

# 立法會 *Legislative Council*

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## **Panel on Development and Panel on Housing**

**Joint meeting on 6 July 2009**

### **Background brief on land supply for public housing**

#### **Purpose**

This paper sets out the progress of land supply for housing, and gives a brief account of the views and concerns expressed by the Panel on Housing (the Panel).

#### **Background**

2. As at end of March 2009, there were over 114 400 applicants on the Waiting List (WL) for public rental housing (PRH), with an average of about 2 800 new applications received every month. To meet the need of low-income families for subsidized rental housing, the Housing Authority (HA) maintains a rolling five-year Public Housing Construction Programme (PHCP). The forecast production of PRH from 2009-2010 to 2013-2014 is about 74 000 flats i.e. an average of about 15 000 flats per year. HA estimates that this level of production, together with the some 16 000 recovered flats from the existing stock every year, would allow it to meet the pledge of maintaining the average waiting time (AWT) for PRH at about three years<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Land supply for public housing**

3. The projects for new flat production under PHCP will come from the urban/extended urban areas<sup>2</sup> with the remaining from the New Territories. The flat production volume within the five-year period would not be subject to major variation as the projects concerned are either at the construction stage or advanced detailed design stage. However, most of the sites available for PRH development beyond the five-year period are at an early planning stage. HA still encounters the following problems in securing timely provision of land -

- (a) *site availability* – sites, even if considered suitable for PRH development, may not be immediately available for various reasons, such as rezoning of sites, land resumption and clearance, technical feasibility study, large-scale site formation works etc.;

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<sup>1</sup> The AWT pledge does not apply to non-elderly one-person PRH applicants on WL.

<sup>2</sup> Extended urban areas include Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing, Shatin, Tseung Kwan O and Tung Chung

- (b) *site development constraints* – uncertainties at the planning stage, such as traffic noise, building height restrictions and urban design considerations, may need to be overcome;
- (c) *different views from the local communities on the suitability of the sites for PRH development* – considerable time will have to be taken in discussing with the locals in an attempt to formulate mutually acceptable solutions; and
- (d) *provision of community facilities* – there may be need to reserve part of the sites for community facility use having regard to requests from the local community, requirements of the relevant departments and development needs of the districts concerned.

4. Unless these issues can be promptly addressed, PHCP and the pledge of maintaining AWT at around three years may be affected. To this end, HA will maintain close liaison with relevant bureaux, departments and District Councils (DCs) to identify suitable sites in different parts of the territory for public housing development. Cleared PRH sites will be retained for public housing development as far as possible. Consideration will also be given to using vacated departmental quarters sites for PRH construction.

5. To ensure that new PRH estates are planned and designed to meet the development needs of the local community, every public housing project will be submitted to the relevant DC for consultation. Some of the PRH sites can proceed as scheduled in PHCP after consultation, but some projects may need several rounds of discussion to cater for the different aspirations of the local community, which may sometimes lead to delay in the projects. HA has also regularized the consultation process with local community for major PRH developments by organizing workshops led by officers at Assistant Director-level to gather views from the local residents.

### **Deliberations by the Panel**

6. The subject of land supply for public housing development was discussed at the Panel meetings on 7 January, 17 June 2008 and 17 April 2009.

7. Members opined that HA should secure the land required for PRH development beyond the five-year period, and that cleared PRH sites should be used for public housing development rather than returning them to the Government for other uses. There was a need to increase PRH production to expedite flat allocation to WL applicants, which was constantly expanding with new applications every month. They emphasized that increasing PRH production was a more effective means than recovery of existing PRH flats in upholding the pledge of maintaining AWT at around three years. Effort should also be made to avoid the over-concentration of PRH in certain districts as this would put extra pressure on the provision of ancillary facilities to meet the needs of the local community.

8. While agreeing to the need for adequate consultation with DCs and local communities, members stressed that the public engagement process should only focus on the planning and design of PRH development as well as management of facilities within PRH estates, and not on the usage of land which had already been earmarked for PRH development.

9. To meet the demand of low-income families for public housing, members urged the Administration to relax the Income and Asset Limits for WL applicants. Consideration should be given to re-launching the Home Ownership Scheme and the Tenant Purchase Scheme to help expedite the recovery of existing PRH flats. The proceeds of sales would also help finance the PRH production.

### **Latest development**

10. As the subject of land supply for public housing straddles the purviews of both the Development Bureau and the Transport and Housing Bureau, the Panel considers it useful to hold a joint meeting with the Panel on Development on 6 July 2009 to discuss the subject.

### **Relevant papers**

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Housing Panel meeting on 7 January 2008

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0107cb1-506-3-e.pdf>

Minutes of the Housing Panel meeting on 7 January 2008

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg080107.pdf>

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Housing Panel meeting on 17 June 2008

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0617cb1-1656-4-e.pdf>

Minutes of the Housing Panel meeting on 17 June 2008

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg080617.pdf>

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Housing Panel meeting on 17 April 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0417cb1-1263-3-e.pdf>

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