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INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) is a Government manual of criteria for determining the scale, location and site requirements of various land uses and facilities. This manual is applied in planning studies, preparation/revision of town plans and development control.
- 1.2 This chapter explains the major aspects of the HKPSG, including its background, purpose, scope, formulation and review process, and application. Subsequent chapters deal with specific standards and guidelines.

2. Background

- 2.1 As the economy of Hong Kong expanded and pressure for urban development increased in the early 1960s, it became apparent that a comprehensive review of the future land use and population distribution pattern throughout the Territory was required. The Government started to prepare the Colony Outline Plan (COP) in 1965, which was completed and agreed by the then Land Development Planning Committee in 1971 and by the Executive Council in 1972.
- 2.2 In 1974, the Colony Outline Plan was substantially revised to take into account the changes in socio-economic conditions and government's development priorities. The revised plan was renamed as the Hong Kong Outline Plan (HKOP) and consisted of two parts: Part I relating to planning standards and Part II on development strategy. The HKOP was approved by the then Land Development Policy Committee (LDPC) in 1979.
- 2.3 In 1981, the Planning Standards Sub-Committee (PSSC) was formed as a sub-committee of the then LDPC to review the planning standards and guidelines in the HKOP. In 1982, the PSSC recommended and the then LDPC agreed that Part II of the HKOP dealing with the development strategy would be presented as a separate document (subsequently known as the Territorial Development Strategy) and that the HKOP would be confined to planning standards and guidelines and renamed as the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines.

3. Purpose

- 3.1 The purpose of the HKPSG is to provide general guidelines to ensure that, during the planning process, the Government will reserve adequate land to facilitate social and economic development and provide appropriate public facilities to meet the needs of the public.
- 3.2 As a tool in forward planning, the HKPSG provides an equitable basis for the allocation of scarce land resources. Based on various standards and forecasts of socio-economic requirements, a land use budget can be prepared for an area. Moreover, the HKPSG provides locational guidelines for various types of land uses and facilities to help the planning of a development area.

- 3.3 The HKPSG is also a tool that helps to regulate development by providing guidance on the scale, intensity and site requirements of various developments as well as the supporting facilities required.
- 3.4 In plan implementation, the HKPSG provides a yardstick to measure the sufficiency of land for various uses and the adequacy of facilities provided to serve a planning area. It is also a useful yardstick to help determine the programme for the provision of community facilities and the development priorities for this area.
- 3.5 Apart from development purposes, the HKPSG also provides guidelines on environmental planning, conservation of our natural landscape and habitats, and conservation of our cultural heritage and townscape, so as to raise the quality of life of Hong Kong residents.

4. Contents

- 4.1 Planning standards refer to the provision of various land uses, community facilities and infrastructure according to the size of a population and are expressed as threshold requirements. Usually the minimum standards are stipulated, but for some facilities, the upper and lower limits are also given.
- 4.2 Planning guidelines for development include locational criteria, compatibility between uses, development intensity, design guidelines, etc. These guidelines are provided for general reference, assuming least development constraints.
- 4.3 Each chapter of the HKPSG covers a particular group or aspect of land uses or facilities. The topics include: residential densities; community facilities; recreational facilities, open space and greening; industrial land; retail facilities; utility services; internal transport facilities; environmental planning; conservation; urban design guidelines; and miscellaneous planning standards and guidelines on particular uses including underground rock cavern development, petrol filling stations, potentially hazardous installations, vehicle repair workshops, port back-up and open storage uses, and land use beneath flyovers and footbridges. As such, the HKPSG covers the full range of local, district and territorial facilities essential to the well-being of the community.
- 4.4 Nevertheless, the HKPSG does not provide standards or guidelines for uses of territorial significance or unique uses and facilities, such as airports, museums, and universities as the provision of these facilities and their locational requirements would be subject to individual investigations and other internationally recognized criteria.

5. Application

- 5.1 The planning standards and guidelines are applicable to different levels of land use planning in Hong Kong. At the strategic planning level, the standards and guidelines can be applied to determine the total land requirements for various uses and their territorial distribution. At the district level, they are mainly applied to identify specific areas and sites for individual land uses and facilities and their

orderly arrangements. The planning standards and guidelines are also used in the preparation of development statements for special areas and planning briefs for large scale development projects.

- 5.2 The planning standards and guidelines should be applied with a degree of flexibility, having regard to land use demands, local conditions, development constraints and resource availability. They should not be applied in isolation and cross-reference between standards and guidelines should be made, whenever necessary.
- 5.3 Although planning standards and guidelines for various uses are not mutually exclusive, they have the effects of competing for scarce land and financial resources. In drawing up development proposals, trade-offs between standards may be necessary so that the community at large would benefit most from the development. In the development process, planners may need to balance the objectives and requirements amongst different parties in order to arrive at acceptable solutions.
- 5.4 In the plan making or development process, the rationale for any proposed deviation from the planning standards and guidelines should be explained in the submission of town plans or development projects to the approving authorities. If the approving authorities are not satisfied with the explanation, a review of the plan or development proposal may be required. In this way, the HKPSG serves as a yardstick for measuring performance, while allowing a degree of flexibility in application.
- 5.5 Site reservations on town plans according to planning standards do not automatically justify the inclusion of the facilities in development programmes. The inclusion of a project in development programmes and the upgrading of development priority require separate justifications and decisions within the context of the resource allocation system in Government.

6. Formulation & Review

6.1 Planning Standards Sub-Committee (PSSC)

The PSSC is a sub-committee of the Committee on Planning and Land Development (CPLD), which replaced the former LDPC, and is responsible for the formulation and review of the HKPSG. The PSSC meets on a need basis and is served by the Planning Standards and Studies Section of the Planning Department. The terms of reference and membership of the PSSC are provided in Appendix 1.

6.2 The Process

- 6.2.1 The formulation and review of planning standards and guidelines is an on-going process, taking into account Government's policies and development requirements. The process starts when the policy authorities and committees, e.g. Executive Council, CPLD, etc. formulate or revise a Government policy which has land use implications. To implement the policy, either the policy bureaux/department submits a request to formulate or review the standards and guidelines or the PSSC

initiates the exercise on its own. Public consultation, as required, would be conducted when planning standards and guidelines with major implications on policy, public interest or the development process are being formulated or revised.

- 6.2.2 For each assignment, an inter-departmental working group would be set up on a need basis under the PSSC. The Secretary of the PSSC, in consultation with the policy bureaux/departments concerned, would propose and circulate the draft terms of reference for each working group. The chairmanship of the group is decided according to the degree of involvement of individual policy bureaux or departments.
- 6.2.3 The working group would conduct research and, if necessary, produce discussion papers for consideration. The working group may also produce draft reports on policy status and outline financial implications of all its proposals, where practical and appropriate. The reports should be vetted by the relevant departments, policy bureaux or specialist committees. The discussion papers and the draft reports together with the proposed planning standards and guidelines would be submitted to the PSSC for consideration.
- 6.2.4 For amendments where a working group is considered not necessary, the responsible department would circulate the proposed standards and guidelines to concerned bureaux/departments for comment. The proposed amendments incorporating departmental comments would be submitted to the PSSC for consideration.
- 6.2.5 The PSSC considers the submissions in the light of policy implications and any outstanding issues. Once adopted by the PSSC, the new or revised planning standards and guidelines would be submitted to the CPLD for approval by circulation, or for consideration at a formal meeting for cases with significant implications or unresolved issues.
- 6.2.6 After the new or revised standards and guidelines have been approved, the Secretary of the PSSC will issue the new or revised standards and guidelines and incorporate them into the HKPSG.
- 6.2.7 The PSSC also monitors the implementation of the HKPSG through feedback from the relevant bureaux/departments and bodies. This process of formulation and review of the HKPSG is summarized in Appendix 2.
- 6.2.8 The length of the HKPSG chapters is confined to the minimum so as to include only the essential materials. Even so, the HKPSG as a whole is a substantial document. Each chapter is therefore bound separately and individual pages, parts and paragraphs are numbered to facilitate handling, reference and revision.

7. Distribution

- 7.1 The HKPSG was originally used within Government and by Government appointed consultants. Since 1991, the HKPSG was made available to the general

public as a means to disseminate planning information to the community. Members of the public can purchase individual chapters of the document through the Information Services Department. The HKPSG, and a summary of the planning standards and guidelines, in both English and Chinese, are uploaded to the Planning Department's Homepage (<http://www.pland.gov.hk/>) to facilitate public access and reference. Members of the public can also approach the Planning Enquiry Counters of the Planning Department (at North Point Government Offices and Sha Tin Government Offices) for inspection of and enquiries on the HKPSG.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 This chapter provides the background information for users of the HKPSG to understand its purpose and the appropriate context in applying the standards and guidelines. The production of the HKPSG is the result of concerted efforts from various Government bureaux/departments.
- 8.2 The standards and guidelines in the HKPSG are neither statutory nor rigid. The HKPSG's effectiveness depends on the proper understanding, flexible application and cooperation within the Government and similarly its application by developers through proper guidance from the Government. Where appropriate, planning standards and guidelines may be included in the lease conditions or stipulated as a condition of planning permission granted by the Town Planning Board. In this way, the HKPSG, which is prepared as a tool for the planners, has become an inseparable and effective part of the planning mechanism in Hong Kong.
- 8.3 Since the HKPSG is a technical manual, public consultation is directed at relevant bodies, such as the professional institutes and Government advisory committees. All members of the public, however, are welcome to express their views to the Planning Department, and all such views will receive serious consideration.

**The Terms of Reference and Membership of
Planning Standards Sub-Committee (PSSC)**

1. Terms of Reference

- (a) To co-ordinate, in close consultation with government departments, bureaux and other appropriate bodies concerned, the formulation of planning standards and guidelines within an appropriate policy context so as to provide necessary information and guidance to departments and other agencies for the preparation and revision of their own development plans and programmes;
- (b) To monitor, interpret and review the effectiveness of such standards and guidelines, and to initiate surveys and other investigations to determine what revisions may be required. In this context, to take particular account of resources likely to be available, perceived development trends, approved practices and policies, and other appropriate strategic planning studies;
- (c) To appoint appropriate working groups in connection with (a) & (b) above on a need basis; and
- (d) To recommend to the Committee on Planning and Land Development (CPLD) proposed new standards and guidelines, and amendments to approved standards and guidelines.

2. Membership

Deputy Director of Planning/Territorial and Sub-Regional (Chairman)

Representative of :

Secretary for Development
Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury
Secretary for Home Affairs
Commissioner for Transport
Director of Lands
Director of Housing
Director of Civil Engineering and Development
Director of Environmental Protection
Government Property Administrator
Government Economist
Director of Architectural Services
Other Bureau Secretaries and Department Heads as required

Senior Town Planner/Standards and Studies, Planning Department (Secretary)

**Formulation and Review of
Planning Standards and Guidelines**

