

(Translation)

LEGCO QUESTION NO. 11

(Written Reply)

Asked by: the Hon Abraham Shek

Date of meeting: 20 April 2005

Replied by: Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands

Question

As I have received many complaints from members of the tourism industry that there are insufficient three-star hotel rooms to meet the demand of an increasing number of Mainland tourists, will the Government inform this Council whether:

- (a) it has formulated short-term and long-term measures to increase the supply of three-star hotel rooms; if so, of the details of these measures; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (b) it will streamline the procedure for processing applications for development of hotels on sites originally designated for industrial use; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply

President,

My reply to the 2-part question is as follows:

- (a) The Government believes the supply of hotels should be a matter for the market. According to the information of the Planning Department and the Hong Kong Tourism Board as at December 2004, the number of hotel rooms will increase by about 14,000 by end-2006, bringing the total number of rooms from 39,000 to

about 53,000. Based on the location, facilities and the number of rooms to be provided as reported, it is expected that more than half of them will be medium tariff hotels. This reflects that the market has been responsive to the tourism growth and changing trend to meet the demands of visitors. The Government will continue to monitor the supply of hotel rooms closely.

- (b) With a role to provide business-friendly conditions, the Government has been facilitating various sectors (including the hotel industry) to operate under a better business environment through streamlining regulatory regimes and simplifying administrative procedures.

In respect of planning, the Outline Zoning Plans provide the necessary flexibility in meeting the diverse demands from developers. The Town Planning Board (TPB) has re-zoned a number of land originally designated for industrial use into “Other Specified Uses” annotated “Business” (“OU(B)”) zone. Planning applications for hotel development on these sites are not uncommon and all applications will be considered by the TPB within 2 months upon receipt, under the Town Planning Ordinance. Since 2003, 37 new applications for hotel development in “OU(B)” zone (which were previously zoned for industrial use) have been approved by the TPB in areas such as

Wong Chuk Hang, Kwun Tong, San Po Kong and Cheung Sha Wan.

Where in line with the planning intention, the Lands Department processes applications of developers for lease modification to allow hotel development with premium charged according to the prevailing policies.

Where the Outline Zoning Plan and the lease conditions permit, the developers may choose whether to develop a hotel or a domestic building on a site. Under the Building (Planning) Regulation 23A, the Building Authority may treat a hotel building as a “non-domestic building” for permitting a higher plot ratio and site coverage. This provides the incentives for developers to develop hotel buildings.

The Government will continue to simplify the whole development approval procedures, including those in processing applications for development of hotels on sites originally designated for industrial use and the lease modification, with a view to minimizing duplication and enhance efficiency.

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