

Comments on Northern Metropolis and San Tin Technopole

General comments on Northern Metropolis

1. We generally support the Northern Metropolis proposal which has the advantage of providing a large amount of land to meet current and anticipated development needs by making use of mainly brownfield land. Proximity to Shenzhen also provides the opportunity for development of employment hubs that could create synergy with innovation and technology (I&T) uses in Shenzhen, and help redress the current home-job imbalance across the territory. Given the fact that the Northern Metropolis comprises a number of development nodes adjoining existing urbanized areas, it has higher scalability providing the robustness to cater for future uncertainties.
2. In light of the presence of sensitive wetland areas, including the Mai Po Marshes and Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site, we consider balancing economic development and environmental conservation being one of the most important principles for the planning of Northern Metropolis.
3. In formulating the Action Agenda and Implementation Plan, the Northern Metropolis Coordination Office would need to, in collaboration with relevant bureaux and departments, fully understand potential users' needs and consolidate spatial requirement inputs of our targeted industries and companies. For example:
 - What are the targeted industries and companies under the new industrial strategies? Would they include large-scale manufacturing?
 - What is meant by adequate power supply for data centres and logistics uses (especially refrigerated warehouses) that could be future proved?
 - What is meant by adequate cable and mobile network infrastructure connection for I&T uses that could be future proved?
 - How should data centres or I&T uses be clustered and what is the scale of each operator?
 - Is there any synergy to plan for hospitals or clinics next to biotech labs?

4. There is a need to take into consideration the implementation programme, population/economic land intake and phasing strategy comprehensively with those of other major projects such as Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands and Ma Liu Shui reclamation. For the latter where I&T related uses have also been proposed, a holistic I&T development strategy showing function differentiation should be presented.
5. Timeline for the first population intake would need to match with transportation and infrastructure completion dates. Having the first population and business intake (around 2031) a few years ahead of the completion of the Northern Link (around 2034) would be highly undesirable.
6. We agree that Government should take the lead to actively manage the wetlands and fishponds. Yet it is unclear to the public how ecological compensation and management would be done. We urge Government to explain the long-term conservation plans and financial arrangements. For example:
 - How to connect Sam Po Shue and Ho Hok Wai?
 - How to preserve birds' flight paths among I&T sites?

Specific comments on San Tin Technopole

7. The study team would need to carefully tackle the interfacing issues between conservation and development areas, e.g. glaring effect on birds. The design of the boundary of the I&T Park should respect natural ecological characteristics, e.g. using existing fish pond boundaries, instead of drawing an arbitrary line or curve.
8. Better rural-urban continuum should be considered. For the recognized village sites currently shown in white on the Recommended Outline Development Plan, the study team should comprehensively plan these areas with consideration of neighbouring uses and facilities, for example by means of preparing village layout plans showing footpath improvements, cycling track connections, creation of open space, installation of flood prevention facilities etc, instead of leaving these village areas unplanned.

9. We consider the scale of the proposed I&T Park being too big and the contents being too vague. There should be indication of the general development parameters for I&T uses, including the scale and disposition of talent housing, open space, etc. It is hoped that the consultancy study on the I&T Park to be commissioned by the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau will shed light on more details, including the level of development and design guidelines while allowing adequate flexibility for attracting various I&T uses.

10. San Tin Technopole covers over 600 ha with a north-south span of over 5 km and is served by only three proposed MTR stations. Accessibility to the proposed I&T Park is particularly poor. Adequate feeder services (including possible automated vehicles) should be planned for connection between the MTR stations and individual areas within the development area.

Public Affairs Committee

The Hong Kong Institute of Planners

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