

**Harbour-front Enhancement Committee
Sub-committee on Harbour Plan Review**

**Supplementary Information on
Proposal to allow Commercial Helicopter Operators
to use Wan Chai Temporary Helipad**

Purpose

This paper provides supplementary information on the proposal to allow commercial helicopter operators to use the temporary helipad at the former Wan Chai Public Cargo Working Area (“Wan Chai Temporary Helipad”), having regard to the discussion at the meeting of the Sub-committee on Harbour Plan Review on 19 November 2008 (copy of the paper for the meeting at **Annex A**).

Supplementary Information

(a) Provision of Permanent Helipad

2. A summary of previous discussion on the provision of a permanent helipad on a site at the north-eastern corner of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (“HKCEC”) is at **Annex B**. Based on the current planning and subject to funding approval by the Legislative Council in 2009, the permanent helipad is expected to be operational in 2011. Upon commissioning of the permanent helipad, the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad will cease to be operational.

(b) Wan Chai Temporary Helipad

3. The Wan Chai Temporary Helipad has been in operation since January 2004, pending the commissioning of the permanent helipad. The Government Flying Service (“GFS”) has been using it temporarily

(about 6 to 7 flights¹ a day). To effect a neighbour-friendly operation, the GFS has taken a number of measures, including operating from the western helipad (which is farther from the Yacht Club) with designated flight paths away from the Yacht Club, minimising (non-emergency) operations during lunch time, etc, so as to alleviate the impact to nearby users (see the site plan at **Annex C**). Since the commissioning of the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad, the Civil Aviation Department has so far received 26 complaints, 24 of which were received from nearby residents concerning emergency flights by the GFS at night time.

(c) Justifications for the Proposal

4. Whilst we have not carried out a cost-benefit analysis, we consider it justified to pursue the proposal on the following grounds –

- (a) the proposal is conducive to the development of the commercial helicopter industry in Hong Kong by creating business opportunities for commercial helicopter operators through the use of an existing facility;
- (b) helicopter tours will positively contribute to the tourism industry as they could be a popular programme for tourists; and
- (c) the proposal will not render the existing facility unacceptable in terms of its impact on nearby users.

(d) Noise Impact and Downwash

5. The Wan Chai Temporary Helipad was not a Designated Project under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (Cap 499) as there were no noise sensitive receivers within 300 metres of the site. Hence, an environmental impact assessment on this project was not required under Cap 499. This notwithstanding, the then Territory Development Department² commissioned a helicopter noise level assessment in 2002, which indicated that the highest noise level generated by helicopters at the time of taking off and landing at the Wan Chai

¹ A flight refers to one landing and one take-off.

² Subsequently merged with the Civil Engineering Department to become the Civil Engineering and Development Department

Temporary Helipad was recorded to be around 84.9dB(A) at a place 260 metres from the helipad. The noise generated by the operations of AS-332 L2 (Super Puma) and EC 155B helicopters of the GFS at the helipad was used in the assessment. The noise criterion specified in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines issued by the Planning Department is 85dB(A) for premises requiring window circulation such as residential flats, schools and hospitals.

6. In general, the helicopter models currently used to provide commercial services are quieter than those used by the GFS and hence their operations will have a lower noise level. Indeed a flight test conducted in early November 2008 at the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad using common commercial helicopters in Hong Kong (i.e. AS355N (twin-engine) and MD 500 (single-engine)) has shown that the noise generated by these helicopters was only slightly above the background noise levels in the nearby areas.

7. Given the configuration of the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad (i.e. almost surrounded by the sea), any downwash effect of helicopter operations will dissipate over sea water, as observed during the flight test mentioned above.

(e) Impact on Local Traffic

8. As each commercial flight can only take 3 to 4 passengers with the current helicopter models, the proposal is expected to have insignificant traffic impact. Moreover, no tour coaches will be allowed to stop at the entrance of the site (i.e. Hung Hing Road), thus avoiding blocking the traffic.

(f) Proposed Operational Arrangements

9. Taking on board the Wan Chai District Council's suggestion³, we will adopt a gradual approach in allowing commercial helicopter flights in the first six months. The details of the proposed operational arrangements are as follows –

³ The Wan Chai District Council supported the proposal when consulted on 18 November 2008.

- (a) operating hours – from 8 am to 6 pm in general⁴;
- (b) number of flights –
 - (i) for the first three months – not more than 15 flights per day on average;
 - (ii) for the second three months – not more than 20 flights per day on average;
 - (iii) afterwards – to be reviewed;
- (c) operation of flights –
 - (i) domestic only;
 - (ii) should not affect the GFS's operations, e.g. no shut-down of helicopters;
 - (iii) flight schedules should be filed with the GFS prior to the scheduled operation day and the GFS will coordinate the schedules;
 - (iv) use the western helipad with designated flight paths as shown at **Annex C**
- (d) passenger waiting lounge and car parking spaces – a container may be installed to be used as a passenger waiting lounge, and two of the existing car parking spaces on the site may be used by commercial helicopter operators.

Advice Sought

10. Members are invited to give their views on the proposal.

Transport and Housing Bureau January 2009

⁴ We could consider a later commencement hour of say 9 am for Sundays and public holidays.

**Paper No. 24/2008
For Discussion
on 19 November 2008**

**Harbour-front Enhancement Committee
Sub-committee on Harbour Plan Review**

**Proposal to Allow Commercial Helicopter Operators
to Use the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on a proposal to allow commercial helicopter operators to use the temporary helipad at the former Wan Chai Public Cargo Working Area (“Wan Chai Temporary Helipad”) (location as indicated at Annex).

Background

2. Since the closure of the Central Helipad at Lung Wui Road in January 2004 to make way for the implementation of the Central Reclamation Phase III works, the Government Flying Service (“GFS”) has relocated its operation to the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad, pending the reprovisioning of a permanent helipad at the north-eastern corner of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (“HKCEC”)¹.

¹ On 9 August 2005, the Government and the Regional Heliport Working Group (“RHWG”) presented their respective proposals on the development of the permanent helipad to the Sub-committee on Wan Chai Development Phase II Review of the HEC. In March 2008, the Government circulated a copy of its paper for the Legislative Council Panel on Economic Development on the results of the technical feasibility study on the development of the permanent helipad to the HEC. The Government has undertaken to brief the HEC when the detailed design of the permanent helipad is available.

3. The Government has also decided that the permanent government helipad will be made available for the provision of commercial helicopter services at a charge to be determined by the Government, on condition that the GFS's emergency and other essential flying services must have absolute priority at all times in using the helipad.

Proposal

4. We have recently received a proposal from the Regional Heliport Working Group ("RHWG") that the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad should be made available for use by commercial helicopter operators. We have considered the proposal and taken the view that the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad is suitable for the provision of commercial helicopter services on a temporary basis provided that the GFS's emergency and other essential flying services are not affected. The RHWG's proposal will be conducive to the development of the industry.

5. According to a helicopter noise level assessment conducted by the then Territory Development Department² in 2002, the highest noise level generated by helicopters at the time of taking off and landing at the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad was recorded to be around 84.9dB(A)³ at a place 260 metres from the helipad. The noise generated by the operations of AS-332 L2 (Super Puma) and EC 155B helicopters of the GFS at the helipad was used in the assessment. In general, the helicopter models currently used to provide commercial helicopter services are quieter than those used by the GFS.

Way Forward

6. Our plan is to allow commercial helicopter operators to use the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad by licence agreements in early 2009 until the permanent helipad is commissioned near the HKCEC.

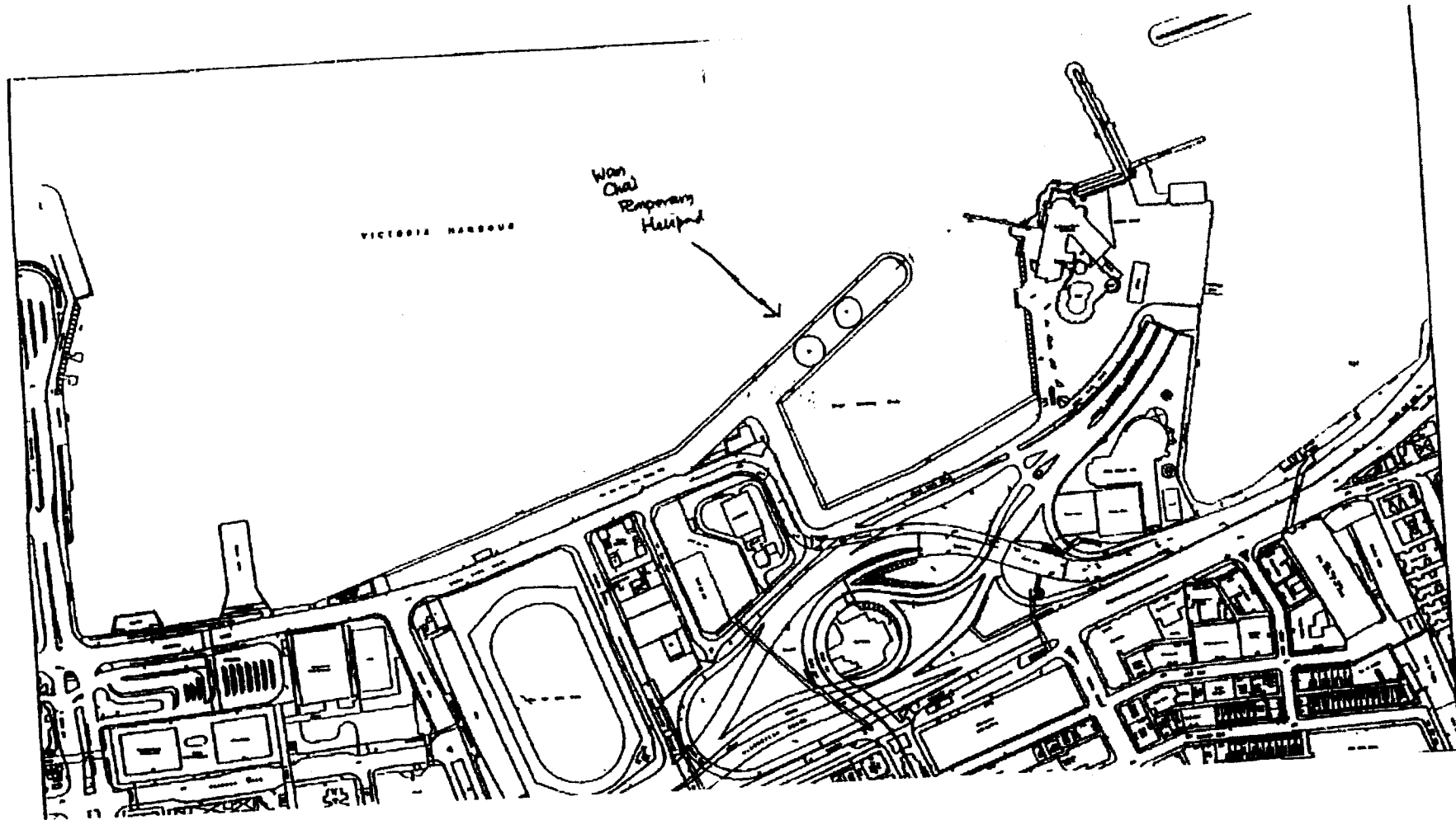
² Subsequently merged with the Civil Engineering Department to become the Civil Engineering and Development Department

³ The noise criterion specified in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines issued by the Planning Department is 85dB(A) for premises requiring window circulation such as residential flats, schools and hospitals..

Advice Sought

7. Members are invited to give their views on the proposal.

**Transport and Housing Bureau
November 2008**



Provision of Permanent Helipad

Following the closure of the Central Helipad at Lung Wui Road in January 2004 to make way for the implementation of the Central Reclamation Phase III works, the Government Flying Service (“GFS”) has relocated its operation to the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad pending the reprovisioning of a permanent helipad. After a thorough site search, the site at the north-eastern corner of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (“HKCEC”) is considered the most suitable site for a permanent government helipad for the GFS to provide emergency and other essential flying services.

2. At a joint meeting held on 28 February 2005, the Legislative Council Panel on Economic Services¹ and Panel on Planning, Lands and Works² passed a motion urging “the Government to expedite the provision of a permanent commercial heliport and associated facilities in the central business district of the Hong Kong Island, and, under the principle of no unlawful reclamation, allow the heliport at the HKCEC to accommodate both commercial uses by helicopter operators and government uses”.

3. Taking into account the motion, the Administration has proposed that the spare capacity of the proposed helipad would be made available for the provision of commercial helicopter services at a charge to be determined by the Government, on condition that emergency and other essential flying services of the GFS must have absolute priority at all times in using the helipad.

4. On 9 August 2005, the Government and the Regional Heliport Working Group (“RHWG”) presented their respective proposals of development of the permanent helipad at the HKCEC³ to the Sub-committee on Wan Chai Development Phase II Review of the HEC (“the

¹ Subsequently renamed the Panel on Economic Development

² Subsequently renamed the Panel on Development

³ The Government’s proposal will comprise two landing/taking-off pads, with ancillary facilities including passenger waiting rooms, service room and car parking spaces. As for the RHWG, they counter-proposed a fully-fledged heliport with four pads which would take up the existing ferry pier and require the erection of a 2,600m² deck over the Harbour.

Sub-committee”). Whilst deciding that the RHWG’s proposal should not be pursued further, the Sub-committee agreed that the Government’s proposal should be included in the outline concept plan to be prepared for the next stage of the public engagement exercise under the Harbour-front Enhancement Review covering Wan Chai, Causeway Bay and adjoining areas (“HER”). The Sub-committee also considered that the Wan Chai Temporary Helipad could be a possible site for developing a permanent helipad and should be included in the outline concept plan, but this idea was dropped at its meeting on 12 December 2005, as it was inconsistent with public’s aspirations for developing the former Public Cargo Working Area as a water sport and entertainment area for public enjoyment.

5. The survey carried out in the Realization Stage of the HER indicated that nearly half of the respondents accepted the planned government helipad at its current size as shown in the Concept Plan for Wan Chai Development Phase II (“WDII”). Thus, the proposed helipad at the HKCEC was included in the Recommended Outline Development Plan (“RODP”) of the WDII and the proposed amendments to relevant Outline Zoning Plans (“OZPs”) at the Detailed Planning Stage, which were put forward for further consultation.

6. After consulting the Wan Chai District Council (“WCDC”) at its meetings on 15 May 2007 and 11 June 2007⁴, and holding a public briefing on 23 June 2007⁵, the proposed amendments to the draft Wan Chai North OZP, which included the proposed helipad zone was considered and agreed by the Town Planning Board (“TPB”) and was then gazetted on 27 July 2007.

7. In March 2008, the Government circulated a copy of its paper reporting the results of the technical feasibility study on the development of a government helipad at the HKCEC to the Legislative Council Panel on Economic Development to the HEC for members’ reference. The Government undertook to brief the HEC when the detailed design of the permanent helipad was available.

⁴ The WCDC had not raised objection to the proposed shared-use arrangement of the Government helipad.

⁵ There was a general consensus that the RODP and OZPs had reflected most of the views and directions previously expressed on the Concept Plan.

Annex C

LICENSEE:

PREMISES:

Existing Government Flying Service Site at Wan Chai Heliport, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

PARTIES

SIGNATURE

LICENSOR

WITNESS

LICENCEE

WITNESS

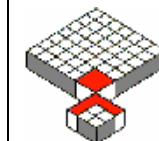
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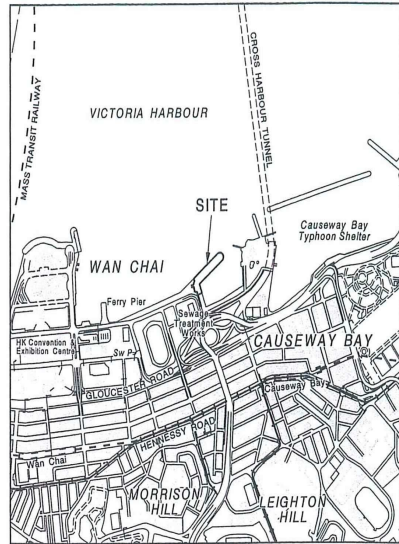
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GOVERNMENT
PROPERTY
AGENCY

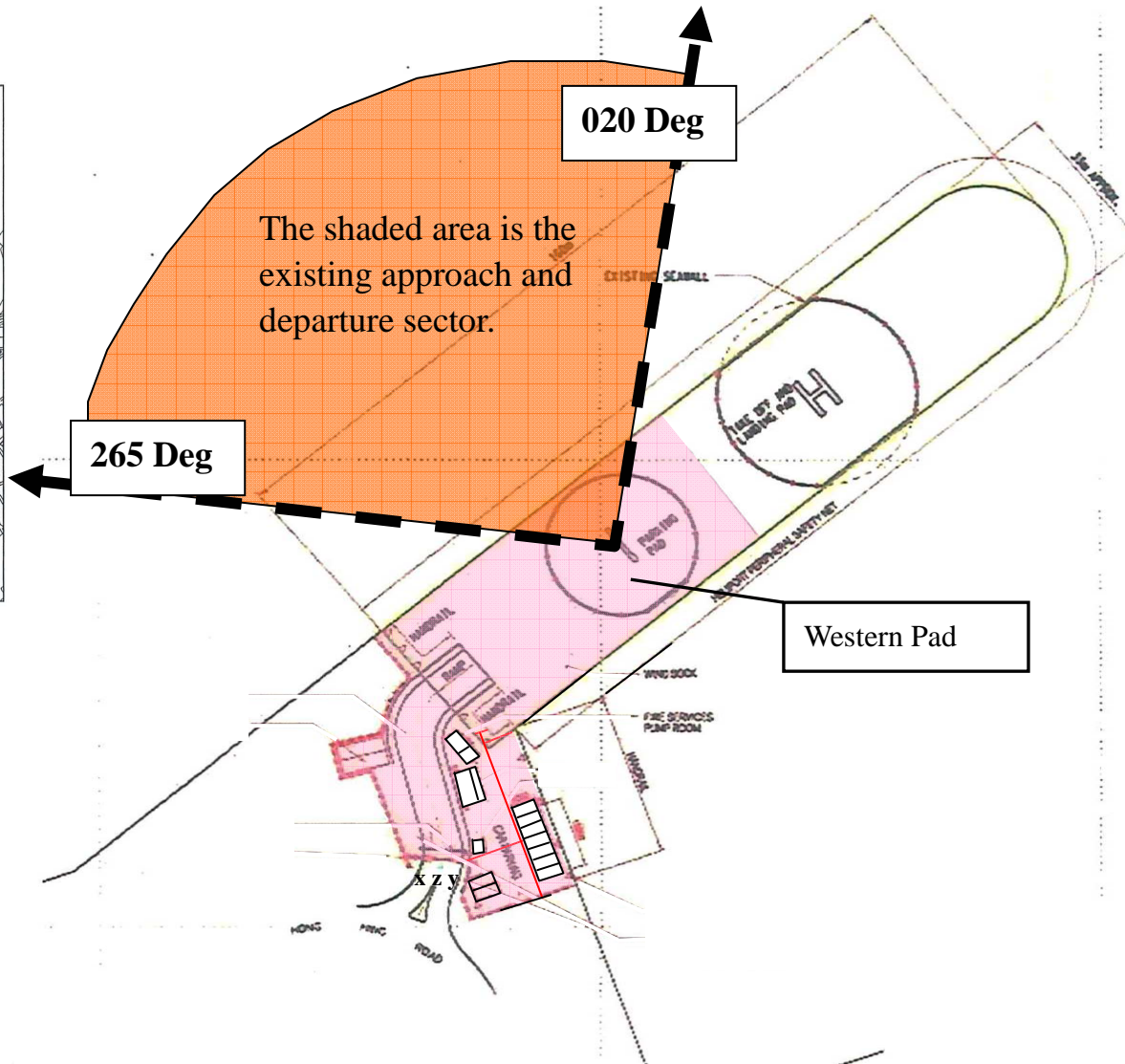


LOCATION



SCALE 1 : 20000

- Pink
- Pink cross hatched black
- X Y Z vehicular access points
- EXISTING WATER MAINS



COLOURED PINK AND PINK CROSS HATCHED BLACK AREA

(NOT TO SCALE)