

Planning Department and Lands Department respond to Office of The Ombudsman's direct investigation report

Regarding a report released by the Office of The Ombudsman today (October 24) on its direct investigation into the enforcement by the Planning Department (PlanD) and the Lands Department (LandsD) against unauthorised land developments, the PlanD and the LandsD expressed their gratitude for the work of the Office of The Ombudsman in the direct investigation and accepted the recommendations in the report.

The two departments are pleased to note that the Office of The Ombudsman considered they have tackled unauthorised development cases according to their purview and statutory powers. The two departments will follow up on the Office of The Ombudsman's recommendations to further enhance the enforcement procedures and strengthen enforcement intensity.

The PlanD will continue to curb unauthorised developments under the Town Planning Ordinance to meet public expectations regarding the protection of the rural environment. With the newly introduced "Regulated Area" upon amendment of the Ordinance, the extent of land subject to the PlanD's enforcement is expected to expand continuously. To manage the increasing workload, the PlanD will continue to streamline its enforcement workflow to expedite the handling of enforcement cases.

The LandsD will continue to step up enforcement against unlawful occupation of government land and breaches of leases on private land, and prioritise the handling of cases on a risk-based approach. The LandsD will also review the existing guidelines and enhance staff training to facilitate timely follow-up on cases of non-compliance and lease breaches.

The PlanD and the LandsD will also strengthen interdepartmental collaboration, including conducting joint enforcement operations against large-scale unauthorised developments through a pilot scheme, and establishing a high-level communication platform to reinforce their collaboration in enforcement work.