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**File Ref: 18/9706/PB**

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**Attention: Mrs S Teeluckdhari**

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Dear Madam,

**COMMENT ON DRAFT BASIC ASSESSMENT REPORT IN TERMS OF THE NEMA ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF A BEACH ACCESS BOARDWALK AND VIEWING DECK ON ERF 9706 (PREVIOUSLY PORTION 57 OF FARM 443), BITOU MUNICIPALITY**

**DEAD&P Reference Number: 16/3/3/6/7/1/D1/15/0299/25**

Bitou Local Municipality would like to thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft BAR for the proposed development of a beach access boardwalk and viewing deck on Erf 9706 (Previously Portion 57 of Farm 443) within the Bitou Municipal area. Please note that these comments have been drafted by the Land Use and Environmental Management department within the Planning and Development directorate. Additional comments may be required from other relevant departments within the Bitou Local Municipality.

The following information was taken from the supplied report and summarise the proposed activities.

**DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

The proposed activity entails the development of a beach access boardwalk and associated viewing deck within the Bitou Municipal Area. Erf 9706 currently contains a dwelling under construction following the destruction of the previous dwelling during the 2017 fires. The applicant proposes to construct an elevated timber boardwalk (approximately 98.3 m<sup>2</sup>) extending through the coastal dune vegetation to provide controlled pedestrian access to the beach, as well as an external deck area of approximately 281 m<sup>2</sup> with a firepit located within 100 metres of the High Water Mark (HWM) of the sea. The boardwalk is intended to follow an existing informal path and will be constructed as a lightweight, elevated structure supported by posts in order to minimise disturbance to the underlying dune system and associated vegetation. Access to the property will continue to occur via the existing servitude road along the western boundary of the site, and no new access roads are proposed.

**LOCATION**

The proposed development is located partially on Erf 9706 (previously Portion 57 of Farm 443, Brakkloof), Plettenberg Bay, within the Bitou Municipal Area, Garden Route District Municipality, Western Cape Province. The property is situated within the coastal zone and lies directly inland of the primary dune system adjacent to the Indian Ocean. The site is zoned Residential and comprises approximately 2.3 hectares.

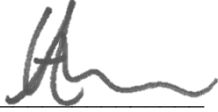
Following a review of the documentation and appendices the following comments are made:

1. The Draft Basic Assessment Report does not clearly indicate on which cadastral properties the proposed structures will be located. It appears from the plans that portions of the proposed boardwalk extend beyond Erf 9706 and may traverse Unalienated State Land (Erf 2132). Clarification is therefore required regarding the exact location of all proposed infrastructure, including the boardwalk, deck, and any associated structures, and whether any component of the development will occur outside the boundaries of the applicant's property. A clear site development plan must be provided that identifies cadastral boundaries and the extent of the development footprint in relation to neighbouring properties and state land.
2. Should the proposal include infrastructure located on Unalienated State Land (Erf 2132), the applicant must demonstrate the legal basis upon which such development would occur. It should be noted that private property owners do not automatically obtain rights of access across State land for private beach access purposes. Any development extending beyond the boundaries of the private property would require appropriate authorisation and permission from the relevant landowner or managing authority.
3. From a municipal coastal management perspective, the privatisation of beach access is generally not supported. Public beaches and coastal areas are a shared resource, and access should not be restricted or perceived to be exclusive to a single property owner. It is, however, acknowledged that an informal access route previously existed in this location.
4. The use of hard structures within the dynamic coastal environment is discouraged, as these structures are vulnerable to storm surge events and coastal erosion processes. Hard infrastructure within the dune system may also exacerbate erosion if damaged or displaced during storm events.
5. Recent coastal storm events along this stretch of coastline have demonstrated the vulnerability of fixed infrastructure within the coastal dune system. Sections of coastline further south towards Robberg Beach End experienced severe erosion during storm events in September 2023 and again in April 2024, which resulted in the destruction of existing wooden walkways and significant changes to the beach profile. These events highlight the dynamic nature of the shoreline and the risks associated with permanent or semi-permanent infrastructure within the coastal zone. Where beach access is required, softer coastal engineering approaches are generally preferable. Such approaches may include:
  - 5.1. Demarcated pathways using timber stakes and logs;
  - 5.2. Sand-trapping measures;
  - 5.3. Temporary dune stabilisation structures; and
  - 5.4. Rehabilitation of dune vegetation.
6. Appendix A2 confirms that the proposed development falls within a Coastal Risk Zone. However, the Draft Basic Assessment Report does not adequately assess the potential risks associated with coastal flooding, storm surge events, sea level rise, and extreme weather events over the expected lifespan of the development. The application must demonstrate that the proposed structures are designed to adequately account for coastal flood risk.
7. The Draft Basic Assessment Report does not include all relevant specialist reports for review despite indicating that they are attached as Appendix G. Given the sensitivity of coastal dune systems, specialist input relating to coastal processes, dune stability, vegetation, and coastal setback considerations are required to adequately assess the environmental implications of the proposed development. These documents should be made available for comment and input, and it should be shown how specialist recommendations are included in the proposal.
8. The alternatives considered within the Draft BAR appear limited, with the primary distinction between alternatives relating only to the inclusion or exclusion of a shower and shallow dog wash facility. This does not represent a meaningful consideration of design alternatives in terms of environmental impact. Additional alternatives should therefore be investigated and presented in the BAR, including:
  - 8.1. A design alternative that terminates the constructed boardwalk at the surveyed property boundary, with the remaining access to the beach managed through soft stabilisation measures within the dune system.
  - 8.2. Alternative alignments that further minimise disturbance to dune vegetation.

The Bitou Municipality reserves the right to revise initial comments and request further information based on any additional information that might be received. The onus remains on the registered property owner to confirm adherence to any relevant legislation with regards to the activities which might trigger and/or need authorisation for.

Should you require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Yours faithfully,



Anjé Minne

**Environmental Management Officer**  
**Planning and Development: Land Use and Environmental Management**  
**Bitou Municipality**