

**Kowloon District**

**Agenda Item 3**

Section 12A Application

[Open Meeting (Presentation and Question Sessions Only)]

Y/K10/6                      Application for Amendment to the Approved Ma Tau Kok Outline Zoning Plan No. S/K10/30, To amend the building height restriction on a “Government, Institution or Community” site, Evangel Hospital, from 5 storeys to 114 metres above Principal Datum, 222 Argyle Street, Kowloon City, Kowloon  
(MPC Paper No. Y/K10/6)

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Presentation and Question Sessions

7.                      The following representatives from the Planning Department (PlanD) and the applicants’ representatives were invited to the meeting at this point:

**PlanD**

- Ms Vivian M.F. Lai                      - District Planning Officer/Kowloon (DPO/K)
  
- Ms Vicki Y.Y. Au                      - Senior Town Planner/Kowloon (STP/K)
  
- Ms Jenny W.C. Lai                      - Town Planner/Kowloon

**Applicant’s Representatives**

*Evangel Hospital - Applicant*

Mr W.I. Ho

Dr Vincent Lin

Dr Billy Chui

*Townland Consultant Limited*

Ms Delius Wong

*Architecture Design and Research Group Limited*

Mr Bernard Lim

Mr Eugene Chung

8. The Chairperson extended a welcome and explained the procedures of the meeting. To ensure smooth and efficient conduct of the meeting, a time limit of 15 minutes was set for presentation of the applicant. He then invited PlanD's representatives to brief Members on the background of the application.

9. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Ms Vicki Y.Y. Au, STP/K, briefed Members on the background of the application, the proposed rezoning of the application site (the Site) to amend the building height (BH) restriction (BHR) of the "Government, Institution or Community" ("G/IC") zone of the Site from 5 storeys to 114mPD to facilitate the redevelopment of the Evangel Hospital (the Hospital), departmental comments, and the planning considerations and assessments as detailed in the Paper. PlanD had no objection to the application.

[Ms Sandy H.Y. Wong and Mr Stanley T.S. Choi joined the meeting during PlanD's presentation.]

10. The Chairperson then invited the applicant's representatives to elaborate on the application. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Mr W.I. Ho, Dr Vincent Lin, Dr Billy Chui and Mr Bernard Lim, the applicant's representatives, made the following main points:

*Background*

- (a) the Hospital was built at the Site in 1965, and was established by the Evangelical Free Church of China. It had served the local community of Kowloon City District for about 60 years with a mission to preach gospel through holistic, high quality and affordable healthcare services;

- (b) the Hospital was a self-financing, non-profit making private hospital, dedicated to providing professional family medicine services. Its revenue was primarily used for the operation and development of the Hospital and for enhancing the quality of medical and clinical services;

*Justifications for the Proposed Redevelopment*

- (c) the proposed redevelopment would enhance the Hospital's service provision by increasing the number of operating theatres (OTs) and hospital beds, as well as the capacity of out-patient services, which was in line with the Government's policy addressing the challenges posed by an ageing population and the rising prevalence of chronic diseases. The proposed redevelopment had gained policy support from the Health Bureau (HHB);
- (d) the existing hospital building was subject to various constraints, including limited floor space, scattered service in various locations, crowded service and waiting areas, and insufficient infrastructural support (e.g. electricity supply and headroom for installation of the latest medical equipment). The proposed redevelopment could overcome these constraints for enhancement of hospital services to meet the increasing demand for high-quality healthcare services, provide more services on prevention and primary health care and promote sustainable healthcare system (e.g. on the aspects of oncology, chronic disease, degenerative disease and mental health) under the Hospital's mission. The redeveloped hospital would improve patients' environment with enhanced infection control, facilitate the application of smart hospital initiative (e.g. adoption of artificial intelligence), provide better patient services including in terms of price transparency and package pricing, and expand collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide services to underprivileged groups;

*The Indicative Scheme*

- (e) the indicative scheme for the proposed amendment of BHR for the Site from 5 storeys to 114mPD comprising 22 storeys over 2 levels of basement would accommodate more medical equipment, facilities for clinical services and professional medical training, and essential electrical and mechanical (E&M) facilities for electricity supply;
- (f) a number of planning and design merits were proposed in the indicative scheme, including a 6m wide full-height setback from Argyle Street, a 6m wide tower setback above podium level from Fu Ning Street, a minimum building setback of 0.65m from the southwestern site boundary, sensitive building facade treatment including a green-patterned wall mural facing Hoover Court located to southwest of the Site, edge plantings at the balcony on 6/F and vertical greening, a mix of glass/wall-like facades on lower podium levels and circulation splay at Fu Ning Street/Fuk Cheung Street with a view to improving pedestrian circulation, street amenity, air ventilation and visual permeability;

#### *Community Engagement*

- (g) the Hospital had consulted relevant stakeholders on the rezoning application, including the adjoining residential development (Hoover Court), Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS), Kowloon City District Council and certain universities, and they had no objection to or adverse comment on the current application; and

#### *Way Forward*

- (h) after the redevelopment, the Hospital would continue its mission and family doctor approach by providing comprehensive and holistic preventive care, i.e. 'One-stop Care', within the redeveloped building. This approach primarily aimed to address the needs of patients suffering from chronic diseases, such as cancer and mental illness, as well as their caregivers, which were exacerbated by an ageing population.

11. As the presentations of PlanD's representative and the applicant's representatives had been completed, the Chairperson invited questions from Members.

*The Indicative Scheme*

12. Some Members raised the following questions:

- (a) the rationale for proposing a building setback of 0.65m from the southwest site boundary and whether the podium setback of 6m at 8/F of the Hospital facing Fu Ning Street could be placed towards Hoover Court to increase the distance between the two buildings;
- (b) whether there were any design measures of the redevelopment that would benefit the local community; and
- (c) whether there was any provision of staff accommodation if the Hospital operated 24 hours a day.

13. In response, Mr Bernard Lim and Dr Billy Chui, the applicant's representatives, with the aid of some PowerPoint slides, made the following main points:

- (a) compared with the previous application No. Y/K10/5 (the previous application), the applicant, after taking into account the site constraint, proposed a building setback of 0.65m from the southwestern site boundary adjacent to Hoover Court in the indicative scheme under the current application in order to maintain a wider distance between Hoover Court and the Hospital. As the building of Hoover Court was set back from its site boundary ranging from 4m to 7m from the Hospital and there were just some windows of Hoover Court on its side facing the Hospital, together with the proposed green-patterned wall mural, the proposed measures would minimise the potential interface issues. The setback from Fu Ning Street was intended to enhance street amenity and had taken into account

the planned redevelopment of Chun Seen Mei Chuen in the vicinity;

- (b) the facades of the lower floors of the Hospital would adopt a transparent design which would be the waiting and seating areas for patients, caregivers and visitors. Besides, the applicant had liaised with HKHS on the arrangement of the run-in/out and construction works of the Hospital to minimise impact on the community including Chun Seen Mei Chuen and its redevelopment; and
- (c) owing to the reform on the fees for public healthcare services being reviewed by the Government, it was expected that more patients would choose private hospital services. To enhance the services to the community, the Hospital would operate 24 hours a day and on-call rooms for medical staff would be provided.

14. The Chairperson supplemented that the BH of Hoover Court was 46mPD as shown on Plan Z-5 of the Paper, whereas the approved BH under the previous application was 80mPD, which was already higher than the BH of Hoover Court. It appeared that most of the windows of Hoover Court faced Argyle Street and Fuk Cheung Street. The additional increase in BH and the disposition of the Hospital tower at a higher level might not have significant impact on Hoover Court, as compared with the previous application.

*Proposed BHR*

15. Two Members raised the following questions:

- (a) whether the roof could be accessed by users of the Hospital and the proposed BHR had taken this into account; and
- (b) the rationale for the current application for further relaxation of the BHR compared with the previous application, and whether there would be future application for additional relaxation on the BHR.

16. In response, Messrs W.I. Ho and Bernard Lim, the applicant's representatives, with the aid of some PowerPoint slides, made the following main points:

- (a) the design of the Hospital and the proposed BHR had taken into account the accommodation of E&M facilities and other rooftop structures, as well as the potential for supporting low-altitude economy in the future. As the roof would house the E&M facilities, it would be accessible to the Hospital's staff only; and
  
- (b) the proposed BHR of 80mPD under the previous application was a conservative decision, which primarily had taken into account the BHRs of the residential developments in the vicinity, which were mainly 80mPD. As a result, the design of the Hospital could only accommodate essential services/facilities, and some services had to be located outside the Hospital. Having considered a Member's enquiry on whether the Hospital would consider pursuing a higher BH for the proposed redevelopment at the Committee's meeting on the previous application in 2023, the project proponent had conducted a comprehensive review to critically assess the technical feasibility and further optimise the site efficiency. With the provision of enhanced hospital facilities and services such as increase in the number of beds and OTs and increase in the room size (e.g. larger OTs) to meet the latest requirements, there would be a corresponding increase in ancillary facilities, such as E&M facilities, lifts and parking spaces. An analysis on lift requirement to meet the operational needs of the Hospital had been conducted and the findings indicated that further increase in BH (i.e. exceeding the currently proposed BH of 114mPD) would necessitate the provision of more lifts to manage the flow and serve different zones of the Hospital and this would take up the space available for medical facilities/services on each floor. Besides, additional car parking spaces for users would also be required. The current scheme with the proposed BH was an optimal design to improve the Hospital's services while meeting relevant requirements such as the design and space requirements of OTs and wards particularly after the pandemic. Applying for further relaxation

of the BHR (i.e. exceeding 114mPD) was considered not necessary.

*Community Engagement*

17. A Member asked whether the residents of Hoover Court had been consulted regarding the proposed green-patterned wall mural facing Hoover Court. In response, Messrs W.I. Ho and Bernard Lim, the applicant's representatives, with the aid of some PowerPoint slides, made the following main points:

- (a) residents of Hoover Court were consulted on the indicative scheme under the current application including the proposed green-patterned wall mural facing their building, and they had no objection to the application. The Hospital had taken into account their feedbacks in formulating the design, including the provision of the planting at the side of the Hospital facing Hoover Court; and
- (b) other stakeholders including nearby schools, HKHS, relevant schools of Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong Metropolitan University and Hong Kong Polytechnic University had been engaged and consulted on the Hospital's redevelopment.

*Others*

18. Two Members raised the following questions:

- (a) the charges for medical services at the Hospital;
- (b) the financial situation of the Hospital in the past 5 years, and how the profit would be used; and
- (c) the sources of funding for the redevelopment.

19. In response, Dr Billy Chui and Mr W.I. Ho, the applicant's representatives, made

the following main points:

- (a) the consultation fee for family doctor services at the Hospital was \$285, excluding medication, while the consultation fee for specialists was approximately \$600. Eligible patients, such as seniors aged 65 or above and those affiliated with NGOs associated with the Hospital, would receive discounts;
- (b) over the past decade, the Hospital experienced losses in several years, particularly during the pandemic. All revenues generated by the Hospital, including donations, were reinvested to support the Hospital's operation and services; and
- (c) the preliminary estimated cost for the redevelopment was approximately HK\$3 billion. The main sources of funding included donations and fundraising, while loans from banks would also be considered, pending banks' assessment of the sustainability of the business model. The Hospital would start working on the financial arrangement if the current rezoning application was agreed by the Town Planning Board.

20. In response to a Member's enquiry on whether land premium would be required for the proposed redevelopment, Ms Vivian M.F. Lai, DPO/K, said that, according to the Lands Department's comments, lease modification was required for the proposed redevelopment subject to payment of premium. Nevertheless, noting that the applicant was a non-profit-making private hospital and with HHB's policy support, the payment of premium might be waived or at a nominal amount subject to the consideration at the lease modification stage. Mr W.I. Ho, the applicant's representative, supplemented that as a non-profit making private hospital, the payment of land premium would impose a burden on the Hospital. The proposed redevelopment would need to rely on donations and fundraising.

21. As the applicant's representatives had no further points to raise and there were no further questions from Members, the Chairperson informed the applicant's representatives

that the hearing procedure of the application had been completed and the Committee would deliberate on the application in their absence and inform the applicant of the Committee's decision in due course. The Chairperson thanked PlanD's representatives and the applicant's representatives for attending the meeting. They left the meeting at this point.

### Deliberation Session

22. The Chairperson recapitulated that the previous application, with a proposed BHR of 80mPD, was agreed by the Committee in 2023. The current application sought to further amend the BHR to 114mPD. Members could focus on considering the justifications for further amending the BHR, any resultant adverse impact on the surroundings, and the planning and design merits of the proposed redevelopment.

23. Members generally supported the application as the proposal was well justified and would not generate insurmountable adverse impact, along with the design merits of the redevelopment scheme and the benefits that could be brought to the community. Members were impressed by the community engagement conducted by the applicant especially with residents of Hoover Court on the redevelopment scheme and design measures, including the setback from the southwestern site boundary adjacent to Hoover Court and incorporation of a green-patterned wall mural to minimise interface with Hoover Court. Some Members expressed that the redevelopment had incorporated the element to develop the Hospital as a 'smart hospital' and could supplement the services of public sector to meet the demand by offering relatively affordable medical services provided by the applicant, thereby bringing benefits to the community, while recognising the potential challenges in the financial arrangements for the redevelopment project.

24. After deliberation, the Committee decided to agree to the application. The relevant proposed amendments to the Ma Tau Kok Outline Zoning Plan, together with the revised Notes and Explanatory Statement, would be submitted to the Committee for agreement prior to its gazetting under the Town Planning Ordinance.