

The Manager
Burial Grounds and Graves Unit
South African Heritage Resource Agency
P O Box 4637
Cape Town
8000

2 June 2021

Dear Ms Seetelo

RE: BURIAL SITE AT ROAD D684 AND TRANSNET CROSSING EAST OF MIDDELBURG, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

It is the intension of the Mafube Mine (Pty) Ltd on behalf of the Mpumalanga Department: Public Works, Roads and Transport to upgrade a section of the existing Provincial Road D684, and to construct a new access road to link the existing Provincial / National Road R104 and the D684, near the Sikhululiwe Village east of Middelburg, Mpumalanga Province.

During the heritage impact assessment conducted for this new access road and upgrade, a burial site was identified to be in close proximity of the proposed new access road and the existing railway crossing. Determining a buffer zone around the burial site presents a problem for a number of reasons as will be explained below.

Analysis of the impact on the identified burial site under threat of the proposed development, is based on the present understanding of the development, which is:

- The new proposed access road will be 0.22 km long and will link the R104 with the existing D684. The proposed new access road will have a 7 m wide surfaced cross section with a 1.5 m unsurfaced gravel shoulder. The road reserve will be 30 m wide. This road will be a single carriageway with one lane in either direction.

The proposed access road link up with the current D684 is at an existing railway crossing, which is also the point where the identified burial site is located (see Figure 1 below).

The following can be said about the burial site:

- The identified burial site is located in close proximity of a railway crossing;
- The site contains about 35 graves;
- It is static, i.e. no new graves have been added in the last few decades;
- It is fenced off; and
- The family members and descendants of the people buried in the cemetery, are unwilling to have the graves relocated.

When considering the design specifications of the proposed access road, a buffer zone around the burial site would not be feasible:

- It is located at the current railway crossing and Transnet is unwilling to create a new crossing;
- Due to the curvature of the railway line and the location of shunting lines (related to the grain silos at Arnot Station), finding an alternative crossing would be very difficult;
- For safety purposes the railroad and road should have a 90° crossing.

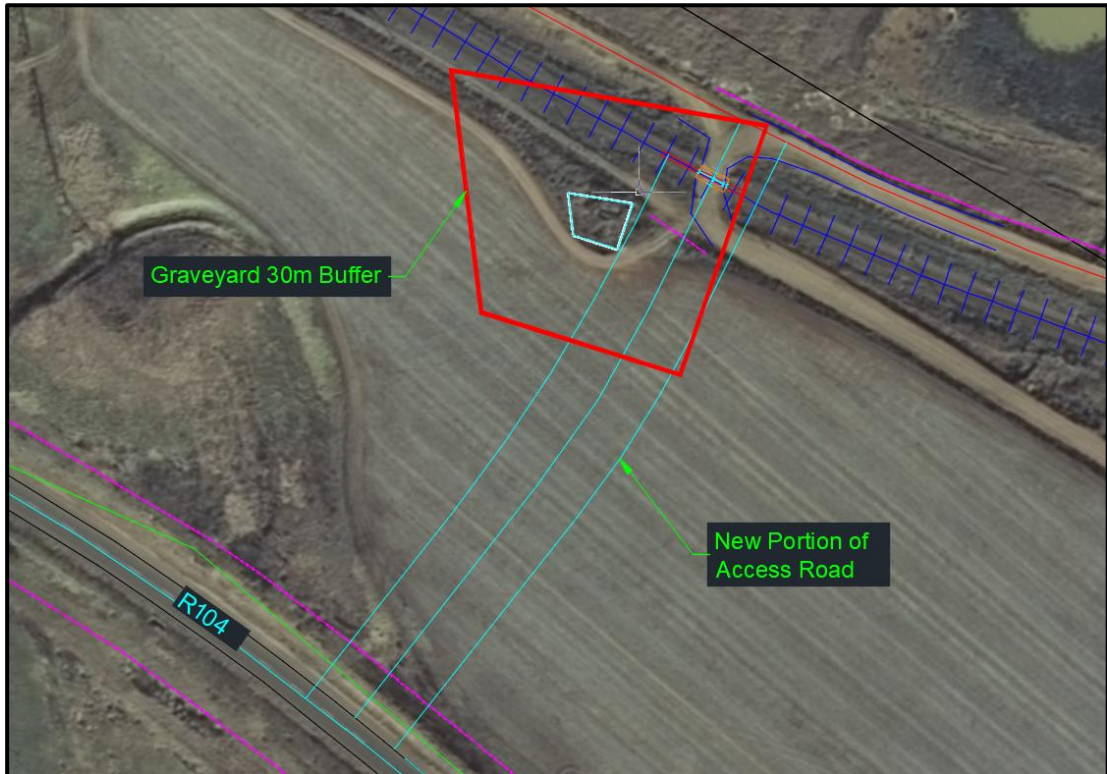


Figure 1. Layout of the proposed access road in relation to the burial site

As Mafube mine is expanding to the east of Sikhululiwe Village, some roads will have to be closed, presenting problems of access for the villagers. Two alternatives were presented - one located to the west of the village, the second being the existing, more direct route:

- The local community, Sikhululiwe Village, accepted the latter route as the shortest and most convenient for their use to travel to urban centres;
- They also requested that this road be upgraded;
- Mafube Mine has agreed to these demands.

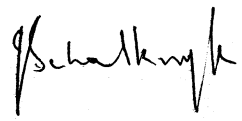
As can be seen from the image in Figure 1 above, the road reserve will cut close to the eastern boundary of the burial site, leaving no room for a buffer zone (indicated at 30m in Figure 1) to be implemented as is the accepted requirement under normal circumstances.

We therefore propose that the buffer zone on the eastern side of the burial site, i.e. closest to the road, is foregone and that instead a brick wall is erected in the place of the wire fence. This wall can then also serve as a bill-board where a site notice can be added cautioning drivers to be careful when passing the site.

It should also be noted that it is only the road reserve that will be in close proximity of the burial site and not the road or gravel shoulder of the road.

Once a mutually accepted solution to this problem has been found, it will be incorporated into the final HIA, which will then be submitted to SAHRA for approval.

Yours sincerely



J A van Schalkwyk (D Litt et Phil)

- Heritage Consultant: ASAPA Registration No.: 164 - Principal Investigator: Iron Age, Colonial Period, Industrial Heritage.
- Postal Address: 62 Coetzer Avenue, Monument Park, 0181; Tel: 076 790 6777; E-mail: jvschalkwyk@mweb.co.za

