



## **FACT SHEET**

### **Land Use Planning in Hong Kong** Factsheet No.4

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The population of Hong Kong was about 7.0 million in 2000 and its total land area is just 1,076 km<sup>2</sup>. So wise use of land is important to make Hong Kong a good place to live and work in, otherwise, conflicting land use such as adjacent industrial buildings to residential area may lead to considerable socio-economic problems. Land use planning aims to promote the right use of land in the right place at the right time.

#### **THE HIERACHY OF PLANNING**

To satisfy the demands on land resources for housing, commerce, industry, transport, recreation and community use, Government has devised a three-tier planning system, namely, Territorial Development Strategy (TDS), Sub-regional Development Strategies (e.g. Metroplan) and district planning (Figure 1). The Land Development Policy Committee (LDPC) guides the policies of the former two plan-making levels. Under such frame-works set up by the these two plan-making levels, district planning is formulated and executed through statutory outline zoning plans (OZP) and development permission area (DPA) plans. Whilst both OZP and DPA plans show district planning intention, DPA plans were prepared after the enactment of the Town Planning (Amendment) Ordinance 1991 as a temporary measure until corresponding OZPs are published.

#### **THE RESPONSIBLE ORGANISATIONS**

Planning Department is the major administrative and executive body for land use planning and control in Hong Kong. Empowered by the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131), a Town Planning Board is appointed, which approves development applications OZPs and DPAs.

#### **LAND USE ZONING**

In each OZP and DPA plan, areas are zoned for uses such as residential, commercial, industrial, green belt, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), etc. In each OZP, some land uses are always permitted while for some others approval from the TPB is required. However, many areas in the DPAs are zoned as "unspecified use" areas and all proposed developments falling into this zone must make an application to the TPB.



## LAND USE PLANNING AND CONSERVATION

Provisions of zoning in the Town Planning (Amendment) Ordinance 1991 related to conservation are:

**Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**- There are 49 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, which is a planning measure ensuring special attention is paid during land use planning.

**Conservation Area (CA)** - These aim to preserve the ecological and topographical features of the site, and separate sensitive areas like SSSIs from the threats of active development.

**Green belt (GB)** - Apart for their own conservation value, they may act as visual and noise screening.

**Country Park (CP)** - 21 Country Parks have been set up, covering about 40% of Hong Kong's area.

**Coastal Protection Area (CPA)** - they are zoned for protecting high quality and scenic coastline.

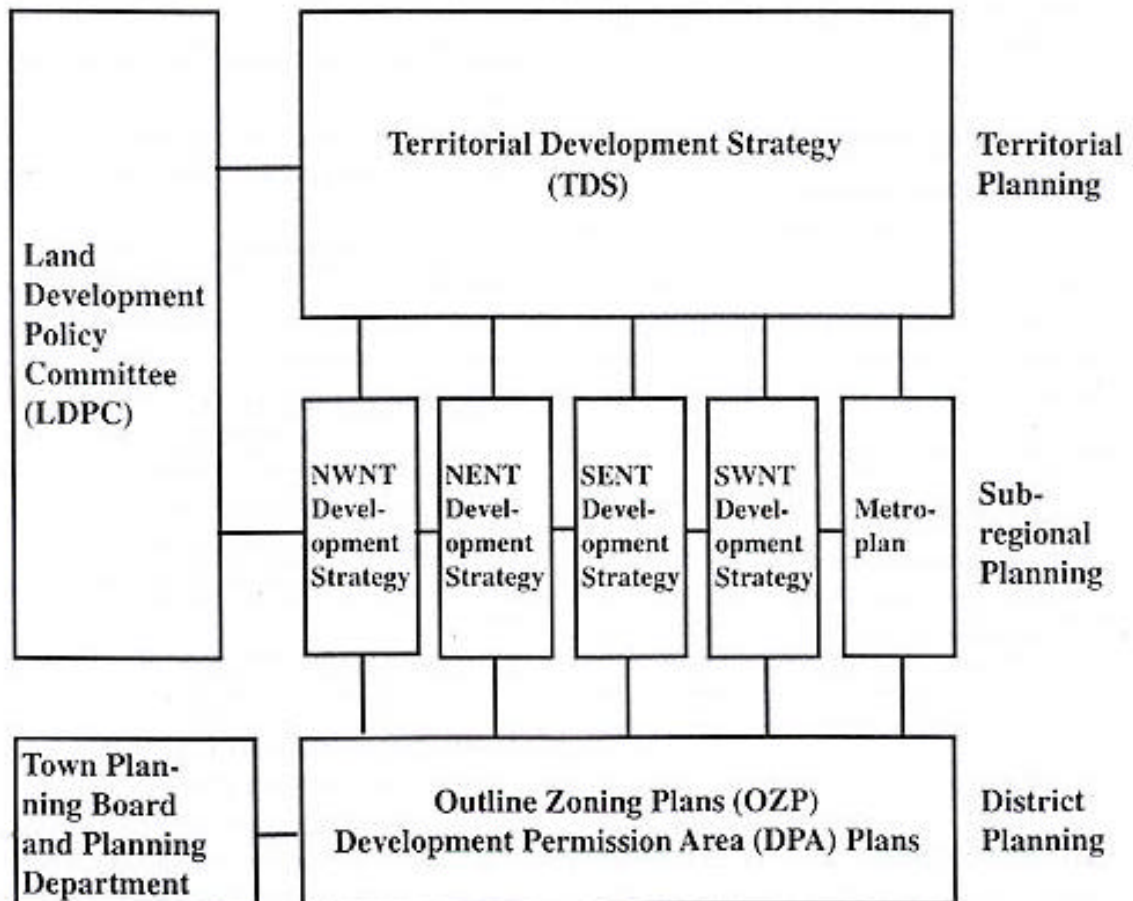
It should be noted that only parts of the above zoning receive statutory protection under the relevant ordinances. Others are just administrative zoning and the protection of them may be inadequate. Although 40% of the Hong Kong SAR is covered by Country Parks, they are mostly restricted to upland area with many pockets within them, which are outside the Country Park boundary. SSSI, SA and CPA also do not enjoy strict protection on their land uses. Thus, unwanted activities are frequently found within these areas. Before the amendment of the Town Planning Ordinance in 1991, land use in the New Territories was not planned except that in the New Towns. This has resulted in the extensive conversion of fish ponds and farmland to open storage and dumping grounds, developments can also be found next to some ecologically important sites, e.g. Fairview Park next to Mai Po SSSI.

Strict enforcement of the Town Planning Ordinance is essential to prevent any further degradation of the natural environment. SSSI, SA and CPA also should receive statutory protection. Better planning approaches are also desired, for example, Buffer Zones sandwiched between SSSIs and developing areas, so that the limited land resources in Hong Kong can be used in an optimal way.



Figure 1. The Hierarchy of Planning in Hong Kong

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Further reading:

1. *Environment Hong Kong 1993*, Environmental Protection Department, Hong Kong Government.
2. *Hong Kong 1993*, Hong Kong government.
3. *Comprehensive Review of the Town Planning Ordinance, Consultative Document*, Planning Environment and Lands Branch, Government Secretariat, Hong Kong, 1990
4. *Territorial Development Strategy Review, Environmental Baseline Conditions*, Planning Department, Hong Kong, 1993.