Housing in heritage area

Redevelopment plans for the area around the Old Police Academy were announced yesterday. About 5,000 flats will be constructed within a 33ha estate, which will include four heritage buildings to be proposed for conservation. Outside the new estate, two more buildings will also be put forward for conservation.

Heritage police buildings will be integrated into new estate

Six police buildings in and around the Old Police Academy will be proposed for conservation and integrated with future developments in the Mount Pleasant area.

The decision to retain the buildings was made after a first-of-its-kind heritage study was conducted for the Old Police Academy site – which spans about 33ha – said National Development Minister Desmond Lee yesterday.

Four of the retained buildings lie within a future 33ha Housing Board estate on the site, while the other two are just beyond the boundary of the new estate.

“This was the first time we’ve done an in-depth heritage study of this scale, which is important considering the scale of the new housing estate,” he said.

The former academy is the site of Singapore’s first permanent police training facility, established in 1929. It was operational until 2005, when its functions were relocated to the Home Team Academy in Choa Chu Kang.

The large-scale independent study, undertaken by the National University of Singapore’s Department of Architecture, compared the significance of 48 buildings and structures and two open spaces, and assessed how the new housing estate could affect the overall heritage significance of the site. It took place between August 2019 and September 2019.

Mr Lee said the development of the new housing estate gave the authorities an opportunity to pilot the study and add to it to guide future ones, as well as an ongoing effort to develop a heritage impact assessment framework.

The study found that nine buildings and areas within the old academy were considered the most significant in the history of the police force. They are Blocks 1, 2, 27, 28 and 153, as well as drill shed, swimming pool, parade square, and the recreation field.

“This is due to their strong organisational and historical associations, architectural and aesthetic values, as well as deep communal associations with the police in Singapore and Malaysia,” he said in a statement.

Within the future housing estate’s boundary, Blocks 1, 2, 27 and 28 will be retained and proposed for conservation. They will be adapted for new uses.

The four blocks were built between 1926 and 1930 as part of the original police academy.

A part of the parade square will be retained as an open space within the new housing estate. Two buildings outside the housing estate’s boundary will also be proposed for conservation: Block 13, which was used as a clinic and hospital ward, and Block 153, as the Senior Police Officers’ Mess.

For buildings and spaces that cannot be retained in their entirety, Mr Lee said HDB will explore how to retain and showcase their heritage significance in the new housing estate’s design.

A new working group comprising members of the police fraternity, the heritage community and government agencies will also be set up. It will develop plans to retain and showcase the unique heritage identity of the area.

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