PB CONSULT
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES

BOTANICAL ASSESSMENT

(with biodiversity inputs)

OPWAG HOUSING PROJECT

PROPOSED FORMALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF 730 NEW ERVEN ON PLOT 2642, BOEGOEBERG SETTLEMENT AND FARM BOEGOEBERG SETLEMENT NO.48/16, OPWAG, !KHEIS LOCAL MUNICIPALITY,NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE

Revised: 14 January 2021

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VEGETATION TYPE	**Bushmanland Arid Grassland** Classified as "Least Threatened" (GN 1002, December 2011) although statutory conservation targets have not yet been met.
VEGETATION ENCOUNTERED	The activity is expected to result in a permanent transformation of approximately 50 ha of land, of which just more than 80% is still covered by indigenous vegetation in good condition. Although Bushmanland Arid Grassland is not known for its high plant diversity, the vegetation encountered was in exceptionally good condition considering the urban settlement and grazing practices.
CONSERVATION PRIORITY AREAS	According to the Northern Cape CBA maps the proposed site falls within a CBA area. However, there is no alternative on Municipal land that will not impact on the CBA. The site will not impact on any recognised centre of endemism.
CONNECTIVITY	The transformation of the site will destroy connectivity on the site, but should not result in a significant impact on the surrounding area, where connectivity is still excellent.
LAND-USE	The footprint is on municipal land in close proximity to the town of Opwag. Portions of the footprint are already disturbed or settled by the local community. The main land-use (apart from housing) seems to be livestock grazing by the local community.
PROTECTED PLANT SPECIES	The most significant botanical aspect of this site is the presence of a 4 protected Sheppard trees (*Boscia albitrunca*) (refer to Table 2). A number of Northern Cape Nature Conservation Act, protected species were also observed (Refer to Table 3).
FAUNA & AVI-FAUNA	The fauna of the Nama Karoo is relatively species-poor and even though the vegetation was still in relative good condition, long term grazing by domestic animals has left their mark. The current land-use and the proximity to the urban edge has already resulted in a disturbance factor, which is likely to have driven most wild animals away from this area. No large game remains in this area, which in turn affects the food chain and ultimately the density of tertiary predators, particularly mammals and larger birds of prey, while smaller predators and scavengers such as jackal and caracal are eradicated by stock farmers in fear of their livestock. Due to long-term impacts associated with human settlements, compounded by the proximity of the proposed development areas to the urban edge, a comprehensive faunal survey is not deemed necessary.

MAIN CONCLUSION

The proposed development footprint is located on Municipal property, adjacent to existing town developments. The activity is expected to result in a permanent transformation of approximately 50 ha of land, of which approximately 80%is still covered by indigenous vegetation in good condition. The site overlaps an identified critical biodiversity area (according to the 2016, Northern Cape Critical Biodiversity Areas maps). In addition, 4 protected Sheppard trees (*Boscia albitrunca*), and a number of Northern Cape Nature Conservation Act, protected species were observed within the footprint.

According to the impact assessment given in Table 6 the development is likely to result in a **Medium-Low** impact, which can be reduced to a **Low** impact with good environmental control during construction.

With the correct mitigation it is unlikely that the development will contribute significantly to any of the following:

- Significant loss of vegetation type and associated habitat.
- Loss of ecological processes (e.g. migration patterns, pollinators, river function etc.) due to construction and operational activities.
- Loss of local biodiversity and threatened plant species.
- Loss of ecosystem connectivity.

WITH THE AVAILABLE INFORMATION IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT PROJECT BE APPROVED, WITH THE PROPOSED MITIGATION ACTIONS.

NO-GO OPTION

The No-Go option is not likely to result in a “no-impact” scenario, as constant slow degradation is expected to continue as a result of urban activities and poor management of the site.

There is also an urgent need for the establishment of additional residential erven in the !Kheis Municipality, which is likely to outweigh the No-Go option.

INDEPENDENCE & CONDITIONS

PB Consult is an independent entity with no interest in the activity other than fair remuneration for services rendered. Remunerations for services are not linked to approval by decision making authorities and PB Consult have no interest in secondary or downstream development as a result of the authorization of this proposed project. There are no circumstances that compromise the objectivity of this report. The findings, results, observations and recommendations given in this report are based on the author's best scientific and professional knowledge and available information. PB Consult reserve the right to modify aspects of this report, including the recommendations if new information become available which may have a significant impact on the findings of this report.

RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE OF THE AUTHOR

Mr Peet Botes holds a BSc. (Hons.) degree in Plant Ecology from the University of Stellenbosch (Nature Conservation III & IV as extra subjects). Since qualifying with his degree, he had worked for more than 20 years in the environmental management field, first at the Overberg Test Range (a Division of Denel) managing the environmental department of OTR and being responsible for developing and implementing an ISO14001 environmental management system, ensuring environmental compliance, performing environmental risk assessments with regards to missile tests and planning the management of the 26 000 ha of natural veld, working closely with CapeNature (De Hoop Nature Reserve).

In 2005 he joined Enviroscientific, an independent environmental consultancy specializing in wastewater management, botanical and biodiversity assessments, developing environmental management plans and strategies, environmental control work as well as doing environmental compliance audits and was also responsible for helping develop the biodiversity part of the Farming for the Future audit system implemented by Woolworths. During his time with Enviroscientific he performed more than 400 biodiversity en environmental legal compliance audits.

During 2010 he joined EnviroAfrica in order to move back to the biodiversity aspects of environmental management. Experience with EnviroAfrica includes NEMA EIA applications, environmental management plans for various industries, environmental compliance audits, environmental control work as well as more than 70 biodiversity & botanical specialist studies.

Towards the end of 2017, Mr Botes started his own small environmental consulting business focusing on biodiversity & botanical assessments, biodiversity management plans and environmental compliance audits.

Mr Botes is a registered Professional Botanical, Environmental and Ecological Scientists at SACNASP (South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions) as required in terms of Section 18(1)(a) of the Natural Scientific Professions Act, 2003, since 2005.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

THE INDEPENDENT PERSON WHO COMPILED A SPECIALIST REPORT OR UNDERTOOK A SPECIALIST PROCESS

I Petrus, Jacobus, Johannes Botes, as the appointed independent specialist hereby declare that I:

- act/ed as the independent specialist in this application;
- regard the information contained in this report as it relates to my specialist input/study to be true and correct, and
- do not have and will not have any financial interest in the undertaking of the activity, other than remuneration for work performed in terms of the NEMA, the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014, as amended, and any specific environmental management Act;
- have and will not have no vested interest in the proposed activity proceeding;
- have disclosed, to the applicant, EAP and competent authority, any material information that have or may have the potential to influence the decision of the competent authority or the objectivity of any report, plan or document required in terms of the NEMA, the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014 and any specific environmental management Act;
- am fully aware of and meet the responsibilities in terms of NEMA, the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014 (specifically in terms of regulation 13 of GN No. R. 326) and any specific environmental management Act, and that failure to comply with these requirements may constitute and result in disqualification;
- have ensured that information containing all relevant facts in respect of the specialist input/study was distributed or made available to interested and affected parties and the public and that participation by interested and affected parties was facilitated in such a manner that all interested and affected parties were provided with a reasonable opportunity to participate and to provide comments on the specialist input/study;
- have ensured that the comments of all interested and affected parties on the specialist input/study were considered, recorded and submitted to the competent authority in respect of the application;
- have ensured that the names of all interested and affected parties that participated in terms of the specialist input/study were recorded in the register of interested and affected parties who participated in the public participation process;
- have provided the competent authority with access to all information at my disposal regarding the application, whether such information is favourable to the applicant or not; and
- am aware that a false declaration is an offence in terms of regulation 13 of GN No. R. 326.

Note: The terms of reference must be attached.

Signature of the specialist:

PB Consult (Sole Proprietor)

Name of company:

14 January 2021

Date:

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ..... **I**

INDEPENDENCE & CONDITIONS ..... **III**

RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE OF THE AUTHOR ..... **III**

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE ..... **IV**

1. INTRODUCTION **1**

1.1. Terms of reference 1

2. STUDY AREA **2**

2.1. Location & Layout 2

2.2. Climate 3

2.3. Topography & soils 3

3. EVALUATION METHOD **4**

4. THE VEGETATION **5**

4.1. The Vegetation in context 5

4.1.1. Nama-Karoo Biome 5

4.2. Vegetation encountered 6

4.2.1. Existing disturbance footprint 6

4.2.2. Remaining natural veld 7

4.3. Critical biodiversity areas maps 9

4.4. Potential impact on centres of endemism 10

4.5. Flora encountered 11

4.6. Threatened and protected plant species 12

4.6.1. Red list of South African plant species 12

4.6.2. NEM: BA protected plant species 12

4.6.3. NFA Protected plant species 12

4.6.4. NCNCA protected plant species 13

5. FAUNA AND AVI-FAUNA **15**

5.1. Mammals 15

5.2. Avi-fauna 16

5.3. Reptile & amphibians 17

6. IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHOD **18**

6.1. Determining significance 18

6.2. Significance categories 19

7. DISCUSSING BOTANICAL SENSITIVITY **21**

7.1. Impact assessment 22

8. IMPACT MINIMISATION RECOMMENDATIONS **24**

8.1. Mitigation actions 24

9. REFERENCES **25**

APPENDIX 1: COMPLIANCE WITH APPENDIX 6 OF GN. NO. 982 (4 DECEMBER 2014) **27**

APPENDIX 2: CURRICULUM VITAE – P.J.J. BOTES **28**

LIST OF TABLES:

Table 1: List of indigenous species encountered within or near the proposed footprint 11

Table 2: Location of NFA protected trees observed within or near the footprint..... 13

Table 3: Plant species protected in terms of the NCNCA encountered within the study area 14

Table 4: Categories and criteria used for the evaluation of the significance of a potential impact.... 18

Table 5: Categories used to describe significance rating (adjusted from DEAT, 2002) 20

Table 6: Impact assessment associated with the proposed development..... 22

LIST OF PHOTOS:

Photo 1: A view over the existing settlement at Opwag (Area 1 in Figure 6). 7

Photo 2: Another photo of the existing settlement at Opwag (Area 1 in Figure 6). Note the neat and tidy developments (especially the lack of general waste). 7

Photo 3: Typical low shrubland dominated by *Justicia australis* encountered in the north western portion of the footprint. 7

Photo 4: Most of the site supported a sparse dwarf shrubland on shallow soils (quarts / calcrete prominent). 8

Photo 5: Slightly deeper sandy soils encountered along the south and south western corner of the proposed footprint. *Boscia albitrunca* in picture (tree no. 023 in Table 2). 8

Photo 6: Deeper sandy soils encountered in the south western corner of the site. The vegetation dominated *Senegalia mellifera* and white grasses. *Aloe claviflora* (in picture) still very common. 8

Photo 7: Denser stands of *Senegalia mellifera* associated with one of the drainage line (*Boscia albitrunca* no. 025 in picture – Refer to Table 2). 9

1. INTRODUCTION

There is an urgent need for the establishment of additional residential erven in the sub-economical market in the !Kheis Local Municipality. Seven towns have been identified for the proposed development of a number of new erven at each town. They are:

- Boegoeberg: 550 erven;
- Gariep: 135 erven;
- Groblershoop: 1500 erven;
- Grootdrink: 370 erven;
- Opwag: 730 erven;
- Topline: 248 erven; and
- Wegdraai: 360 erven.

Macroplan has been appointed by the Barzani Group (on behalf of COGHSTA) as Town and Regional Planners to manage the town planning process in terms of SPLUMA (Act 16 of 2013).

The proposed project will trigger listed activities under the National Environmental Management Act, (Act 107 of 1998) (NEMA) and the EIA regulations (as amended). As result EnviroAfrica was appointed to perform the NEMA EIA application and PB Consult was appointed to conduct a botanical assessment of the proposed sites, which, although disturbed in some areas, still supports natural vegetation.

This report refers to the proposed development of approximately 730 new erven on a 50 ha piece of land on, municipal land adjacent to Opwag.

The proposed footprint supports one vegetation type namely, Bushveld Arid Grassland (considered "Least Threatened" in terms of the National list of ecosystems that are threatened and in need of protection). Desktop studies suggest that the veld may still be in good condition, and it overlaps a terrestrial critical biodiversity area (CBA1) as identified in the 2017 Northern Cape Biodiversity Spatial Plan.

It must be mentioned that Opwag was probably the surprise of all the !Kheis housing projects, in that the veld was still in good condition, and the people really made an effort to keep their town clean. They should be commended for this.

1.1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference for this appointment were to:

- Evaluate the proposed site(s) in order to determine whether any significant botanical features will be impacted as a result of the proposed development.
- Determine and record the position of any plant species of special significance (e.g. protected tree species, or rare or endangered plant species) that should be avoided or that may require "search & rescue" intervention.
- Locate and record sensitive areas from a botanical perspective within the proposed development footprint that may be interpreted as obstacles to the proposed development.
- Make recommendations on impact minimization should it be required
- Consider short- to long-term implications of impacts on biodiversity and highlight irreversible impacts or irreplaceable loss of species.

2. STUDY AREA

2.1. LOCATION & LAYOUT

Opwag is located just north of Groblershoop, about 1.6 km from the Orange River in the !Kheis Local Municipality of the Northern Cape Province (Figure 1). The proposed new erven will include the current settlement that has been established at Opwag, on Plot 2642, Boegoeberg Settlement and Portion 14 of the Farm Boegoeberg Settlement No. 48 (GPS Coordinates 28° 50' 49.00"S; 21° 57' 34.10"E).

Figure 1: Map showing the location of Opwag in relation to Upington and Groblershoop in the Northern Cape Province

Figure 2: The proposed location of the new erven at Opwag

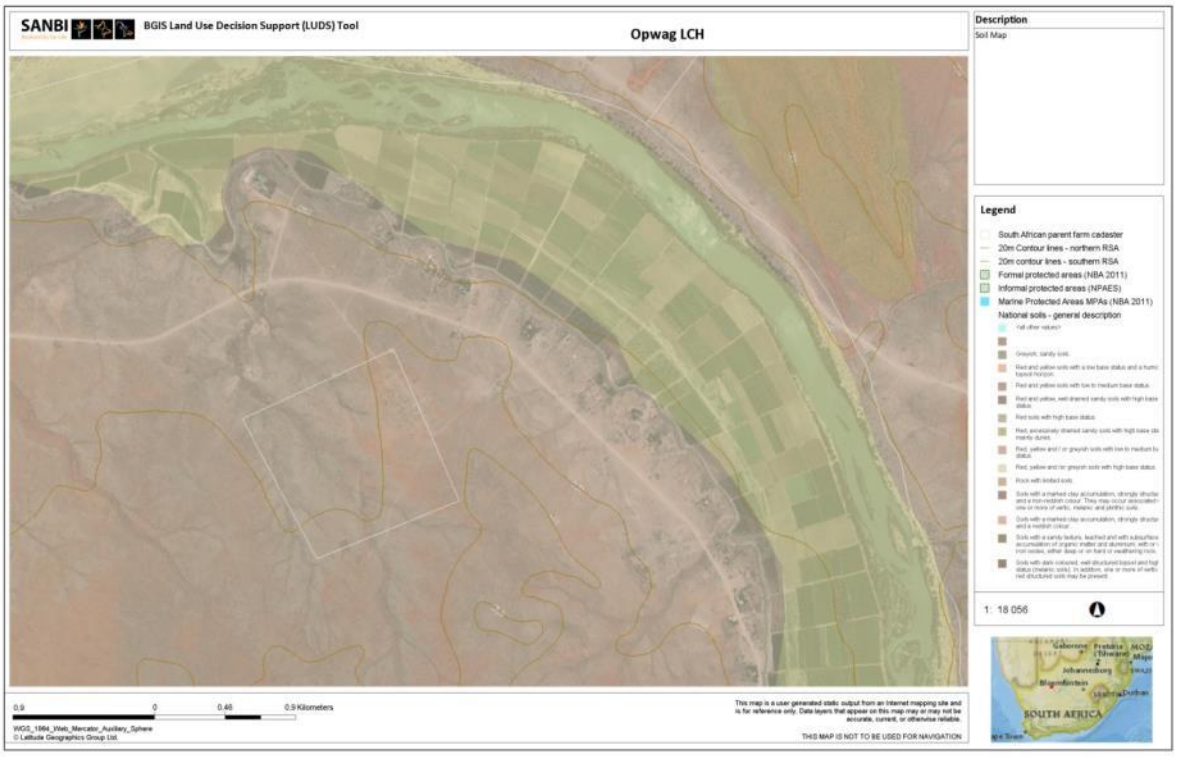
2.2. CLIMATE

All regions with a rainfall of less than 400 mm per year are regarded as arid. Opwag receives less than a 100 mm of rain per year, mainly in mid-summer December to March the highest (40 mm) in February/March, with its lowest rainfall (0 mm)during winter (June to August). It is also important to note that rainfall can be highly erratic and can vary significantly per annum on any specific location. Daily temperatures vary from 23°C – 37°C during the hot summer months (December / January) and drops down to between 8°C - 17°C during the colder winter months (June – July) (www.worldweatheronline.com).

2.3. TOPOGRAPHY & SOILS

The proposed Opwag settlement will be located on slightly undulating land characterised by small to medium ephemeral drainage lines. The land slopes slightly towards the southwest into a larger ephemeral drainage line, which drains towards the landscape towards the Orange River.

Figure 3: National soil map of South Africa, showing the town of Opwag and its immediate surroundings



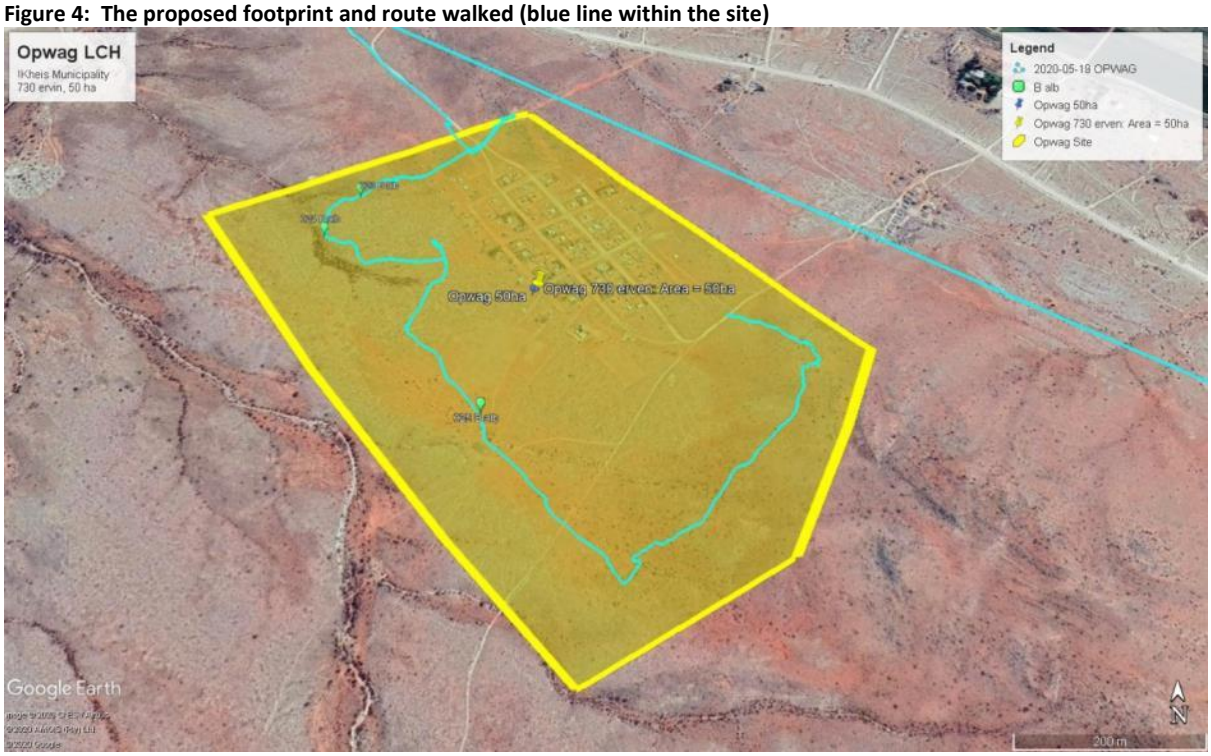
According to Mucina & Rutherford (2006), the geology for Bushmanland Arid Grassland vegetation is dominated by mudstones and shales of the Ecca Group (Prince Albert and Volksrust Formations) and Dwyka tillites, both of the early Karoo age. About 20% of rock outcrops are formed by Jurassic intrusive dolerite sheets and dykes. The soils are described as soils with minimal development, usually shallow on hard or weathering rock, Glenrosa and Mispah forms, with lime generally present in the entire landscape (Fc land type) and, to a lesser extent, red-yellow apedal, freely drained soils with a high base status and usually <15% clay (Ah and Ai land types) are also found. The salt content in these soils is very high. The soils on site were generally shallow on weathering rock with high quarts and calcrete content.

3. EVALUATION METHOD

Desktop studies coupled with a site visit were performed. The site visit was conducted on the 19th of May 2020. The timing of the site visit was reasonable in that, even though the veld was very dry, almost all perennial plants were identifiable.

However, it is important to note that the Northern Cape is currently in the midst of one of its worst drought periods in a long time, and although some summer rains had fallen (deducted from the presence of a number of grass species) it was not yet enough to really trigger a display of annual herbs.

Figure 4: The proposed footprint and route walked (blue line within the site)



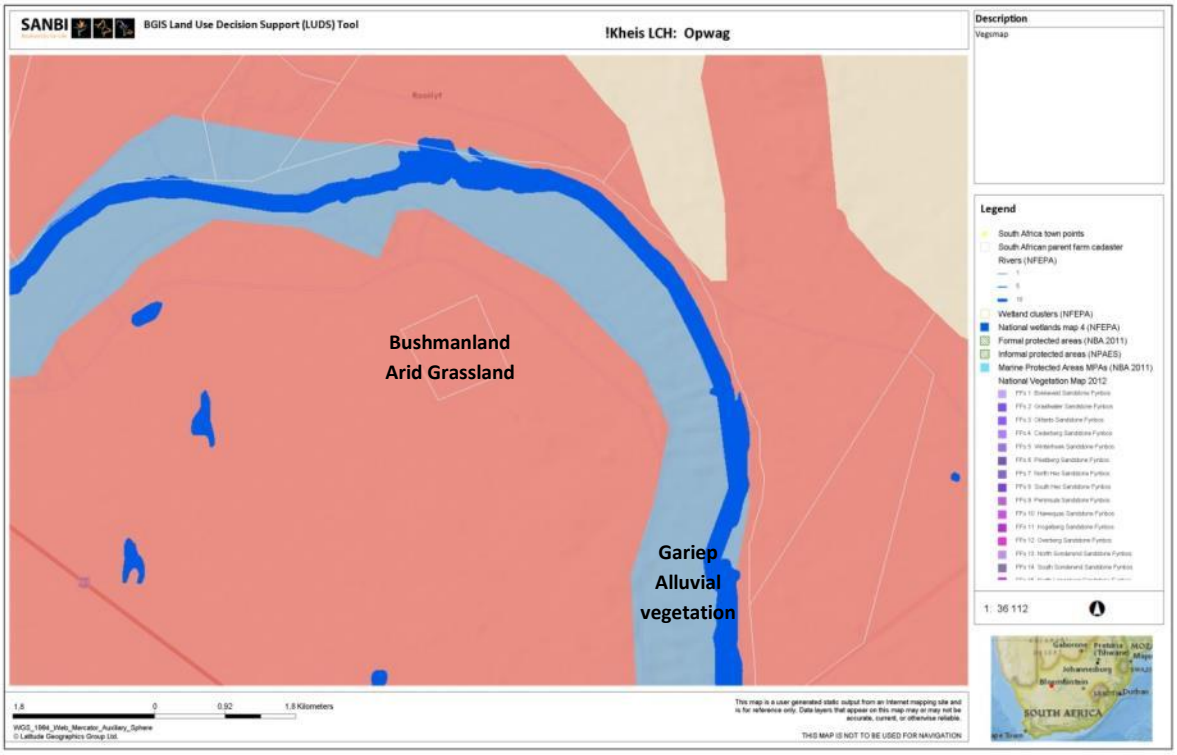
However, the author is confident that a fairly good understanding of the biodiversity status of the site was obtained. The survey was conducted by walking the site and examining, marking and photographing any area of interest. Confidence in the findings is high. During the site visit the author endeavoured to identify and locate all significant biodiversity features, special plant species and or specific soil conditions which might indicate special botanical features (e.g. rocky outcrops or silcrete patches).

4. THE VEGETATION

The Northern Cape contains about 3500 plant species in 135 families and 724 genera, with about 25% of this flora endemic to the region. It is also home to an exceptionally high level of insect and reptile endemism, with new species still being discovered. However, it must be noted that this remarkable diversity is not distributed evenly throughout the region, but is concentrated in many local centres of endemism. The Karoo used to support millions of antelope, mainly springbuck, but also numerous other larger antelope (and other grazing animal). These animals roamed the vast plains of the Karoo, utilizing different selections of plants and allowing for long "rest" periods as they move around, and as a result preventing overgrazing (Shearing, 1994).

The Opwag area would be classified as a desert region. In accordance with the Vegetation map of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006, as updated in the 2012 beta version) only one broad vegetation type is expected within the proposed footprint, namely **Bushmanland Arid Grassland** (Figure 5). Both these vegetation types are classified as "Least Threatened" (GN 1002, December 2011) although statutory conservation targets have not yet been met.

Figure 5: Vegetation map of South Africa (2012 beta 2 version), showing the expected vegetation types



4.1. THE VEGETATION IN CONTEXT

4.1.1. Nama-Karoo Biome

Bushmanland Arid Grassland is part of the Nama-Karoo Biome, which is a large arid landlocked region on the central plateau of the western half of South Africa, extending into Namibia. It is flanked by the Succulent Karoo to the west and south, desert to the northwest, arid Kalahari Savanna to the north, Grassland to the northeast, Albany Thicket to the southeast and small parts of Fynbos to the south. In South Africa, only the Desert Biome has a higher variability in annual rainfall and only the Kalahari Savanna greater extremes in temperature. The Nama-Karoo receives most of its rainfall in summer, especially in late summer (Mucina *et. al*., 2006).

Climate is essentially continental and with almost no effect of the ameliorating influences of the oceans. Rainfall is low and unreliable, peaking in March. Droughts are unpredictable and often prolonged. Summers are hot and winters cold with temperature extremes ranging from -5°C in winter to 43°C in summer. However, rainfall intensity can be high (e.g. episodic thunderstorm and hail storm events). This coupled with the generally low vegetation cover associated with aridity and grazing pressure by domestic stock over the last two centuries, raises the potential for soil erosion. In semi-arid environments such as the Nama-Karoo, nutrients are generally located near the soil surface, making it vulnerable to sheet erosion (Mucina *et. al*., 2006). In contrast with the Succulent Karoo, the Nama-Karoo is not particularly rich in plant species and does not contain any centre of endemism. Local endemism is very low, which might indicate a relative youthful biome linked to the remarkable geological and environmental homogeneity of the Nama-Karoo. Rainfall seasonality and frequency are too unpredictable and winter temperatures too low to enable leaf succulent dominance (as in the Succulent Karoo). It is also too dry in summer for dominance by perennial grasses alone and the soils generally to shallow and rainfall too low for dominance by trees. But soil type, soil depth and local differences in moisture availability can cause abrupt changes in vegetation structure and composition (e.g. small drainage lines support more plant species than surrounding plains) (Mucina *et. al*., 2006).

4.2. VEGETATION ENCOUNTERED

The proposed development footprint is about 50 ha in size. About 10 ha of the proposed footprint had already been settled, but for the remainder the site was in excellent condition, with no illegal dumping or other disturbances encountered.

4.2.1. Existing disturbance footprint

Figure 6 gives an overview of the disturbed areas, which includes;

- Purple area: Area already settled or being settled, about 10 ha in size (Photo 1 – Photo 2).

Figure 6: An overview of the site, showing most significant disturbed areas

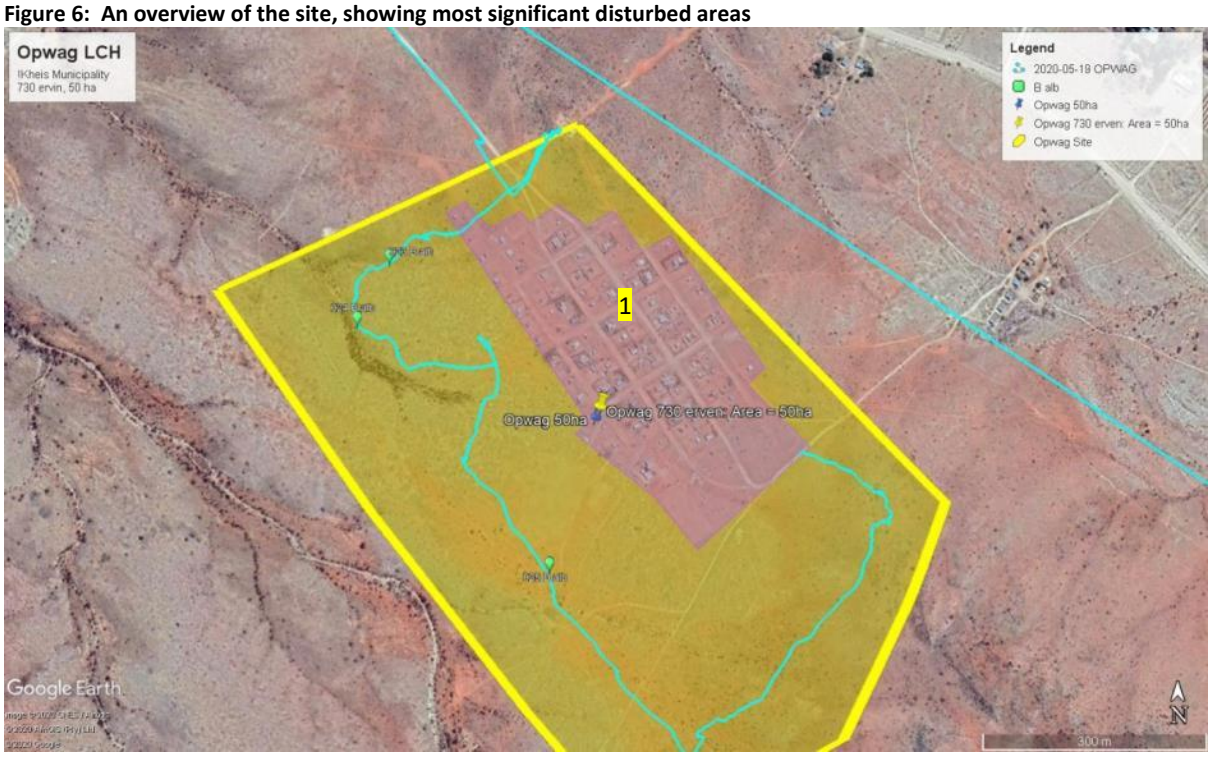


Photo 1: A view over the existing settlement at Opwag (Area 1 in Figure 6).

Photo 2: Another photo of the existing settlement at Opwag (Area 1 in Figure 6). Note the neat and tidy developments (especially the lack of general waste).

4.2.2. Remaining natural veld

Like most of the other sites six sites the remaining natural veld was covered by a low sparse shrubland. Again the footprint was characterised by shallow soils on weathering rock dominated by quartz (Photo 3 & Photo 4). Towards the south and southwest of the site slightly deeper reddish sands were encountered (with calcrete outcrops common), which supported a slightly denser and higher shrubland (Photo 5 & Photo 6). Although the Northern Cape are in the midst of a severe drought (the last 5 – 7 yeas), recent rains had brought some relieve, which can be seen in the display of some grasses and the new growth shown by many a plant (although it had not as yet trigger a display of annual or herbaceous species). Livestock grazing has left its mark on the vegetation but seemingly not as severe as at some of the other sites (e.g. palatable plants like *Pteronia* species were observed for the first time).

Photo 3: Typical low shrubland dominated by *Justicia australis* encountered in the north western portion of the footprint.

On the shallow soils the vegetation were mostly a low sparse shrubland, dominated by *Tetraena decumbens* with *Justicia australis (=Monechma)* and *Aptosimum spinescens* also very common (Photo 3 & Photo 4). The deeper sandy soils were dominated by *Senegalia mellifera* and white grasses. Many species (e.g. *Aloe claviflora*) were common in both vegetation types.

Photo 4: Most of the site supported a sparse dwarf shrubland on shallow soils (quarts / calcrete prominent).

To the northeast and southeast two small koppies were encountered, which harboured a couple of plants (mostly herbs) between its protective rocks, which were less common throughout the remainder of the site, including: *Barleria lichtensteiniana*, *Justicia spartioides*, *Leobordea* cf. *platycarpa*, *Monsonia angustifolia* and *Monsonia crassicaulis* (=*Sarcocaulon*).

Photo 5: Slightly deeper sandy soils encountered along the south and south western corner of the proposed footprint. *Boscia albitrunca* in picture (tree no. 023 in Table 2).

Photo 6: Deeper sandy soils encountered in the south western corner of the site. The vegetation dominated *Senegalia mellifera* and white grasses. *Aloe claviflora* (in picture) still very common.

The following plants were also observed, scattered throughout the footprint: *Aloe claviflora* (very common), *Asparagus* species, *Blepharis mitrata, Boscia albitrunca* (only 4 individuals)*, Cynanchum viminale, Euphorbia gariepina, Euphorbia spinea* (occasionally)*, Geigeria ornativa, Kleinia longiflora, Lacomucinaea lineata,*

Leucosphaera bainesii (occasionally), *Lycium cinereum, Monsonia salmoniflora, Pteronia* (2 x species), *Rhigozum trichotomum, Ruschia divaricata* and *Tetraena rigida.*

Photo 7: Denser stands of *Senegalia mellifera* associated with one of the drainage line (*Boscia albitrunca* no. 025 in picture – Refer to Table 2).

As is typical in the Bushmanland Grassland vegetation the ephemeral drainage lines are also associated with denser and higher shrub layer (Photo 7). In this case the vegetation associated with these water courses were dominated by Senegalia mellifera and larger shrubs like *Lycium cinereum* and *Phaeoptilum spinosum*. Other species not observed within the footprint by likely to be present in these streams includes *Parkinsonia africana* and *Ziziphus mucronata*.

4.3. CRITICAL BIODIVERSITY AREAS MAPS

The Northern Cape CBA Map (2016) identifies biodiversity priority areas, called Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) and Ecological Support Areas (ESAs), which, together with protected areas, are important for the persistence of a viable representative sample of all ecosystem types and species as well as the long-term ecological functioning of the landscape as a whole (Holness & Oosthuysen, 2016). The 2016 Northern Cape Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA) Map updates, revises and replaces all older systematic biodiversity plans and associated products for the province (including the Namakwa District Biodiversity Sector Plan, 2008). Priorities from existing plans such as the Namakwa District Biodiversity Plan, the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Plan, National Estuary Priorities, and the National Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Areas were incorporated. Targets for terrestrial ecosystems were based on established national targets, while targets used for other features were aligned with those used in other provincial planning processes.

Critical biodiversity areas (CBA's) are terrestrial and aquatic features in the landscape that are critical for retaining biodiversity and supporting continued ecosystem functioning and services (SANBI 2007). The primary purpose of CBA's is to inform land-use planning in order to promote sustainable development and protection of important natural habitat and landscapes. CBA's can also be used to inform protected area expansion and development plans.

- **Critical biodiversity areas (CBA's)** are areas of the landscape that need to be maintained in a natural or near-natural state in order to ensure the continued existence and functioning of species and ecosystems and the delivery of ecosystem services. In other words, if these areas are not maintained in a natural or near-natural state then biodiversity conservation targets cannot be met. Maintaining an area in a natural state can include a variety of biodiversity-compatible land uses and resource uses.

- **Ecological support areas (ESA's)** are areas that are not essential for meeting biodiversity representation targets/thresholds but which nevertheless play an important role in supporting the ecological functioning of critical biodiversity areas and/or in delivering ecosystem services that

support socio-economic development, such as water provision, flood mitigation or carbon sequestration. The degree of restriction on land use and resource use in these areas may be lower than that recommended for critical biodiversity areas.

Figure 7: The Northern Cape Critical Biodiversity Areas Map (2016) showing the proposed development

From a land-use planning perspective it is useful to think of the difference between CBA's and ESA's in terms of where in the landscape the biodiversity impact of any land-use activity action is most significant:

- For CBA's the impact on biodiversity of a change in land-use that results in a change from the desired ecological state is most significant locally at the point of impact through the direct loss of a biodiversity feature (e.g. loss of a populations or habitat).

- For ESA's a change from the desired ecological state is most significant elsewhere in the landscape through the indirect loss of biodiversity due to a breakdown, interruption or loss of an ecological process pathway (e.g. removing a corridor results in a population going extinct elsewhere or a new plantation locally results in a reduction in stream flow at the exit to the catchment which affects downstream biodiversity).

According to the Northern Cape CBA map (Figure 7), the proposed development falls within a terrestrial CBA. However, it must be noted that there is no real alternative site within the Municipal town boundaries that is not located within the CBA.

4.4. POTENTIAL IMPACT ON CENTRES OF ENDEMISM

The proposed development will not impact on any recognised centre of endemism (Van Wyk & Smith, 2001).

4.5. FLORA ENCOUNTERED

Table 2 gives a list of the plant species encountered during this study. Because of the limitations (timing and a single site visit as well as the drought) it is likely that a number of annuals might have been missed.

Table 1: List of indigenous species encountered within or near the proposed footprint

No.	Species name	FAMILY	Status	Alien & invader plant (AIP)
1.	*Aloe claviflora*	ASPODELACEAE	LC NCNCA, Schedule 2 Protected (all species in this Family)	**Apply for a NCNCA Flora permit (DENC)**
2.	*Aptosimum spinescens*	SCROPHULARIACEAE	LC	
3.	*Asparagus* species	ASPARAGACEAE	LC	
4.	*Barleria lichtensteiniana*	ACANTHACEAE	LC	
5.	*Blepharis mitrata*	ACANTHACEAE	LC	
6.	*Boscia albitrunca*	BRASSICACEAE (CAPPARACEAE)	LC NFA protected species NCNCA, Schedule 2 Protected (all species of Boscia)	**Apply for a NFA Tree permit (DAFF)** **Apply for a NCNCA Flora permit (DENC)**
7.	*Cynanchum viminale (=Sarcostemma viminale)*	APOCYNACEAE	LC NCNCA, Schedule 2 Protected (all species in this Family)	**Apply for a NCNCA Flora permit (DENC)**
8.	*Euphorbia gariepina*	EUPHORBIACEAE	NCNCA, Schedule 2 Protected (all species in this Genus)	**Apply for a NCNCA Flora permit (DENC)**
9.	*Euphorbia spinea*	EUPHORBIACEAE	LC NCNCA, Schedule 2 Protected (all species in this Genus)	**Apply for a NCNCA Flora permit (DENC)**
10.	*Geigeria ornativa*	ASTERACEAE	LC	
11.	*Justicia australis (=Monechma genistifolium)*	ACANTHACEAE	LC	
12.	*Justicia spartioides (=Monechma spartioides)*	ACANTHACEAE	LC	
13.	*Kleinia longiflora*	ASTERACEAE	LC	
14.	*Lacomucinaea lineata (=Thesium lineatum)*	SANTALACEAE	LC	
15.	*Leobordea platycarpa*	FABACEAE	LC	
16.	*Leucosphaera bainesii*	AMARANTHACEAE	LC	
17.	*Lycium cinereum*	SOLANACEAE	LC	
18.	*Monsonia angustifolia*	GERANIACEAE	LC	
19.	*Monsonia crassicaulis (=Sarcocaulon crassicaule)*	GERANIACEAE	LC	
20.	*Monsonia salmoniflora (=Sarcocaulon salmoniflorum)*	GERANIACEAE	LC	
21.	*Parkinsonia africana*	FABACEAE	LC	
22.	*Phaeoptilum spinosum*	NYCTAGINACEAE	LC	
23.	*Pteronia* species 1	ASTERACEAE		
24.	*Pteronia* species 2	ASTERACEAE		
25.	*Rhigozum trichotomum*	BIGONACEAE	LC	
26.	*Ruschia divaricata*	AIZOACEAE	Protected in terms of schedule 2 of the NCNCA	**Apply for a NCNCA Flora permit (DENC)**
27.	*Senegalia mellifera (=Acacia mellifera)*	FABACEAE	LC	
28.	*Tapinanthus oleifolius*	LORANTHACEAE	LC	
29.	*Tetraena decumbens (=Zygophyllum decumbens)*	ZYGOPHYLLACEAE	LC	

No.	Species name	FAMILY	Status	Alien & invader plant (AIP)
30.	*Tetraena rigida (=Zygophyllum rigidum)*	ZYGOPHYLLACEAE	LC	
31.	*Ziziphus mucronata*	RHAMNACEAE	LC	

4.6. THREATENED AND PROTECTED PLANT SPECIES

South Africa has become the first country to fully assess the status of its entire flora. Major threats to the South African flora are identified in terms of the number of plant taxa Red-Listed as threatened with extinction as a result of threats like, habitat loss (e.g. infrastructure development, urban expansion, crop cultivation and mines), invasive alien plant infestation (e.g. outcompeting indigenous plant species), habitat degradation (e.g. overgrazing, inappropriate fire management etc.), unsustainable harvesting, demographic factors, pollution, loss of pollinators or dispersers, climate change and natural disasters (e.g. such as droughts and floods). South Africa uses the internationally endorsed IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria in the Red List of South African plants. However, due to its strong focus on determining risk of extinction, the IUCN system does not highlight species that are at low risk of extinction, but may nonetheless be of high conservation importance. As a result a SANBI uses an amended system of categories in order to highlight species that may be of low risk of extinction but are still of conservation concern (SANBI, 2015).

In the Northern Cape, species of conservation concern are also protected in terms of national and provincial legislation, namely:

- The National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, Act 10 of 2004, provides for the protection of species through the "*Lists of critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable and protected species*" (GN. R. 152 of 23 February 2007).
- National Forest Act, Act 84 of 1998, provides for the protection of forests as well as specific tree species through the "*List of protected tree species*" (GN 908 of 21 November 2014).
- Northern Cape Nature Conservation Act, Act of 2009, provides for the protection of "*specially protected species*" (Schedule 1), "*protected species*" (Schedule 2) and "*common indigenous species"* (Schedule 3).

4.6.1. Red list of South African plant species

The Red List of South African Plants online provides up to date information on the national conservation status of South Africa's indigenous plants (SANBI, 2015).

- **No red-listed species** was observed.

4.6.2. NEM: BA protected plant species

The National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, Act 10 of 2004, provides for the protection of species through the "Lists of critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable and protected species" (GN. R. 152 of 23 February 2007).

- **No NEM: BA protected species was observed.**

4.6.3. NFA Protected plant species

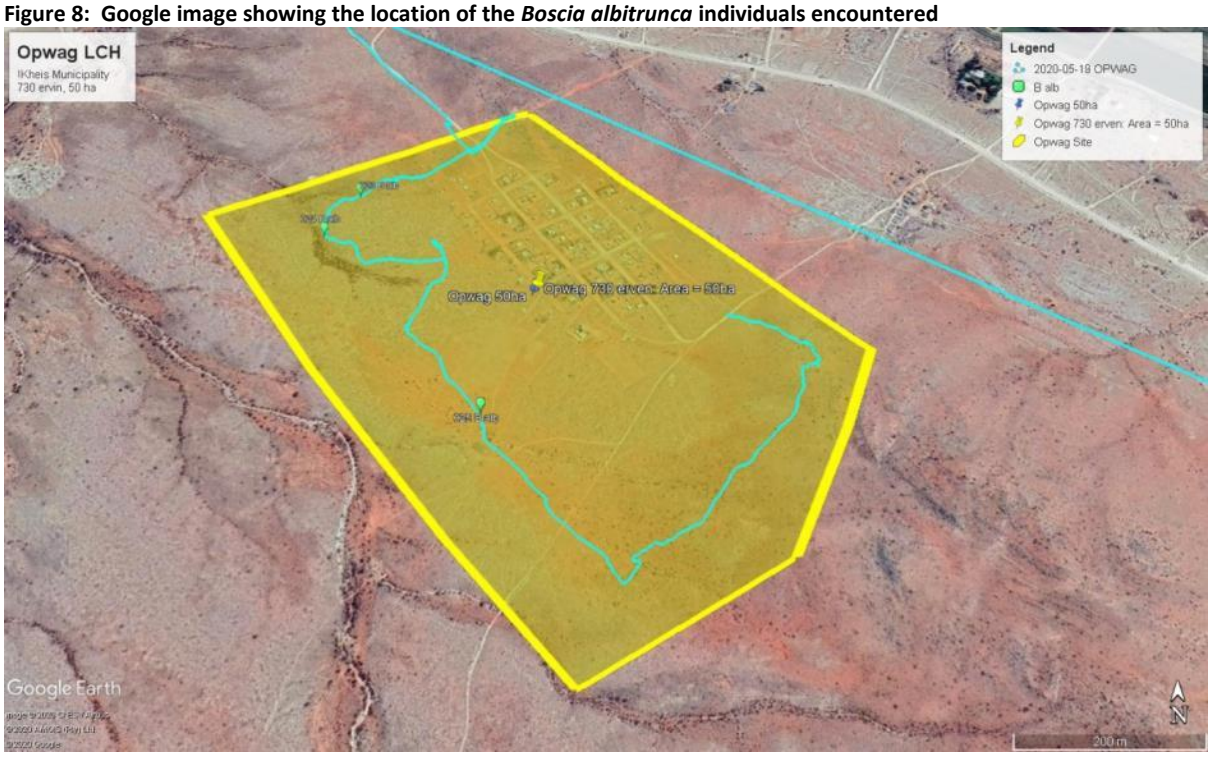
The National Forests Act (NFA) of 1998 (Act 84 of 1998) provides for the protection of forests as well as specific tree species (as updated).

- **One species protected in terms of the NFA** was observed, namely ***Boscia albitrunca***. The following table give locations for each tree as well as recommendations for impact minimisation. A NFA permit as well as a NCNCA permit will be required for the removal of these plants.

Table 2: Location of NFA protected trees observed within or near the footprint

NO.	SPECIES NAME	COMMENTS	RECOMMENDATIONS
023 B alb	*Boscia albitrunca* S28° 50' 08.4" E21° 57' 14.3"		Small shrub in good condition (0.5 m tall). **Permits will be needed in terms of both the NFA and the NCNCA if this plant needs to be removed.**
024 B alb	*Boscia albitrunca* S28° 50' 11.1" E21° 57' 12.7"	Refer to Photo 5.	2 x Medium size trees, relative good condition (2.1 m tall) Retain if possible. **Permits will be needed in terms of both the NFA and the NCNCA if this plant needs to be removed.**
025 B alb	*Boscia albitrunca* S28° 50' 21.7" E21° 57' 22.2"	Refer to Photo 7.	Large sized shrub in relative good condition (1.8 m tall). Retain if possible. **Permits will be needed in terms of both the NFA and the NCNCA if this plant needs to be removed.**

Figure 8: Google image showing the location of the *Boscia albitrunca* individuals encountered



4.6.4. NCNCA protected plant species

The Northern Cape Nature Conservation Act 9 of 2009 (NCNCA) came into effect on the 12th of December 2011, and also provides for the sustainable utilization of wild animals, aquatic biota and plants. Schedule 1 and 2 of the act give extensive lists of specially protected and protected fauna and flora species in accordance

with this act. NB. Please note that all indigenous plant species are protected in terms of Schedule 3 of this act (e.g. any work within a road reserve).

- The following species protected in terms of the NCNCA were encountered. Recommendations on impact minimisation also included.

Table 3: Plant species protected in terms of the NCNCA encountered within the study area

NO.	SPECIES NAME	COMMENTS	RECOMMENDATIONS
1.	*Aloe claviflora* **Schedule 2 protected**		Very common plant in this area.
2.	*Boscia albitrunca* **Schedule 2 protected**		Refer to Table 2.
3.	*Cynanchum viminale* **Schedule 2 protected**	Occasionally observed within the footprint.	Larger *Cynanchum* plants are expected to transplant poorly. Species protection through topsoil conservation.
4.	*Euphorbia gariepina* **Schedule 2 protected**		Occasionally observed. Larger *Euphorbia* tends to transplant very poorly. Species protection through topsoil conservation.
5.	*Euphorbia spinea* **Schedule 2 protected**		**Search & rescue:** Occasionally observed. Individuals within footprint to be transplanted to surrounding area.
6.	*Ruschia divaricata* **Schedule 2 protected**		**Search & rescue:** Occasionally observed. Individuals within footprint to be transplanted to surrounding area.

5. FAUNA AND AVI-FAUNA

Please note that no fauna or avi-fauna screening was done as part of this study and the following notes are just observations with regards to status of the study area and observations made during the botanical site visit. The proposed site borders (almost surrounding) the existing Opwag settlement where the main land-uses is livestock grazing. The vegetation was still in relative good condition, although long term grazing by domestic animals would have left their mark.

Faunal diversity changes through space and time and are directly influenced by anthropogenic activities, including animal husbandry (i.e. overgrazing by livestock) and human settlements (e.g. transformation of land) (Tilman et al., 1997; Chapin *et al*., 2000). The major large-scale disturbance to the Nama Karoo ecosystem has been the change in grazing. Previously a variety of indigenous migratory ungulates with a broad range of grazing habits would have migrated through the land, but now domestic sheep and goats with much more selective grazing habits are confined within farm boundaries (Skead, 1982). This change in the grazing regime is thought to be responsible for alterations in both plant species composition and cover, which ultimately influence ecosystem functioning (Roux & Theron, 1986). Heavily disturbed Karoo veld seldom recovers within one lifetime (Esler *et. al*., 2006). Direct impacts are typically associated with urban land expansion, leading to land cover changes (and consequent loss of natural areas) and edge effects, whereas indirect impacts include impacts associated with the generation of waste (e.g. general or sewage) and its management (McDonald *et al.,* 2020). Edge effects have diverse impacts on biodiversity and ecological functioning (Razafindratsima *et al.,* 2018). The current land-use, the adjacent farming practices and the poor status of the veld all contributes to a disturbance factor, which is likely to have driven most wild animals away from this area. It is considered highly unlikely that any large game remains in this area. This in turn would have affected the food chain and ultimately the density of tertiary predators, particularly mammals and larger birds of prey, while smaller predators and scavengers such as jackal and caracal are eradicated by stock farmers in fear of their livestock.

Due to long-term impacts associated with human settlements, compounded by the proximity of the proposed development areas to the urban edge, a comprehensive faunal survey is not deemed necessary.

5.1. MAMMALS

The fauna of the Nama Karoo is relatively species-poor (Vernon, 1999). Although not remarkably rich in species or endemism, the flora and fauna of the Nama-Karoo region are impressively adapted to its climatic extremes. There are few strict endemics, as most animals have extended their ranges into the Karoo from adjacent biomes. Only the small Visagie's golden mole (Chrysochloris visagiei) is strictly endemic to the eco-region. Five other small mammals are near-endemic, Grant's rock mouse (*Aethomys granti*), Shortridge's rat (*Thallomys shortridgei*), the riverine rabbit (*Bunolagus monticularis*), *Gerbillurus vallinus* and *Petromyscus monticularis* of which riverine rabbit is the most vulnerable (Hilton-Taylor, 2000). The quagga, (*Equus quagga*) a Nama Karoo near-endemic, was hunted to extinction in the 19th Century (Skinner & Smithers, 1990).

The nearby Witsand Nature Reserve still supports an impressive diversity of larger antelope and other mammal species, such *Antidorcas marsupialis* (Springbuck), *Oryx gazelle* (Gemsbok or Oryx), *Raphicerus campestris* (Steenbok), *Sylvicapra grimmia* (Grey Duiker), *Alcelaphus buselaphus* (Red hartebeest), *Xerus inauris* (Southern African ground squirrel), *Suricata suricatta* (Meerkat), *Hystrix cristata* (Porcupine), *Proteles cristata* (Aardwolf), *Orycteropus afer* (Aardvark), *Manis temminckii* (Ground Pangolin), *Otocyon megalotis* (Bat-eared fox), *Vulpes chama* (Cape fox), *Genetta tigrina* (Cape genet) and *Pedetes capensis* (Springhare) (Mthombeni, 2019). However, the Witsand Nature Reserve falls within the Savanna Biome (as opposed to the Nama-Karoo Biome at Grootdrink) and as a result the species occurring at Witsand will not give a true

reflection of the expected game for this area. However, it should give an indication of potential fauna for the larger area.

The Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (approximately 250km) and Tswalu Kalahari Reserve (approximately 144km) are the closest protected areas with similar vegetation. Mammalian species present in these reserves include, but are not limited to the African Striped Weasel, African Wild Cat, African Wild Dog (Painted Wolf) Antbear (Aardvark), Bat-Eared Fox, Black-Backed Jackal, Black-Tailed Tree Rat, Blue Wildebeest, Brant's Whistling Rat, Brown Hyena, Bushveld Elephant-Shrew, Cape Golden Mole, Cape Hare, Cape Serotine Bat, Caracal, Chacma Baboon, Cheetah, Common Mole Rat, Damara Mole Rat, Desert Musk Shrew, Egyptian Free-Tailed Bat, Egyptian Slit-Faced Bat, Eland, Gemsbok, Giraffe, Grass Climbing Mouse, Grey Duiker, Ground Squirrel, Hairy-Footed Gerbil, Highveld Gerbil, Honey Badger, Kudu, Large-Eared Mouse, Leopard, Lion, Namaqua Rock Mouse, Pangolin, Porcupine, Pouched Mouse, Pygmy Mouse, Red Hartebeest Round-Eared Elephant Shrew, Short-Tailed Gerbil, Silver (Cape) Fox, Slender Mongoose, Small Spotted Cat, Small-Spotted Genet, South African Hedgehog, Spotted Hyena, Springbok, Springhare Steenbok, Striped Mouse Striped Polecat, Suricate, Vervet Monkey, Warthog, Woosnam's Desert Rat, and Yellow Mongoose (https://www.sanparks.org/parks/kgalagadi/conservation/ff/mammals.php) / (https://tswalu.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Tswalu-Information-Guide-2019.pdf).

Although smaller mammals like genet, mice is still expected, none where observed (not even droppings or spoor), apart from livestock (which were mainly goats). It is also considered highly unlikely that larger game or even smaller game like duiker will frequent or visit the proposed footprint because of its proximity to the settlement and the scarcity of natural hiding.

5.2. AVI-FAUNA

Among birds in the Nama-Karoo, the ferruginous lark (*Certhilauda burra*) and Sclater's lark (*Spizocorys sclater*) are strictly endemic, while the following five species are near-endemic: Karoo chat (*Cercomela schlegelii*), tractrac chat (*Cercomela tractrac*), red lark (*Certhilauda burra*), Karoo scrub robin (*Cercotrichas coryphaeus*), red-headed cisticola (*Cisticola subruficapillus*), and the Namaqua prinia (*Phragmacia substriata*). Other characteristic species of the Nama Karoo which are regarded as "Vulnerable" in South Africa are tawny (*Aquila rapax*) and martial (*Polemaetus bellicosus*) eagles, African marsh harrier (*Circus ranivorus*), lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*), blue crane (*Anthropoides paradiseus*), kori (*Ardeotis kori*) and Ludwig's (*Neotis ludwigii*) bustards, and the red lark (Dean *et al*., 1991; McCann, 2000; Barnes, 2000).

The nearby Witsand Nature Reserve is regarded as a great birding site, with its dunes and dense woodland and Savanna, offering all the typical arid Savanna birds, as well as species that prefer denser woodland. These include Melba Finch, Black-cheeked and Violet-eared Waxbills, Yellow-billed Hornbill, Lappet-faced Vulture and, in wet years, Monotonous Lark (www.capebirdingroute.org/Kalahari_Witsand_NR).

But again, avi-fauna diversity and numbers is expected to be much higher at Witsand than in the study area, because of the difference in vegetation. Although Bushmanland Arid Grassland vegetation can potentially attracts a number of bird species, the disturbed and low vegetation cover (associated with the proposed site), is likely to result in a low avifaunal diversity, as avifaunal diversity is directly influenced by land cover (Lepczyk *et al.,* 2017).

Although a few smaller birds were seen no larger birds were observed during the site visit. Because of the existing impacts (e.g. proximity to the urban edge of the settlement) the proposed footprint enlargement is not expected to have any significant impact on the surrounding bird populations, especially if larger trees next to the seasonal drainage lines are protected.

5.3. REPTILE & AMPHIBIANS

The Nama-Karoo reptile fauna contains at least 10 species that are regarded as near-endemic, but only a few are potentially confined to this region, which includes the Karoo dwarf chameleon (*Bradypodion karrooicum*) and Boulenger's Padloper (*Homopus boulengeri*). Many of the endemics, and some of the other species present, are relicts of past drier epochs when desert and Savanna biomes expanded to link up with similar biomes in northeast Africa (Werger, 1978). This arid corridor enabled flora and fauna to move between the two regions. Many discontinuous populations of the same species, genera and families with representatives in each region indicate that the corridor formed many times, most recently about 18,000 years ago. Among the fauna to exhibit this interrupted distribution are the bat-eared fox, olive toad (*Bufo garmani*), and fawn-coloured and sabota larks (*Mirafra africanoides*, *M. sabota*) (Vernon, 1999).

The occasional agama was observed on rocky outcrops and the footprint may provide habitat for a number of reptile species, but they would most likely be terrestrial species adapted to the dry Nama-Karoo. No amphibian species are likely to occur due to a lack of aquatic and wetland habitat in the proposed footprint.
It is not expected that the proposed footprint enlargement will have any significant additional impact on reptile activity (especially since the surrounding veld is still in good condition).

6. IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHOD

The objective of this study was to evaluate the botanical diversity of the property area in order to identify significant environmental features which might have been impacted as a result of the development. The Ecosystem Guidelines for Environmental Assessment (De Villiers *et. al*., 2005), were used to evaluate the botanical significance of the property with emphasis on:

- Significant ecosystems
  - Threatened or protected ecosystems
  - Special habitats
  - Corridors and or conservancy networks
- Significant species
  - Threatened or endangered species
  - Protected species

6.1. DETERMINING SIGNIFICANCE

Determining impact significance from predictions of the nature of the impact has been a source of debate and will remain a source of debate. The author used a combination of scaling and weighting methods to determine significance based on a simple formula. The formula used is based on the method proposed by Edwards (2011). However, the criteria used were adjusted to suite its use for botanical assessment. In this document significance rating was evaluated using the following criteria (Refer to Table 4).

Significance = Conservation Value x (Likelihood + Duration + Extent + Severity) (Edwards 2011)

Table 4: Categories and criteria used for the evaluation of the significance of a potential impact

ASPECT / CRITERIA	LOW (1)	MEDIUM/LOW (2)	MEDIUM (3)	MEDIUM/HIGH (4)	HIGH (5)
CONSERVATION VALUE Refers to the intrinsic value of an attribute or its relative importance towards the conservation of an ecosystem or species or even natural aesthetics. Conservation status is based on habitat function, its vulnerability to loss and	The attribute is transformed, degraded not sensitive (e.g. Least threatened), with unlikely possibility of species loss.	The attribute is in good condition but not sensitive (e.g. Least threatened), with unlikely possibility of species loss.	The attribute is in good condition, considered vulnerable (threatened), or falls within an ecological support area or a critical biodiversity area, but with	The attribute is considered endangered or, falls within an ecological support area or a critical biodiversity area, or provides core habitat for endemic or rare &	The attribute is considered critically endangered or is part of a proclaimed provincial or national protected area.

ASPECT / CRITERIA	LOW (1)	MEDIUM/LOW (2)	MEDIUM (3)	MEDIUM/HIGH (4)	HIGH (5)
fragmentation or its value in terms of the protection of habitat or species			unlikely possibility of species loss.	endangered species.	
LIKELIHOOD Refers to the probability of the specific impact occurring as a result of the proposed activity	Under normal circumstances it is almost certain that the impact will not occur.	The possibility of the impact occurring is very low, but there is a small likelihood under normal circumstances.	The likelihood of the impact occurring, under normal circumstances is 50/50, it may or it may not occur.	It is very likely that the impact will occur under normal circumstances.	The proposed activity is of such a nature that it is certain that the impact will occur under normal circumstances.
DURATION Refers to the length in time during which the activity is expected to impact on the environment.	Impact is temporary and easily reversible through natural process or with mitigation. Rehabilitation time is expected to be short (1-2 years).	Impact is temporary and reversible through natural process or with mitigation. Rehabilitation time is expected to be relative short (2-5 years).	Impact is medium-term and reversible with mitigation, but will last for some time after construction and may require on-going mitigation. Rehabilitation time is expected to be longer (5-15 years).	Impact is long-term and reversible but only with long term mitigation. It will last for a long time after construction and is likely to require on-going mitigation. Rehabilitation time is expected to be longer (15-50 years).	The impact is expected to be permanent.
EXTENT Refers to the spatial area that is likely to be impacted or over which the impact will have influence, should it occur.	Under normal circumstances the impact will be contained within the construction footprint.	Under normal circumstances the impact might extent outside of the construction site (e.g. within a 2 km radius), but will not affect surrounding properties.	Under normal circumstances the impact might extent outside of the property boundaries and will affect surrounding land owners or –users, but still within the local area (e.g. within a 50 km radius).	Under normal circumstances the impact might extent to the surrounding region (e.g. within a 200 km radius), and will regional land owners or –users.	Under normal circumstances the effects of the impact might extent to a large geographical area (>200 km radius).
SEVERITY Refers to the direct physical or biophysical impact of the activity on the surrounding environment should it occur.	It is expected that the impact will have little or no affect (barely perceptible) on the integrity of the surrounding environment. Rehabilitation not needed or easily achieved.	It is expected that the impact will have a perceptible impact on the surrounding environment, but it will maintain its function, even if slightly modified (overall integrity not compromised). Rehabilitation easily achieved.	It is expected that the impact will have an impact on the surrounding environment, but it will maintain its function, even if moderately modified (overall integrity not compromised). Rehabilitation easily achieved.	It is expected that the impact will have a severe impact on the surrounding environment. Functioning may be severely impaired and may temporarily cease. Rehabilitation will be needed to restore system integrity.	It is expected that the impact will have a very severe to permanent impact on the surrounding environment. Functioning irreversibly impaired. Rehabilitation often impossible or unfeasible due to cost.

6.2. SIGNIFICANCE CATEGORIES

The formal NEMA EIA application process was developed to assess the significance of impacts on the surrounding environment (including socio-economic factors), associated with any specific development proposal in order to allow the competent authority to make informed decisions. Specialist studies must advise the environmental assessment practitioner (EAP) on the significance of impacts in his field of specialty. In order to do this, the specialist must identify all potentially significant

environmental impacts, predict the nature of the impact and evaluate the significance of that impact should it occur. Potential significant impacts are evaluated, using the method described above, in order to determine its potential significance. The potential significance is then described in terms of the categories given in Table 5.

Table 5: Categories used to describe significance rating (adjusted from DEAT, 2002)

SIGNIFICANCE	DESCRIPTION
Insignificant or Positive (4-22)	There is no impact or the impact is insignificant in scale or magnitude as a result of low sensitivity to change or low intrinsic value of the site, or the impact may be positive.
Low (23-36)	An impact barely noticeable in scale or magnitude as a result of low sensitivity to change or low intrinsic value of the site, or will be of very short-term or is unlikely to occur. Impact is unlikely to have any real effect and no or little mitigation is required.
Medium Low (37-45)	Impact is of a low order and therefore likely to have little real effect. Mitigation is either easily achieved. Social, cultural and economic activities can continue unchanged, or impacts may have medium to short term effects on the social and/or natural environment within site boundaries.
Medium (46-55)	Impact is real, but not substantial. Mitigation is both feasible and fairly easily possible, but may require modification of the project design or layout. Social, cultural and economic activities of communities may be impacted, but can continue (albeit in a different form). These impacts will usually result in medium to long term effect on the social and/or natural environment, within site boundary.
Medium high (56-63)	Impact is real, substantial and undesirable, but mitigation is feasible. Modification of the project design or layout may be required. Social, cultural and economic activities may be impacted, but can continue (albeit in a different form). These impacts will usually result in medium to long-term effect on the social and/or natural environment, beyond site boundary within local area.
High (64-79)	An impact of high order. Mitigation is difficult, expensive, time-consuming or some combination of these. Social, cultural and economic activities of communities are disrupted and may come to a halt. These impacts will usually result in long-term change to the social and/or natural environment, beyond site boundaries, regional or widespread.
Unacceptable (80-100)	An impact of the highest order possible. There is no possible mitigation that could offset the impact. Social, cultural and economic activities of communities are disrupted to such an extent that these come to a halt. The impact will result in permanent change. Very often these impacts cannot be mitigated and usually result in very severe effects, beyond site boundaries, national or international.

7. DISCUSSING BOTANICAL SENSITIVITY

The aim of impact assessment is to determine the vulnerability of a habitat to a specific impact. In order to do so, the sensitivity of the habitat should be determined by identifying and assessing the most significant environmental aspects of the site against the potential impact(s). For this development the following biodiversity aspects was considered:

- **Location**: The proposed development footprint is located on Municipal property, next to the existing town. Portions of the proposed footprint had already been settled.
- **Activity**: The proposed activity is expected to result in a permanent transformation of approximately 50 ha of land, of which more than 80% is still covered by indigenous vegetation in relatively good condition.
- **Geology & Soils**: No special features such as true quarts patches or heuweltjies were observed in or near to the larger footprint area that may result in specialised plant habitat.
- **Land use and cover**: The footprint is on municipal land in close proximity to the town of Opwag. Portions of the footprint is disturbed or already settled. The area is grazed by livestock, but the vegetation cover is still in fairly good shape.
- **Vegetation status**: The vegetation is not considered a threatened vegetation type, but conservation targets have not yet been met.
- **Conservation priority areas:** According to the Northern Cape CBA maps the proposed site falls within a CBA area. However, there is no alternative on Municipal land that will not impact on the CBA. The site will not impact on any recognised centre of endemism.
- **Connectivity**: The transformation of the site will destroy connectivity on the site, but should not result in a significant impact on the surrounding area, where connectivity is still excellent.
- **Watercourses and wetlands**: Not evaluated in this study as a separate freshwater impact assessment has been commissioned as part of the NEMA EIA process.
- **Protected or endangered plant species**: The most significant botanical aspect of this site is the presence of a 4 protected Sheppard trees (*Boscia albitrunca*) (refer to Table 2) and a number of Northern Cape Nature Conservation Act, protected species (Refer to Table 3).
- **Alien and Invasive Plant species**: No significant invasive alien species observed.

7.1. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Table 6 rates the significance of environmental impacts associated with the proposed development. It also evaluates the expected accumulative effect of the proposed development as well as the No-Go option.

Table 6: Impact assessment associated with the proposed development

Impact assessment								
Aspect	**Mitigation**	**CV**	**Lik**	**Dur**	**Ext**	**Sev**	**Significance**	Short discussion
Geology & soils: Potential impact on special habitats (e.g. true quartz or "heuweltjies")	Without mitigation	2	1	5	2	1	18	No special habitats observed.
	With mitigation	2	1	3	1	1	12	Protect all significant indigenous tree species (even if it have to be incorporated within the development).
Landuse and cover: Potential impact on socio-economic activities.	Without mitigation	2	3	5	1	2	22	Permanent transformation of approximately 50 ha of indigenous vegetation used for livestock grazing.
	With mitigation	2	2	3	1	1	14	Potential beneficial socio-economic impact (much needed housing project).
Vegetation status: Loss of vulnerable or endangered vegetation and associated habitat.	Without mitigation	3	3	5	2	2	36	Permanent transformation of 50 ha of slightly disturbed Bushmanland Arid Grassland (Least Threatened).
	With mitigation	2	2	3	1	1	14	Protect all significant indigenous tree species and search & rescue other potentially significant protected plant species.
Conservation priority: Potential impact on protected areas, CBA's, ESA's or Centre's of Endemism.	Without mitigation	3	3	5	2	3	39	The development will impact on a proposed CBA. However, there is no alternative location on the property that will not impact on the same CBA.
	With mitigation	2	2	3	1	2	16	Protect all significant indigenous tree species and search & rescue other potentially significant protected plant species.
Connectivity: Potential loss of ecological migration corridors.	Without mitigation	2	3	5	2	2	24	The transformation will destroy connectivity within the site, but will not result in a significant impact on the surrounding area, where connectivity is still excellent
	With mitigation	2	2	3	2	2	18	Protect all significant indigenous tree species and search & rescue other potentially significant protected plant species.
Watercourses and wetlands: Potential impact on natural water courses and it's ecological support areas.	Without mitigation						0	N/a (Refer to the Freshwater specialist report).
	With mitigation						0	
Protected & endangered plant species: Potential impact on threatened or protected plant species.	Without mitigation	3	3	5	2	2	36	A number of protected species were observed, most notably a number of nationally protected tree species.
	With mitigation	2	2	3	1	1	14	Protect all significant indigenous tree species and search & rescue other potentially significant protected plant species.
Invasive alien plant species: Potential invasive plant infestation as a result of the activities.	Without mitigation						0	No alien invasive plants observed
	With mitigation						0	

Veld fire risk: Potential risk of veld fires as a result of the activities.	Without mitigation	1	2	3	2	2	9	Veld fire risk low.
	With mitigation	1	1	1	1	1	4	Address fire danger throughout construction.
Cumulative impacts: Cumulative impact associated with proposed activity.	Without mitigation	3	3	5	2	3	39	Permanent transformation of approximately 50 ha of natural veld for urban development.
	With mitigation	2	2	3	2	2	18	Refer to all the mitigation recommendations above.
The "No-Go" option: Potential impact associated with the No-Go alternative.	Without mitigation	3	3	4	2	2	33	Slow degradation of natural veld as a result of illegal dumping, physical disturbances and grazing practices.
	With mitigation						0	

According Table 6, the main impacts associated with the proposed development will be:

- The transformation of 50 ha of indigenous vegetation within a proposed CBA; and
- The potential impact on a number of nationally protected trees as well as provincially protected plant species.

However, there is no logical alternative site, located on Municipal land that will not impact on the same CBA. In this case, about 20% of the proposed footprint is already impacted as result of existing settlement.

The No-Go option is not likely to result in a “no-impact” scenario, as constant slow degradation is expected to continue as a result of urban activities and poor management of the site.

The cumulative impact (even without mitigation) is expected to be **Medium-Low**, which can be reduced to **Low** through mitigation.

8. IMPACT MINIMISATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed development footprint is located on Municipal property, adjacent to existing town developments. The activity is expected to result in a permanent transformation of approximately 50 ha of land, of which approximately 80% is still covered by indigenous vegetation in good condition. The site overlaps an identified critical biodiversity area (according to the 2016, Northern Cape Critical Biodiversity Areas maps). In addition, 4 protected Sheppard trees (*Boscia albitrunca*), and a number of Northern Cape Nature Conservation Act, protected species were observed within the footprint.

According to the impact assessment given in Table 6 the development is likely to result in a **Medium-Low** impact, which can be reduced to a **Low** impact with good environmental control during construction.

With the correct mitigation it is unlikely that the development will contribute significantly to any of the following:

- Significant loss of vegetation type and associated habitat.
- Loss of ecological processes (e.g. migration patterns, pollinators, river function etc.) due to construction and operational activities.
- Loss of local biodiversity and threatened plant species.
- Loss of ecosystem connectivity.

8.1. MITIGATION ACTIONS

The following mitigation actions should be implemented to ensure that the proposed development does not pose a significant threat to the environment:

- All construction must be done in accordance with an approved construction and operational phase Environmental Management Plan (EMP), which must include the recommendations made in this report.
- A suitably qualified Environmental Control Officer must be appointed to monitor the construction phase in terms of the EMP and any other conditions pertaining to specialist studies.
- **Before any work is done** protected tree species must be marked and demarcated (Refer to Table 2).
- **Before any work is done** search & rescue as discussed in Table 3 must be completed.
- Lay-down areas or construction sites must be located within the construction footprint.
- No clearing of any area outside of the construction footprint may be allowed.
- An integrated waste management approach must be implemented during construction.
    - Construction related general and hazardous waste may only be disposed of at Municipal approved waste disposal sites.
- Alien invasive *Prosopis* plants within the footprint (and immediate surroundings) must be removed in a responsible way (to ensure against regrowth).
- The Municipality must ensure that adequate waste and sewerage facilities and or services are established to service this community.

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APPENDIX 1: COMPLIANCE WITH APPENDIX 6 OF GN. NO. 982 (4 DECEMBER 2014)

Specialist reports

1. A specialist report prepared in terms of these regulations must contain -	
a) Details of –	**Refer to:**
(i) The specialist who prepared the report; and	Refer to Page ii & Appendix 2
(ii) The expertise of the specialist to compile a specialist report including a curriculum vitae;	Refer to Appendix 2
b) A declaration that the specialist is independent in a form as may be specified by the competent authority;	Refer to Page ii
c) An indication of the scope of, and the purpose for which the report was prepared;	Refer to Heading 1.1
d) The duration, date and season of the site investigation and the relevance of the season to the outcome of the assessment;	Refer to Heading 3
e) A description of the methodology adopted in preparing the report or carrying out the specialist process inclusive of equipment and modelling used;	Refer to Heading 3
f) Details of an assessment of the specific identified sensitivity of the site related to the proposed activity or activities and its associated structures and infrastructures, inclusive of a site plan identifying site alternatives;	Refer to Headings 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6.
g) An identification of any areas to be avoided, including buffers;	Refer to Figure 8
h) A map superimposing the activity including the associated structures and infrastructure on the environmental sensitivities of the site including areas to be avoided, including buffers;	Refer to Figure 8
i) A description of any assumptions made and any uncertainties or gaps of knowledge;	Refer to Heading 3
j) A description of the findings and potential implications of such findings on the impact of the proposed activity, [including identified alternatives on the environment] or activities;	Refer to Heading 7
k) Any mitigation measures for inclusion in the EMPr;	Refer to Heading 8.1
l) Any conditions for inclusion in the environmental authorization;	None
m) Any monitoring requirements for inclusion in the EMPr or environmental authorization;	Refer to Heading 8.1
n) A reasoned opinion -	
(i) [as to] whether the proposed activity, activities or portions thereof should be authorized;	Refer to the "*Main conclusion*" within the executive summary (Page i)
(iA) regarding the acceptability of the proposed activity or activities; and	
(ii) if the opinion is that the proposed activity, activities or portions thereof should be authorized, any avoidance, management and mitigation measures that should be included in the EMPr, and where applicable the closure plan;	Refer to Heading 8.1
o) A description of any consultation process that was undertaken during the course of preparing the specialist report;	N/a
p) A summary and copies of any comments received during any consultation process and where applicable all responses thereto; and	N/a
q) Any information requested by the competent authority.	N/a
2. Where a government notice gazetted by the Minister provides for any protocol or minimum information requirement to be applied to a specialist report, the requirements as indicated in such notice will apply.	

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BRIEF RESUME OF RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

1997-2005: Employed by the Overberg Test Range (a Division of Denel), responsible for managing the environmental department of OTB, developing and implementing an ISO14001 environmental management system, ensuring environmental compliance, performing environmental risk assessments with regards to missile tests and planning the management of the 26 000 ha of natural veld, working closely with CapeNature (De Hoop Nature Reserve).

2005-2010: Joined Enviroscientific, as an independent environmental consultant specializing in wastewater management, botanical and biodiversity assessments, developing environmental management plans and

strategies, environmental control work as well as doing environmental compliance audits and was also responsible for helping develop the biodiversity part of the Farming for the Future audit system implemented by Woolworths. During his time with Enviroscientific he performed more than 400 biodiversity and environmental legal compliance audits.

2010-2017: Joined EnviroAfrica, as an independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner and Biodiversity Specialist, responsible for Environmental Impact Assessments, Biodiversity & Botanical specialist reports and Environmental Compliance Audits. During this time Mr Botes compiled more than 70 specialist Biodiversity & Botanical impact assessment reports ranging from agricultural-, pipelines- and solar developments.

2017-Present: Establish a small independent consultancy (PB Consult) specialising in Environmental Audits, Biodiversity and Botanical specialist studies as well as Environmental Impact Assessment.

LIST OF MOST RELEVANT BOTANICAL & BIODIVERSITY STUDIES

Botes. P. 2007: Botanical assessment. Schaapkraal, Erf 644, Mitchell's Plain. A preliminary assessment of the vegetation in terms of the Fynbos Forum: Ecosystem guidelines. 13 November 2007.

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Botes, P. 2012(b): Proposed Disselfontein Keren Energy Holdings Solar Facility on Farm Disselfontein no. 77, Hopetown. A Biodiversity Assessment (with botanical input) taking into consideration the findings of the National Spatial Biodiversity Assessment of South Africa. 28 March 2012.

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Botes, P. 2012(d): Proposed Keimoes Keren Energy Holdings Solar Facility at Keimoes. A Biodiversity Assessment (with botanical input) taking into consideration the findings of the National Spatial Biodiversity Assessment of South Africa. 9 March 2012.

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Botes, P. 2012(h): Proposed Vanrhynsdorp Keren Energy Holdings Solar Facility on Farm Duinen Farm no. 258, Vanrhynsdorp. A Biodiversity Assessment (with botanical input) taking into consideration the findings of the National Spatial Biodiversity Assessment of South Africa. 13 April 2012.

Botes, P. 2012(i): Askham (Kameelduin) proposed low cost housing, Mier Municipality Residential Project, Northern Cape. A preliminary Biodiversity & Botanical scan in order to identify significant environmental features (and to identify the need for additional studies if required. 1 November 2012.

Botes, P. 2013(a): Groot Mier proposed low cost housing, Mier Municipality Residential Project, Northern Cape. A preliminary Biodiversity & Botanical scan in order to identify significant environmental features (and to identify the need for additional studies if required. January 2013.

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Botes, P. 2013(g): Onseepkans Canal: Repair and upgrade of the Onseepkans Water Supply and Flood Protection Infrastructure, Northern Cape. A Biodiversity & Botanical scan in order to identify significant environmental features (and to identify the need for additional studies if required). August 2013.

Botes, P. 2013(h): Biodiversity scoping assessment with regards to a Jetty Construction On Erf 327, Malagas (Matjiespoort). 24 October 2013.

Botes, P. 2013(i): Jacobsbaai pump station and rising main (Saldanha Bay Municipality). A Botanical Scan of the area that will be impacted by the proposed Jacobsbaai pump station and rising main. 30 October 2013.

Botes, P. 2014(a): Brandvlei Bulk Water Supply: Proposed construction of a 51 km new bulk water supply pipeline (replacing the existing pipeline) from Romanskolk Reservoir to the Brandvlei Reservoir, Brandvlei (Northern Cape Province). A preliminary Biodiversity & Botanical scan

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Botes, P. & McDonald Dr. D. 2014: Loeriesfontein Bulk Water Supply: Proposed construction of a new bulk water supply pipeline and associated infrastructure from the farm Rheeboksfontein to Loeriesfontein Reservoir, Loeriesfontein. Botanical scan of the proposed route to determine the possible impact on vegetation and plant species. 30 May 2014.

Botes, P. 2014(b): Kalahari-East Water Supply Scheme Extension: Phase 1. Proposed extension of the Kalahari-East Water Supply Scheme and associated infrastructure to the Mier Municipality, ZF Mgcawu District Municipality, Mier Local Municipality (Northern Cape Province). Biodiversity & Botanical scan of the proposed route to determine the possible impact on biodiversity with emphasis on vegetation and plant species. 1 July 2014.

Botes, P. 2014(c): The proposed Freudenberg Farm Homestead, Farm no. 419/0, Tulbagh (Wolseley Area). A Botanical scan of possible remaining natural veld on the property. 26 August 2014.

Botes, P. 2014(d): Postmasburg WWTW: Proposed relocation of the Postmasburg wastewater treatment works and associated infrastructure, ZF Mgcawu District Municipality, Tsantsabane Local Municipality (Northern Cape Province). Biodiversity and botanical scan of the proposed pipeline route and WWTW site. 30 October 2014.

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Botes, P 2015(c): Proposed Bredasdorp Feedlot, Portion 10 of Farm 159, Bredasdorp, Cape Agulhas Municipality, Northern Cape Province. A Botanical scan of the area that will be impacted. 28 July 2015.

Botes, P. 2016(a): OWK Raisin processing facility, Blaauwskop Settlement, Erf 151, Kenhardt, Northern Cape Province. A Botanical scan of the proposed footprint. 26 May 2016.

Botes, P. 2016(b): Onseepkans Agricultural development. The proposed development of ±250 ha of new agricultural land at Onseepkans, Northern Cape Province. Biodiversity and Botanical Scan. January 2016.

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Botes, P. 2017: The proposed new Namaqua N7 Truck Stop on Portion 62 of the Farm Biesjesfontein No. 218, Springbok, Northern Cape Province. Botanical scan of the proposed footprint. 10 July 2017.

Botes, P. 2018(a): Kamieskroon Bulk Water Supply – Ground water desalination, borehole- and reservoir development, Kamiesberg, Northern Cape Province. Botanical scan of the proposed footprint. 20 February 2018

Botes, P. 2018(b): Rooifontein Bulk Water Supply – Ground water desalination, borehole- and reservoir development, Rooifontein, Northern Cape Province. Botanical scan of the proposed footprint. 23 February 2018

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Botes, P. 2018(d): Kakamas Waste Water Treatment Works Upgrade – Construction of a new WWTW and rising main, Khai !Garib Local Municipality, Northern Cape Province. Botanical assessment of the proposed footprint. 1 August 2018.

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Botes, P. 2018(f): Wagenboom Weir & Pipeline – Construction of a new pipeline and weir with the Snel River, Breede River Local Municipality, Northern Cape Province. Botanical assessment of the proposed footprint. 7 August 2018.

Botes, P. 2018(g): Steynville (Hopetown) outfall sewer pipeline – Proposed development of a new sewer outfall pipeline, Hopetown, Northern Cape Province. Botanical assessment of the proposed footprint. 8 October 2018.

Botes, P. 2018(h): Tripple D farm agricultural development – Development of a further 60 ha of vineyards, Erf 1178, Kakamas, Northern Cape Province. Botanical assessment of the proposed footprint. 8 October 2018.

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Botes, P. 2019(a): Lethabo Park Extension – Proposed extension of Lethabo Park (Housing Development) on the remainder of the Farm Roodepan No. 70, Erf 17725 and Erf 15089, Roodepan Kimberley. Sol Plaaitje Local Municipality, Northern Cape Province. Botanical assessment of the proposed footprint (with biodiversity inputs). 15 May 2019.

Botes, P. 2019(b): Verneujkpan Trust agricultural development – The proposed development of an additional ±250 ha of agricultural land on Farms 1763, 2372 & 2363, Kakamas, Northern Cape Province. 27 June 2019.