

LCQ2: Vetting and approval of plans submitted in respect of building works of modular housing/container housing

Following is a question by the Hon Jeremy Tam and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (May 9):

Question:

Section 16 of the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) provides that if plans of building works submitted to the Building Authority (BA) (i.e. the Director of Buildings) are not endorsed with or accompanied by a certificate from the Director of Fire Services (DFS) certifying that (i) no fire service installation or equipment is necessary in connection with the building that will result from the carrying out of the building works shown on the plans or (ii) in the opinion of DFS, the fire service installations and equipment shown on the plans have met the minimum requirements, BA may refuse to give his approval of the plans. It has been reported that the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) is planning to build three modular housing blocks of three storeys each at 202-220 Nam Cheong Street, Sham Shui Po for temporary residential purpose (HKCSS modular housing). Regarding the issues relating to the issuance by DFS of the aforesaid certificate for the building works of modular housing/container housing and the vetting and approval by BA of plans submitted in respect of such kind of works, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) (i) of the criteria adopted by DFS for determining whether the aforesaid certificate should be issued for the building works of HKCSS modular housing, and (ii) whether DFS has issued the certificate;

(2) of the criteria adopted by BA for determining whether approval should be given to the plans submitted in respect of the building works of HKCSS modular housing; the number of times for which BA has so far received the relevant plans submitted by HKCSS, and on each occasion, (i) the date of receipt of such plans and (ii) the amount of fees charged; whether BA has approved the relevant plans; if so, of the approval date;

(3) of the details of the applications for constructing temporary modular housing/container housing received by BA and DFS in the past five years, including (i) the dates of application, (ii) the locations of the modular housing/container housing concerned, (iii) the amounts of fees payable by the applicants, (iv) the number of revisions made to the plans and (v) the outcome of vetting and approval (set out in a table); (vi) the number of applications received and (vii) the number of applications approved by BA and DFS in each of the past five years, as well as (viii) the amount of fees charged, (ix) the amount of processing time and (x) the number of revisions made to the plans, per application on average; and

(4) regarding each of the cases in which the plans submitted in the past five years to BA for approval which were subsequently rejected, of the proposed location(s) of the modular housing/container housing concerned and the justifications of BA for not granting approval?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Jeremy Tam is as follows:

For building plan applications submitted by an Authorised Person (AP) in accordance with the Buildings Ordinance (BO), regardless of the proposed construction method (including the Modular Integrated Construction (MiC) technology), the Buildings Department (BD) must process the building plans in accordance with the BO and its subsidiary legislation. The BD's officers will scrutinise whether the planning, design and construction of the building and its building works shown on the building plans comply with the statutory requirements and will also refer the building plans to other relevant departments through the centralised processing system for their assessments on areas of concern or requirements under their purview. Other than the conditions or grounds listed under section 16 of the BO that the Buildings Authority (BA) may refuse to give his approval of any plans of building works, BA must approve the building plan submission.

MiC technology refers to a construction method whereby free-standing integrated modules (completed with finishes, fixtures and fittings) are manufactured in a prefabrication factory and then transported to site for installation into a building. To provide clearer and more specific guidance on the use of MiC technology to the industry, the BD has promulgated a practice note in December 2017, setting out general guidance on design requirements for compliance with BO and relevant factors to be considered for projects using MiC technology. The relevant practice note can be found at the following link: www.bd.gov.hk/english/documents/pnap/ADV/ADV036.pdf

Regarding the development proposal at 202-220 Nam Cheong Street at Sham Shui Po, the concerned building plans were submitted to the BD on December 6, 2017 and were approved by the BA in accordance with BO on February 2, 2018. Nevertheless, the BD has not received the related structural plans and drainage plans yet. As the development proposal concerned is a non-profit-making community facility, the BD has exempted the payment of plan processing fees under section 42 of the BO.

Regarding the fire service installations and equipment on the building plans, upon receipt of the building plans referred under the centralised processing system, the Fire Services Department (FSD) has issued a certificate to the AP concerned on December 28, 2017, confirming that the fire service installations and equipment shown on the building plans complied with the requirements set out in the prevailing "Code of Practice for Minimum Fire Service Installations and Equipment" (i.e. for residential buildings of three storeys or less, fire extinguisher(s) should be provided on each

floor).

Up till April 30, 2018, other than the above mentioned proposed development project, the BD and FSD have not received similar building plan submissions, viz. temporary housing development projects using MiC technology.