

Doc Type	HA
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Title	Future Direction for the Provision of Interim Housing
CONTENTS	<p>HA 70/95</p> <p>THE HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY</p> <p>Memorandum for the Housing Authority</p> <p>Future Direction for the Provision of Interim Housing</p> <p>PURPOSE</p> <p>This paper assesses the demand for Interim Housing (IH) and proposes measures to meet the demand over time.</p> <p>INTERIM HOUSING</p> <p>2. The traditional Temporary Housing Areas (THAs) consist of timber structures which provide accommodation of a temporary nature because of the short tenure of the land upon which these structures stand. The reality is : there will be a continuous need for some form of transient accommodation for people who are made homeless because of clearances or emergencies but are not immediately eligible for allocation of public rental housing (PRH).</p> <p>3. We propose to re-name such transient accommodation "interim housing". The aim is to emphasise the transitional nature of the accommodation to the residents, but the structures may remain permanent. At present, there are two types of interim housing, the traditional low-rise timber structures and multi-storey concrete block (namely, Kwai Shing East Block 12).</p> <p>THE DEMAND</p> <p>4. Annex A sets out the projected demand for interim housing between 1995/96 and 2000/01. The demand beyond 2001 is dependent on the future policy on clearances which is one of the subjects to be addressed in the Review of the Long Term Housing Strategy. The assumptions underlying the demand projections in Annex A are set out below.</p> <p>(a) Squatter clearance</p> <p>5. The demand for interim housing mainly arises out of clearance operations for development, safety or environmental improvement purposes. There are now approximately 248,000 squatters, largely in the New Territories. Experience in recent</p>

years showed that an increasing proportion of clearerees required interim housing accommodation, the majority of whom were recent immigrants. Between April 1991 and December 1994, an average of 38% of all clearerees required interim housing. Taking into consideration the increase in immigrants from China, the current estimate is that 54%¹ of clearerees might not be eligible for PRH in future clearances.

6. Between now and 1997/98, we expect a strong demand for interim housing arising out of the Government's pledge to clear all urban squatters on government land, clearance of squatters on dangerous slopes, and programmed clearances to make way for development, including public housing development. Total demand is estimated to be 35,460 person-spaces, or 11,900 units.

(b) THA clearance

7. In order to meet the heavy demand for interim housing in the next two years, the Management and Operations Committee decided on 23 September 1995 to retain, refurbish and re-use 13 THAs which together provide a total of 14,000 person-spaces. The intention is to review the situation in 1997 and decide whether and, if so, when these THAs should be cleared.

8. For the purpose of the present demand projection, we have assumed that the 13 THAs would be cleared over three years from 1997/98 to 1999/2000. It may be possible to speed up the clearance if the actual demand for interim housing from other rehousing categories is less than expected or if the supply of other forms of interim housing is increased. Conversely, if the demand for interim housing increases drastically, some of the THAs not required to be cleared for development purposes may have to be retained for a longer time. Our aim is to clear the traditional THAs as soon as possible.

9. The policy to require all residents to register on the Waiting List upon admission to interim housing means that those whose application numbers have not reached maturity at the time of clearance will have to be moved to another interim housing. The demand for relocation is estimated to be 5,800 person-spaces per annum.

(c) Private tenement and other categories

10. Based on past experience, it is estimated that the annual demand from private redevelopment and clearance of rooftop squatters is about 450 person-spaces. The demand from compassionate rehousing and other categories is estimated to be 2,380 person-spaces.

THE SUPPLY

(a) Multi-storey interim housing

11. From the land use and management point of view, the most cost-effective way of meeting the demand for interim housing is to make use of old housing blocks which

are structural sound but somewhat inferior in quality, facilities and allocation standards compared to present-day PRH provision. Kwai Shing East Block 12, which was originally intended to be redeveloped, is the first of such interim housing and has proven to be very popular among clearerees. We suggest re-use of old housing blocks should be the prime supply of interim housing in the long-term.

12. However, there are limitations on the selection of such housing blocks, the timing of availability and geographical distribution. A primary consideration in selection is that, as far as possible, retention of old blocks should not be at the expense of the production of new flats. Furthermore, it will not be appropriate to retain old blocks in good locations which would create a disincentive for residents to move out eventually.

13. We have identified a number of potential CRP blocks² in the urban fringe area to be converted into interim housing, but they are not likely to be available until 1997/98 and thereafter.

(b) Traditional THAs

14. In view of the strong demand for interim housing between now and 1997/98, it is necessary to re-use the 13 traditional THAs as and when vacancies arise. We expect about 13,000 person-spaces to be generated between now and 1996/97 through trawling and direct offer of PRH to existing residents. The THA units will be refurbished before they are reallocated, and the external environment will also be improved.

15. Annex B shows that there will be a shortfall of interim housing from 1997/98 onwards as we begin to clear the 13 traditional THAs. Continual retention of these THAs is not a preferred option because of the age and condition of the timber structures and, in most cases, the sites will be required for development. It is therefore necessary to identify new forms of interim housing to meet the demand.

(c) Prefabricated Structures

16. We propose to experiment with a new form of interim housing at Sha Kok Mei using proprietary prefabricated building system (Paper No. HA 71/95). This has the advantages of being quick to build, flexible in the flat-mix and, subject to normal wear and tear, up to 90% of the materials are re-usable if it is necessary to re-build on another site. Furthermore, most of the old blocks found suitable for use as interim housing are situated in west New Territories. The Sha Kok Mei project will supplement the provision of interim housing in east New Territories.

17. However, in view of the high cost involved, this type of interim housing will only be used sparingly as a fallback and stop-gap measure, where other forms of interim housing are not available, or cannot be made available in time to meet an upsurge in demand, and where there are uncertainties over the tenure of a particular site.

(d) Reinforced concrete structures

18. Where a site is available for a reasonably long period, say, ten years, we may consider building reinforced concrete structures instead of using prefabricated materials. The cost is estimated to be 29% lower than the Sha Kok Mei project but will require more time to build, estimated to be 19 months as compared to nine months for prefabricated structures.

(e) Tall blocks

19. In addition to making use of old housing blocks as interim housing, and recognising the limitations on the selection of such blocks, we shall also explore the possibility of building multi-storey interim housing on permanent housing sites. The aim is to maximise land use. This will be considered as a longer term option.

20. However, the social implications of building lower standard high-rise interim housing, the lead time and cost involved will have to be carefully assessed. We may be better off building new PRH on permanent housing sites and turn some of the existing old blocks, which may have become socially obsolescent, into interim housing.

MANAGEMENT

21. The introduction of new forms of interim housing necessitates corresponding management measures tailored to individual circumstances. Kwai Shing East Block 12 provides a management model for multi-storey interim housing, but new licence conditions will have to be introduced in the light of the decision to require residents to register on the Waiting List upon admission and to move out when their applications mature. Details on the management policy will be submitted to the Management and Operations Committee for approval.

22. For as long as the 13 traditional THAs continue to exist, management will be upgraded. Additional security guards will be employed to keep out trespassors and the Mobile Operation Unit will be deployed where eviction of unauthorised persons is necessary. Cleanliness will be improved through daily door to door refuse collection and more frequent cleansing of open surface channels and public toilets. A comprehensive termite extermination contract will be introduced to include survey of all units, treatment and repair, advisory and on-call services. Management staff will also step up communication with residents through regular meetings and newsletters.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

23. The cost of refurbishing the 13 traditional THAs is estimated to be about \$8,000 per unit, or \$37 million for 14,000 person spaces. The pilot scheme in Sha Kok Mei using prefabricated building structures is estimated to cost \$17.5 million which we propose to charge to the Development Fund. The cost of refurbishing old housing blocks to be used as interim housing is estimated to be about \$20,000 per flat.

PUBLIC REACTION AND PUBLICITY

24. The proposal to identify more old housing blocks to be used as interim housing should be welcomed. Publicity will emphasise the Housing Authority's determination to improve the quality of management and the living conditions of interim housing in general and to phase out the traditional THAs as soon as possible after 1997.

ADVICE SOUGHT

25. At the meeting of the Housing Authority on 4 January 1996, Members will be asked to note the projected demand for interim housing in Annex A, and to endorse the following proposals -

(a) that multi-storey buildings, be they purpose-built or old housing blocks, should provide the bulk of interim housing in the long-term (paragraphs 11 and 19);

(b) that the 13 traditional THAs should be cleared as soon as possible after 1997 (paragraphs 8 and 15);

(c) that the more expensive prefabricated structures should only be used as a fallback and stop-gap measure to meet unforeseen demand (paragraph 17); and

(d) that the management of interim housing should be tailored to individual circumstances and carefully devised to ensure a turnover of residents (paragraph 21).

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1 A 16% increase is projected to reflect the increase in the daily quota for single-permit holders from 105 to 150. 2 These are old blocks in the Comprehensive

Redevelopment Programme which are not included in the public housing production programme up to 2001.

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