



How to Check if a Singapore Building Is Conserved

Description

A conserved building is neither frozen in time nor a blank canvas. Owners can adapt it, but the work and any proposed new use must comply with the rules for that particular building and conservation area.

That distinction is easy to miss when a property advertisement, old photograph or map pin is treated as proof of what can be done. URA's conservation records are the starting point, not the final permission.

Begin with the building, not just the street

URA's refreshed [Conservation portal](#) includes a "Find a Building" service with photographs, historical information and links to the guidelines that apply to buildings in conservation areas.

Search the full address and match the building number, map position and individual record. A street can contain several units, and neighbouring properties do not necessarily share the same record or restoration requirements.

The building entry should identify its conservation context. Singapore's historic districts, residential historic districts and secondary settlements are not interchangeable labels; the surrounding streetscape and the extent of permitted adaptation can differ.

Conservation status does not settle property use

The most important warning on the portal is concise: all works or new uses in a conserved building require Conservation Permission and must comply with the relevant guidelines.

That does not mean every repair needs the same treatment, or that every desired use will be rejected. It means a photograph of the facade or a conservation-area label cannot answer a planning question by itself.

Approved use is a separate issue. A shophouse may be conserved while its lawful use, last approved use and any proposed change of use must be checked through the relevant planning records and application routes. A tenant considering a restaurant, studio or office should not infer permission from the building's heritage description.

Use the map to test the record

[URA SPACE's conservation map](#) helps confirm the map point and the surrounding conservation area. Use it to check whether the selected record corresponds to the exact property, particularly where unit numbers, corner buildings or rear extensions make the address ambiguous.

For a design discussion, the useful file is small: exact address, URA building record, conservation area, building type, relevant guideline and the specific work or use being considered. That gives an architect, tenant, owner or contractor the same starting facts.

Download or note the version of the guidance used, but do not begin work from a screenshot. Guidance can change, and permission depends on the scope of the proposal. Qualified advice and URA's decision remain necessary before demolition, facade work, additions, alterations or a new use.

The portal is also valuable for readers interested only in history. Its photographs and building accounts can be read alongside LBRD's guides to [read one conserved district through its heritage trail](#) and [compare another built-heritage route](#). The historical record explains why a place matters; the planning record decides what may happen next.

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