

Taiping Heritage Town: British Colonial Legacy Landscape Master Plan

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Abstract:

British Colonization period in the 19th century made Taiping the first tin mining and capital town of Malaysia, previously known as British Malaya. Taiping's possession of a wealth of historical buildings, structures and sites provide tangible evidence of the unique and intricate history and culture formed over the past centuries. Today, Taiping's British Colonial legacy not only form the town's urban historic landscape but also relents a 'sense of place' to the town. Taiping Local Authority wanted to ensure that this heritage can be continuously enjoyed, sustained and maintained by commissioning Taiping's Heritage study, encompassing both its natural and cultural heritage. The purpose of the study was to formulate and propose Taiping's Heritage Town Landscape Master Plan. The Master Plan is to become a multifaceted conservation strategy to address the major conservation issues. It is to be a policy document intended to guide

and coordinate conservation activity in Taiping. Conserving the Taiping of the past as a part of the Taiping of the future will be a vital component of the town's development in the years to come. The conservation and enhancement of Taiping's heritage resources can and will continue to significantly contribute to the town's economic revitalization, cultural and tourism opportunities, image, and quality of life. A comprehensive inventory, overlays, assessment and planning of Taiping's heritage resources was carried out as part of the processes in preparing the Master Plan. The potentials, constraints and threats existing in the town's urban landscape were identified and analysed. This paper discusses the processes of the study and its outcome, a document to guide and coordinate Taiping's heritage landscape activity and establish a framework for decision-making. It outlines procedures for heritage identification and interpretation, guides the stewardship of public-owned heritage resources, and identifies specific improvements to the existing regulatory framework.

1.0 Introduction

Taiping is the second biggest town of Perak. Perak is one of the 13 states in Malaysia and it lies north of Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. (See Figure 1.0). Taiping can be categorised as being one of the most important heritage towns in Malaysia as heritage buildings from the British Colonisation Era in the 19th and 20th centuries still stood to this day. Apart from being a rich old heritage town with many heritage buildings, Taiping possesses other natural and socio-cultural resources as well. It is also in accordance with the Malaysian National Heritage Act 2005 stating that the components of heritage within a heritage town can comprise of a vast range of both tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage (Akta Warisan Kebangsaan, 2005).

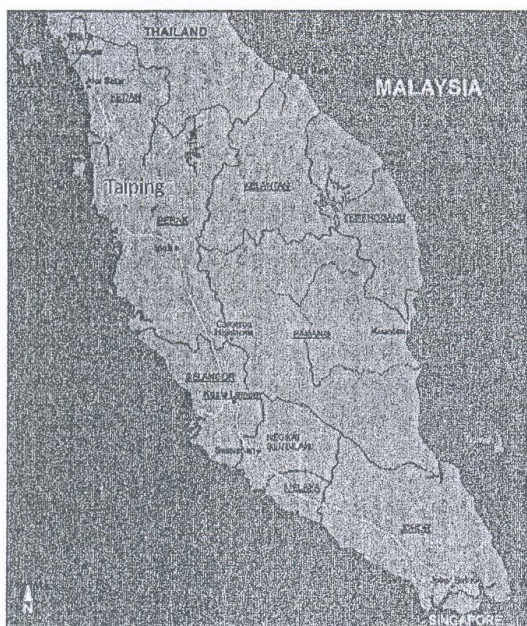


Figure 1.0 : Location Map of Taiping

However, Taiping has yet to plan, utilise, monitor and embark on proper conservation and management strategies of its heritage resources. Thus, one of the preliminary measures to ensure that Taiping's heritage resources can be conserved and utilised properly in enforcing the image of Taiping as a heritage town is to come up with a Landscape Master Plan. Taiping's heritage zones within the Local Authority not only covers the city centre but also the sub urban areas of Matang and Pengkalan Aor. (See Figure 1.1)

2.0 Taiping Historical Background

In the 19th century, Taiping was known as the 'tin ore' town.

A famous Malay nobleman, Long Jaafar, found tin ore as early as 1844. The discovery of tin originated from an incident in Klian Pauh, on a day when Long Jaafar observed his elephant working through the soil and noticed patches of tin on the animal's leg. Thus, tin was originally discovered in Klian Pauh in the Larut area and the first tin mine started its operation.

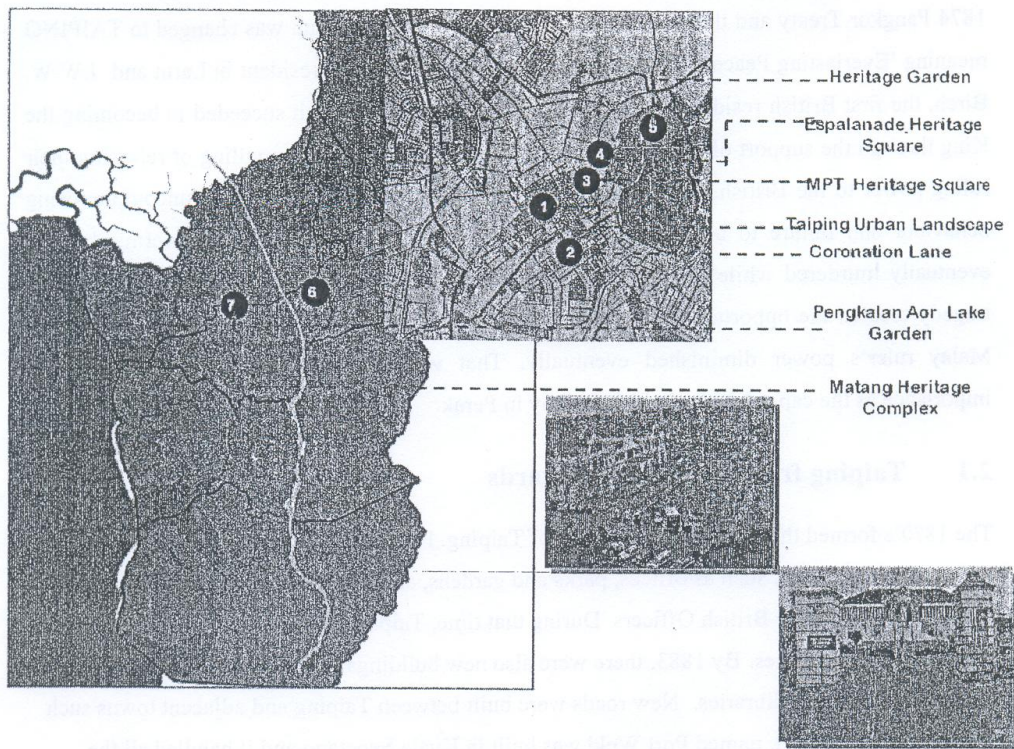


FIGURE 1.1 : TAIPING HERITAGE ZONES WITH TAIPING MUNICIPAL AREA

The interest in tin ore led to the in pour of Chinese immigrants and they tried to have a good rapport with Long Jaafar to capitalise on the mining activities. Chinese immigrants were brought in from China and Penang. The Chinese occupied areas like Asam Kumbang, Klian Pauh, Kota and Kamunting. The increase in the demand for tin ore in Britain further helped Larut tin mining zone to generate more economic activities. As Larut began gaining importance, Long Jaafar monopolised the tin mining area from 1850 to 1856. When he died, his son, Ngah Ibrahim took over the administration of Larut mining activities (Swettenham, 1906).

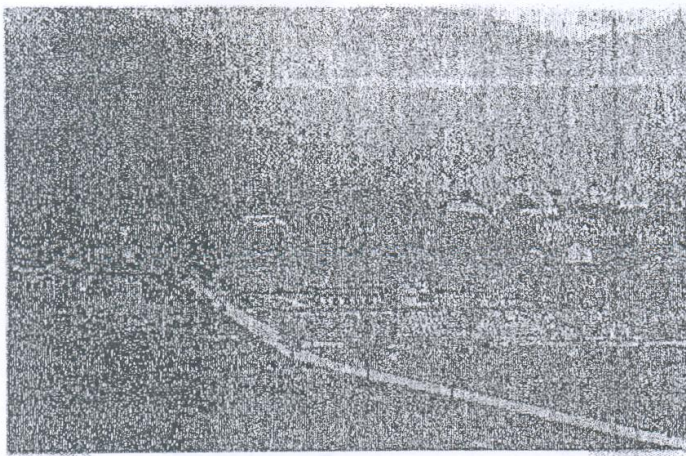
One of the Malay royal princes of Perak, Raja Abdullah, agreed to allow the British to place a British Resident in the state in return for helping him to claim the throne and gaining control of a large portion of Larut tin mining activities. There were feuds between the Chinese secret

societies. The repeated disturbances caused by the Chinese secret societies in Larut led to the 1874 Pangkor Treaty and the name of the mining town of Klian Pauh was changed to TAIPING meaning 'Everlasting Peace'. Captain Speedy became the assistant resident in Larut and J.W.W. Birch, the first British resident, in Perak. Even though Raja Abdullah succeeded in becoming the King through the support of the British, the Malay ruler was actually unwilling of releasing their ruling power to the British. Due to J.W.W. Birch, the First British Resident's uncompromising behaviour and failure to understand the Malay's local culture, religion and norms, he was eventually murdered while bathing near a river in the famous tragedy of 'Pasir Salak'. That tragedy created the opportunity for the British to set a stronger footing in Perak and the local Malay ruler's power diminished eventually. That was also the start of Taiping gaining importance as the capital of the British Colony in Perak.

2.1 Taiping from the 1870's onwards

The 1870's formed the developmental years of Taiping. For administrative purposes, the British built various buildings such as offices, parks and gardens, army barracks, hospital, stores, jails and bungalows for the British Officers. During that time, Taiping had only about 6000 people working in the tin mines. By 1883, there were also new buildings for courts and offices as well as reading rooms and libraries. New roads were built between Taiping and adjacent towns such as Parit Buntar. A port, named Port Weld was built in Kuala Sepetang and it handled all the import and export activities between Taiping and Penang.

Taiping had the first railway system in the country. The railway tracks was built from Taiping to Port Weld (Kuala Sepetang) and the first passenger train made its first journey on the 12th of February 1885. Until the late 19th century, Taiping became the main town in the Malay States based on the intensive mining and administration centre. The Senior British officers were placed in Taiping and the first clubs or associations of the different ethnics who lived in Taiping were also formed. There were many buildings assigned for those associations or clubs. Taiping started to lose its importance in the early 20th century. The local economic activity shifted to rubber plantation and a few plantations were opened in Taiping when the production of tin ore dropped and the discovery of more tin in other areas.



At that point, it led to the placement of Senior British Officers and European farmers and they generate demands for supplies and social activities. Social Clubs meant only for Europeans was established from 1880 to 1914. There were also numerous heritage English bungalows and Garden constructed on Maxwell Hill.


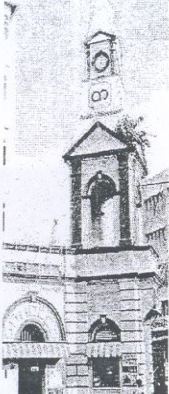


Figure 2.0 : Taiping Town in 1870's

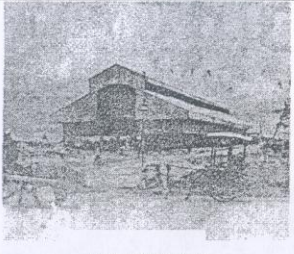

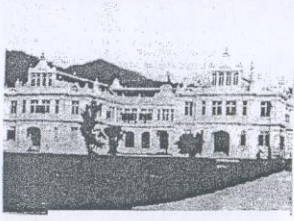

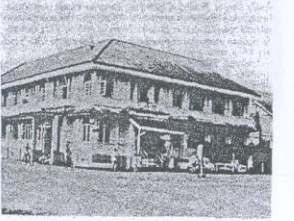

2.3 List of TAIPING's Heritage Buildings and Structures

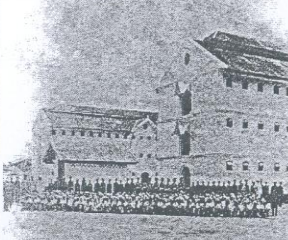
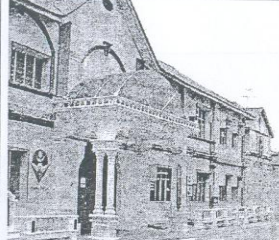
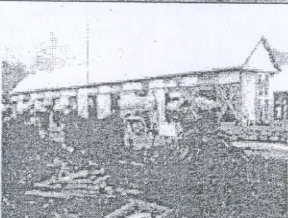

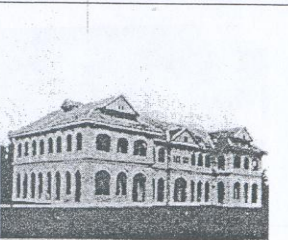
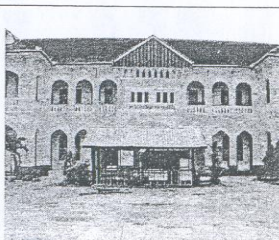
Many of the heritage buildings from the British Colonisation era in the 19th and 20th centuries still survives to this day. The following are some of the existing British Colonisation Heritage Buildings in Taiping.

- 1) Taiping Government Offices, Kota Road
- 2) Kapitan Chung Keng Kooi's Townhouse, Barrack Road
- 3) Post and Telegraph Office, Station Road
- 4) Town Rest House, Station Road
- 5) King Edward VII School, Station Road
- 6) Ceylon Association, Station Road
- 7) St. George's Institution, Station Road
- 8) General Hospital, Main Road
- 9) FMS Indian Association, Main Road
- 10) The Keling Mosque, Kota Road
- 11) Taiping Convent, Convent Road
- 12) Tengku Menteri's Residence, PWD 41, Kota Road
- 13) Hokkien Association, Kota Road
- 14) Sunlight Muslim Association, 212 Kota Road
- 15) Old Kota Mosque, Mosque Road
- 16) Peking Hotel, 2 Jalan Idris
- 17) Coronation Park, Theatre Road
- 18) Tseng Lung Hakka Association, Market Road
- 19) Taiping Market, Market Square
- 20) Police Station, Kota Road
- 21) Guan Hin Chan, 19 Cross Street No.4
- 22) Shun-te Hui-kuan, 36 Kota Road
- 23) Cantonese Association and Temple for the Immortal Girl, Temple Street
- 24) Taiping Public Library, Kota Road
- 25) Taiping Lake Gardens, Circular Road
- 26) Taiping War Cemetery
- 27) Ng Boo Bee Fountain, Waterfall Road
- 28) The Residency, Residency Road
- 29) The New Club and Golf Course, New Club Road
- 30) Cenotaph, Esplanade Road
- 31) The Secretary to Resident's House, Esplanade Road
- 32) Chinese Tombs, Esplanade Road
- 33) Malay States Guides Barracks, Main Road
- 34) British Officers' Mess, new Club Road
- 35) Old Saints Church, Main Road
- 36) Fort Carnavon, Main Road
- 37) Lady Treacher Girls' School, Upper Museum Road
- 38) Perak Museum, Main Road

TABLE 2.0 SOME OF TAIPING'S HERITAGE BUILDINGS/ELEMENTS- BEFORE AND AFTER IMAGES

| Nos. | HERITAGE BUILDINGS/ELEMENTS | Details | Old Photo | Current condition |
|------|--|---|---|--|
| 1. | Clock Tower (1881) | Originally it was made of wood but rebuilt using stone in 1890. Between 1908 and 1950, it was used as a Police Station. It is now a Tourist Information Centre. |  <p data-bbox="943 829 1029 846">Klocktoren, Taiping</p> |  |
| 2. | Lady of the Sacred Heart Church (1883) | The oldest Catholic Church in Taiping |  <p data-bbox="862 1199 980 1215">Gezellig Katholiek Taiping</p> |  |

| Nos. | HERITAGE BUILDINGS/ ELEMENTS | Details | Old Photo | Current condition |
|------|--|--|--|---|
| 5 | Taiping Old Market (1884-1885) | The Old Market measures 220 feet in length and 60 feet wide. It is an example of a market structure of the 19th century. There are 2 markets. One was built in 1884 and the other, a year later. |  |  |
| 6. | District Office (1879) | The building is still used as a government building. |  |  |
| 7. | Post Office and Telegraph Office (1884) | The building is no longer used and need repairs |  |  |

| Nos. | HERITAGE BUILDINGS/ ELEMENTS | Details | Old Photo | Current condition |
|------|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| 8. | Taiping jail (1883) | The building is still used as a jail. |  |  |
| 9. | Port Weld (Kuala Sepetang) (1885) | The building is gone but the signage and some of the railway track can still be found. |  |  |
| 10. | Sekolah King Edward VII's (1905) | The first English school in the Malaysia and it was built in 1883 and was called the Central School. In 1905, upon the completion of the new school, the name changed to King Edward VII School. In World War 2, it was made the Headquarters during the Japanese Occupation and many of the classroom were used as the Torture rooms. |  |  |

3.0 METHODOLOGY OF PREPARING TAIPING HERITAGE MASTERPLAN

The Local Authority inculcated the vision of wanting to establish Taiping Heritage Town as a Heritage Tourism Hub in Northern Perak region. Based on Taiping's rich Urban Historical Heritage and natural heritage areas parallel to it being a harmonious and peaceful living environment for the local communities.

PREPARATION OF TAIPING LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN FLOW CHART

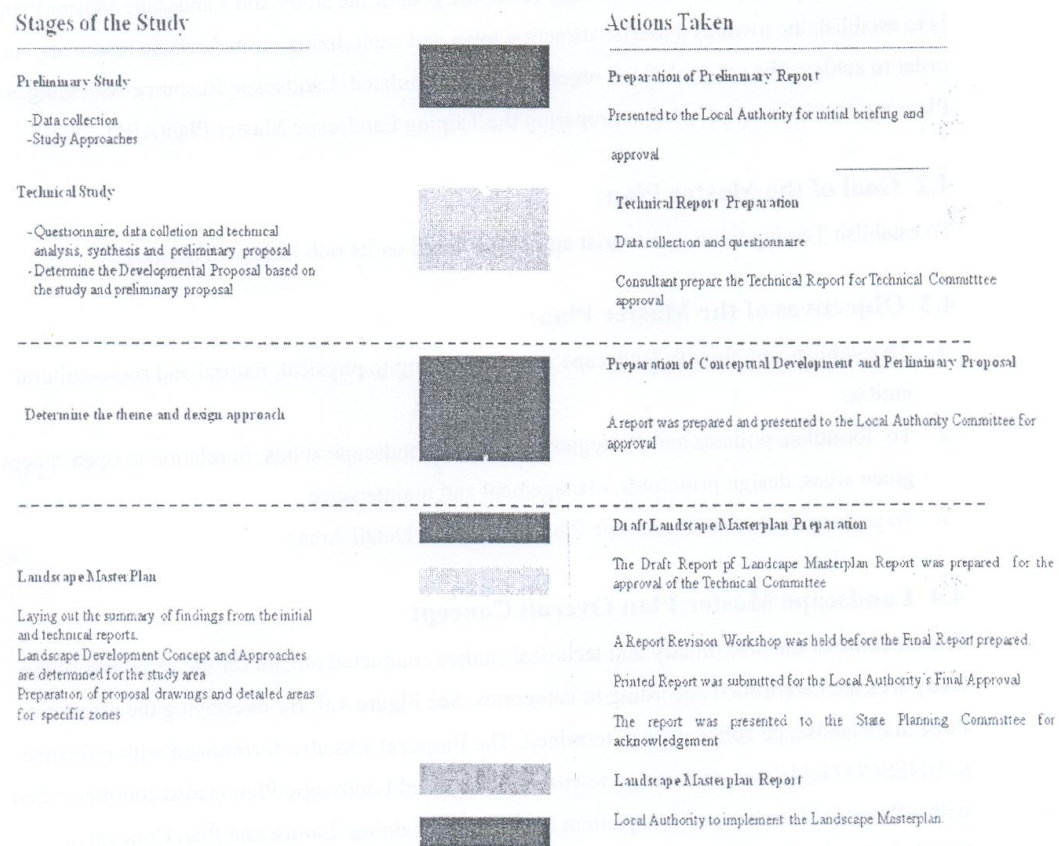


Figure 3.1: Processes in Preparing Taiping Landscape Master Plan (ABD, 2009)

4.0 TAIPING HERITAGE TOWN MASTERPLAN

4.1 Introduction

The Master Plan took a year to prepare with a multi disciplinary team of landscape architects, architects, planners, quantity surveyors and engineer. Based on the brief given by Taiping Local Authority, the goal and objectives were drafted to manouevre the directions of the study and Landscape Plan.

With Taiping being known as a heritage town, the goal of the study and Landscape Master Plan is to establish the town as a tourist attraction town and capitalizing on its heritage resources. In order to achieve the set goal, three objectives are formulated. Landscape Resource Assessing and Planning method was adopted in preparing the Taiping Landscape Master Plan(ABD, 2009).

4.2 Goal of the Master Plan:

To establish Taiping town as a tourist attraction based on its rich historical heritage.

4.3 Objectives of the Master Plan:

1. To establish and classify landscape zones according to physical, natural and socio-cultural entities
2. To formulate policies and strategies for specific landscape zones in relation to open spaces, green areas, design principles, management and maintenance
3. To prepare an Action Landscape Plan for Specific Detail Areas

4.4 Landscape Master Plan Overall Concept

The outcome of the preliminary and technical studies conducted on site for the resources of the study area are determined according to categories. See Figure 4.0. By overlaying the resources, three main landscape zones were determined. The Proposal was also formulated with reference to UNESCO Guidelines on heritage towns. The Proposed Landscape Plan is also complemented with a Proposed Landscape Management Plan and the Taiping Landscape Plan Concept is based on 4 major focuses.

Focus 1: Landscape development of the Main Gateways of Taiping

Selama Gateway, North Taiping Gateway, Changkat Jering Gateway, Kuala Kangsar Gateway and Bruas and Pantai Remis Gateway

Focus 2: Development of Public Parks

Regional Park, Town Park and Local Park

Focus 3: Landscape Development of Heritage Town

Protocol Roads- Jalan Kota and Jalan Taming Sari;

Heritage Town- Religio Cultural Row, Cultural Enclave, Historical Administrative Zone, Coronation Lane and Taiping Lake Garden

Focus 4: Creating Urban Landscape Identity and Character

Landscape Upgrading of Town and Commercial Centre, Institutional areas, industrial areas and housing areas

The details of the zones within the 4 focuses are as described in Figure 4.1. However, this paper will narrow down to only present Taiping Town Urban Landscape Zone. The Overall Taiping Town Urban Landscape Proposal covers the entrances into the town, the town centre and the Historical Lake Garden Area. See Figure 4.2.

Within the Town Urban Landscape areas, there are 4 thematic zones:

1. Religio- Cultural Row (Entrance from Jalan Kota -Kota Road)
2. Cultural Enclave (the local Market and its surrounding areas)
3. Historical Enclave (Esplanade, Land Office, Local Authority Building)
4. Coronation Lane (Pedestrian Walkway near Cinema Street)

The design of the thematic zones are made based on the existing land use, socio cultural and per historical resources within a zone and its context. See Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.4.1 to Figure 4.4.4 show some of the proposals of important streets within the Heritage Town Area

CATEGORIES OF RESOURCES

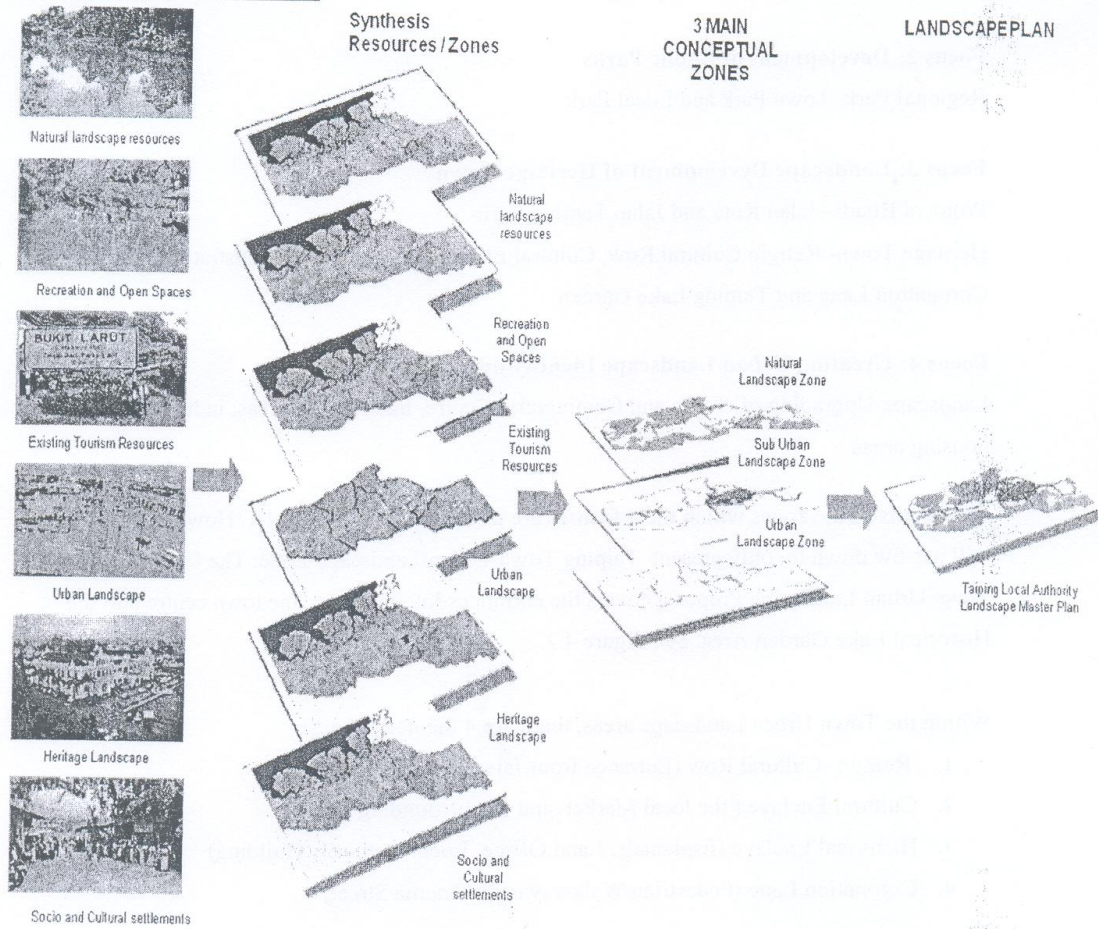


FIGURE 4.0 : OVERLAYING AND SYNTHESIS OF RESOURCES, CONCEPTUAL ZONES AND TAIPIING LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN

Urban Landscape



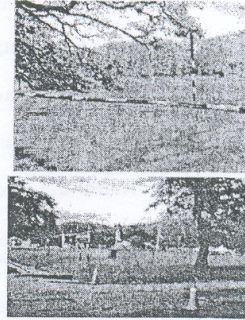
- 1 Recreation zone
- 2 Heritage sub zone
- 3 Institution sub zone
- 4 Housing sub zone

Recreation Sub Zone

Existing Recreation and open spaces in Taiping Town

Pekelling Road near Lake Garden to Larut Hill

Greenway linkage through existing 'nodes' near Zoo and Lake Garden

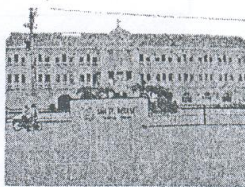


Heritage Sub Zone

City Centre to Lake Garden Area

•Buildings of architectural and historical significance near streets: I-Jalan Taming Sari, Jalan Berek, Jalan Stesen dan Jalan Pasar are conserved and repaired when necessary

•Conservation of Heritage trees along roads in Taiping Lake Garden



Institutional and Housing Sub Zone
Urban areas apart from Heritage Zones

To create a landscape that gives identity and recreational opportunities for local people

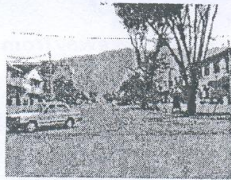


Figure 4.1: Overall Landscape Concept Plan of Taiping Town and Sub Urban Areas

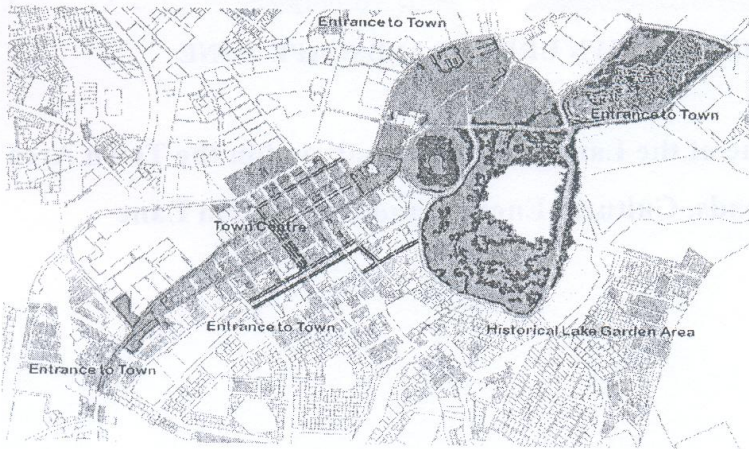


Figure 4.2: Taiping Town Urban Landscape Landscape Plan

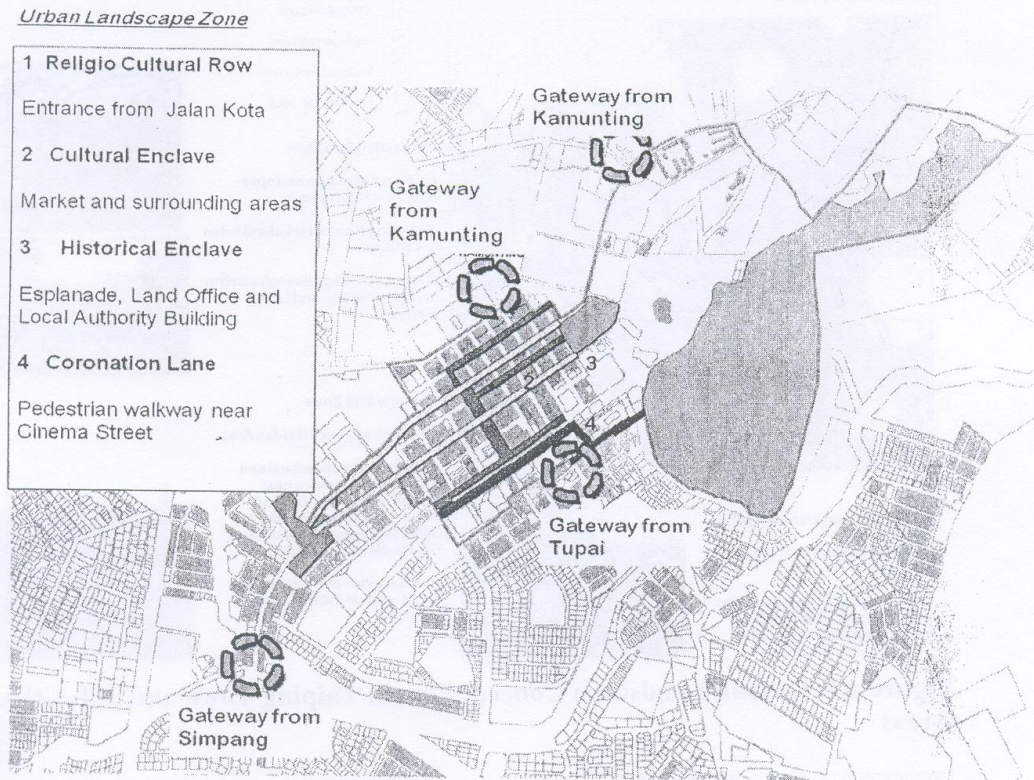


FIGURE 4.3 : TAIPING TOWN URBAN LANDSCAPE ZONE

Figure 4.4 : Some of the Landscape Proposal within the Town Area for : Protocol Roads, Cultural Enclave and Coronation Lane

PROTOCOL ROADS LANDSCAPE PLAN:

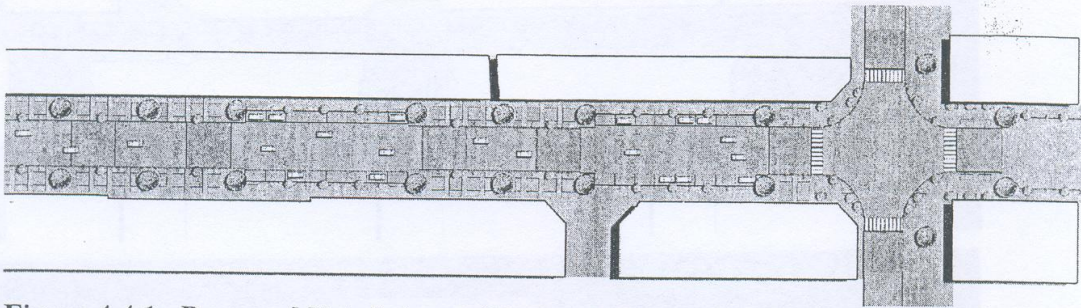


Figure 4.4.1 Proposed Detail Area of Protocol Road- Jalan Kota (Kota Road)

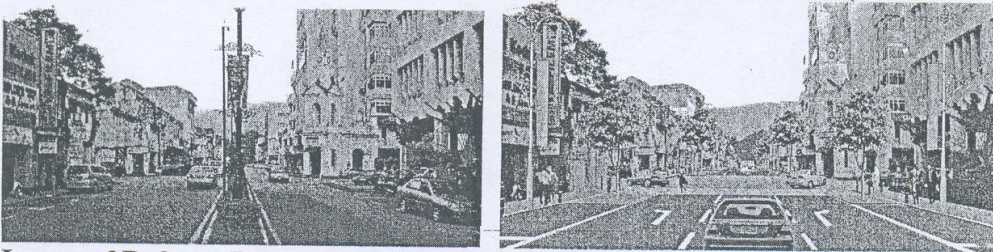


Image of Before: Protocol Road Image of After : Protocol Road

Figure 4.4.2 Proposed Detail Area of Cultural Enclave- Barracks Street

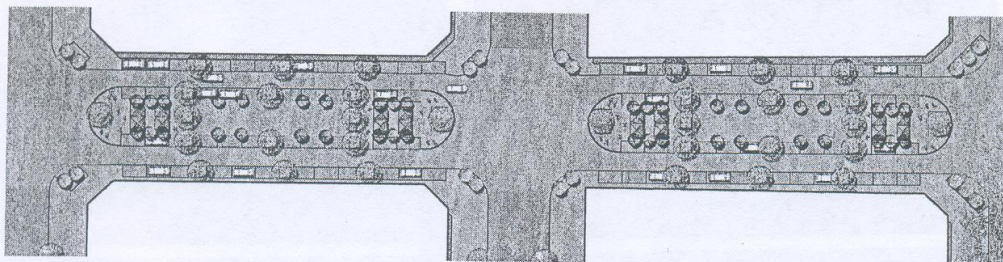


Figure 4.4.3 Proposed Detail Area of Cultural Enclave Halaman Pasar Street

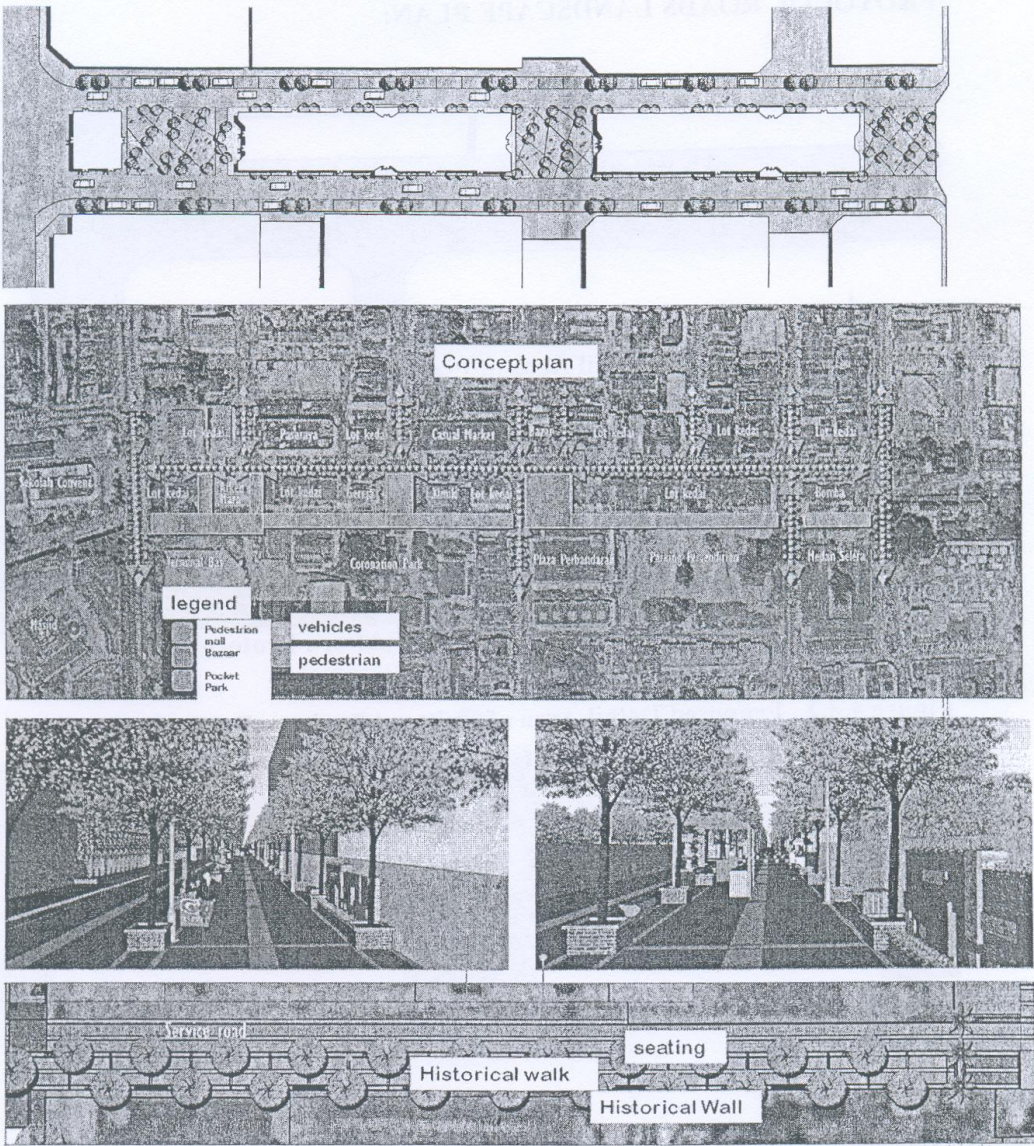


Figure 4.4.4: Coronation Lane Landscape Design Concept:
Combination of colonial style and grid iron

5.0 Conclusion

The Taiping Landscape Masterplan was done with intensive studies involving thorough data collection from a series of field studies and the work ranged from the different technical physical, biological, cultural-socio and historical sectors. The data were analysed, synthesized and conceptual diagrams were produced by a strong team of multidisciplinary professionals and technical staff. The implementation will be carried out in 5 year stages (2010-2015) according to the recommendations set in the Taiping Landscape Master Plan. It is the hope of the Malaysian National Department of Landscape, the local authority, consultants and staff involved in the project to see a complete and successful implementation of the Landscape Plan in a matter of 5 years.

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