

Mechanism of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Agenda

- Views on the existing mechanism of EIA
- Proposal for improvement

Key Issues

- **CONTRIBUTION OF EIA**

HKIA recognizes the contribution of EIA to the betterment of planning and building the environment of Hong Kong. Architects also value the significance of "environmental consultants" as one of the key team members in many projects involving EIA.

For improvement to the existing mechanism of EIA, HKIA has the following views:

- **INTEGRATIVE APPROACH MULTI-FACTOR CONTROL MECHANISM**

It is imperative for development to be based on an "integrative, holistic approach" so that appropriate, balancing design(s) could be identified towards sustainability. The present control mechanism relies too much on "design features" rather than genuine "integrative design" which works on architectural layout, interior spaces, massing, etc. Besides the scientific portion, other factors like cultural heritage, urban design implications, aesthetical control and, human comfort, use of materials, etc, have to be part of the whole consideration for contribution to the environment.

- **AESTHETICAL CONTROL**

The importance of aesthetical control for EIA has not been considered for the important contribution to the built environment. The impact of large projects as 3-dimensional elements whether of building height, colour, mass, materials and impact on surrounding urban spaces need to be assessed. Also, the immediate surroundings of heritage buildings need to be cared to allow for the best preservation of our cultural history.

- **URBAN LIVABILITY**

In the prevalently high-density urban context of Hong Kong, the environmental quality for living is also of increasing concern. Human comfort based on local research and statistical data should be used to ascertain environmental issues not limited to urban air / wind quality, daylighting availability, noise, urban landscape and visual aspects. For large-scale urban developments including renewal projects, the scope of EIA should be considered for inclusion of the above considerations as well as preservation of our cultural heritage so that at an early stage of projects -- with the experience of architectural designers and skills of environmental consultants -- the most appropriate design towards urban sustainability could be assessed.

- **ROLE OF ARCHITECTS AND CREATIVITY**

We believe the integrative approach and multi-factor control mechanism will contribute towards sustainability. In particular, creativity towards design of the built environment should be considered as an important factor in EIA. Local architects with their vast experience in the Hong Kong context can make very positive contribution. From this perspective the architectural design professionals should take a co-ordinating role in the consultancy of EIA studies, especially on projects in relation to the design of our built environment, including urban / rural context, new town planning / heritage concern, visual / ecological impact, socio-cultural / economic aspects, ...