

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT  
PORTIONS 59, 62 AND 63 OF FARM 443 BRAKKLOOF  
PLETTENBERG BAY



Figure 1: View southwestwards from Robberg Road over the property. The gravel road that led to the house and quarry site can just be seen

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

Prepared in compliance with **Section 38(8)** of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA): Case ID: 1136: Case Officer Jenna Lavin

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February 2012

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In this report it is recommended that the proposed residential development be supported and that no further heritage studies are required subject to a number of conditions that are designed to conserve the property's aesthetic and scientific significance.

## 1. BACKGROUND

The owners of Portions 59, 62 and 63 of Farm 443 Brakkloof Plettenberg Bay; Shock Proof Investments 171 (Pty) Ltd intend developing the property for residential purposes. Environmental consultants Calidris Development Management Services was appointed to meet the requirements of Regulation 22 (b) of Government Notice No R 385 of Chapter 5 of the National Environment Management Act (Act 107 of 1998) as certain listed activities related to the proposed development. A multi-disciplinary team of specialists was appointed as part of the environmental process and a draft Scoping Report with their findings was advertised for comment in January 2010. The Final Scoping Report has been lodged with the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEA & DP).

As the proposed development involves the rezoning of a property of more than 10 000m<sup>2</sup>, will change the character of a site of more than 5000m<sup>2</sup> and will involve the consolidation of the three portions of the farm, the comments of the provincial heritage authority, Heritage Western Cape (HWC) must be obtained in order to comply with the provisions of section 38(8) of the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999) (NHR Act). Aikman Associates Heritage Management was subsequently appointed and a standard Notification of Intent to Develop form was submitted to HWC in August 2011. The Interim Comment issued on 7 September 2011 stated that:

An HIA is required consisting of a visual impact assessment providing direction on appropriate landscape architectural design; a palaeontological assessment in terms of impact to the Brakkloof Formation as well as an archaeological impact assessment to be conducted by an Early Stone Age specialist.

New World Associates Landscape Architects was subsequently appointed and a Level 3 Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) was undertaken to meet HWC's first requirement (see Annexure 1).

A palaeontological assessment was undertaken by ----- (see Annexure 2).

The Agency for Cultural Resource Management had undertaken an archaeological impact assessment and this was submitted to HWC in June 2010 (see Annexure 3). It reported that several thousand Early Stone Age (ESA) flake tools (including handaxes) had been found related to an important Acheulean Stone Age site. In addition relatively large numbers of Early and Middle Stone

Age tools had been found lying, among the spoil dumps associated with mining activities. In the gravel road traversing the south western portion of the site large numbers of tools had also been documented. These significant findings led to HWC's archaeologist Ms J Lavin and archaeologist and HWC Councillor Ms M Leslie undertaking a site inspection in February 2011. They recommended that an ESA specialist be appointed. Mr Will Archer then conducted the follow up study assessment of the Brakkloof archaeological material. His study focused on the nature, significance, sensitivity and spatial integrity of the identified ESA archaeology (see Annexure 4).

Aikman Associates Heritage Management was subsequently appointed to undertake the survey and prepare this heritage impact assessment report.

## **2. STATEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE**

Henry Aikman of Aikman Associates who prepared this HIA is an architect and an accredited member of the Association of Professional Heritage Practitioners (APHP). None of the consultants engaged in this study has any financial interest in the proposed development or any other projects undertaken by the developers. The assessment involved a site inspection, some research using readily available published material and discussions with the team's specialists and EIA coordinator.

## **3. LOCALITY**

The triangular site is located on the south west edge of the southern Cape town of Plettenberg Bay in the Bitou Municipality. It is bordered on its eastern edge by Robberg Road leading to the Robberg Nature Reserve.

## **4. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND SETTING**

In this section the historical development of the area is outlined and the site and its setting are described.

### **4.1 Historical development of the site and setting**

For at least half a million years people have lived along this coast. Small groups of hunter-gatherers followed the seasonal round, collecting plants and seafood, catching wild birds and animals. They found shelter in caves and rock formations and constructed windbreaks and waterproof "skerms" in more open areas. Evidence of their wide presence is found in the archaeological record in caves like the nearby Nelson's Bay Cave on the Robberg Peninsula and particularly in the middens and fish traps along the coast. Archaeological sites in

this area include mostly Later Stone Age<sup>1</sup> (LSA) sites, but Middle Stone Age<sup>2</sup> (MSA), as well as Early Stone Age<sup>3</sup> (ESA) sites also occur. The AIAs indicate that there is a significant amount of artefactual material on the subject property exposed by 20th Century quarrying and sand mining and the construction of the road that traverses it.

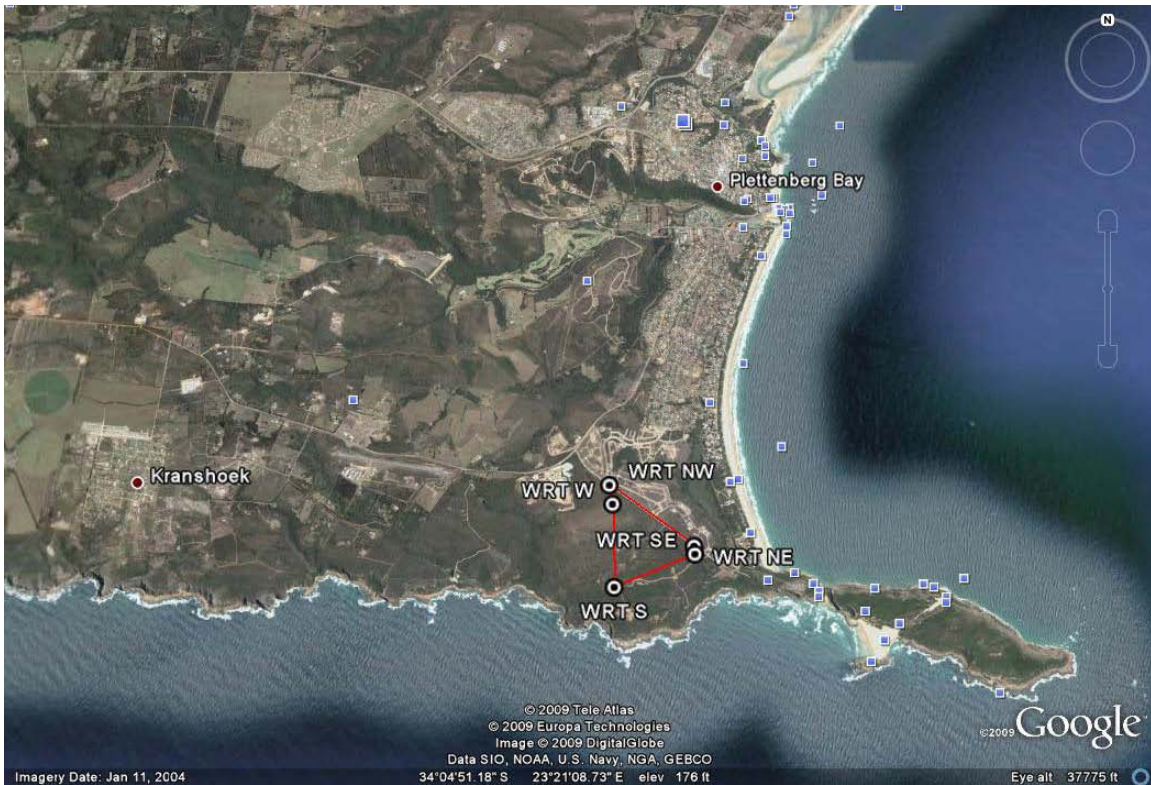


Figure 2: The property shown on the south western edge of Plettenberg Bay close to the Robberg Peninsula

The last of the hunter-gatherers were the San or Bushmen, who survived here possibly even until 200 years ago. Besides their middens of organic debris and their tools, they left little sign of their presence in the landscape.

About 2000 years ago the Western Cape landscape began to change as a result of new human intervention. Archaeological evidence indicates that they visited this coastal area in the winter months of each year moving away into the interior via Attaqua's Pass for the rest of the year. The two principle groups in the area between Mossel Bay and Plettenberg Bay were the Attaqua and the Inqua who

<sup>1</sup> A term referring to the last 20 000 years of precolonial history in southern Africa.

<sup>2</sup> A term referring to the period between 250 000 and 20 000 years ago.

<sup>3</sup> A term referring to the period between 2 million and 250 000 years ago.

traded with the Dutch in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>4</sup> It is suggested that they may have traded with Portuguese explorers in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries and probably had contact with the Portuguese sailors marooned here for 9 months when the *San Gonzales* sank in the bay in 1630. The Portuguese called it *Bahia Formosa* or the Beautiful Bay.

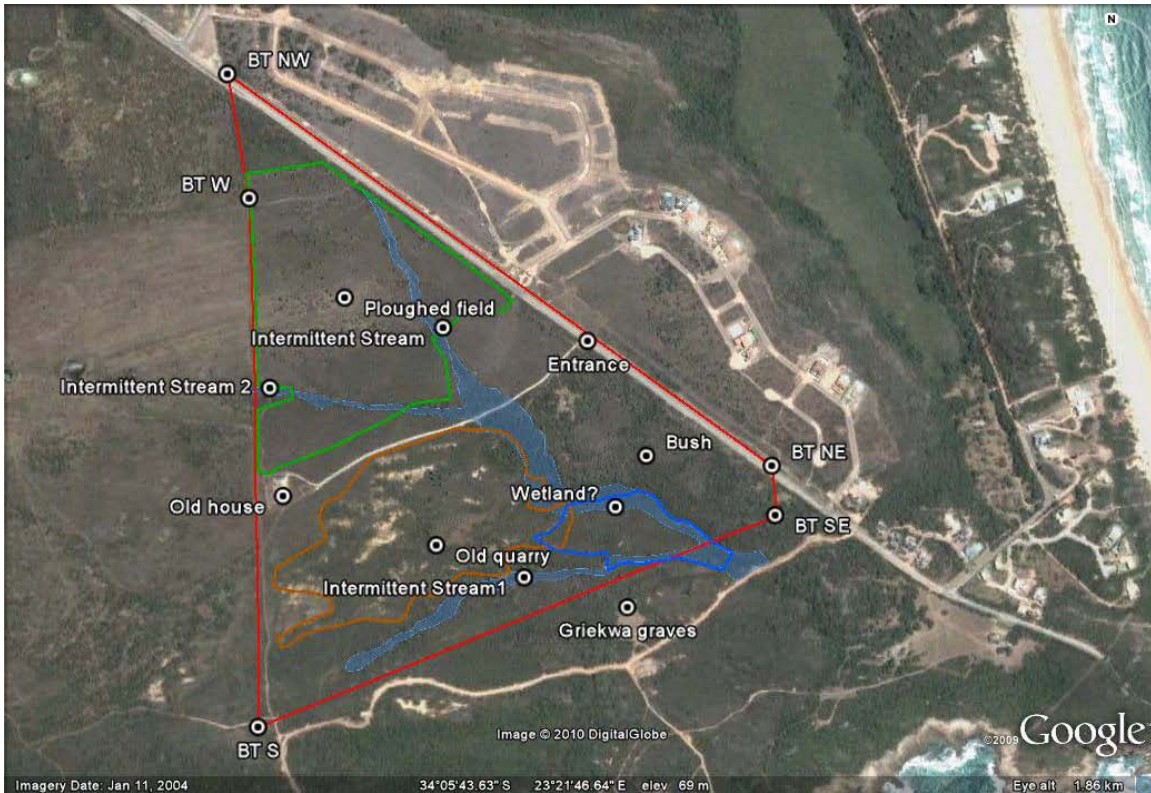


Figure 3: Detailed view of the property with its main features shown

The Khoi were gradually displaced as the VOC issued “veepos” permits to freeburghers to pasture their stock. The two groups came into direct conflict for control over pastures, water and livestock. Low-level warfare commenced and the choicest pastures and hunting grounds were taken over by the settlers. Inter-tribal warfare caused further decimation. This warfare, the smallpox epidemic of 1713, drought and other epidemics reduced their flocks and herds and many surviving Khoi ended up in mission stations or the service of the settlers as stock keepers. The first grant in this area was in 1763 to a Cornelis Botha. He established a farm on the Piesang River.

Following exploration of the southern Cape by the Swedish botanists, Carl Thunberg (1772-73) and Anders Sparrman (1775) and their reports of the great

<sup>4</sup> BOONZAAIER, E, MALHERBE, C, SMITH, A & BERENS, P. 1996. The Cape Herders: a history of the Khoikhoi of Southern Africa. David Philip, Cape Town. Pg 69.

forests in the district, the VOC constructed a rough road between Swellendam and Outeniqualand and established a woodcutter's post on the site of the present town of George. Large numbers of people drifted into the district to work as woodcutters and take part in what was to become a "timber boom".<sup>5</sup> In 1778 Governor Baron Joachim van Plettenberg established a timber station here and renamed the bay after himself. In 1787 the VOC built a large timber store at Plettenberg Bay and timber was shipped from there to Table Bay by sea.

More and more settlers created farms along the rivers of the district but from 1800 parties of Xhosa; the Gqunukhwebes together with parties of allied Khoi raided the farms and drove the settlers to the safety of Knysna. In 1812 British military forces drove the raiders back over the Fish River in the Eastern Cape. This opened up the district for British settlers who farmed and carried on with the timber trade.<sup>6</sup>

A village formed around St Peter's Anglican Church built in 1851. It grew slowly over the next 100 years but from 1940 when the Beacon Island Hotel was built on the site of the old whaling station it became an important holiday resort town. It currently has a permanent population of over 20 000 people but this almost doubles in the summer holiday season.

Mention should be made of the Griqua people who trekked from Griqualand East to the Nature's Valley area in 1927 and then to the farm Kranskop to the south west of Plettenberg Bay where they settled in 1939. They were led by AAS Le Fleur known by his people as The Reformer. His grave is close to the boundary of the property and is a place of pilgrimage for the Griqua people.

The farm Brakkloof was an early grant close to the VOC's timber store at Plettenberg Bay. The farm was incrementally subdivided into a number of portions with the ones forming the subject property being some of the last remaining not yet developed for residential purposes. Portion 59 was previously cultivated for agricultural purposes, while Portion 62 and 63 was mined for gravel, sand and road construction material. These activities ceased about 15 years ago and the site has been invaded by alien vegetation.

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<sup>5</sup> ACKERMAN, D P, IMMELMAN, W F E, WICHT, C L. 1973. Our Green Heritage, Tafelberg, Cape Town. Pg 21

<sup>6</sup> STORRAR, P. 1978. Portrait of Plettenberg Bay. Purnell Cape Town.

## 4.2 Setting

Robberg Road borders the triangular property on its north eastern edge. On the north eastern side of this road a new gated township; Whale Rock Ridge Beach Estate has been established and large single residential development is taking place.



Figure 4: The Whale Rock Ridge Beach Estate opposite the property



Figure 5: Township on Robberg Road opposite the property where new houses are being built



Figure 6: Looking north along Robberg Road with the subject property on the left and the developing residential township on the right



Figure 7: Looking south down Robberg Road with the property on the right

The south eastern edge of the property is bordered by Remainder Farm 443 Brakkloof as is the south western edge. These areas were partly cultivated in the past but are now covered with thick indigenous bush.



Figure 8: General views of the site covered in a mixture of indigenous and alien vegetation

The grave of AAS Le Fleur, the Griqua leader is sited close to the south eastern boundary of the site and is accessed via a gravel road.

### 5. STATUTORY CONTEXT.

The 55.3ha property is zoned for Agricultural Zone I purposes in terms of the Schedule 8 Zoning Scheme, Land Use Planning Ordinance: No 15 of 1985 (LUPO).

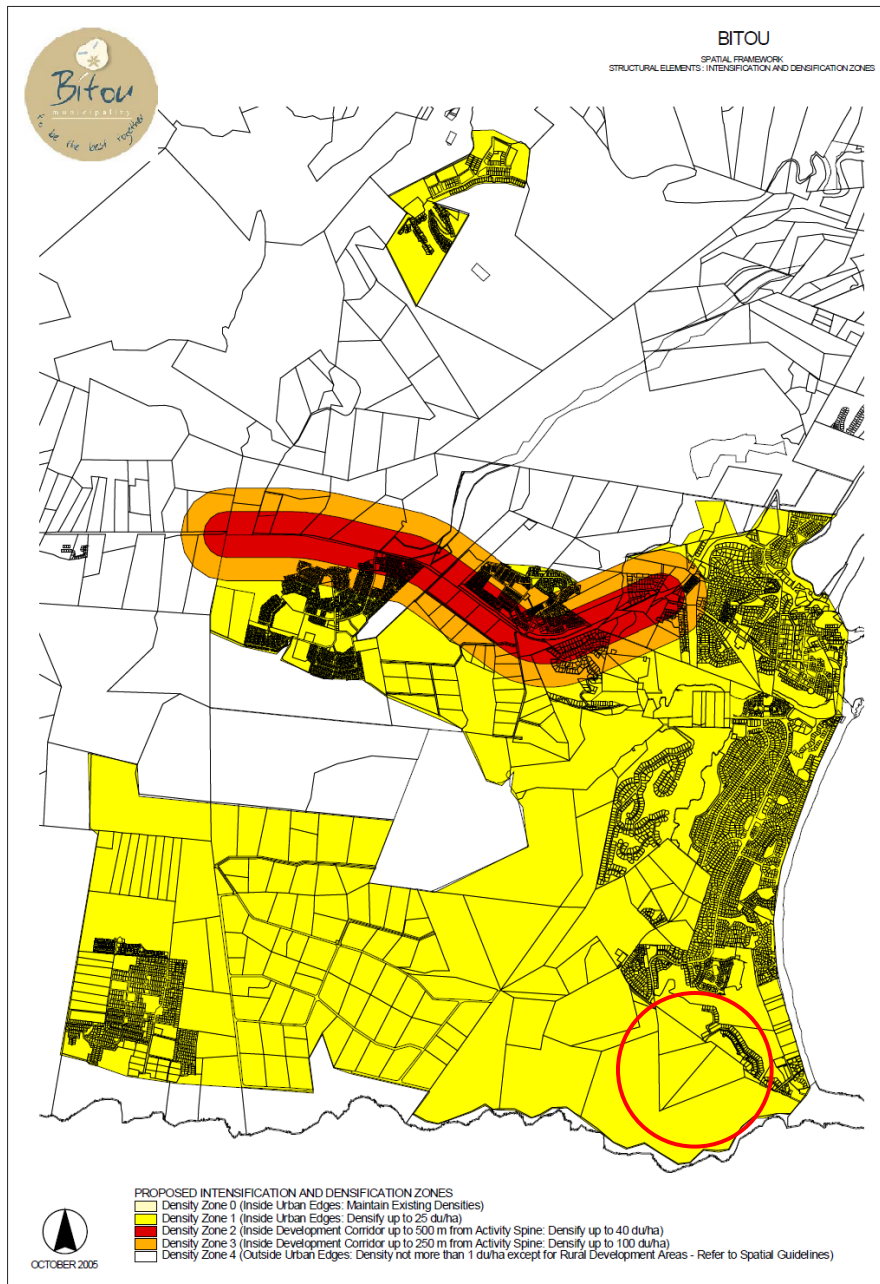


Figure 9: Bitou Spatial Framework: Structural Elements—Intensification and Densification Zones 2005. The triangular site is ringed in red

There are no restrictive conditions of title preventing the proposed development of the property. The proposed development falls inside the urban edge of the town. The proposed urban development is consistent with the development proposals of the Bitou Spatial Development Framework for the area as well as the Plettenberg Bay Urban Structure Plan (USP).

## 6. TOPOGRAPHY SOILS AND VEGETATION

Three shallow water courses drain eastwards through the site. There is a small wetland area below the confluence of the two western water courses and upstream of the confluence with the third watercourse. The abandoned quarry area overlaps with the possible wetland. The old ploughed fields are on the northern half of the site. The site forms a natural amphitheatre, sloping down and opening to the east, with the highest points being along the western boundary and the southern point.

Very dense bush now covers the site, the majority of which is invasive alien vegetation, but there are remnants of the original on the site.

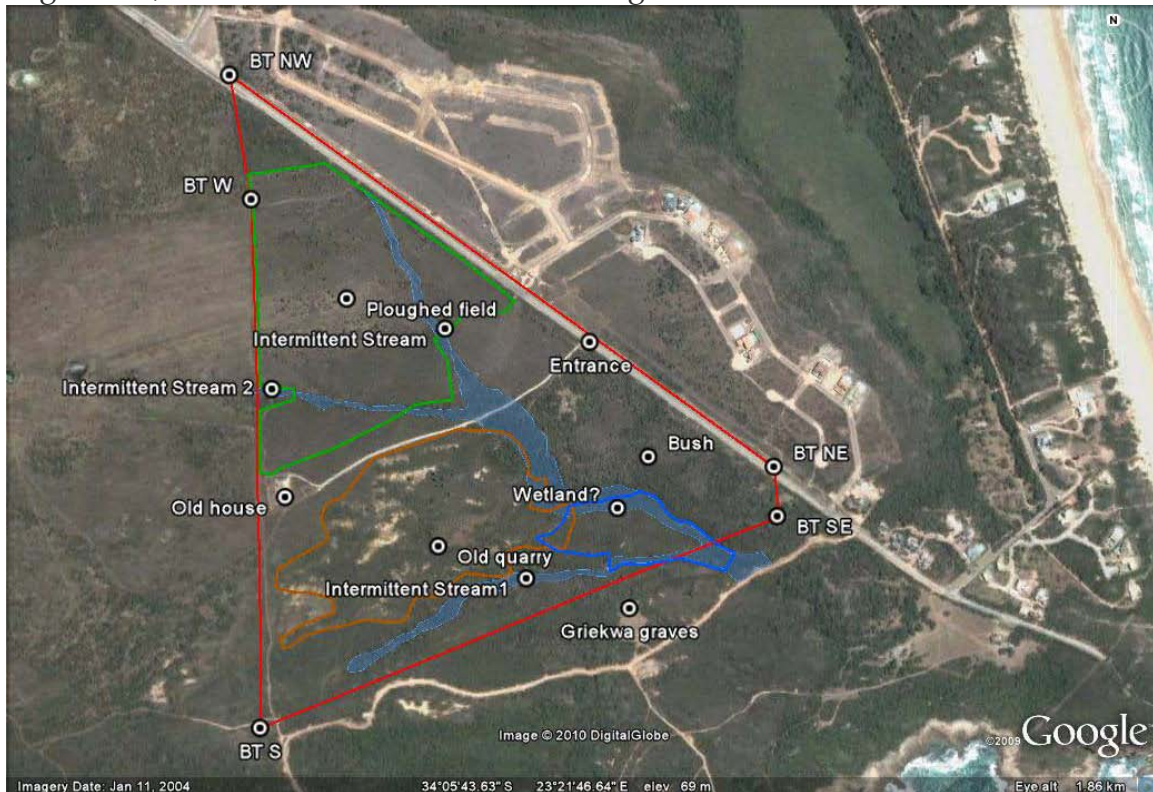


Figure 10: Detail site plan

## 7. STRUCTURES

A modern house was demolished some years ago but its floor slabs and garden terraces survive.

## 8. HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage or cultural attributes of a property can for convenience be grouped into four main categories: aesthetic, historical, scientific and social. Significance for this site can be found in the aesthetic significance of the property's landscape setting and in the scientific significance of the remnant indigenous vegetation and of the archaeological material identified in the two AIAs.

### 8.1 Aesthetic significance

New World Associates undertook a Level 3 VIA (Annexure 1). It was stated that the proposed development occurs in an area not widely visible from the road but strongly dominated by nature. Robberg Road leading to the Robberg Peninsula Nature Reserve is an important scenic route and it and its associated landscape has a distinctive identity or "sense of place".<sup>7</sup> This landscape must be considered to be part of the National Estate (Section 3 of the NHRA) in terms of Sub-section (2)(d) "*landscapes and natural features of cultural significance*". It is critical that the new development relates positively to the scenic route.

### 8.2 Scientific significance

Although the property is heavily infested with invasive alien vegetation, the botanical survey carried out by Jan Vlok identified remnant areas supporting South Outeniqua Sandstone Fynbos, a vulnerable vegetation type and areas of Knysna Sand Fynbos which is endangered.<sup>8</sup> This vegetation is of scientific importance and therefore must be considered to be part of the National Estate (Section 3 of the NHRA) in terms of Sub-section 3 (b) because of "*its possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of South Africa's natural heritage*", and (d) because of "*its importance in demonstrating the principle characteristics of a particular class of South Africa's natural places*".

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<sup>7</sup> LYNCH, K. 1992. Good City Form: The MIT Press. London. Pg. 131. Lynch defines it as "it is the extent to which a person can recognise or recall a place as being distinct from other places—as having a vivid or unique or at least a particular character of its own."

<sup>8</sup> "The Vegetation of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland" (2006), Strelitzia 19, Ladislav Mucina and Michael C Rutherford (Ed), SANBI, Pretoria.

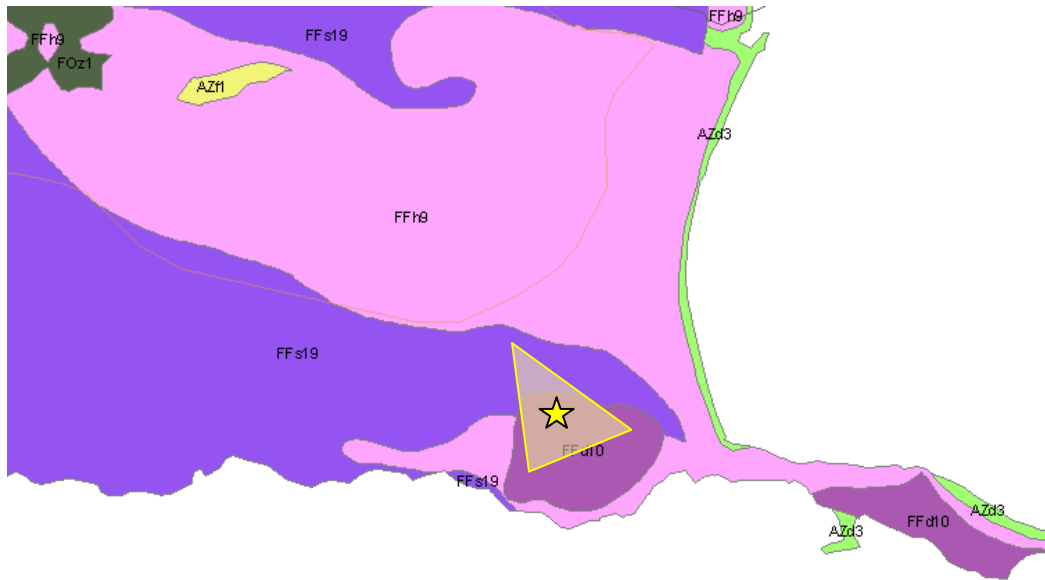


Figure 8: Mapping of the vegetation types showing about 2/3 of the property supported Knysna Sand Fynbos (classified as vulnerable) and the balance South Outeniqua Sandstone Fynbos (classified as endangered)

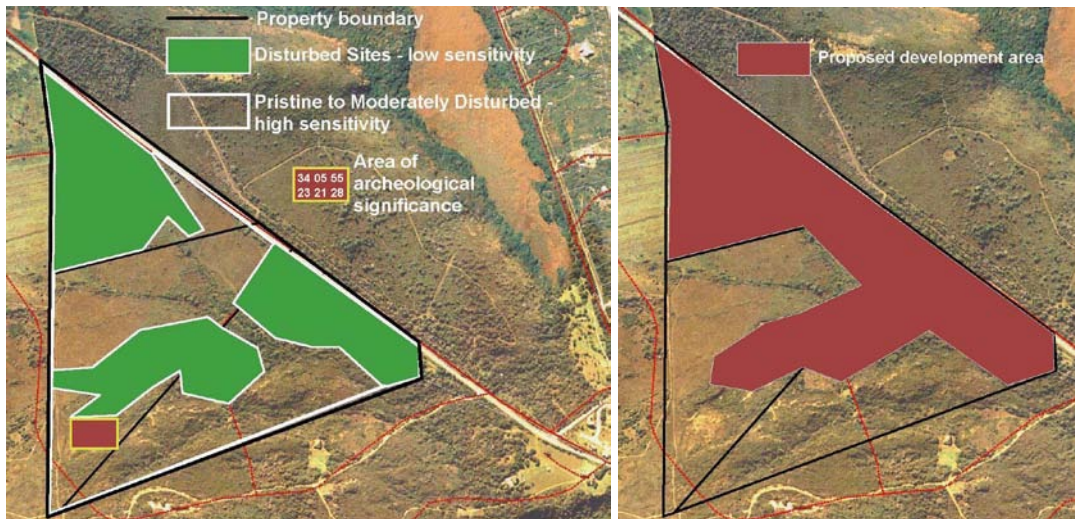


Figure 9: These diagrams were prepared following the specialist studies and identified areas where development could take place

The AIA survey carried out by ACRM identified several thousand Early Stone Age (ESA) flake tools (including handaxes) had been found related to an important Acheulean Stone Age site. In addition relatively large numbers of Early and Middle Stone Age tools had been found lying, among the spoil dumps associated with mining activities. In the gravel road traversing the south western portion of the site large numbers of tools were also documented. Will Archer's more recent studies found inter alia that the old quarry site is likely to represent a Middle-Pleistocene locality where both raw-materials were procured and

artefacts were made *in situ*. Because of its rich archaeological potential as has been shown in the surveys that have been conducted, the property as a whole must be considered to be part of the National Estate (Section 3 of the NHRA) in terms of Sub-section 3 (c) because of *“its potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of South Africa’s cultural heritage”*.

## **9. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

The environmental studies identified 3 areas covering about half of the 55.3ha site (29.2ha) where development could take place. It will accommodate housing, parking and business. The balance will accommodate conservation corridors along wetland routes and an area where the greatest concentration of artefactual material was mapped and surveyed.

The preferred Site Development Plan (SDP) prepared by town planners Macoplan indicates a conventional and geometrical township layout generally falling with the contour.

Macoplan also prepared a Low Impact Development (LID) Framework and Guidelines have been prepared covering urban design, architecture and landscape for the proposed development (see Annexure 5). A range of alternative Site Development Plans was developed and the preferred SDP is shown in Figure 14 below.

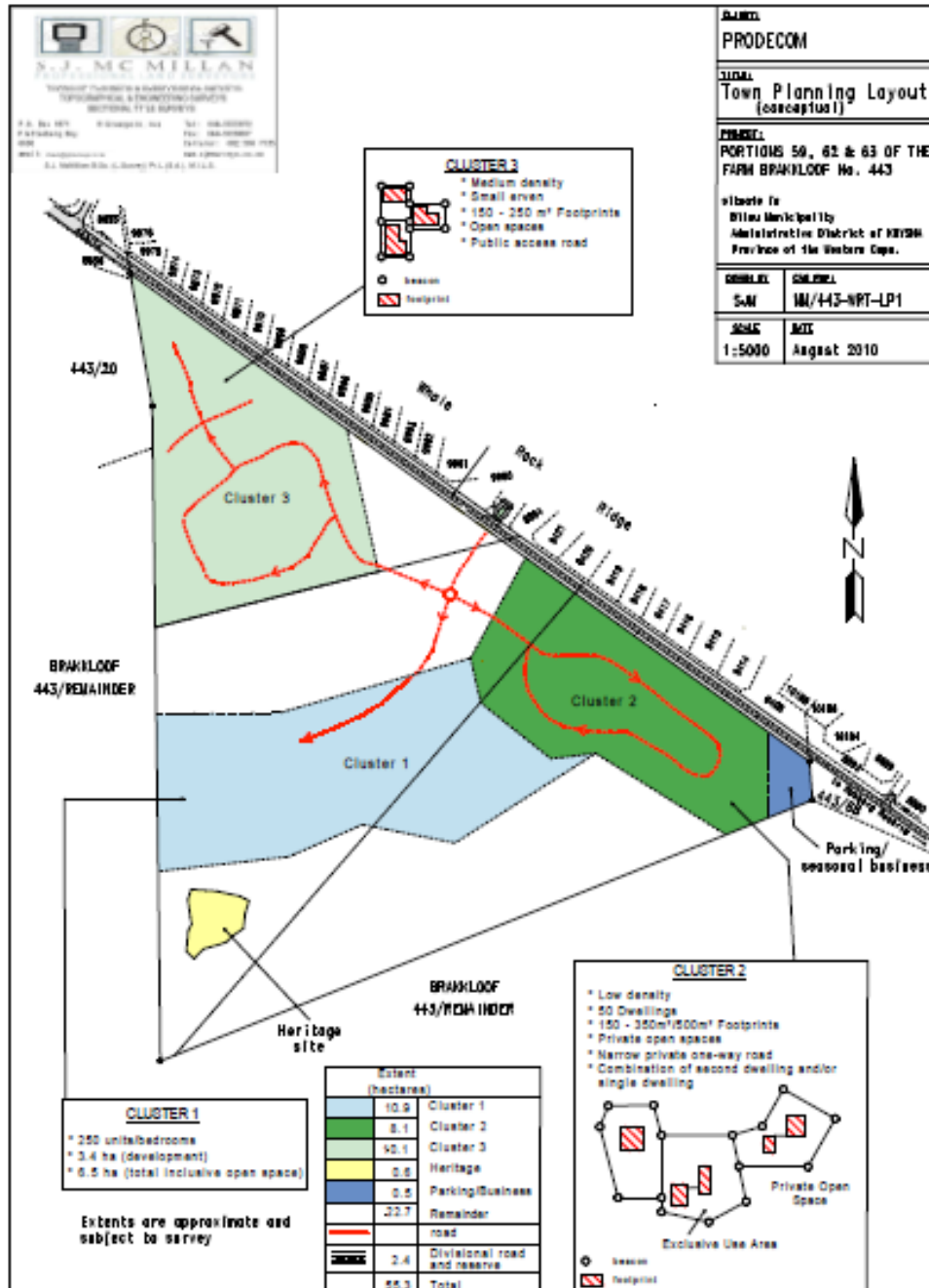


Figure 10: The Cluster Plan was prepared in response to the analytical studies indicating areas where development could take place

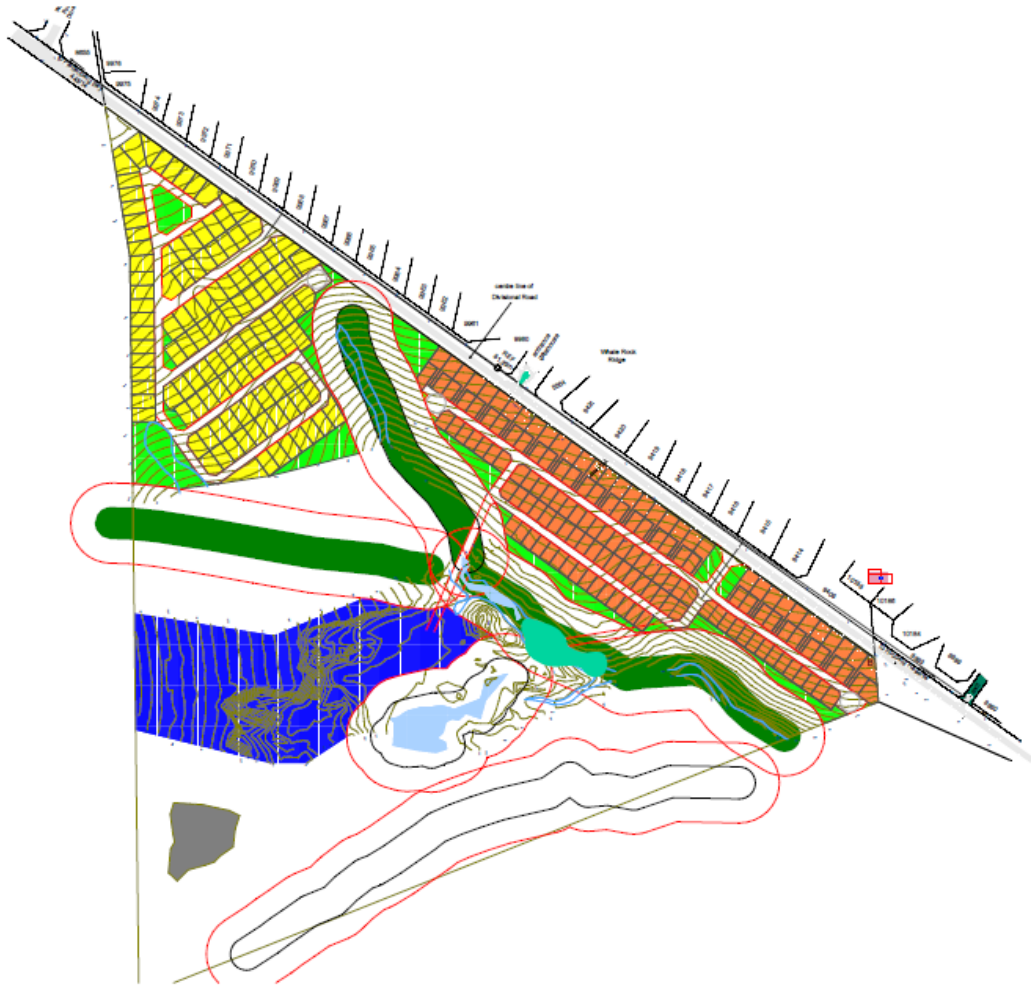


Figure 14: Preferred Alternative March 2011

## 10. RESPONSE TO THE HERITAGE RESOURCES

As set out in section 8 above the landscape character of the property and its setting is a significant resource as is the scientific significance of its remnant indigenous vegetation and the archaeological material found on the property.

### 10.1 Impact on the aesthetic significance

The VIA found that that the proposed development would have a potentially moderate impact on the landscape with district extent only. A number of recommendations were made in the report to mitigate visual and aesthetic impact. The VIA noted that while a LID manual had been prepared (see Annexure 4) the preferred SDP was not well suited to the site and setting (see Figure 14 above). It was recommended that a looser layout that is more site sensitive in detail should be developed. Other key recommendations were;

- A Landscape Plan must be prepared by a registered Landscape Architect;
- Fencing should be carefully chosen to match the surrounding vegetation
- Landscape lighting should be minimal and subtle to prevent unwanted intrusion into the rural landscape and
- Signage: should be kept to a minimum.

### **10.1 Impact on the scientific significance**

The SDP was developed in response to the environmental studies and the initial AIA that had been prepared (see Figure 12). Will Archer argues however in his recent report that the most valuable assemblages are those that are still submerged and the distribution of submerged artefacts across the property without the use of test-pitting, remains unknown. He states...*Assessment of the importance of submerged material was not possible during the initial impact assessments previously undertaken, and therefore could not have been a consideration in the designation of the area suitable for development.*

Among the detailed recommendations made in the report Archer recommends that test-pit localities where prospective earthmoving operations are likely to take place could be designated and information from test-pits would enable avoiding the disturbance of localities where impacts are likely to be significant. His key recommendation is that a heritage management plan be developed to protect vegetation which he states will be gradually destroyed exposing artefactual material.

## **11. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

A full public participation process has been undertaken in line with the *Guideline for Public Participation for the EIA Process, September 2001* (DEA&DP, 2001). The comments received and the response from Calidris forms part of the Final Scoping Report. The objections received and were focused primarily on the scale of the development.

## **12. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that HWC should support the proposed residential development where almost about half of the property is to be conserved as open space designed to protect vulnerable endangered indigenous vegetation and archaeological material found there. This is subject to the following recommendations made by the VIA and archaeological specialists:

- The preferred SDP should be revised and a looser layout that is more site sensitive in detail should be developed;
- A Landscape Plan must be prepared by a registered Landscape Architect;
- A landscape architect should serve on the design review panel;
- Fencing should be carefully chosen to match the surrounding vegetation
- Landscape lighting should be minimal and subtle to prevent unwanted intrusion into the rural landscape and
- Signage: should be kept to a minimum.

Will Archer endorsed the following ACRM recommendations:

- The 'Quarry Site' as it has been mapped by the land surveyor should be declared a 'No Go' development area. A buffer of at least 100 m must also be established around the site.

In addition, a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) must be developed and implemented, that ensures the long term protection of this important site, during both the Construction and Operational Phase of the proposed development.

It is possible that Quarry Site could be developed as a public viewing site, but this would have to be done with strict and sustainable management guidelines in place. Heritage Western Cape would also need to be consulted in this regard. It would also be required that an ESA specialist be contracted by the developers to investigate the site in more detail which may require more detailed mapping. Such an initiative would clearly be viewed as a positive impact arising out of the proposed development as it will allow for detailed research of an important and rare archaeological occurrence.

He however argued that ACRM's recommendation that earthmoving operations must be monitored by a professional archaeologist during the Construction Phase of the proposed development should be refined. His recommendation was:

- Test-pit localities where prospective earthmoving operations are likely to take place should be designated and if it is feasible, information from test-pits would enable avoiding the disturbance of localities where impacts are likely to be significant;

- A heritage management plan (presumably the same tool as the ACRM CMP) should be developed to prevent the destruction of vegetation that protects artefactual material should be developed