

Hong Kong : The Facts

Town Planning



Purpose of Town Planning: Town planning aims at shaping a quality living and working environment, facilitating economic development, and promoting the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the community by guiding and controlling development and the use of land. Based on the principle of sustainable development, town planning seeks to bring about an organised, efficient and desirable place for the community to live and work in. Given the limited land resources in Hong Kong, there is a need to strike a balance in land utilisation to meet the competing demand for housing, commerce, industry, transport, recreation, nature conservation, heritage preservation and other community needs.

Planning Organisations: The Planning and Lands Branch of the Development Bureau is in charge of the policy portfolios of planning, land use, buildings and urban renewal in Hong Kong. Taking directives from the Development Bureau, the Planning Department (PlanD) is responsible for formulating, monitoring and reviewing land uses at the territorial and district/local levels. It also carries out topical studies and undertakes enforcement actions against unauthorised developments (UDs).

The principal body responsible for statutory planning in Hong Kong is the Town Planning Board (TPB). It is formed under the Town Planning Ordinance (TPO) and served by PlanD. Comprising predominantly non-official members, the TPB oversees the preparation of draft statutory plans, considers representations to such draft plans and considers applications for planning permission and amendments to plans. There are two standing committees under the TPB, namely, the Metro Planning Committee and the Rural and New Town Planning Committee. Under the TPO, the TPB may also appoint a committee among its members to consider representations to draft statutory plans.

Planning System: Hong Kong's planning system comprises development strategies at the territorial level and various types of statutory and departmental plans at the district/local level. The preparation of these plans has taken into account the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, relevant development-related policies and principles, and community views.

Territorial Development Strategy: The strategy provides a broad planning framework to guide future development and provision of strategic infrastructure in Hong Kong. It also serves as a basis for the preparation of district plans. The Government's latest territorial development strategy, which is known as "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" ("Hong Kong 2030+"), was promulgated in 2021. A people-centric, proactive, pragmatic and action-oriented approach has been adopted to draw up a robust development strategy to enhance Hong Kong to become a liveable, competitive and sustainable Asia's World City. To this end, a series of strategic directions under three building blocks, namely enhancing liveability in a compact high-density city, embracing new economic opportunities and challenges, and creating capacity for sustainable growth, and a conceptual spatial framework are formulated. On the basis of a multi-pronged and capacity creating approach, a list of

possible solution spaces is suggested. Among them, the Northern Metropolis, as a new engine for the future development, will inject new economic impetus into Hong Kong and be one of the main sources of future housing land supply.

Statutory Plans: Two types of statutory plans are prepared and published by the TPB under the provisions of the TPO.

The first type is Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) which shows the land use zones, development restrictions and major road systems of an individual planning area. Areas covered by OZPs are in general zoned for uses such as residential, commercial, industrial, green belt, open space, government, institution or community uses, conservation area, or other specified uses. Attached to each OZP is a Schedule of Notes showing the uses which are always permitted (Column 1 uses) in a particular zone and other uses for which prior permission from the TPB must be sought (Column 2 uses).

The second type is Development Permission Area (DPA) Plan. DPA Plans are prepared to provide interim planning control and development guidance for rural areas in the New Territories, pending the preparation of more detailed OZPs. DPA Plans indicate broad land use zones and are also accompanied by Schedules of Notes showing Column 1 and 2 uses. DPA Plans are effective for a period of three years and will be replaced by OZPs.

In 2023, the TPO was amended to streamline the plan-making process and the statutory requirements for planning applications. The amended TPO took effect on 1.9.2023.

Information on statutory plans, planning applications, related guidelines and procedures as well as the agenda, meeting papers and decisions of the open meetings of the TPB and its Committees can be accessed online from the TPB website at <https://www.tpb.gov.hk/> and the Statutory Planning Portal 3 at <https://www.ozp.tpb.gov.hk/>. The public may also observe those open meetings in the Public Viewing Room located at 1/F, North Point Government Offices, 333 Java Road, North Point, Hong Kong.

Departmental Plans: Outline Development Plans (ODP) and Layout Plans are administrative plans prepared within the framework of the statutory plans. With a much larger scale, these departmental plans show more detailed level planning parameters e.g. site boundaries, location of access points and footbridges, specific types of government or community uses to facilitate the coordination of public works, land sales and land reservation for specific uses.

Views from the public are essential considerations for the formulation of development strategies and preparation of plans. Public engagement in the form of stakeholders consultation meetings, workshops, exhibitions, etc. is a very important component of the planning process.

Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG):

It is a government manual of criteria for determining the scale, location and site requirements of various land uses and facilities. It serves to ensure that during the planning process, the Government will reserve adequate land to facilitate social and economic developments and provide appropriate public facilities to meet the needs of the public. Various bureaux and departments will formulate, review and amend the planning

standards and guidelines falling under their purview from time to time taking into account the latest policy considerations and initiatives. PlanD will assist bureaux and departments to incorporate updated or new standards and guidelines into the HKPSG for promulgation to the public.

Urban Renewal and Regeneration: The new Urban Renewal Strategy formulated by the Government adopted a “people first, district-based, public participatory” approach in undertaking urban renewal works in Hong Kong. PlanD works closely with the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) in planning various urban renewal projects, undertaking relevant statutory planning procedures and providing planning advices on urban renewal studies. The implementation of urban renewal projects in old urban districts help address the problem of urban decay and improve the living environment in dilapidated urban areas.

With the completion of the District Study for Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok (YMDS) by the URA, PlanD has been working closely with the URA to take forward the recommendations of the study including promulgation of the new TPB Guidelines for piloting “transfer of plot ratio” (TPR) in July 2023 with a view to providing incentive to speed up urban regeneration through private initiatives in Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok, making amendments to the Mong Kok and Yau Ma Tei OZPs to relax certain planning restrictions in order to provide greater planning flexibility, and preparation of Sai Yee Street / Flower Market Road Development Scheme Plan. With the experience gained in the YMDS, the URA is undertaking similar studies on Tsuen Wan and Sham Shui Po to formulate district renewal plans. PlanD has been providing planning advice and support to the URA in these studies, and will continue to render assistance to URA in taking forward its 24th Corporate Plan (2025-26 to 2029-30) and 24th Business Plan (2025-26) as approved by the Financial Secretary.

Hong Kong’s urban decay problem is driven by our rapidly ageing stock. Our buildings have been ageing much faster than the pace of redevelopment by URA and the private market. It is essential for the Government to come up with innovative ideas to expedite urban renewal with a new mindset. In this connection, PlanD is proposing relaxations to the current arrangement for TPR within the same district to allow cross-district TPR, among others. The TPB Guidelines will be revised after consultation with stakeholders.

New Town and New Development Areas: Large-scale new town development in the New Territories began in the early 1970s. PlanD has worked closely with the Civil Engineering and Development Department’s Development Offices to prepare plans and oversee the development of these new towns. At present, there are nine new towns, namely Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin, Tuen Mun, Tai Po, Yuen Long, Fanling/Sheung Shui, Tseung Kwan O, Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung. A number of New Development/Growth Areas are under various stages of development or study. They comprise Tung Chung East and West, Tseung Kwan O Area 137, Lung Kwu Tan and Tuen Mun West, and various planned/proposed developments within the Northern Metropolis including Kwu Tung North/Fanling North, Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen, Lau Fau Shan, Yuen Long South, San Tin Technopole, New Territories North New Town, Ngau Tam Mei and Au Tau.

Planning Enforcement: The TPO provides the Planning Authority with enforcement power against UD in areas covered by the DPA Plans or the replacement OZPs. Apart from the above, according to the amended TPO in 2023, the Secretary for Development may designate those rural areas in the New Territories within OZPs and previously not covered

by any DPA Plan as “Regulated Areas” (“RAs”) for the purpose of protecting the areas from environmental degradation and/or nature conservation, and enabling the Planning Authority to take enforcement actions in these areas. Accordingly, the South Lantau Coast RA and the Mui Tsz Lam RA were designated in 2023. Within the RAs and areas currently or previously covered by DPA Plans, all developments are unauthorised unless the development is either in existence before the gazettal of the DPA Plan or before the material date of the “RA”, permitted under the relevant statutory plan or covered by valid planning permission.

PlanD’s Central Enforcement and Prosecution Section is responsible for undertaking enforcement and prosecution actions against UD. The Section investigates public complaints and referrals from other government departments, and carries out regular patrols to identify possible UD. Once a UD is confirmed, statutory enforcement and prosecution actions will be taken as appropriate.

Topical Studies: PlanD also carries out a wide range of topical studies. The Study on Existing Profile and Operations of Brownfield Sites in the New Territories, which captured a snapshot of the comprehensive profile including the nature, site characteristics and operational details of the brownfield sites as well as their spatial distribution in the New Territories, completed in 2019 has identified brownfield sites that have relatively higher potential for development.

To take on board the recommendations of Hong Kong 2030+, PlanD completed the Study on Active Design for Healthier Lifestyle – Feasibility Study and the Study on Reimagining Public Spaces in Hong Kong - Feasibility Study in 2023. The former provides recommendations and guidelines on incorporating “active design” in the planning and development process in promoting healthy lifestyle. The latter puts forth recommendations to enhancing the quality and quantity of open space and provides a basis for revision of the Open Space section in Chapter 4 of the HKPSG.

Planning Information: The City Gallery, located at 3 Edinburgh Place, Central, Hong Kong, showcases the achievements of Hong Kong’s planning and infrastructure development. It also acts as a platform for collaboration and exchange of planning ideas as well as public engagement in the planning process. For more information on town planning and the City Gallery, please visit the PlanD and City Gallery’s websites at <https://www.pland.gov.hk> and <https://www.citygallery.gov.hk> or visit the two Planning Enquiry Counters located at:

- 17/F, North Point Government Offices,
333 Java Road, North Point, Hong Kong
- 14/F, Sha Tin Government Offices,
1 Sheung Wo Che Road, Sha Tin, New Territories

For enquiries, please call 2231 5000, fax to 2877 0389 or e-mail to enquire@pland.gov.hk.