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Head: (91) Lands Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (1) Land Administration
Controlling Officer: Director of Lands (Thomas CHAN)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

How many small house applications were received by the Lands Department (LandsD) in the past five years? What are the numbers of backlog cases and cases under processing at present? How long does it take on average for LandsD to process a small house application? What is the total area of land zoned “Village Type Development” and available within the “Village Expansion Area” at present, and how much of it can be reserved for approved small house development? What are the estimated expenditure and manpower required for handling such cases in 2020-21?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Tanya (LegCo internal reference no.: 225)

Reply:

Over the past five years (2015 to 2019), the Lands Department (LandsD) received a total of 8 498 small house applications. As at end of December 2019, the number of small house applications being processed was 6 419 and the number of applications pending processing was 2 456. For straightforward applications, the processing may be completed within 24 weeks from the date of interview with the applicant. For non-straightforward applications, such as those associated with local objections, land title or boundary problems or requirements imposed by relevant regulatory authorities, the processing time may be longer.

According to the Planning Department, about 3 377 hectares (ha) of land fall within areas zoned “Village Type Development” (“V”) on the statutory plans. Land under the “V” zones on statutory plans is scattered across the territory and covers existing and recognised villages in the New Territories. Whether the development of small house may proceed on a particular site within the “V” zone would depend on engineering and other technical conditions. The Government does not have readily available information on the total area of land available for small house developments in these “V” zones.
There are at present 16 “village expansion areas” with a total area of about 33 ha within which sites are still available for small house development. These village expansion areas are currently zoned “V” and form part of the total area of “V” zones quoted above.

It is estimated that around 100 staff will be involved in handling small house applications in the financial year 2020-21, involving an estimated staff expenditure of $53.4 million. Some of the staff involved are also responsible for other land administration duties.

The cases being processed as at end 2019 exclude applications for Private Treaty Grant and Land Exchange involving Government Land. The processing of these two types of applications has been suspended since the judgment of the Court of First Instance on the judicial review case on the small house policy took effect. Pending the results of the appeal, the suspension will continue.