

## Legislative Council Panel on Housing

### Proposed Bathroom Improvement in Po Tin Estate

#### PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the findings of the feasibility study conducted by the Housing Department (HD) on improving the bathroom size in Po Tin Estate and the proposed implementation plan.

#### BACKGROUND

2. At the Panel on Housing meeting held on 3 June 2013 when the issue on Improving the Living Environment of Po Tin Estate was discussed (for details, please refer to LC Paper No. CB(1)1153/12-13(04)), Members passed a motion to request the Administration to explore and study ways to enlarge bathrooms in the units in Po Tin Estate (the Estate), and arrange a site visit on the completion of the study.

3. Po Tin Estate in Tuen Mun was completed in 2000 and originally designed as interim housing (IH) for transient accommodation. Due to the declining demand for IH, in 2004 the Housing Authority (HA) started to flexibly convert the vacant and surplus recovered units into public rental housing (PRH) for allocation to utilize public resources. PRH households are generally allocated larger units on par with other PRH estate allocation, although some of the 1-person applicants may be allocated smaller units due to high demand. Tenants of such units are generally satisfied with the environment and facilities of the Estate that are comparable to other PRH estates, except for the relatively small-size bathrooms.

4. Despite the fact that many sitting tenants in the Estate were admitted through Express Flat Allocation Scheme, the tenancy incentives offered and the special transfers provided to those in need, the issue of small bathroom is still of concern. To address the problem, in 2000 the HA implemented improvement works by relocating the wash basin from the bathroom entrance to the inner corner using “corner basin” so as to free up more maneuvering space in the bathroom. We completed the improvement works in 62% of the units in the Estate. The improved design, however, only improves the situation marginally.

## COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS

5. In response to the residents' concern and the request Members made at the meeting on 3 June 2013, the HD has carried out a comprehensive study on various possible options to improve and enlarge the bathrooms. Several factors including technical implications, nuisance, cost effectiveness and impact on flat supply associated with these options have been taken into consideration. The ensuing paragraphs set out the findings of the study.

### *The Proposed Option: Modifying Bathroom Wall within the Flat*

6. The bathroom non-loadbearing partition wall adjoining kitchen (applicable to Type 1, 2-Person flats) or living area (applicable to Type 3, 4 and 5-Person flats) can be modified by encroaching into the kitchen or living area. By so doing, the space of the bathroom can be enlarged by eating into the floor area of the kitchen or living area (**Annex 1**). This option is the least disruptive and most cost-effective amongst the options explored. Only minor nuisance such as noise and vibration will be caused. It is expected that the modification work for each unit can be completed in about 15 to 20 days.

7. Upon modification, the bathroom area will be enlarged by an average of 30%. We have conducted site mock-ups which prove that maneuvering space within the bathrooms is much improved.

### *Other Options Explored: More Extensive Conversions or to Rebuild the Blocks*

8. The HD has also explored other options to enlarge bathrooms in the units of the Estate. These include —

- (a) Pair-up Flats Conversion: to repartition two flats confined within the structural walls;
- (b) Comprehensive Block Conversion: to repartition flats with some structural and facade modifications allowed;
- (c) Demolish and re-build the Estate

9. We have carefully examined these options but have concluded that there are several technical constraints to conversions given the existing building configuration including windows and water heater flue apertures, the building regulation requirements of prescribed window for the bathroom, kitchen and living area, the structural walls and the flat entrances. Also, repartitioning flats will expose the modified building service installations. **Annex 2** shows the standard floor plan of the blocks with technical constraints highlighted.

10. We considered that these options are not practical in the current situation due to—

- (a) their complexity, the time required to carry out the works and the nuisance caused;
- (b) the necessary and complicated decanting and rehousing arrangements which will impact on the already stretched housing supply;
- (c) conversion works would need to be carried out block-by-block, which implies that the living environment of the Estate could not be improved within a reasonable period; and
- (d) the works will be neither environmental-friendly nor cost-effective.

## **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

11. For the occupied units in the Estate, modification of the bathroom walls will be carried out on the request of the residents. The HA will modify all vacant flats during refurbishment. Having considered that residents might be affected by the modification work, we will start the improvement programme by modifying existing vacant flats such that these flats can be used as temporary accommodations if necessary. When a sufficient number of modified vacant flats is available for temporary accommodations, we will invite residents to apply for the modification. Visits to the mock-up flats will be arranged prior to the invitation of application.

12. It is expected that not all residents will apply for the modification. However, given the limited number of vacant flats available for temporary accommodation and manpower resources, as well as the possible disturbance that might cause to the neighbourhood, modification work has to be carried out in batches. We will establish administrative criteria to determine the priority in carrying out the modification.

13. During the work, the contractor will be required to install protective screens to separate the works area and the rest of the flat, and also cover residents' furniture and belongings to mitigate disturbance. Residents concerned may, during the course of modification, apply for temporary accommodation or choose to stay in their flat. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that residents who choose to stay would not be able to access the bathroom and kitchen of the units when modification work is underway.

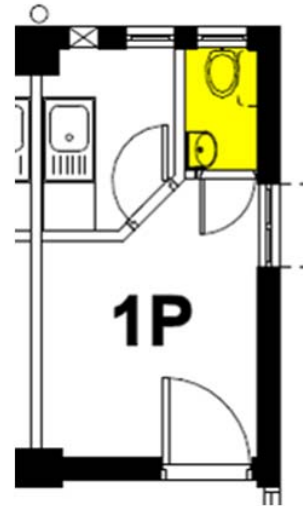
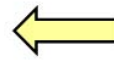
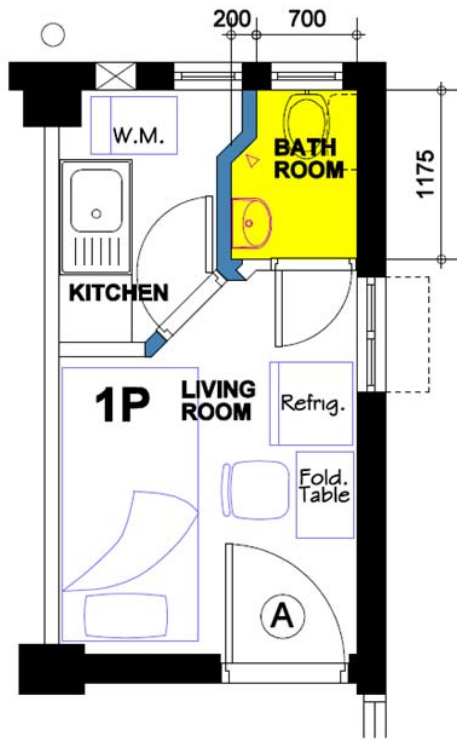
## **WAY FORWARD**

14. Notwithstanding the aforementioned constraints, we plan to convert 200 to 250 flats per month (including the flats modified as part of the refurbishment exercise). After fine-tuning the workflow with more experience gained, we will extend the programme to Tin Yan Estate Phase 1 where the bathrooms are of a similar configuration.

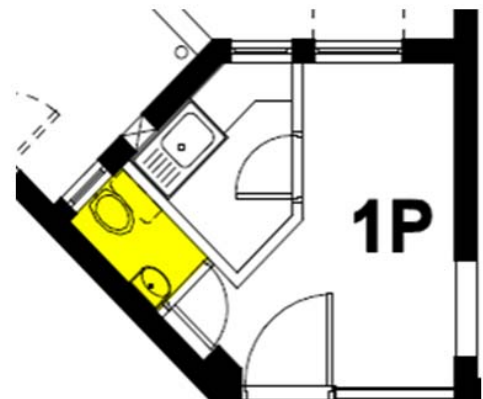
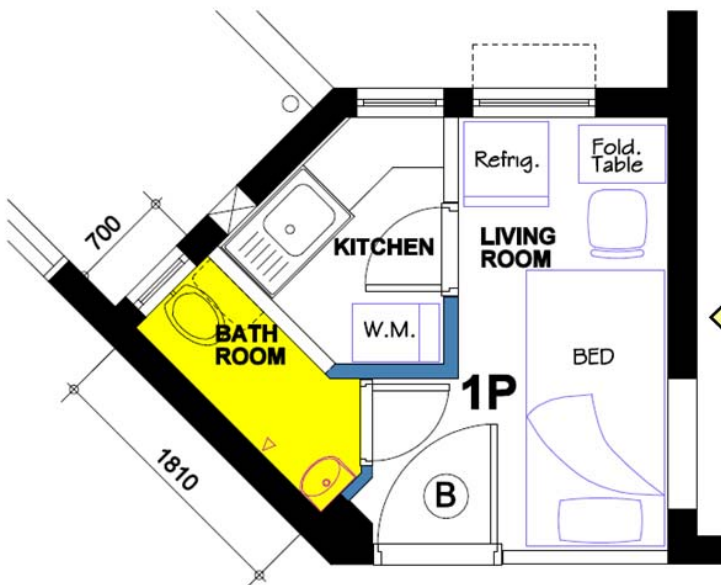
15. Subject to Members' comments, we will submit the proposal to the Subsidised Housing Committee of the HA. Once endorsed, the improvement programme will commence in the coming financial year (i.e. 2014/15).

**Transport and Housing Bureau  
February 2014**

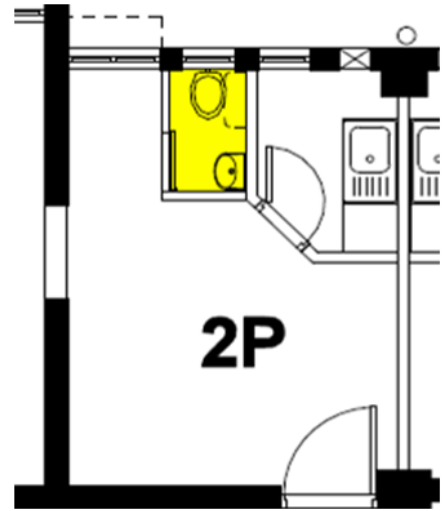
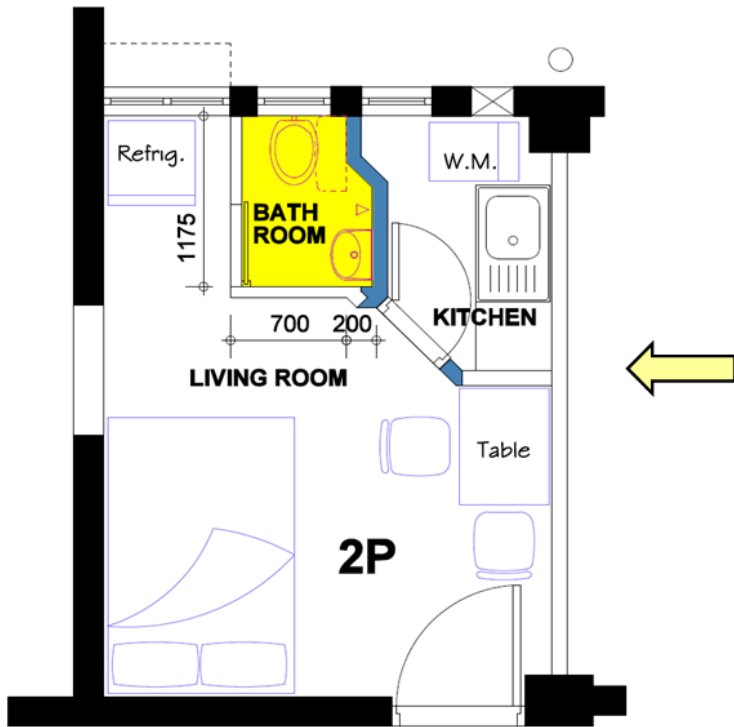
Annex 1  
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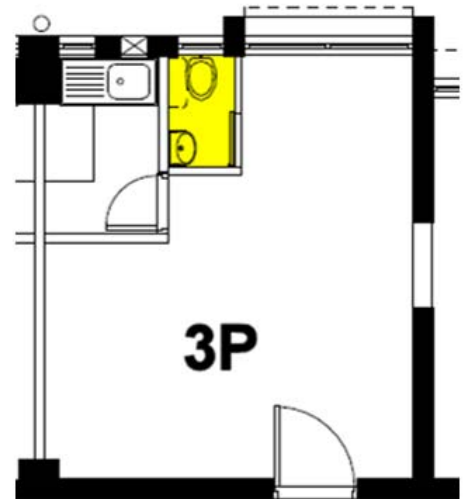
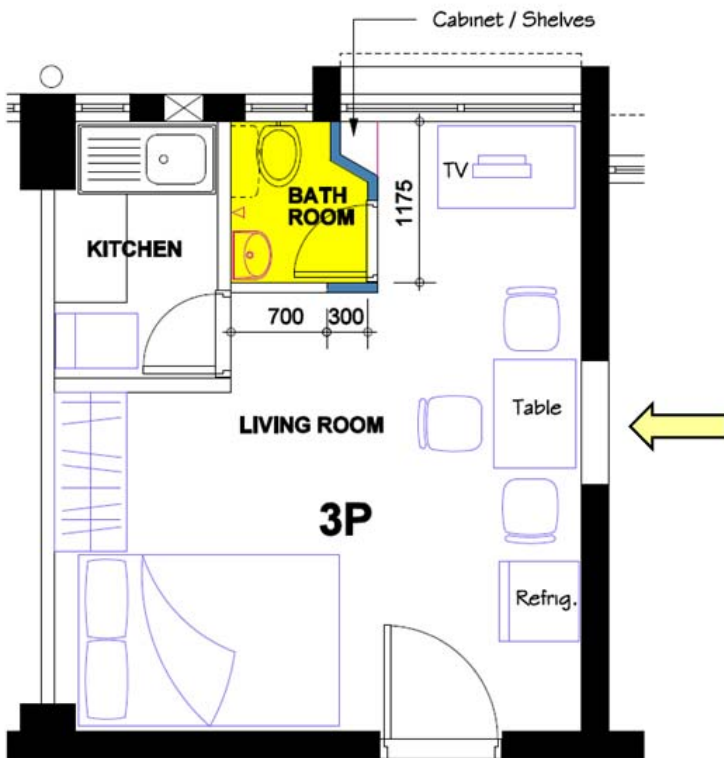
1P(A) Flat



1P(B) Flat



2P Flat



3/4/5P Flat

## Existing Floor Plan and Conversion Technical Constraints

