

Tsim Sha Tsui Piazza Project shelved

The Government announced today (August 8) the decision to shelve the Tsim Sha Tsui (TST) Piazza Project. The decision was made after the Government fully examined the project and considered the views and aspirations of the District Council (DC) and district personalities.

A spokesman for the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau said, "The Government put forward a revised proposal for the TST Piazza Project in June 2011. Under the revised proposal, the piazza development would have been integrated with the revitalisation of the TST Pier, with an aim of developing the pier and its vicinity into a TST Pier-themed tourism node.

"In order to address the strong aspirations of the Yau Tsim Mong District Council (YTMDC) and the public over the traffic and transport arrangements, we also proposed to expand the planned turnaround outside the Hong Kong Cultural Centre to become a new public transport interchange, so that all 15 bus routes currently using the TST Pier Bus Terminus could continue to call at the TST Pier. The Government arranged for gazettal of works for the expansion of the turnaround in September 2011, and handled more than 7,000 representations received during the period of gazettal in accordance with the statutory procedures. In accordance with the relevant statutory provision, we sought the Chief Executive's approval for extension of the statutory time limit for handling public views for six months to August this year."

The spokesman continued, "Following the introduction of the revised proposal last year, the relevant departments actively conducted technical assessment on the proposal with a view to exploring the feasibility of the project and drawing up a concrete design as soon as possible for further consultation with the DC and the public. Nevertheless, when conducting the initial technical assessment for renovation and expansion of the TST Pier, the works departments discovered that the foundation of the existing pier would not be able to support substantial renovation and expansion with a meaningful increase of floor area for additional open space for public enjoyment of the harbourfront (such as a rooftop garden on top of the existing pier).

"The Government therefore considered re-adopting the original design proposal. However, the expanded turnaround plan for accommodating all 15 bus routes currently using the TST Pier Bus Terminus could not be incorporated into this proposal. If the strong aspirations of the DC for preserving the current level of bus

services were to be addressed, the size of the planned piazza would have inevitably been reduced by 40 per cent, from the original size of around 8,500 square metres to around 5,000 square metres. This would not allow adequate room for a substantial piazza development."

The spokesman pointed out that at the meeting of the YTMDC's Traffic and Transport Committee held in July this year, members once again expressed grave concerns over the traffic and transport arrangements under the TST Piazza Project. Given the aforesaid considerations, the Government considered it unviable to adopt the original design proposal.

"Over the past few years, we have made our best endeavours to take forward the project. Nevertheless, we encountered considerable technical difficulties and strong aspirations from the DC and the public for preserving the existing level of bus services. On the other hand, with the opening of the heritage hotel (1881 Heritage) at the site of the former Marine Police Headquarters as well as the development of Canton Road and its vicinity into a popular tourist shopping area in recent years, the additional tourism and economic benefits that the piazza project may bring have become relatively limited. Having balanced these considerations, we have decided to shelve the TST Piazza Project," the spokesman said.

The spokesman noted that the Government would allow the Gazette notice of the turnaround works under the revised proposal to lapse on the statutory deadline (i.e. August 8, 2012), and would arrange to publish a notice in the Gazette that the turnaround works would not be executed. The Government would also inform the stakeholders and relevant parties of the decision to shelve the project.

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