

Detailed Justifications for

Temporary Place of Recreation, Sports or Culture (Hobby Farm) and Associated Filling of Land for a Period of 3 Years on Lots 1468, 1472, 1474, 1475, 1478, 1479, 1486, 1599 and adjoining Government Land, Shek Tong Tsuen, Yuen Long

The Application Site and Zoning

1. The Application Site (the Site) is located at the central portion of Shek Tong Tsuen, Yuen Long. It falls within an area zoned "Agriculture" ("AGR") on the Tai Tong Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) (**Plan 1**). According to the covering Notes of the OZP, temporary use or development of any land or building not exceeding a period of three years requires planning permission from the Town Planning Board (the Board). Moreover, planning permission is also required for filling of land within "AGR" zone. The Site is currently vacant, except parking of vehicles at the southern portion.

The Proposal

2. The applicant seeks planning permission to use the Site for proposed temporary 'place of recreation, sports or culture (hobby farm) and associated filling of land for a period of 3 years. The major development parameters of the current application are as follows:

Site Area	About 3,097m ² (including 149m ² Government land ¹)
Total Floor Area	About 420.3m ²
Site Coverage	About 12.4%
No. and Height of Structures (Plan 2)	11 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 1 converted container for ancillary office and reception (3m high, 1 storey)- 1 temporary structure for agricultural education room and multi-function room (6m high, 2 storeys)- 1 temporary structure for plant nursery (3m high, 1 storey)- 2 converted containers for ancillary storage including farm tools, farming materials, seed storage and farm products (3m high, 1 storey)- 1 shelter for compost area (3.5m high, 1 storey)- 1 temporary structure for green house (4.5m high, 1 storey)- 2 temporary structures for fungus sheds (3m high, 1 storey)- 1 temporary structure for toilet and changing room (2.5m high, 1 storey)- 1 temporary structure for portable toilet (2.5m high, 1 storey)
No. of Parking Space	3 for private car (5m x 2.5m) (1 for staff and 2 for visitors)
Loading/unloading Bay	1 for van-type LGV (5m x 2.5m)
Operation Hours	10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, including Sundays and public holidays

¹ The inclusion of Government land is for vehicle manoeuvring and pedestrian passage. It would not be fenced off or prohibited to outsiders.

The applicant also proposes to regularize the land filling works² carried out at the Site for site formation of structures and to meet the operational need of the hobby farm, such as parking and vehicle manoeuvring. The hard paved area under application³ involved about 990m² (about 32% of Site) of filling of asphalt of not more than 0.2m in depth (from about 18.4mPD at the southern portion to 19.5mPD at the northern portion). For the proposed temporary structures other than converted containers, asphalt would be removed and replaced by concrete with the same thickness.

Types of Agricultural Products

(a) The proposed development is a hobby farm and the types/species to be cultivated would be subject to participants' preference. Nevertheless, the hobby farm would recommend suitable species and provide guidance/advice for the visitors. For example, on the wet agricultural land at the central and southern portions, flood tolerated crops such as watercress, water spinach and lotus roots are recommended to be cultivated. The rearing of fancy carp in the existing stream and Misgurnus (𩺰) in the lotus roots field may foster a farming system akin to Aquaponics (魚菜共生) and year round harvest is possible.

(b) Fungi is also recommended to be grown as it is a product which can be described as “benefits all things and does not compete”. It is not demanding on water and soil quality and its scraps are good organic fertilizers. It is a sustainable crop which fulfills the 3R principles of “Reduce, Reuse and Recycle”.

(c) Flowers and penzai are recommended to be planted at the northern portion. At the central portion, fruit plants like pineapples, papayas, mangoes, lychees, *Prunus salicina* may be cultivated.

Traffic

(d) The vehicular access to the Site is via a local track leading from Yau Shin Street (**Plan 1**). There will be three parking spaces for private car (one for staff and two for visitors) and one loading/unloading bay for van-type light goods vehicle, all measured 5m x 2.5m (**Plan 2**). The estimated traffic generation/attraction rate is at **Appendix 1**. No medium or heavy goods vehicles will be allowed to be parked or enter the Site.

Drainage

(e) There are existing field drains within the Site to discharge the overland flow and provide irrigation water for cultivation. The field drain system includes twin 900mm diameter concrete drainage pipes and open channels of min. 0.5m wide with connection to the open channel outside the Site in Lot 1609 (**Plans 2 and 3c**).

² Parts of the Site are the subject of three enforcement cases. Two cases are related to filling of land (E/YL-TT/740 & 742) and Reinstatement Notices (RNs) have been issued. Application for review of the RNs has been submitted to DEVB, which is being processed. Another enforcement case is related to parking of vehicles (E/YL-TT/741) and Enforcement Notice (EN) has been issued. Steps would be taken to comply with the EN upon its expiry on 10.3.2025.

³ Part of the local track leading to the Site were in existence before the imposition of land filling restriction on the OZP in April 2005. Hence, it is not included in the application for land filling.

(f) There has been no record of flooding at the Site. The applicant will submit a drainage proposal, with recommended drainage improvement measures, to mitigate the potential drainage impact generated by the proposed development after planning approval has been granted by the Board. The applicant will proceed to implement the proposed drainage facilities at the Site once the drainage proposal is accepted by DSD.

Operation Mode

(g) The proposed development aims to promote hobby organic farming among the applicant's relatives and friends. On weekends and public holidays it will also be opened to the public on payment of an entrance fee and advance booking. The hobby farm is non-profit making and farm products will be shared with the participants for free after harvesting.

(h) The proposed development is operated from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, including Sundays and public holidays. It is estimated to attract a maximum of 10 visitors per day. 2 nos. of staff will work at the Site. Office and reception will be provided at structure B2 to support the daily operation of the hobby farm.

(i) Farm areas will be subdivided into smaller portions for visitors to practice organic farming. Basic farming knowledge is taught at structure B1 proposed for 'agriculture education room' where visitors would be briefed about the importance of seed saving and the harm of GM food, pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Visitors will then be directed to the designated farm areas for hobby farming activities.

Justifications

3. The justifications are summarized as follows:

(a) Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in recent years, the demand for local recreational organic/hobby farming have increased and the proposed use can help meet the huge demand for such activities and promote sustainable organic farming in Hong Kong. It is also in line with the government policy on agriculture by encouraging members of the public to participate in agriculture and greening.

(b) Large portion of the Site would be used for farming purpose (about 2,062m² or 66.6% of Site) and the rest for ancillary use and vehicular/pedestrian access (Plan 2). The farming activity is similar to the always permitted agricultural use. The proposed development on a temporary basis would not jeopardize the long-term planning intention of the "AGR" zone.

(c) The proposed development is generally not incompatible with the surrounding uses, including village houses, cultivated/fallow agricultural land and temporary structures.

(d) The Site is within walking distance from Long Shin Estate (about 10 min.). Advanced booking is required for the visit and so traffic flow could be managed in an efficient manner. Traffic generated by the proposed development is not significant, as revealed in Appendix 1.

Besides, sufficient manoeuvring space will be provided within the Site and no queuing and reverse movement of vehicles onto/from public roads is allowed. Hence, no adverse traffic impact is envisaged.

(e) The proposed use is clean in nature. No advertisement boards with neon light devices would be installed. No public announcement system or any form of audio amplification system will be used at the Site. No recreational facilities such as karaoke room, game room, mahjong room and barbecue area will be provided. No night-time operation or workshop activities would take place during the planning approval period.

(f) ~~The applicant will follow the 'Code of Practice on Handling Environmental Aspects of Temporary Uses and Open Storage Sites' issued by EPD to minimize possible environmental impacts and nuisance to the surrounding area.~~

(g) Sewage discharge from the Site would be directed to a proposed septic tank near the proposed toilet at Lot 1472, which will be designed and constructed with reference to the Practice Note for Professional Person (PROPECC). The portable toilet at the southern portion would be cleaned by contractor at regular intervals. Besides, no herbicide, pesticide and chemical fertilizers will be applied in the farming areas. There will be insignificant environmental, drainage and sewage impacts arising from the development.

(h) The proposed development would not involve felling of trees and two existing trees (Elephant's Ear) within the Site would be retained. Besides, flowers/penzai areas would be provided at the northern portion and lotus would be grown at the southern portion to enhance the landscape setting (**Plan 2**). Significant adverse landscape impact arising from the proposed development is not envisaged.

(i) To avoid any possible environmental nuisance generated by the development, the applicant would agree to the imposition of approval conditions restricting the operation hours and workshop activities. Any non-compliance with the approval conditions would be subject to revocation of the planning permission. Besides, the applicant would follow the EPD's Code of Practice.

(j) Fire services installation (FSI) and detailed drainage proposals would be submitted and implemented should the application be approved by the Board. The applicant will also apply to DLO/YL, LandsD for a Short Term Waiver for the structures and a STT for inclusion of Government land.

Filling of Land

(k) The application is to regularize the existing hard paved area and no new area of filling is proposed. Hence, it will not cause adverse drainage and environmental impacts on the adjacent areas. The hard paved area can provide a clean environment for visitors and avoid soil erosion. The paved area would also stabilize the structures, provide manoeuvring and parking spaces for vehicles and facilitate drainage works. The proposed structures are for the

use of farmers and visitors and ancillary facilities such as office, reception, agricultural education room, multi-function room, storage and toilet. The area for structures and paved area is kept to a minimum for operational need. The paving will be removed upon expiry of the planning approval and the Site will be reinstated to a condition suitable for agricultural use.

(1) Two planning applications involving land filling in the vicinity of the Site within the same “AGR” zone were approved by RNTPC. Application no. A/YL-TT/579 for religious institution (temple) was approved on 17.2.2023, while application no. A/YL-TT/670 for temporary animal boarding establishment was approved on 6.12.2024. Approval of the current application is in line with the Board’s above decisions and would not create an undesirable precedent.

4. To conclude, the proposed development is compatible with adjoining land uses, and no traffic, environmental, drainage, visual and landscape impacts are envisaged. In view that it can promote sustainable organic farming in Hong Kong and is in line with the Government policy on agriculture, favourable consideration may be given to the application.

Estimated Traffic Generation

1. The vehicular access to the Site is via a local track leading from Yau Shin Street. The ingress/egress point is about 9m wide. As the Site is within 10-minute walk from Long Shin Estate and the proposed hobby farm is mainly to serve villagers in the locality, most of the customers would arrive on foot and traffic generated by the proposed development is not significant.
2. The proposed parking spaces and loading/unloading bay at the Site would only be opened to visitors with prior appointment.
3. There will be three parking spaces for private cars (1 for staff and 2 for visitors) and one loading/unloading bay for van-type light goods vehicle, all measured 5m x 2.5m. As the volume of farm products and the size of farming materials will be small, they shall be able to be transported by a van-type LGV. The estimated traffic generation/attraction rate is shown as follows:

Type of Vehicle	Average Traffic Generation Rate (pcu/hr)	Average Traffic Attraction Rate (pcu/hr)	Traffic Generation Rate at Peak Hours (pcu/hr)	Traffic Attraction Rate at Peak Hours (pcu/hr)
Private car	0.3	0.3	0	0
Van-type Light Goods Vehicle	0.15	0.15	0	0
Total	0.45	0.45	0	0

Note:

- a) The operation hours of the proposed development are revised to 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, including Sundays and public holidays;
 - b) The pcu of private car and van-type light goods vehicle are taken as 1 and 1.5 respectively; and
 - c) Morning peak is defined as 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. whereas afternoon peak is defined as 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
4. In association with the proposed use, adequate space for manoeuvring would be provided within the Site such that no queuing up of vehicles would be occurred outside the Site.