

SITE SENSITIVITY VERIFICATION (SSV) REPORT

PROPOSED BRIDGE AND GRAVEL ROAD UPGRADE ON PORTION 3 OF FARM VISGAT 207, AND PORTION 2 OF FARM 304, WITZENBERG VALLEY, WITZENBERG MUNICIPALITY, WESTERN CAPE

INTRODUCTION:

This Site Sensitivity Verification (SSV) Report was undertaken in terms of the *Protocols for the Assessment and Minimum Criteria for Reporting on identified Environmental Themes* (referred to “the Protocols” hereafter) as per Government Notice No. 320 (published in Government Gazette No. 43110 on 20 March 2020)¹. These Protocols, effected as on the 9th May 2020, must be complied with for every new application submitted after the effective date. According to the Protocols, the EAP must verify the current use of the proposed site for development as well as the site’s environmental sensitivity, in accordance with the DFFE Screening Tool (Appendix I – DFFE Screening Tool), to determine the need for specialist inputs in relation to the themes (and proposed specialist assessments) included in the Protocols.

METHODOLOGY:

The Site Sensitivity Verification (SSV) report was compiled based on desktop studies [including the Western Cape Biodiversity Spatial Plan, vegetation maps (Vegetation map of SA (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006), NFEPA, land-use map, Google Earth imagery, historical imagery), specialist input (Botanical, Freshwater, and Heritage inputs), as well as a site visit (conducted in December 2021) to investigate, identify, and evaluate potential impacts, associated with the proposed development, on the receiving environment (namely the proposed site for development). The SSV report was compiled by the EAP (Mr Clinton Geyser).

AIM OF THE SSV REPORT:

The aim of the SSV Report is to;

- Verify land use and theme sensitivities as identified by the DFFE Screening Tool;
- Confirm or disconfirm the need for a particular specialist assessment(s) as indicated by the DEA Screening Tool; and
- Should the need for a specialist assessment be challenged, provide a motivation as to why the proposed specialist assessment is not applicable to the proposed development.

¹ The Protocols are in line with Section 24(5)(a) and (h) and Section 44 of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998).

SITE DESCRIPTION:

The proposed sites is located on Portion 3 of Farm Visgat 207, and Portion 2 of Farm 304. Farm Visgar is an established pome fruit farm.

As per the site visit, the proposed sites are mostly located within undisturbed natural vegetation. The vegetation is classified as Winterhoek Sandstone Fynbos (Least Concern).

The proposed bridge will cross the Olifants River, and the access road runs roughly parallel to the Olifants River, on the eastern side of the river. The road realignment section cross, or are in close proximity, to a number of the non-perennial streams indicated on the NFEPA overlays, but also on non-perennial streams not indicated on the NFEPA overlays.



Figure 1. General view of the existing bridge over the Olifants River.



Figure 2. Typical seasonal stream.



Figure 3. General view of the typical new road section route.

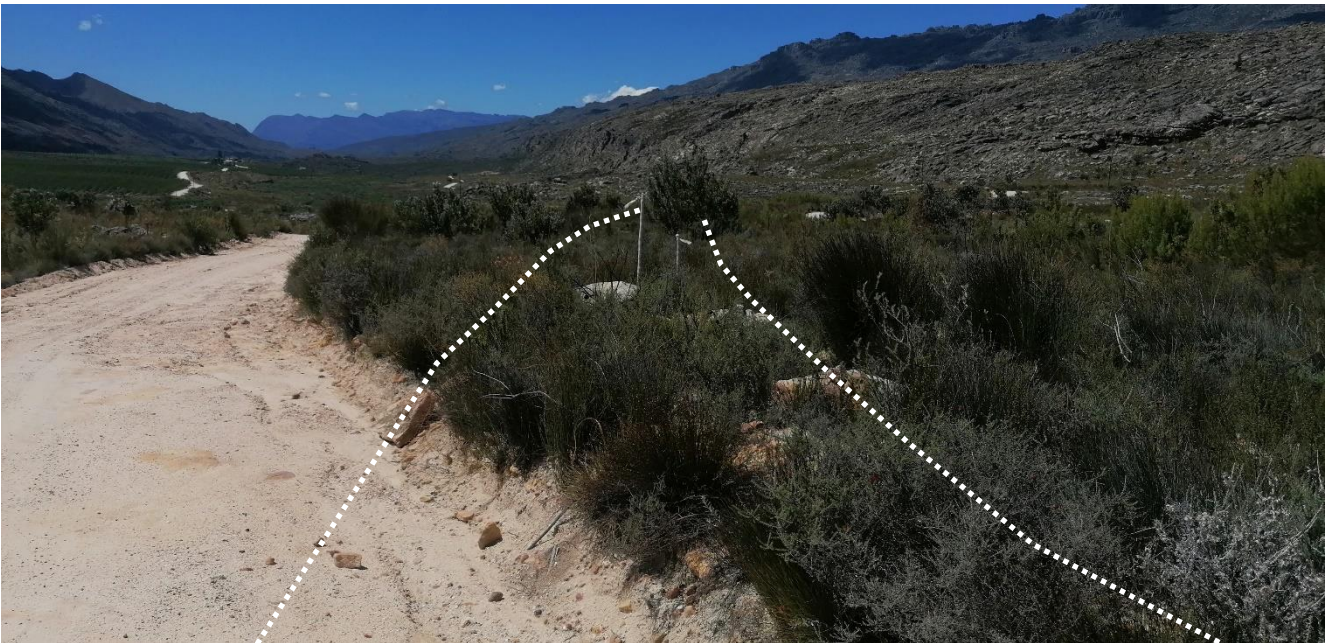


Figure 4. General view of existing access road, and new proposed route of the road.



Figure 5: Google Earth Image showing the alignment of the proposed bridge.



Figure 6: Google Earth Image indicating the realignment of road section 1.

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Figure 7: Google Earth Image indicating the realignment of road section 2.

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Figure 8: Google Earth Image indicating the realignment of road section 3.

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Table 1. Themes and associated sensitivity as per the DEA Screening Tool.

No	Theme	DFFE Sensitivity	Agree/Disagree	Proposed Sensitivity	Motivation
1	Agriculture Theme	Very High Sensitivity	Disagree	Very Low - Insignificant	<p>The proposed property is zoned Agricultural, and is an existing pome fruit farm.</p> <p>However, the areas proposed for development, which will only have a combined footprint of approximately 0.5ha, are unlikely to be cultivated. Therefore the impact on potential agricultural land is likely to be insignificant, especially when additional areas of the farm are available for cultivation.</p>
2	Animal Species Theme	High Sensitivity	Disagree	Very Low - Insignificant	<p>No animals of significance were noted on site during the site visit. Due to the nature of the development and the relatively small development footprint, impacts are expected to be negligible.</p> <p>The High Sensitivity is based on the potential occurrence of the katydid <i>Brinckiella aptera</i>, and the Black Harrier (<i>Circus maurus</i>), both of which are unlikely to be significantly impacted.</p>
3	Aquatic Biodiversity Theme	Very High Sensitivity	Agree		A Freshwater Assessment has been conducted (Appendix G1).
4	Archaeological and Cultural Heritage	Low Sensitivity	Agree		<p>A Notice of Intent to Develop, in terms of Section 38(4) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999), was submitted by Mr. Jonathan Kaplan (ACRM) to HWC.</p> <p>The following response, date 02 December 2021 (see Appendix E1), was received from HWC: <i>You are hereby notified that, since there is no reason to believe that the proposed upgrading of an existing gravel road on ptn 3 farm 207, Visgat Ceres will impact on heritage resource, no further action under Section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) is required.</i></p>

5	Civil Aviation	Low Sensitivity	Disagree	Insignificant	Due to the nature of the activity, no impacts on civil aviation are expected.
6	Defence Theme	Low Sensitivity	Disagree	Insignificant	Due to the nature of the activity, no impacts on defence are expected.
7	Palaeontology	High Sensitivity	Disagree	Low Sensitivity	<p>A Notice of Intent to Develop, in terms of Section 38(4) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999), was submitted by Mr. Jonathan Kaplan (ACRM) to HWC.</p> <p>The following response, date 02 December 2021 (see Appendix E1), was received from HWC: <i>You are hereby notified that, since there is no reason to believe that the proposed upgrading of an existing gravel road on ptn 3 farm 207, Visgat Ceres will impact on heritage resource, no further action under Section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) is required.</i></p>
8	Plant Species Theme	Medium Sensitivity	Agree		<p>In accordance with the 2018 Vegetation map of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006), the proposed footprint(s) will only impact on one broad vegetation type, namely Winterhoek Sandstone Fynbos a vegetation type classified as “Least Concern”.</p> <p>Although the proposed development footprint is only approximately 0.5ha, a Botanical Impact Assessment was conducted (Appendix G2).</p>
9	Terrestrial Biodiversity Theme	Very High Sensitivity	Disagree	Medium Sensitivity	Due to the nature of the development and the relatively small development footprint, impacts are expected to be Low. A Botanical Impact Assessment was conducted (Appendix G2) which addresses terrestrial biodiversity.

Table 2. Specialist assessments identified as per the DFFE Screening Tool.

No	Proposed Specialist Assessment	Verification of Site Sensitivity And Motivation On The Need For Specialist Investigation
1	Landscape/ Visual Impact Assessment	Due to the nature of the development, no Visual Impact Assessment is deemed necessary.
2	Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA)	<p>A Notice of Intent to Develop, in terms of Section 38(4) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999), was submitted by Mr. Jonathan Kaplan (ACRM) to HWC.</p> <p>The following response, date 02 December 2021 (see Appendix E1), was received from HWC: <i>You are hereby notified that, since there is no reason to believe that the proposed upgrading of an existing gravel road on ptn 3 farm 207, Visgat Ceres will impact on heritage resource, no further action under Section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) is required.</i></p> <p>Therefore, no Heritage Impact Assessment is required.</p>
3	Palaeontological Impact Assessment	<p>A Notice of Intent to Develop, in terms of Section 38(4) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999), was submitted by Mr. Jonathan Kaplan (ACRM) to HWC.</p> <p>The following response, date 02 December 2021 (see Appendix E1), was received from HWC: <i>You are hereby notified that, since there is no reason to believe that the proposed upgrading of an existing gravel road on ptn 3 farm 207, Visgat Ceres will impact on heritage resource, no further action under Section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) is required.</i></p> <p>Therefore, no Heritage Impact Assessment is required.</p>
4	Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment	A Botanical Impact Assessment (Appendix G2) has been conducted.
5	Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment	A Freshwater Assessment (Appendix G1), has been conducted.
6	Hydrology Assessment	Due to the size of the proposed development, a hydrology assessment is not deemed necessary.
7	Socio-economic	Due to the nature of the proposed activity, no socio-economic impact assessment is deemed necessary.
8	Plant Species Assessment	A Botanical Impact Assessment (Appendix G2) has been conducted.
9	Animal Species Assessment	No animals of significance were noted on site during the site visit. Due to the nature of the development and the relatively small development footprint, impacts are expected to be negligible.

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		The High Sensitivity is based on the potential occurrence of the katydid <i>Brinckiella aptera</i> , and the Black Harrier (<i>Circus maurus</i>), both of which are unlikely to be significantly impacted.
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Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or clarity on the above.

Best Regards,

Clinton Geyser



Environmental Assessment Practitioner

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