

Implementation of Heritage Impact Assessment Framework

The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) will implement a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) framework to complement the existing heritage evaluation process. The HIA framework will allow for a more detailed, structured and robust process through which agencies assess when and how heritage studies should be conducted, and how findings from such studies should be incorporated into the planning and design of the development.

Current process to assess significance of buildings and structures

Singapore adopts a systematic and comprehensive approach to determine and mitigate the potential impact of development. Under the Planning Act, all development projects are required to undergo a thorough evaluation process to address the development's impact across various aspects, e.g. traffic, public health, the environment and heritage.

URA adopts a consultative and calibrated approach to managing the trade-offs between built heritage and development needs, facilitating the retention and recollection of Singapore's built history as part of our urban rejuvenation efforts. URA's evaluation of the heritage significance of buildings and structures takes into consideration their architectural, historical and social significance. In our planning process, the intended use of the site, future development needs, and the interests of relevant stakeholders such as the heritage community, future users, and our broader national interest, are also considered.

Over the years, agencies have cultivated a constructive working relationship with community and heritage stakeholders. Advisory panels, such as the Heritage and Identity Partnership and the Heritage Advisory Panel, which has diverse representation from industry, civil society, and the heritage and cultural sectors, have also been established. Regular consultation with these stakeholder groups and panels have allowed agencies to involve and engage the community upstream in the planning process to tap on their collective expertise for creative solutions. Such engagement also promotes greater public education and understanding of our built heritage. This collaborative approach has resulted in the conservation of over 7,200 buildings and structures that have been sensitively integrated into our modern cityscape and adapted for contemporary uses, as well as the implementation of other design interventions and initiatives that celebrate our built heritage.

Implementation of HIA framework

Today, heritage studies are conducted at varying scales and scope to inform the land use planning process.

Under the HIA framework, public projects that are likely to cause major impact to significant heritage sites will be required to undergo an in-depth consultation process with URA and NHB to ascertain if heritage studies or other mitigating measures are required. URA and the National Heritage Board (NHB) may recommend that heritage studies be conducted on selected sites to provide a more holistic and in-depth understanding on the heritage significance of buildings and structures and the impact of development. Conducting such studies also add an additional layer of external assessment, with greater involvement of industry professionals, the heritage community and the general public. For example, a pilot

heritage impact study was conducted for the site comprising the former Police Academy at the Mount Pleasant area, which was the first of such scale. [See details of the study at **Annex.**] The scale and scope of such studies may vary depending on the context of the site.

It is likely that HIAs, which are the most extensive heritage studies that may be imposed, will only be required for large-scale redevelopment projects (e.g. future housing estates and business centres) impacting clusters of buildings and structures with potential heritage value, and which are of significance to multiple stakeholder groups.

For sites that are assessed to require a heritage study, developing agencies will:

- (i) Engage external consultants to conduct an independent heritage study to assess in greater detail the extent of the potential impact of development works, the adequacy of proposed mitigating measures, and consider more comprehensive strategies to incorporate built heritage elements in the proposed development.
- (ii) Engage the relevant stakeholders and the heritage community at key project milestones when appropriate, such as when determining the scope of the studies and sharing the preliminary findings.
- (iii) Publish the study findings on their websites for a period of public feedback. Feedback received will be considered and incorporated as much as possible, as agencies continue to develop mitigating measures for the project.

Thus, findings from the heritage studies will guide agencies' development of comprehensive and detailed strategies to mitigate the impact of development, such as integrating and recalling significant buildings, structures and associated elements as part of new developments. Different stakeholders and the public will be involved and engaged more widely in the shaping of plans for significant sites as well.

The HIA framework has been developed in partnership with NHB, with support from the heritage community.

The implementation of the framework exemplifies the Government's commitment to strengthen transparency and accountability in our planning decisions, and our push to further responsible stewardship of our land resources. The Government will continue to partner Singaporeans in these efforts to ensure that we strike the optimal balance between the development needs of our nation and retaining our sense of identity and history. Agencies will regularly review the framework such that it remains relevant and robust.

Annex: Pilot Detailed Heritage Study for Site of the Former Police Academy in the Mount Pleasant Area

Paving the way for the formalisation of the framework is the pilot large-scale detailed heritage study conducted for the site of the former Police Academy in the Mount Pleasant area, which will be developed into a new housing estate. The study was conducted between August 2018 and September 2019. The study provided an additional layer of external evaluation which validated agencies' earlier assessments and allowed agencies to develop detailed strategies and measures to sensitively integrate heritage elements within the new housing estate.

Following the conclusion of the heritage study, taking into consideration other feedback from the heritage community and stakeholder groups, six significant heritage buildings at Mount Pleasant have been identified and will be proposed for conservation. Four of these buildings, within the future housing estate will be meaningfully integrated and adapted for contemporary uses. For buildings and spaces that cannot be retained in their entirety, HDB will explore various strategies to retain and showcase their heritage significance in the design of the new housing estate.

During the public feedback period from 23 November 2021 to 21 December 2021, agencies received suggestions from members of the public to retain certain road names to recall memories of the former Police Academy, and some of the black-and-white bungalows along Mount Pleasant Road which contribute to the historic character of the area.

Agencies will continue to work with the police community and relevant stakeholders to incorporate other meaningful heritage elements in the new housing estate, to capture the history of the site while catering for future needs. To this end, the Workgroup chaired by Minister of State for Home Affairs and National Development Dr Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim will study ways to enhance the distinctiveness and identity of the new housing estate.