FLASH

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Aerial view of the terrace housing, with the old housing area as a backdrop.

HOLMESTOWN

A Unique Take on Terrace Housing @ Kuching New Township

by PDC Design Group Sdn. Bhd.

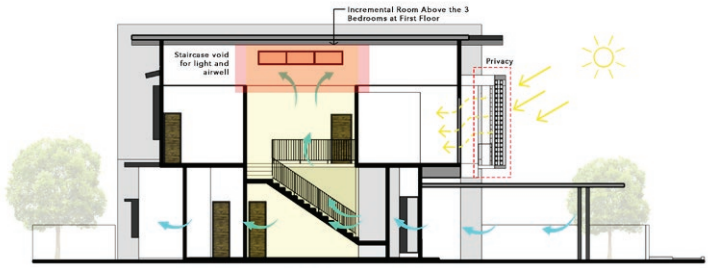
ARCHITECT'S STATEMENT

In the context of mass housing design, blending in with the existing surroundings can be seen as a safer approach. However, for this housing project, we intentionally creating a contrasting environment that offers a fresh, and modern perspective, by breaking away from convention, offering individuality, privacy, and modernity to its residents.

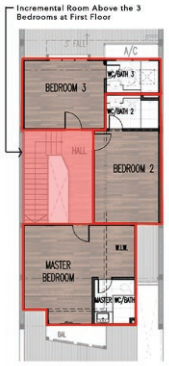
The residence presents a unique aesthetic, featuring a recessed wall design and a front patch of greenery for visual distinction. Embracing an open-plan layout, the design promotes cross-ventilation, while tall ceilings facilitate stack ventilation and abundant daylight. A strategically positioned ventilation block on the facade serves dual purposes of filtering east and west sunlight and optimizing cross ventilation on the first floor. With a focus on affordability, Holmestown harmonizes aesthetic appeal, functionality, and sustainable living in its thoughtfully designed 2-storey terrace houses.

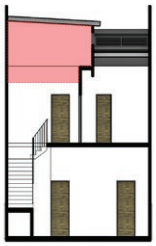
Design Concept

Individuality Redefine & Modern Facade with Purpose



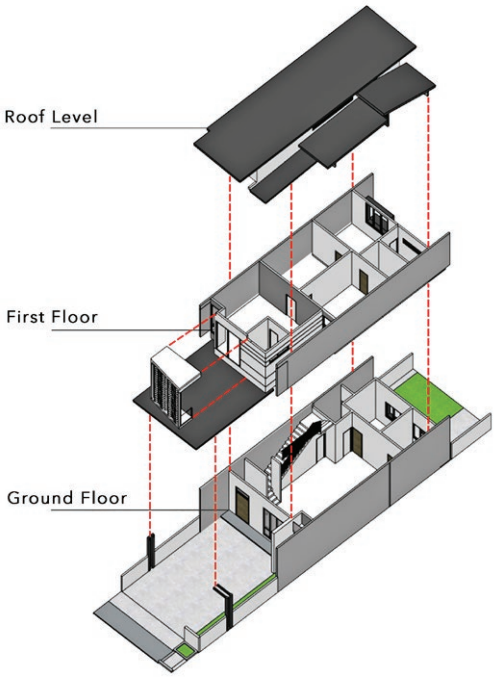
Embracing Light, Space and Sustainability

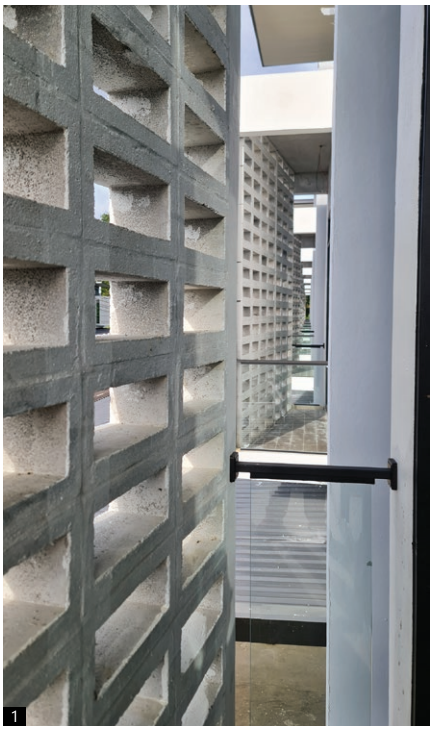




Incremental Room on Upper Level

Exploded Diagram





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The main feature of this development is the deliberate avoidance of mirrored-repetition design. Instead, each unit was crafted to appear as an individual dwelling, akin to a townhouse or super-link, rather than the typical monotonous terrace housing layout. One of the most significant departures from conventional terrace housing is the design's emphasis on high ceilings and abundant natural lighting and ventilation. The double-volume spaces adjacent to the stairways add an element of luxury and spaciousness to each unit, creating an exciting ambiance. The high ceiling spaces in these terrace houses offer more than just a sense of grandeur. They also provide residents with the unique opportunity for expansion by creating an attic floor above. Internally, each bedroom is thoughtfully designed with an attached bathroom. This feature not only enhances convenience but also adds a touch of luxury to everyday living.

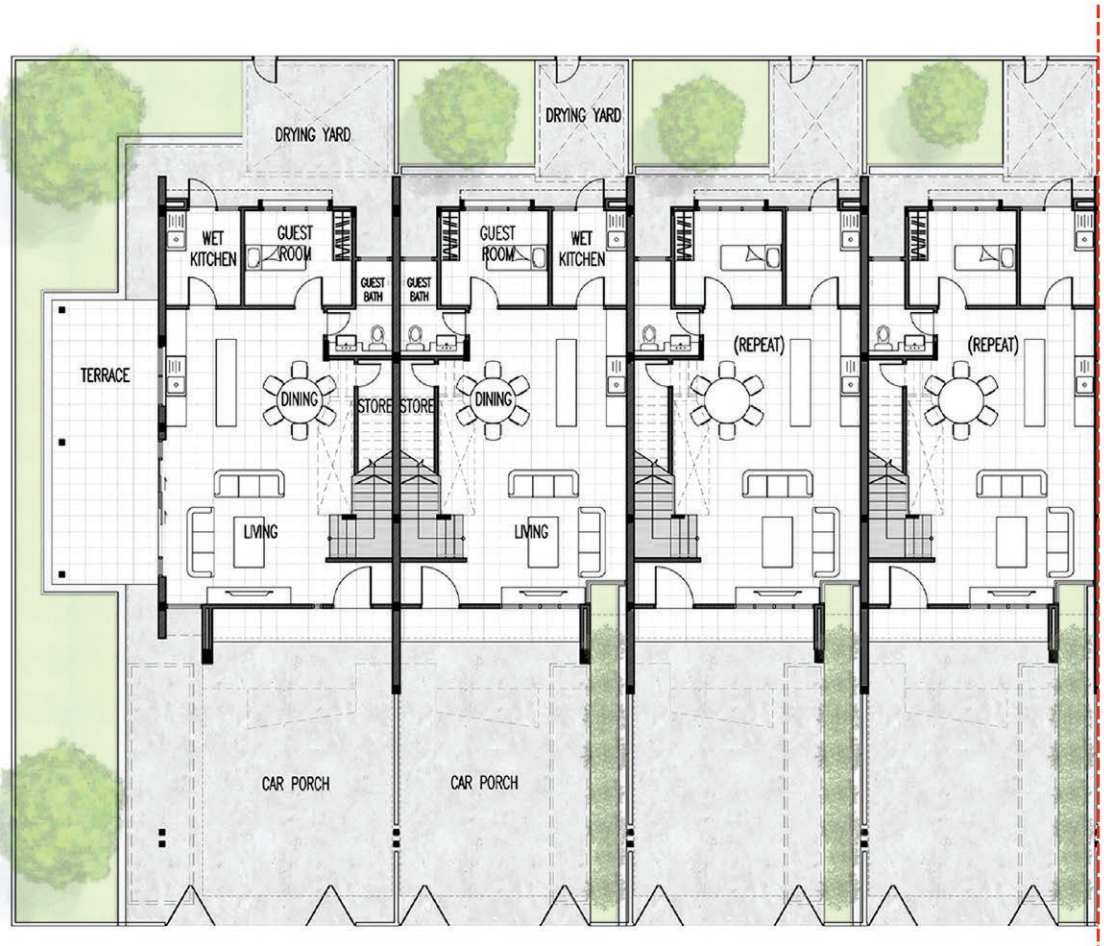
In a world where conformity often takes precedence, this innovative housing development dares to be different. By intentionally contrasting with its surroundings, offering individuality through design, providing privacy with purposeful facades, embracing light and space, and allowing for flexible expansion, it stands as a better example of modern housing design.

Text by Tay Tze Yong

CAPTIONS:

1. *The screen offers privacy, preventing residents from looking into each other's homes. It also shields against the hot sun and adds character to the development.*
2. *A slightly larger void in the staircase area enhances lighting and ventilation for the internal spaces, functioning similarly to an air well.*
3. *Each unit was crafted to appear as an individual dwelling, akin to a townhouse or super-link, rather than the typical monotonous terrace housing layout.*

Floor Plan



GROUND FLOOR PLAN
Scale: N.T.S.

FIRST FLOOR PLAN
Scale: N.T.S.

CAPTIONS:

4. *This design stands out by blending contrast, individuality, privacy, light, space, and flexibility, making it a better example of modern terrace housing within its surrounding context.*
5. *The housing project, situated in a new residential area adjacent to the old suburban housing of Kuching, is designed to contrast with its surroundings. This approach aims to establish a distinct identity for the new housing area.*
6. *The corner unit is designed to appear as a standalone, individual entity.*
7. *The internal space is bathed in natural light and achieves cross ventilation through the staircase well, extending up to the upper roof.*

Client	:	**LT Homes Development Sdn. Bhd.**
Architect	:	**PDC Design Group Sdn. Bhd.**
C&S Engineer	:	**Perunding K.S.L**
M&E Engineer	:	**Alpha Beta JP Sdn. Bhd.**
Contractor	:	**Kin Cuan Sen Construction Sdn. Bhd.**
Photographer	:	**PDC Design Group Sdn. Bhd.**

SEKOLAH MENENGAH PENDIDIKAN KHAS VOKASIONAL PADAWAN

Designed by HR LO Architect

ARCHITECT'S STATEMENT

Project Background

SMPKV (Sekolah Menengah Pendidikan Khas Vokasional) Padawan is a remarkable undertaking as the first vocational school for People With Disabilities (PWD) in Borneo. The design of this school carries the crucial responsibility of adhering to the universal design code of practice, with a primary focus on ensuring accessibility for all.

SMPKV Padawan serves as a boarding school, offering a range of 7 courses, including Pembuatan Pakaian Wanita (Women's Clothing Production), Desktop Publishing, Dandanan Rambut (Hairdressing), Operasi Pengemasan (Housekeeping Operations), Operasi Perkhidmatan Dobi (Laundry Services Operations), Refleksologi Kaki, Tangan dan Telinga (Foot, Hand, and Ear Reflexology), and Penyediaan dan Pembuatan Makanan (Food Preparation and Production) to Form 4 and Form 5 students with National Occupational Skills Standards (NOSS) Accreditation.

The school accommodates students across six categories of special needs, comprising people with visual impairments, hearing impairments, speech impairments, mobility impairments, cognitive/learning impairments, and a variety of impairments.

Design Concept

"On a dark desert highway, cool wind in my hair, (Touch)

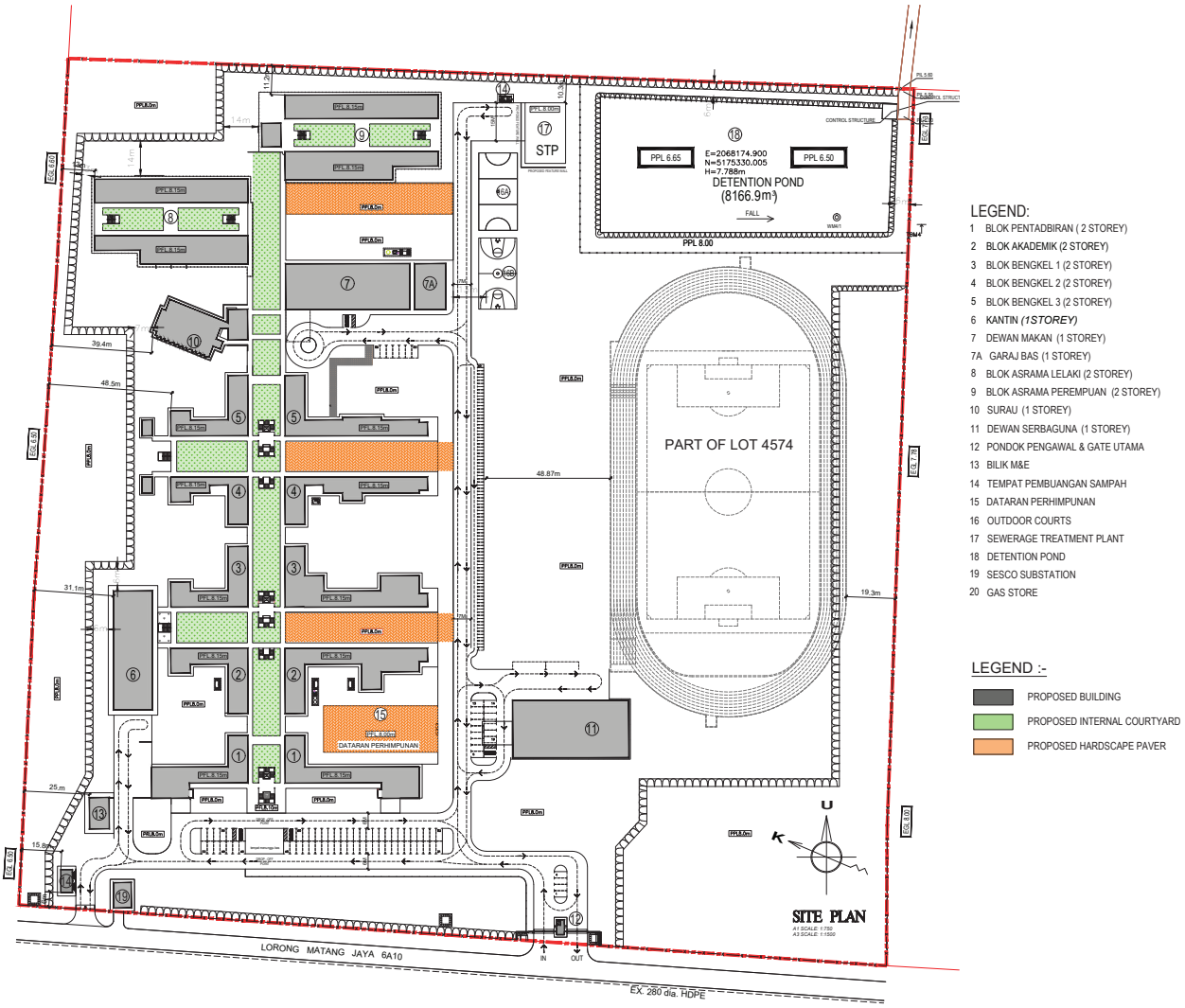
Warm smell of colitas, rising up through the air, (Smell and Taste)

Up ahead in a distance, I saw shimmering light, (Sight)

.....

There were voices down the corridor, (Hear)"

The inspiration for our design concept emerged when the timeless song "Hotel California" played on our shuffled playlist. We seized upon the idea of enriching the exploration of the five senses as one journeys through the school. Our design intention aims to transform negative circulation spaces into a sensory voyage.



The Axis: A Guiding Beacon

Wayfinding serves as the underlying principle in the overall planning for PWD students. Departing from the typical clustering of blocks with different functions, we devised a breakthrough spatial arrangement approach that employs sequential spaces. The Ruai Axis acts as a covered walkway integrated with courtyard spaces, interconnecting all the different blocks. As students arrive at the school, the Ruai Axis guides them through administrative blocks, academic blocks, "bengkel" (workshop) blocks, and finally leads them to the hostels. This linear axis reduces the need for excessive turns between different areas.

The axis named after Ruai, Borneo traditional tribal vernacular architecture of communal space, ambit to maximise the frequency of informal meetings, and venue for formal occasion. "*Ruai*" as horizontal-vertical Intersection between Different "*Bengkel*" Blocks: The concept of "*Ruai*," a covered walkway and courtyard space, serves as a vital intersection point between different "Bengkel" blocks. This design element creates a dynamic and interconnected environment, encouraging interaction and collaboration among students and faculty members from various vocational disciplines.

Courtyards are designed along the Ruai Axis to create pocket of spaces for gardens and concourses offer diverse senses as one walks through. These courtyards are metaphorically a giant canvas, painted with Braille Codes in the form of landscape. Although the Braille Code need not to be visible to the public eyes, it does offer an interesting story secretly lying within the Architecture.

Arrival Point (Public Zone): Embracing Grandeur

At the Arrival Point, careful attention has been given to create a welcoming and accessible space for students, staff, and visitors. The design incorporates several key elements to ensure a smooth and convenient experience.

The Marking of Trees: A significant trees serves as a symbolic landmark, anchoring the arrival area, making a bold statement through the integration of landscape design. Here, the landscape trees are thoughtfully placed to create a striking architectural entrance that immediately sets the tone for the entire campus. This visual spectacle ensures that visitors and newcomers feel welcomed and inspired from their very first steps. These trees not only provide shade and beauty but also acts as a visual cue, helping individuals orient themselves within the space.

Double Drop Off Design: To facilitate efficient drop-off and pick-up, the Arrival Point features a thoughtfully designed double drop-off system. This design consideration ensures that vehicles can maneuver easily and safely, minimizing congestion and promoting smooth traffic flow. Aside from its functionality, the drop off being the starting point, gives a strong entrance statement.

The Commas (Interim Point): Pausing for Interaction

The Commas, within the school are crucial areas where students, staff, and visitors can pause and engage in activities. These spaces have been thoughtfully designed to provide a sense of respite while maintaining connectivity within the overall circulation system.

The Commas serve as transitional zones where different functional blocks intersect, signalling changes in direction within the campus. In this intermediate space, we introduce a Braille-inspired concrete bench design as a continuity of the Braille Code, but different architectural texture. These benches serve not only as functional seating but to engage more interaction dialogue for individuals on diverse journeys.

The Serenity Point (Private Zone): A Gateway to Tranquility

The Serenity Point marks the gateway to the school's private zone, housing the hostels. The Serenity Point represents a private zone within the school, dedicated to providing a peaceful and reflective atmosphere. This area is designed to offer students a moment of tranquillity and relaxation, away from the busier communal spaces. This serves as a tranquil intersection to the sacred prayer hall, relaxing dining hall, and hostels.

Huge Planter Box with a Big Tree is placed at the point of transition, where the elevated ground of Planter Box not only serves as a means of demarcation but also creates a subtle shift in the physical environment, signalling a change in ambiance along the axis. The elevated ground within the planter boxes adds a sense of elevation and interest, inviting individuals to explore and engage with the surroundings, a venue where students gather around under the big tree.

Surau.

Concourse in between the bengkel blocks.

The Serenity Point serves as a vital hub, connecting various student facilities within its tranquil surroundings. These facilities include the Surau (prayer room), Dewan Makan (dining hall), and the Male and Female Hostels. By placing these essential amenities within close proximity, the design promotes convenience and fosters a sense of community, enabling students to access necessary services with ease.

The design of SMPKV Padawan embodies a commitment to inclusivity, accessibility, and innovation. By integrating elements inspired by the sensory journey, the school provides not just a space for education but a holistic environment where students of diverse abilities can thrive. From the guiding Ruai Axis to the tranquil Serenity Point, every aspect of the campus is carefully crafted to facilitate learning, interaction, and personal growth. As the first vocational school for People With Disabilities in Borneo, SMPKV Padawan ambit to be the benchmark for inclusive education, paving the way for a more equitable and empowering future for all.

END

Location	:	Padawan, Kuching, Sarawak	Date of Completion	:	January 2025
Client	:	Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia	Site Area	:	27 acres
Project Director	:	Pengarah Pembinaan Pasukan Projek Khas 2, JKR, Malaysia	Main Contractor	:	Himpun Daya Sdn. Bhd.
			C&S Engineer	:	TKY Consultants Sdn. Bhd.
Principal Use	:	Vocational School	M&E Engineer	:	Konsortium Bumi Consultants & Services Sdn. Bhd.
Design Architect	:	Ar. Lo Horng Rong & Mr. Lim Terk Chyang	Quantity Surveyor	:	Perunding Ukur Bahan PS
Submitting Architect	:	Konsortium Bumi Consultants & Services Sdn. Bhd.	ICT Engineer	:	Info Wings Sdn. Bhd.

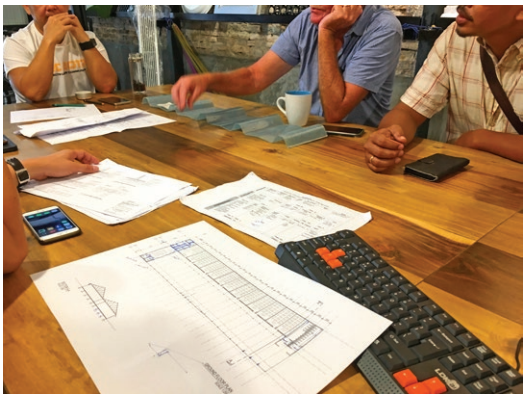
DARI BALAI KARANGAN KE TAWANGMANGU (BUILDING ON FAITH)

This is a series of events which led our office to design and build a series of classrooms in Indonesia - first in Balai Karangan, Kalimantan and then in Tawangmangu, near Surakarta, Java. This is a story worth telling because it describes a journey of faith; our client's faith in us to provide design ideas and plans, and in their community to provide funding and construction labour.

Our client is Sam and Carol Soukotta, they are the founders of Mount Hope, which is a kindergarten, school, and boarding school in Balai Karangan, Kalimantan, they are also the directors of the Tawangmangu Bible School in Central Java (founded by Carol's parents, Dal and Dorothy Walker).

THE SCHOOL PROJECT

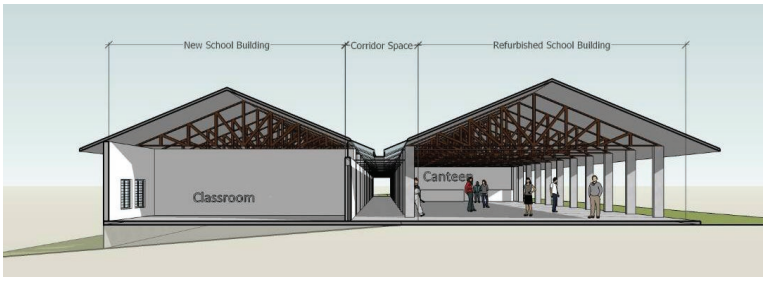
April 2017
Our last few meetings with Toni and Craig have been fruitful; they are our points of contact with the school in Kalimantan. I believe we have a working scheme for the Mount Hope primary school extension. We will go to site over the Gawai holidays to dig the pad footings for the new classrooms, and organise games and events for the children. I briefed our group of volunteers, about 12 of them, and decide to make a simple cardboard model to Sam and Carol, who were visiting the school.



"We'll get back to you when we've solved the grids - actually, I think our current spacing still works..."
Design meeting with Toni Ponco who coordinates the material procurement, while Craig Pilcher from New Zealand oversees construction on site.

June 2017
We leave Kuching after breakfast and arrive just before lunch – after a round of introductions and lunch, I had the opportunity to brief Sam and Carol about the classroom extension when they drop by to say hello to the volunteers. They seem to understand what we're aiming to do, and Carol tells me they'll be in touch to ask for help designing their Bible College in Central Java. I laugh it off (though they seem quite serious about it) and return to my lunch.

We spend the rest of the afternoon digging under the existing primary school building, for new pad footings – the existing timber columns are rotting away and these will be replaced with new concrete ones. The roof structure is retained while the existing timber floor would become the form-work for the new concrete floor.

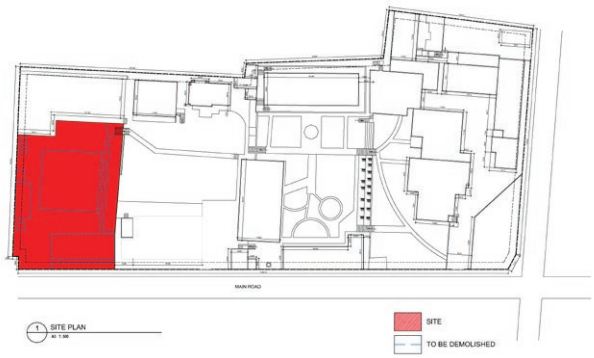


"we will keep going as long as there is money - we are building on faith, mate".
We are in constant contact with Craig who brief us about site progress. They have volunteers to help with the construction, the parents of some children work on site in lieu of school fees.

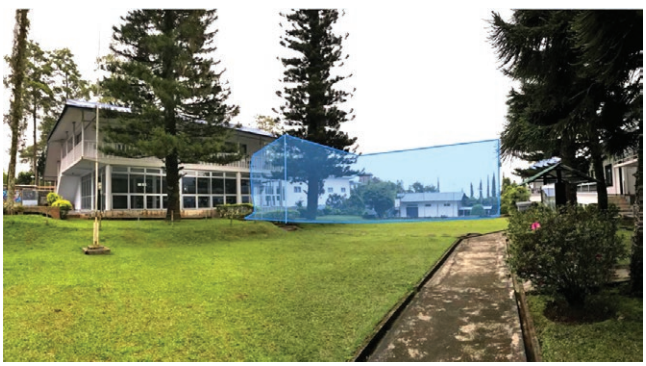
"This is good; maybe you could do our university extension next."

THE COLLEGE PROJECT

True to her word, Carol rings us and asks if we are able to design an extension to the Bible College in Tawangmangu. We accept and a few weeks later, she invites us to visit the college to present our scheme to the School Board.



We did not have drawings of the site, so we had to measure the site and its surroundings.



The new building was to fill up the lower corner of the campus, and link up with the adjacent blocks

They invite us to their home for dinner and tell us that a local architect will be presenting their scheme as well tomorrow and they can't wait to see our proposal. We finish our dinner and dessert a little quicker, and work through until the early morning.

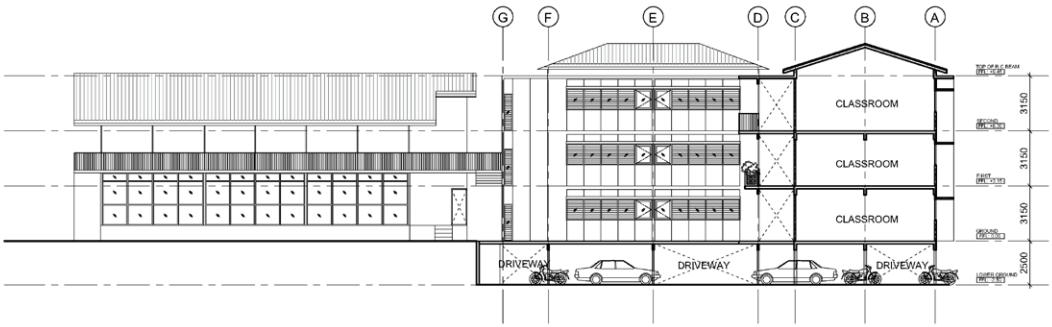
Much later that night - GW: "Add in some more coniferous trees. L: [quietly] "I'm... not sure what those are."

7 a.m. the next morning - Carol comes knocking "how is it coming along?"

10 a.m. that morning - the local architect presents two schemes versus our one.
Sam voices his support for our scheme "God spoke to me... "

The presentation went well for us, the school favoured our simple functional approach to design. Over lunch, we worked out the implementation programme. The local architect would assist in the submission to authorities and coordinate with the local builder. Communication was sporadic, there is often no communication as we got busy with our work and university assignments.

And then one day, about 18 months later - the college extension is completed.



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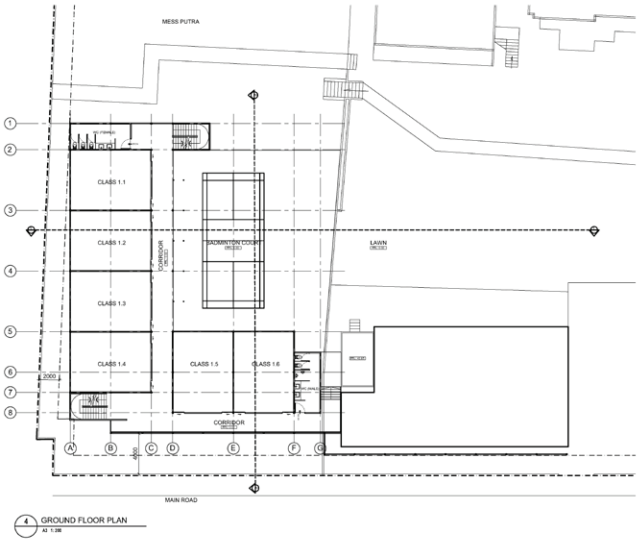

4 GROUND FLOOR PLAN

In hindsight, it is a simple project - 3-storeys with a sub basement with only essential details to simplify the communication between us and the local team, and to reduce unnecessary cost. It did not earn us any fees, but taught us a wealth of lessons about community, responsibility and commitment. And it allowed us to leave a physical legacy in the form of two buildings in Indonesia.

Text by Sean Wee
Building design by GW Leong, Min, Sean Wee and Lionel Kueh.