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Reference LE14/2/6/1/6/2/ERF 301_Commercial_Hoekwil

date 16 August 2024

Eco Route Environmental Consultancy,
P.O. Box 1252,
Sedgefield,
6573

Attention: Ms Joclyn Marshall
By email: joclyn@ecoroute.co.za

Dear Ms Joclyn Marshall

THE PRE-APPLICATION BASIC ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF ERF 301, WHITES ROAD, HOEKWIL (WILDERNESS HEIGHTS), GEORGE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, WESTERN CAPE.

DEA&DP Reference: 16/3/3/6/7/1/D2/19/0099/24

CapeNature would like to thank you for the opportunity to review the above report. Please note that our comments only pertain to the biodiversity related impacts and not to the overall desirability of the application. CapeNature wishes to make the following comments:

According to the Western Cape Biodiversity Spatial Plan (Pool-Stanvliet *et.al.* 2017)¹ the erf has Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBA 1: Terrestrial). The erf has a non-perennial river to the east and is within a National Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Area (NFEPA)² River corridor. Furthermore, the erf is within the National Strategic Water Source Area for surface water for the Outeniqua region and serves as a water source protection for the Touws River and watercourse protection for the South-eastern Coastal Belt.

The fine-scale Vlok and de Villiers (2007)³ vegetation maps describe the area as Wolwe River Fynbos-Forest. According to the National Biodiversity Assessment (Skowno *et al.* 2018)⁴ the vegetation units are Garden Route Granite Fynbos which is **Critically Endangered** (NEM:BA,

¹ Pool-Stanvliet, R., Duffell-Canham, A., Pence, G. & Smart, R. 2017. The Western Cape Biodiversity Spatial Plan Handbook. Stellenbosch: CapeNature.

² Nel, J.L., Murray, K.M., Maherry, A.M., Petersen, C.P., Roux, D.J., Driver, A., Hill, L., Van Deventer, H., Funke, N., Swartz, E.R., Smith-Adao, L.B., Mbona, N., Downsborough, L. & Nienaber, S. (2011). Technical Report for the National Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Areas project. WRC Report No. K5/1801

³ Vlok JHJ, de Villiers R (2007) Vegetation Map for the Riversdale Domain. Unpublished 1:50 000 maps and report supported by CAPE FSP task team and CapeNature.

⁴ Skowno, A. L., Poole, C. J., Raimondo, D. C., Sink, K. J., Van Deventer, H., Van Niekerk, L., Harris, L. R., Smith-Adao, L. B., Tolley, K. A., Zengeya, T. A., Foden, W. B., Midgley, G. F. and Driver, A. 2019. National Biodiversity Assessment 2018: The status of South Africa's ecosystems and biodiversity. Synthesis Report. Pretoria, South Africa. 214 pp.

2022)⁵ and Least Concerned Goukamma Dune Thicket (SANBI 2022)⁶. Following a review of the application, CapeNature wishes to make the following comments:

1. CapeNature has provided comments for the Land Use Planning and OSCA applications. Furthermore, CapeNature conducted a site visit on 18 October 2023 (kindly see attached comment).
2. The Terrestrial Biodiversity Sensitivity for the “Forest” and “Fynbos on rocky outcrops” which are outside the development footprint was Very High and low for the “Thicket with some patches of overgrown fynbos” which is the development area. CapeNature has provided feedback following our site visit regarding the vegetation dispute and is of the opinion that the development footprint is within fynbos which has become invaded by forest species.
3. The SEI for the entire property was rated High. Thus, avoidance can be achieved in reducing the development footprint. In turn this will reduce the impact on Critically Endangered Garden Route Granite Fynbos⁷. Furthermore, the property forms part of a continuous CBA corridor which is important for the conservation of the species, ecosystems, supporting ecological processes, and landscape connectivity. CapeNature will not support the loss of CBA (Pool-Stanvliet *et al.* 2017).
4. CapeNature has received few development applications for the Wilderness area. We are concerned that the cumulative impacts, if not properly considered and planned for, could be quite significant on the biodiversity of the area.
5. It is understood that the landowner intends to conserve the remainder of the property. We would encourage the landowner to contact SANParks for possible inclusion in their Protected Areas Expansion Programme.
6. CapeNature reminds the applicant of Section 28 of National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) (Act 104 of 1998 as amended) (Duty of Care) that states the following:

“Every person who causes, has caused or may cause significant pollution or degradation of the environment must take reasonable measures to prevent such pollution or degradation from occurring, continuing or recurring, or, in so far as such harm to the environment is authorised by law or cannot reasonably be avoided or stopped, to minimise and rectify such pollution or degradation of the environment.”

Any action that causes wilful degradation of the environment may therefore constitute a breach of this Duty of Care and the penal provisions of NEMA will apply.

In conclusion, CapeNature does not support the development of a single residential dwelling with six “pods”. We do not object to the single residential dwelling if this will be developed on a

⁵ National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No. 10 of 2004). The Revised National List of Ecosystems that are Threatened and in need of protection. 2022. Government Gazette No. 47526

⁶ Government of South Africa (2022) South African Red List of Terrestrial Ecosystems: assessment details and ecosystem descriptions. Technical Report #7664, SANBI Pretoria, South Africa.

⁷ The Garden Route Granite Fynbos is one of the **seven high risk Critically Endangered** vegetation types in South Africa (Skowno *et al.* 2018).

The Western Cape Nature Conservation Board trading as **CapeNature**

Board Members: Ms Marguerite Loubser (Chairperson), Prof Gavin Maneveldt (Vice Chairperson), Mr Mervyn Burton, Prof Denver Hendricks, Dr Colin Johnson, Mr Paul Slack

shallow slope as we will not support any development on slopes with a gradient that is greater than 1:4.

CapeNature reserves the right to revise initial comments and request further information based on any additional information that may be received.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Megan Simons', written in a cursive style.

Megan Simons
For: Manager (Conservation Intelligence)