



BY FAX AND BY EMAIL

The Secretary,
Town Planning Board,
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(Email: tpbpd@pland.gov.hk)

22 October, 2015

Dear Sir/Madams,

**Green Groups' Joint Submission in Response to
Draft Tung Chung Valley Development Permission Area Plan No. DPA/I-TCV/1**

Support the Promulgation of a Statutory Land Use Plan

1. The undersigned green groups jointly welcome the draft Tung Chung Valley Development Permission Area (DPA) Plan gazetted on 21 August 2015. This DPA will introduce statutory land use control in Tung Chung West and help protect the rich and diverse ecology against incompatible developments, environmental vandalism and degradation.
2. In order to effectively preserve and manage the biodiversity, natural landscape and hydrology of Tung Chung River, Valley and Coast, green groups call for, as shown in Appendix 1,
 - (a) Extension of DPA Plan to include Tin Sam and Wong Lung Hang areas where have not been covered by any statutory land use plans or country parks.
 - (b) Establishing a River Nature Park for proactive management of natural riverine and estuarine ecology and landscape, and for flood regulation.

Green Groups' Request for a DPA Plan for Tung Chung River, Valley and Coast

3. The Planning Department (PlanD) and the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) have jointly commissioned the Tung Chung New Town Extension Study (the Study) in January 2012. The study which covered Tung Chung River Valley, Tung Chung Bay and coastal area recognized the outstanding biodiversity of the area.
4. Green Groups requested in joint letters dated 3 May 2012 to the Secretary for Development and Director of Planning for the publication of a DPA Plan to protect the rich biodiversity and ecological values of the Tung Chung River, Valley and Coast from vandalism and unauthorized development.
5. After the draft Recommended Outline Development Plan (RODP) was published in August 2014 under the "Tung Chung New Town Extension Study – Stage 3 Public Engagement", the joint green groups again urged the Government on 15 September 2014 and 19 June 2015 to proceed forthwith with the publication of a DPA Plan for the area around Tung Chung not yet covered under the Town Planning Ordinance (TPO).
6. On 21 August 2015, the draft Tung Chung Valley DPA Plan No. DPA/I-TCV/1 was published and exhibited for public inspection under section 5 of the TPO.

Rich, Unique and Intact Ecosystem of Tung Chung River, Valley and Bay

7. Tung Chung River is one of the few remaining major streams in Hong Kong which has not been overly affected by channelization or water pollution. The Tung Chung River largely retains its natural state throughout from headwater to estuary. The Tung Chung River system is unique in the local context. Its headwaters flow from Hong Kong's second and third highest peaks, all the way to the shallow Tung Chung Bay without interruptions.
8. The high connectivity and continuity of the river system from the montane area to the estuary make it exceptionally rich in its aquatic and coastal biodiversity, including many rare and endangered species, e.g. Beijiang Thick-lipped Barb (*Acrossocheilus beijiangensis*) 北江光唇魚, Philippine Neon Goby (*Stiphodon atropurpureum*) 紫身枝牙鰕虎魚, Romer's tree frog (*Liuixalus romeri*) 盧氏小樹蛙, Chinese Horseshoe Crab (*Tachypleus tridentatus*) 中國蠶, Seaweed Pipefish (*Syngnathus schlegelii*) 舒氏海龍, Swinhoe's Egret (*Egretta eulophotes*) 黃嘴白鷺. Diverse types of habitats are also found in the surrounding land area supporting many ecologically important animal and plant species in Hong Kong, including Common Birdwing (*Troides helena*) 裳鳳蝶 and Eurasian Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*) 鵞鴞 (refer to Appendix 2).

9. Tung Chung River is the second richest in freshwater species of any in Hong Kong, with a total of 23 species recorded, and listed as an Ecologically Important Stream (No. 27) by Agricultural, Fishery and Conservation Department (AFCD). The mangroves on the intertidal mudflat at the Tung Chung River estuary is the largest on Lantau which is one of highest plant diversity sites. Tung Chung Valley and coast is also a butterfly hotspot which nurtures 148 species which comprises about 60% of Hong Kong's total, including two rare and two very rare species.

Green Groups' Recommended DPA Plan

10. Green Groups' recommended DPA (version Oct 2015) for a sustainable planning for Tung Chung River, estuary, coastal areas and associated habitats is enclosed (Appendix 1).
11. Regarding the land use of Tung Chung Valley, we suggested in 2012 (Appendix 2):
 - (a) To protect and conserve high quality natural habitats which are of rich biodiversity and ecological value through conservation planning, management and monitoring. In particular, the Tung Chung River, estuary, woodlands and the coast should not be exploited for any development and protected statutorily as "SSSI", "CA" and "CPA" zones as illustrated in our revised recommended DPA Plan (version Oct 2015) attached to this letter (Appendix 1).
 - (b) To promote compatible community uses and enjoyment of the Tung Chung River Valley and the estuary through environmental education and passive recreation activities. Ecologically-friendly facilities which encourage the public to access Tung Chung River and the estuary can be considered, for example, eco-trails, a riverside park, a nature education centre, resting places and look-out towers.
 - (c) To enhance the tourist appeal the river landscape and cultural heritage of the Tung Chung River Valley through improved linkage to existing Country Parks in Lantau. Tung Chung River Valley is located amongst existing tourist spots including Hong Kong International Airport, Ngong Ping Cable Car, Po Lin Monastery and the Tian Tan Buddha Statue.
12. We remind the Board that the tributaries of Tung Chung River flowing through Mok Ka, Lam Che and Nim Un should be protected by zoning its stream courses and banks as SSSI.
13. Therefore, Green Groups proposed in our recommended DPA Plan (Appendix 1) an extensive **River Nature Park** to serve above-mentioned land use purposes and flood prevention.

Green Groups' Response to the Draft DPA/I-TCV/1

14. Green groups fully agree with *the general planning intention for the Area* (Section 7.1 of EXPLANATORY STATEMENT) is to protect the ecologically sensitive areas and the rural and natural character, to maintain the unique landscape character and cultural heritage of the Area, and to prevent it from encroachment by unauthorized development and from undesirable change of use.
15. In response to the “NEED FOR PLANNING GUIDANCE AND CONTROL”, section 6 of EXPLANATORY STATEMENT, Green Groups are very concerned that the publication of the RODP of the future new town extension and associated increase in economic activities provide incentives for unauthorized land uses.
16. Over the past two decades green groups observed a proliferation of incompatible developments and vandalism in Tung Chung Valley. The ecologically degraded land areas increased from 4.8% in 2007 to approximately 13% in 2015 (Appendix 3 and 4). However, enforcement powers and protection were lacking due to the absence of a statutory land-use plan.
17. To address these problems and as explained above, Green Groups have regularly requested the Secretary for Development and Director of Planning for the publication of a DPA Plan for the Tung Chung River Valley and Coast
 - (a) to ensure the RODP and proposed land uses in the Tung Chung New Town Extension Study can be implemented;
 - (b) to ensure control over incompatible and/or unauthorized developments,
 - (c) to terminate existing vandalism and to stem potential vandalism in Tung Chung Valley and Coast; and
 - (d) to protect the ecology, hydrology and water quality of Tung Chung River and Bay, a major planning intention of the RODP.

Cover Tin Sam and Wong Lung Hang under the DPA Plan

18. Regarding the Plan Area (Section 7.1 of EXPLANATORY STATEMENT), although the signatory green groups welcome the draft Tung Chung Valley DPA, they urge government to extend the DPA Plan to cover Tin Sam and Wong Lung Hang Stream (refer to Appendix 1) which otherwise will remain as enclaves without effective land use control. It would be most efficient to include these areas now under this DPA Plan
19. The seagrass beds and nearby mangroves at San Tau (SSSI No.58) are one of only four sites where Dwarf Eel Grass (*Zostera japonica*) 矮大葉藻, and one of only five sites where Oval Halophila (*Halophila ovalis*) 喜鹽草 are recorded in Hong Kong. Both species are rare in Hong Kong and are listed as of Local Concern status in China. San Tau mangroves is of high conservation value due to rich floristic diversity. San Tau,

which is nearby Tin Sam, is a butterfly hotspot and Wong Lung Hang is an Ecologically Important Stream listed by AFCD. Both areas require the preservation of local habitats.

Tung Chung Valley not suitable for Residential Development

20. In view of the land use (Section 7.4 of EXPLANATORY STATEMENT), we call for a reduction in development pressure and wide ranging measures to alleviate development impacts.
21. Much of Tung Chung Valley is allocated for residential development in the RODP. We consider that such planning is incompatible with the physical and ecological setting of Tung Chung Valley and the principles of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Under Article 8 of this Convention, each contracting party shall:
 - Regulate or manage biological resources important for the conservation of biological diversity whether within or outside protected areas, with a view to ensuring their conservation and sustainable use;
 - Promote the protection of ecosystems, natural habitats and the maintenance of viable populations of species in natural surroundings;
 - Promote environmentally sound and sustainable development in areas adjacent to protected areas with a view to furthering protection of these areas;
 - Rehabilitate and restore degraded ecosystems and promote the recovery of threatened species, *inter alia*, through the development and implementation of plans or other management strategies;
 - Endeavour to provide the conditions needed for compatibility between present uses and the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components.
22. We are highly concerned that the residential development (plot ratio 0.75 near the Tung Chung River estuary and up to 6.5 to the east of the valley) would affect the natural landscape, hydrology and ecology of Tung Chung River, threaten the inhabited wildlife and impact the water quality of Tung Chung River.
23. From the Hong Kong Observatory's past observation on and prediction of Hong Kong's future precipitation pattern, the scale and frequency of river floods is expected to increase. Tung Chung River is comparatively short and steep with an overall slope of 1: 4.9, (compared to Lam Tsuen River 1: 14.5, Kam Tin River 1: 14.4, Shing Mun River 1: 17.7, Tuen Mun River 1: 17.9). The average annual rainfall of its river basin reaches up to 2400 mm, which is higher than that of Hong Kong (i.e. 2200mm). Therefore, hydraulic and geotechnical conditions in small and narrow area of Tung Chung River Valley are highly unfavourable for dense and high-rise development.

24. Thus, in the long run, the Government must make early precaution and preventive measures in river land use planning through a statutory DPA Plan for Tung Chung River Valley, to decrease the threat posed by river floods due to climate change:
- (a) Governments should avoid developing residential and industrial areas in Tung Chung River Valley, which are highly prone to flooding and landslide, to prevent risking the lives of residents and their properties.
 - (b) The government should allocate sufficient “permeable land use” by conserving vegetation and avoid covering large surface areas with concrete in Tung Chung Valley which helps allowing rainwater to infiltrate through the soil and alleviate flooding.
 - (c) Government should strengthen law enforcement on dumping, unauthorized vehicle access and developments on both sides of Tung Chung River or other activities which may affect drainage capacity of the rivers.

River Nature Park for Flood Control and Conservation as Public Interest

25. We urge Government to seriously consider the resumption of all private land lots in the Tung Chung River Valley to be able to better conserve and enhance the ecological value and functions of the area, and to achieve a sustainable plan for Tung Chung West.
26. Control over unauthorized development and incompatible uses is needed to conserve the valley and estuary covering at least 30m buffer for two main streams and 20m buffer for tributaries. It is proposed that land is resumed and that the entire river valley, and estuary is managed as a **River Nature Park** (separately or jointly by DSD, AFCD and/or LCSD), to safeguard the hydraulic and ecological properties of the river valley.
27. Government could consider the Long Valley’s model in the North East New Territories New Development Areas Planning and Engineering Study (Stage 3 Public Engagement) in which Long Valley was designated as “Other Specified Uses (Nature Park)” to enhance and conserve the existing ecological value and functions of Long Valley.
28. Similarly, Tung Chung River Valley can be considered as a biodiversity hotspot for Hong Kong as well as a “green lung” for the Tung Chung residents. Designation of Tung Chung River Valley as a River Nature Park can be implemented by the Government as part of the Tung Chung New Town Extension project. It will also allow for better control over the ecological and hydraulic values.
29. Government should explore and assess the feasibility and potential impacts of different alternative options for flood prevention such as resuming lands along the riparian zones of Tung Chung River so as to serve as natural floodplain to retain floodwater.

30. The resumption of land and the management as a park will make it possible to better conserve and enhance the ecological value and functions of the area. The park will provide a high quality nature experience for residents, improved flood control, and better conservation of the rich habitat of the river valley and estuary.
31. Whereas the residential and road development identified in the RODP will impose adverse and irreversible impacts on the ecology of Tung Chung River Valley and Bay, the proactive land use management possible by establishing a River Nature Park will help preserve natural resources for community use and enjoyment, habitat protection and fisheries intended under the RODP and draft Tung Chung Valley DPA Plan.
32. The estimated resumption cost for about 500 private land lots with a total area of 8.5 ha in Green Groups' proposed River Nature Park (Appendix1) is HK\$370 million.
33. It is noted that the proposed polder dykes could adversely impact the ecological connection within the whole Tung Chung Valley. Careful studies should be carried out to justify the necessity and assess potential ecological impacts of the polder dykes. Mitigation measures should be proposed to minimize the adverse ecological impacts if the dykes are proven necessary.

Prevention of Water Pollution and Habitat Damages

34. Green groups concur Remarks (b), Annex A under Schedules of uses which stipulates the control of diversion of streams, filling of land/pond or excavation of land under section 16 of the Town Planning Ordinance.
35. For Section 8.2, we opine that regarding *uses or building which were in existence immediately before the first publication in the Gazette of the notice of the draft DPA Plan, any material change of such use or any other development which may have adverse environment, drainage, traffic, ecology and hydrology of the Area should not be permitted. The alteration and/or modification works which may lead to an environmental and ecological improvement to the Area may be considered favourably by the Board.*
36. For section (2) of NOTES, in order to avoid water pollution to Tung Chung River and Bay, any use or development that does not conform to Water Pollution Control Ordinance (Cap.358) should be terminated despite being in existence immediately before the first publication in the Gazette of the notice of the above-captioned draft DPA Plan.
37. For section (7)(b) of NOTES, "refreshment kiosk" should not be permitted on ecologically important areas, within 30 metres on either side of river/stream and

agricultural lands because it may generate wastewater and garbage that pollute the water bodies and degrade the habitats.

38. For section (7)(c) of NOTES, in order to avoid alteration of physical setting and damage to ecology of the natural streams and rivers (including its tributaries flowing through or by agricultural lands), diversion, excavation, shotcreting and paving of beds and banks should not be allowed for maintenance or repair without the permission of the relevant government authorities in charge of environmental protection and nature conservation.
39. For section (7)(e) of the NOTES, the septic tanks of rebuilt New Territories Exemption Houses should not be constructed within 30 metre of either side of watercourse to avoid pollution of river water by the sewage.

Adverse Impacts of Road Network

40. Green groups would like to stress the adverse impacts of road network (Section 7.5.1 of EXPLANATORY STATEMENT), road access will promote development, air and noise pollution, and facilitate illegal dumping and landfilling on farmlands and riverbanks. In order to prevent uncontrollable and unenforceable vandalism in Tung Chung Valley and other potential adverse impacts of road access, we urge the Administration to review the proposed road network in the RODP and to impose traffic restriction in Tung Chung West, especially for construction trucks and machinery. We insist that all non-essential roads access to ecologically sensitive areas such as natural coastlines, river banks, fung shui wood and other ecologically important site is eliminated.
41. In the RODP of Tung Chung West, several proposed roads are concealed as they are zoned as "Non-Building Areas "(NBA) including:
 - (a) an extension of Yu Tung Road through "R4" zone to "CPA" on the eastern bank of Tung Chung River which is indicated as NBA,
 - (b) an extension from the proposed Area 39 PRH to "R4" zone across East River to reach Shek Lau Po.
 - (c) an "NBA" zone connecting "CA" through "R3" zone to the north of Shek Mun Kap.
42. Also, we are highly concerned about the proposed road access connecting existing Shek Mun Kap Road to Mok Ka, which runs across an Ecologically Important Stream designated by AFCD.
43. We are concerned that the launch of RODP will initiate eco-vandalism activities in ecologically important areas with road access, e.g. the "CA" zone adjoining Ngau Au, the "CA" and "GB" zone between Shek Mun Kap and the proposed "R3" zone.

Thank you very much for your kind attention. We look forward to your favourable decision.

Yours faithfully,



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On behalf of

Designing Hong Kong
Eco-Education & Resources Centre
Green Lantau Association
Green Power
Hong Kong Bird Watching Society
Hong Kong Outdoors
Lantau Buffalo Association
The Conservancy Association
World Wide Fund For Nature Hong Kong

Encl.

Appendix 1. Green Groups' recommended DPA Plan (version Oct 2015)
Appendix 2. Joint green groups' recommended DPA Plan for Tung Chung River, estuary, coastal areas and associated habitats (version Jun 2012)
Appendix 3. Map illustrating degraded site complaints and photos by green groups.
Appendix 4. Aerial photos of Tung Chung Valley taken in November 2007 and April 2015.

C.C.

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