



香港觀鳥會有限公司

THE HONG KONG BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY Limited

認可公共性質慈善機構 Approved Charitable Institution of Public Character

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Secretary, Town Planning Board
15/F, North Point Government Offices
333 Java Road, North Point, Hong Kong
(E-mail: tpbpd@pland.gov.hk)

7 Feb 2011

Dear Sir/Madam,

Objection on Application for Amendment of Plan in Ping Kong (Y/NE-PK/1)

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) would like to raise our objection on the Application for Amendment of Plan in Ping Kong (Y/NE-PK/1) because of the following reasons:

1. Current Zoning is suitable for the area

The planning intention of the “Agricultural” Zoning is to protect good quality land for agricultural use¹. Currently both active and abandoned farmland is found in the area, indicating that there is great potential for agricultural activities. According to a local research², agricultural lands often have high ecological value and support a unique community of birds. Agricultural lands in Hong Kong are currently under great pressure from various developments, thus there is a need to preserve them for conservation of rural cultures and biodiversity. The current zoning is appropriate for nature conservation and protecting the rural environment from urban encroachment.

2. Justification for development in the area

The justification for development in the area, as stated by the applicant, is according to the North East New Territories (NENT) Study dated in 2003³. However, as stated in the NENT study, Ping Kong is not favourable for residential development due to traffic problems and significant landscape impact. The population growth and housing

¹ TPB, 2008, Master Schedule of Notes – Agriculture, available at http://www.info.gov.hk/tpb/en/forms/Schedule_Notes/msn_gb_e.pdf

² Leven M.R., 1998, ‘Special Feature – Focus on Farmlands’, *Porcupine!*, no. 18, Newsletter of Ecology & Biodiversity, The School of Biological Sciences, The University of Hong Kong.

³ Planning Department, 2003, Planning and Development Study on North East New Territories.

demand should be reviewed before allowing development in the Ping Kong Area. Allowing the current application for development without proper consideration of strategic planning is not favourable. In the “HK2030 study”⁴ complete in 2007, the area was even not mentioned as possible new development areas. On the other hand, the HK2030 study reinforces a need to protect rural areas including agricultural land for conservation. The current application for low-density residential development does not comply with the suggestions of the HK2030 study.

3. Ground for Sustainable Development

The applicant did not provide information on why the development is a sustainable one. The project would cause irreversible damage to the landscape and biodiversity in the area, as well as rural cultures of villages, which is not acceptable in terms of the modern concept of sustainable development. On the other hand there are no sustainable economic benefits brought to the majority of local residents, but only the instant income generated from selling of land to the developer. Moreover, the proposed sport facilities to be constructed by the applicant would only benefit restricted groups of people but not the general public.

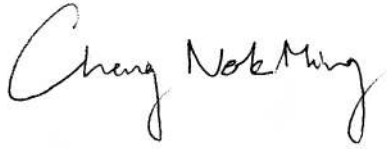
4. Ecological Value of the Area

The area is the only confirmed breeding ground of Malayan Night Heron, a rare species in Hong Kong. There also breeding records of other uncommon species, including Greater Painted Snipe, Black Baza and Asian Barred Owlet in the Ping Kong area. Species of conservation interest such as Crested Serpent Eagle, Bonelli’s Eagle and Crested Goshawk, which are Grade 2 Protected Animals in China, are also regularly observed. These indicate that Ping Kong is an important habitat for birds and is having a high ecological value. A higher conservation status should be given to the site and current environment should be preserved.

Based on the above reasons, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society respectfully requests the Town Planning Board to reject the captioned application. Thank you very much for your attention and consideration.

⁴ Planning Department, 2007, Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cheng Nok Ming". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

Cheng Nok Ming
Conservation Officer
Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

cc:

Mr. Mike Kilburn, Vice-Chairman, Hong Kong Bird Watching Society