

Amenity Features

Amenity features are loosely defined as those elements of design that whilst not statutory requirements are desirable to improve the standard and quality of a building or a development project. Provision of such features enhances the sense of care and pride for buildings, thereby inducing proper maintenance and repair. To encourage these features, the Building Authority is prepared to consider modification and exemption, under the Buildings Ordinance and Regulations, for the provision of new amenities in both new developments and existing buildings.

2. To justify favourable consideration for modification or exemption, such proposals should meet one or a combination of the following objectives :

- (a) encouraging efficient and effective building management;
- (b) enhancing the quality of life for residents and users;
- (c) obviating the desire or temptation for unauthorized building works; and
- (d) improving environmental compatibility with the neighbourhood.

3. It is not possible to lay down hard and fast rules. Applications would be considered on their individual merits and relevance to a particular building and its users.

4. For large schemes or innovative designs, it is advisable prior to formal submission to hold a preliminary discussion with the Buildings Department. If necessary, a proposal will be the subject of consultation with the Lands and the Planning Departments. The intention is that Buildings, Lands and Planning Departments would consider a proposal on similar grounds and in its entirety : factors such as the preservation of trees, landscape and antiquities would be regarded as positive contributions.

5. Some examples of amenity features are given below.

Air-conditioning

6. For **residential buildings**, wall boxes or platforms in reinforced concrete or other suitable material may be constructed as a permanent feature, even over streets, and as such may be excluded from site coverage considerations (see PNAP 68). For **commercial and industrial buildings**, a centralized air-conditioning system should be provided or suitable internal areas should be set aside for this purpose at the design stage. Allowance should be made for adequate ducting and trunking, recesses, set-backs, open yards or other suitable spaces at or above floor levels where air-conditioning package units (or other plant and accessories) can be accommodated without the need to project over streets.

7. In accordance with Building (Planning) Regulation 23(3)(b), any floor space genuinely intended for air-conditioning may be excluded from gross floor area calculations. The following provisions would be considered reasonable in the absence of the detailed design layout of the plants :

- (a) air-conditioning plant rooms not exceeding 1% of the total gross floor area of a building; or
- (b) air handling units, not exceeding 4% of the total gross floor area of **each floor** on which they are situated.

If it is intended to exceed these percentages or where an air-conditioning room is provided in each domestic unit, full justification must be submitted. In such cases, the advice of the Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services would be sought during processing.

8. If an unusually extensive system is proposed for exclusion from gross floor area calculations, then it should be shown in detail on the approved plans and be operational before an application for occupation permit is made.

9. In all cases where buildings will be or are likely to be air-conditioned, careful consideration should be given to the location of the exhaust of the plant and the need to provide a disposal system for the condensation from the plant to prevent causing nuisance to adjoining occupants and the public.

Security Gates

10. As long as they do not obstruct the means of escape from a building and have locks openable from the inside without keys, security gates may be installed prior to the issue of an occupation permit or may be indicated on floor plans in suitable positions for future installation. Suitable positions are considered to be :

- (a) entrances to individual units;
- (b) main staircase exits from buildings; and
- (c) in a composite building, between the domestic part and the commercial part.

(In this case, the gate would be across an exit route, preferably in a lobby, and should be designed to prevent the entry of non-residents into the domestic part of the building.)

Counters, Kiosks, Offices, Stores, Guard Rooms, and Lavatories for Watchmen and Management Staff

11. Such provision enhances standards of control and maintenance of buildings. The Building Authority will consider favourably on application for exemption from gross floor area calculations where such provision meets the following criteria :

/(a)... .

- (a) it should not be excessive in size; and
- (b) it should be located in a common area or designated as a common area in a Deed of Mutual Covenant to prevent abuse.

Miniature Logistic Service Room

12. Small logistic service room in a multi-storey residential building allows the temporary storage of delivered goods under the custody of the management staff while the occupants are out. Such facility not only improves security but also alleviates fire hazard as otherwise the goods would be left unattended in the common lobby or staircase. Where such provision is provided in accordance with the following criteria, the Building Authority (BA) will favourably consider application for exemption of such rooms from GFA calculation :

- (a) The room is not excessive in size. As a general guide, a room size of 8 m² may be allowed for a block size of 240 flats.
- (b) The room should be located in the common area adjacent to the management office or guard post.

Mail Room

13. Mail rooms for large commercial and industrial buildings are facilities which enhance the serviceability of the buildings. The BA will consider favourably an application for exemption from gross floor area calculations where the provision of a mail room meets the following criteria :

- (a) it should not be excessive in size;
- (b) it should be endorsed by Postmaster General (in this connection an additional set of plans should be submitted for consideration by Postmaster General);
- (c) it should be located in a common area or designated as a common area in a Deed of Mutual Covenant to prevent abuse; and
- (d) the building is centrally managed.

14. For a typical mail room,

- (a) there should be a small public area for tenants to enter and collect their items from the lockable boxes;
- (b) there should be a small counter for postmen to sort mail into lockable mail boxes;

/(c)

- (c) a stamp vending machine and a posting box are usually provided in the mail room for the convenience of the tenants; and
- (d) it is preferably provided at ground floor or basement level.

A typical mail room detail is at Appendix A for attention.

Building Service Facilities

15. These are generally covered in PNAP 13.

Projections

16. These are generally covered in PNAP 68 and canopies are specifically dealt with in PNAP 173.

17. For individual domestic units, clothes-drying racks, anti-burglar bars and small window hoods designed to provide protection from the elements and falling objects would not have any site coverage or plot ratio implications. Similarly, any projections that improve the energy efficiency of a building, including enhanced wall thicknesses would also be disregarded for the purposes of site coverage and plot ratio.

Horizontal Screens

18. In open areas frequently used by occupants at ground floors or podium floors; or roof gardens/play areas at podium floor around the perimeter of a domestic tower, horizontal screens may be permitted to provide protection against inclement weather and falling objects subject to the following conditions:

- (a) the horizontal screens will not materially affect the lighting and ventilation of the areas or nearby buildings;
- (b) the areas are designated as common area in the Deed of Mutual Covenant; and
- (c) the areas do not form part of any commercial premises.

19. In assessing the acceptability of the width of the horizontal screens, the BA will take into consideration the population using the facility, the size of the development and the design of the screens.

Prestige Entrances

20. These are generally covered in PNAP 13. The BA aims to adopt a liberal attitude towards provision of such features. However, care must be taken in the design to ensure that future occupants would maintain the integrity of protected lobbies and corridors related to means of escape and fireman's lifts.

/Recreational

Recreational Facilities

21. The provision of podium roof gardens and play areas is encouraged. Where these amenities occur under and within the perimeter of a domestic tower, a modification of Building (Planning) Regulation 23(3)(a) would be granted, provided the area is open in design and not encumbered with structural elements. For the avoidance of doubt, it is clarified that staircases or lift shafts that pass through such floors may be discounted from gross floor area considerations, provided they are not connected with an entrance to the building from outside the podium level or do not serve other accountable accommodation at that level.

22. Certain other recreational facilities such as squash courts, gymnasiums, indoor swimming pools, sauna facilities, function rooms (for either active or passive recreational activities) are often clearly identifiable with a particular development and aim to benefit the residents and occupiers generally. These can be considered for exclusion from gross floor area calculations by modification of Building (Planning) Regulation 23(3)(a) on a case-by-case basis.

23. This concession does not apply to substantial luxury clubs with restaurants and other facilities obviously meant for an exclusive membership and commercial takings, rather than for the general benefit of residents and occupiers.

Satellite Dishes

24. These are becoming quite common nowadays being installed in response to public demand. It would seem appropriate therefore to make provision at the design stage of a building to accommodate such a feature.

25. Such a provision could be by way of cast-in-situ mounting blocks and/or built-in-fixing bolts together with an appropriate increase of the design load of the structural elements to accommodate the weight of the dish.

Concluding Observations

26. The BA is open to suggestions for consideration as amenities in the context of this practice note.

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