

## **Summary of Response to Feedback on Pilot Heritage Study of Old Police Academy in the Mount Pleasant Area**

### **I. Overview: Approach to planning and heritage**

The Government takes a holistic and long-term approach to urban planning, to balance social, environmental and economic considerations, and to steward Singapore's scarce land resources as we develop sustainably to meet the needs of current and future generations. This involves addressing trade-offs across a wide variety of land-use needs, including for housing, green spaces, infrastructure, community facilities, jobs and more.

Heritage considerations are considered upstream as part of our land use planning process. In studying buildings and structures of heritage value for conservation, we consider their architectural, historical and social significance, the competing land needs, the interests of stakeholders such as current and future residents, the heritage community, the wider public, as well as the national interest. Beyond the formal conservation of buildings, we also require a range of mitigating measures and strategies to protect and recall our heritage, such as documentation or the salvaging of artifacts. Any decision to proceed with our planning and development strategy for the area is made only after such studies and engagement with stakeholders are carried out, if required.

We continue to see high demand for public housing, especially in mature estates. This is driven partly by marriage and family formation, as well as a growing number of smaller Singaporean households. To meet this demand, agencies adopt a range of development options such as increasing the density of developments while ensuring liveability, as well as developing strategies and measures to sensitively integrate heritage elements with the new housing estate, where possible. In so doing, a balanced approach is adopted to capture and celebrate the built heritage of the area while meeting land-use needs.

## II. Site context & milestones

The site of the former Police Academy, Old Police Academy (OPA), is bounded by Mount Pleasant Road to the north, Thomson Road to the east, Onraet Road to the west and Pan Island Expressway (PIE) to the south. The OPA site covers a total area of approximately 25ha (see Figure 1), and is largely within the proposed development area of the new housing estate (approximately 33ha).



Figure 1: Indicative boundaries of Old Police Academy and new housing estate

The site of the new housing estate, which includes the OPA, has been zoned as “Residential (Subject to Detailed Planning)” in URA’s gazetted Master Plan since 1998.

In 2018, URA, HDB and NHB commissioned an external consultant to conduct a pilot detailed heritage study of the OPA, considering that the OPA site was planned for redevelopment within plans for a larger housing estate with supporting amenities and infrastructure in Mount Pleasant area (for more details, please see the full report [here](#); summary of the heritage study findings may be found in the executive summary published earlier [here](#)).

The purpose of the heritage study is to provide agencies with a more holistic understanding of the significance of the buildings, architectural design features and spaces at the OPA. This would help to guide HDB’s development plans in a way that would mitigate the potential impacts of the proposed developments and sensitively integrate heritage elements with the new housing estate.

The key findings from the heritage study are as follows:

- a) The OPA played a vital role in the development of the Straits Settlements police force. It marked the first time Singapore had a permanent institution to train and professionalise its law enforcement body. As a centre for innovation in police training and education of recruits, the Old Police Academy played a vital role in the professional development of police officers from the 1920s to 2005 until its closure in 2005.

- b) The layout of the buildings, grounds and associated features reflects the history of police training and education, institutional design, social attitudes and economic development over eight decades. These buildings and structures have substantial and unique associations with particular communities, such as current and former Singapore Police Force (SPF) personnel, SPF National Servicemen and Singaporeans.
- c) Based on the assessment of the significance of all buildings and open areas at the Old Police Academy, Blocks 1, 2, 27, 28, 153, the Old Drill Shed, Swimming Pool, Parade Square and the Recreation Field are considered the most significant buildings and open areas in the history of the police force in Singapore. 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.

### **III. Engagement with Stakeholders**

Together with URA and NHB, HDB engaged various stakeholders and representatives from heritage groups, who shared their feedback on the findings of the heritage study and agencies' proposed development plans. Since 2016, SPF has also been engaging the larger police fraternity, including in-service, retired and Police National Service officers, to assist in the documentation of the sites and to seek their ideas on sustaining and celebrating the heritage of OPA.

The heritage study report was published online for public feedback from 23 Nov 2021 to 21 Dec 2021. In total, we received 2 responses via HDB's feedback channels.

### **IV. Feedback received**

We are appreciative of the partnership with the heritage groups and consultants, and the interest and feedback from members of the public. We have reviewed all feedback and suggestions that were submitted. One requested for HDB to consider retaining various road names that are characteristic of OPA, while the other requested for the preservation of at least some of the black-and-white bungalows along Mount Pleasant Road.

### **V. Responses to feedback**

We are mindful of the need to develop housing areas sensitively, by integrating heritage elements and retaining the heritage significance of the site, while meeting the strong demand for public housing. Taking into consideration the findings of the heritage study and feedback received, HDB will adopt the following key measures:

- A) Continue to work with the police community and other stakeholders to integrate heritage elements within the new housing estate**
  - HDB and SPF jointly lead a new Workgroup involving URA, NHB, members of the police fraternity and heritage consultants, and chaired by Minister of State for Home Affairs and National Development Dr Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim.
  - The Workgroup will allow HDB to further work with stakeholders to discuss how the rich heritage of OPA can be preserved and incorporated into the new

developments and design of common/park spaces, prior to the commencement of works on site.

- The Workgroup will also discuss ways to enhance the distinctiveness and identity of the estate. Proposals for further discussion by the Workgroup include exploring the possibility of retaining physical elements of key sites in the OPA, and per feedback received, consider re-using existing road names or incorporating new road names related to police heritage in the new housing estate.

**B) Propose conserving 4 buildings (Blocks 1, 2, 27, 28) in the OPA within the new housing estate**

- Based on the heritage study findings and feedback, Blocks 1, 2, 27 and 28 are planned to be proposed for conservation and meaningfully adapted for new contemporary uses in the new housing estate. These blocks are assessed to be of greater heritage significance according to the heritage study. A part of the parade square, similarly assessed to be of greater heritage significance, will also be retained and re-interpreted as an open space within the new housing estate.
- Outside of the new housing estate, agencies also plan to propose conserving Blocks 13 and 153. Block 153 will retain its current use as the Senior Police Officers' Mess, while the future use for Block 13 will be further studied.

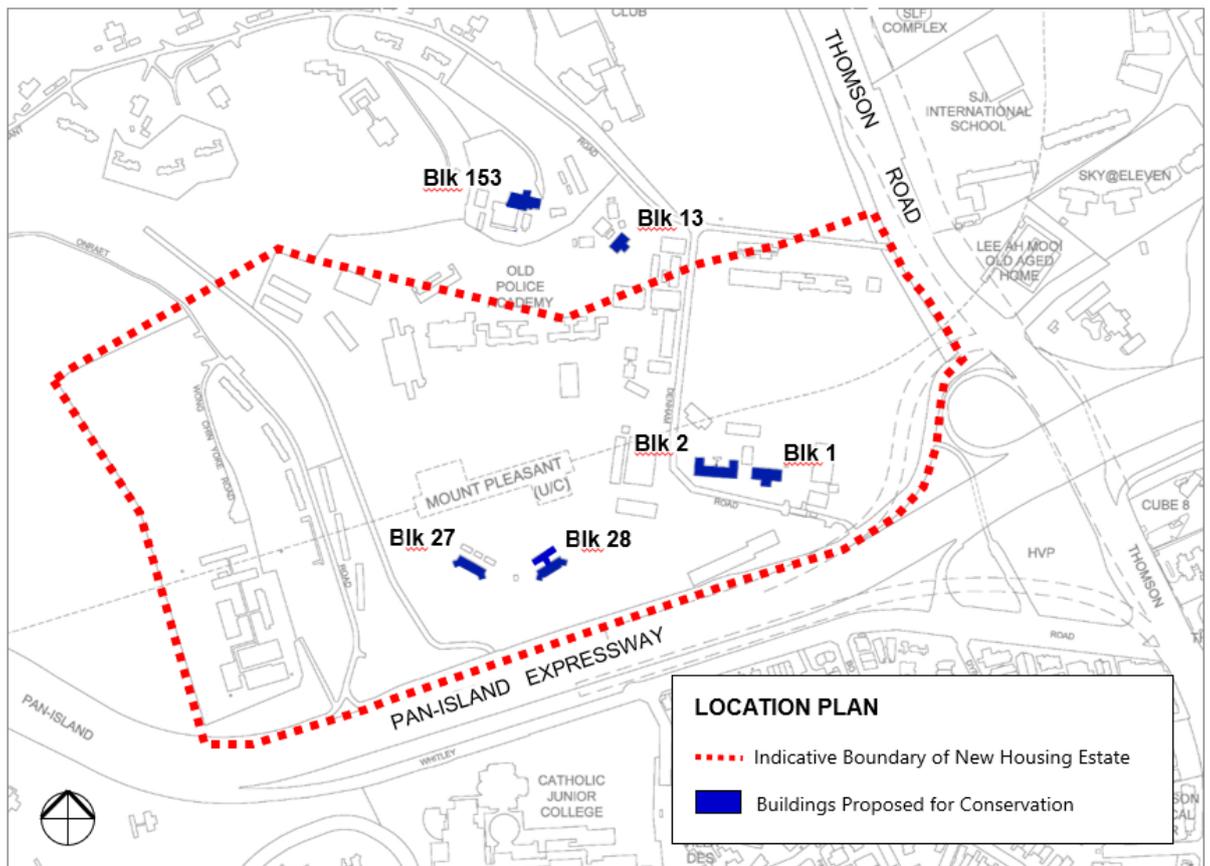


Figure 2: Taking into consideration the heritage study findings and feedback from stakeholders, the six buildings proposed for conservation are assessed to be most representative of the Police's historical, social and architectural heritage in the area.

- Technical constraints were also considered in assessing the feasibility of retaining buildings and spaces. These include the need to raise existing

platform levels to alleviate potential flooding concerns, technical requirements for supporting infrastructure such as roads, and the feasibility of meaningfully repurposing the retained building for a suitable new use within the new housing estate.

**C) Mitigation measures for buildings/areas that cannot be kept**

- For the buildings/areas that cannot be kept in entirety due to technical considerations and the need to meet development needs, HDB will explore various strategies to retain and keep the heritage significance of these spaces.
- These strategies include referencing the architectural elements of the colonial-era police academy buildings in the design of the new developments, and exploring the possibility of retaining physical elements from key sites to re-purpose into street furniture or markers in the new housing estate.
- Agencies will also carry out photographic documentation to capture the key buildings and spaces that cannot be retained, and explore interpretation strategies to re-tell the site's significant police heritage to future generations, especially future residents and users of the new development.

**D) Minimise the potential impact to surrounding areas**

- The proposed development area of the new housing estate is largely within the brownfield area of the Old Police Academy. Kopi Sua Cemetery to the west as well as the black-and-white bungalows and Mount Pleasant Road (a gazetted heritage road) to the north, would not be affected by the new housing estate. With regard to the feedback received, the conservation merits and feasibility of conserving the black-and-white bungalows along Mount Pleasant Road will be reviewed subsequently. There are currently no plans to redevelop that area.