

# Old City Hall, Penang

(ARCHITECT'S STATEMENT)

► The Old City Hall of Penang is a fine example of admirable British Colonial architecture that still exists in Malaysia. A typical British Palladian architectural style building built in 1903, Old City Hall has been listed since 1982 as a national monument under the Antiquities Act 1976.

**Conservation Processes.** Findings from the dilapidation survey showed numerous problems; signs of leakage, termite infestations, rising damp, salt contamination and organic growth. Consequently, an extensive restoration work was proposed for the Old City Hall in order to rectify these serious building defects.

Apart from identifying defects, studies on existing materials were also conducted. It was discovered that tessellated tiles could be found on the ground floor at the entrance, lobby, lounge and corridor. This information was later used as references for the replacement and repair of these old tiles.

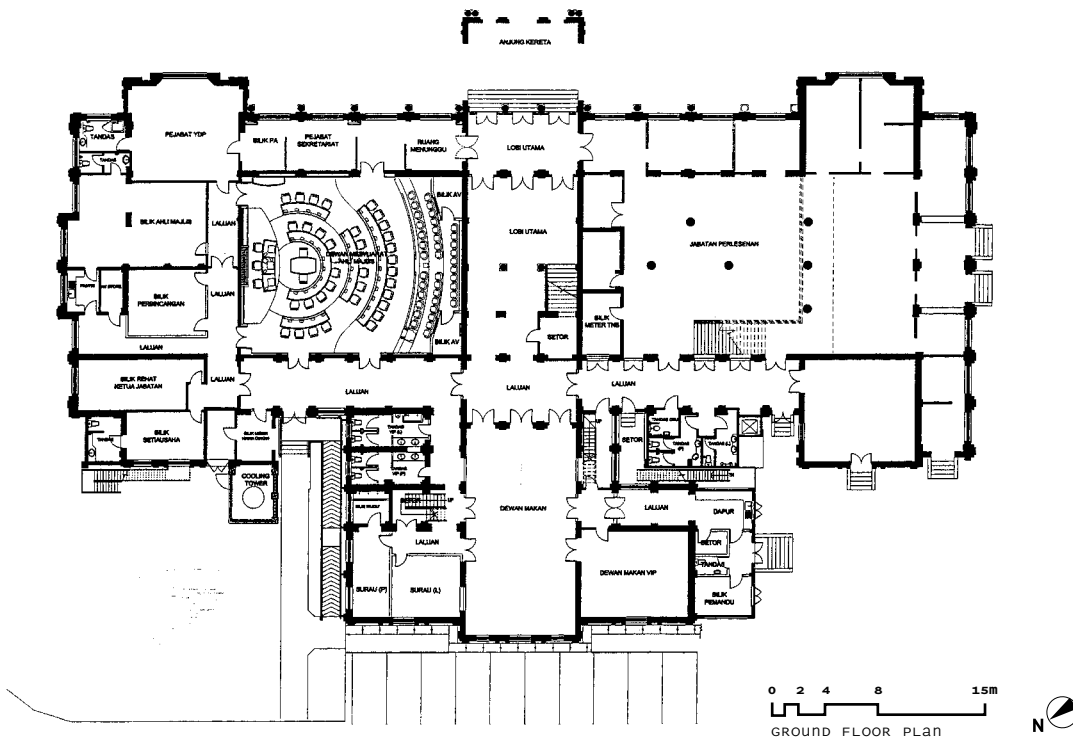
The project also posed a challenge to the consultants in their task of retaining the authentic building structures

and fabric whilst fulfilling the functional requirements of an office environment at the Old City Hall. The concepts of restoration and refurbishment were adopted to enhance the architectural significance of this colonial building. Temporary wall panels were removed from the buildings to regain the originality of the interior, while carpets were removed to expose the original timber floorboards. New tessellated tiles were picked as floor finishes for the main lobby and circulation area to match its original design and colour.

As per the requirement of the building user, the Council Chamber was equipped with state-of-the-art integrated conferencing system which comprised of audio visual equipments, Local Area Networking (LAN) and LCD projectors. All rooms were installed with new lighting fixtures and air-conditioning units. Furniture was carefully selected to suit the Hall's unique architectural style and building ambiance. As the building required a main dining hall to hold certain functions, a room on the ground floor was restored and refurbished for this purpose. The mez-

zanine level that was previously added to the room was later removed to reveal its original ceiling height.

**Conclusion.** The restoration and refurbishment of the Old City Hall had posed great challenges to those directly involved in its conservation. Conducting structural investigations and diagnosing building conditions during the dilapidation survey had required not only inputs from the professionals, but also other specialists and experts to ensure that the building was restored accordingly. The client's requirements, which included interior refurbishments, were carefully carried out with minimum intrusion to the existing structures. It is noteworthy that the approach of adaptive re-use through the combined concepts of restoration and refurbishment has been successfully adopted in the Old City Hall restoration project. It is evident that this approach is viable in retaining the authentic building structures and fabric, while satisfying the functional requirements of an office setting at the Old City Hall. am



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- 1 The restored main lobby looking towards the entrance to the dining hall
- 2 Conceptual computer-generated perspective of the Council Chamber
- 3 The façade of Old City Hall, Penang
- 4 The suspended ceilings were removed to reveal cornices and window arches after restoration

