

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-FHB(FE)06

(Question Serial No. S0020)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (3) Market Management and Hawker Control

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

It is noted from the reply regarding the assistance scheme for hawker licensees that the Department is now planning to close Yu Chau West Street Cooked Food Hawker Bazaar, Ma Kok Street Cooked Food Hawker Bazaar and Yen Chow Street Temporary Hawker Bazaar. In this connection, please advise on the criteria for determining the closure of a hawker bazaar. To take the Yen Chow Street Temporary Hawker Bazaar, i.e. a cloth bazaar commonly known as "Pang-tsai", as an example, it has a zero vacancy rate and is of practical use to many fashion designers or students who often look for fabrics in the venue, and yet the Department plans to close it down. Is this an act of "blindly scrambling for land"? Has the Department considered the impact on the industry before planning to close the venue?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Yuen-han (Member Question No.)

Reply:

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) will formulate improvement or exit plans for hawker bazaars and cooked food hawker bazaars with regard to their business viability, community needs, resource availability and competing priorities. In determining the relocation or closure of a hawker bazaar, we will take into account all relevant factors, with vacancy rate being only one of the considerations. Fire safety and the availability of a better alternative site in the long run are also relevant factors.

For the example cited in the question, the Yen Chow Street Temporary Hawker Bazaar (the cloth bazaar) is a relocation exercise rather than a closure exercise. Commissioned in 1978, the cloth bazaar has no permanent structure. Fabrics, some of which is flammable, line the narrow passageway, thus presenting a fire hazard. The Government has already earmarked the Tung Chau Street Temporary Market (TCSTM), within 10-minutes' walk from Yen Chow Street, for reprovisioning the eligible cloth operators there. The TCSTM is a practical, feasible and win-win option for all parties concerned. It allows the continuation of a fabric market where fashion designers and students can continue to

procure, at one spot, the different varieties of fabrics that they need. Compared with the shabby appearance of the cloth bazaar, the TCSTM is a purpose-built permanent structure providing the operators and the fabrics better protection against inclement weather and fire hazard.

It is also pertinent to note that the reprovisioning has been planned and made known for quite some time. The Government has since 1981 earmarked the site occupied by the cloth bazaar for long-term residential development. The question of changing the land use of the cloth bazaar site was discussed at the Sham Shui Po District Council (SSPDC) in 2005. Subsequently, the Department engaged the cloth hawkers to follow up their relocation arrangement. In June 2013, the Planning Department briefed the SSPDC on the proposed housing development strategy in the district, which included the proposed use of the site at 373 Lai Chi Kok Road (i.e. the site currently occupied by the cloth bazaar) for building Home Ownership Scheme flats. In short, the proposed reprovisioning should come as no surprise to the operators.

By January 2016, the Department has reached a general consensus with the licensed cloth hawkers of the cloth bazaar regarding the exit arrangement, with some opting to surrender their hawker licences in return for an ex-gratia payment, and others opting for continuation of their business by moving to on-street fixed pitch hawker stalls. Separately, the Department has, on an exceptional basis, offered to relocate collectively the eligible unlicensed hawkers to the TCSTM so that they may continue their business there. Discussion on the relocation arrangements is currently in progress.

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