

Background and Purpose of Submission

According to the Chief Executive Policy Address 2015 paragraph 182 and Policy Address 2017 paragraph 114, the Government will proactively work with NGOs to adopt a flexible approach to support and promote the revitalization of remote rural areas and conserve biodiversity in rural areas according to sustainability development principle and adopts innovative approaches. This project is a response to the CE's call and will serve as a showcase to the rural community how food business licensing could be achieved.

Following the announcement of 2017 Policy Address, the Countryside Conservation Office (CCO) was established under the Environmental Protection Department in 2018. The establishment of CCO will enhance the countryside revitalization, ecological conservation, and support collaboration of local NGOs based on an interactive and co-operative approach under the Countryside Conservation Funding Scheme (CCFS). This project, as part of village revival model, is funded under the CCFS to conduct the feasibility of licensed food business in remote old village in Lai Chi Wo.

This planning statement is prepared to substantiate a s.16 planning application for "Eating Place" at ground floor of houses at Lot in D.D.145 at Lai Chi Wo Village on "Village Type Development" (V) zone of Approved Lai Chi Wo, Siu Tan and Sam A Tsuen Outline Zoning Plan No. S/NE-LCW/2 (OZP No. S/NE-LCW/2).

Justification and Planning Merits

As part of village revival model and promotion of the traditional rural village in Hong Kong, "eating place" use is required to serve the guests of the recently licensed guesthouses, local community and visitors.

The proposed shop would provide catering services without seating accommodation and mainly focus on serving target groups such as the visitors and villagers. Traditional Hakka style cooked food could be provided under food factory licence and sell as take-away. The operation hour of the proposed shop will be from 11a.m. to 3p.m. on Saturday, Sunday and public holiday.

The proposal wishes to provide licensed food service in the village. It will be a part of the village life learning experience.

Premises Background

The premises is situated in Lai Chi Wo village, which is a well-preserved Hakka walled village having high cultural and historical value and is illustrative of the development of the rural Hong Kong.

In accordance to the reply letter from Lands Department, the occupations on Lot in D.D. 145 had existed before 1 January 1961. The premises in application lot is a double-storey block wall traditional residential house. There is no any related planning enforcement case or any previous planning application in respect of the premises.

The Premises and its Surrounding Area

The premises is currently used as living room toilet and kitchen at G/F and bedroom at 1/F. The food business is to be run by the Lai Chi Wo villagers who are living in the same premises at 1/F with consent from landowner(s).

The surrounding areas are mainly rural and natural in character and rich of cultural heritage and recreation/tourism-related resources, such as Hip Tin Temple, Hok Shan Monastery and the Lai Chi Wo Nature Trail, which develop Lai Chi Wo area into a popular destination for hikers and tourists. There are also agricultural and tourism activities available for visitors. In support of the operation of guesthouse to be launched in coming March 2022, the proposal will complement each other to benefit the revitalization of the village.

Planning Intention

The planning intention of the “V” zone is to designate both existing recognized villages and areas of land considered suitable for village expansion. Land within this zone is primarily intended for development of Small Houses by indigenous villagers. It is also intended to concentrate village type development within this zone for a more orderly development pattern, efficient use of land and provision of infrastructures and services.

Selected commercial and community uses serving the needs of the Lai Chi Wo villagers and in support other revitalization initiatives in Lai Chi Wo revival model may be permitted on application to the Board.

Planning Considerations

The proposed food business would be operated under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) and other relevant legislation. Subject to detailed design, the premises could be applied for food factory license upon granting of planning

permission. In view of the small scale of area and business nature, the proposal would not create environmental nuisance or inconvenience to residents nearby.

Since septic tank and the drainage system would be upgraded (if required) to meet licensing requirement, it is believed that the proposal would not result in adverse impacts on drainage, sewage disposal facilities. Fire safety aspects would be upgraded (if required) to meet licensing requirement as well.

In case there is local objections, forum with Q&A session is proposed to be held within the village to explain the importance of licensed and qualified food services in the progress of revitalization of remote rural area.

Comments from Relevant Government Departments

As stated in OZP No. S/NE-LCW/2, the planning intention of Village Type Development allows for the provision of selected commercial and community uses serving the needs of the villagers and in support of the village development, use including 'eating place' is always permitted on the ground floor of a New Territories Exempted House. By referring to the reply on enquiry from Lands Department dated 26 October 2021 (see attachment), the houses on Lot in D.D.145 had existed before 1 January 1961 and the mentioned lot is Old Schedule lots which have no user restrictions.

Public Comment Received

Local villagers' engagement activities were conducted to collect views and opinions before the preparation of this application. Positive feedback and strong support were received from the attendants.

A master layout plan and proposed layout plan of the houses are provided for your consideration. With justifications and merits presented above, the members of the Town Planning Board are sincerely requested to give favorable consideration to this planning application.