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22 July 2003

Clerk to Panel
Panel on Planning, Lands and Works
Legislative Council Building
8, Jackson Road, Central
Hong Kong
(Attn: Miss Odelia Leung)

Dear Miss Leung,

Panel on Planning, Lands and Works
Follow-up to joint meeting on 16 May 2003

Thank you for your letter of 7 July 2003. We have the following comments on the views expressed by Mr Francis Chan Chak-tin on the two submissions on the issue of "Design of sewerage system of residential buildings in Hong Kong" from the Association of Consulting Engineers of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers.

Approval Process of Drainage Installations

Under the existing building control regime, there are sufficient regulations and guidelines to ensure that the construction or installation of drainage systems in new buildings meets the safety and sanitary standards. When a new building is to be constructed, the Authorized Person (AP) responsible for the construction is required to, inter alia, prepare and submit drainage plans to the Building Authority (BA) for approval. The AP, being an architect, engineer or surveyor, is a qualified building professional with sufficient professional knowledge on drainage works. Apart from the submission of drainage plans by the AP, the developer has to appoint a Registered General Building Contractor (RGBC) for the installation of drainage works. The RGBC should possess the relevant technical expertise in carrying out the drainage works. Both the AP and RGBC will ensure and certify that the drainage systems of the building are constructed according to the standards stipulated in the building regulations.

At present, if the alteration of and addition to drainage systems do not involve the structure of the buildings, the connection of additional pipes to a septic tanks and the like, the works are usually classified as exempted works under section 41(3A) of the Buildings Ordinance. These exempted drainage works do not require the prior approval and consent of the Building Authority, but the professional oversight and execution requirements still apply. To better control these currently exempted drainage works, we intend to include these works under the minor works control regime proposed in the Buildings (Amendment) Bill 2003. This would require the designated drainage works to be supervised and carried out by qualified minor works contractors.

Design to Prime the Floor Drain

The prevailing standards of drainage systems stipulated in the Buildings Ordinance are adequate. However, we welcome proposals for different designs to prime the floor drain. Insofar as the standards of the building regulations are complied with, we will allow building professionals and developers to choose the design. We will continue to listen to the views of professionals and the industry on the subject, and keep track of the latest developments in international building design to see if there is scope for improvement.

Application of two-pipe and one-pipe systems

Under the Building (Standards of Sanitary Fitments, Plumbing, Drainage Works and Latrines) Regulations (BDR), both the “one-pipe” and “two-pipe” systems are acceptable drainage system designs. Neither system should cause any sanitary nuisance or adverse effect on the living environment provided that the drainage system has been installed in compliance with the standards specified by the building regulations and is kept in good condition by proper maintenance and repair. The current building regulations do not impose any constraints on building layout or drainage designs which may hamper the accommodation of either a “one-pipe” or “two-pipe” system. Building professionals have flexibility to decide whether they would like to use the “one-pipe” or “two-pipe” system with due consideration of their preferred building designs and cost of construction.

Yours sincerely,

(Rick Chan)
for Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

b.c.c.

AA/SHPL
Director of Buildings (Attn: Mr K M Mo)