

LCQ14: Supply of public housing

Following is a question by the Hon Wilson Or and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (January 20):

Question:

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) publishes the updated public housing construction programme (PHCP) on an annual basis, setting out the volumes of public housing production for the relevant financial year and the ensuing four years. Regarding the supply of public housing, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) since a comparison of the PHCP published in 2020 with the one published in the preceding year shows that the estimated years of completion of the 11 public housing projects listed in Table 1 have been deferred for one year, (i) of the problems resulting in the need to defer the estimated years of completion of such projects, (ii) whether the problems have been solved, and (iii) (if they have not been solved) of the estimated time when the problems can be solved (set out in Table 1);

Table 1

Project	(i)	(ii)	(iii)
Northwest Kowloon Reclamation Site 6 Phase 1			
Pak Tin Phase 7			
Pak Tin Phase 8			
Diamond Hill Phase 1			
Northwest Kowloon Reclamation Site 1 (East)			
Pak Tin Phase 10			
Diamond Hill Phase 2			
Fat Tseung Street West			
Tseung Kwan O Area 65C2 Phase 1			
Queen's Hill Phase 3			
Hang Fu Street, Tuen Mun Area 16			

(2) given that the public housing projects estimated to be completed in the financial year of 2023-2024, as set out in the PHCP published in 2019, included the two projects listed in Table 2, of (i) the reasons for such projects no longer being included in the PHCP published in 2020, and (ii) the years of completion of such projects according to the latest estimate (set out in Table 2);

Table 2

Project	(i)	(ii)
San Kwai Street		
Tai Wo Hau Road Phase 2		

(3) as the Secretary for Transport and Housing (STH) indicated in a blog article he published on October 10, 2020 that HA had planned to put up about 4 700 units for sale under the Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme in the coming months, of the public housing projects from which those units are drawn and the expected dates on which those units will be open for applications;

(4) given that STH indicated in the aforesaid blog article that an average number of about 26 000 public rental housing (PRH) units (including about 14 000 new units and about 12 000 recovered units) had been allocated to PRH applicants in each of the past five years, but he indicated in his reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on May 13, 2020 that the number of PRH units recovered by HA in each of the past five financial years which could be used for re-allocation ranged from 7 744 to 9 972, of the reasons for the inconsistency in such figures; and

(5) of the specific measures in place to (i) shorten the procedure that need to be gone through for sites that are "not spade-ready" to become "spade-ready" and (ii) minimise the uncertainty of the outcome of such procedure, so as to ensure that public housing projects can be completed as scheduled?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Development Bureau (DEVB), the Government's reply to the question raised by the Hon Wilson Or is as follows:

(1) Among the 11 public housing development projects under the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) as mentioned in the question, five projects (Northwest Kowloon Reclamation Site 6 Phase 1, Pak Tin Phase 7, Pak Tin Phase 8, Fat Tseung Street West and Tseung Kwan O Area 65C2 Phase 1) can be completed in 2020-21. HA will continue to monitor the progress of the remaining six projects with a view to completing them as soon as possible. Details of the above-mentioned projects are set out in Annex.

Construction works may be affected by various factors, such as inclement weather, progress of works and unforeseeable site constraints, etc. which cause delays. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic had also caused impact on the delivery of construction materials and labour supply in 2020 which affected the work progress of certain projects. Although the situation has resumed normal, HA will continue to monitor closely the situation of COVID-19 and liaise closely with the contractors to prioritise

work procedures taking into account actual circumstance so as to minimise project delays as far as practicable.

(2) Both San Kwai Street and Tai Wo Hau Road public housing development projects are covered in the draft Kwai Chung Outline Zoning Plan (OZP), which are subject to judicial reviews. As the relevant legal procedures have not yet completed, the OZP cannot be submitted to the Chief Executive in Council for approval. As a result, the Government cannot grant the land concerned to HA for development. According to HA's estimate, these two projects would be completed in 2025-26 or beyond. Therefore, they have not been included in the five-year housing construction programme published in 2020. HA will continue to monitor the progress of these projects with a view to completing them as soon as possible.

(3) According to the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address, around 4 700 flats under the Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (GSH) will be put up for sale in phases. The Strategic Planning Committee of HA approved at its meeting on January 11 this year the conversion of the public rental housing (PRH) development at Diamond Hill Comprehensive Development Area Phase 2 at Wong Tai Sin to a GSH project, providing 2 112 flats. Subject to smooth progress of the preparatory work, HA expects to launch the sale of flats of the project in around May this year. Sale of the remaining flats is subject to the sale response of the above-mentioned project.

(4) HA recovers PRH units for re-allocation based on different reasons, including voluntary surrender of units by tenants, tenants having purchased subsidised sale flats, tenants moving out in compliance with the requirements of HA as they breach the tenancy agreements, death of tenants and transfer of tenants to other PRH units, etc. In the past five years, an average of 12 000 units were recovered each year. As for Question 8 of the Legislative Council on May 13, 2020, we provided the number of recovered PRH units for re-allocation excluded units recovered due to transfer as per the question requested.

(5) At present, a number of development processes are involved in transforming a piece of "primitive land" into a "spade-ready site" for building of flats and to the completion of public housing units. These processes include planning and feasibility studies, rezoning, engineering and architectural designs, funding applications, land resumption and clearance, reprovisioning of affected facilities, site formation, as well as infrastructural works and building of flats, etc. In order to expedite the land development process, the DEVB will expand the composition and remit of the Steering Group on Streamlining Development Control established in 2018 to include vetting departments other than those under the DEVB, with a view to reviewing more comprehensively the approval processes of development projects, and rationalising the development-related requirements imposed by different bureaux, such as reviewing whether the technical assessment requirements are clear and suitable. The purpose is to compress development programme and expedite the implementation of public housing projects.