



香港建築師學會

The Hong Kong Institute of Architects

3 December 1999

For the past year a number of projects of the Housing Authority have been under severe criticism by the public for faulty workmanship, defective foundation, elements of construction executed not according to specification and other complaints. Housing Authority in turn put majority of the blame on contractors and consultants engaged on such projects. The Hong Kong Institute of Architects is of the view that finger-pointing by officials of the Housing Authority will not resolve the problems. Well designed buildings with quality construction can only come about by good team work between the Housing Authority, consultants who are qualified and properly staffed, and contractors who are selected on basis of their ability with contract terms that are equitable. It is high time that the Housing Authority should review their current management policy and system, their method of tendering and selection of both contractors and consultants. At the same time HA should review their priorities on quantity versus quality. The Hong Kong Institute of Architects have the following recommendations for consideration by the LegCo Panel on Housing and by the Housing Authority:

1. On most housing projects, the HA is acting as the developer, the designer, the project manager and supervisor professional, and also as the Building Control. In meeting the demands of these different roles there are obvious conflict of interests. We are of the view that the Buildings Department should take over the role of building control on all HA projects in line with the practice of private sector projects. This will no doubt give a greater degree of assurance to home purchasers; and will result in a consistent standard of design and construction in terms of building safety for HA and private sector projects.
2. Contractors are on the front line in guaranteeing the quality of construction. The present practice of awarding tenders on the basis of lowest bid, and the often inequitable sharing of risk by contractors create an environment for contractors trying to cut corners to reduce cost or taking unnecessary risks in order to complete the project within the contract period. This situation needs to be redressed.
3. The organisation and strength of the site management team of the contractor together with their technical capability have direct bearing on the quality of construction. Improved skill for the workforce can be achieved by better training and certification of workmen and use of direct labour. Use of mechanized construction technique and off-site assembly can minimize the risk for poor workmanship on site. These criteria should be strongly factored in the process of tender assessment of contractors.

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4. Current practice of HA calls for pile and pile caps to be contractor's design. Tenderers to cut cost would submit piling system that may carry a higher risk of settlement. Using consultant's design as baseline for tender would eliminate this problem.
5. The current system of control over the construction, the supervision and the acceptance criteria of bored piles in both HA and private sector projects warrant major review. The Hong Kong Institute of Architects and fellow professional institutions have already made submissions to the Buildings Department to expedite such review.
6. Consultant's site team will benefit from the addition of qualified architect and engineer to supervise the work of contractors at all critical stages of the construction process.
7. The HA system of consultants selection heavily favours the lowest bidder. This has direct bearing on the resources a consultant can assign on the project. The selection system needs immediate review.
8. The Hong Kong Institute of Architects have for a number of years been pleading to the HA the importance of quality design in public housing. We also advocate much stronger emphasis on research and development with input by consultants, contractors and academics. With current technology and capability of established contractors in the Territory, the argument of insisting on a standardised block design to meet the annual flat production target is no longer valid. Alternative procurement methods such as developer's participation or Design and Build contract should also be considered.