TOWN PLANNING
IN
HONG KONG

Town Planning Division
Lands Department
Murray Building
Hong Kong
1984
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CHAPTER ONE
MAJOR LOCAL PLANNING ISSUES

INTRODUCTION
Planning for a city such as Hong Kong is an enormous challenge. Fraught with seemingly unsolvable problems, planning policy and programmes have aimed to respond positively and energetically to ameliorate these problems.

Local planning has had to cope with essentially two major problems: the critical shortage of developable land coupled with a high population growth rate particularly caused by immigration in recent years. The interplay of these problems have resulted in the rapid and intensive development of Hong Kong, making it one of the most densely populated cities in the world. In efforts to solve these problems, the Government has initiated land reclamation programmes adding 1.7% additional developable land since 1945. The Government has also undertaken a massive public housing programme and established a new town programme in the 1970's with the aim of providing a 'balanced' community while relocating urban populations into better housing and living conditions. Furthermore, a comprehensive approach to handling the transportation system via mass and public transit while restraining private car ownership was adopted. This chapter attempts to review the scale and scope of these issues and the planning efforts in response.

LOCATION AND PHYSICAL SETTING
Hong Kong is situated at the mouth of the Pearl River on the south-eastern coast of Mainland China. It is just inside the tropics, less than 160 kilometres south of the Tropic of Cancer, and lies between latitudes 22°9' and 22°37' north and longitudes 113°52' and 114°30' east (Diagram 1.1).

Hong Kong is about 1 066.53 square kilometres in area. It is made up of hundred of islands, with the larger ones being Hong Kong Island, Lantau, Tsing Yi, Ap Lei Chau and Lamma.

The urban built up areas include Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and New Kowloon which constitute only about 9% of the total land area in the Territory. The remaining 91% are mostly scrubland, woodland, badland and arable land in the New Territories interspersed between new towns.

Victoria Harbour, which lies between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula, is deep and sheltered and is an invaluable asset to Hong Kong.

LAND RESOURCES
Existing Land Use
Of the total land in Hong Kong, only 16% is built up area. The main urban areas of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and six new towns in the New Territories—Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun, Yuen Long, Fanling/Shak Wu Hui, Tai Po and Sha Tin—constitute almost 9% (Diagram 1.2) while the remaining 7% of the built-up land are rural market towns and villages, with the most prominent being Sai Kung, Ping Shan, Kam Tin, Cheung Chau, Mui Wo, Tai O, Tung Chung etc.

The rest of the Territory is mostly uninhabited, typically grass and scrub land; and badlands (63%). Natural and established woodlands (11.7%) in Hong Kong are rare. The afforested areas are mainly found in areas adjoining water reservoirs and within country parks.

Most of Hong Kong's arable land lies in the north-western part of the New Territories, with Yuen Long Plain accounting for the largest amount of arable land. These cultivated areas are used for market gardening. With the continuance of urban sprawl, more cultivable land are left fallow.

Despite the decrease in arable land, the acreage of fish ponds remains steady at 1.7%. This includes fresh and brackish water fish farming but excludes coastal marine fish farms. A breakdown of land utilization in Hong Kong in 1983 is found in the following Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Land Utilization in Hong Kong 1983

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use Classification</th>
<th>Approximate Area (square kilometres)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban built-up land</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural developed land</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodlands</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grass and scrub land</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badlands</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arable</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish ponds</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swamp and mangroves</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 064</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hong Kong 1983, Government Information Services, Hong Kong, p. 63.
Topography and the Shortage of Land

Generally, the landform of Hong Kong is rugged. About 80 per cent of the Territory consists of hilly land. These hills form the backbone of the terrain with the highest point at 958 metres on Tai Mo Shan. Series of ridges extend to the north-east (Pat Sin Range), south-west (Lantau Peak and Sunset Peak) and the west (Tai Lam Chung areas). The only extensive area of flathland is in the north-western part of the New Territories. Some of the coastal areas are still affected by flood during heavy rainfall particularly at high tides, making development of these areas more costly.

The majority of the developable areas are found north and south of Victoria Harbour where urban development concentrates on the narrow strip of coastal land extending from west to east. The presence of steep slopes, coupled with the large population, accounts for the very high concentration of people in the developed areas. With increasing pressure on land and limited developable area, there is an increasing tendency for uphill development in the city. More and more highrise towers are now standing on the very steep slopes of the Victoria Peak. Through the use of modern engineering technology slopes are levelled, making the steepest slopes safe to build on at extra cost.

Creation of Land Through Reclamation

The shortage of land has long been the cause of high density development and overcrowdedness in Hong Kong. Through levelling of hills and reclamation, new land has been created for urban development.

Schemes existed for moderate reclamation at least as far back as 1855. Gaining land from the sea has continued to keep pace with accelerating rates of urban development. Since the end of the 19th Century strips of land has been added onto the coast along Victoria Harbour through different stages of reclamation (Diagram 1.3). But slowly they have extended to the coastal regions in the New Territories especially after the Second World War. Larger reclamation areas in the New Territories include Gin Drinker’s Bay, Tide Cove, Tolo Harbour and more recently, Ma On Shan, Tuen Mun and Junk Bay. The total area of land created through reclamation during the period 1945–1983 is 1 787.6 hectares, amounting to approximately 1.7% of the total land area in Hong Kong in 1983.

In general, most reclamations are intensively used for housing development. Public housing developments on reclaimed land are found at Kwun Tong, Wah Fu, Chai Wan etc. Private housing development are found at Lai Chi Kok (Mei Foo Sun Chuen) and Quarry Bay (Taikoo Shing) etc. Other reclaimed areas are heavily committed as commercial centres (Central and Wan Chai) and industrial sites (Container Terminal at Kwai Chung and industrial estates at Kwun Tong).

The importance of reclamation in creating new land for meeting the housing needs of the city has been reiterated in the consultant study on ‘Harbour Reclamations and Urban Growth’ commissioned by the Government in 1982. This study serves as part of a programme by the Government to coordinate overall planning, and to meet housing, transportation, employment and other needs of the population. It details the potential for further reclamations within the harbour area, and the scope for additional urban land created through the redevelopment of existing properties and the development of new sites.

POPULATION

Growth: A General Outlook

The total population of Hong Kong had increased dramatically from 3.1 million in 1961 to 5 million in 1981. By the end of 1982 the total population was estimated to be 5 287 800. Table 1.2 shows the population growth since 1961.

The average annual rate of increase over the last 10 years was 2.4%, fluctuating at changes in migration flows. During the years 1978–1980 in particular, there was a large inflow of immigrants from China—both legal and illegal—and an influx of boat refugees from Vietnam. The average annual growth rate increased from 1.8% over the period 1972–1977 to 3.9% over the period 1978–1980. The average annual growth rate for the years 1981–1982 dropped to 1.6% due to a reduction in the inflow of immigrants as a result of stricter control of illegal immigrants at the end of 1980. Due to efforts advocating family planning, the rate of natural increase dropped steadily over the period 1972–1982 from 14 to 12 per thousand.

Table 1.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>3 129 648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>3 936 630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>4 402 980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>4 986 560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982 (Estimate)</td>
<td>5 287 800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures exclude transients, Vietnamese refugees and residents away from Hong Kong on the reference date.

Source: Census and Statistics Department.
Density and Spatial Distribution

With the total population increasing by over a million since 1971, the population density of Hong Kong as a whole reached a peak in 1982, resulting in 4 923 persons per square kilometre as compared with the corresponding figure of 3 750 eleven years ago. The figure was even higher when individual urban districts were considered. According to the 1981 census, the three census districts with the largest population density, Sham Shui Po, Mong Kok and Hung Hom had a density of 165 000, 161 000 and 120 000 persons per square kilometre respectively.

There was a considerable pressure on the demand for land to house the ever increasing population, and it was essential to develop hitherto sparsely populated areas in order to relieve overcrowding in the old districts.

A huge development programme in the New Territories started in the 1970's. Out of the largely rural expanse of the New Territories the new towns of Tsuen Wan—first developed in the early 1960's—Shatin and Tuen Mun emerged as self-contained communities providing housing, schools, shopping, community facilities and industry. Meanwhile the old market towns of Tai Po, Sheung Shui/Fanling, and Yuen Long were being expanded, modernized, and provided with additional infra-structure to meet daily needs. A seventh new town in Junk Bay is currently being planned. The new town scheme has the objectives of relocating urban populations living at high densities, providing them with better housing and improved living conditions while at the same time attracting industry.

Table 1.3 Distribution of Population

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Broad Census Area</th>
<th>1961 (000)</th>
<th>1971 (000)</th>
<th>1981 (000)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong Island</td>
<td>1 005</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>1 184</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kowloon</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Kowloon</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>1 469</td>
<td>1 651</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Territories</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>1 303</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New towns</td>
<td>N.A. (395)*</td>
<td>(939)</td>
<td>N.A. (10)</td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other areas</td>
<td>N.A. (280)*</td>
<td>(364)</td>
<td>N.A. (7)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3 130</td>
<td>3 937</td>
<td>4 987</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures may not add up to total due to rounding.
* Figures in brackets are detailed breakdowns in the New Territories.
Source: Hong Kong 1981 Census, Main Report Volume 1, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, p. 63.

This massive urbanization programme has a significant effect on the geographical distribution of the population. Table 1.3 shows that there was an increase in the number of people moving from the main urban areas of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and New Kowloon to the new towns between 1961 and 1981. As a result of people moving out of the older urban areas, the population in the conurbation of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and New Kowloon grew at a lower annual rate than that of the whole of Hong Kong. There was even a loss of population in a number of urban districts. Another group that also showed a decline is the marine population.

HOUSING

Demand for Housing

Rapid population increase

The post war natural increase in population and the large influx of legal and illegal immigrants in the 1950s and between 1978–80 have resulted a greater demand for housing and extreme overcrowdedness in urban areas. Without permanent accommodation many resorted to squatting. Squatters illegally occupying areas of Crown land have posed a demand for permanent housing. Despite government's huge efforts in public housing development and the rapid expansion of private housing, there remains squatters who are still on the waiting list for public housing and who are either unable or unwilling to afford private accommodation. Estimate put the current squatter population at about half a million.

Increase in the number of household

Aggravating the problem was an increase in the number of households at a rate higher than population growth; between 1971–1981 at 3.8% per annum. This was partly due to continuing economic prosperity which enabled young people to form their own nuclear families.
Government's Response

**Provision for public housing**

In 1973 the Ten-Year Housing Programme was launched with the primary aim of overcoming Hong Kong's housing problems and providing all households with a permanent, self-contained home at an affordable price. The plan called for a concerted house-building programme intended to supply housing for 1.8 million within a maximum of 10 years. As developable urban land became increasingly scarce, development had to spread to the once rural New Territories.

Both the Housing Authority established under the Housing Ordinance and the Hong Kong Housing Society incorporated in 1951 played a very active role in the provision of low-cost housing for low-income families. In March 1973, the total number of public housing units, comprising Group A and B Estates, Cottage Areas and Housing Society Estates, was 352,341. In ten years' time, this number grew to about 509,300 units, inclusive of Housing Authority Estates, Cottage Areas, Housing Society Estates and Home Ownership Scheme Blocks introduced in early 1976.

In 1983 the annual production target for public housing unit was set at 35,000. The Government has emphasized that this rate of production is not the maximum target and when circumstances permit expansion would be considered.

**Squatter control, clearance and improvement**

Due to poor living conditions and illegal occupation of Crown land, squatter areas have been considered a menace to public health and land development. The Government has attempted to clear those areas required for permanent development and to exercise control over the building of additional structures. The main task is to restrict the growth of temporary structures on areas of Crown land required for development or where such structures are likely to create health, fire or structural hazard.

Squatter fires and landslides during 1981 have highlighted the safety and environmental problems in squatter areas. In early 1982, a Squatter Area Improvements Division was established within the Housing Department to undertake the planning of improvements to squatter areas not expected to be cleared for development for some time. A comprehensive squatter improvement programme is now being implemented providing fire-fighting installations, fire-breaks, basic services such as sanitation, drainage, water and electricity, as well as amenities such as sitting-out areas. Nevertheless, it is envisaged that about half of the families living in squatter areas will be rehoused within the next five years.

**TRANSPORTATION**

**General Review**

Rapid and dense urban development, the growth of new towns and sustained economic activity have all posed a heavy burden on Hong Kong's internal transport system. In general, urban transportation in Hong Kong is characterized by its low car-ownership ratio, as compared to other developed countries, limited road capacity and dependence on public transport.

Between 1966 and 1982 there was an increase of 29.4% of road space from approximately 948 km to 1,227 km. The registration of motor vehicles of all types over the same period more than tripled from 93,000 to over 330,000. This meant an average of 276.6 vehicles for every kilometre of road space. As for the registration of private cars, there was a substantial increase during the same period, from approximately 57,000 in 1966 to 215,000 in 1982. However, due to government policies (discussed in the following) there has been a decline in the growth rate of private car registration since 1982. In January 1984, the registration of private cars dropped to approximately 199,800. At the end of 1982 when the peak of car ownership was reached, it was estimated that 24.6% households in Hong Kong owned a motor car.

By the same token, over 75% of households today rely on public transport. This dependence on public transport is of concern as a growing proportion of population is living at an increasing distance from the centres of economic and social activity as a result of urban growth and development of the New Territories. Statistics showed that over 94% of the work trips and 92% of the school trips by mechanical modes were made on public transport in 1976.

**Major Transport Study and Government's Policy**

In 1973, 'The Hong Kong Comprehensive Transport Study' was commissioned by the Government to:

- establish the requirements of a transportation system in which the demand for movement and the facilities available to meet that demand would be balanced to the greatest possible extent;
- examine the transport mix necessary to reach this balance and the methods by which it may be achieved in practice;
- examine the effect on transportation system of changes in population prediction and distribution and of road construction and mass transit construction programmes; and
- examine the effect of certain stated transportation policies.
It recommended a high road investment programme, an extended and early completion of the full mass transit system, reconstruction of the Kowloon-Canton Railway and progressive fiscal constraint on private cars.

In 1979 the White Paper on Internal Transport Policy was published. Proposals included:

- improvement of road system;
- expansion and improvement of public transport; and
- a more economic use of the road system.

Further to the publication of the White Paper, action has been taken by the Government to improve the road system. Several major road improvement projects were completed and work on the New Territories trunk road, the New Territories Circular Road and the Island Eastern Corridor progressed satisfactorily.

To increase mass transport capacity, the modified initial system of the MTR was completed in 1981 and the electrification of the entire Kowloon-Canton Railway between Hung Hom and Lo Wu was completed in 1983. Should the Light Rail Transit be built in Tuen Mun, mass transport capacity of western New Territories will be further increased.

To tackle congestion on roads, measures have been taken to restrain the growth rate of private cars and motor-cycles. These measures included doubling the rate of first registration tax, tripling the annual private vehicle licence fees, substantially raising the duty on petrol and the electronic road pricing system, feasibility of which is currently under consideration. As a result, the number of new private cars registered between May and December 1982 dropped by 66% compared with the same period in 1981. It is hoped that these measures will keep the growth rate of private cars down from the level of 11% in 1981 to the new policy target of not more than 5% per annum.

SUMMARY

This chapter has highlighted some of the major planning issues which Hong Kong has been facing and will probably continue to face. These planning issues may be quite different to those of other cities—our resources are much limited, land extremely short, pace of change remarkably rapid, density higher, etc. Together with many other cultural, historical and political factors, they all constitute a very different context of planning in Hong Kong.

In the following chapters, discussions will focus on how planning is carried out in Hong Kong, its past achievements and outlook for the future.
CHAPTER TWO
HISTORY OF TOWN PLANNING

INTRODUCTION
Similar to many other countries, the Government plays a very active role in the planning and development of Hong Kong. The evolution of town planning in Hong Kong has occurred in concert with the emergence of a formal planning body institutionalized within the Government.

ENACTMENT OF TOWN PLANNING ORDINANCE
The earliest history of institutionalized planning essentially began with the enactment of the Town Planning Ordinance in 1939. It was in this Ordinance that the aim 'to promote the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the community' was first proclaimed. Under the provisions of the Ordinance, the Town Planning Board was appointed by the Governor to prepare draft plans for the future layout of existing and potential urban areas as directed. Owing to the interruption of the Second World War, the first meeting of the Board was only convened in 1951.

THE ABERCROMBIE REPORT
In 1947, Sir Patrick Abercrombie was appointed to advise the Governor of Hong Kong on the general lines and principles to be followed in planning the future development of the port and urban area of Hong Kong, to outline general plans for this purpose, and to advise on what such plans would involve and in particular, what planning organization would be required.

Abercrombie’s report published in September 1948, outlined various physical planning proposals including the provision of a cross-harbour tunnel, reclamations, railways relocation, removal of military establishments, creation of industrial and residential zones and development of new towns in rural New Territories. As part of these proposals, he also recommended the establishment of an office to draw up detailed plans and to administer them.

Whilst a small Town Planning Unit was established within the Public Works Department headquarters in 1947 to prepare preliminary land utilization plans and necessary surveys to facilitate the work of Sir Patrick, it was not until 1953 that a Planning Branch was established within the Crown Lands and Survey Office of the Public Works Department. The purpose of the Branch was to coordinate the work of the various offices of the Public Works Department and other government departments with a view to producing detailed plans for the future development of Hong Kong.

PLANNING ACHIEVEMENTS: 1953-1973
With the setting up of the Planning Branch in 1953, emphasis was put on the preparation of statutory plans under the auspices of the Town Planning Board. By the end of 1958, planning work had included either background studies or surveys. District plans had been initiated for over 70% of the urban districts. Layout plans for several small townships in the New Territories had also been prepared.

Apart from preparing plans, the Planning Branch also undertook joint studies with other government departments. A comprehensive review of the Territory’s road system was conducted in 1958 by the Planning Branch, the Road Office and a consultant from the British Road Research Laboratory. Planning staff contributed to and participated in a number of committees and working groups concerned with the coordination of the physical development of the Territory.

Planning work in the 1950’s and 1960’s has paved the way for future new town development. In the mid-1950’s the land requirement for industry and housing was reviewed. It finally led to the preliminary investigation of five possible sites for new-town development, namely Tsuen Wan/Kwai Chung, Sha Tin, Tuen Mun, Tai Po and Junk Bay. The first Outline Development Plans for Sha Tin and Tsuen Wan were approved and published by the Governor-in-Council in 1962 and 1964 respectively. Ideas were also put forward to establish country parks especially in the New Territories for passive recreation and conservation purposes.

Concurrently, planning for the main urban areas expanded in scope. In the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, the resiting of the railway terminus from Tsim Sha Tsui to Hung Hom as well as the possible alignments of a cross-harbour tunnel were investigated. These investigations carried significant impact on the development pattern of Tsim Sha Tsui, Hung Hom and Wan Chai Districts. In 1960, a plan for north-eastern Kowloon, which covered 1 350 acres (546.8 ha) and extended from Waterloo Road to Clear Water Bay Road for a population of 650,000, was prepared. The plan was characterized by its emphasis on public housing development and sites for flatted factories in San Po Kong.
Redevelopment of the old urban districts always attracted the active attention of the Government. In 1961, the comprehensive redevelopment plan for Central District was approved and published. In 1967, the Planning Branch took part in a planning and engineering feasibility study involving the urban renewal of a 'Pilot Scheme Area' in Western District. Layout plan for the scheme was prepared and adopted in 1970.

As planning evolved in the 1960's, the need for comprehensive planning outlining broad proposals for the future land use and population distribution pattern throughout the Territory became evident. In 1965, the Government called for the preparation of a 'Colony Outline Plan'. Under the direction of the Land Development Planning Committee (now known as the Land Development Policy Committee), the Colony Outline Planning Division was established in the Planning Branch to prepare the Colony Outline Plan. Based on reports of six inter-departmental working committees, the Plan was finally completed in 1970, agreed to by the Land Development Planning Committee in 1971 and noted by the Executive Council in May 1972. This Plan has since served as a guideline in the planning practice of Hong Kong. Constant updating of the Plan was required to take account of the changing economic and social conditions and revised government priorities and policies. A major review was made in 1974 and the Plan was also renamed the 'Hong Kong Outline Plan'.

PLANNING FROM 1973 ONWARDS

In 1972 the Governor-in-Council approved the adoption of a 'Ten-Year Housing Target Programme', and since then town planning in Hong Kong entered a new era. The Ten-Year Housing Target Programme was aimed at providing adequate housing for another 1.8 million people by the mid-1980's. The Housing Authority played an important role since the bulk of the housing demand could only be accommodated in public housing. In response to the need for this major housing programme within the 10-year period, the Government decided to accelerate the development of new towns and to expand market towns in the New Territories.

To do this, the New Territories Development Department was formally set up in 1973 within the Public Works Department to be responsible for planning, coordinating and implementing the development programme of new towns. Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin and Tuen Mun were the first three new towns to be developed.

Concurrent with the establishment of the New Territories Development Department, the Planning Branch was upgraded to become a full-fledged Office within the Lands, Survey and Town Planning Department which operated under the umbrella of the Public Works Department. It was responsible for statutory planning matters in both the new towns and the urban areas, district planning matters in the rural New Territories and the urban areas as well as the revision of the Hong Kong Outline Plan.

District planning activity was stepped up in the 1970's. In early 1973, nineteen statutory plans covering twenty-one planning areas in the urban districts and three statutory plans covering Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung and Sha Tin were prepared. At the end of 1983, a total of twenty-four statutory plans covering twenty-six planning areas in the urban districts and a total of seven draft Outline Zoning Plans covering the majority of the new towns were prepared. During the same period, 'Environmental Improvement Areas' and 'Comprehensive Redevelopment Areas' were designated into areas in need of urban renewal.

Stepping into the 1980's the establishment of the Urban Area Development Organization, the setting up of the Strategic Planning Unit and later the defederalization of the Public Works Department (PWD) led to the planning profession in Hong Kong moving in a new direction. The Urban Area Development Organization was set up in 1980 on an experimental basis to coordinate urban development in the urban area particularly in north-east Kowloon and to liaise with local consultative bodies on behalf of the PWD Group of Departments. The Strategic Planning Unit within the Government Secretariat was formed in 1980 to prepare an overall Territorial Development Strategy to guide public and private investment. With the defederalization of PWD in 1982, the Town Planning Division, under the Lands Department, was given the responsibility to take charge of statutory planning matters, update the Hong Kong Outline Plan, undertake planning surveys and regional/sectoral studies (e.g. estimate of land supply), and prepare sub-regional structure plans.

The planning profession in Hong Kong has begun to place more emphasis on territorial and sub-regional planning in the 1980's. This is reflected in the establishment of the Strategic Planning Unit to prepare the Territorial Development Strategy and the creation of the Structure Planning Section within the Town Planning Division to prepare sub-regional structure plans. In connection with the preparation of the Territorial Development Strategy, consultants were commissioned for a series of sub-regional studies with a view to examining the development potential of each of the five sub-regions, namely, North-east New Territories (N.T.), North-west N.T., South-east N.T., South-west N.T. and the main urban areas.

As a final remark, it is worthwhile noting that having placed emphasis on new town development in the 1970's, the Government has recently refocussed on the main urban areas with renewed interest. This is indicated by the commissioning of two consultancy studies to look into the feasibility of further development within the main urban areas and the form and structure of an agency to facilitate the implementation of urban renewal programmes.

Planning in Hong Kong has grown in importance with the development of Hong Kong. During the past 30 years, both the scope and area of planning concern has expanded. The planning profession in Hong Kong would be launching into a new era if and when the Government re-orient planning activity in the development and redevelopment of the main urban areas. If that is the case, two consultancy studies completed in 1983 have indeed played a vital role in writing a new page of planning history for Hong Kong.
CHAPTER THREE
PLANNING ORGANIZATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

STRUCTURE OF THE GOVERNMENT

Hong Kong is a British Crown Colony and the principal features of the constitution are prescribed in Letters Patent under The Great Seal of the United Kingdom, which provide for a Governor, an Executive Council and a Legislative Council.

The Legislative Council (LegCo), which is presided over by the Governor, meets publicly once a fortnight. All legislations are enacted by the Governor with the advice and consent of LegCo. The Executive Council (ExCo) advises the Governor on all important matters on the administration of Hong Kong. The Governor-in-Council is also given power under numerous ordinances to make subsidiary legislation by way of rules, regulations and orders. ExCo meets in camera weekly.

The Chief Secretary, the head of the Civil Service and chief executive of the Hong Kong Government, is responsible to the Governor for the formulation of policies to be implemented by various branches or department. The relevant committees and departments involved in land use planning matters are illustrated in Diagram 3.1.

Hong Kong has a three-tier planning system:

- The Strategic Planning Unit of the Lands and Works Branch is primarily responsible for territorial development strategic planning.
- The Town Planning Division of the Lands Department takes charge of the structure planning at the sub-regional level, sectoral studies and statutory planning.
- The Urban Area Development Organization and the New Territories Development Department take care of the day-to-day planning and its implementation at the district or new town level.

These offices and departments, directly responsible for land use planning, mainly work under the direction of the Town Planning Board and the Land Development Policy Committee.

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS OF THE TOWN PLANNING DIVISION

The Government planning organization had operated within the Public Works Department since 1953. Subsequent to the re-organization of the Public Works Department in April 1982, the Town Planning Division became one of the three Divisions of the Lands Department.

The overall functions of the Division are to formulate planning policies, planning standards and guidelines, to prepare structure plans and planning sectoral studies and to draft and publish statutory town plans. It provides professional advice to the public, other government departments, consultants and advisory bodies on town planning matters. It services the Town Planning Board in the preparation of statutory outline zoning plans and processing planning applications under the provisions of the Town Planning Ordinance, and also the Land Development Policy Committee, the Special Committee on Land Supply and their sub-committees.

The Principal Government Town Planner, who is the Head of the Town Planning Division, is also responsible for the professional quality of the work of town planners seconded to the New Territories Development Department, Urban Area Development Organization and the Strategic Planning Unit of the Lands and Works Branch (Diagram 3.2).

The work of the Division is carried out by three Sections, namely, Statutory Planning Section, Planning Standards and Studies Section, and Structure Planning Section.

Statutory Planning Section

The Statutory Planning Section was set up in April 1982 as a separate section within the Division. It is responsible for the statutory planning aspects of the Territory. It services the Town Planning Board in the preparation and revision of all statutory outline zoning plans, including those for the New Territories. The Section also processes planning applications submitted under Section 16 of the Town Planning Ordinance and coordinates with other government departments on the implementation of statutory planning proposals.

Planning Standards and Studies Section

The main function of the Planning Standards and Studies Section is concerned with work relating to the preparation and revision of the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, a government policy document on standards of provision for various community facilities to be adopted in district planning. Apart from this, the Section is also involved in the undertaking of background studies for the preparation of district plans; the conducting and systematic updating of land use and floor area surveys, occupancy and demographic data for planning purposes; the undertaking of special planning research studies; and above all, the developing, organizing and maintaining of computer systems for the storage and processing of planning data.
Structure Planning Section
The Section was formed in 1981. Its main functions are to provide planning data input to strategic territorial planning work and to translate territorial goals into sub-regional objectives for the preparation of structure plans which will be discussed in the following chapter. This Section undertakes sub-regional and territory-wide studies, including the monitoring of planning consultancy studies, which provide the necessary data inputs for the preparation of the development strategy. Based on the results of these studies and on the basis of the strategic plan, sub-regional structure plans will be prepared, which will provide a more coordinated framework for the preparation of statutory and departmental plans at the district/local level. Other duties of the Section include the collection of planning information and preparation of detailed studies to assist in the setting up and monitoring of land production and urban renewal schemes.

Other Units
Apart from the three major Sections mentioned, the Town Planning Division is also supported by the Central Information and Technical Administration Unit and the Design and Layout Unit.

The Central Information and Technical Administration Unit was formed in August 1980 to provide a common channel through which planning information is released to the public. The Unit also provides general professional assistance to the Principal Government Town Planner on technical matters.

The Design and Layout Unit provides design and layout services to the whole of the Town Planning Division. It prepares detailed layout plans for the development of existing and future areas of special interest and provides planning advice on civic design matters. It also undertakes special studies in relation to recreation, urban renewal, conservation etc., including any study necessary in relation to large private development proposals.

PLANNING FUNCTIONS OF THE NEW TERRITORIES DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
The New Territories Development Department (NTDD) is a multi-disciplinary organization established in 1973 as a result of government's objective to implement the public housing programme and associated development in the New Territories. It is responsible for all administrative, professional and financial functions related to the development and planning of new towns, main market towns, and other development areas in the New Territories.

The principal responsibilities are to prepare layout plans, to prepare and review development programmes, to direct the activities of consulting engineers and private architects and to co-ordinate the related work, such as to provide formed land, roads, drainage and the full range of infrastructure required, with other Lands and Works Group of Departments. Although planning functions are important aspects of NTDD's responsibilities, its major role remains one of coordinating engineering activities within the new towns.

The Department consists of a headquarters, various New Town Development Offices and a New Territories Development Branch (responsible for areas in the New Territories outside the new towns). The Head of the Department is the Director of New Territories Development. Each New Town Development Office is under the direct control and supervision of a Project Manager who is supported by a multi-disciplinary professional team of engineers, town planners, and architects. The Branch is similarly constituted but is headed by a Government Engineer. When NTDD was created in 1973, there were only three New Towns Development Offices—Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin and Tuen Mun. Since then the Tai Po/Fanling and Junk Bay Development Offices were established in 1978 and 1980 respectively bringing the total number of New Town Development Offices to five (Diagram 3.3).

The planning staff seconded to NTDD are responsible for district planning and development control functions within the new towns and some designated rural areas. Their major responsibility is to prepare and revise outline development plans and layout plans within the framework of statutory outline zoning plans prepared by the Town Planning Division and to the standards and requirements set out in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines. Apart from this, they also reserve sites for government departments, utility companies and other community uses, scrutinize development submissions, prepare development programmes for the implementation of planning proposals, and provide planning advice to other government departments, advisory bodies, consultants and the public.

PLANNING FUNCTIONS OF THE URBAN AREA DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION
The Urban Area Development Organization (UADO) formed in late 1980 on an experimental basis is responsible, among others, for the programming, processing, and monitoring of both public and private works for the development of the main urban areas, and co-ordinating Lands and Works Group of Departments in the planning and development of the urban areas to meet the government's district administration plan.

When it was first set up, it consisted of a Headquarters and a NE Kowloon Development Office. The former was headed by the Urban Area Development Adviser (UADA) and the latter by the Development Manager/NE Kowloon. Under them there are, at present, District Divisions covering ten Districts Board regions. Each District Division is headed by a Chief Public Works Officer. In July 1982, the responsibility of action planning in the main urban areas, together with the staff, was transferred from the Town Planning Division to the UADO. The new unit is named the Urban District Planning Division and is headed by the Government Town Planner/Urban (Diagram 3.4).
Town planners seconded to UADO are either working in the Urban District Planning Team under the direction of Government Town Planner/Urban or in a multi-disciplinary team of engineers, architects and town planners under a Chief Public Works Officer in the District Divisions. They are mainly responsible for district planning matters and development control in the urban areas, and carry out functions similar to town planners seconded to the New Territories Development Department.

PLANNING FUNCTIONS OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING UNIT

The Strategic Planning Unit was set up in mid-1980 as an integral part of the Lands Division of the Environment Branch in view of the need to plan for longer term population growth in 1990's and after which the current cycle of planning would not be able to provide. The Unit is now a functional unit of the Lands and Works Branch with part of its staff seconded from the Town Planning Division.

The main aim of the SPU is to prepare an overall development strategy which sets out the general path along which investment and development should be directed, over a given time scale, to achieve the greatest effectiveness in the development of housing, industry and infrastructure, including inter-urban transport links and services.

More specifically, the main functions of the SPU are:

- To assess land requirements to meet various policy objectives which may be approved by the Government from time to time.
- To produce plans for the optimum development sequence necessary to meet the long-term objectives within the framework of established development policies.
- To maintain close liaison with policy branches and departments to ensure that development plans, programmes and planning standards are implemented according to strategic in development policies.
- To advise on the terms of reference of all major development projects.

The Unit is now headed by a Government Town Planner/Strategic Planning and is responsible to the Deputy Secretary of Lands and Works. At present, two Senior Town Planners seconded from the Town Planning Division and one Senior Statistician provide professional support to the Government Town Planner/Strategic Planning.
CHAPTER FOUR
HIERARCHY OF PLANS

INTRODUCTION

The Town Planning Division, the Strategic Planning Unit, the New Territories Development Department and the Urban Area Development Organization are all involved in the preparation of plans. The types of plans prepared varied according to the scope and nature of the subject to be covered. The basic principle of town planning in Hong Kong is from general-strategic to site-specific. At the territorial level, there are planning standards and strategic planning proposals containing broad-brush development policies for the whole of Hong Kong. At the district level of the hierarchy of plans there are statutory or departmental town plans for individual districts within the main urban areas or new towns. The hierarchy, made up of territorial, sub-regional and district/local plans, is illustrated in Diagram 4.1.

TERRITORIAL PLANS

Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines

Background and Contents

In 1965, the Colonial Secretariat (now known as the Government Secretariat) called for the preparation of an Outline Plan as a comprehensive development plan for the whole of Hong Kong. Consequently, under the direction of the Land Development Planning Committee (now known as the Land Development Policy Committee) and the operation of six inter-departmental working committees, a Colony Outline Plan was prepared. The Plan was agreed to by the Land Development Planning Committee in 1971 and noted by the Executive Council in 1972.

In 1974, the Plan was substantially revised taking into account changes in socio-economic conditions and government priorities since its completion. The revised Plan, known as the Hong Kong Outline Plan which consisted of Part I (Planning Standards) and Part II (Territorial Development Strategy) was approved by the Land Development Policy Committee (LDPC) in 1979. A year later, however, LDPC set up a Working Group on Development Strategy Formulation (WGDSF) to focus on the complex task of charting a more comprehensive long-term spatial development. As a result, the preparation of planning standards (i.e. Part I) was carried out separately under the guidance of the Planning Standards Sub-committee of the LDPC. It was subsequently renamed the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) and formed a separate document of its own.

The HKPSG is a government manual of current land planning standards and guidelines. It is mainly concerned with district and local criteria for site reservation, location factors and site requirements. It is an important source of reference on government policies for land use planners in the preparation of statutory and departmental plans and project planning briefs.

The HKPSG includes the full range of local, district and sub-regional facilities essential to community well-being, such as 'residential densities', 'community facilities', 'recreation and open space', 'industry', 'commerce', 'utility service' and 'internal transport facilities'. These chapters are concerned with specific land use/facility types, covering the homes-work places-leisure 'triangle', transportation and other linkages among them.

In the preparation of each chapter, an 'argument paper' is usually drafted to back up the chapter by explaining the formulation of standards and guidelines concerned to facilitate proper application and to provide a basis for future revisions. The standards have to be revised to take account of the changing social and economic conditions and government policies and priorities. However, revisions are undertaken on an ad hoc basis rather than through regular monitoring. Ad Hoc Working Groups formed by concerned departments are generally convened for this purpose. The procedures in respect of the preparation and the revision of the HKPSG are illustrated in Diagram 4.2.

Application

Planning standards and guidelines are by no means rigid. They are flexibly applied by district landuse planners with regard to the people, time, space, and various resources and constraints of a particular district concerned. Standard for the provision of some facilities cannot always be achieved, particularly in built-up urban area. Nevertheless, standard criteria in the provision of facilities can often be met either by further reclamations or by comprehensive redevelopment schemes. Professional judgment is definitely required to ensure a sensible and flexible adoption of the HKPSG in the preparation of district town plans.

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Territorial Development Strategy

Background
The rapid rate at which Hong Kong has developed in the post war years, particularly over the past decade, is reflected by a number of indicators which express themselves in the form of rapid population growth from approximately 2 million in 1951 to 5.5 million in 1983. On average, the population has increased in steps of about one million persons per decade. If this trend continues, by the turn of the century there should be about seven million people in the Territory. In response to this tremendous population growth, major programmes of development in respect of housing, social services, transport, economic diversification and other related fields have been vigorously pursued with capital expenditures averaging about HK$7.85 billion per annum since 1977/78. In the forefront there have been programmes for the development of six new towns designed to accommodate about three million people overall. In 1980, the LDPC considered that the time had come for a re-evaluation of where, in terms of physical development, Hong Kong should be heading in the long run bearing in mind that, by the end of the 1980s, current major land production programmes will have largely reached fruition. To that end, the LDPC advised that a Territorial Development Strategy should be formulated.

Goals and objectives
In very broad terms, it is seen that the principal goal is to ‘produce a long-term land use/transportation strategy for Hong Kong to cater for a derived target population and associated socio-economic activities in a manner which will produce the highest quality environment within constraints set by resource availability and the time frame within which the needs of the target population have to be met’. Such a strategy should, in land use terms, cover needs for additional urban growth while conserving rural and marine areas for purposeful activities. The resultant land development proposals must be serviced by a multi-mode transport system not only to serve internal travel demands but also to provide essential facilities for our international trade.

There are two sets of objectives guiding long-term development strategies. The first comprises a variety of investment objectives aimed at minimizing costs and maximizing potential benefits. The second set of objectives encompasses a broad range of social, environmental and economic considerations which strategic development proposals should aim to satisfy.

The formulation of goals and objectives is the first step to give direction to strategic planning studies, to help shape alternative proposals and to assess available options, leading eventually towards the selection of a preferred strategy.

Methodology
The procedure involved in the formulation of a Territorial Development Strategy was endorsed by the LDPC in 1980. In broad terms, the methodology involves the following steps:

1. identify the key issues that the strategy would need to consider, and primary assumptions in various social, political, environmental and economic policy objectives;
2. estimate additional housing and employment demands for the whole Territory over the strategic planning period;
3. establish the basic transport network assumed to be operational for the same period;
4. establish the potential for development in each sub-region and determine the associated requirements for transport interconnections;
5. derive alternative development strategies in relation to the investment objectives set out at the beginning, the additional population and employment demand identified at step 2 and the land use—transport development potentials established at step 4;
6. evaluate each alternative development strategy against various policy objectives and resource constraints and select a preferred strategy;
7. translate the chosen strategy into more definitive plans and programmes, monitor and adjust strategy in the light of changing circumstances; and
8. carry out various sectorial studies on such matters as industrial diversification, the role of agriculture, etc. to keep under review key issues and main assumptions, and also to provide a basis for the evaluation of strategies.

As Hong Kong is becoming more important as a financial centre and an entrepot in South-East Asia, it has been estimated that the volume of air traffic will increase to a point beyond the capacity of the existing international airport. It is recognized that a replacement airport may be required sometime in the future although its location and timing of construction has not yet been decided. Since the overall development pattern of Hong Kong will be significantly affected by the future location of its international airport, it is considered prudent for the Territorial Development Strategy to derive a preferred strategy for different airport location scenarios.
Progress

A number of consultant and in-house sub-regional studies had been completed in order to assess the potential for land supply and infrastructural demand in sub-regions like North-west New Territories, North-east New Territories, North Lantau, Junk Bay—Sai Kung and the Main Urban Areas. In land use terms, there would be potential scope to accommodate an additional three million people in the 1990s and beyond over and above what further capacity remains in existing planned and developed areas. All the above major studies were brought together in 1983 as a basis for formulating development options.

At the time this booklet was under preparation planners at the Strategic Planning Unit were engaged in the generation of alternative strategies and the selection of the preferred strategy. Although it would be too early to predict the final outcome in broad terms, the basic choices are likely to be a harbour oriented urban growth strategy, a strategy of further decentralization or various combinations thereof. Some preliminary results are expected to be available by the end of 1984.

SUB-REGIONAL PLANS

Structure Plans

Structure Plans in Hong Kong are sub-regional policy guidelines translating territory-wide goals into sub-regional objectives. They serve as a bridge linking the Territorial Development Strategy and local/district plans. Structure plans are designed to perform the following functions:

- to establish aims, policies and broad proposals to achieve the territorial goals and policies;
- to provide frameworks for local plans and to identify action areas which require intensive action; and
- to serve as guidelines for development control, particularly for areas not covered by any local plans.

A Structure Plan usually contains a written statement and is accompanied by illustrative diagrams, figures and plans. The written statement will comprise:

- background information about the sub-region such as the geography, context and existing structure;
- the identification and analyses of strategic issues such as population, labour force, employment structure, industry/commerce, housing, community facilities, recreation, conservation/landscaping, agriculture, transport/communications, utility service, land and other resources etc.;
- the identification of specific planning objectives for the sub-region;
- the generation and evaluation of possible alternative strategies to achieve the objectives and the selection of a preferred strategy;
- the explanation of policies for positive planning action or strategic development control;
- the identification of 'action areas' in need of intensive action or comprehensive treatment either by public or private agencies; and
- a statement on how the plan is to be implemented, programmed and monitored.

An example of the summary diagram of a Structure Plan is at Diagram 4.3.

Structure Plans will be prepared for the five sub-regions—North-east New Territories, North-west New Territories, South-east New Territories, South-west New Territories and the Main Urban Areas (Diagram 4.4) as soon as the Territorial Development Strategy is formulated and agreed to by the LDPC. A series of statutory plans covering various districts within each sub-region would be prepared on the basis of the agreed Structure Plans.

DISTRICT/LOCAL PLANS

Statutory Outline Zoning Plans

Statutory outline zoning plans for existing and potential urban areas are prepared under the provisions of the Town Planning Ordinance and under the direction of the Town Planning Board. They indicate the proposed broad land use patterns and major road systems of particular area. In general, areas are zoned for residential, commercial, industrial, government/institution/community, open space or other specified purposes. They provide an important link between the Government and the public in that they give an indication of the future broad pattern of land use, including major public works for developing areas. Therefore they provide a guide to public and private investment (Diagram 4.5).

Before the preparation of a statutory outline zoning plan, a background study of the existing situation and a forecast of the district's future population, land and other requirements in the planning area are carried out. This is
to assess the problems and needs of the district in relation to the surrounding areas, the sub-region and the Territory as a whole. Relevant government departments and public bodies are consulted in the process.

When a draft statutory plan is considered suitable for publication by the Town Planning Board, it is displayed for public inspection for two months. Any person affected by the draft plan may, within the two-month period, send a written statement of his objection to the Board. This statement should set out the nature and reasons of the objection and indicate whether the objection could be removed by an amendment to the draft plan. If the written objection is rejected, the objector or his authorized representative is entitled to appear before the Board to expand on his written statement if he desires a hearing. After full consideration of the objection, the Board may decide to amend the plan to comply with the objection or reject it. The draft plan is then submitted with a schedule of all objections to the Governor-in-Council for approval. Once approved, it is a binding statutory document until such time as it is revoked or replaced (Diagram 4.6). Even before approval by the Governor, a statutory outline zoning plan once displayed for public inspection has legal effect. Under the Buildings Ordinance, the Building Authority may refuse to give its approval to any plans for building works which would contravene any approved or draft plan prepared under the Town Planning Ordinance. In general, statutory plans may affect owners of land in three main ways, that is, if their land:

- is zoned for public purposes;
- is restricted to a use not permitted under the lease; or
- is more severely restricted as to use than permitted under the lease.

Normally, an owner is not affected until either he wishes to redevelop his property or Government wishes to proceed with the scheme affecting his land. In the case of sites zoned Government/Institution/Community or Open Space, the Government will normally require them; either by negotiation or by resumption under the Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance for public purposes. The Town Planning Board may, under Section 4(2) of the Town Planning Ordinance, recommend the resumption of any land interfering with its plans for the layout of any area, and resumption to avoid such interference shall be deemed to be resumption for a public purpose within the meaning of the Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance.

In 1983, the main urban areas were sub-divided into thirty-nine planning areas of which, three were covered by approved plans and twenty-three by draft plans. In the New Territories, there were seven draft plans covering Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung, Tsing Yi, Sha Tin, Tai Po, Tsuen Mun and the southern coast of Lantau Island.

The Town Planning Ordinance also makes provision for a Schedule of Notes to be attached to each statutory plan. This schedule shows the uses which are always permitted in a particular zone and the other uses for which the Town Planning Board's permission must be sought. Such provision for application for planning permission (under Section 16 of the Ordinance) allows greater flexibility in land use planning and better control of development to meet changing needs, which will be explained in greater details in the next chapter.

Outline Development Plans

Outline development plans are departmental plans prepared within the framework of the statutory outline zoning plans. They are the most common type of plan prepared by the Urban Area Development Organization and the Development Offices/Branch within the New Territories Development Department. In the urban area, these plans are normally drawn at a scale of 1:2 500.

If a Town Planning Board statutory outline zoning plan exists for the area, the function of the outline development plan is to supplement the former and to show the land use and road framework in greater detail. In addition, the outline development plan is prepared as a guide for land sales and for inter-departmental reservation and allocation of ‘Government’ sites. Thus where are statutory outline zoning plan shows broad areas of ‘Government/Institution and Community’ uses, the outline development plan will indicate the more specific use of the sites within this broad zoning, e.g. schools, clinics, markets, community centre etc. (Diagram 4.7).

Layout Plans

Layout plans are departmental plans drawn to the largest scale serving as ‘action plans’ to enable land to be formed and released for public and private development.

These plans normally indicate the detailed land use and development proposal of an area covered by an outline zoning plan or outline development plan but in certain circumstances they may be prepared independently. They are usually of local significance and apply mainly to newly-formed land or to areas requiring comprehensive redevelopment. These plans usually show in more details the planning proposals for the area including information such as road and formation levels, the restriction of existing and new buildings. They are used as a basis for land sales and allocations as well as for the implementation of land formation projects and the construction of roads. Such plans are normally drawn at a scale of 1 to 1 000 to 1 to 500 (Diagram 4.8).

Both outline development plans and layout plans are departmental plans used by the Government for administrative purpose. Once approved by the appropriate authority, the Development Progress Committee, and signed by the Secretary for Lands and Works, departmental plans are called adopted plans. Although such plans have no statutory effect, they are binding on all government departments. They are used as the basis for considering lease modifications as well as formulating lease conditions and development programmes.
PUBLIC ACCESS TO PLANS

In general, all gazetted statutory and adopted departmental plans are available to the public. However, subject to the agreement of the appropriate Chief Town Planner, the public may inspect departmental plans under preparation by special arrangement.

Whenever any members of the public wish to enquire about plans or planning information, they may contact the Central Information Unit of the Town Planning Division either by phone, in person or in writing. This Unit handles an average of a hundred enquiries per month. Nature of enquirers includes zoning and development potential of a particular site, user permission of a proposed development within a statutory planning area, development proposals of a particular area, land use data, planning standards and other local town planning matters in general. Enquirers seeking planning advice and/or information comprise overseas visitors, professionals, planning consultants, property owners, developers, reporters and students.
CHAPTER FIVE
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL AND PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

Broadly speaking, there are two categories of development. First, anything in the nature of construction operation which involves the erection and alteration of buildings, and engineering works on, above or under ground. Second, any material change in the use of existing buildings or land, which may or may not involve construction operation.

The Government has always given the maximum freedom to private initiative. While detailed control of the design and use of building is considered inappropriate, certain degree of restrictive regulations and legislations are considered necessary:

- to ensure that land is available for government projects and public facilities;
- to encourage the separation of incompatible uses such as housing and heavy industry or obnoxious trades;
- to control the building volume in order to limit the population to that which can reasonably be provided in the area with road access, utility services and basic community facilities; and
- to control the bulk of buildings allowing basic requirement of daylight penetration and ventilation.

Legislations and policies with implications on development control can be found in many ordinances and government policy papers. In practice, development control is achieved by both statutory and non-statutory means, and quite a number of government departments/offices are involved to implement these development control measures.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT

About 75% of the land in Hong Kong is hilly. However, these rugged areas are valuable assets to the people of Hong Kong in terms of their recreational and scenic potentials, as well as their vegetation and, to a lesser extent, wildlife habitat. They also function as the water catchment areas channelling rain water to reservoirs.

In order to protect water from pollution, catchment areas has to be relatively free from development. Under the Waterworks Ordinance, a map of 'gathering grounds' was prepared and approved by the Governor to empower the Government to resume land and control development within the designated gathering grounds. Water catchments of various types covered more than 30% of the total land area of the Territory (Diagram 5.1).

The Country Parks Ordinance, which came into effect in early 1976, provides for the designation, control and management of country parks, enabling them to be conserved for recreational purposes. Where the Director of Agriculture and Fisheries considers that any use or proposed use of any leased land within a country park would substantially reduce the enjoyment and amenities of the country park as such, he may request the appropriate Land Authority to discontinue or modify the uses or prohibit the proceeding of the proposed use. There are now 21 country parks throughout the Territory, covering about 40% of the land area (Diagram 5.2).

These two ordinances have empowered the Government to exercise very restrictive development control in the rural areas against urban sprawl and have practically ‘frozen’ them from development.

STATUTORY CONTROL

Town Planning Ordinance

The Town Planning Ordinance, first enacted in 1939, provides for the appointment of a Town Planning Board and the procedure to be adopted in preparing and approving statutory town plans. These plans, outline zoning plans, are prepared for existing and potential urban areas. They show areas zoned for Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Government, Institution and other purposes. Once a draft outline zoning plan is gazetted for public inspection, it has statutory effect. Existing non-conforming uses are not affected by the plan; however, any new development—including building works and/or change of use—should conform with the zoning shown on the plan.

The Ordinance provides no sanction nor penalties. The only ‘teeth’ are contained in Section 13 that reads: ‘Approved plans shall be used by all public officers and bodies as standards for guidance in the exercise of any powers vested in them’. The exercise of development control mainly rests with the Crown lease conditions and the provision of the Buildings Ordinance.

Attached to and forming part of each draft or approved statutory plan is a Schedule of Notes which sets out, for each zoning shown on the plan, the following:
development can proceed as of right as long as it complies with the Crown lease, the Buildings Ordinance and subject to any conditions or restrictions that it may impose. If the proposed development is a use not shown under other relevant legislation. If the proposed development is a use under 'Column 2' a planning application to the planning authorities, the Transport Department, Buildings Ordinance Office, Lands Division, Fire Services Department, Urban Services Department and Environmental Protection Agency are the government bodies more commonly involved. The practice of departmental circulation has become an important channel to solicit different views within Government on a specific issue of development control. Their comments will be processed by the Statutory Planning Section and presented to the Town Planning Board for consideration.

From the above it can be seen that the Town Planning Ordinance is unique in a number of ways when compared with planning legislation in other countries. First, it covers the preparation of statutory outline zoning plans for existing and potential designated urban areas. In other words, statutory planning does not cover the entire Territory. Second, it has no direct power of development control. It relies on other legislations/documents to enforce its planning decisions. Third, there is no provisions within the Ordinance for compensation should a landowner be affected by a zoning proposal.

Buildings Ordinance

Legislations on buildings existed as early as mid-19th Century. The early legislation arose from the need for resuming insanitary dwellings and later control set out the relationship between building height and the width of street onto which a building abuts. The Buildings Ordinance currently in force which governs the erection and alteration of buildings was enacted in 1955 and recently revised in 1981. It prescribes the maximum height, amount of open space, width of private streets and lanes, and all structural details. The Ordinance is administered by the Buildings Ordinance Office of the Building Development Department.

The Ordinance has stated the grounds on which the Building Authority may refuse to give his approval of any plans of building works where:

- the carrying out of the building works would contravene the provisions of this Ordinance, the lease conditions or of any other enactment, or would contravene any approved or draft plan prepared under the Town Planning Ordinance.
- the carrying out of the building works would result in a building differing in height, design, type or intended use from buildings in the immediate neighbourhood or previously existing on the same site.

The Building (Planning) Regulations of the Buildings Ordinance contain provisions regarding heights and volumes of buildings, projection, open spaces within sites, access lanes, lighting and ventilation, staircases and fire escapes, etc. and special clauses relating to domestic and temporary buildings.

The Regulations carry very significant impacts on building volumes and ultimately on population density. Before 1955, the plot ratio of buildings averaged no more than 3 and the buildings were usually less than 25 metres (80 feet) high. Regulations introduced in 1956 permitted plot ratios of 6, and in some cases as high as 20 which facilitated the erection of large multi-storey buildings. The intensity of development, combined with high occupancy rates, led to congestion of the transport system, overloaded services, and inflated land values. As a result of these problems, the Regulations were revised on several occasions. The latest amendment was introduced and has been in force since 1976.

The schedules of the Building (Planning) Regulations cover the relationship between the heights of building, site coverages, plot ratios and use. As the building height and plot ratio increase, the permitted site coverage decreases.

Crown Lease Conditions

Land is sold or granted to the private sector for development on leasehold terms. The lease conditions are drawn up by the Lands Division of the Lands Department after consultation with the Town Planning Division and other relevant government departments. The Government could impose any conditions for development in the Crown lease when sites are sold or granted to the private sector for development. The lease conditions normally cover aspects of development control such as density, height, use, access, car parking and site formation, as well as more mundane matters such as drainage.
There are two categories of leases: renewable and non-renewable. Renewable leases entitle the lessees a new lease at such rent as determined by the Director of Lands as the fair and reasonable rental value of the ground at the date of renewal. However, when a non-renewable lease comes to an end, the land and all buildings erected upon it should be reverted to the Crown, i.e. the Government of Hong Kong. The holders of non-renewable leases may apply for renewal and the Government can then impose any new restrictions and conditions wherever appropriate in the lease to control the development.

In the case of comprehensive large-scale private development, application for modification of leases may be necessary. The lease conditions usually require a master layout plan to be prepared and submitted for approval to the satisfaction of the Director of Lands. In order to encourage a self-contained project, the Government takes the opportunity to direct the development by additional specifications on the building density, provision of government/institution and community facilities and access roads, etc., which can be consolidated in the modified lease covenants.

Hong Kong Airport (Control of Obstructions) Ordinance

In order to comply with the safety requirements of the Hong Kong International Airport, the Hong Kong Airport (Control of Obstructions) Ordinance was introduced in 1957 empowering the Governor to prescribe areas within which all buildings are prohibited or which no building shall exceed the height specified. In other words, the Ordinance controls the height of buildings that lie within the flight paths of the Airport. The effect of this Ordinance on building height is particularly noticeable in the area north of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in urban Kowloon. Most of the buildings in the Kowloon Peninsula are restricted to approximately 60 m in height. The eastern part of Hong Kong Island, areas such as North Point, Quarry Bay, Sai Wan Ho and Tai Hang, is also subject to height control.

NON-STATUTORY CONTROL

Apart from the statutory planning restrictions mentioned above, there are other administrative practices which have control over the intensity of development.

Density Zoning

Density Zoning policy, formally introduced in 1965 and approved by the Executive Council in 1966, specifies the following residential density zoning in the Territory (Diagram 5.3):

Zone 1—It covers the main urban areas where building development is permitted to go to full Building (Planning) Regulations standards.

Zone 2—It covers the more suburban residential neighbourhoods of the Territory, particularly the Mid-level districts and the central strip of Kowloon Peninsula where suburban site coverage and plot ratio are applied.

Zone 3—It covers the more remote parts such as the southern part of Hong Kong Island (excluding Aberdeen), and the extreme north of Kowloon Peninsula together with Kowloon Tong.

Zone 4—This covers a considerable amount of areas in the new towns of Tuen Mun, Sha Tin, etc. where very low plot ratio is applied.

The Density Zoning schedules control the building volume of development in different density zones through restrictions on site coverage and plot ratios. For a three-storey building on a corner site in a Zone 2 area the coverage is 66.6% but in a Zone 3 it is only 25%.

Based on the current building regulations and the expected occupancy rates, net site densities could be as high as 8 000 persons per hectare in Zone 1, 2 640 in Zone 2 and 650 in Zone 3. However, other restrictive factors discussed in this chapter would also affect the maximum densities. In the planning of large private housing developments with comprehensive design in the main urban areas, a gross density of 2 500 persons per hectare has been aimed at. As for new towns in the New Territories with approved comprehensive designs, the recommended maximum gross population density for Zone 1, 2 and 3 will be approximately 1 740, 1 050 and 470 persons per hectare respectively.

Areas of Special Control (SCA)

In December 1972, a schedule of Areas of Special Control in the main urban areas was approved by the LDPC. The SCA were created for a number of special locations where, for particular reasons, development or redevelopment was restricted to a greater extent than what was normally allowed. Generally speaking, SCA were designated for one or more of the following reasons:

- to maintain the character and amenities of the existing and planned development;
- poor access road;
- inadequate engineering services;
- to preserve public views and general amenities; and
- other reasons, such as restrictions to avoid interference with radio transmission, etc.
Development restrictions applied to these SCA usually fall into one or more of the following categories:
- maximum building height restrictions;
- plot ratio and/or site coverage restrictions;
- no lease modification for more intensive development than what is permitted under the existing lease;
- special car parking requirement.

OTHER SPECIAL CONTROL MEASURES

Under very special circumstances the usual power of restriction over development control exercised through statutory or non-statutory means mentioned above was insufficient to deal with a specific problem. Under such circumstances, it became necessary for government to intervene by introducing ad hoc control over development. Examples of such control measures are the moratorium on development in Pokfulam areas and the Mid-levels.

The Mid-levels construction moratorium was first introduced in 1973. It was replaced by the Buildings (Amendment) Bill 1982 which aimed at improving control of building operations in the Mid-levels to safeguard the stability of slopes. Under this Bill, the Building Authority is empowered, among other things, to ensure due consideration is given to the effects on ground stability of foundation works, to limit the amount of excavation during building and to impose requirements for ground water drainage work.

The Pokfulam moratorium was imposed because the limited road capacity of the area could not cope with the amount of building development/redevelopment expected. It was laid down that no modification of any kind for more intensive development than outlined in existing leases could be granted and the sale of Crown land in this area had been suspended. With the road improvement projects in this area almost completed the Government is considering the possibility of lifting the moratorium in part.

The government departments involved in development control and the source of authority and the nature of control measures are indicated in Diagram 5.4.
Having studied the mechanisms of planning (i.e. the planning organization, type of plans and development control), it is worthwhile to investigate in greater details two areas on which planning efforts have been concentrated in the past decades. These are new town development in the New Territories and urban renewal in the main urban areas. The former is the subject of this chapter while the latter is described in the next.

WHY IS NEW TOWN DEVELOPMENT NECESSARY?

The idea of building new towns in the New Territories was first mooted by Sir Patrick Abercrombie some 35 years ago during his visit to Hong Kong after the Second World War. Despite his early and inspiring solutions to the potential urban problems of Hong Kong, it was not until the early 1970's that this ambitious programme of developing new towns became reality.

There are two reasons for building new towns in the rural New Territories in the early 1970's. First, rapid population growth has proven the need for creating land to house the millions. Second, the scarcity of land in the built-up urban areas has necessitated that this increasing population had to be housed in the New Territories on new land formed from the rugged terrain or by reclamation.

Population Growth

The rapid population growth mainly due to successive waves of immigrants over the past few decades, which had been mentioned earlier, has placed great demands on land for housing, employment and community facilities.

Land Availability

Given the scarcity of land in the densely populated main urban areas, vacant or under-utilized land was sought in the rural New Territories. The construction of the Lion Rock Tunnel in 1967 and the opening of the Second Tunnel in 1978 had improved accessibility to the rural New Territories to a great extent. While giving top priority to the development of new urban centres in the New Territories, the Government is also maintaining a rural balance, ensuring that part of the unspoilt area will continue to be used for primary production or reserved as country parks. Hence, urban growth is limited to designated areas in which government housing estates and private residential projects are built.

Land for Public Housing

In 1972, the Governor-in-Council approved the adoption of a ‘Ten-year Housing Target Programme’ aiming at providing adequate housing for another 1.8 million people by the mid-1980’s. Attention was directed to the New Territories where land would be made available within a reasonably short time for public housing. Accordingly, development in Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin and Tuen Mun new towns were accelerated and three market towns, Tai Po, Fanling/Sheung Shui and Yuen Long were expanded to new town status (Diagram 1.2). For the purpose of implementing such an ambitious programme, the New Territories Development Department, headed by a Director and staffed by a multi-disciplinary team of town planners, engineers and architects, was established within the then Public Works Department in 1973.

OBJECTIVES OF BUILDING NEW TOWNS

The new town scheme was established to fulfill several objectives: to solve the housing problem by creating new land to meet the Ten-Year Housing Target Programme; attract industry to new areas; alleviate Hong Kong’s problems of urban congestion by decentralizing population to the New Territories while providing a breathing space for the over-crowded urban areas and improving environmental conditions for remaining urban dwellers.

DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

New towns aim to achieve ‘self-containment’ and ‘balanced development’. In order to create a satisfactory living environment and to minimize commuting, each new town aims at providing adequate working opportunities, shopping, recreation and other community facilities for its local residents. By ‘self-contained development’ the daily needs of the residents can be met within the new town. By ‘balanced development’ new towns may be able to supply all the necessary employment opportunities, and above all, to provide an optimal housing mix between public/private housing, ownership/rental units and high/low density housing through which a healthy social mix within a community may be achieved. These concepts seem to be very idealistic and may not be achieved fully in reality due to unforeseen social and psychological reasons. However, the planning of each new town will continue
to apply these concepts as they will, hopefully, achieve a balance in the long run. In the physical form of the new town, civic design principles are often applied so as to achieve an aesthetically enjoyable environment for residence, work and recreation.

THE PLANNING AND THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The planning and construction of new towns is now carried out by the New Territories Development Department. The majority of the new towns have their own development office headed by a Project Manager. His duty is to ensure that progress is maintained on all detailed planning and construction, so that the new town programme is on schedule.

The process of development commences with planning and engineering studies from which development plans and programmes are prepared. These studies will take account of the potentials and constraints of each new town setting. Natural environment, scenic areas, sites of historic/archaeological/scientific interest will be preserved. Green belts are usually zoned along the fringes of the new town as a means to discourage urban development beyond the designated new town boundary. These planning and engineering studies will normally provide in-depth background information for the preparation of statutory and departmental town plans.

For each new town, an ultimate population and an optimal housing mix are planned for. Based on the planned population figure, the amount of land required for various residential, commercial, institutional, industrial and open space uses will then be set aside on the town plan.

To date, the Town Planning Division of the Lands Department has prepared six statutory town plans covering four new towns—Sha Tin, Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun and Tai Po. The preparation of statutory plans for other new towns such as Fanling/Sheung Shui and Junk Bay is currently underway, and all new towns will eventually be covered by statutory plans which will provide a legal means of control over the land uses zoned for particular purposes.

The implementation of the plans starts with the acquisition and clearance of land followed by site formation and the provision of essential infrastructure. Land then becomes available for development such as the building of public and private housing, factories, commercial and community facilities. In order to ensure a balanced development of public and private housing, job opportunities and community facilities at each phase of the population build-up, the New Territories Development Department prepares a rolling ‘ten-year development programme’ which sets out the programme of work planned for the next ten years and forecasts the financial resources required over the next five years. This programme has been derived by grouping engineering works into a series of ‘packages’ which include all those works required to produce, on completion of the package, a balanced development of housing, industry and community facilities. Although in certain instances, it has not been possible to achieve ‘self-containment’ within a particular package, it remains a primary objective of new town development.

All the new towns are being developed at great speed. Diagram 6.1 indicates the ultimate population of different new towns on full development. It can be seen that Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin and Tuen Mun are the major new towns. They were developed first in 1960’s and their development gathered momentum in the 1970’s. Their population build-up is also quicker in comparison with other new towns which have had a later start. Tai Po, Fanling/Sheung Shui, Yuen Long and Junk Bay are comparatively smaller in the scale of development. In general, the housing mix in new towns tries to aim at a ratio of 60% public housing and 40% private housing subject to variations to suit local conditions (see Diagram 6.1).

Diagram 6.2 shows the Outline Zoning Plan of Sha Tin New Town as an example of planning for new towns in Hong Kong.

GENERAL REVIEW

Since the Government committed itself to a policy of decentralization of urban areas to seven new towns in 1972, ‘balanced development’ has become the fundamental principle for new town planning and development. New towns were to be ‘accompanied by a full ration of what is essential to modern life’, as remarked by the then Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, in a speech to the Legislative Council in October, 1972. Each new town provides reasonably good transport links to the metropolitan area, community facilities, an optimal housing mix and sufficient local employment opportunities.

As the new town programme evolved, it was observed that the concept of ‘balanced development’ could not be achieved to the satisfaction as expected. This is due to unforeseen social and psychological reasons which planners may have overlooked. In some cases the rate of increase in the number of resident workers in the new towns has grown more rapidly than the build-up of the new town employment opportunities. As a result, commuting rates into and out of new towns are still quite high. Having gained experience from the early new town development, planners are now more aware of the need for better coordinating of engineering works, the need to build into the transport network spare capacity for external commuting as well as the need for revising the standards of provision for education and other community facilities. As far as the concepts of ‘self-containment’ and ‘balanced development’ are concerned, they would still help to provide a basis in achieving a long-term balance.
CHAPTER SEVEN
URBAN RENEWAL

THE NEED FOR URBAN RENEWAL IN THE MAIN URBAN AREAS

There are essentially two main reasons why urban renewal in the main urban areas is needed in Hong Kong.

Firstly, some older districts in the main urban areas had been developed without proper planning. This was because standards of provisions for various infrastructural facilities were practically non-existence at that time. As social aspirations and standards of living changed over a period of time, the environment in those districts turned out to be below current expectations.

Secondly, like many other cities, the inner urban areas of Hong Kong have deteriorated over the years. A number of older districts suffered from physical dilapidation and poor environmental quality. At the beginning of the 20th Century slum clearance programmes had been carried out by the Government. This was later followed by schemes of environmental improvement and the more ambitious one of comprehensive urban renewal. In 1974, the Town Planning Office undertook an assessment of the environmental quality of residential areas in the main urban areas. In this study, districts such as Mong Kok, Sham Shui Po, To Kwa Wan, Ngau Chi Wan, Sai Ying Pun and Wan Chai were identified as environmentally very poor. The majority of the buildings were dilapidated and there were deficiencies in the provision of recreational/community facilities. Sporadic in-situ redevelopment on small lots by individual land owners precluded the opportunity to meet such shortfalls. As a result, incompatibility between the new and the old buildings as well as mismatch between street capacity and population growth have occurred.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The fundamental goal of urban renewal is to create a better environment. Some realistic objectives identified to achieve this goal include:

- To upgrade existing substandard urban areas to at least meet currently accepted minimum standards through redevelopment or rehabilitation.
- To plan for conveniently located government/institution/community facilities, open space, shopping, residential and industrial uses in an orderly manner.
- To provide for a safe and convenient pedestrian movement system within the area.
- To control the use and configuration of land or building.
- To upgrade the transport system and to provide for convenient public transport.

GOVERNMENT'S PAST EFFORT

In order to achieve the above goal, the Government has initiated a number of urban renewal schemes:

Effort Prior to the Sixties

As early as 1884 and 1905, the Government initiated ‘slum clearance schemes’ in areas such as Tai Ping Shan, Lower Lascar Row and Kau U Fong. In 1959, a layout plan for part of Tai Hang Village (LH 6/9/1C) was prepared amalgamating small lots, realigning lot boundaries and providing other facilities such as market complex, schools and open space. Due to strong objections from local residents because of their loss of development rights, the plan was superseded by the Causeway Bay Outline Zoning Plan (LH 6/24B) in which the majority of the original environmental improvement proposals were deleted.

Urban Renewal in the Sixties

Pilot Scheme Area

In the early 1960’s, the prevalence of dilapidated buildings and the congested and unhealthy conditions of inner city residential areas had pointed towards the need for some form of positive government intervention. In 1964, the Governor appointed a Working Party on Slum Clearance. In 1965, the Working Party recommended the designation of Sheung Wan as an Urban Renewal District within which a specific area was identified as a Pilot Scheme Area. In 1969, the Scheme was declared a ‘public purpose’. The Town Planning Board was directed to prepare a statutory plan for the Urban Renewal District and the Government was given the power of resumption in the implementation of the Scheme. A layout plan (LH 3/38) for the Pilot Scheme Area was later completed and adopted in 1970 with a view to upgrading the living environment, improving traffic circulation of the area and providing necessary local facilities (Diagram 7.1).
Acquisition was planned to be carried out in four phases. The first phase was to concentrate on sites required for road-widening and the later phases on the consolidation of land for resale to private developers for commercial/residential development.

Due to the lack of adequate funds, the implementation of the programme took longer than scheduled. The whole project has taken more than a decade to complete. During the process of implementation, the physical as well as the socio-economic character of the area has changed. While the sociological implications of the project can be a subject for further study, on a physical and environmental basis, the Pilot Scheme Area has generally achieved the objectives it set out to achieve. Diagram 7.2 shows the Sheung Wan Pilot Scheme Area before and after urban renewal.

Renewal Effort in the Seventies

**Environmental Improvement Area**

Following the designation of Sheung Wan as an Urban Renewal District, consideration was given to designate other such areas. However the Government decided that since renewal may not be immediately financially feasible, the concept of ‘Environmental Improvement Area’ (EIA) was introduced (Diagram 7.3). Its main objective was to upgrade the environment by providing more land for government and community facilities. Several areas including the former Urban Renewal District outside of the Pilot Scheme Area, Wan Chai, Yau Ma Tei, Shek Kip Mei, Tai Kok Tsui, Cheung Sha Wan and Kennedy Town were designated EIA. In 1973, the overall coordination and programming of EIA was assumed by the Urban Renewal and Environmental Improvement Coordinating Committee.

A typical example of EIA was the ‘Yau Ma Tei Six Street Redevelopment’ for which an Outline Development Plan (LK 3/43B) was prepared with additional zoning of ‘Government/Institution/Community’ and ‘Open Space’. However, the scheme was only a programme of urban services and public works projects rather than an integrated and comprehensive renewal programme.

**Comprehensive Redevelopment Area**

Several years later, the Government made another attempt to implement comprehensive renewal schemes by introducing ‘Comprehensive Redevelopment Area’ (CRA) in selective areas (Diagram 7.3), but this time with participation from private owners instead of through government resumption. An example of CRA is the Tsim Sha Tsui ‘Four Streets’ case.

Almost all the land of the ‘Four Streets’ areas was held on non-renewable leases about to expire. Owners of the land were invited to participate in its comprehensive development according to a master layout plan. However, owners were divided on their individual claims to cost and benefit sharing. There were also problems on vacant possession because some tenants were unwilling to accept cash compensation where owners were not required to provide them with alternative accommodation. In view of the economic situation and sluggish property market in 1983, the small property owners may be hesitant to participate in such an investment. Although the scheme has not yet failed, its progress has been extremely slow.

**Urban Improvement Scheme**

Almost at the same time when the ‘Environmental Improvement Area Scheme’ was proposed, the Executive Council agreed to provide financial support to an ‘Urban Improvement Scheme’ proposed by Hong Kong Housing Society. The scheme was commenced in 1974 with a view to improving the environment of old districts by redeveloping properties with fragmented or absentee ownership, selling flats produced by the Scheme to affected families at discounted prices, and retaining the strong community ties which exist in old districts.

After eight years of implementation, ten projects providing over a thousand flats have been completed under the Scheme at Mei Sun Lau, Lai Yan Lau, Oi Kwan Court, Po Man Street and Western Garden. Ancillary community facilities and playgrounds were provided in these projects. The scheme is currently on-going and more projects are expected to be completed in the years to come. Although the design concept was good, unfortunately it was implemented at a small scale. Urban renewal up to the present has not been undertaken successfully on a comprehensive scale.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED**

Past experience has revealed that there are many problems in the implementation of comprehensive urban renewal schemes. Although these problems vary between districts in which the schemes are located, there are some common elements which are described below.

The most problematic is the multiple ownership of properties. Very often, a few owners manage to obstruct private developers from proceeding with their projects by refusing to sell. Absentee ownership is another difficult issue. Lengthy negotiations are involved in order to secure sufficient number of small lots for assembly into larger site suitable for the implementation of a comprehensive redevelopment scheme.

Limited financial capacities of small owners may hinder participation in comprehensive redevelopment schemes. Even if they agree to participate in principle, it may take considerable time and effort to work out mutually acceptable means to share the profits from the scheme.
Rehousing tenants is another problem. People affected by demolition should theoretically be resited nearby in order to minimize social disruption. However, there are practical difficulties in its application. Land may not be available within the renewal area or in its immediate vicinity for public housing. Those who cannot afford to move back to rent private accommodation after redevelopment would be displaced to new town or move to other slum areas.

Equally difficult is the relocation of incompatible uses such as service trades and small scale industries. In many cases, it is not possible to find appropriate sites nearby to accommodate such uses which usually have detrimental effects on their residential neighbours.

The process of property resumption is one of the main causes for delay in the realization of urban renewal schemes in Hong Kong. Negotiations over compensation are usually time-consuming.

Above all, close coordination and cooperation among all government departments and concerned agencies are required during implementation. To resolve these problems, a new approach would have to be devised or the existing system would have to be revamped.

CURRENT STUDIES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

In response to the above difficulties, a consultancy study was commissioned by the Government to study the possibility of establishing a Land Development Corporation (LDC) to facilitate the implementation of urban renewal schemes. The consultants submitted their report and concluded that the LDC concept was feasible and recommended that further studies be carried out. The Government, recognizing the importance of urban renewal and in pursuance of the recommendations by the consultants, set up a Co-ordinating Urban Renewal Team within the Town Planning Division to prepare an urban renewal programme and be responsible for the preparation of urban renewal plans and their implementation.

Having embarked upon the development of new towns in the 1970's, the Government is now paying more attention to the redevelopment of existing urban areas. It is anticipated that the majority of the population will stay in the old development districts around the Harbour even when all new town programmes are implemented. Hong Kong will benefit from a revived interest in the main urban area and in urban renewal schemes, comprehensively planned and effectively coordinated by a new administrative organization.
Hong Kong is a unique city. Its uniqueness lies in its limited land resource, rapid population build-up and its corresponding demand for housing, transportation and other facilities. To make provision for an adequate supply of land, housing and transportation, the Government has paid great attention to the planning and development of the city, both in the urban areas and the New Territories.

The built-up areas of Hong Kong are characterized by ‘high density’ development. Given the limited land resources and the increasing housing demand, high density development appears to be the only possibility to maximize the use of land. It provides more accommodation at a lower cost and makes more land available for the required community facilities, services and open space, resulting in a better environment.

However, there are unquantifiable costs involved in high-density living. Planners in Hong Kong are very much aware of such criticisms as 'overcrowdedness' and 'social illness'. It is in this context that makes town planning in Hong Kong very challenging and gives planners a vital role to play.
APPENDIX

ILLUSTRATIONS
HONG KONG HARBOUR - STAGES OF RECLAMATION

NOTATION

- Reclamation up to 1887
- Reclamation between 1887 & 1904
- Reclamation between 1904 & 1924
- Reclamation between 1924 & 1945
- Reclamation between 1945 & 1957
- Reclamation between 1957 & 1976
- Reclamation between 1976 & 1982

NOTE: POSITION AS AT JULY 1982

SOURCE: PORT WORKS DIVISION
Squatter Areas Off ShaU Kei Wan Road
ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE OF THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT
DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN LAND USE PLANNING
ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE OF THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT
DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN LAND USE PLANNING

Diagram 3.1
Director of New Territories Development

Deputy Director of New Territories Development

Headquarters

Technical Support Services:
- Engineering
- Planning
- Landscaping

Administrative Services

Accounting Services

Sha Tin New Town Development Office

Tai Po & Fanling Development Office

Junk Bay Development Office

Tsuen Wan New Town Development Office

Tuen Mun New Town Development Office

NT Development Branch

Development Offices

NEW TERRITORIES DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
ORGANIZATION CHART

Diagram 3.3
The Hierarchy of Plans

Diagram 4.1
Possible preliminary ExCo memo; when policy formulation, extension or clarification necessary

Depts/Branches submit requests for review of standards/policies to PSSC, or PSSC initiates, through Secretary for Lands and Works (SLW) as and when required. PSSC proposes interdepartmental Working Group(s) for substantial reviews.

SLW, in association with Branches/Depts. directly concerned, circulated proposed terms of reference to Working Group.

Draft report vetted by Departments/Branches concerned; reference to any relevant specialist committees.

Working Groups convene and produce draft report; policy status and outline financial implications of all proposals to be included where practical & appropriate.

Working Groups submit draft report with summary of interdepartmental comments to PSSC. PSSC considers general policy implications and any outstanding points-of-issue.

Final report submitted to LDPC for endorsement, with recommendation on need for ExCo submission.

ExCo memo on proposed major revisions.

Revised/new standards initially circulated to Branches/Departments by SLW. PGTP circulates any additional copies requested, and supplies working copies to all professional planning officers.

PLANNING STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE (PSSC):
OUTLINE OF PROCEDURES
AMENDMENT TO DRAFT PLAN NO. LH 5/35
EXHIBITED UNDER SECTION 7 OF THE TOWN PLANNING ORDINANCE ON THE 2nd DAY OF JANUARY, 1981.
AN EXAMPLE OF OUTLINE ZONING PLAN

| ZONES | NOTATION
|-------|----------

Schedule of Uses and Areas

The diagram shows the layout of the zoning plan with various zones and uses, including industrial, commercial, residential, and open space areas. The plan is dated and signed by the Town Planning Board. Additional details and regulations can be found in the attached schedule.
MAJOR STEPS IN THE PREPARATION OF STATUTORY PLANS

Diagram 4.6

Instruction to prepare a statutory plan, or to revoke, amend or replace an existing statutory plan by a new one

Drawing up of plan

Plan circulated to relevant government departments for comments/information

Comments received

Appropriate amendments incorporated in the plan

Presentation to District Management Committee/District Board if considered appropriate

Submission to LDPC for financial implications

Plan submitted to the TPB for consideration

Plan gazetted and exhibited for public inspection

Preliminary consideration of objections by the Town Planning Board

Hearing of objections by the TPB and incorporating amendment in the plan, if necessary

Plan submitted to Governor in Council for approval

Approved plan published

Note: Procedure may be repeated as indicated by dotted line

TPB — Town Planning Board
THE USE ZONING OF THIS DISTRICT IS SET OUT IN PLAN No. LH 5/35. ALL DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT SHOULD NORMALLY CONFORM WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THAT PLAN. THE USE ZONING SET OUT IN THIS PLAN CONFORMS WITH THE STATUTORY PLAN BUT SHOWS MORE DETAIL. THIS DETAIL HAS NO STATUTORY EFFECT BUT WILL GENERALLY BE FOLLOWED IN LAND TRANSACTIONS WHERE GOVERNMENT IS IN A POSITION TO DETERMINE, AND BY WAY OF LEASE MODIFICATIONS OR SALES OF CROWN LAND.

THE USE ZONING ON THIS PLAN, WHICH IS MORE DETAILED THAN THAT SET OUT IN STATUTORY PLAN No.LH5/35, CONFLICTS WITH THE USE PERMITTED UNDER EXISTING LEASE CONDITIONS, THE ZONING ON THIS PLAN CANNOT BE USED OTHER THAN AS A GUIDE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT WHICH GOVERNMENT WISHES TO ENCOURAGE.

HONG KONG PLANNING AREA No. 5
WAN CHAI RECLAMATION – LAYOUT PLAN

AN EXAMPLE OF LAYOUT PLAN
DENSITY ZONING - KOWLOON AND NEW KOWLOON

DENSITY ZONING - ZONE 1
- ZONE 2
- ZONE 3

Diagram 5-3b
POPULATION DISTRIBUTION & HOUSING MIX OF NEW TOWN

NEW TERRITORIES

HONG KONG ISLAND

KOWLOON

TAI PANG WAN

LEGEND

ULTIMATE POPULATION

Cartography by Town Planning Division, Lands Department 1984
THE MAIN URBAN AREAS - KOWLOON & NEW KOWLOON