

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Paper No. 11/03

Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy

Purpose

This paper provides an overview of the Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy Study (HK2030 Study) and reports on current progress, with particular focus on the community engagement process and how sustainable development principles are taken into account.

HK2030 Study

2. The HK2030 Study is a comprehensive review of Hong Kong's Territorial Development Strategy which is a spatial, physical development plan setting out how much, what type, where and when development land and supporting infrastructure should be provided in the next 30 years.

Study Approach and Progress

3. The HK2030 Study has adopted a vision-based approach aiming to translate the vision of building Hong Kong as Asia's World City into a physical development framework.

4. Its 30-year planning horizon allows the articulation of broad directions for the long term (30 years), while also providing a basis for district-level or sectoral (e.g., transport) planning in the next 10 to 20 years.

5. The study is divided into four stages: (1) agenda setting; (2) identification of key issues; (3) developing scenarios and options; (4) formulating a planning strategy and response plans. Extensive public consultation is conducted at the end of each stage of work.

6. Having commenced in late 2000, the HK2030 Study has now progressed to Stage 3. With the technical work of this stage almost complete, public consultation is scheduled to start later this year.

A Planning Strategy for Sustainable Development

7. The HK2030 Study has taken sustainable development as its overarching goal. Sustainable development demands the balancing of economic, social, environmental as well as resource needs and involves engaging the community in the development process. Based on this overarching goal, planning objectives and evaluation criteria covering

economic, social and environmental aspects have been formulated after extensive consultation with the community.

8. Hong Kong's future development is essentially driven by four key forces, namely the increasing (albeit at a slower rate) population, economic restructuring, aspirations for a better living environment and increasing socio-economic interaction with the Mainland. Proposals to address these development needs, in the form of different "Development Options", are currently being formulated, closely guided by the sustainability objectives. The Development Options will then be subject to evaluation criteria. The ultimate aim is to derive a Development Option that would maximise social-economic benefits and minimize adverse environmental impact.

9. A 30-year planning horizon represents a long period of time. Circumstances will change such that planning proposals made today will inevitably have to be revised and adjusted. Consequently, we cannot emphasise more the dynamic nature of the planning process. The importance of the HK2030 Study lies not only in the formulation of a planning strategy that is accepted by the community, but also in the process of engaging the community so as to allow us to gauge aspirations, build consensus on key development issues and concerns, facilitate the sharing of diverse viewpoints, and agree on broad directions for change and integrated solutions.

Engaging the Community

10. As planning essentially involves making choices, engaging the community is of particular importance in the whole planning process. For effective engagement, it is essential that a clear purpose is defined for each stage of consultation:

Stage 1 – Defining the Community's Planning Objectives

- (a) The first round of public consultation was aimed at sparking interest amongst stakeholders. It allowed for the general brainstorming of ideas and the airing of aspirations, highlighting areas that needed priority attention.

Stage 2 – Gauging Public Concerns

- (b) Under the Stage 2 public consultation, ideas collected under Stage 1 were consolidated into key issues for more in-depth discussion, pointing towards the formulation of development scenarios and options. For example, the need to forge closer links with the Mainland and to plan Hong Kong in a wider regional context has been

recurrently raised as a prime concern by the public. How this should be done and the related considerations were the subject of more focused discussion. Coping with the constantly evolving economy and the resultant land needs is another planning issue. There is also a clear public desire for a better quality of life and a more pleasant living environment.

Stage 3 – Presenting Different Planning Choices

- (c) Stage 3 of the Study focuses on drawing up alternative options for future development, including the identification of new development areas, the provision of major infrastructure support and the designation of areas for conservation. Under the next round of public consultation, we will provide a broad evaluation of the various Development Options, including technical analyses covering environmental, economic and financial, transport, social and land use impacts, to facilitate informed public debate with a view to building consensus on a preferred development pattern.

Stage 4 – Engendering Wide Ownership

- (d) Stage 4 of the Study will involve the selection of a preferred Development Option, a more detailed assessment of this option as well as formulation of alternative “What If” Scenarios and corresponding Response Plans. This final round of public consultation would seek to explain clearly the rationale behind the selection process in order to secure wide ownership of the Development Strategy.

Community Engagement Issues

11. Many of the problems faced by the HK2030 Study in conducting public consultation are no different from those encountered in many other planning studies and policy proposals. Five broad issues are highlighted below.

Issue 1 - Different Target Audience

12. Many members of the public are not be familiar with the town planning process, especially the purpose and meaning of strategic planning. On the other hand, those who are more informed may demand more details to enable a more critical examination of the planning process and proposals.

Some people may have very specific interests and would only focus on certain issues.

13. As the HK2030 Study affects almost everyone, we have tried to cast our net wide. We first decided to use a simple name for the study so that people can remember it more easily. Different consultation materials have been prepared for different types of reader - simple digests for general distribution, supplemented by technical papers posted on the website for those who wish to go into detail.

14. A variety of events have been designed for different target audience, for example, briefings for stakeholder groups (including statutory bodies and Government committees), forums and roadshows (with audio-visual and panel displays) for the public, press conferences and one-on-one interviews.

15. For young people, programmes have been even more diverse and not confined to the consultation periods. They include design and planning competitions for schools, game booths at fun fairs, briefings for teachers and a leadership training course on town planning in Hong Kong (organised jointly with the HK Federation of Youth Groups). The “chatroom” on the website which allows frequent exchange of views is also geared towards the younger generation. Apart from listening to young people’s concerns and aspirations, the programmes also focus on raising awareness on issues that are likely to affect their future.

Issue 2 - Diverse and Sometimes Conflicting Interests

16. At the early part of each consultation exercise, a public forum is held to allow people with different background and interests, which allows participants to appreciate that in planning for the future of Hong Kong there are diverse and conflicting views on many issues. The holding of a large forum also draws public attention and arouses general media interest.

17. Following the public forum, a series of focused group discussions on specific issues are held to give people with more specific interests a chance to engage in a more thorough debate and to express explicit ideas and views.

18. During the whole process, the Planning Department has tried to maintain a neutral stance, positioning itself as a facilitator and provider of technical support.

Issue 3 – The Community Wants to be Heard

19. In any exchange of ideas and information, the strongest resentment comes from the feeling of not being heard. People who have

provided comments would expect that their requests and suggestions to be fully reflected and duly considered.

20. In the HK2030 Study, a consultation report detailing comments received and the Government's responses is issued after each round of consultation and a forum is also held, inviting all who have given comments to discuss the consultation report.

21. As there are many issues involved in a strategic plan, and interests are diverse, it is difficult to reach consensus on every aspect of the plan. We will explain how the public's comments have been taken on board and if not, why. Clarification with people with dissenting views on how different interests have been balanced is a difficult but important step towards obtaining wide ownership of the Development Strategy.

Issue 4 – Call for an Open Planning Process

22. There has been criticism that planning processes are not transparent enough. It has also been said that public consultation is only conducted after decisions have been made.

23. Under the HK2030 Study, there is a public consultation exercise following each stage of the study to show that the study process is transparent and that the public can be involved actively in every step of the Study.

24. The appointment of external advisers (such as academics, professionals, business people, economists, environmentalists and sociologists) to the Study's Working Group has been a new experience. Apart from conveying the message that this is an open and transparent process, it helps to give added dimensions to discussion of relevant issues. External advisers have also been invited to speak at the Study's public forums, showing the wider community that the Study encompasses a wide range of views, and not just the Government's ideas.

Issue 5 - Need for Continuity

25. Many studies have been one-off exercises, with interest subsiding soon after the consultation process has been completed. There has sometimes been a lack of adequate channels to keep the community informed of follow-up action.

26. In order to provide a channel for the Government to disseminate regular information and for the public to contribute views and comments, a dedicated website has been set up for the HK2030 Study where announcements are made and working papers are posted for public viewing. To maintain the momentum, year-round school outreach programmes are organised and a

permanent exhibition relating to the HK2030 Study is provided by the Planning Department's touring van.

Conclusion

27. Formulating a planning strategy for sustainable development is an important first step, but, as is widely recognised, sustainable development is a journey, not a destination. The Development Strategy that will emerge from the HK2030 Study will need to be closely monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. In order to maintain, if not enhance, community involvement we will need to sustain the community engagement process, and the Planning Department is committed to doing this. The HK2030 Study will help to set the scene, but it is only the beginning of the process of becoming a more sustainable society.

Planning Department
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