

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.



1 Block 153 (Senior police officers' mess)

- Built in 1931, the building is deemed the foundation of the force's esprit de corps, having hosted many formal gatherings, official functions and events, such as festive celebrations, weddings, and networking and socialisation events for serving and retired officers.



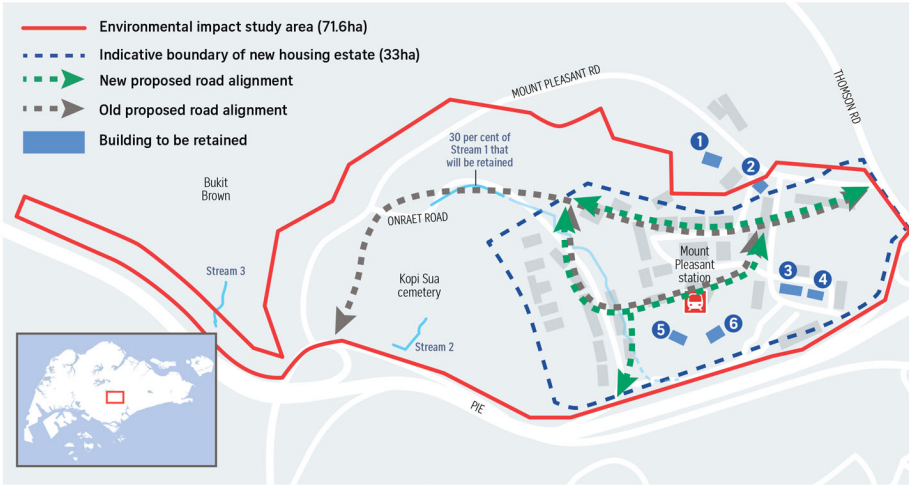
2 Block 13 (Clinic and hospital ward)

- Construction for the block began in 1928 and it served as the primary entry point to the medical centre.
- Built in the style of plantation houses, the building was designed with surrounding verandahs and large timber shutters for natural ventilation.



3 Block 2 & 4 Block 1 (above) (Main administrative buildings)

- Situated at the original main entrance of the academy in Whitley Road.
- They were physical, visual and symbolic landmarks for trainees, providing the backdrop for parade ground events and graduation photo shoots.



5 Block 27 & 6 Block 28 (above) (Senior officers' accommodation)

- Each bungalow has a unique butterfly-shaped semi-detached layout with full-length verandahs. They were designed to suit the tropical weather while retaining English-style design roots.
- Situated on high ground, they overlook the academy and are visible from the Pan-Island Expressway.

Sources: HDB/URA/SLA PHOTOS: URA STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

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 25ha – 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 apt 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 2018 and September 2019.

Mr Lee said the development of the new housing estate gave the authorities an opportunity to pilot the study and added that it will 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; an old drill shed; a swimming pool; the parade square; and the recreation field.

"This is due to their strong organisational and historical associa-

tions, architectural and aesthetic values, as well as deep communal associations with the police in Singapore and Malaysia," said the authorities 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.

Asked why the heritage study was not called prior to the commencement of works for Mount Pleasant MRT station in 2015, a URA spokesman said an internal assessment had taken place, to assess the area affected by MRT construction, occupied by six buildings and ancillary structures.

These were assessed to be of low

heritage significance and demolished in 2015.

"Subsequently, given the scale of the OPA site and its deep history, we decided to carry out a more detailed heritage study to supplement our internal assessment," said the spokesman, who added that a study on a similar scale for the former Turf Club in Bukit Timah has been called.

A new workgroup 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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