

77 BENCOOLEN STREET

Integrated Contrast



Owner:

Harvey Norman Yoogalu Pty Ltd
Bencoolen Properties Pte Ltd

Architect:

WOHA Architects Pte Ltd

Engineer:

Beca Carter Hollings & Ferner (SEA) Pte Ltd

Contractor:

Shanghai Chong Kee Furniture & Construction Pte Ltd

Although pre-war buildings were once ubiquitous along the bustling Bencoolen Street, the two units of double-storey shophouses (Units 71 & 73) and bungalow villa (Unit 81) were the last of their kind on the street. The project team has taken a bold approach to conserving these heritage buildings. By sensitively restoring the facades, opening up the interior spaces and introducing a new 21st Century 'glass house' infill, they have updated the old buildings respectfully to meet their modern purpose as a singularly stunning, and commercially attractive upmarket gallery for premium furniture.



Interplay of heritage buildings and contemporary architecture

Enlivening The Old

Good historical research and documentation effort helped to uncover the original nature and internal forms of the heritage buildings which had undergone myriads of insensitive modifications over the years. Stripped-off original fenestrations and decorative elements on the façade of Unit 71 were meticulously reinstated. Ornate moulding details on the external walls of the conserved Unit 81 bungalow as well as its timber windows, louvres and fanlights were skilfully repaired or reinstated based on photographic records. Also deserving special mention is the immaculate restoration of the bungalow's soaring roof. With the attic removed and existing jackroof exposed, the timber trusses which aligned with the original masonry structures create a breathtaking interior volume that shouts 'stately heritage home'.

Liberating Interior Spaces

The interior spaces were cleverly reinvented for adaptive reuse. Internal walls between Units 71 & 73 were removed and openings in the party wall to Unit 77 were created. Sweeping column-free spaces between the shophouse units and the new glass house infill were clearly delineated where the original barriers used to be. As a whole, the open-plan configuration fulfills the space-intensive requirements of the

furniture gallery while the character of the conserved buildings has been sensitively preserved. The symmetrical alignments of the two hanging attics in Unit 71, and the spectacular exposed pitched roof concept is visionary. The resultant interplay of old structures and contemporary architectural techniques excites the senses and invigorates the interior environment.

A Glass Act

The decision to insert a contrasting infill glass building at the site of Unit 77 using the structural frame of an earlier building was a bold proposition well executed. It creates valuable functional space for the development's new use while its transparent appearance and setback from the conserved shophouses form an interesting and distinctive urban corner with a tiling pattern that provides a visual continuity between the development's external and internal spaces.

The finished product sets a precedent for good quality restoration that helps old souls find new relevance within the hip urban arts and entertainment epicentre of Singapore's Bugis district.



Distinctive urban corner with tiling pattern as visual continuity



Contrasting infill glass building uses structural frame of earlier building



Pitched roof of shophouses accentuated by symmetrically aligned hanging attics



Reflection of old bungalow on new glass façade enhances heritage ambience



Casement windows of shophouses



Exposed timber trusses in bungalow's soaring roof



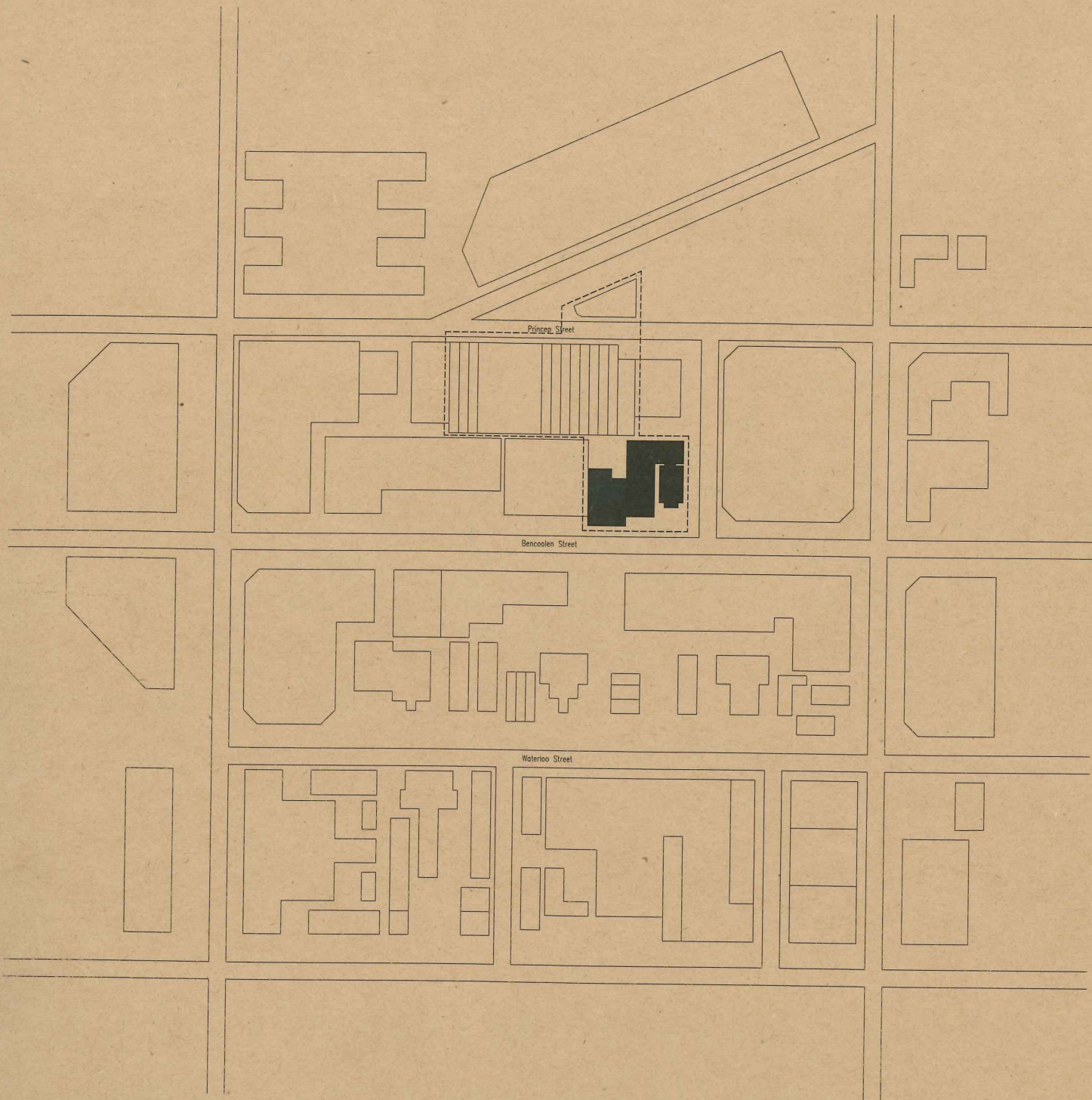
Naturally lit outdoor space with lush green wall at rear courtyard



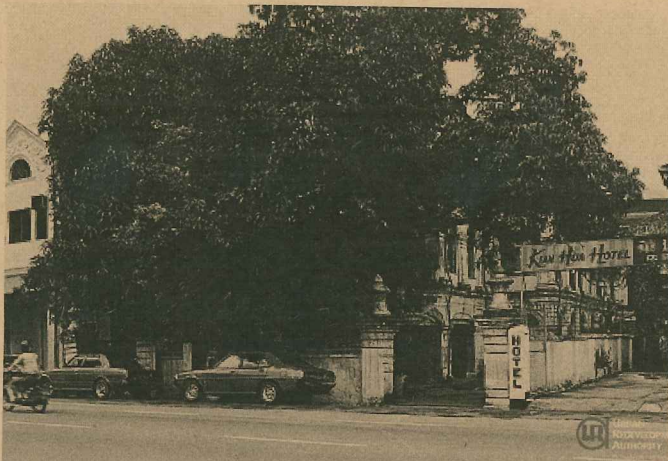
Bencoolen Street attained its name in memory of Sir Stamford Raffles' position as Lieutenant Governor of Bencoolen, Sumatra in 1818, and was typically referred by the Chinese as *chai tng au* in the pre-war days, which means "behind the vegetarian hall", as there was a Chinese vegetarian guild located in the area.

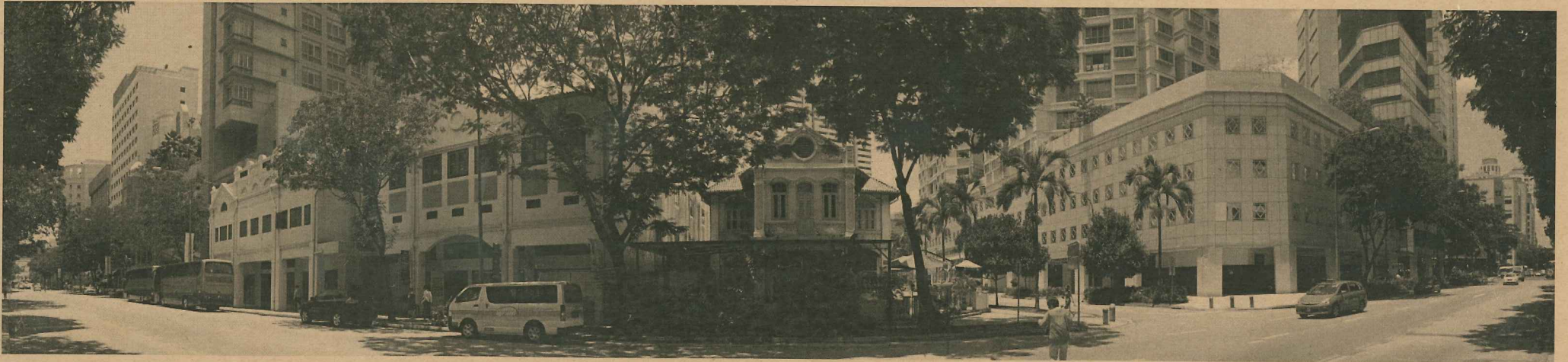
Bencoolen Street was also a part of the greater settlement area called Kampong Bencoolen where a great majority of the early Bencoolen Malays resided. As such, the busy thoroughfare was lined with densely packed shophouses and a few villas as shown in the historical aerial photo of the Bras Basah area where Bencoolen Street runs.

Left: Archival image of Bras Basah in the 1950s showing No. 71, 77 and 81 outlined in red.

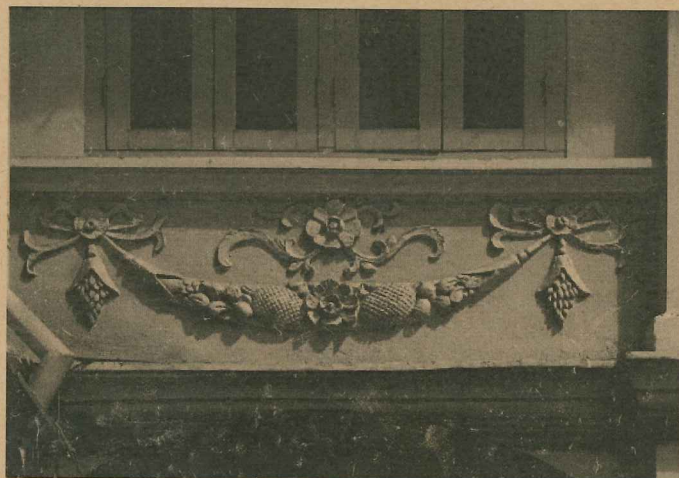


The conservation development of No. 71, 77 and 81 Bencoolen Street sits within the gazetted conservation district of Cheang Jim Chwan Place which encompasses a collection of traditional shophouses surrounded by dense high-rise buildings in the Arts, Entertainment & Education District of Rochor/Bugis, Singapore.





Originally part of a large collection of pre-war shophouses and bungalow villas lining busy Bencoolen Street, No. 71, 77 and 81 were isolated and remain the only heritage structures along the street amidst a heterogeneous context of tall buildings.



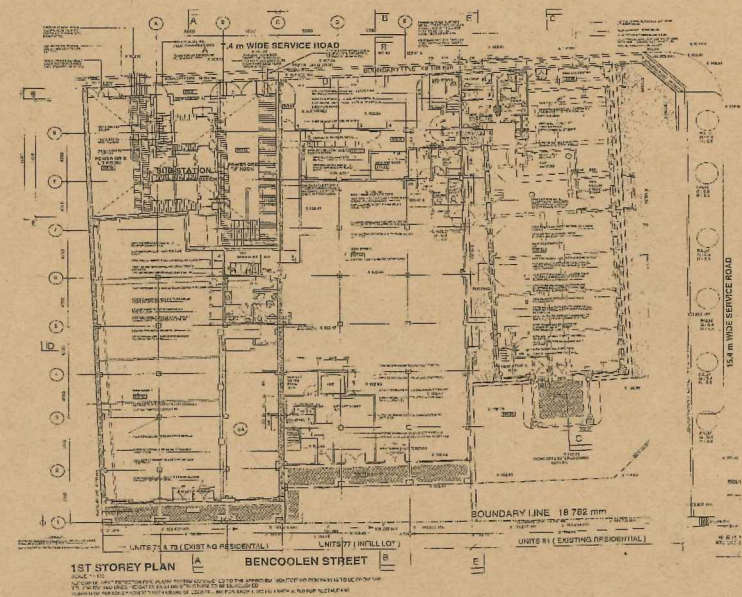
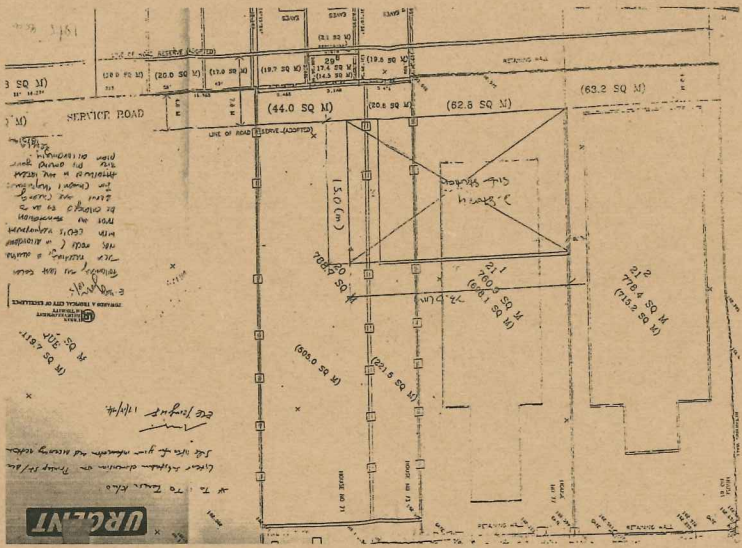
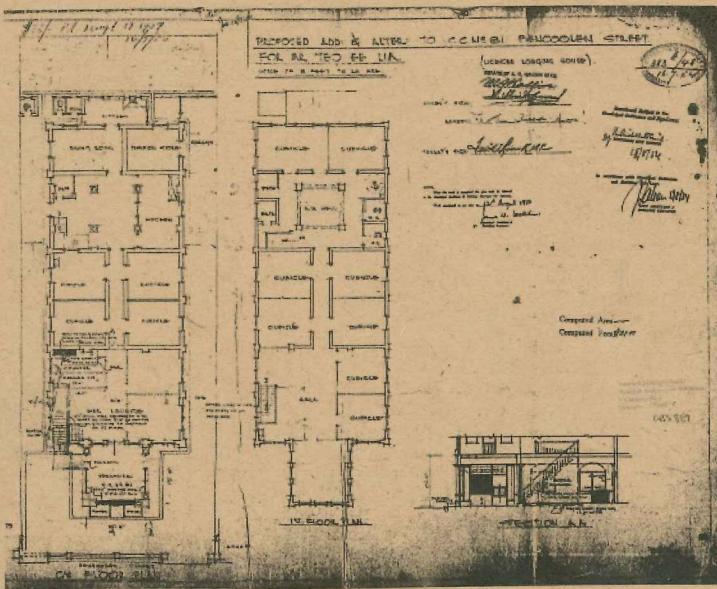
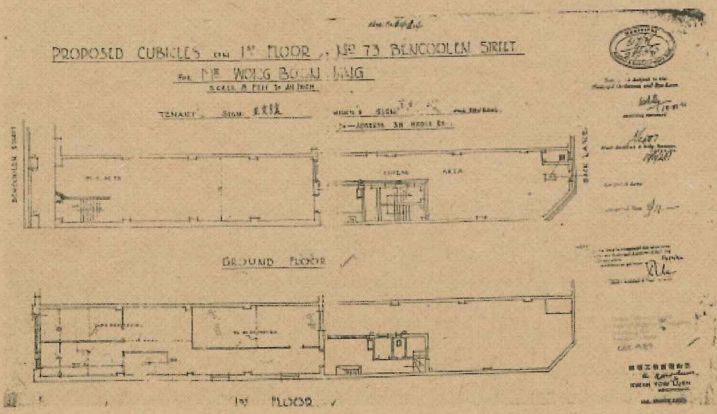
The shophouse and villa are extravagant in form and expressively decorated with an eclectic mixture of Colonial, Chinese, and Malay elements.

The Colonial influence is expressed in the louvered timber shutters brought by the British via India; the French windows used in the upper floors; as well as in the use of fanlights and plasterworks. Also recognised are the application of Portugese *jalousie* where shuttered windows with slats sloping upwards from outside are framed by repeated use of certain ornamentation and details like the Corinthian pilasters on the upper storey, as well as Doric ordered columns rising from the ground up for decoration and support. The triangular pediments with moulded dentils and relief mouldings of fruits, flowers and English roses also give added definition to the building facades and increased not only the building's appearance of grandeur but is also a physical extension of the owner's social standing and aspirations.



The open rear courtyard plan of the house for communal space and outdoor activities can be referenced to Chinese influence. Other Chinese features include the rounded gabled ends of the pitched roofs and fan-shaped air vents above the windows.

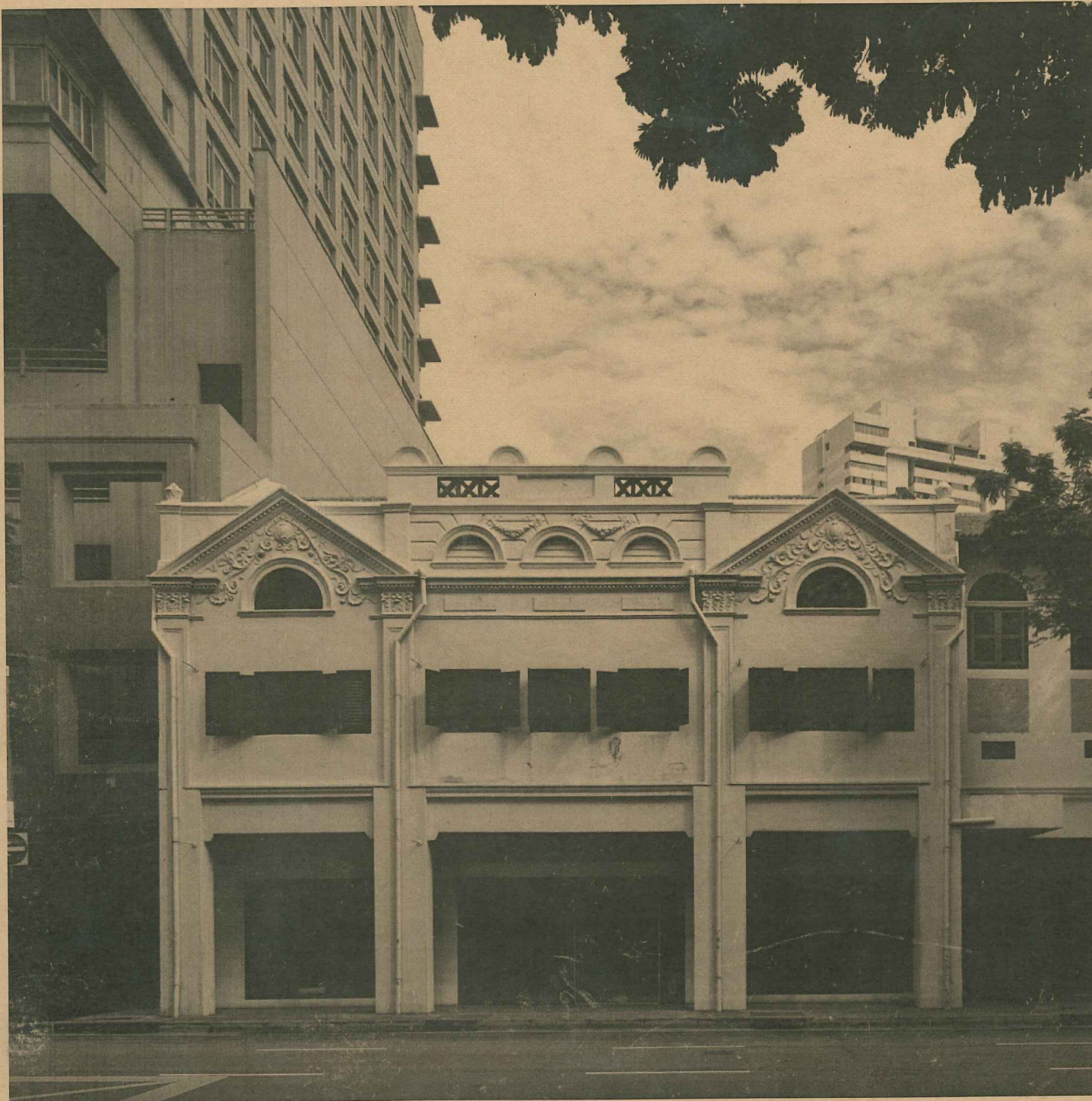
The Malay influence comes in the form of timber fretwork for the balustrades as well as the eaves and fascia boards.



In the cycles of adaptive re-use to meet the demands at the time, No. 71, 77 and 81 were transformed from their original spatial layout.

No. 71 once comprised 2 shophouse units that were built in the early shophouse style with large rear air wells or courtyards that were separated by party walls with single span timber beam construction. No. 81 was a bungalow villa that was subsequently converted into a hotel in the early 1950s while No. 77 also a bungalow villa was demolished in the early years of the 1990s.

The subsequent redevelopment in 1996 that grouped No. 71, 77 and 81 together as a single development shows substantial deviation from the original character and nature of these heritage buildings.



No. 71 and its sister shophouse No. 73 were amalgamated with its internal structure and separation party wall was removed. New concrete structures were inserted to incorporate attic floors at the upper levels. A substation was inserted behind No. 71 that occupied the rear air-well of which only a small remnant courtyard remained that was subsequently sealed to expand internal commercial space.



No. 77 was formerly a bungalow villa similar to No. 81 which was demolished and redeveloped as a 4-storey commercial building in 1996. The internal floor plates had to be vertically squeezed within the height profile of adjacent No 71. The long and deep rooms with low ceiling meant that internal spaces were dim and claustrophobic. Its external facade was dictated to mimic the facade of No. 71.



No 81 suffered from its original conversion into a hotel with a front concrete staircase distorting the spatial symmetry at the main entrance to the bungalow. An attic was added in the later redevelopment which sealed off the high pitched roof of the villa.

Recd: Fei Shu [Signature]

PROPOSED CUBICLES ON 1ST FLOOR AT NO 73 BENCOOLEN STREET.

FOR MR. WONG BOON JANG

SCALE 8 FEET TO AN INCH

TENANT SIGN: 王文讓

OWNER'S SIGN: 翁錫榮 WONG SIEW KENG

ADDRESS: 38 MIDDLE RD.



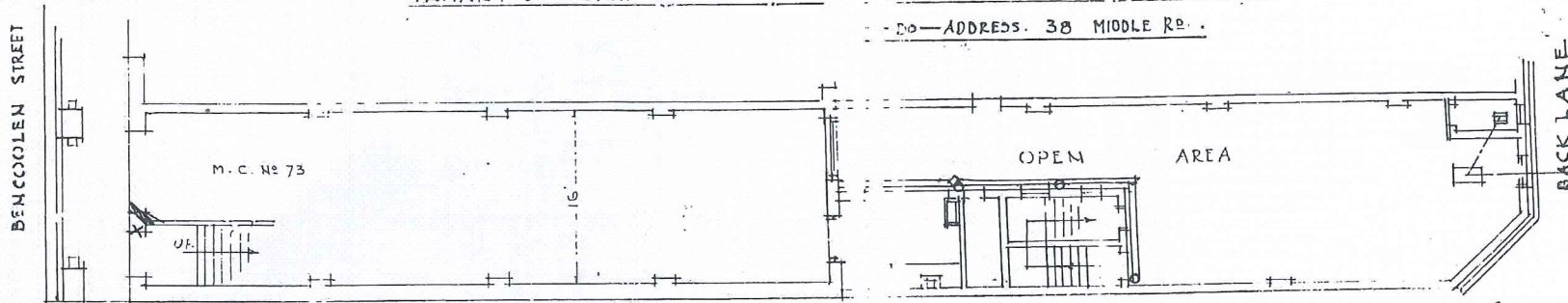
Subject to the Municipal Ordinance and By-Laws.

[Signature] 19-11-44
MUNICIPAL PRESIDENT

[Signature] Scott
Mun: Architect & Bldg. Surveyor.
19/1/52

Computed Area

Computed Fees \$41.-



GROUND FLOOR ✓

When the work is completed this plan must be submitted to the Municipal Architect & Building Surveyor for signature.
Completed as per plan 16/1/46

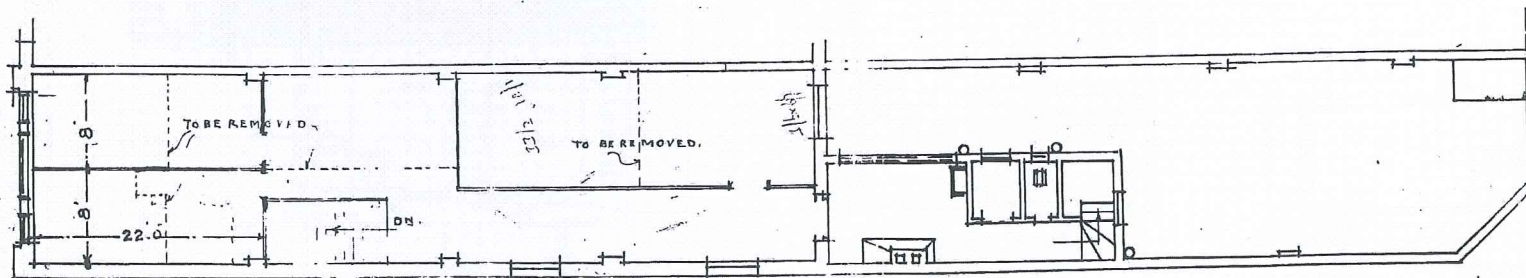
[Signature]
Mun: Architect & Bldg. Surveyor

National Heritage Board
National Archives of Singapore
1 Canaling Rise
Singapore 179868

CBS-989

師程工繪測製由
[Signature]
KWAN YOW LUEN
ARCHITECT.

16-A, CHANGI ALLEY



1ST FLOOR ✓

PROPOSED ADDITIONS AND ALTERATIONS TO M.C. NO 81 BENCOOLEN ST.
FOR MR. TEO EE LIM. (FOR LODGING HOUSE.)

SCALE 0 FEET TO AN INCH

SWORN BY A. H. KRANAN DEEN

[Signature]
Municipal Engineer



OWNER'S SIGNATURE

OWNER'S ADDRESS

39 Patterson Road

PLANNING SIGNATURE

[Signature]

Sanctioned Subject to the
Municipal Ordinance and Bye-Laws.

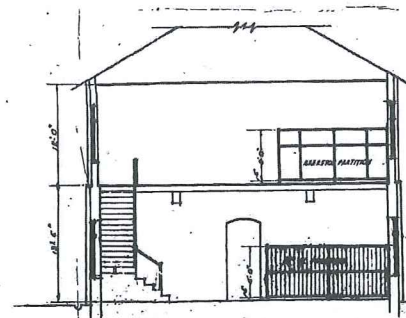
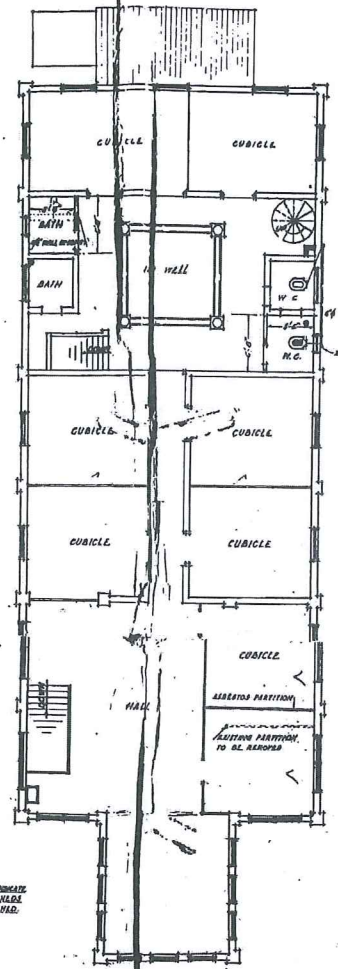
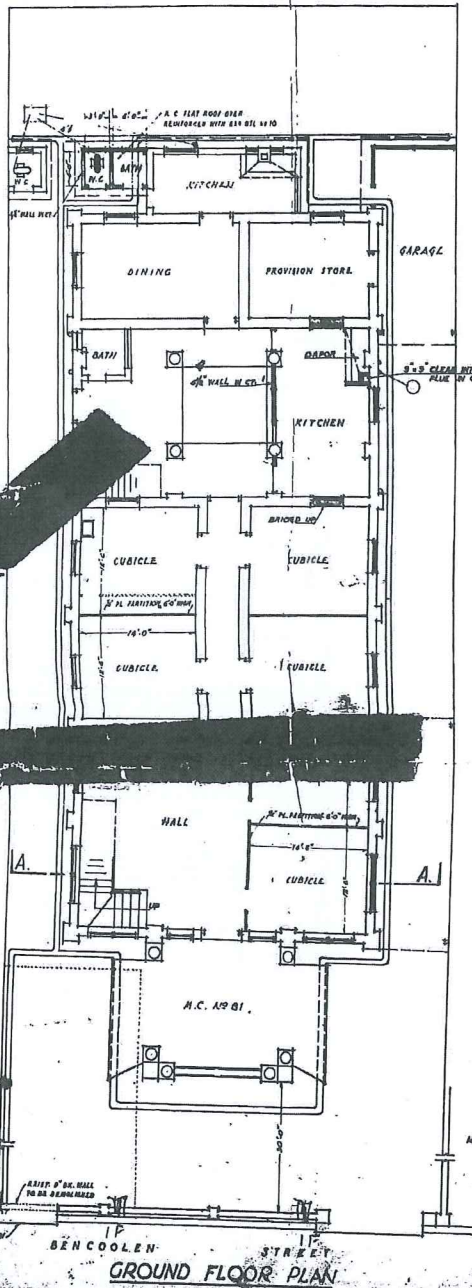
NOTE
When the work in accordance with this plan shall be
completed the Municipal Engineer is to be notified
for inspection.
Work completed at cost of \$1000.00

Municipal Engineer &
Building Surveyor

Computed Area

Computed Price \$1800.00

MUNICIPAL ARCHITECT &
BUILDING SURVEYOR
20/7/49



Board of Singapore
Singapore
Singapore

CBS 889

#25/ Ptd. Receipt SF 3907
16/7/54

PROPOSED ADD. & ALTER. TO C.C. NO. 81 PANCOOLEN STREET.

FOR MR. TED EE LIM.

SCALE OF 8 FEET TO AN INCH.

(LICENCED LODGING HOUSE)

ESTATE OF A. H. IBRAHIM DEC'D.
Mohammed
Abdullah



OWNER'S SIGN: *Mohammed Abdullah*

ADDRESS: *To the Police House*

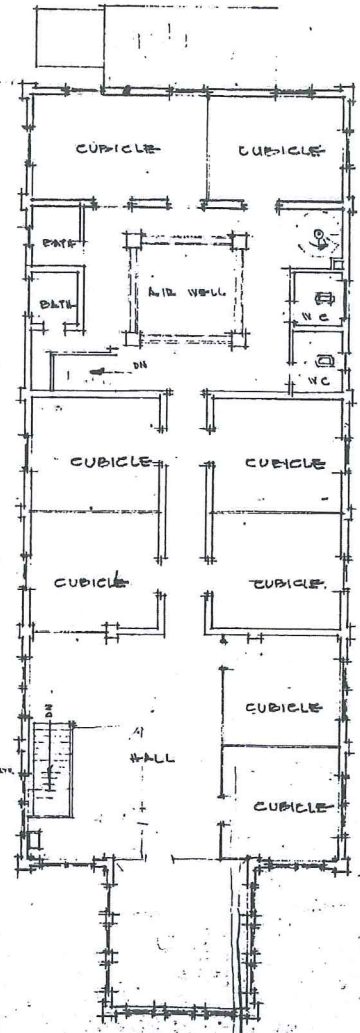
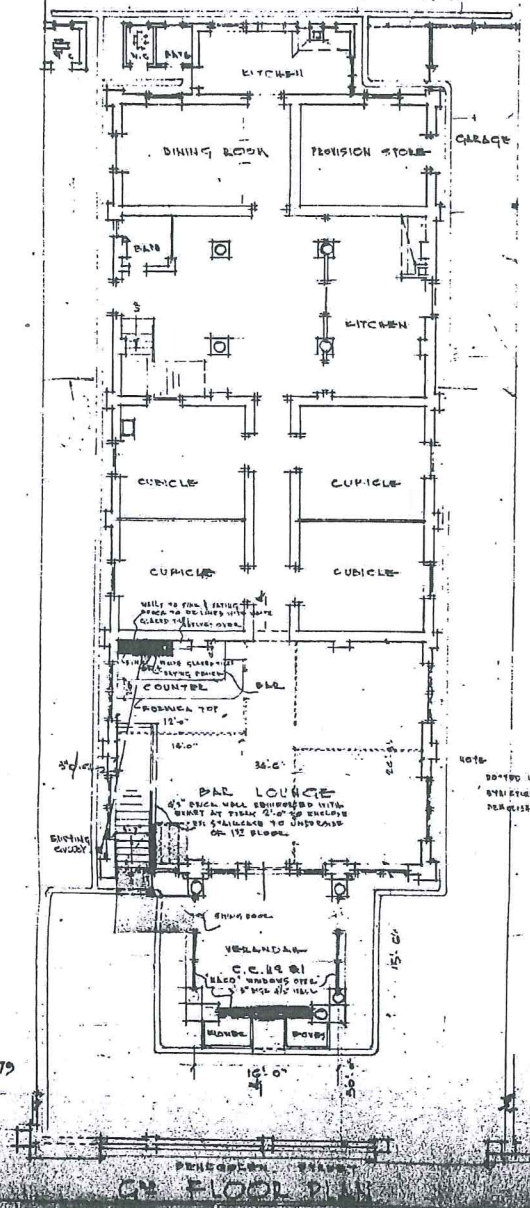
TENANT'S SIGN: *Szeifank MC*

Sanctioned Subject to the Municipal Ordinances and By-Laws

Mohammed Abdullah
MUNICIPAL ENGINEER
15/8/54

NOTE:
When this work is completed the plan must be returned to the Municipal Architects & Building Surveyor for inspection.
Work completed as per plan on 16/7/54
James N. Lockhart
Municipal Architect & Building Surveyor

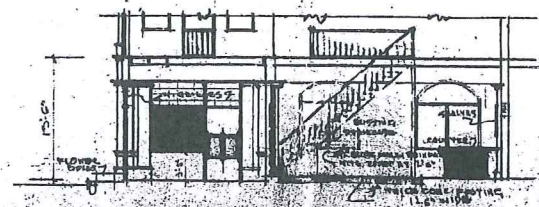
In accordance with Municipal Ordinances and Building By-Laws
James N. Lockhart
MUNICIPAL ARCHITECT & BUILDING SURVEYOR



Computed Area
Computed Fees \$21.00

National Heritage Board
National Archives of Singapore
1 Canting Rise
Singapore 179868

CBS 887



SECTION A-A