

# PROPOSED AFFORDABLE HOUSING: FARM 1653, 1339 AND 1158/1 LA MOTTE FRANSCHHOEK



Figure 1: View from the Roberts Vlei Road towards the TCTA housing and existing La Motte township. Some of the proposed housing would be sited to the left of the settlement where pine plantations have been removed

## PHASE ONE HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

CASE NO: 130218RN21M

Prepared in compliance with **Section 38(8)** of the National Heritage  
Resources Act (No 25 of 1999)

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The assessment that has been carried out indicates that the proposed affordable housing development, related facilities and infrastructure could have a negative impact on the landscape character of the area. The heritage related design indicators set out in Section 11 of this offer significant mitigation.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

Following studies undertaken by Planning Partners in 2008 for the Franschhoek Municipality and subsequently by CNdV for the Stellenbosch Municipality a number of sites within the municipal area where affordable housing schemes could be developed were identified. The La Motte site was one of these and the Council resolved to proceed with development there during 2012. Tenders for undertaking the environmental and planning processes were sought and CK Rumbol & Partners Planning was appointed together with environmental consultants EnviroAfrica CC. In compliance with the provisions of the National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998) a Basic Assessment Report (BAR) for the proposed development is being prepared and fresh water, botanical, zoological and other specialists have conducted studies of the property.

As the redevelopment of the property involves the rezoning of a site more than 10 000m<sup>2</sup> in extent, Aikman Associates: Heritage Management was appointed by the project managers to make application to the provincial heritage authority, Heritage Western Cape (HWC) in terms of section 38(8) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act No.25 of 1999) (NHR Act).

A Notification of Intent to Develop (NID) form together with a Baseline Study was submitted to HWC and on 12 March 2013 then issued their Interim Comment stating that a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) was required consisting of:

- The integration of the new areas of residential development into the setting should be undertaken;
- The analysis should involve an assessment of visual/spatial impacts;
- We request comments of the Franschhoek Valley Trust;
- We request a map of the Grade 1 area.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The programme consisting of the preparation of the Baseline Study and this Phase 1 HIA has involved site inspections and an analysis of historical maps, aerial photographs, plans and other documentation. Some archival research was undertaken and use was made of relevant and easily available published and unpublished material.

Henry Aikman who undertook this study is an architect and accredited member of the Association of Professional Heritage Practitioners (APHP).

### 3. SITE AND SETTING

The site is reached via the Robertsvlei Road that intersects with the R45 about 5km northwest of the Boland town of Franschhoek.



Figure 2: The La Motte site lying in the narrow Robertsvlei valley to the west of Franschhoek. The Berg River dam can be seen in the bottom left hand corner separated from the village by a low mountain ridge





Figure 3: There are two townships separated by a stream. The oldest north of the stream was developed by the Department of Forestry in the 1950s to accommodate 80 families and the newer being housing built to accommodate builders working on the Berg River dam in 2004, Ringed in yellow is the site of the cemetery



Figure 4: The Roberts Vlei Road intersects with the R45. Simonsberg in the distance





Figure 5: The Roberts Vlei Road leads to the township



Figure 6: The existing township is screened by trees along the river



Figure 7: View up the valley



Figure 8: The Trans Caledon Tunnel Authority housing built in 2004



#### 4. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND SETTING

The Department of Forestry established a village for forestry workers at the site in the 1950s. They erected 80 timber-framed houses and community facilities. From 2000 the then Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) began phasing out the plantations of pine and gum in anticipation of the construction of the Berg River Dam. Thousands of hectares of plantations have been removed and a programme to rehabilitate the catchment area of the dam has commenced.

DWAF subsequently reduced its staff levels and the housing there is currently leased to former workers and their families.



Figure 9: Dwellings in the old Forestry Department village



Figure 10: Typical street in the old Forestry Department village



Figure 11: Most of the roads are tarred but some are not



In 2004 the Trans Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA) built 80 dwellings for the construction team involved in the building of the Berg River Dam.



Figure 12: Southern edge of the TCTA township



Figure 13: TCTA housing seen from the access road



Figure 14: Soccer field on the edge of the TCTA housing area

## 5. STATUTORY FRAMEWORK CONTEXT

The following are of relevance;

### **5.1 Zoning Scheme**

The subject property is currently zoned as Agriculture I in terms of the Schedule 8 Land Use Planning Ordinance (15 of 1985) (LUPO).

### **5.2 Spatial Development Framework**

The property is outside the “Urban Edge”.

### **5.3 Western Cape Provincial Spatial Development Framework: Rural Land Use & Management Guidelines 2009**

This policy document has at its core a set of principles that underpin the Western Cape’s rural guidelines. These are:

- Sense of justice: - Meeting fundamental needs of rural communities, especially the poor - Restitution and redistribution of land and natural resources - Rights-based democratic governance - Participatory rural planning processes
- Sense of limits: - Incremental gains over time, working with what is available - Transition to renewable energy alternatives and energy efficiency - Zero waste via reuse of waste outputs as productive inputs - Connectivity along rural movement corridors, towards viable public transport - Sustainable construction materials and building methods - Sustainable use of water and other natural resources
- Sense of place: - Response to landscape context - Sensitivity to spiritual qualities of rural areas - Respect of rural settlement form - Integrated and safe rural communities
- Sense of history: - Valuing cultural diversity and rural community - Sensitivity to cultural landscapes - Response to rural settlement patterns and built vernacular
- Sense of craft: - Growing and broadening the rural economy, greater equity and fair trade - Farming security and sustainable food supplies - Adding value to agricultural products - Strengthening rural tourism (agri and nature based) - Rural livelihood skills development
- Sense of nature: - Maintaining functional eco-system services - Enhancing biodiversity and the preservation of natural habitats - Connecting ecological corridors and maintaining ecological buffers to mitigate against the impacts of climate change.

The policy advocates that to achieve integrated rural development and sustainable human settlements in the Western Cape, new housing development beyond the urban edge urgently needs to be curtailed. The provincial approach is to channel pressures for residential development to existing towns, villages and hamlets. It concludes that only in essential circumstances should new settlements of appropriate scale and compatibility be considered within the rural landscape.

## 5.4 NHR Act

The property is not part of the area designated as a Grade I site by resolution of the Council of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). HWC is therefore the commenting agency in terms of section 38(8).

In terms of section 36 of the NHR Act SAHRA must conserve and generally care for burial grounds and graves. The cemetery therefore falls under SAHRA's jurisdiction.

## 6. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

In 1998 it was estimated that the backlog for affordable housing in the Franschhoek Municipality was  $\pm 1000$  units. This included people living in shacks, backyard dwellings, those on the waiting list and provision for some people moving off the farms and into town.

During the construction of the Berg River Dam in Franschhoek, Stellenbosch Municipality and the Trans Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA) entered into a Memorandum of Agreement, in terms whereof TCTA would build 80 houses to be used by construction staff during the construction phase of the dam.

On completion of the construction, these houses would be transferred to Stellenbosch Municipality, on condition that any proceeds (when selling the property to individuals) would be deposited in a Housing Development Fund (Revolving Fund). A Transfer Agreement, in terms whereof the 80 houses will now be transferred to Stellenbosch Municipality has subsequently been entered into between TCTA and the Municipality.





It is proposed to extend the existing La Motte township to the north (Area 3) to the south of the TCTA housing (Area 1) linking into the existing road network and services. Affordable and subsidised housing is to be provided with community facilities and a commercial centre centred on the existing forestry workshops, stores and the fire station (Area 2).



Figure 15: It is proposed that the Cape Winelands fire station and other former Forestry Department buildings on the Robertsvlei Road could also be used as a node for commercial development (Area 2)

## **7. THE LANDSCAPE**

The character of this area has been substantially transformed since the late 1940s when the State Forestry Department established hundreds of hectares of pine plantations. Up until WWII the Boland mountains had not changed as settlers in the area from the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century concentrated on farming the valley floors and floodplains. While the slopes were used as rough grazing of livestock and were occasionally burned their primeval character survived. This land also remained in VOC, Crown, Cape and eventually Union Government ownership and was never cultivated.

Following WWII the Forestry Department established thousands of Hectares of pine and gum plantations throughout the Boland. The soils of the area are derived from sandstone and granite overlying alluvial sands and gravel. These soils gave rise to three vegetation types: Boland Granite Fynbos, Kogelberg Sandstone Fynbos and Swartland Alluvium Fynbos. This would have existed in the area from primeval times until the post WWII period when extensive pine plantations were established. Forestry practice at the time was to simply plant pine tree saplings in the shrubby fynbos vegetation and to be cost-effective ploughing was not carried out.

La Motte was one of the main forestry stations controlling plantations from Franschhoek to Grabouw. Mountain slopes up until then carpeted with fynbos were divided up into blocks with a network of roads criss-crossing the slopes and brought into timber production.





Figure 16: Slope analysis of Area 1

The planning and construction of the Berg River Dam however set in motion a process to rehabilitate this area to increase water capture and dramatically improve biodiversity. Over the last decade hundreds of hectares of plantations have been clear-felled including the area surrounding the La Motte village which until 2010 was hidden in pine plantations.

Areas 1 and 2 where housing and commercial development respectively is proposed are fairly level. Most of Area 3 is level but the south western half becomes fairly steep. Areas 1 and 3 were until fairly recently used for timber production (*Pinus radiata*) but have been clear-felled.





Figure 17: Slope analysis Area 3

As a result of the clear felling over the last decade pioneer indigenous and invasive alien vegetation is now found on these sites. Although it has been concluded that pines alter nutrient-poor 'fynbos' soils less than invasive trees such as leguminous, nitrogen-fixing *Acacia* sp. (there is still a strongly suppressive effect of pine plantations on the growth of fynbos).



Figure 18: Area 1 lying to the south east of the TCTA housing area was used for timber production until fairly recently when it was clear-felled. The fire station and old forestry complex can be seen to the left of the Robertsvlei Road at centre top of the picture



Figure 19: Area 3 has also been clear-felled and as can be seen in the foreground fynbos is now growing once again

In the specialist botanical survey<sup>1</sup> it was concluded:

Given the past disturbance on Areas 1 and 3 but regenerating fynbos the impacts of the proposed residential development are rated as **Medium Negative** overall. On-site mitigation would be difficult but it is recommended that in the broader planning for the La Motte area, areas of fynbos should be earmarked for conservation purposes, even if those areas previously had pine plantations.

The survey of Area 2 concluded:

The high level of transformation of Area 2 indicates that there should be no constraints on development of that area apart from adequately buffering the riparian zone.

## 8. STRUCTURES

Besides the TCTA housing erected in 2004 there are three groups of structures in the study area: the old forestry station, the dwellings of the old La Motte village and the cemetery. Most of the dwellings in the village are more than 60 years old and the cemetery is probably also dates from the establishment of the settlement.

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<sup>1</sup> MACDONALD, D.J. 2013. Botanical Assessment: La Motte, Drakenstein Municipality, Western Cape Province. Report prepared for EnviroAfrica CC





Figure 20: Cape Winelands fire station with Forestry Dept sheds in the background

### 8.1 La Motte Village

As shown in Figures 9, 10 and 11 above and 21 below, the majority of dwellings in the village are simple timber frame structures. RDP type dwellings were also erected in the last few years.



Figure 21: Typical timber frame dwelling

### 8.2 Cemetery

On a sloping site to the northwest of the La Motte village is an informal cemetery. There are about 80 graves in four distinct rows. It is clear that it was abandoned as a burial site many years ago as tree stumps are found on many of the graves. There are a few graves with plastered masonry surrounds but most are simple mounds of small stones, some decorated with seashells.





Figure 22: Informal burial ground



Figure 23: Most graves are mere mounds of stones but a few have plastered masonry surrounds

Officials of the Stellenbosch Municipality claim to know nothing of it and a few residents interviewed in houses nearby claimed that they knew of it and that children and old people had been buried there many years ago.

SAHRA has been informed of its presence.

## 9. SETTLEMENT PATTERNS OF THE VALLEY

In response to concerns being raised about proposals for significant urban development in the Dwars River Valley, a few kilometres to the west of the La Motte site on various farms owned by Boschendal Ltd a report was prepared

investigating historical patterns of settlement in the Dwars River valley.<sup>2</sup> The analysis conducted relates strongly to those found here in Franschoek. The study indicated that four patterns of settlement had occurred. These were:

1. The historic homesteads;
2. The off-farm agro-villages on the main movement spine (i.e. Pniel);
3. Villages on a secondary corridor (i.e. Kylemore) and
4. On-farm accommodation for farm labourers.

The consultants stated that the first three patterns operated as an integrated system as they are linked through pedestrian flows and all contribute to the thresholds or levels of support for social and commercial facilities which operate to the benefit of all. It can be argued that La Motte village fits into category 3 as it is sited on a secondary corridor, the Robertsvlei Road.

The report also provides in Section 5: Some Guiding Principles of Development. These relate to how new development in the Dwars Valley can be distilled and given the similarity of the setting these guidelines are also appropriate to La Motte:

At the level of the settlement system:

- Maintain the dominance of wilderness and agriculture: development should occur in relatively small pockets;
- Use new development to reinforce and integrate the regional and sub-regional movement structure;
- Respond to historical investment in infrastructure:
- Replicate the dominant pattern of “bead on a string” in order to preserve large uninterrupted green swathes.

At the level of Micro-location:

- No development in river floodplains, or areas prone to flooding;
- No development on good agricultural soils and tread lightly on moderate soils;
- No development on steeper slopes (9°)
- No development on ridgelines or hills;
- No blockages to important public viewing cones and vistas and their backdrops;
- Make erven larger and building footprints smaller as slopes steepen;
- Make development as visually unobtrusive as possible (through planting, cutting, control of height and so on).

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<sup>2</sup> DEWAR, D & LOUW, P. 2007 Boschendal Farmlands: Groot Drakenstein-Simondium Valley: EIA-HIA Baseline Studies: Settlement Structure

The consultants concluded that...to meet the performance criteria of integration, dominance of and agricultural landscapes and authenticity, any new settlement in the valley must exhibit a locational logic which derives in the first instance from the regional and sub-regional movement structure: it must reinforce existing settlement and movement patterns. It must derive from and respect the character of the landscape.

## **10. HERITAGE RESOURCES**

The heritage or cultural attributes of a site can be grouped into four categories: aesthetic, historical, scientific and social. Significance for this property can be found in the aesthetic, scientific and social categories.

### **10.1 Aesthetic significance**

The site cannot be considered to be part of an intact cultural landscape. The wilderness character was transformed with the planting of plantations of pine in the 1940s and is again undergoing transformation now that these are being clear-felled. The site is however in an area where wilderness and agriculture are the dominant elements. This will have to be taken into consideration in the development of a Site Development Plan (SDP).

### **10.2 Scientific significance**

The botanical study indicated that... *Areas 1 and 3 have fynbos vegetation which is regenerating after the effects of suppression by pine plantations. This vegetation could return to viable fynbos communities in the long term.*

It went on to state... *Only one Red List plant species (Raimondo et al. 2009) *Lachnaea capitata* (**Vulnerable**) was encountered (in Area 1). A more intensive study over a number of season could possibly reveal more threatened species (particularly in Areas 1 & 3) so loss of fynbos habitat in Areas 1 & 3 would have negative implications for such species in the La Motte district.*

Parts of the site provide an opportunity for viable fynbos communities to be re-established.

The archaeological survey undertaken by Pro-Active Archaeology yielded no prehistoric archaeological resources.



### **10.3 Social significance**

The cemetery with more than 80 burial sites is of social significance and requires further research and conservation.

## **11. DESIGN INDICATORS**

The area selected for development is in a fairly secluded valley setting and could only be glimpsed from the R45. There would be some visual impact in an area of great scenic beauty. To mitigate against the possible negative development of housing development the following heritage related design indicators are recommended:

### **11.1 Small pockets of development**

In order to retain the dominance of wilderness and agriculture it is recommended that broad green corridors between the existing La Motte village and TCTA village and new areas of residential development be provided to break up the scale of urban development in this small valley. The new areas of residential development should also be broken up into small pockets with broad corridors.

The corridors can be used to accommodate a range of green uses including fynbos habitats, storm water management ponds, playing fields, parks and community food gardens.

### **11.2 Steeper slopes**

To avoid visual intrusion no development should take place on slopes steeper than 9°.

### **11.3 Fynbos**

As was recommended in the botanical survey areas of fynbos should be earmarked for conservation purposes, even if those areas previously had pine plantations.

### **11.4 The cemetery**

This site needs further investigation and conservation and memorialisation by the municipality and SAHRA who should liaise in this regard.

## **12. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Franschhoek Valley Conservation Trust is registered with HWC and is to be consulted as part of the section 38(8) NHR Act process.

## **13. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the heritage related design indicators set out in Section 11 above should inform the formulation of the SDP.