

Legislative Council Panel on Housing and Panel on Development

Land Supply for Public Housing

Purpose

This paper responds to the concern on land supply for public rental housing (PRH) raised by Members of the Legislative Council Panel on Housing at its meeting on 17 April 2009. The information is provided jointly by the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) and the Development Bureau (DEVB).

Land Supply for Housing

2. The Hong Kong 2030 Study recommends that the spatial development pattern of Hong Kong should make prudent use of land resources under the goal of sustainable development. Under the recommended Preferred Development Option, it is anticipated that the existing built-up areas, including metro areas and new towns, can accommodate 70% of the population increase up to 2030, whereas the remaining will be provided mainly by the two New Development Areas (NDAs) in the North East New Territories and at Hung Shui Kiu. Therefore, the overall supply of housing land should be adequate to meet the housing needs of the projected population growth up to 2030.

3. The major sources of land supply for PRH are:

(a) NDAs

- The Government will reserve land for PRH development in planning of NDAs, such as the North East New Territories NDA and Hung Shui Kiu NDA. However, irrespective of new development sites or NDAs, there should be a balanced housing mix complemented by other land uses and supporting infrastructure/facilities. Though there is no established standard ratio between public and private housing developments, we have drawn on experience in existing new town development and concluded that a balanced housing mix between public and private housing with varying development densities is crucial to the building of a harmonious community. As reflected in the public consultation on the North East New Territories New Development Areas Planning and Engineering Study, the public generally support a balanced public/private housing mix.

- Since a lot of the land in the planned NDAs is private land, the Government has to carry out acquisition of land for development. As the process will involve compensation, clearance, rezoning of land use and site formation etc., NDAs can only provide residential land in a longer term. According to our current programme, we anticipate that the earliest date for population intake in NDAs will be around end-2019.

(b) Developed Areas

- The Government will identify suitable land for PRH development in the urban area and existing new towns, including land planned for “residential” use as well as formed land. In view of the limited supply of land zoned for “residential” purpose, the Government will also consider rezoning land zoned for other purposes for PRH development, but it will take longer to make such land available.
- Though land identified in the built-up areas for PRH development is relatively small, we can make use of existing infrastructure and community facilities, thereby optimizing the use of resources. Moreover, old districts can be revitalized by new population and the associated economic activities.

(c) Redevelopment of Old Public Housing Estates

- In redeveloping old public housing estates, the Government needs to take into account the additional demand for PRH flats generated from rehousing. According to the current housing policy, PRH blocks will be cleared only if they are found to be structurally unsafe or beyond economic repair.
- The Government will retain cleared PRH sites for public housing development as far as possible.

4. There is an internal coordinating mechanism in the Government which operates through the Committee on Planning and Land Development, the Committee on Housing Development, and the Planning Department-Housing Department Liaison Meeting to monitor land supply for public housing and study the most appropriate land use for cleared PRH sites. This is to ensure that the proposed land use can meet the overall development of the society and that there is sufficient land supply to cater for the demand for PRH. As the development agency, the Housing Authority (HA) considers all sites, regardless of their size, for PRH development under the principle of optimal utilization of land resources to maintain the most cost-effective and sustainable development.

Public Housing Construction Programme

5. The objective of the Government and the HA is to provide PRH to low-income families who cannot afford private rental accommodation. As at March 2009, there were 114 400 applicants on the Waiting List for PRH, including 43 000 non-elderly one-person applicants, with an average of about 2 800 applications received every month in 2008/09. The HA estimates that the average annual production of about 15 000 new flats, together with the PRH flats estimated to be recovered every year, would allow it to maintain the average waiting time at about three years. At present, the average waiting time for general applicants is about 1.8 years, which is shorter than the target of about three years.

6. The Public Housing Construction Programme (PHCP) is a five-year programme to be rolled forward every year, with suitable adjustments to its production according to the latest demand and supply situation every year. In the five-year period from 2009/10 to 2013/14, the forecast production of PRH is about 74 000 flats (Annex), i.e. around 15 000 flats per year on average.

7. Since the PHCP will be rolled forward every year, the HA will pay special attention to the progress of the projects in the sixth year. Depending on circumstances, projects may be advanced or deferred in order to maintain the average waiting time at about three years. Apart from resolving technical problems (such as development constraints, change in land use, dissenting views from locals, land resumption, clearance and site formation etc.), it is also necessary to enlist support of local communities for the smooth inclusion of PRH development projects in the PHCP.

Strengthening Ties with the Local Communities

8. Irrespective of whether the proposed PRH sites are located near existing public housing estates or adjacent to private housing developments, and despite the fact that the sites have been confirmed as suitable and feasible for PRH use, the local communities often hold different views when consulted and consider the sites not suitable for PRH development. Their major concerns are the additional burden on the local traffic, infrastructure and community facilities, as well as implications on the property value, vista and ventilation in the vicinity as a result of the proposed PRH development, considering that land for PRH should be used for community facilities, open space or commercial purposes instead.

9. At the preliminary stage of each public housing development project, the Housing Department (HD) conducts various technical studies on traffic, the environment, ventilation and supporting facilities to ensure public housing development would not exert pressure on the district. The HD has formalized the consultation process for major PRH developments by organizing community workshops led by officers at Assistant Director-level to gather views from the local residents with a view to achieving social cohesion and enhancing communication.

The Way Forward

10. To ensure an adequate and steady supply of suitable land for PRH development:

- (a) THB, in conjunction with DEVB, will continue to liaise closely with the concerned Government departments, district councils and local communities to identify suitable sites for PRH development in different parts of the territory;
- (b) the HA will continue to retain cleared sites for PRH development as far as possible, such as the ex-Yuen Long Estate and So Uk Estate, and to expedite the development of those cleared, formed and zoned “residential” sites; and
- (c) the HA will use vacated departmental quarters for PRH development such as ex-Shatin Police and Firemen Quarters, ex-Cheung Sha Wan Police Quarters, ex-Kwai Chung Police Quarters and ex-Au Tau Departmental Quarters.

Conclusion

11. THB together with DEVB and concerned Government departments will regularly review the supply of land for housing with a view to identifying more suitable land for public housing development.

12. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

**Transport and Housing Bureau and Development Bureau
June 2009**

Production of PRH Flats in the Coming Five Years (2009/10 – 2013/14)

Year of Completion / District	Sub-District	Planned Flat Number
2009/2010		
Urban	Eastern	1 600
	Kwun Tong	8 000
	Wong Tai Sin	1 500
Extended Urban [#]	Shatin	2 000
New Territories	Yuen Long	2 400
Sub-total		15 500
2010/2011		
Urban	Kwun Tong	7 200
	Kowloon City	1 200
	Wong Tai Sin	1 300
Extended Urban	Kwai Tsing	1 500
	Shatin	2 600
	Sai Kung (Tseung Kwan O)	2 000
Sub-total		15 800
2011/2012		
Urban	Kwun Tong	4 200
	Kowloon City	800
	Wong Tai Sin	1 300
	Sham Shui Po	5 600
	Sub-total	11 900
2012/2013		
Urban	Kowloon City	7 400
	Sham Shui Po	2 700
Extended Urban	Kwai Tsing	800
	Shatin	2 800
New Territories	Tuen Mun	1 000
Sub-total		14 700
2013/2014		
Urban	Kwun Tong	400
	Kowloon City	5 900
	Sham Shui Po	600
	Wong Tai Sin	1 000
Extended Urban	Kwai Tsing	1 400
	Sai Kung (Tseung Kwan O)	1 900
	Shatin	2 900
New Territories	Yuen Long	2 000
Sub-total		16 100
Total		74 000

(Based on the Public Housing Construction Programme as at March 2009)

Extended urban areas include Kwai Tsing, Tsuen Wan, Shatin (including Ma On Shan), Sai Kung (including Tseung Kwan O) and Tung Chung.