

LCQ19: Work of Town Planning Board

Following is a question by the Hon Alice Mak and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (June 16):

Question:

Regarding the work of the Town Planning Board (TPB), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the total number of meetings held by TPB and its committees as well as the total number of meeting hours involved, in each of the past five years;

(2) of the respective numbers of applications received by TPB in each of the past five years made under section 12A (amendment of plans on application to TPB), section 16 (applications for permission in respect of plans) and section 17 (right of review) of the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131), and the following information on each type of applications:

(i) the total number of statutory plans to which amendments were made,

(ii) the respective numbers of representations and comments received,

(iii) the total number of hours for which hearings were held and, in respect of the concluded cases, the respective shortest, longest and average hearing time,

(iv) the number of requests for deferment on consideration of the applications, as well as the respective numbers of times and days of deferment for each application on average,

(v) the respective numbers of deferment requests approved, rejected and withdrawn, and

(vi) the number of cases in which approval was given by the Chief Executive for extending, by six months, the time limit for submitting the amended statutory plans to the Chief Executive-in-Council for approval;

(3) in respect of the three types of applications mentioned in (2), of the respective numbers of applications involving comprehensive development areas which were received, approved and rejected by TPB in each of the past five years; the number of applications withdrawn; for the concluded cases, the respective shortest, longest and average time taken for handling the cases; and

(4) whether it will study simplifying, by amending Cap. 131, the procedure relating to land planning, so as to shorten the time taken for such procedure?

Reply:

My reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) The Town Planning Board (TPB) as well as the Metro Planning Committee and the Rural and New Town Planning Committee under it meet regularly to discharge the functions under the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131) (the Ordinance). TPB meetings are normally held on alternative Fridays, and special meetings will be arranged where necessary. Meetings of the two Committees are normally held on Fridays without TPB meetings in the morning and the afternoon respectively. The number of meetings held by TPB and the two Committees in each of the past five years is as follows:

Year	No. of Meetings		
	TPB	Metro Planning Committee	Rural and New Town Planning Committee
2016	28	24	24
2017	29	23	23
2018	32	23	23
2019	24	23	23
2020	21	21	22

We do not maintain the statistics on total meeting hours.

(2) In the past five years, TPB received a total of 152 applications for amendment of plan under section 12A, 4 398 applications for planning permission under section 16 and 255 applications for review under section 17 of the Ordinance. The number of applications received by year is as follows:

Year	No. of Applications Received		
	Application for amendment of plan under section 12A	Application for planning permission under section 16	Applications for review under section 17
2016	30	828	51
2017	29	867	48
2018	26	960	61
2019	37	913	58
2020	30	830	37
Total	152	4 398	255

If TPB agrees/partially agrees to the application for amendment of plan under section 12A, the amendment together with other amendments to the plan (if any) will be incorporated into the draft Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) for gazettal and exhibited for public inspection for two months. Of the 152 applications for amendment of plan under section 12A mentioned above, TPB

agreed/partially agreed to 17 applications (see Note 1) , involving amendments to 16 draft/approved OZPs in total. The amendments of eight applications together with other amendments to the plans have been incorporated into seven draft OZPs. During the exhibition period, a total of 27 representations and subsequently 21 comments (see Note 2) related to the amendments of the applications were received.

According to the Ordinance, TPB is required to consider the representations and comments, and submit the draft plans and relevant amendments, together with the representations and comments, to the Chief Executive in Council for approval within nine months after the expiry of the plan exhibition period. In case of special circumstances where approval of the Chief Executive has to be sought to extend the time limit, only a maximum extension of six months could be allowed. Of the seven draft OZPs with the amendments incorporated as mentioned above, TPB has completed the consideration of the representations and comments of four draft OZPs. These four draft OZPs have been submitted to the Chief Executive in Council within nine months in accordance with the Ordinance and have been approved. The remaining three draft OZPs are still under the representation consideration process.

For section (iii) regarding the total number of hours spent on hearings, we do not maintain the relevant statistics.

Of the applications received by TPB in the past five years, there were a total of 1 429 applications involving requests for deferment of decision of TPB by the applicant, including 114 applications for amendment of plan under section 12A, 1 259 applications for planning permission under section 16 and 56 applications for review under section 17 of the Ordinance. The number of deferment requested ranged from one to four, while the deferment period requested was usually one to two months. TPB would consider such requests on an individual basis. If there are sufficient grounds, the request for deferment would generally be approved. That said, of the abovementioned applications involving requests for deferment, four were rejected by TPB.

(3) Regarding applications involving Comprehensive Development Areas, TPB received 20 applications for amendment of plan under section 12A, 142 applications for planning permission under section 16 and ten applications for review under section 17 of the Ordinance in the past five years. Details of the applications received by year are as follows:

Year	Application for Amendment of Plan under Section 12A			
	No. of application received	Application agreed/partially agreed by TPB	Application not agreed by TPB	Application withdrawn by applicant
2016	3	0	3	0

2017	3	0	1	2
2018	4 (see Note 3)	2	0	1
2019	7 (see Note 4)	1	0	3
2020	3 (see Note 5)	1	0	0

Year	Application for Planning Permission under Section 16			
	No. of application received	Application approved by TPB	Application rejected by TPB	Application withdrawn by applicant
2016	44	34	3	7
2017	32	21	3	8
2018	30	22	6	2
2019	21	14	4	3
2020	15 (see Note 6)	8	4	2

Year	Application for Review under Section 17			
	No. of application received	Application approved by TPB	Application rejected by TPB	Application withdrawn by applicant
2016	3	0	1	2
2017	3	0	3	0
2018	0	0	0	0
2019	3	0	3	0
2020	1	0	1	0

According to the Ordinance, TPB has to consider the applications for planning permission under section 16 of the Ordinance within two months, the applications for amendment of plan under section 12A within three months, and applications for review under section 17 within three months from the date of receipt of the application. However, under individual circumstances, for example, when the applicant requests for a deferment on consideration of the application, the time required for TPB to consider and decide on the application may be longer.

(4) As announced by the Chief Executive in the 2020 Policy Address, the Steering Group on Streamlining Development Control (Steering Group) under the Development Bureau (DEVB) has expanded its composition and remit to include

vetting departments other than those under the DEVB, with a view to reviewing more comprehensively the development approval processes for both Government and private projects, and rationalising the development-related requirements imposed by different bureaux. At present, the Steering Group is exploring how to streamline the overall development process to expedite land supply, including reviewing the Ordinance to see if there is room to shorten the time required for planning-related procedures.

Note 1: There are also 31 applications pending consideration by TPB, while the rest are applications not agreed by TPB, applications withdrawn by the applicant, invalid applications or applications not further processed by TPB.

Note 2: As the comment periods for two of the draft plans have yet to expire, the number of comments received is subject to change.

Note 3: Including one application not further processed by TPB as the applicant had passed away.

Note 4: Including one invalid application and two applications pending consideration by TPB.

Note 5: Including two applications pending consideration by TPB.

Note 6: Including one application pending consideration by TPB.