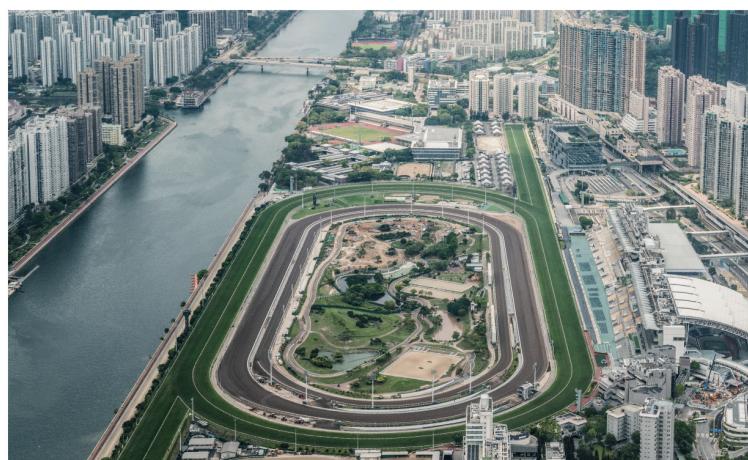


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Planning for Liveable New Towns



Sha Tin



規劃署

Planning Department

2025

Geographical Context

Sha Tin New Town (Figure 1) is located in the eastern part of the New Territories to the north of Kowloon. It occupies an area of about 6 940 hectares (ha) bounded by hill ranges in the east, south and west including Ma On Shan, Buffalo Hill, Tate's Cairn, Lion Rock, Beacon Hill, Golden Hill, Needle Hill and Grass Hill, and by the Tolo Harbour in the north. Shing Mun River flows across Sha Tin in a southwestern to northeastern direction into Sha Tin Hoi. The valley areas and the lowland flood plain have provided opportunities for human settlement.

Sha Tin New Town comprises the Sha Tin and Ma On Shan areas as well as the adjacent rural areas. The Sha Tin area is located in the lowland and valley areas. The Ma On Shan area adjoins the Sha Tin area at Tai Shui Hang and stretches northeastward along the eastern coast of Sha Tin Hoi to as far as Nai Chung.

Sha Tin New Town is one of the first generation New Towns in Hong Kong. The development of Sha Tin New Town began with a population of about 20 000 in 1973. According to the Hong Kong 2021 Population Census, the total population of Sha Tin and Ma On Shan New Towns was about 698 100.

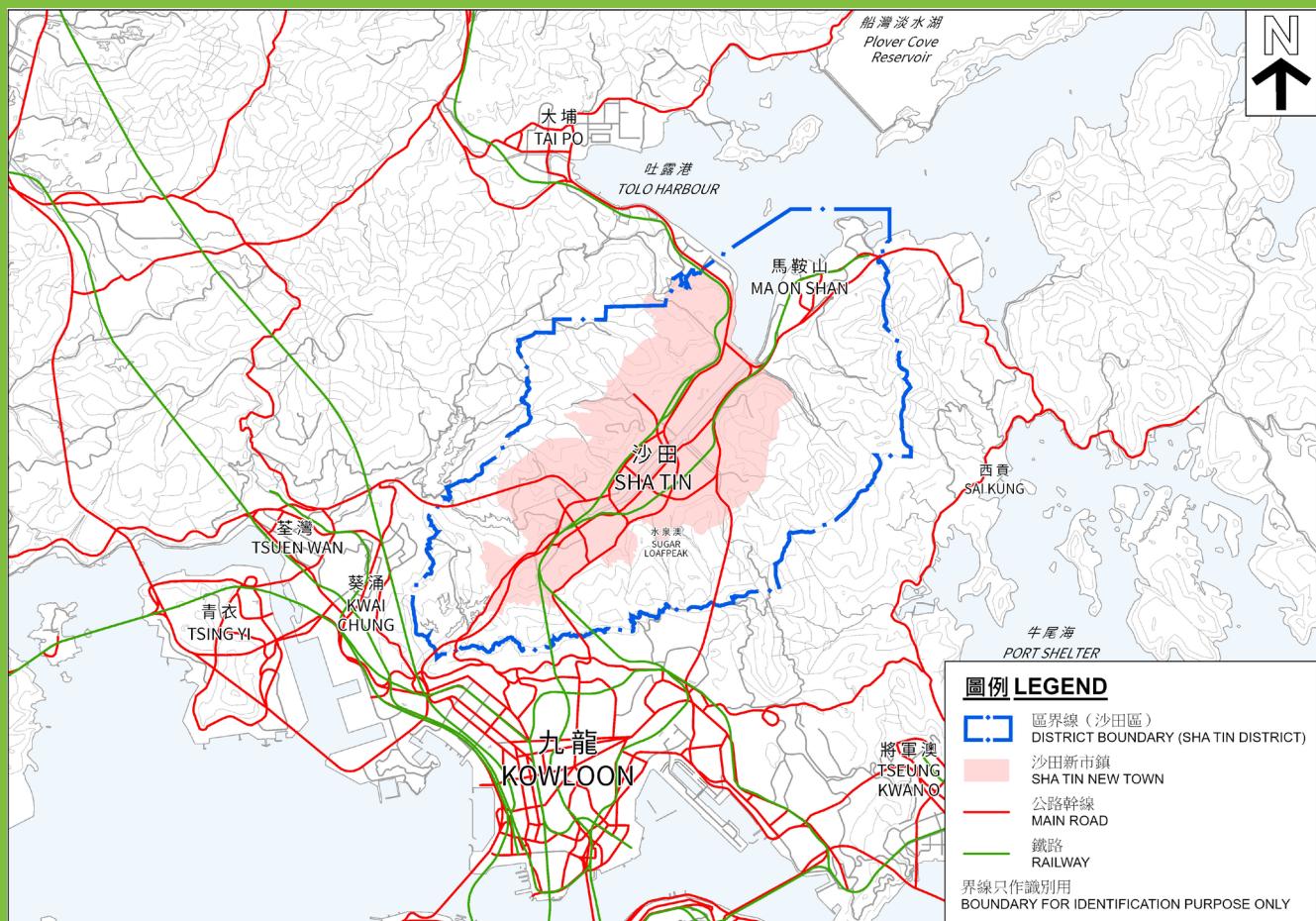


Figure 1: Location of Sha Tin New Town

Figure 2: Sha Tin New Town in the old days

Figure 3: Sha Tin New Town in present



Historical Background

Since the early years, Hong Kong has been beset by a lack of suitable building land. The New Territories, largely mountainous countryside, contained limited areas of flat land around the older settlements and the development was largely constrained by the Kowloon foothills to the south and by the lack of major public utility services.

In October 1972, the Government launched a large-scale housing programme with an aim to providing adequate housing for 1.8 million people by the mid-1980s. More than half of the new housing was planned to be provided in the new towns. Sha Tin, Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan were the first generation new towns designated by the Government. The Government's decision to develop new towns in the New Territories was the first planned attempt to overcome the physical barrier of the Kowloon foothills.

People lived and farmed in Sha Tin since the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) during which the village of Tai Wai was founded. The flat ground of the valley was extremely fertile, and according to legend, rice produced there used to be taken to Beijing for the Emperor's table.

Although Sha Tin is situated not far from northern Kowloon, which is linked by roads and rails, the area remained largely rural until the 1970s.

The first statutory plan for Sha Tin was prepared by the Town Planning Board in 1961. This plan provided for a population of 360 000 with a density of up to 750 persons per ha. Sha Tin was seen merely as a dormitory suburb of Kowloon at that time, although a limited amount of industrial land was proposed.

With a view to alleviating the congestion problems in the urban areas, there was a need to include substantial resettlement estates in Sha Tin. Hence, a review of the 1961 plan to allow higher density residential and industrial developments was necessitated. The 1961 plan was then superseded by a draft Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) prepared as a result of further specific planning and engineering investigations. In 1965, the former Public Works Department prepared a comprehensive development scheme which recommended the development of a new town in Sha Tin. The draft OZP based on this scheme was eventually approved in June 1967. A revised draft development plan was prepared in the early 1970s to provide for an ultimate population of about 500 000. With the onset of large-scale reclamation for Sha Tin New Town since the early 1970s (Figure 2), the population had built up rapidly.

In 1979, the Government approved the development of Ma On Shan as an extension of Sha Tin New Town. In 1983, the Ma On Shan Transport Study was endorsed proposing a population threshold of 150 000 in Ma On Shan as part of an overall threshold of 704 000 for Sha Tin and Ma On Shan. In 1986, the Ma On Shan Development Review was completed and recommended that the population of Sha Tin New Town should be limited to 750 000. On 22 March 1991, a separate OZP prepared for Ma On Shan was first gazetted. Both the Sha Tin and Ma On Shan OZPs have been amended several times to keep abreast with current proposals. Major land uses such as residential, village type development, commercial, industrial, open space, government, institution or community (GIC), green belt and other specified uses as well as transport systems have been included in the OZPs.

Planning Concept

Sha Tin New Town (Figure 3) has a linear-shaped, cellular development layout along the natural valleys of Shing Mun River. The basic concept of developing Sha Tin New Town is to provide a balanced community with sustainable development where people can work, play, grow and learn in a pleasing and enjoyable environment.

The physical planning of the New Town is largely constrained by the existing topography and railway lines. In planning for different land uses, consideration has been given to placing higher intensity residential and industrial uses in valleys and on reclamation areas, and lower intensity residential uses on higher grounds.

Development in Sha Tin New Town

In planning the development of Sha Tin New Town, suitable sites have been reserved for various types of land uses including residential, commercial, industrial and open space and for the provision of different types of community and infrastructural facilities to meet the needs of the population.

Population and Housing Mix

There is a variety of housing development in Sha Tin to suit a range of income levels and housing aspirations. According to the Hong Kong 2021 Population Census, the population of the Sha Tin and Ma On Shan New Towns includes about 383 000 persons in public rental housing (PRH) and subsidised sale flats¹. The remaining 315 100 persons are in private residential developments, villages and other temporary and non-domestic housing.

Upon full development of Sha Tin New Town as planned, the overall flat mix ratio of the New Town will be about 55:45 between public (including PRH and subsidised sale flat) and private permanent housing (including village housing).

While Chun Yeung Estate (Figure 4) is the newest, Lek Yuen Estate (Figure 5) and Wo Che Estate are two of the earliest PRH developments in Sha Tin. At present, there are altogether 23 PRH estates (including five under Tenant Purchase Scheme), 26 Home Ownership Scheme and 7 Private Sector Participation Scheme estates in Sha Tin New Town. Low-density private residential developments are mainly located on higher grounds such as Kau To (Figure 6).



Figure 4: Chun Yeung Estate



Figure 5: Lek Yuen Estate



Figure 6: Low-density residential developments in Kau To

¹ Subsidised sale flats include Housing Authority's Home Ownership Scheme flats, Private Sector Participation Scheme flats, Buy-or-Rent Option Scheme flats, and Housing Society's Flat-for-Sale Scheme flats.

Community Facilities

In Sha Tin New Town, a number of community facilities are planned and developed in accordance with the requirements set out in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines for provision of medical, education and community facilities to serve the local residents.

Both primary and secondary schools are provided at a satisfactory level to meet the changing population needs. The New Town also accommodates various tertiary institutions, such as the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Figure 7), the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Sha Tin), and Caritas Institute of Community Education (Sha Tin). The Hong Kong Sports Institute offers yet further diversity in the provision of tertiary education.



Figure 7: The Chinese University of Hong Kong

There are nine community halls and four community centres in Sha Tin New Town. These community halls and centres may incorporate facilities such as nurseries, children/youth centres, and centres for the elderly and disabled.

The Prince of Wales Hospital (Figure 8), officially opened in 1982, serves as a regional hospital. The provision of hospital services is supplemented by Sha Tin Hospital and a subvented hospital (Cheshire Home) at Ah Kung Kok. There is a private hospital in Sha Tin that will provide a total of about 600 beds after expansion. Also, four general clinics/health centres are provided in Sha Tin to serve local residents.



Figure 8: Prince of Wales Hospital

Recreation and Open Space

Adequate land has been reserved for the development of open space and recreation purposes to meet local and district needs.

Shing Mun River is the backbone of open space provision in Sha Tin. Stretching along its entire length are parks, promenades, cycleways and recreational facilities. The focus of these provisions is the nine-ha Sha Tin Park (Figure 9). Apart from its lavish horticultural gardens and impressive water features, it also includes a large open plaza and a bandstand.



Figure 9: Sha Tin Park



Figure 10: Green visual corridor in Ma On Shan

The open spaces in Ma On Shan are designed to link the Ma On Shan Country Park to the shoreline of Tide Cove/Tolo Harbour. Ma On Shan Park at the waterfront to the west of Wu Kai Sha has been developed into a town park. A waterfront promenade running from Tai Shui Hang in the south up to Ma On Shan Park in the north has been opened for public enjoyment.

In response to the “green finger” concept adopted in the overall planning of Ma On Shan, three strips of open spaces running in an east west direction have been developed in the area. They serve as green visual corridors (Figure 10) separating the high-density developments. They are located to the south and to the north of Heng On Estate and to the north of Yiu On Estate.

Facilities for recreational use have also been planned and provided, many of which are located along Shing Mun River, for example, Sha Tin Sports Ground. Wu Kai Sha Youth Village (Figure 11) is one of the famous recreational areas in Ma On Shan. Swimming pool complexes, tennis courts, squash courts and indoor recreation centres are provided at various locations in the New Town to serve the population of their local catchments.

In addition to the major open spaces and recreational facilities, it is the planning intention to provide adequate local open spaces and recreational facilities within public housing estates and large-scale private residential developments.



Figure 11: Wu Kai Sha Youth Village

Town Centres

The area in the vicinity of the Mass Transit Railway Sha Tin Station of the East Rail Line has been selected for the development of the town centre for Sha Tin (Figure 12) as a natural extension of the old market town. It also provides the New Town with a concentration of shopping facilities and a major public transport interchange.

The cultural complex, which is linked with the Sha Tin Station by commercial development, is the principal focus of the town centre of Sha Tin providing comprehensive facilities including a public library and a town hall. As the cultural complex is located within the low-rise civic spine, it is visually dominant from the surrounding pedestrian areas. Sha Tin Law Courts are located beside the cultural complex. The Sha Tin Park, situated between the cultural complex and Shing Mun River, complements the development in the town centre. It is the focus of the open space theme along Shing Mun River. Shops, offices, cinemas and other commercial and recreational facilities can also be found within the town centre.



Figure 12: Sha Tin Town Centre

The town centre in Ma On Shan area (Figure 13) has been selected on the basis of its prominent look-out onto the Tolo Harbour and its convenient location from other parts of the New Town. It includes a commercial core which is surrounded by a middle ring of residential development and an outer ring of government or community uses. The outer ring articulates the Town Park and Tolo Harbour promenade that completely encircle the town centre.



Figure 13: Ma On Shan Town Centre

Retailing and Services

Sha Tin New Town is one of the most important shopping and service centres in the New Territories. Large shopping arcades can be found in the town centres of Sha Tin (Figure 14) and Ma On Shan. Also, local shopping centres and market facilities are provided in public housing estates.



Figure 14: New Town Plaza in the Sha Tin New Town

Industries

Industries are distributed into three main areas, namely Tai Wai, Fo Tan (Figure 15), and Siu Lek Yuen. Convenient access to these industrial areas is provided. Industries in the New Town are mainly light manufacturing, warehousing and godown types.

Shek Mun is gradually transforming from an industrial area to an area for general business use after rezoning in 2002.



Figure 15: Fo Tan Industrial Area



Figure 16: Tsang Tai Uk

Village Type Development

Although some older villages had to make way for land formation during the early stages of development, special attention has been paid to conservation and improvement of the remaining original communities. A number of recognised villages, including Tai Wai Village and Tsang Tai Uk (Figure 16), have been retained within the New Town area.

Conservation of Natural Environment

The Nai Chung Site of Special Scientific Interest was designated in 1982. It extends about 0.9 kilometres (km) along the coast of Nai Chung. Within this site, there is a good contact of granite with sediments and traces of black carbonaceous shales are found. These are all rare geological features in Hong Kong.

Transport

Sha Tin New Town is well-served by different types of transport modes and good transport networks are linked with other parts of the territory.

Highways, Tunnels and Roads

Road links between Sha Tin and Kowloon are provided by the Lion Rock Tunnel, Tate's Cairn Tunnel, Eagle's Nest Tunnel, Sha Tin Heights Tunnel and Tai Po Road. Traffic to the northwestern New Territories is connected by the Shing Mun Tunnel linking Sha Tin with Tsuen Wan.

Access to the northern New Territories has been greatly improved since the opening of the Tolo Highway in September 1985. This, together with Sha Tin Road and Tai Po Road, forms a highway system which connects the New Town with Tai Po and beyond. Tate's Cairn Highway also links Ma On Shan with the Tolo Highway. Connection to Sai Kung has been provided by Sai Sha Road since October 1988.

Routes 8 and 9 connect Sha Tin with Lantau Island and West Kowloon respectively. Ma On Shan Bypass, opened in 2004, provides a direct route for traffic to bypass the busy town centre and to shorten the travelling time between Sha Tin and Ma On Shan.

Within the New Town itself, communication has been greatly improved by bridging over Shing Mun River at several points.

Mass Transit Railway

Sha Tin and Ma On Shan are well served by the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) (Figures 17 and 18). The East Rail Line has altogether five stations serving the New Town, namely Tai Wai, Sha Tin, Fo Tan, Racecourse and the University. It connects Sha Tin New Town to other parts of the New Territories, Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, and forms the “North-South Corridor”.

The Tuen Ma Line was fully opened in 2021. It comprises 27 stations, connecting Wu Kai Sha and Tuen Mun with Tai Wai which is the interchange station with East Rail Line, and forms the “East-West Corridor”



Figure 17: Sha Tin Station



Figure 18: Ma On Shan Station

Public Transport

Sha Tin New Town is served by a large number of bus routes. Population centres are linked either directly with the metropolitan area or indirectly via local routes with the railway stations. The bus service is supplemented by green minibuses which generally serve smaller residential areas.

Pedestrian Walkways and Cycle Tracks

Safe and convenient walkways and cycle tracks are provided for both pedestrians and cyclists to link the Sha Tin Town Centre with residential and industrial areas and provide direct links with most of the open spaces. A similar network is also developed in Ma On Shan to link up the residential developments with open spaces, community facilities, and the town centre as far as possible.



Cycling has become a popular recreational activity in the New Town other than as a transport means for purpose trips. Maximum segregation of cyclists from cars is achieved by building the cycle tracks (Figure 19) separated from the roadway. Reasonable separation of cyclists from pedestrians is also maintained by a difference in level between the two paths. The cycle track along the Tolo Highway from Sha Tin to Tai Po is one of the most popular routes for cyclists.

Figure 19: Cycle Track along Shing Mun River

Future Development

Housing

To address the pressing need for housing supply, residential sites in the New Town have been earmarked or under construction for public housing developments. Also, potential sites for residential development are being identified by the Government.

"Single Site, Multiple Uses" Development Model

The Government will follow the "Single Site, Multiple Uses" development model to integrate and provide more GIC facilities to meet the demand for public services and better utilise valuable land resources. Two pieces of government land on Shan Mei Street, Fo Tan and Tsuen Nam Road, Tai Wai have been identified for joint-user development to provide various GIC facilities including medical and social welfare facilities. The proposed joint-user complex on Tsuen Nam Road will also provide for public housing development.

Trunk Road T4 Project

The Government will take forward the Trunk Road T4 Project in Sha Tin to provide a more direct link connecting West Kowloon and Tsuen Wan with Ma On Shan and Sai Kung, and to serve as a bypass to Tai Po Road (Sha Tin section) and other district distributor roads to improve the traffic conditions.

Shatin Bypass

The Government is carrying out the "Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030" (RMR Studies). As recommended in the RMR Studies, the Government will take forward a major road project known as "Shatin Bypass" to connect Tai Po and Kowloon West. It will provide a faster route for residents of the New Territories East to the urban areas, and improve the transport network for north-south connectivity as well as relieve traffic pressure on Tolo Highway.

Relocation of Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works

The existing Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works (Figure 20) occupies an area of about 28 ha in the New Town. It is proposed to be relocated to a cavern to be excavated at Nui Po Shan of A Kung Kok, so that



the existing site could be released for other beneficial uses. The cavern could also serve as a barrier against potential nuisances like odour and noise, bringing improvements to the local environment. The investigation, design and construction work of the relocation project is ongoing with a view to optimising the benefits of the project by studying the possibility of introducing relevant advanced technologies and making reference to overseas experiences.

Figure 20: Existing Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works

Whitehead

Whitehead, which was formerly occupied by the Whitehead Detention Centre for Vietnamese boat people in 1990s, is strategically located to the east of the Ma On Shan Town Centre and as a headland at the Tolo Harbour. Apart from the residential development in the southern part, the proposed Whitehead Sports Park including the provision of sports and recreational facilities such as a cricket field, baseball field, velodrome and water sports centre in the northern part, is under active planning.

Looking Ahead

As a result of population growth in Hong Kong, more land would be required to meet the demand for residential, commercial, recreational and other purposes. It is expected that Sha Tin New Town will continue to grow to help meet such demand. Apart from housing, a full range of community and recreational facilities and infrastructures will be provided to ensure that Sha Tin New Town is a place where people can work, play, grow and learn in a pleasing and enjoyable environment.

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