Chapter 11

Preferred Development Option

11.1 Introduction

As neither of the two options, i.e. the Consolidation and Decentralisation Options, presented in Chapter 9 stands out, the Preferred Development Option has been derived by extracting the more desirable elements from each of the two options through the broad assessment set out in Chapter 10 forming a hybrid. This Preferred Option (Figures 11.1 and 11.2) basically concerns about the future spatial development pattern, outlining where, what type and how much development should take place at different planning horizons. The rest of this chapter presents a broad description of the Preferred Option. An overall planning strategy which encompasses a wider perspective will be presented in Chapter 13.

11.2 Planning Concepts and Functions

Being a highly compact city, Hong Kong’s preferred future spatial development pattern is underpinned by the planning concept (Figure 11.3) of clustering the bulk of development around mass transit railway stations to facilitate fast and mass movement of people in an environmentally friendly mode of transport. Better utilisation of development opportunities in the existing built-up areas where infrastructure capacities permit would also be recommended. However, care should be exercised to take into account urban design considerations (such as building mass and height, provision of breezeways etc.) as well as heritage conservation objectives, in the planning of new developments.
Section IV  Planning Strategy and Next Steps

Preferred Development Option

Figure 11.1 Preferred Development Option for Impact Assessment (Medium Term - by 2020)
Section IV  Planning Strategy and Next Steps

Preferred Development Option

Figure 11.2  Preferred Development Option for Impact Assessment (Long Term - by 2030)
Section IV  Planning Strategy and Next Steps

Preferred Development Option

Figure 11.3 Strategic Concept Plan

Remark: The plan is not meant for site identification purpose.
11.2.2 While massive construction programmes like the new towns of the 1970s to 1990s are not recommended at this juncture, new development areas of a moderate scale in northern New Territories are proposed to provide land for a mixture of uses including housing, employment, and possibly higher education and high value-added/clean special industrial processes. These will be comprehensively planned to provide an alternative living choice which emphasises both quality living space and resident/user convenience.

11.2.3 By optimising development opportunities in the existing built-up areas, with only moderate-scale new developments in the New Territories, it will allow us to preserve most of our rural areas, thereby creating a sustainable form of development.

11.2.4 In terms of future development directions, the core urban areas will still remain as the focal point of development and urban activities. Further development opportunities will be found along three axes – (i) the first in a north-south direction roughly aligning with the East Rail; (ii) the second spreading westwards from the core towards Lantau; and (iii) the third alignment in northern New Territories located close to the boundary with Shenzhen (Figure 11.3). These development area/axes will serve the following functions:

- Metro Development Core – Intensive commercial/business zones and housing for urban-style living;
- Central Development Axis – Community-type housing and education/knowledge-building facilities;
- Southern Development Axis – Logistics and major tourism facilities; and
- Northern Development Axis – Non-intensive technology and business zones and other uses that capitalise on the strategic advantage of the boundary location.

11.2.5 For the rest of Hong Kong in areas falling outside existing developed areas, we would recommend a lower level of development with conservation being a priority consideration.
11.3 Housing

11.3.1 In Chapter 9 we note that the Consolidation Option allows better use of developed areas and more efficient use of infrastructure in the Metro Area (i.e. the areas covering Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung and Tsing Yi). It gives shorter travelling distances for work trips and convenient connection to facilities. Keeping the undeveloped areas untouched can leave greater flexibility to meet the needs of future generations and avoid major upfront financial commitment.

11.3.2 As such, it would be sensible to give priority to utilising the available development potential of the Metro Area. Of the 1.6 million increase in population from the Base Year to 2030 as assumed, there is room to accommodate about 0.6 million (i.e. about 36%) of it in the Metro Area, mainly at redevelopment/infill sites, at West Kowloon and Kai Tak, assuming a lower density as recommended in the latest plan of the latter.

11.3.3 However, to address the congestion problem, high-density districts such as Mong Kok and North Point should be given greater attention in determining whether to introduce new developments into these areas, and if so, the desirable intensity for the new developments. The development density issue is further discussed in Section 11.6 below.

11.3.4 On the other hand, the Decentralisation Option, through dispersing more of our development and population to the New Territories, offers opportunities for arresting the intensification process in the Metro Area.

11.3.5 In addition, there is still scope to accommodate a substantial proportion of our population growth at the undeveloped parts of the existing new towns, especially Tseung Kwan O and Tung Chung. Together, such development opportunities should be able to take in about 0.5 million more people (or about one-third of the population increase from the Base Year to 2030).
11.3.6 Besides, New Development Areas (NDAs) could provide a better living environment with greater diversity in density, design and built form. Earlier implementation of some of them could allow timely provision of needed infrastructure in northern New Territories. We assume that housing development at Kwu Tung North NDA and Fanling North NDA (part of the Three-in-One Scheme) and Hung Shui Kiu NDA could accommodate 0.35 million people (or about 22% of the population increase from the Base Year to 2030). The actual population capacity of the NDAs will be subject to detailed study.

11.3.7 The distribution of “new” population under the Preferred Development Option is shown in Table 11.1 below.

Table 11.1 Distribution of “New” Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Base Year – 2010</th>
<th>Up to 2020</th>
<th>Up to 2030</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metro Area</td>
<td>192,000 (49%)</td>
<td>321,000 (32%)</td>
<td>573,000 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Towns</td>
<td>163,000 (42%)</td>
<td>491,000 (49%)</td>
<td>509,000 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDAs(^1)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42,000 (4%)</td>
<td>353,000 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>33,000 (9%)</td>
<td>153,000 (15%)</td>
<td>167,000 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>388,000 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,007,000 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,602,000 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Central Business District\(^2\) (CBD) Grade A Offices

11.4.1 As illustrated in Chapter 8, it is assumed that there will be a total requirement of employment floorspace of about 11.0 million m\(^2\) in GFA up to 2030 and CBD Grade A offices will account for 2.7 million m\(^2\) GFA. In working out a planning strategy for CBD Grade A offices, we have assumed that there will be no more harbour reclamation (other than the proposed Wan Chai North Development which will in any case not provide any office accommodation). While meeting all requirement for Grade A office space at the CBD may not be a desirable option in planning terms, decentralisation alone is neither able to fully satisfy the planning criteria of CBD Grade A offices.

\(^1\) Only include the population increase resulting from upgrading of infrastructure related to NDA schemes, and exclude existing populations and populations arising from approved development schemes or projects already in the pipeline.

\(^2\) For the purpose of the HK2030 Study, the CBD is defined as the business zones within Central, Wan Chai, Sheung Wan, Causeway Bay, Tsim Sha Tsui and the West Kowloon Reclamation.
offices both in terms of quantity and the agglomeration requirement. We should therefore, similar to the approach for housing land, adopt a hybrid of the Consolidation and Decentralisation Options in formulating the planning strategy for CBD Grade A offices. However, noting the agglomeration characteristic of office activities, our search for opportunities has been focused within the harbour area.

11.4.2 The existing CBD could be reinforced by making use of the remaining undeveloped office sites, vacated Government, Institution or Community sites, or, where appropriate, freeing up space or land currently occupied by government offices to facilitate the provision of Grade A offices. Private-sector redevelopments within the CBD are also expected to contribute to the office supply.

11.4.3 In parallel, we note the continued development of up-market office space at Quarry Bay which is mainly driven by private initiatives. This may well form an off-CBD office node that provides the kind of accommodation comparable to Grade A offices within the CBD. It may appeal to those multi-national companies which do not necessarily need to remain at the CBD but would opt for high-grade office accommodation at a convenient location outside the CBD.

11.4.4 Besides, located at an important transportation hub with the convergence of three existing and planned railways, the West Kowloon Reclamation also provides good opportunities to be turned into another high-grade office cluster. In addition, we will reserve land for the possible development, in the longer term, of a new office node at the former Kai Tak Airport site. Similar to Quarry Bay, this new office node may address the needs of some of the conventional CBD occupiers and could produce synergy with the neighbouring Kowloon Bay and Kwun Tong business districts currently undergoing transformation from their industrial origins. Figure 11.4 illustrates our proposed strategy for CBD Grade A offices.
11.4.5 In a nutshell, we believe that the supply in hand, including the known private projects in the CBD and Quarry Bay, will be sufficient to meet the office requirement at least for the next few years. Longer-term supply from government sources will continuously come on-stream upon resolution of such issues as urban design, traffic impacts and reprovisioning of existing uses. This supply is expected to be supplemented by further private redevelopment proposals through the market mechanism.

Office/Business Nodes

11.4.6 Since the introduction of “Other Specified Uses” annotated “Business” (“OU(B)”) zone in 2001, we have rezoned about 200 hectares of “Industrial” land to “OU(B)” so that buildings within such zones can be used for both industrial and office/commercial purposes.

11.4.7 Utilising the unrealised development potential arising from the redevelopment of existing industrial areas would be our major strategic response to the supply of general office/business uses. Since “OU(B)” zones are mainly located at the urban fringe, intensification of development in these areas could help achieve decentralisation of employment opportunities to some extent.
Employment Uses in the New Territories

11.4.8 As Hong Kong’s economy becomes increasingly services oriented and services industries have a tendency to concentrate in the urban areas, large-scale decentralisation of general office developments to the New Territories in the foreseeable future would be unlikely. However, some special industries involving high value-added, high-tech production and logistics activities are less reliant on agglomeration economies and could be more ready to decentralise to the New Territories.

11.4.9 Our assessment shows that the net requirement for special industries amounts to 2.9 million m$^2$ GFA up to 2030. Special industries are normally land-extensive and/or entail particular accommodation requirements. We therefore need to reserve specific locations to address their particular needs.

11.4.10 There are still capacities at the existing Science Park and industrial estates to accommodate some of the more immediate demand. However, land will need to be identified to meet longer-term needs. As demand for special industrial land may arise quite unpredictably and at a large quantity, we need to plan ahead and create sufficient land reserves to ensure a prompt response to such unanticipated demand. In this connection, the Ping Che/Ta Kwu Ling NDA and part of the Hung Shui Kiu NDA could be considered for the provision of land reserves for special industries.

11.4.11 Prior to the land in Ping Che/Ta Kwu Ling and Hung Shui Kiu being permanently taken up by special industries, this land could be temporarily allocated for the reprovisioning of the port back-up and other storage uses displaced by the NDA schemes. As noted in Chapter 8, the demand for port back-up uses is expected to decline in future, especially in the light of changes to Mainland’s customs policies, therefore providing scope for accommodating special industries in the longer term on the land concerned.

11.4.12 Separately, subject to the resolution of various development constraints, the Closed Area at the boundary could also be deployed for employment land uses including high value-added economic uses,
especially those that capitalise on our links with the Mainland. The
development potential in the Closed Area is being examined in the
“Land Use Planning for the Closed Area – Feasibility Study”.

11.4.13 Apart from special industries, it is also our intention to reserve land
at one of the NDAs for the development of tertiary educational
facilities. While this is still an initial concept, details for which still
need to be further articulated, these facilities are targeted to provide a
supportive learning environment in order to attract more Mainland and
international students and skilled professionals to study and work in
Hong Kong. Facilities may include not only teaching campuses, but a
mixture of residential accommodation and other supporting facilities.
A preliminary assessment finds that Kwu Tung North, with its serene
rural setting and convenient access to the Mainland, would be a
desirable location for this purpose.

11.5 New Development Areas in the New Territories

11.5.1 Previous new town proposals
were conceived at times of
high development pressure.
However, due to the anticipated
slower population growth
and available development
opportunities elsewhere, we are
no longer compelled to introduce
development of this scale.

11.5.2 Nevertheless, we would still recommend proceeding with some of the
NDA proposals, which are only about a fifth to a quarter of the size of
conventional new towns. NDAs not only provide a mixture of public
and private housing land, but they could help to meet other land use
requirements such as those mentioned in Section 11.4 above. NDAs
also offer an alternative choice of living through the development of
lower-density buildings in a quality living environment, with convenient
access to mass transportation and community facilities. Besides,
by shifting some of the population from the dense urban areas to
the New Territories, we could achieve a more balanced territorial development pattern and a less congested environment, particularly needed in those urban areas which are characterised by extremely high development densities.

**Implementation Priority**

11.5.3 A number of NDAs have been identified in past studies\(^2\), but given the lower population assumptions, there is no need to implement all of them within the Study’s planning horizon. The priority for implementation has therefore been considered. Subsequently, the development of NDAs at Kwu Tung North, Fanling North and Ping Che/Ta Kwu Ling (Three-in-One Scheme) and Hung Shui Kiu (Figure 11.5) have been prioritised mainly for the following reasons:

i. These NDAs have been studied in detail in the past and the public were consulted on the preliminary proposals;

ii. They are served by rail and would be highly accessible through the development of new rail stations. Ping Che/Ta Kwu Ling which is not accessible by rail is only proposed for non-housing uses, e.g. special industries; and

iii. They are contiguous to existing developed areas such that it would be more cost effective in the provision of infrastructure. Some of the existing government, institution or community facilities could also be shared between the developed areas and the NDAs. Conversely, NDAs could provide additional employment opportunities for new town dwellers.

---

\(^2\) Planning and Development Study on North West New Territories and Planning and Development Study on North East New Territories.
11.5.4 Development of NDAs has a long lead time of at least 12 to 13 years, involving such tasks as planning review, rezoning, land resumption/clearance/rehousing, engineering works and building construction.

11.5.5 The implementation for the two NDA schemes would need to be staggered for better resource utilisation (including planning, land clearance and works management). Taking into consideration such factors as reprovisioning needs and urgency of some of the proposed uses, the Three-in-One Scheme would be given priority for implementation and a planning and engineering review study for this scheme is recommended to be conducted as soon as possible.

Development Densities at NDAs

11.5.6 To provide an alternative form of living environment, the NDA should not be targeted for a high-density form of development. However, this may act against our intention to capitalise on the rail connection. To strike a balance, it is proposed that the development density around rail stations should be set at a medium level, with plot ratios comparable to new towns like Sha Tin/Ma On Shan. Lower plot ratios could be adopted for development sites farther away from the rail stations.
Section IV  Planning Strategy and Next Steps

Preferred Development Option

11.6  Development Densities at Existing Urban Areas

Congested Urban Districts

11.6.1 The current development density controls, whether under the Building (Planning) Regulations (B(P)R) or the outline zoning plans (OZP), have been progressively established and revised since the 1960s. The development intensity pattern, by and large, reflects the socio-economic and development needs of the time. The philosophy was to provide as much flexibility in the OZPs as possible to cater for our changing societal needs. As such, development intensity controls more stringent than those of the B(P)R are mainly imposed in areas intended for low-intensity development only. Controls in other areas were largely achieved through land leases with reference to administrative plans and the density zones set out in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG).

11.6.2 Hence, the generally flexible development intensity controls have created the characteristic high-density feature of Hong Kong. Then again, it is widely recognised that there are merits associated with the high-density development pattern, including better land utilisation, optimisation of infrastructure, efficient use of energy resources, and preservation of more rural land and ecologically valuable resources, thereby resulting in a more sustainable form of development. Allowing higher densities could also facilitate the urban renewal process.

11.6.3 However, the higher development intensities have generated more housing units on individual sites, resulting in rising population levels, which could exert increased pressures on our infrastructure and provision of community facilities and open space. Fortunately, over the years, the decreasing household size\(^4\) has offset some of the

---

\(^4\) According to Census and Statistics Department’s records, Hong Kong’s average household size dropped from 4.4 in 1961 to 3.1 in 2002.
growth caused by the injected populations, and even brought about a thinning process in some of the most congested urban districts.

11.6.4 Nevertheless, higher development intensities also give rise to bulkier buildings, which could result in protrusive built forms, blockage of wind passage and view corridors as well as stagnation of airflows at the pedestrian level. Indeed, in the aftermath of SARS and rising aspirations for a higher quality living environment, there have been continuous community calls for lowering development intensities, reducing building bulk and height, and providing more open space.

11.6.5 In view of the pros and cons both ways, we do not propose blanket reduction of development densities, but a more balanced approach in determining a suitable level of development intensities for individual localities. Sites under government control will be our primary targets and priority would be given to those sites at distinctive locations, such as the harbourfront, and land situated in prominent urban design or air ventilation corridors.

11.6.6 In this light, the Government has already taken steps to review the development densities at some of the major harbourfront locations, e.g. Kai Tak, North Point and Central District, and at individual sale sites, e.g. the Oil Street comprehensive development area and the former Hollywood Road police quarters.

**New Towns**

11.6.7 As most of the new towns have largely been developed in accordance with comprehensive plans, there is little scope nor a strong need to review their development densities. For Tseung Kwan O, the existing densities of which may tend to be on the high side, work has already been carried out to lower the plot ratios of the remaining undeveloped sites, together with the provision of more open space and recreational facilities. For Tung Chung Further Development, care should be exercised in its forthcoming comprehensive planning and engineering study to apply the most appropriate level of densities commensurate with its geographical character as well as other considerations.
11.7 Protection of Rural Areas

11.7.1 Through designation of Country Parks, Special Areas and various conservation zonings on statutory town plans, about 43% of Hong Kong’s land area is under statutory protection. The urbanised areas of Hong Kong have so far taken up about 21% of the land area, with rural settlements a further 2%. With our future spatial development pattern, we need only to open up no more than 2% of our land area by 2030. This will still leave a large proportion of woodland, shrubland, grassland and agricultural land primarily remaining untouched by strategic development proposals. In these areas, conservation will be a priority consideration – the pursuit of development or land use thereat must give due respect to the environment and other conservation concerns. Chapter 13 will further discuss planning proposals related to the beneficial use of our rural lands.

11.8 Predetermineds

11.8.1 Predetermineds refer to those strategic planning components that are being dealt with outside the HK2030 Study. The generation of options and decision on these components are related but independent to this Study. While impact assessments have been (or will be) carried out for the individual components or projects in their respective sectoral studies, inclusion of these components in our Preferred Option could ensure that the overall cumulative impacts would be considered.

Port Development

11.8.2 According to the Study on Hong Kong Port – Master Plan 2020 (HKP2020 Study), significant additional capacity can be added through enhancement of the existing container terminals to satisfy short-term demand. However, in the longer term, we would need to ensure adequate and timely supply of new port facilities.
11.8.3 To determine the optimum location for the new terminal, two locations, Northwest Lantau (NWL) and Southwest Tsing Yi (SWTY) (Figure 11.6) have been examined under the HKP2020 Study. Under current conditions, NWL has better potential, primarily because of its economic and financial performance relative to SWTY, as detailed in Annex V.

Figure 11.6 Proposed Port Locations

11.8.4 However, a decision on a preferred location for the new terminal will be contingent upon completion of the Ecological, Fisheries and Water Quality Impact Assessment Study for the proposed port development at NWL and the new port cargo forecasts. We have therefore taken into account both locational possibilities for port expansion in our assessment of options under the HK2030 Study.
Section IV  Planning Strategy and Next Steps

11  Preferred Development Option

Airport Development

11.8.5 The Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) Master Plan 2020 has identified the key facilities and services which will be required to achieve the ultimate annual capacity for HKIA. These include enhancement and expansion of the passenger terminal building, construction of midfield concourse, establishment of a 24-hour "SkyCity", and exploring the possibilities of multilateral and bilateral cooperation between airports. With these improvements, the HKIA will be able to handle the forecast passenger and cargo increase up to 2020.

11.8.6 In the recently published update of the Master Plan (known as HKIA 2025), the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AA) has forecasted that by 2025, the HKIA will serve 80 million passengers, and handle 8 million tonnes of cargo and 490,000 aircraft movements each year. While the report has indicated that AA will soon begin engineering and environmental feasibility studies on the construction of a third runway at the HKIA, in the absence of details on this proposed third runway at this stage, it has not been taken on board under the Reference Scenario or any of the alternative scenarios of the HK2030 Study for testing purpose.

Transport Network

Domestic

11.8.7 To meet the increasing traffic demand and to provide early relief to certain congested sections of the existing road networks, a number of transport projects have been separately proposed in various planning or engineering studies. These projects have been adopted in the relevant strategic assessments of our development options. They are generally assumed for implementation in the medium to long term as set out in Annex VI. The need, scope and timing of each of the transport projects are only assumptions of this study and would be subject to further review in due course.
Cross-boundary

11.8.8 Upon review of the existing linkages, we estimate that there is a need to improve the cross-boundary facilities and infrastructure to meet the increasing demand for passenger, vehicle and cargo flows as well as the growing number of Mainland visitors. Our goal is to integrate and expand the road and rail networks between Hong Kong and the Mainland, especially the PRD.

11.8.9 Continued enhancement to the handling capacities of control points, development of multi-modal transport facilities nearby, as well as provision of additional road and rail links, including the recently completed Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line, will help to improve the cross-boundary passenger and vehicle flows. The Government is also working closely with relevant Mainland (and Macao) counterparts to accelerate implementation of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link.