

Acceleration of Private Development Schemes

You will be aware that since the introduction in November 1974 of the priority system arising from the Acceleration of Private Development Schemes, the economic situation in Hong Kong has improved significantly so that the original objectives are less relevant to the present situation. Furthermore, the benefits arising from the centralised processing of building plans (see Practice Note for Authorised Persons and Registered Structural Engineers 1976.30), which to some extent obviates the need for priority, are now becoming apparent. Government has therefore taken the decision that in respect of private building projects, the priorities system for the approval of plans and related matters should be continued, but priority will now only be given where the proposals meet with the following revised criteria :-

- (a) Urgently required public utility and institutional buildings; or
- (b) Projects particularly recommended by the Industrial Lands Sub-Committee as requiring priority treatment.

2. Cases falling within criteria (a) are likely to be schools, electricity sub-stations and other buildings of a similar nature where it can be shown that they are urgently required and it would be in the public interest for priority to be granted. Cases falling within criteria (b) will be those industrial buildings which are likely to significantly contribute to the industrial and economic growth of Hong Kong and will include buildings providing accommodation for special industries. It is not expected that speculative flatted factories will meet this criteria. Applications for priority for industrial buildings will need to be supported by the Industrial Lands Sub-Committee but this will be sought by the Buildings Ordinance Office Priorities Committee if the application merits this action. It is possible that other projects not covered by criteria (a) or (b) may also merit priority for special reasons but this will only be granted by the Secretary for the Environment in exceptional circumstances and after consultation with the Government Departments concerned. Applications for priority status in this category should be addressed to the Secretary for the Environment, Government Secretariat, Central Government Offices, East Wing, 3rd floor, Hong Kong.

3. All new applications for priority will continue to be considered by a committee comprising senior officers of the Buildings Ordinance Office and its recommendations on applications will continue to be endorsed by the Secretary for the Environment. Priority projects will be kept under constant review to ensure that the need for priority treatment is not lost and decisions for withdrawal of priorities will be taken in a similar manner as for their award. It is expected that there will be a significant reduction in the number of cases warranting priority and this should result in an improvement in the overall performance of the Buildings Ordinance Office and the Fire Prevention Bureau as it is anticipated that the processing time of those proposals which do not enjoy priority status will be reduced.

4. With regard to Government land transactions, the criteria for granting priority treatment have also been modified. Applications should be made to the Secretary for the Environment or the Secretary for the New

Territories, North Kowloon Magistracy Building, 4th floor, Tai Po Road, Kowloon, as appropriate, where your clients are desirous of proceeding urgently with developments that may qualify for priority treatment. I must point out that although a project may have been given priority in respect of the land transaction, it does not necessarily follow that priority will be accorded by the Buildings Ordinance Office Priorities Committee to the processing of building proposals: the criteria laid down in paragraph 1 above will be adhered to.

5. All existing priority projects will now be reviewed in the light of the new criteria and you will be notified shortly whether priority status is to be retained or withdrawn for each priority project under your control.

6. Practice Notes for Authorised Persons and Registered Structural Engineers 1974.2 and 1974.4 are cancelled.

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