

Site Verification Report


Proposed rezoning and subdivision of Farm Klein
Dassenberg 20 Portion 16, Atlantis

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1. BACKGROUND

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, a Site Sensitivity Verification (SSV) Report must be compiled and submitted with each new application submitted after the effective date of the Protocols (9th May 2020).

The aim of the SSV Report is to (i) verify the land use and various theme sensitivities which were identified by the DEA Screening Tool (Appendix A), (ii) agree/dispute theme sensitivity ratings, and provide motivations should the theme sensitivity be challenged, and (iii) provide a motivation as to why the need for identified specialist studies are challenged.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant, Velaskar Property Development (Pty) Ltd proposes to rezone and subdivide Portion 16 of the farm Klein Dassenberg No. 20 in Atlantis in order to develop a shopping center. The proposed development will be approximately 7974m² in extent comprising of the following:

- Anchor shop;
- Various line shops;
- Parking area;
- ATMs;
- Delivery bays and yard areas.

Refer to **Figure 1** for a location of the site.

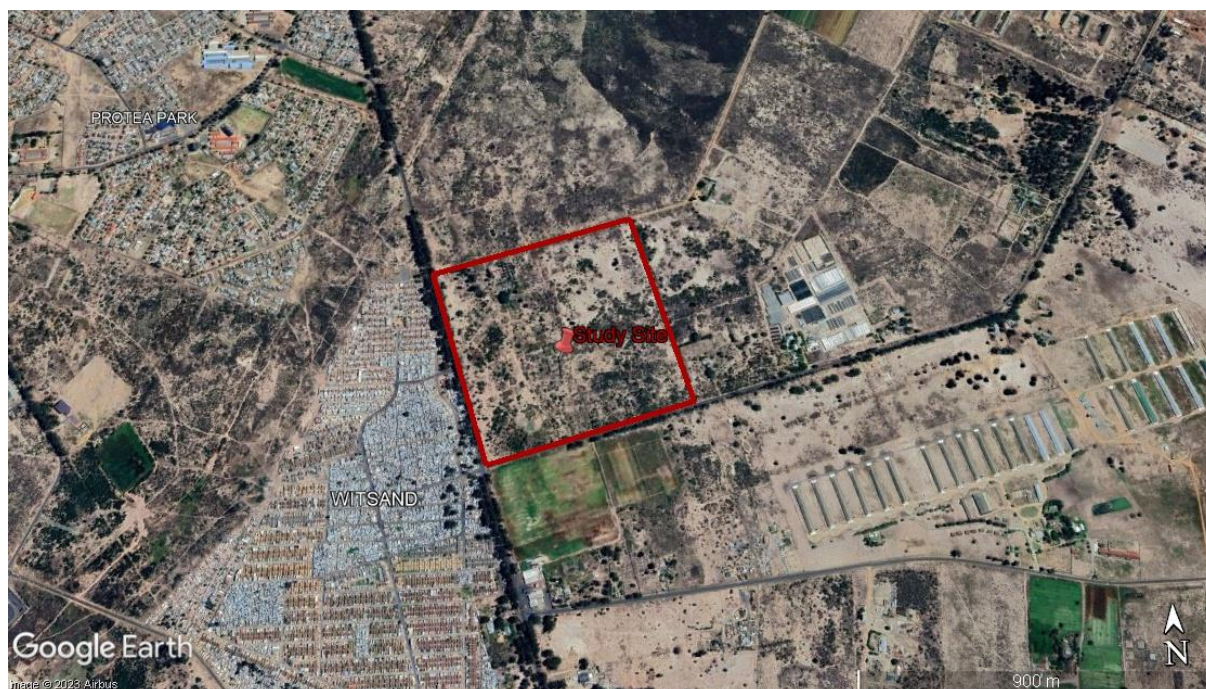


Figure 1 Location of Farm Klein Dassenberg 16/20

ECOS Consulting (Pty) Ltd has been appointed to undertake the Basic Assessment EIA Process in terms of the 2014 EIA Regulations, as amended, published under the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA). This SSV Report forms part of the Basic Assessment Process being undertaken for the proposed development.

3. METHODOLOGY

The SSV Report was compiled based on the following:

- Site visit;
- Desktop studies;
- Site photographs; and
- Satellite imagery (Google Earth)

to determine the applicability of the EIA Regulations, 2014 (as amended) to the proposed application.

3.1 HISTORICAL IMAGERY

The historical imagery provides a timeline of the site from February 2003 to June 2021 showing the changes over time – images 1 to 5.



Figure 2: February 2003 - earliest available image obtained from Cape Mapper



Figure 3: August 2009 - site disused.



Figure 4: June 2014- site no longer used for agricultural purposes



Figure 5: July 2019 - site overgrown with alien vegetation.



Figure 6: June 2021 - Southern extent of the site used as a taxi rank.

3.2 RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

The farm Klein Dassenberg Portion 16 of 20 is approximately 8.6ha in extent. The proposal is to rezone and subdivide the property where the westerly portion of the property will be transformed to develop the shopping centre. This portion is approximately 4.3ha and the development footprint for the shopping centre is 7974m².

The original vegetation, Atlantis Sand Fynbos, no longer exists in a pristine state and is indicative of a disturbed habitat. Currently the vegetation largely consists of weeds and alien vegetation such as Port Jackson and Bluegum trees with indigenous vegetation present in insignificant numbers. The site has over the years been transformed through past agricultural activities and in more recent years by illegal dumping, wood burning and the creation of an informal taxi rank on the south westerly corner of the property. The property is directly adjacent to the Witsand residential area which has mushroomed significantly due to informal housing (i.e. shacks).

3.3 SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

Site photographs were taken during the site inspection undertaken on the 12th of April 2023.





Subsequent to the site inspection in April 2023, the site was fenced off.



4. SPECIALIST ASSESSMENTS IDENTIFIED BASED ON THEME SENSITIVITY

A Screening Tool Report has been generated for the proposed development. According to the screening tool report the following specialist assessments were identified:

1. Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment
2. Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment
3. Palaeontology Impact Assessment
4. Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment
5. Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment
6. Socio Economic Assessment
7. Plant Species Assessment
8. Animal Species Assessment

The table below indicates the level of sensitivity of each of the themes identified in the National Web-based Screening Tool Report, dated 2 June 2023.

Theme	Very high sensitivity	High sensitivity	Medium sensitivity	Low sensitivity	EAP Opinion
Agriculture			X		
Animal Species			X		
Aquatic Biodiversity				X	
Archaeological and Cultural Heritage				X	
Civil Aviation		X			
Defence				X	
Palaeontology				X	
Plant Species			X		
Terrestrial Biodiversity	X				

4.1 Agriculture

The Screening Tool identifies the agricultural sensitivity as Medium using the estimated land capability dataset that is associated with this site. The property is currently zoned for Agriculture. However, an application to subdivide and rezone the property will be submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development in terms of Section 8(1) of the Subdivision of Agricultural Land Act, Act 70 of 1970.

The site for the proposed development is highly degraded as a result of illegal dumping and a portion of it is being used as an informal taxi rank. The property is bordered on the West by the township of Witsand which consists of both formal and informal residential structures. The property to the South of the site, is used for the cultivation of commercial lawn and there is an existing center and fuel station. Since the proposed site will be rezoned, there would be no impact on the loss of agricultural land. An Agricultural Assessment will be compiled and submitted as part of the Basic Assessment Report.

The Western Cape Department of Agriculture will be included as an I&AP for comment.

4.2 Animal Species

It was found by the Biodiversity compliance statement that the site is largely transformed from its natural state. Based on the historical imagery and the site inspection, the site has been transformed through agricultural activities, and with little to no indigenous vegetation present. The habitat characteristics do not resemble those required by the animal species identified.

It is highly unlikely that the proposed development site supports any sensitive wildlife. Therefore, the proposed development will have a **low to negligible** impact on sensitive animal species. It is the EAPs opinion that a Specialist Assessment or Compliance Statement will not be required.

4.3 Aquatic Biodiversity

The Screening Tool identifies the sites Aquatic Biodiversity as low. An Aquatic Biodiversity Compliance Statement was however compiled (which will form part of the BAR) and confirms that the site has been significantly disturbed and transformed due to various anthropogenic

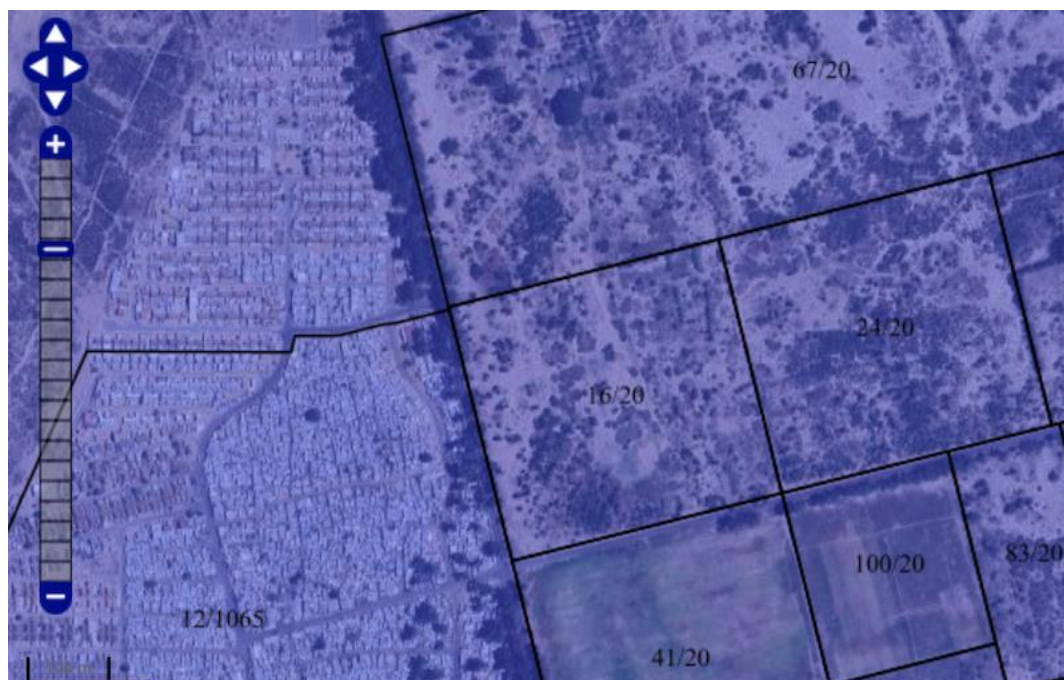
activities and the presence of alien invasive vegetation. There exist no wetlands nor any distinct watercourses. It is therefore the opinion of the EAP that an Aquatic Biodiversity Assessment will not be required as the proposed development will have a negligible impact on the aquatic biodiversity.

4.4 Archaeological and Cultural Heritage

According to the Screening tool, Archaeological and Cultural heritage has been identified as “low”. Despite this, Ron Martin Heritage Consultancy was appointed to conduct a Heritage assessment (pre-application) due to the presence of a historic Blue gum Tree avenue along the R304 on the Western Boundary of the site. Based on the findings, it is proposed to set back the development and align the vehicle entrances at areas where there are existing gaps in the tree avenue along the western boundary of the site. No direct impact will therefore occur. It is also proposed that any additional gaps along the avenue will be rehabilitated through active planting, where applicable. Based on the findings, a full Heritage Impact Assessment is not necessary. A Notice of Intent to Develop will be submitted to HWC to obtain comment and to confirm that a HIA will not be necessary.

4.5 Palaeontology

The screening tool identified this theme as being “low”. According to the SAHRIS Paleo sensitivity map, the site falls within a low paleo sensitivity area where “no paleontological studies are required though a protocol for potential finds must be put in place”. It is therefore the opinion of the EAP that a paleontological assessment will not be required.



4.6 Civil Aviation

According to the screening tool, the development is located within 8 km of other civil aviation aerodrome and within dangerous and restricted airspace. The closest airfield is the Winter Vogel Airfield, located approximately 20.6km from the site. It is a privately owned airfield.

It does not trigger the obstacle collision / potential hazard requirements as set out by the CAA, i.e.

- Buildings or other objects which will constitute an obstruction or potential hazard to aircraft moving in the navigable air space in the vicinity of an aerodrome, or navigation aid, or which will adversely affect the performance of the radio navigation or instrument landing systems,
- There are no buildings or objects higher than 45 metres above the mean level of the landing area;
- No building, structure, or object which projects above a slope of 1 in 20 and which is within 3000 metres measured from the nearest point on the boundary of an aerodrome;
- No building, structure or other object which will project above the approach,

transitional or horizontal surfaces of an aerodrome.

As such it is not necessary to request approval in terms of the Civil Aviation Act for obstacles, however comment will be requested from the Civil Aviation Authority. The evidence collected for this theme does not support the High Sensitivity rating and is considered to be null.

4.7 Defence

The Screening tool identified this theme as being “low”. No further studies will be undertaken as the development constitutes a shopping center on the peri urban/urban edge.

4.8 Plant Species

The Screening tool identified this theme as being “medium”. It should be noted that the site has been transformed due to anthropogenic activities such as illegal dumping, alien vegetation clearing and the location of an informal taxi rank on the property. A Botanical Compliance Statement which includes the identification and consideration of the impact of the development on the site has been undertaken. The report will be included with the Basic Assessment Report.

4.9 Terrestrial Biodiversity

The Screening tool identified this theme as being “very high”. KC Phyto Enterprises was appointed to conduct a Biodiversity assessment. The site was visited on 31 May 2023 for a pre-assessment site sensitivity verification of the vegetation and habitat condition. From this survey the following was found:

- The natural vegetation and habitat are almost entirely transformed.
- Vegetation occupies the entire site.
- Overall, the plant species on the site are atypical of Atlantis Sand Fynbos although indigenous species are found.
- Alien invasive trees along with emerging annual winter weeds are widespread on the site.
- Ongoing vegetation damage from anthropogenic activities which includes solid waste disposal.
- Animal activities are present on the site.

A Terrestrial Biodiversity Compliance Statement has been drafted and will be included with the Basic Assessment Report (BAR). A Terrestrial Biodiversity assessment will be conducted during the Winter months to determine the presence of any sensitive plant species. This report will form part of the BAR.

4.10. Additional Specialist Assessments Identified

In addition to the environmental theme sensitivities included in the Screening Tool Report, the following specialist assessments were identified for inclusion:

(a) Landscape / Visual Impact Assessment

In terms of a visual assessment, the site is deemed to be disturbed or degraded and the type of development (in this case a Category 4 development e.g. small-scale commercial facilities). According to the above, minimal visual impact is expected. As such the EAP does not believe that a visual assessment is required.

(b) Socio-Economic Assessment

The proposed development is not intended to have any negative socio-economic impact. It is anticipated that the proposed development will result in additional socio-economic benefits. The EAP does not believe that a socio-economic assessment would be required for this application process.

(c) Archaeological And Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment

Please see Section 4.4 of this report.

(d) Palaeontology Impact Assessment

Please see Section 4.5 of this report.

(e) Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment

Please see Section 4.9 of this report.

(f) Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment

Please see Section 4.3 of this report.

(g) Plant Species Assessment

Please see Section 4.8 of this report.

(h) Animal Species Assessment

Please see Section 4.2 of this report.

(j) Traffic assessment

In addition to the above specialist assessments, a Traffic Impact Report has been compiled by Imodie Projects which will be appended to the Basic Assessment Report.

5. CONCLUSION

The National Web-Based Environmental Screening Tool identifies the environmental themes that the proposed development may impact on. The report includes sensitivity ratings for each of these themes. The screening report also provides a list of identified specialist assessments to be included within the assessment process.

For this proposal, the screening tool identified themes ranging in sensitivity from Low to Very High. This Site Sensitivity Verification Report provides reasons for disputing the screening tool sensitivity ratings and reasons as to why the screening tool identified specialist assessments are not included in this environmental assessment process. As explained in this Site Sensitivity Verification Report, the proposed development site has been transformed from its natural state as a result of anthropogenic activities i.e. previous agricultural activities and subsequent illegal dumping, informal taxi rank etc. on the site.

Table 3 provides a summary of the environmental themes and identified specialist assessments and whether the relevant studies will be undertaken for this environmental assessment process and the reasons why the specialist assessments will not be included in the assessment process.

Table 3: Summary of the environmental themes and identified specialist assessments and whether the relevant studies will be undertaken.

Environmental theme and/or specialist Assessments identified	Sensitivity rating	Impact Assessment / Compliance Statement / None	Reasons to not include
Agriculture	Medium	Agricultural Impact Assessment	An Agro ecosystem assessment has been conducted.
Animal Species	Medium	Compliance Statement	Since the site is transformed, the habitat characteristics of the identified species in the Screening Tool Report do not resemble the habitats required by the animal species. The proposed development will therefore not impact any animal species.
Aquatic Biodiversity	Low	Compliance Statement	The proposed development does not impact any aquatic sensitivities.
Archaeological and Cultural Heritage	Low	None	A NID was submitted to HWC. HWC confirmed that no further studies would be required since there is no reason to believe the proposed development would impact any heritage resources.
Civil Aviation	High	None	The proposed development is within allowable building parameters and will not impact any civil aviation activities.
Defence	Low	None	The proposed development will not impact any defence activities.
Palaeontology	Low	None	A NID was submitted to HWC. HWC confirmed that no further studies would be required since there is no reason to believe the proposed development would impact any heritage resources.
Plant Species	Medium	Impact Assessment	The site is transformed however an assessment was conducted.
Terrestrial Biodiversity	Very High	Impact Assessment	The site is transformed however an assessment was conducted.
Socio economic		None	It is anticipated that the proposed development will

	Additional assessment identified		result in additional socio-economic benefits.
Visual Assessment		None	It is anticipated that the site will have a minimal visual impact as there is an existing shopping centre in the same line of sight. A Landscape Plan will be developed.
Traffic Assessment	No rating as this is not included in the Screening Tool but this is a specialist assessment included in the assessment process. See Appendix G5: Traffic Assessment .		