

I refer to the SCMP article “Land bank rethink in population slowdown” published on August 20.

The article suggested that the Government’s strategy to build up a land bank might have to be revised because the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) recently lowered Hong Kong’s projected population from 8.89 million in 2039 to 8.47 million in 2041.

While the accommodation of 1.37 million people – about twice the population of Shatin – would in itself require a considerable amount of land, two other important factors should be taken on board. First, C&SD also predicts that the proportion of people aged 65 and over will rise significantly from 13% in 2011 to 30% in 2041, leading to a growing demand for facilities and space for the elderly. Second, the “2011 Population Census” revealed that there is a trend of shrinking household. The proportion of small households (1 or 2 persons) increased from 37.5% in 2001 to 42.3% in 2011. Both factors will press for more land.

The Government is committed to pursuing additional land resources and building up a land reserve to meet the increasing need for housing and community facilities, public aspirations for better living environment, and infrastructural and economic development. As regards land reserve, apart from conventional approach of forming land to put into the land reserve, we will consider identifying and reserving potential sites after further analysis and studies. Construction work will start only when the need is established.

We launched the Stage 1 Public Engagement (PE) in November 2011 on enhancing land supply strategy. The majority of responses either supported or indicated no objection to enhancing land supply using the multi-pronged approach, which includes reclamation outside Victoria Harbour, re-zoning, redevelopment, resumption of land, rock cavern development and re-use of ex-quarry sites. As different supply options involve different challenges and limitations, we need all six in play to form a flexible and resilient mix of land supply options to meet future challenges and opportunities. In this respect, it is worth pointing out that reclamation can also help resolve problems associated with surplus public fill and contaminated mud.

Letter to the editor of SCMP (7 Sep 12)

We will propose a number of sites for public consultation in Stage 2 PE. According to the current plan, the Stage 2 PE will commence in the fourth quarter of 2012 for completion in the first quarter of 2013.

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