temporary use must be rejected;
- (b) under Town Planning Board Guidelines No. 12B for “Application for Developments within Deep Bay Area”, temporary use was exempted from the requirement for submission of ecological impact assessment;
- (c) planning permission was sought for a warehouse with storage under cover of a structure on the site. The adverse ecological, environmental and visual impacts of the subject warehouse was much less than other forms of open storage;
- (d) the planning history of the site should not be disregarded. Permissions were given in the past. The appellant had a good record in complying with

the approval conditions; and

- (e) many open storage and port back-up uses in the surrounding areas were “existing uses” that the Government could do little to stop. It was unrealistic to expect there would be any plan for comprehensive development in a short time given the different land ownership of the area. To reject the application would serve little purpose in achieving the planning intention.

8. A copy of the Summary of Appeal and the TPAB’s decision were tabled at the meeting for Members’ reference.

(iv) Town Planning Appeal Statistics

9. The Secretary reported that as at 7.10.2005, 22 cases were yet to be heard by TPAB. Details of the appeal statistics were as follows:

Allowed	:	13
Dismissed	:	81
Abandoned/Withdrawn/Invalid	:	111
Yet to be Heard	:	22
Decision Outstanding	:	2
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Total		229

[Hon. Patrick S.S. Lau arrived to join the meeting at this point.]

Agenda Item 3

Proposed Development of a Government Helipad at the
Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre
(TPB Paper No. 7421)

[Open Meeting (whole agenda item). The meeting was conducted in both English and Cantonese.]

10. The following representatives from Government departments were invited to the

meeting at this point:

Ms. Manda Chan	Principal Assistant Secretary(A), Security Bureau
Ms. Jenny Chan	Principal Assistant Secretary (Economic Development), Economic Development and Labour Bureau
Captain West Wu	Senior Pilot, Government Flying Services (GFS)
Miss Alison Wong	Senior Operations Officer (Statistics), Civil Aviation Department
Ms. Christine Tse	District Planning Officer/Hong Kong, Planning Department

Presentation Session

11. Ms. Manda Chan and Ms. Jenny Chan covered the following aspects in their presentations as detailed in the papers:

- (a) the background and need for a Government permanent helipad to provide GFS's services;
- (b) the justifications for selecting the site at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) for the development of a permanent Government helipad;
- (c) the location, design and layout of the proposed helipad;
- (d) the estimated demand for commercial domestic helicopter services and the justifications for accommodating such services at the proposed helipad at HKCEC; and
- (e) the views of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panels, the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee and the relevant District Councils (DCs) on the suitable location for the helipad.

Discussion Session

12. Major questions and comments raised by Members were as follows:

Demand for commercial helicopter services

- (a) whether the Government had any comprehensive plan to meet the long-term demand for commercial domestic helicopter services which was 4 times of that for GFS's services;

[Mr. Leslie H.C. Chen and Dr. Lily Chiang arrived to join the meeting at this point.]

- (b) clarification was sought on the discrepancy between the Government's estimate that the proposed helipad could support around 20,000 commercial flights per year, and the estimate of the Hong Kong Regional Helicopter Working Group indicating just 9,000 flights per year;

Site selection

- (c) whether it was fully justified to place the helipad at a prime waterfront location because of the performance constraint of single-engine helicopters. The use of double-engine helicopters could be stipulated as a requirement so that non-waterfront sites could be considered. A query was raised on whether there was any alternative site in Central;
- (d) the Government should provide information on the sites previously considered in the site selection process to facilitate comparison with the proposed site;
- (e) for cases which involved use of helicopters to send patients to hospitals, it would be in the patients' interest better if they could be sent directly to the hospitals than having to drop them off at the proposed helipad for transfer to hospitals as some hospitals were equipped with helipads and there might be delay due to traffic congestion on the roads. In planning the provision of helipads for hospitals in future, every care should be taken to ensure that hospital helipads could be put to proper and effective use and that no

subsequent development in the vicinity should be allowed to obstruct or jeopardize their safe use;

Operation hours

- (f) the proposed helipad should allow for 24-hour operation to meet the needs of commercial customers, e.g. transfer flights to airport;

Environmental and transport impacts

- (g) given the total number of helicopter flights by GFS and commercial operations per year and per day would be around 25,000 and 70 respectively, careful consideration should be given to the environmental implications of the proposed helipad, particularly the noise impact on tourists visiting the adjacent Golden Bauhinia Square. As transient visitors did not fall within the category of sensitive receivers under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance, the noise impact on them might be inadvertently neglected;
- (h) as most of the commercial travellers would travel to the helipad by private cars, the proposed provision of 4 car parking spaces at the helipad appeared to be insufficient to meet the demand. The traffic impact of the proposed helipad on the surrounding areas should also be assessed;

Impacts on adjacent piers

- (i) whether the proposed helipad would adversely affect the operation of the existing piers near HKCEC;

Permanence of the helipad

- (j) as the proposed helipad might be relocated in future, whether it was proper to regard it as a permanent facility; and

Presentation

- (k) plans and photos showing the area surrounding the proposed helipad and the 3-dimensional photomontages of the proposed helipad should be provided to facilitate consideration by Members.

13. In response, Ms. Manda Chan, Ms. Jenny Chan, Captain West Wu, Miss Alison Wong and Ms. Christine Tse made the following main points:

Demand for commercial helicopter services

- (a) the current proposal was made in response to the LegCo Panels' motion urging the Government to, inter alia, allow the helipad at HKCEC to accommodate both commercial and Government uses. Taking into account the GFS's requirements, the number of landing/taking off pads available and the constraint on landing in bad weather, the Government estimated that the helipad could have spare capacity for 20,000 commercial domestic helicopter flights per year, which could meet the demand up to 2020. The figure was estimated based on past operational experience for the previous helipad at Central, where GFS used to share facility with two private companies;

Site selection

- (b) due to performance limitation of single-engine helicopters which were used in commercial domestic flights, it would be preferable to locate the helipad on the waterfront to ensure clearance of obstacles for safety reason;
- (c) the Chairperson said that as single-engine helicopters were currently used in commercial domestic services, it was unreasonable to disallow them to use the helipad. The procurement of double-engine helicopters in the longer term would be a business decision of the commercial operators. A balance had to be struck between safety concerns and the Government's intention to facilitate business;
- (d) the Government had conducted thorough site search for a permanent helipad. It was not desirable to provide a helipad along the waterfront of Central and

Wan Chai due to land use incompatibility and the planning intention of providing a world class promenade along the waterfront. The creation of an offshore island to the west of HKCEC would involve reclamation in the harbour. Rooftop structures were unsuitable for a number of reasons: it would not allow direct and effective transfer of patients from helicopters to ambulances; surrounding high-rise buildings might affect the safety of helicopters; landing and taking off in bad weather and transportation of heavy equipment was not possible; the helicopter operation might generate noise impact on adjacent residential developments; the installation of the concerned buildings might not be able to meet the security requirement of the Police, and the uses of the building might also be affected by the Police's operation. Other sites considered, e.g. Sai Ying Pun and Shun Tak Centre, were also relatively far away from the Police Headquarters;

- (e) taking into account the above constraints, the proposed site at HKCEC was considered as the only suitable site. The site was at a strategic location not far away from the hospitals on Hong Kong Island. It was also close to the Police Headquarters, enabling GFS to provide prompt flying support to police operation. The waterfront location could provide obstacle-free surface for landing and taking off of helicopters under different wind directions. As the site was quite far away from residential developments, the environmental impacts were not expected to be significant;

- (f) currently only three hospitals, namely Tuen Mun Hospital, Prince of Wales Hospital and Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital, had helipads. Due to environmental constraints and the presence of high-rise buildings nearby, direct flights to Tuen Mun Hospital would only be provided in emergency cases. The helipad at Prince of Wales Hospital was subject to more severe constraints due to the high-rise buildings in the Siu Lek Yuen area and was therefore not in use. The helipad at Eastern Hospital was about 200-300m away from residential developments and the hospital was situated on hillside. It was only put to use about 2 years ago after making some improvements, and was only used in emergency cases. Landing was not possible in bad weather;

[Mr. Alex C.W. Lui arrived to join the meeting at this point.]

- (g) the Chairperson remarked that the need to make provision for direct helicopter services should be considered in the planning of future hospitals;

Operation hours

- (h) the Government would conduct detailed technical assessments before deciding the appropriate operation hours of the proposed helipad, having regard to the operational needs of commercial flights and the possible noise impact on the adjacent areas;

Environmental and transport impacts

- (i) the Chairperson said that the proposed site was zoned “Other Specified Uses” annotated “Helipad” on the draft Wan Chai North Outline Zoning Plan No. S/H25/1. The possible environmental and traffic impacts of helipad use at the site should have been duly considered prior to designation of such zoning;
- (j) the Government would carry out detailed technical feasibility study to assess the possible environmental impacts of the proposed helipad on the adjacent areas and would propose mitigation measures to minimize the impacts through appropriate design of the helipad and operational procedures;

Impacts on adjacent piers

- (k) the existing pier at the proposed site served only sightseeing tours of the harbour and was on a short term tenancy which could be terminated by the Government upon one month’s notice. The existing Wan Chai Pier near the proposed helipad was proposed to be relocated northwards should there be any future reclamation pending the review on Wan Chai Development Phase II but its current operation would not be affected by the proposed helipad;

Permanence of the helipad

- (l) the subject site was needed to re-provision the existing temporary helipad in Wan Chai. The proposed helipad was intended for permanent use. However, if the site was required for other uses in future, an alternative site for the helipad would have to be identified; and

Presentation

- (m) Members' suggestions were noted and the way of presentation would be improved in future presentations to the Board; and

[Mr. Daniel B.M. To left the meeting temporarily at this point.]

14. In summing up the discussion, the Chairperson said that Members had given useful comments and advice for further consideration by the concerned bureaux and departments. Thorough economic and technical assessments should be carried out by the Government in taking forward the proposal.

15. The Chairperson thanked the Government representatives for attending the meeting. The Government representatives left the meeting at this point.

[Mr. Daniel B.M. To returned to join the meeting at this point.]