



18 July 2023

Att : Natasha Higgitt
South African Heritage Resources Agency
PO Box 4637
Cape Town
8001

Dear Ms Higgitt,

RECOMMENDED EXEMPTION FROM FURTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND PALAEOANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES, PROPOSED DE KUILEN RESORT DEVELOPMENT ON PORTION 2 OF THE FARM DE KUILEN NO. 451 NEAR KAMIESKROON, KAMIESBERG MUNICIPALITY, NORTHERN CAPE

1. Introduction

The proposal entails the development of a wedding and conference facility, accommodation, and associated infrastructure on Portion 2 of the Farm De Kuilen No. 451 near Kamieskroon (Kamiesberg Municipality) in the Northern Cape Province (Figures 1 & 2).

EnviroAfrica is the appointed, independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) responsible for facilitating environmental authorisation of the project.

A Basic Environmental Assessment (BA) process will be followed in this application.

2. Description of the proposed activity

The proposed De Kuilen Resort development is a low-density development, comprising between five and seven chalets/log houses and a conference centre/wedding facility, with a combined footprint area of ± 2.2 ha (Figure 3). A restaurant/café, caravan/camping site may also be developed. The proposed chalets/caravan/camping site will be located in old/disused ploughed fields of Rooibos Tea and dryland wheat, while the conference centre/wedding facility/restaurant will be located in disturbed land alongside the farmhouse/werf, at the entrance to the property. Potable water for the project will be supplied via three boreholes on the property. The abstracted water is pumped into Jo Jo storage tanks from where it is distributed over the property. Each chalet will be provided with their own storage tank. Septic tanks and/or soak aways systems for wastewater will also be built. Existing access roads will be used, and no new roads will need to be constructed. The proposed development will have a low environmental impact.

3. Environmental context

Kammieskroon is a small village located alongside the N7, about 500kms north of Cape Town, in the arid, semi-desert region of the Northern Cape Province. De Kuilen (GPS coordinates 30°11'08.21" S 18°02'51.20" E) is situated about 11kms to the east of the village at the top of the Kamiesberg Pass. To the east is the wide expanse of the arid Boesmanland and to the west the Kamies Mountains. The topography is made up of prominent granite outcrops. In between the granite are patches of level ground that have historically been ploughed for farming of Rooibos tea and wheat (Figure 5). To the south is the upper tributary of the Buffels River. The river is mostly dry and only runs after heavy rains. The main farmhouse and associated buildings and infrastructure are all located at the entrance to the farm (Figure 6). The surrounding land use is mostly grazing (sheep and goats).



4. Archaeological context

A desktop study was carried out to assess the heritage context surrounding the proposed development site. The study included mostly unpublished commercial archaeology reports, some of which were sourced from the South African Heritage Resources Information System (or SAHRIS). The study has shown that very little archaeological work has taken place in the Kammieskroon area. Only three studies have previously been done in the village, where extremely low numbers of Stone Age archaeological resources were recorded (CTS Heritage 2017, 2018a; Kaplan 2020a, b). A HIA conducted for a large solar energy farm ± 25kms northeast of Kamieskroon, failed to identify any archaeological resources (Gaigher 2012). A few isolated Middle Stone Age and Later Stone Age remains were recorded at Paulshoek, and Rooifontein, small villages more than 35kms northeast and southeast respectively of Kamieskroon (CTS Heritage/Kaplan 2018a & b). A faded rock art site was also recorded at Paulshoek.

In more recent historic times, the interior of Namaqualand was occupied by the Little Namaqua, a Khoekhoen pastoralist group who herded sheep and cattle and lived in temporary encampments of mat houses. They are known to have moved seasonally with their livestock and historical reports indicate that they may have followed a transhumance cycle between the Kamiesberg in the summer months and the Sandveld in the winter months that may also have included the area around Kammieskroon (Webley 1992). Since the Little Namaqua had no clearly defined territorial boundaries, it was easy for the colonial Trekboers to settle in the area. The earliest loan farms in the Kamiesberg were granted after 1750 and the Little Namaqua eventually retreated to so-called “reserves” such as Leliefontein (near Kammieskroon), Steinkopf and Concordia (Webley 1992).

5. Palaeontological heritage

According to consulting palaeontologist, John Pether (email correspondence dated 22 May 2023), De Kuilen is situated in gneiss bedrock terrain. The bedrock is lapped around by weathering regolith as colluvial slope-wash and ephemeral stream-wash sediments, which ‘have low fossil bone potential’ as these environments are not favourable for the preservation of the bones of carcasses. Unless timeously buried by windblown sands or cached in burrows by hyaenas or other carnivores, bones remaining on a surface are quite rapidly degraded by scavenging, bioerosion (gnawing by rodents & insects), and by weathering. The colluvial deposits, according to Pether, ‘also have low fossil bone potential’ as the environment is not favourable for the early burial of carcasses on their surfaces.

Pether also notes that ‘the ephemeral or seasonal stream-wash alluvial deposits are also poorly fossiliferous, but robust fossil bones are expected to occur very sporadically, as well as fragmented bones, antelope horn cores and scattered teeth which have been washed into the local alluvium of the ephemeral, shallow channels during occasional, deluges. Although graded Medium, the default for “alluvium” (SAHRIS PalaeoMap), the fossil potential is (also) LOW in this context’.

The subsurface impact of the development is also considered to be minor (Pether pers. comm. May 2023).

The Low palaeontological sensitivity of the Kamieskroon area is also supported by consulting palaeontologist, Dr John Almond (2020).



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6. Anticipated impacts

The desktop study has shown that important archaeological and palaeontological heritage resources are unlikely to be impacted by the proposed De Kuilen Resort development.

7. Conclusion

The proposed De Kuilen Resort on the Farm De Kuilen No. 451/2 near Kamieskroon is not considered to pose a threat to local archaeological heritage because of the following considerations:

- The desktop study indicates a paucity of Stone Age archaeological resources in the surrounding area, where only a few isolated tools have previously been recorded.
- The development will have a low environmental impact, with a combined hard footprint area of ± 2.2 ha.
- The development will be located in disused fields of Rooibos Tea and wheat (chalets/camping/caravan site), and in degraded land (conference centre/wedding facility/restaurant).
- The DEA Screening Tool indicates a Low sensitivity in respect of Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact.
- The palaeontological sensitivity of the proposed site is rated as being Low (Pether 2023; Almond 2020).

Therefore, there are no objections to the proposed development commencing.

8. Recommendations

It is recommended that exemption from further specialist heritage studies be granted, as important archaeological, and palaeontological resources are unlikely to be impacted by the proposed De Kuilen Resort development.

However,

1. If any human burials, or ostrich eggshell caches, for example, are uncovered during construction activities then work in the area must be halted. The finds would need to be reported to the heritage authorities (Att Ms Natasha Higgitt 021 462 4502) and will require inspection by a professional archaeologist.

The above recommendation must be included in the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for the proposed development.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Kaplan
Director: Agency for Cultural Resource Management



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9. References

Almond, J. 2020. Palaeontological heritage assessment: desktop study. Proposed Kammieskroon Bulk Water Supply System, Kamiesberg Local Municipality, Namakwa District Municipality, Northern Cape. Report prepared for EnviroAfrica cc. Natura Viva cc, Cape Town.

CTS Heritage 2017. Kamieskroon Bulk Water Supply, Kamiesberg Local Municipality. Heritage Screener prepared for Enviroafrica cc. CTS Heritage Cape Town

CTS Heritage 2018a Archaeological specialist study. Proposed upgrade and expansion of Kammieskroon Oxidation Ponds, Kamiesberg Local Municipality, Northern Cape. Prepared for Enviroafrica cc. CTS Heritage, in Association with ACRM, Cape Town

CTS Heritage 2018b. Archaeological Specialist Study, proposed Paulshoek Bulk Water Supply. Report prepared in association with ACRM, for Enviroafrica cc.

CTS Heritage 2018c. Archaeological Specialist Study, proposed Rooifontein Bulk Water Supply. Report prepared in association with ACRM, for Enviroafrica.

Gaigher, S. 2102. Heritage Impact Assessment, Basic Assessment Proposed establishment of the Brax Energy Photovoltaic Solar Park on a Portion of the Farm Mesklip 259 near Springbok in the Northern Cape Province. Report prepared for Savannah Environmental. G&A Heritage Management Consultants. Louis Triecharadt.

Kaplan, J. 2020a. Archaeological Impact Assessment, proposed Kamieskroon Bulk Water Supply System, Portion 4 of Farm 455, Kamieskroon, Northern Cape. Report prepared for Enviroafrica. ACRM, Cape Town.

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Van Driel, D.2023. De Kuilen Resort, Kamiesberg Northern Cape. Freshwater Report for the further development of the De Kuilen Resort on Portion 2 of the Farm De Kuilen 451, Kamieskroon. Watsan Africa, Knysna.

Webley, L. 1992. The history and archaeology of pastoralist and hunter-gatherer settlement in the north-western Cape, South Africa. Unpublished D.Phil. thesis: University of Cape Town.



Figure 1. Map indicating the location of the proposed De Kuilen Retreat near Kamieskroon



Figure 2. Google Earth satellite map indicating the study area (yellow pin) northwest of Kamieskroon

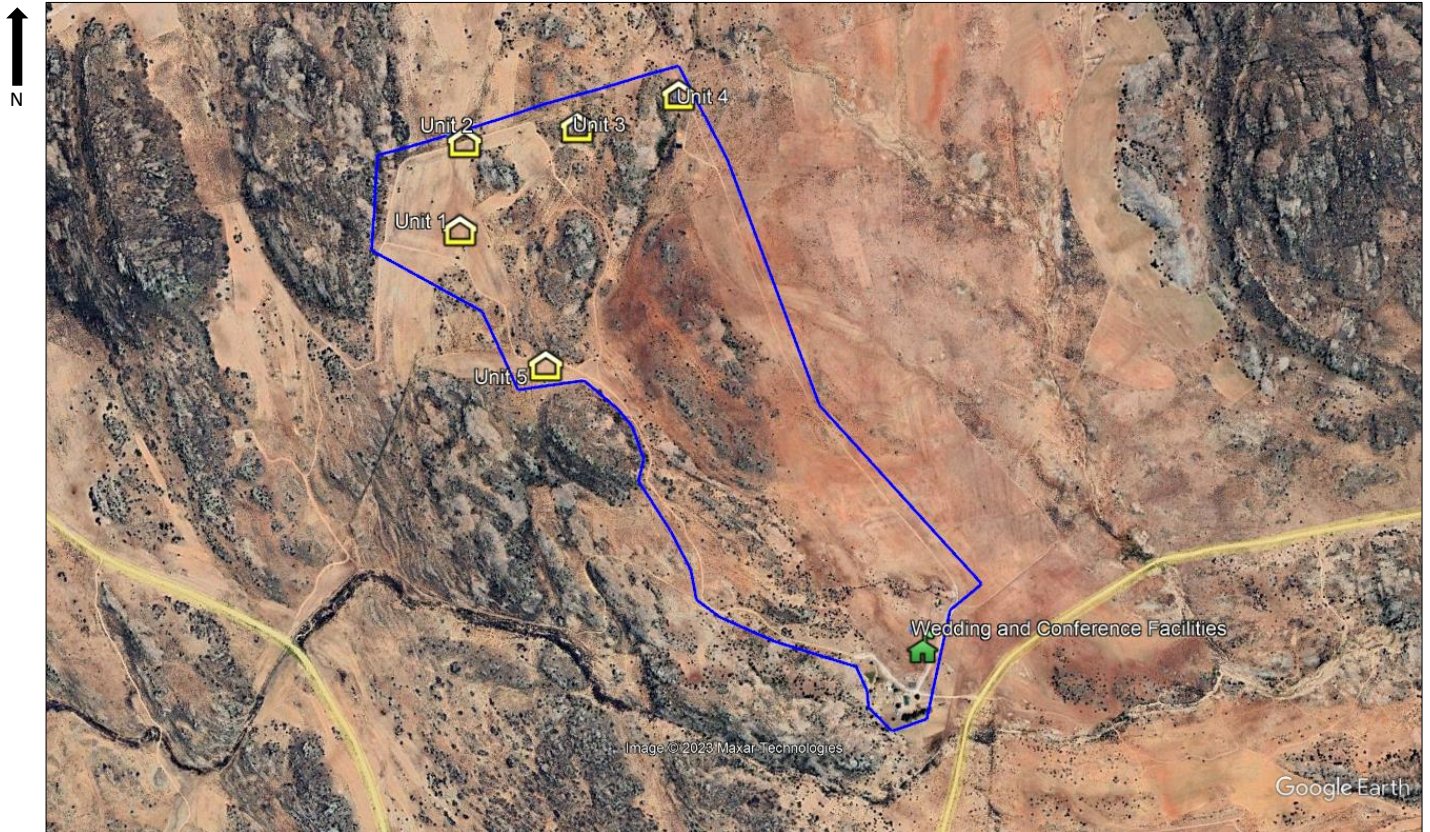


Figure 3. Proposed layout of the De Kuilen Resort Development.



Figure 4. The receiving terrain for the proposed chalets/log houses. View facing northeast (Van Driel July 2023)



Figure 5. Existing dwellings and infrastructure on the farm (Source: Macroplan July 2023). Note the location of the proposed wedding venue/conference centre