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# \$1,500m rural housing plan

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A \$1,500 million New Territories rural development programme is now within reach of reality as a host of feasibility studies pours in from Government-commissioned consultancy firms.

Its aim is to house rural people centred in the market towns of Taiipo, Sheung Shui, Fanling and Yuen Long and forms part of the Housing Authority's 10-year plan to provide 1.8 million homes.

Other rural centres included in the programme are Sham Tseng, Laufaushan, Tan Kwai Tsuen and Sai Kung in the New

Territories, Mui Wo and Tai O on Lantau and on the islands of Peng Chau and Cheung Chau.

Some 58,000 homes are planned for the four market towns and 18,200 in the eight rural centres.

The feasibility studies for the rural areas, except Sham Tseng, were conducted by three firms - Maunsell Consultants Asia, Binnie and Partners (Hongkong) and Wilbur Smith and Associates - and cost \$3.6 million.

The Sham Tseng study was completed in August 1974 by the Government itself.

The studies for Taiipo,

Sheung Shui and Fanling were awarded to Maunsell. A report on the initial development of Taiipo was completed last November while the reports on Sheung Shui and Fanling are expected to be finalised this month.

Binnie and Partners was awarded the studies for Yuen Long, Laufaushan and Tan Kwai Tsuen. A report on Yuen Long has been submitted and a draft report on Tan Kwai Tsuen has been completed. The one on Laufaushan is expected soon.

The studies for Sai Kung, Peng Chau, Mui Wo, Tai O and Cheung Chau were

awarded to Wilbur Smith. Reports on all these areas with the exception of Peng Chau and Cheung Chau, have been completed.

Taiipo will get the lion's share of the development - more than \$476 million. Its present population of 25,200 is expected to reach 94,500 when it is fully developed.

The \$147 million to be spent on Fanling will raise its population from 43,500 to 71,000.

The cost of developing Yuen Long has been estimated at \$209.5 million, increasing its population of 27,000 to 85,000.

Development of Sai Kung will not cover the present town but will be concentrated on an area known as Tui Min Hoi across the sea.

The acting Government Engineer (New Territories), Dr Nip Kam-fan, said yesterday that the feasibility studies provided a clearer picture of the money that would be needed for the whole rural development programme.

The present estimate of \$1,500 million is however small when compared, for example, with the \$4,200 million to be spent on Shatin New Town alone.