

MEDIA RELEASE

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KEEPING OPTIONS OPEN FOR 38 OXLEY ROAD

Singapore, 24 October 2024 – In its 2018 Report, the Ministerial Committee on 38 Oxley Road assessed that the building has architectural, heritage and historical significance. It also concluded that while Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s preference was for the building to be demolished, he was prepared to accept options other than demolition, provided that suitable arrangements were made to ensure that: (i) the building was refurbished and kept in a habitable state; and (ii) the family’s privacy was protected.

2 The Report sets out options for the building and also for the site where the building is located. The options include retaining the entire building, retaining only the basement dining room, or demolishing the building fully but designating the site for alternative use (for example, as a park or a heritage centre). These options are not exhaustive. The intention is for a future government to consider these, and other options that could emerge later, and make an informed and considered decision in the fullness of time, taking into consideration the wishes of Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

3 Upon the passing of Dr Lee Wei Ling, Mr Lee Hsien Yang has stated that he intends to seek permission to carry out demolition works at 38 Oxley Road and has made an application to Urban Redevelopment Authority to do so on 21 October 2024. But making such a move now will rule out a proper and full consideration of the above options.

4 The National Heritage Board (NHB) will therefore commence a study of the site to assess if the site has national historical, heritage, and architectural significance as to be worthy of preservation.¹

5 The Government recognises that there will be a diverse range of views amongst Singaporeans on this matter. If a Preservation Order is made, the Government will have the time needed to consider carefully the different options identified in the Ministerial Committee Report (as mentioned in para 2), and any other options that may emerge. This will ensure a well-considered decision that will stand the test of time and will strengthen our solidarity and unity as a nation.

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¹ The study will be conducted by NHB's Preservation of Sites and Monuments Advisory Board, which comprises experts from various sectors. NHB's recommendation will be submitted to the Minister for Culture, Community and Youth to decide whether to issue a Preservation Order for the site under the Preservation of Monuments Act. If the Minister intends to preserve the Site, NHB will notify the owner and occupier of the Site of the intention to preserve the Site through a Notice of Intention, and the owner and occupier may submit any objections to NHB within a reasonable period before the Minister makes a final decision. If the decision is made to preserve the Site as a National Monument: (a) all options for the Site will continue to remain open to the current government and future governments, because a Preservation Order can be amended or revoked as the government of the day considers appropriate; and (b) no rezoning to or alternative use of the site will be allowed until a decision is made in the future.

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About the National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993. As the custodian of Singapore's heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit.

NHB's mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, safeguards and promotes intangible cultural heritage, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the national collection. Through the national collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the past, present and future generations of Singaporeans. NHB is a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit www.nhb.gov.sg for more information.

Fact Sheet on the Ministerial Committee Report

1. A Ministerial Committee on 38 Oxley Road (“Site”) was formed in June 2016 and tasked to address three terms of reference, namely to assess:
 - a) The historical and heritage significance of the Site;
 - b) The wishes of Mr Lee Kuan Yew in relation to the Site; and
 - c) The possible plans for the Property and the neighbourhood, and the options to move forward.

2. The Committee released its [Report](#) on 2 April 2018 with a number of key findings.
 - a) First, the Committee assessed that the Site has architectural, heritage and historical significance.
 - b) Second, the Committee’s view was that Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s preference was for the building to be demolished, but he was also prepared to accept options other than demolition, provided that suitable arrangements were made to ensure that: (i) the building was refurbished, and kept in a habitable state; and (ii) the family’s privacy was protected.
 - c) Third, the Report outlined drawer plans to help a future Government make an informed and considered decision about the Site when it became necessary.

Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s Views

3. The Committee had carefully studied the representations from Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s children. In reaching its views on Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s wishes, the Committee relied particularly on the three key objective documents placed before it which expressed Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s thinking and wishes regarding the Property, and the concrete steps that Mr Lee Kuan Yew had himself taken in his lifetime to put his wishes into effect. This included the demolition clause in Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s last will (comprising both Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s wish for the Property to be demolished, and his wishes in the event demolition was not possible), his letter to Cabinet dated 27 December 2011, as well as the renovation/redevelopment plans for the Property which he submitted to the

URA in March 2012, and obtained approval for. Please see the attached documents in Folios 1-3.

- a) Demolition Clause. The Committee noted that the Demolition Clause comprises two parts: the first part clearly sets out Mr Lee Kuan Yew's wish for the building to be demolished, and the second part then specifies his wishes in the event demolition was not possible. In such an event, Mr Lee Kuan Yew did not want the building to be open to the public. The Demolition Clause contemplates more than one outcome, and acknowledges the possibility that demolition may not take place.
- b) Mr Lee Kuan Yew's letter to Cabinet. The letter was Mr Lee Kuan Yew's last formal communication to the Cabinet on the Site, which acknowledges that the Site may be preserved, and his views if that were to happen.
- c) Mr Lee Kuan Yew's plans to renovate/redevelop the Site. The Committee noted that in January 2012, Mr Lee Kuan Yew approved detailed plans to entirely overhaul the interior living areas while retaining the external structure and the basement dining room of the building. The renovation plans appear to have been specifically prepared with conservation requirements in mind. The detailed architectural plans were then approved by Mr Lee Kuan Yew for submission to the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) in March 2012, and were affirmed in April and May 2012 after the URA's approval was obtained.

Having looked at the objective evidence above as well as the views expressed by Mr Lee Kuan Yew's children, the Committee's view is that Mr Lee Kuan Yew's preference was for the building to be demolished, but Mr Lee Kuan Yew was prepared to accept options other than demolition, provided that suitable arrangements were made to ensure that (i) the building was refurbished, and kept in a habitable state; and (ii) the family's privacy was protected.

Options regarding the Site

4. The Report also laid out a range of options available for the Site, and the considerations for each of these options, as drawer plans to help a future government make an informed and considered decision on the Site, as shown in the table below. The Report also acknowledged that there were possible intermediate options for the Property that can be considered, which would be

compatible with Mr Lee’s expressed wishes, and enable future generations to retain the significant historical and heritage value associated with the Site.

Option	(1) Retain the building	(2) Retain the Dining Room and tear down the rest of the building	(3) Allow the building to be demolished fully, and allow redevelopment
Sub-options	a) Gazette and preserve as a National Monument; or b) Gazette for conservation	The Dining Room would be gazetted as a National Monument, and integrated with an alternative use for the site (e.g. park, heritage centre)	a) By the owner for residential use; or b) By the State for alternative use (e.g. park, heritage centre), after acquisition of the site
Remarks	Both sub-options could include further steps to significantly address Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s concerns about privacy (e.g. significant interior renovations of the private spaces, and/or with restricted access).	Even if there is public access to the Dining Room for national education purposes, demolition of the rest of the Property including the private spaces would ensure that the privacy of Mr and Mrs Lee Kuan Yew would be respected.	Sub-option (a) could result in the loss of a historically significant property, and the potential of that history being leveraged for commercial profit.

5. The options listed in the Report are not exhaustive and, depending on the views of the government at that future point in time, allows for other options to be raised for consideration.

Folio 1 – [Demolition Clause](#)

Folio 2 – Annex C2 – [Mr LKY’s Letter to Cabinet](#)

Folio 2 – Annex C3 – [Development Application](#)

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