

Issued on: 26 September 2018

Land for Hong Kong
Our Home! Our Say!

HKIoD's Statement in response to
the public engagement exercise on how to tackle land shortage

That Hong Kong faces a shortage in land supply needs no debate. How best to tackle that land shortage can draw some haggling and argument, however. It is not realistic to expect unanimous support for any one solution option, but it is probable that a genuine debate will allow the community to settle on some package of proposals that addresses land need. The costs and trade-offs for meeting that need can also then be better revealed.

The Administration can seek to drive the debate with some inclination towards what it thinks are the better options going forward. But if there is to be a genuine debate, options that go beyond those preferred by the Administration ought not to be ignored and excluded. We are aware of sensible propositions put forward by certain groups that are not among the 18 options in the Public Engagement exercise.

There are certain views expressed out there, and it is also our impression, that the Public Engagement has detached land use from the debate on how to increase land supply. What options ought to be taken to increase land supply could well depend on the perceived need for land sites so obtained.

The most pressing need for land use and the most talked about is for housing. With the completion of more housing units, we can probably re-establish a flight of steps for younger persons and families to improve on their housing condition and quality of living in realistically reachable climbs. For those seriously in need for public rental housing to satisfy basic housing, the promise of a three-year waiting time can also be better kept.

HKIoD would like to reiterate another concern, that in meeting the acute housing demand now, we do not forget the other long-term goal of increasing the living area per person.

And while we think about housing, we should not forget about land use for commercial use. Trends in demographics will also call for a rethink of how to utilise Hong Kong's land resources for social and health services.

Land supply in Hong Kong should not just be a matter of revenue generation. The decisions to put Hong Kong's land resources to various use must comport with strategic developmental goals.

Land may be a precious commodity in Hong Kong, but developable land in Hong Kong has surely not been exhausted. A better more efficient utilisation of idling land sites must be considered alongside the search for new plots, whether through reclamation or otherwise. Land sites now occupied by one use could well be released if such use can be suitably relocated.

To release existing land sites for another use will involve a bargain with the existing holders of the land interest. In some situations, public-private partnership will be a sensible tool to be deployed. In those situations, the public will expect the Administration to not shed its responsibility in dictating land use with public interest in mind. Holders may rightfully make a

gain on their interest in land, but it will be a public outcry if their gain is seen as too much of a windfall just from having a stockpile of land plots.

-END-