

**LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works
Meeting on 14 June 2002**

Processing of Small House Applications

Introduction

This paper sets out further information as requested by the Panel in relation to the Administration's information note on the processing of small house applications.

Information requested

(A) Number of outstanding small house applications in each district

2. As at 31 March 2002, the total number of outstanding applications was 14,157. The breakdown by districts is as follows:

| <i>District</i> | <i>No. of outstanding applications</i> |
|-----------------|--|
| Islands | 480 |
| North | 2,940 |
| Sai Kung | 878 |
| Sha Tin | 937 |
| Tai Po | 3,615 |
| Tsuen Wan | 354 |
| Kwai Tsing | 55 |
| Tuen Mun | 430 |
| Yuen Long | 4,468 |
| Total | 14,157 * |

* Note : included (a) 1,372 approved applications pending execution of land documents; and (b) 1,958 applications involving village expansion areas.

(B) Average time required for processing straightforward/ non-straightforward applications in each district

3. The breakdown of average time required by districts is as follows:

| <i>District</i> | <i>Straightforward applications (in months)</i> | | <i>Non-straightforward applications(in months)</i> | |
|-----------------|---|------------------------|--|------------------------|
| | <u>Waiting Time</u> | <u>Processing Time</u> | <u>Waiting Time</u> | <u>Processing Time</u> |
| North | 36 | 9 | 36 | 22 |
| Tai Po | 36 | 15 | 36 | 39 |
| Yuen Long | 36 | 12 | 36 | 45 |
| Islands | Not applicable | | 24 | 15 |
| Sai Kung | Not applicable | | 24 | 16 |
| Tuen Mun | 0 | 12 | 0 | 36 |
| Tsuen Wan | Not applicable | | 0 | 20 |
| Kwai Tsing | Not applicable | | 0 | 36 |
| Sha Tin | Not applicable | | 0 | 54 |

(C) Performance pledge on the time required for processing a small house application

4. Lands Department's performance pledge for New Territories small house applications is that processing of a straightforward case is to be completed within 34 weeks (8.5 months), excluding the waiting time.

5. As regards non-straightforward cases, they have their own particular circumstances. Lands Department, therefore, cannot set a performance pledge for processing these cases.

6. The main reasons for the long processing time are:
- (a) applications involve land title or division problems;
 - (b) applicants fail to attend interviews with Lands Department;
 - (c) applicants' request for change of site;
 - (d) the applicants fail to submit slope stability report prepared by an authorised person or qualified engineer in good time;
 - (e) local objections, e.g. on fung shui grounds, against cross-village applications; and
 - (f) problems relating to emergency vehicular access (EVA), environmental and drainage issues.

(D) Additional measures to expedite processing of small house applications

7. Measures to expedite processing of small house applications have been discussed in paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Administration's earlier information paper. As can be seen in paragraph 6 above, delay in the processing of applications is often attributable to reasons beyond the control of Lands Department. In this regard, applicants and the relevant Rural Committees may also assist Lands Department, under certain circumstances, in the processing of small house applications, for example, applicants' cooperation in completing the application forms properly and to provide relevant information promptly upon request. Where local objections are involved, the Rural Committee's early involvement in mediation among the affected villagers may help speed up the process.

8. Lands Department will continue to explore ways to shorten the processing time. In this regard, any further suggestions from Heung Yee Kuk will be welcome.

(E) Assessment of the impact of the long processing time on the applications and measures taken to address the housing needs of the applicants

9. Fulfilment of the housing need of the indigenous villagers (IVs) does not rely on the Small House Policy alone. Government has never set any restrictions on the IVs regarding their right to apply for public housing as long as they have not received any small house grants. IVs can apply for the different types of public housing, including Public Rental Housing, Home Ownership Scheme and Private Sector Participation Scheme if they meet the eligibility criteria of these schemes.

10. Between 1 January 1996 and 31 December 2001, 36% of the small house grantees had applied, within 3 months of the completion of the small house, for the removal of the non-assignment clause to permit disposal of their houses. The impact of the long processing time of small house applications on this group of IVs is that it may cause some delay in the eventual disposal of their houses.

11. The Administration will continue to make every effort to speed up processing of small house applications. However, there are also other means through which the housing needs of IVs can be met, including those provided by the private market and the public housing sector.

Lands Department
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