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The Conservancy Association

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23rd April 2015

Ms. Wong Sean Yee, Anissa
Director of Environmental Protection
Environmental Protection Department
Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance Register Office

By E-mail: reo@epd.gov.hk

Dear Ms. Wong

Re: Comprehensive Development and Wetland Protection near Yau Mei San Tsuen

The Conservancy Association (CA) would like to express grave concerns on the captioned EIA report.

1. Impact on Black-faced Spoonbill

According to the EIA report of the Proposed Residential Cum Passive Recreation Development within “Recreation” Zone and “Residential (Group C)” Zone at Various Lots in DD 104, Yuen Long, N.T., 6 records of Black-faced Spoonbill (BFS) were once noted in Ngau Tam Mei Channel near the application sites. (i.e. within the Assessment Area of the captioned project) in December 2010. As mentioned in the captioned EIA report, this Channel “*has become more important for wetland birds since the water management regime changed since the 2008 wet season*” (Section 8.7.2.2), the ecological survey which is conducted between 2007 and 2008, might not reflect the usage of BFS in this Channel in associated with the development site.

From Section 8.7.2.3, supplementary information on the bird flight line is added to evaluate linkage between the Channel and the wider Deep Bay wetlands through the Assessment Area. Flight Lines of BFS, however, has not been shown in the EIA report. BFS is listed as “Endangered” under the IUCN Red List and China Red Data Book, and of “Potential Global Concern” in Fellows *et al.* (2002) so that impacts of any development on this globally endangered species need careful assessment. Provision of more details is therefore necessary.

2. Effectiveness of the proposed ecological corridor

From Figure 1-a of Appendix 8-4, Flight Line 4 is exactly within the development site while Flight Line 3 is located close to east boundary of the development site. These two non-breeding bird flight lines would be narrowed as a result of the proposed development. Despite the provision of ecological corridor (Figure 1) in the eastern side of the development site, we are doubtful that if the proposed width (9-19m according to Section 2.9) of the ecological corridor would be effective in mitigating disturbance to Flight Line 3 and 4, as well as to the adjacent wetland outside the development site.

We have to highlight that the proposed ecological corridor is located next to “Recreation” (REC) zone (Figure 1) which is another source of human disturbance. The worst case scenario can be that the ecological corridor is between the residential development and recreation land use in future. The Flight Line 3 identified in the EIA report would be further blocked and the narrow ecological corridor could no longer serve any purposes. We cannot see how this potential cumulative impact and loss of ecological linkage can be tackled by project proponent in the EIA report.

3. Loss of agricultural land

With the increasing public interest on local agriculture, agricultural land should not be easily scarified for development. Especially the new Agricultural Policy, entitled “Sustainable Agricultural Development in Hong Kong”, has been formulating after 3-month consultation. We have to state that sustainable agriculture, apart from economic viability, protect ecological and environmental resources, creates food security, and enhances the quality of life for farmers and the community, for both current and future generation. Loss of agricultural land due to this development project should not be tolerated. Both the Administration and project proponent should try to ensure protection of local agriculture in a practical way instead of leaving this irreversible impact unsolved.

The agricultural land in this site indeed remained largely active (Figure 2). Even it is now left abandoned, we believe that there is still high potential for farm rehabilitation in this site. The Director of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) should therefore consider the potential value to be enhanced ecologically.

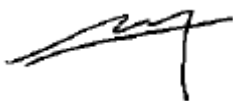
4. Buffer Planting

Some 3-storey houses would be built next to WRA so that buffer planting has been proposed to screen out potential human disturbance. However, according to Figure 11-24 & 11-25 of the EIA report (Figure 3), it seems that the proposed tree planting buffer cannot screen out disturbance with 3-storey houses. Besides, Figure 11-18 has stated that those featuring trees for screen planting would be “capable of reaching a height >10m within 10 years”. This assumption lacks justification as currently no details of species selection have been provided. Some species might not result in dense canopy when mature and we worry that human disturbance cannot be mitigated finally.

5. Nature Conservation Policy

We wish to point out that the proposed development site falls within the list of 12 Priority Sites (Deep Bay Wetland Outside Ramsar Site) according to New Nature Conservation Policy (NNCP) promulgated in 2004. Therefore the proposed Public-private Partnership (PPP) Scheme should fulfill the requirement under NNCP, in addition to the requirement under OU(CDWRA). The project proponent should further elaborate in the EIA report that how the current proposal can meet the requirement under NNCP.

Yours sincerely



Ng Hei Man
Assistant Campaign Manager

Figure 1 The proposed ecological corridor (circled in red) is narrow while the REC zone (circled in orange) is located just next to the ecological corridor and its effect in mitigating disturbance from the development is questionable.

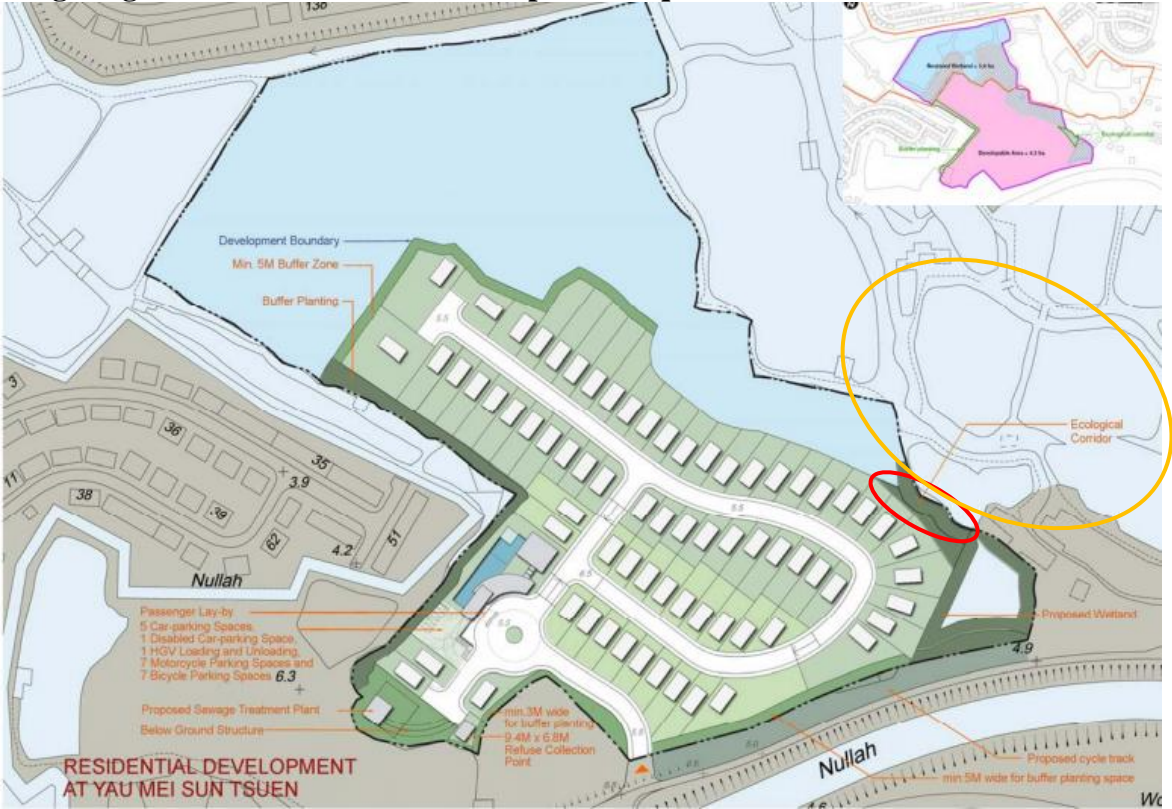


Figure 2 Referring to Google Earth Aerial Photo, agricultural land in the subject site remained largely active in 2008. Currently, most of them are abandoned.

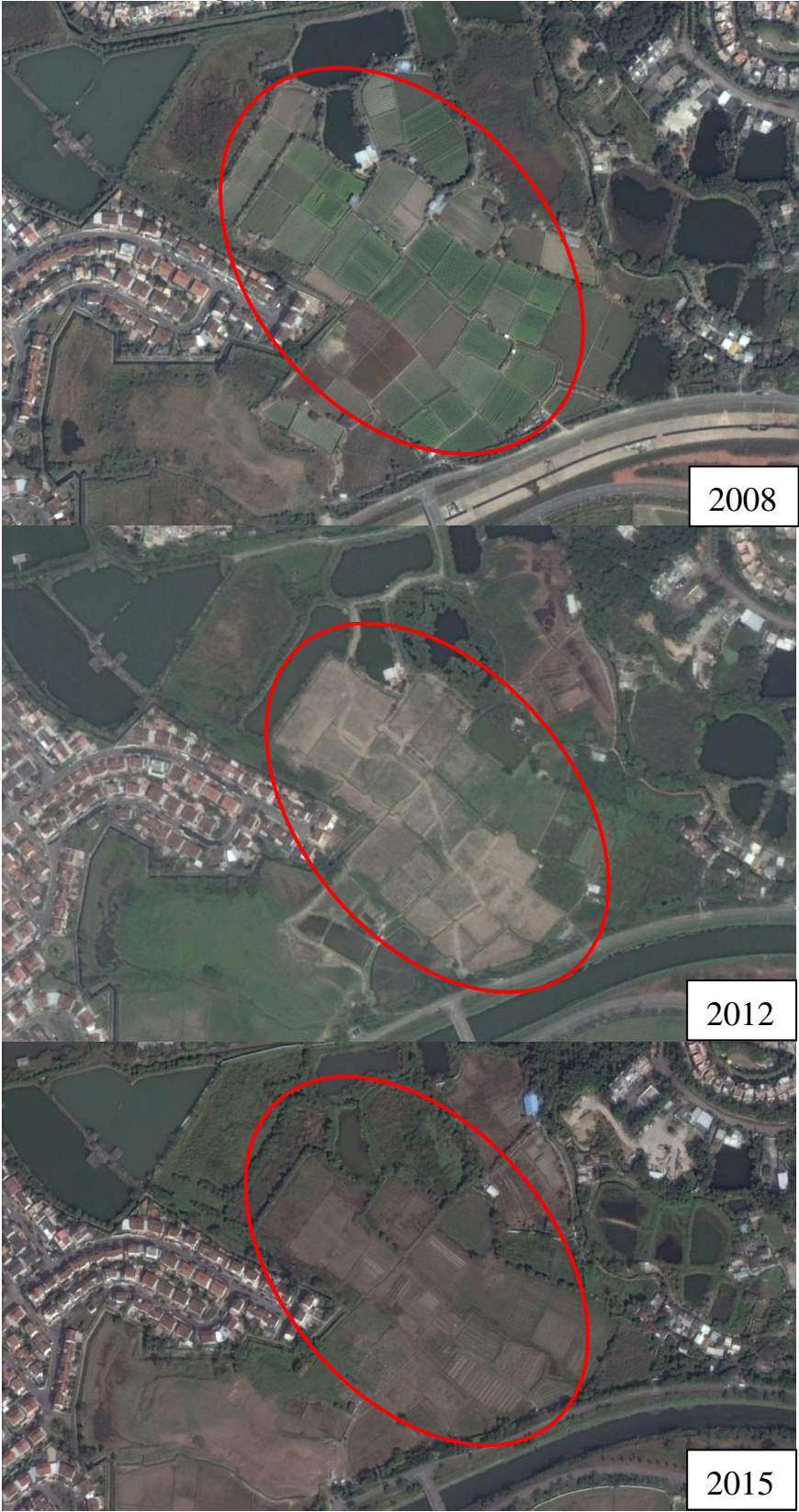
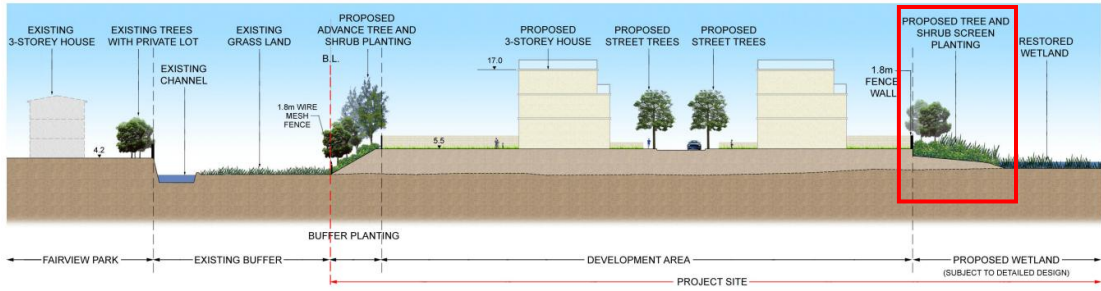


Figure 3 The proposed tree planting buffer (bracketed in red) cannot screen out disturbance with 3-storey houses.

NOTE: SECTIONS ARE APPROXIMATE AND FOR VISUALISATION PURPOSES ONLY



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