

### **Mall for mainland shoppers suffering delays**

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The launch date for the popup shopping mall near a Shenzhen road link is set to be postponed from its original October launch date, until early next year.

But the new deadline was still treated with caution by project planning experts. They believe it will take over a year to complete the mall.

Shoppers eager to expose themselves to the elements amid some temporary structures may have to wait until Christmas. Lawmaker Wong Ting-kwong, the project's coordinator, admitted to reporters on Thursday that he had underestimated the difficulties.

Wong originally aimed to submit an application to the district lands office in Yuen Long on March 31 — the revised deadline is next Monday.

Prefabricated structures will be used in the new plan, instead of modified containers.

This is to better protect shoppers from the summer heat. The number of retail spaces will be reduced from 380 to 300, but it is still estimated that there will be 3,000 visitors each day.

The organizer will assess noise levels and the impact of the projection on the environment. It will also examine its impact on traffic and the flow of visitors from border control points.

Wong remained optimistic about the progress — saying government regulators were not applying any deadline pressure. “I will make use of all my connections and get help from my old friends,” he told China Daily. “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.”

But experts believe Wong may still not understand the uncertainties that remain.

Vincent Ho Kui-yip, chairman of **Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors**, said the mall project would take at least a year to complete — based on available information.

The first hurdle will be the statutory planning regulator, the Town Planning Board.

Wong Ting-kwong anticipates receiving approval in July, but Ho said a four-month wait would

be minimal even assuming there is no resistance from its neighbors.

The site is within a wetland buffer area — so environmental assessments would be required to protect wild birds, Ho said.

Its impact on traffic is another concern being voiced by pressure groups. Hung Wing-tat, a traffic planning expert at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, advised the organizer to find a way to minimize traffic added to nearby roads, which are crucial links to the Lok Ma Chau border control facility.

Should the government conclude that roads must be widened, Hung Wing-tat fears the subsequent procedures could take “years”. A possible lack of raw traffic data to run the mandatory assessment may slow things down.

Having satisfied the planners, the Buildings Department and fire safety regulator will take over. That process should be given four months, Vincent Ho added. The power company may need to build a substation on site to cope with the increased demand for electricity in the summer.

Since the facility will be open to the public, Ho believes the use of prefabricated structures may require additional reinforcements and fire safety fixtures.