

Reports of Technical Visits / Seminars

Seminar on Visual Impact Assessment in EIA Studies

Date :	18 March 2004
Topic :	Visual Impact Assessment in EIA Studies
Speaker :	Mr Michael Fowler and Ms Cindy Tsang, Townland Consultants Ltd.
Venue :	Conference Room, ERM

Summary

The Institute organised a seminar on the topic of visual impact assessment (VIA) under the EIAO on 18 March 2004. Mr Michael Fowler and Ms Cindy Tsang of Townland Consultants Ltd, both very experienced town planners, were the speakers for the event.

Ms Tsang started off by giving a very comprehensive account of the criteria and basic principles of VIA. As the subject was all about visual impacts, it was only natural that part of the discussion was on the role and importance of visual presentations and illustrations in making a good VIA. A number of issues particularly relevant in the Hong Kong context were brought to the attention of the audience. These included the protection of ridgeline and clearance of eyesores. The ultimate goal would be to maximise visual compatibility of new developments with existing features, to minimise potential adverse visual impacts and to explore opportunities for enhancing visual quality.

Whilst Ms Tsang used a lot of local development projects as examples to illustrate her points, her colleague Mr Fowler shared with the audience his own international experience in urban design/planning, especially that accumulated from his work in San Francisco.

Following the presentations by the two speakers, there was also a lively exchange of views on issues including the application of international experience in VIA to Hong Kong, the weighting of visual impacts against the development potential of projects, the merits and demerits of guidelines and criteria for a fairly subjective topic.



The seminar was very well received and the Institute would like to thank Mr Fowler and Ms Tsang for the extremely interesting presentation and discussions that evening.