



## REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

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SSI Ref.No:20017

24 February 2022

**NOTICE OF BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF PEDESTRIAN BRIDGES IN THE MONONTSHA SETTLEMENT, REMAINDER OF FARM WITZIESHOEK NO. 1926 QWAQWA, FREE STATE PROVINCE.**

Dear Interested and affected party,

Spatial Solutions Incorporated (SSI) as independent environmental consultants and impact assessors has been appointed by Maluti-a-Phofung Local Municipality to facilitate the Integrated Environmental Management (IEM) procedure in terms of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations GN R. No. 327, GN R. No. 325 and GN R. No. 324 as amended 7 April 2017, in the form of a Basic Assessment process for the proposed Development Of Pedestrian Bridges In The Monontsha Settlement, Remainder Of Farm Witzieshoek No. 1926 Qwaqwa, Free State Province.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Maluti-a-Phofung Local Municipality (hereafter referred to as "The Proponent"), wishes to develop pedestrian footbridges in the following villages Poelong, Khosheng, Phophopho, Selahliwe and Sehlajaneng located on the remainder of the farm Witzieshoek No. 1926. The proponent owns and the subject property and would like to establish five (5) pedestrian bridges crossing several streams in order to create safe crossings for the local community. According to the Maluti-a-Phofung Municipal SDF, the location of the proposed properties is earmarked as 'Residential Development Zone'. The localities of the five (5) proposed pedestrian crossings are situated within the Maluti-a-Phofung Local Municipality District Ward No.11 inside the urban edge of Monontsha.

During the previous rainy seasons, it has become apparent that the residents in the Monontsha area needs to cross several stream systems while they are in flood, and this has high risks for their safety while crossing. The area has a high annual rainfall (approximately 600 mm), which results in flash floods and high velocity flow within the mountainous stream systems and are therefore very difficult to cross during these times. At least five stream systems have been identified which contain dilapidated structures, require structures to allow for safe crossing. The proposed pedestrian bridges will be constructed over several small stream systems which is located in the Monontsha area which forms part of the greater QwaQwa residential area but lies along the western outskirts of the urban area. These bridges will also be located in the villages of Poelong, Khosheng, Phophopho, Selahliwe and Sehlajaneng. The development will involve the construction of five pedestrian bridges across several streams. At each crossing, an existing footpath already exists, with several of the streams also already containing concrete structures in various stages of disrepair. The crossing sites are therefore already modified to some degree. The stream crossings are all small, with none

being named systems, however, they all form tributaries of the Elands River, downstream of the bridge sites. Due to the urban surroundings the area has been degraded and transformed to a significant extent, with the affected stream systems also being degraded to various degree.

Following a site visit with all the appointed specialists on 16 April 2021, preliminary surveys indicate that the design and construction of the bridges will consist of:

- Composite design of steel I-beams and a concrete slab.
- These composite decks will be supported on concrete abutments.
- Dewatering and diversion of streams will likely be required during construction.

Thus, the proposed bridges will either comprise solid concrete abutments with a reinforced concrete slab and concrete handrails. Or should the span exceed 6m, a composite design for the deck (abutments will remain solid concrete), which consist of steel beams casted monolithically with the concrete slab.

As confirmed by the appointed Ecologist and the National Biodiversity Assessment (2018) the areas surrounding the proposed bridge sites have been almost completely transformed from the natural condition. Transformation is mostly a consequence of the urban development and in addition, crop fields in the bottomlands also contribute to transformation. Along the streams where the bridge crossings will be situated the vegetation is for the most part still natural though is clearly quite degraded and contains, in many areas, dense clumps of exotic weeds and invasive species. The stream systems also contained substantial amounts of refuse, including refuse which would clearly also cause poor water quality. One of the most detrimental impacts on the streams are also extensive overgrazing and trampling by domestic livestock. The area forms part of communal grazing areas and consequently overgrazing by livestock is high. This results in a decrease in vegetation cover, and combined with high levels of trampling, this results in quite extensive erosion along these streams. From the above, it should be clear that the general ecology of the area is quite degraded from the natural condition.

#### **NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT ACT (ACT NO. 107 OF 1998), AS AMENDED 7 APRIL 2017.**

##### Environmental Assessment

The National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) (ACT No. 107 of 1998) identifies the application for the proposed residential estate development on the property, as an activity that may have an effect on the environment with the following listed activity:

Government Notice No. R. 327 of 7 April 2017:

Activity 12:

The development of—

i. dams or weirs, where the dam or weir, including infrastructure and water surface area, exceeds 100 square metres; or ii. infrastructure or structures with a physical footprint of 100 square metres or more; where such development occurs—(a) within a watercourse; (b) in front of a development setback; or (c) if no development setback exists, within 32 metres of a watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse; — excluding— (aa) the development of infrastructure or structures within existing ports or harbours that will not increase the development footprint of the port or harbour; (bb) where such development activities are related to the development of a port or harbour, in which case activity 26 in Listing Notice 2 of 2014 applies; (cc) activities listed in activity 14 in Listing Notice 2 of 2014 or activity 14 in Listing Notice 3 of 2014, in which case that activity applies; (dd) where such development occurs within an urban area; [or] (ee) where such development occurs within existing roads, [or] road reserves or railway

line reserves; or (ff) the development of temporary infrastructure or structures where such infrastructure or structures will be removed within 6 weeks of the commencement of development and where indigenous vegetation will not be cleared.

#### Activity 19:

The infilling or depositing of any material of more than 10 cubic metres into, or the dredging, excavation, removal or moving of soil, sand, shells, shell grit, pebbles or rock of more than 10 cubic metres from a watercourse; but excluding where such infilling, depositing, dredging, excavation, removal or moving— a. will occur behind a development setback; b. is for maintenance purposes undertaken in accordance with a maintenance management plan; c. falls within the ambit of activity 21 in this Notice, in which case that activity applies; d. occurs within existing ports or harbours that will not increase the development footprint of the port or harbour; or e. where such development is related to the development of a port or harbour, in which case activity 26 in Listing Notice 2 of 2014 applies.

Government Notice No. R. 324 of 7 April 2017:

#### Activity 12

The clearance of an area of 300 square metres or more of indigenous vegetation except where such a clearance of indigenous vegetation is required for maintenance purposes undertaken in accordance with a maintenance management plan (b) Free State, i. Within any critically endangered or endangered ecosystem listed in terms of section 52 of the NEMBA or prior to the publication of such a list, within an area that has been identified as critically endangered in the National Spatial Biodiversity Assessment 2004; ii. Within CBAs identified in bioregional plans; iii. On land, where at the time of the coming into effect of this Notice or thereafter such land was zoned open space, conservation or had an equivalent zoning; or iv. Areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland.

#### Definition of Environmental Impact Assessment

An environmental impact assessment (EIA) is not only a good planning tool to assist in the identification, evaluation and assessment of potential positive and negative impact of a proposed development on the environment, but also recommends ways to either avoid- or reduce negative impacts, thus ensuring that developments are sustainable without affecting people's lives and the environment adversely.

As mentioned, a Basic Assessment is undertaken in terms of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) (Act No. 107 of 1998) as amended, and the EIA Regulations.

### POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Potential environmental issues that will be addressed in the assessment include inter alia:

- Noise Pollution

Construction activities could be a hindrance in terms of noise to the immediate surroundings. During the operational phase no noise are expected to occur.

- Heritage Impact:

A heritage specialist has been appointed to conduct a heritage assessment of the properties however no significant heritage resources were found.

- Ecological Impact:

An ecologist was appointed to assess the proposed properties however no protected, rare or endangered species could be observed in the surrounding areas and due to high levels of overgrazing, transformation and disturbance it is considered highly unlikely that such a species would occur on the site. In addition, it is of utmost importance that all recommendations from the ecologist be taken into account during the

construction and operational phase of the development.

- Visual Impact:

There will be some visual impacts during the construction phases, but this will only be temporary. The visual impact during the operational phase is not expected to be significant as these walkways will only be able to accommodate pedestrians.

- Water Impact:

The proposed pedestrian bridges will cross several streams in order to create safe walkways for the local community thus a Water Use License Application will be submitted to the relevant authority.

As mentioned, the Basic Assessment Report will identify measures to reduce identified negative impacts and optimise positive impacts.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In terms of the NEMA, public participation forms an integral part of the Basic Assessment Process. The public participation process provides people who may be affected by the proposed development with an opportunity to provide comments and to raise concerns about the project or to make suggestions that may result in enhanced benefits for the project.

Comments and concerns raised during the public participation process will be captured, evaluated and included in a Comments and Response Report, which will be incorporated into the Final Basic Assessment Report.

## Deliverables:

The environmental assessment will culminate in the compilation of a Basic Assessment Report (BAR) and an Environmental Management Plan (EMP).

The Basic Assessment Report and Environmental Management Plan will be submitted to the Department of Economic, Small Business Development Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Free State Province (DESTEa) the regulatory authority responsible for the review of the report.

The DESTEa has to reach a decision as to whether, and under what conditions, the project may proceed, based on environmental considerations. An environmental authorization will be issued based on the information provided in the Basic Assessment Report. Interested and Affected Parties who have registered will be notified of the environmental authorisation.

## TIMEFRAMES

The table below provides an indication of the proposed timeframes for the project.

| BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS – PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL ESTATE, THE KLOOF 1/2165, BLOEMFONTEIN |                  |                |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Activity   | Start Date       | Finish Date    |
| Compile draft BAR and EMP  | December 2021    | February 2022  |
| Compile EIA Application  | December 2021    | February 2022  |
| Submit EIA Application to DESTEa   | 24 February 2022 |                |
| DESTEa Review of Application   | 24 February 2022 |                |
| DESTEa to Acknowledge Receipt of Application.  |                  | 10 March 2022  |
| Public Participation Process of Draft BAR & EMP (30 Days)                              | 24 February 2022 | 04 April 2022  |
| Possible additional specialist studies   | April 2022       | May 2022       |
| Possible Second Public Participation Process of Draft BAR & EMP                        | May 2022         | May 2022       |
| Amend Final BAR  | May 2022         | June 2022      |
| Submit Final BAR and EMP   | June 2022        |                |
| DESTEa to Acknowledge Receipt of Final BAR   | June 2022        |                |
| DESTEa Review of BAR & EMP   | June 2022        | September 2022 |
| Authorisation – EA   | September 2022   |                |
| Authorisation – Notify all I&IPs   | September 2022   | October 2022   |

Spatial Solutions Inc. was appointed as an independent environmental consultancy by Proper Consulting Engineers to act as a sub consultant on behalf of the Maluti-A-Phofung municipality, to facilitate the Basic Assessment and Public Participation Process for the proposed project. We would like to invite and encourage all stakeholders register as an Interested and Affected Party between Thursday 24 February 2022 and Monday 04 April 2022 to which effect all developments in this proposed development will be communicated to all registered parties for comment. Please forward all written registration forms to: Spatial Solutions Inc. Attention: Mrs. M.W. Cordier.; P.O. Box 28046; Bloemfontein; 9310; Tel: (051) 101 0696; Fax: (086) 553 9003; or Email: willene@spatialsolutions.co.za Please refer to the SSI Ref No: 20017 in all correspondence. Please submit the registration sheet to Spatial Solutions Inc. by no later than Monday 04 April 2022. A copy of the documents currently on review is available on the Spatial Solutions Inc. website.

Please refer to the attached locality map.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. W. Cordier', is shown within a light blue rectangular box.

**Mrs. M.W. Cordier**

*For Spatial Solutions Inc.*

