

Sites and buildings proposed for conservation

Former Royal Malayan Naval Base Admin Block

1. The former Royal Malayan Naval (RMN) Base, later known as “Kapal di-Raja (KD) Malaya”, used to operate next to the British Royal Naval Base in Woodlands. The site has been planned for a future residential estate since 1998 to offer Singaporeans more housing options in the North region, so future residents will be able to tap on available job opportunities in Woodlands Regional Centre. The larger area has progressively been developed over the years, with amenities such as Woodlands Waterfront Park and the Republic Polytechnic to support residents’ recreational and learning needs.
2. URA has been engaging agencies and stakeholders on plans to sensitively integrate the naval heritage of the area with future developments. Given the heritage significance of the former RMN Base, URA will be proposing to conserve the three-storey Admin Block, and studying potential new uses for the building to complement the future “Housing by the Woods” development by the Housing & Development Board (HDB). Agencies and stakeholders are also exploring creative ways to celebrate the heritage of the site, such as recalling significant features in the design of future developments.

Significance

3. Completed in 1953, the RMN Admin Block encapsulates 70 years of naval history spanning Singapore’s colonial era to post-independence, with ties to the Commonwealth and both Singapore and Malaysia. It reflected the urgent need in the post-World War Two era for Malaya to build up its own defences. The premises served as training grounds for generations of navy personnel, including locals recruited by the British in the 1950s, those serving Malaya after the RMN was handed over to the Malayan government in 1957, and RMN recruits who continued to train there even after Singapore gained independence in 1965. Over the years, the former RMN Base hosted major naval events and bore witness to the significant contribution of generations of Singaporeans, to naval defence. The site was eventually returned to Singapore in 1997 and repurposed as the Admiralty West Prison from 2011 to 2018.

4. Reflecting architectural trends of its time, the main Admin Block was designed in Art Deco style, with modern tropical elements such as streamlined rounded canopies. The symmetrical block consists of a central tower with twin flagstuffs and an observation deck at the third storey roof. On both sides of the central tower, two two-storey wings feature open, naturally ventilated corridors that served as a viewing gallery to the parade square. Features such as the former parade square, a stone rubble retaining wall and twin stairways form the foreground which accentuates the grandeur of the building and will be integrated with future developments.



Inspection of the Guard of Honour of the Royal Malayan Navy at the Parade Square in 1954
Credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Royal Malaysian Navy officers at the front of the RMN Admin Block in 1953

Credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



RMN Admin Block overlooking former Parade Square in 2019

Credit: URA



Front façade of the RMN Admin Block in 2023
Credit: URA

Dakota Crescent

5. Dakota Crescent, one of Singapore's oldest public housing estates, was built by the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT) in 1958 to address overcrowding in the city centre and provide affordable homes to improve living standards of residents. Located off Old Airport Road, the estate is characterised by its distinctive low-rise blocks comprising a variety of two-, three-, and seven-storey blocks.
6. URA will be proposing to conserve a cluster of six blocks at Dakota Crescent estate – comprising four seven-storey blocks, one three-storey block, and one two-storey block – which were retained after future plans for the site were announced in 2017. This cluster of six blocks surrounds the estate's courtyard where the Dove playground is located. All the building types found in the estate are represented in this cluster to help serve as endearing landmarks that will recall social memories for residents. Two SIT projects built around the same era i.e. the Tiong Bahru and Kampong Silat estates, have been conserved in part in earlier years to commemorate Singapore's public housing story.

Significance

7. The site reflects the government's post-war response to meet the population's needs for affordable mass housing with proper sanitation facilities. The estate is also significant as it reflects the evolution of public housing in Singapore before our nation's independence. It was one of the last estates that SIT built before HDB took over Singapore's public housing development in 1960.
8. The Dakota Crescent estate and road were named after Douglas DC-3 Dakota, a passenger aircraft of the 1930s, which often took off from and landed at the former Kallang Airport runway along Old Airport Road, when Singapore was under British colonial rule. Among the cluster of six Dakota Crescent estate blocks, four of them were thoughtfully and spaciouly laid out to form a square courtyard that is well-shaded and set apart from the busy Old Airport Road. The blocks were carefully placed at a distance from each other, striking a balance between privacy and the creation of a cosy common space at the courtyard, which often attracted the community to gather. Meanwhile, the other two blocks had a waterfront view along Geylang River.

9. The architecture of each block, while simple in form, is elegant and well-considered in its proportions and visual balance. Unique to this estate are the seven-storey blocks which feature a curved footprint, likened to the shape of a butterfly or 'pi' symbol. Due to Singapore's tropical climate, balconies were designed so that the main living areas were set back and sheltered from the sun. The balconies were carefully composed, with some protruding from the facade, while others were recessed to subtly enhance the solid-and-void effect.
10. In addition, visual contrast is offered by slender mild steel railings at some of the balconies. Patterned ventilation screens also add interesting juxtapositions with the concrete walls. The skillful design of the blocks, together with the original fair-faced brickwork, give the estate a distinct character.
11. Located at the courtyard is the Dove playground which has been retained – a well-loved community space which continues to delight visitors both young and old from all over the island, even allowing older residents to re-live their childhood experiences from yester-years. Altogether, a familiar sense of belonging is created by the combination of the distinctive architecture of the buildings, spatial quality of the courtyard, the Dove playground as well as the commemorative social memories they evoke.



The Dove playground sits within the cosy courtyard, flanked by four residential blocks
Credit: URA



*Block 12, a two-storey block, used to house shops serving the neighbourhood
Credit: URA*



*One of the seven-storey slab blocks designed with protruding balconies, a feature of tropical architecture
Credit: URA*

Jurong Hill Tower

12. Jurong Hill Tower and Jurong Hill Park located on Jurong Hill, also known as Bukit Peropok, were planned by JTC in the late-1960s in tandem with the rest of Jurong New Town and the broader Jurong Industrial Estate. The development aimed to provide residents and workers with recreational spaces and access to nature, at a time when the nation was undergoing rapid urbanisation and industrialisation.



Then Prime Minister of Denmark Poul Schluter visiting Jurong Hill Tower in 1985

Credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Jurong Hill Tower

Credit: URA



People enjoying the view from the top of Jurong Hill Tower

Credit: URA

13. Jurong Hill Tower offered visitors panoramic views of the Jurong Industrial Estate. Between 1969 and 1984, foreign heads of state and dignitaries visiting the tower as part of their tours of Jurong Industrial Estate also planted trees in the Garden of Fame located at the foot of the tower to commemorate their visits.

14. Jurong Hill Tower and the 14-hectare Jurong Hill Park opened to public in 1970. The Tower had a 200-seater capacity fully-airconditioned restaurant at its base. Originally called the Jurong Hill-Top Restaurant, it was the first restaurant to be opened in Jurong Town. The hilltop road and Tower are also popular destinations for recreational cyclists.
15. URA will be proposing to conserve Jurong Hill Tower for its historical, social and architectural significance.

Significance

16. Jurong Hill Tower is a notable landmark in Jurong representing Singapore's economic transformation and industrialisation achievements after attaining independence. Together with the Garden of Fame, the Tower was valued as a recreational destination for locals and also symbolises Singapore's close international ties which facilitated collaboration with foreign investors in its early years of independence.
17. The concrete structure comprises a spiral ramp supported by 18 structural columns. In the past, the top of the Tower had an enclosed meeting room with a skylight featuring models and exhibitions of the government's industrialisation efforts and plans for Jurong.
18. The Tower's unique spiral ramp allowed visitors to take a leisurely stroll up to the viewing deck, while enjoying the panoramic views of the industrial estate including the new factories, Jurong Port, and Jurong Island's Energy and Chemicals Hub to the south.



Unique spiral ramp supported by 18 columns

Credit: URA

Buildings at the Bukit Timah Turf City

19. The Bukit Timah Turf City is set to be transformed into a new housing estate where public and private homes, heritage, nature and amenities are sensitively integrated to provide current and future residents with a highly liveable, inclusive and endearing living environment. The site was formerly home to Singapore's second racecourse from 1933 to 1999 and a popular horseracing venue. After the Singapore Turf Club (STC) relocated to Kranji, the site later served as a recreational and commercial hub, with spaces leased out for interim lifestyle and recreational uses until end-2023.
20. URA will be proposing to conserve both the iconic North and South Grandstands as they are tangible reminders of the development of horse racing as a popular spectator sport and reflect Singapore's journey from colonial to post-independence periods, within the 'Social' narrative. The Grandstands will set the context and history of the Bukit Timah Turf City. Agencies are continuing to study the potential retention and adaptive reuse of 25 other buildings and structures on site, including the former Secretaries' Bungalows and Bukit Timah Saddle Club Clubhouse, and will share more details when ready.

Significance

21. Given the scale and context of the site, a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) was conducted in consultation with heritage interest groups, to comprehensively study the site and guide the development of plans that balance future housing needs with safeguarding important heritage assets.
22. The HIA attributed the heritage significance of Bukit Timah Turf City to its 66 years of history as one of Southeast Asia's top racecourses and its association with the roots of horse racing in Singapore. Comprising buildings and landscapes of architectural and aesthetic value, the former racecourse reflects the equestrian history of the site. The HIA therefore recommended retaining and repurposing significant buildings as well as implementing mitigation strategies such as sensitive urban design and a conservation management plan to recall the history and identity of the area.
23. Having carefully considered findings from the HIA and subsequent feasibility studies on the potential for adaptive reuse of the buildings, as well as feedback from the Heritage and

Identity Partnership (HIP)¹, residents of the surrounding estates and workers of the former Turf Club, agencies are adopting three strategies to sensitively integrate the site's heritage with future developments, to recall the history of the area:

- i) The two Grandstands which will be proposed for conservation are significant landmarks in the area that had housed thousands of spectators. The North Grandstand is a notable example of Modernist architecture in the 1980s with its bold and brutalist design. Juxtaposed with the classical-style South Grandstand which first opened in 1933, both Grandstands will be adapted to new uses and will be integral as focal points for the new community.



North and South Grandstands

Credit: URA

¹ The HIP serves as a platform for regular dialogue between URA and its members of diverse backgrounds, including individuals from the building industry, arts and heritage sector, journalism, business and property owners and academia. The HIP provides feedback and suggestions on ways to sustain and manage built heritage and identity as well as to promote greater public understanding of built heritage.



North Grandstand

Credit: URA



*Queen Elizabeth II and Duke of Edinburgh Prince Philip arriving at Singapore Turf Club accompanied by
Chairman Tan Sri Runme Shaw on 20 Feb 1972*

Credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Orchid Plant judging in South Grandstand during the International Orchid Festival in 1963
Credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

- ii) A new central open space in front of the Grandstands will pay homage to the site's sporting heritage. It is intended for sports and recreational uses and will be surrounded by commercial, civic and community amenities. Measures will also be taken to commemorate and mark the original extent of the historic racetracks. The Grandstands, together with the open space, are envisioned as the civic and recreational heart of the future precinct.
- iii) To further recognise the history of the former Turf Club, agencies will continue to actively document the heritage of the site and explore ways to tell the story of the racecourse, such as through storyboards and heritage trails.

24. Agencies will share more details on the potential retention and adaptive reuse of the other 25 other buildings and structures when ready.

Singapore Badminton Hall

25. The genesis of the former Singapore Badminton Hall (SBH) at 100 Guillemard Road can be traced back to events linked to the first Thomas Cup Tournament first held in Britain in 1949, which the team from Malaya won and was given the opportunity to host the next tournament. Completed in June 1952, SBH hosted the third and fourth Thomas Cup Tournaments in 1955 and 1958 respectively. It was the nurturing ground for local badminton talents in the 1950s, such as Wong Peng Soon, Ismail Marjan and Ong Poh Lim. Besides badminton, SBH also hosted other sporting competitions, such as gymnastics, sepak takraw, table tennis, billiards and wrestling.
26. SBH was also a venue for entertainment events, such as plays, movie screenings, talent-search and dance competitions. In 1962, the hall was used as the vote-counting venue for the referendum to merge Singapore, Brunei, Sarawak, Sabah and the Federation of Malay States to form Malaysia.
27. These are important milestones in the development of Singapore's local sports scene as well as historic events in our nation's history. In recognition of the significance of the venue, the National Heritage Board marked the former SBH as a historic site in 1999. URA will be proposing to conserve the building as a symbol of Singapore's humble beginnings and to mark historic moments in the local sports scene and our nation's evolution.

Significance

28. Designed by pioneer Singaporean architect Ng Keng Siang, SBH has a rectilinear form characterised by modern architectural features, such as streamlined concrete fins/canopies and pre-cast concrete vents and parapet wall. The building's entrance is marked by a protruding box structure, featuring an inset framed concrete canopy and a concrete flag post.



Badminton match held at the Singapore Badminton Hall in 1967

Credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Crowds gathered for the Referendum Announcement at the Singapore Badminton Hall in 1962

Credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



*Front façade of the Singapore Badminton Hall along Guillemard Road in 2025
Credit: URA*



*Mural featuring national badminton players on the façade of the Singapore Badminton Hall in 2025
Credit: URA*



Café and main entrance along the front façade of the Singapore Badminton Hall in 2025
Credit: URA



Badminton players in the Singapore Badminton Hall in 2025
Credit: URA

29. SBH's key internal features include its large open hall with a metal roof with steel trusses, and tiered grandstand seating. Offices and ancillary spaces are located around the building's perimeter, beneath the grandstand seating.

30. Before Guillemard Road became a main arterial road, large crowds used to gather at the building during events, and its front has been much photographed. Today, it stands as an important marker of local identity and a repository of social memories.