



SITE VERIFICATION REPORT

**THE PROPOSED PALLADIUM SOLAR POWER PLANT NEAR
NORTHAM, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

27 June 2023

PROJECT DETAIL

DFFE Reference No's.	:	To be confirmed
Project Title	:	Proposed Palladium Solar Power Plant near Northam, Limpopo province
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Client	:	Palladium Solar Power Plant (RF)(Pty) Ltd
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1 INTRODUCTION

This Site Verification Report is compiled in compliance with Government Notice No. 320, dated 20 March 2020, which includes the requirement for an Initial Site Sensitivity Verification Report to be produced for a development footprint. The outcome of the Initial Site Verification must be recorded in the form of a report that-

- a) Confirms or disputes the current use of the land and environmental sensitivity as identified by the national web based environmental screening tool;
- b) Contains a motivation and evidence of either the verified or different use of the land and environmental sensitivity;
- c) Is submitted together with the relevant reports prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations.

1.1 Specialist Assessments identified by the Screening Report

The DFFE Screening Tool Report (Appendix B of the Basic Assessment Report) identified the following specialist assessment to be included in the assessment:

1. Agricultural Impact Assessment
2. Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment
3. Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment
4. Paleontology Impact Assessment
5. Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment
6. Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment
7. Civil Aviation Assessment
8. Defence Assessment
9. RFI Assessment
10. Geotechnical Assessment
11. Social Economic Assessment
12. Plant Species Assessment
13. Animal Species Assessment

The table included below provides an indication of the specialist studies identified by the DFFE Screening Tool Report, as well as an indication of whether the studies were undertaken or not and a motivation or confirmation of the studies being included or not.

Table 1.1: Specialist studies identified by the DFFE Screening tool and specialist studies conducted

Study identified in the DFFE Screening Tool and sensitivity	Study included?	Appendix
Agricultural Impact Assessment Sensitivity: Very High	Yes	An Agriculture Potential Assessment is included in Appendix E. The high sensitivity is disputed by the report.
Animal Species Assessment Sensitivity: Medium	Yes	Refer to Appendix E. The Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment also includes the relevant Animal Species Assessment. This assessment has been undertaken in terms of the Protocols of GNR320 – refer to the content of the report.
Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment Sensitivity: Low	Yes	A Wetland Assessment Report is included in Appendix E. This assessment has been undertaken in terms of the Protocols of GNR320 – refer to the content of the report.
Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment Sensitivity: Low	Yes	A Heritage Impact Assessment is included in Appendix D4.
Avian Impact Assessment Sensitivity: Low	Yes	Avifauna Impact Assessment Report is included as Appendix E. This assessment has been undertaken in terms of the Protocols of GNR320 – refer to the content of the report.
Civil Aviation Assessment Sensitivity: Medium	No	Study not included. Refer to section 2 of this report for site verification.

Defence Theme Sensitivity: Low	No	Study not included. Refer to section 2 of this report for site verification.
Landscape / Visual Impact Assessment Sensitivity: Very High	Yes	A Visual Impact Assessment is included in Appendix E.
Palaeontological Impact Assessment Sensitivity: High	Yes	A Palaeontological Impact Assessment is included in Appendix E.
Plant species Assessment Sensitivity: Low	Yes	Refer to Appendix D1. The Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment also includes the relevant Plant Species Assessment. This assessment has been undertaken in terms of the Protocols of GNR320 – refer to the content of the report.
RFI Assessment Sensitivity: Low	No	Study not included. Refer to section 2 of this report for site verification.
Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment Sensitivity: Very High	Yes	A Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment Report is included in Appendix E. This assessment has been undertaken in terms of the Protocols of GNR320 – refer to the content of the report.
Geotechnical Assessment Sensitivity: Not indicated	No	The Geotechnical Assessment will be conducted before construction begins as part of the micro-siting of the facility layout. The consideration of geotechnical aspects is considered to be of a technical concern rather than an environmental concern.

1.2 The sensitivities for the studies conducted as part of the Scoping and EIA process.

This section provides the sensitivities as identified in the DFFE Screening Tool Report for which specialist studies have been conducted as part of the Scoping and EIA process.

1.2.1 Agriculture Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as very high, with site ranging from medium to high due to a medium Land capability;11. High/12. High-Very high/13. High-Very high/14. Very high/15. Very high. Refer to Figure 1.1 below.

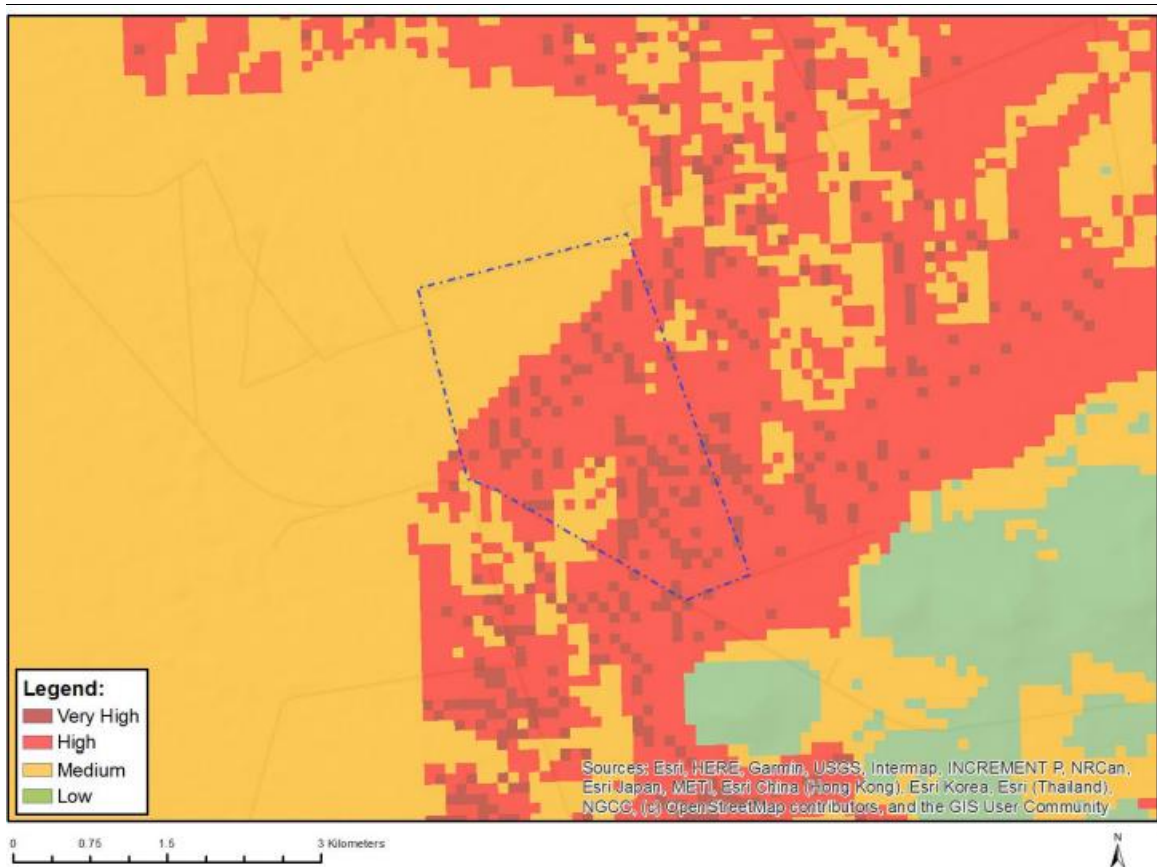


Figure 1.1: Agricultural sensitivity as indicated by the DFFE Screening Tool Report

1.2.2 Animal Species Theme

The majority of the site is medium. The medium sensitivity is Mammalia-*Crocidura maquassiensis* Mammalia-*Lycaon pictus* and Reptilia-*Kinixys lobatsiana*. Refer to Figure 1.2 below.

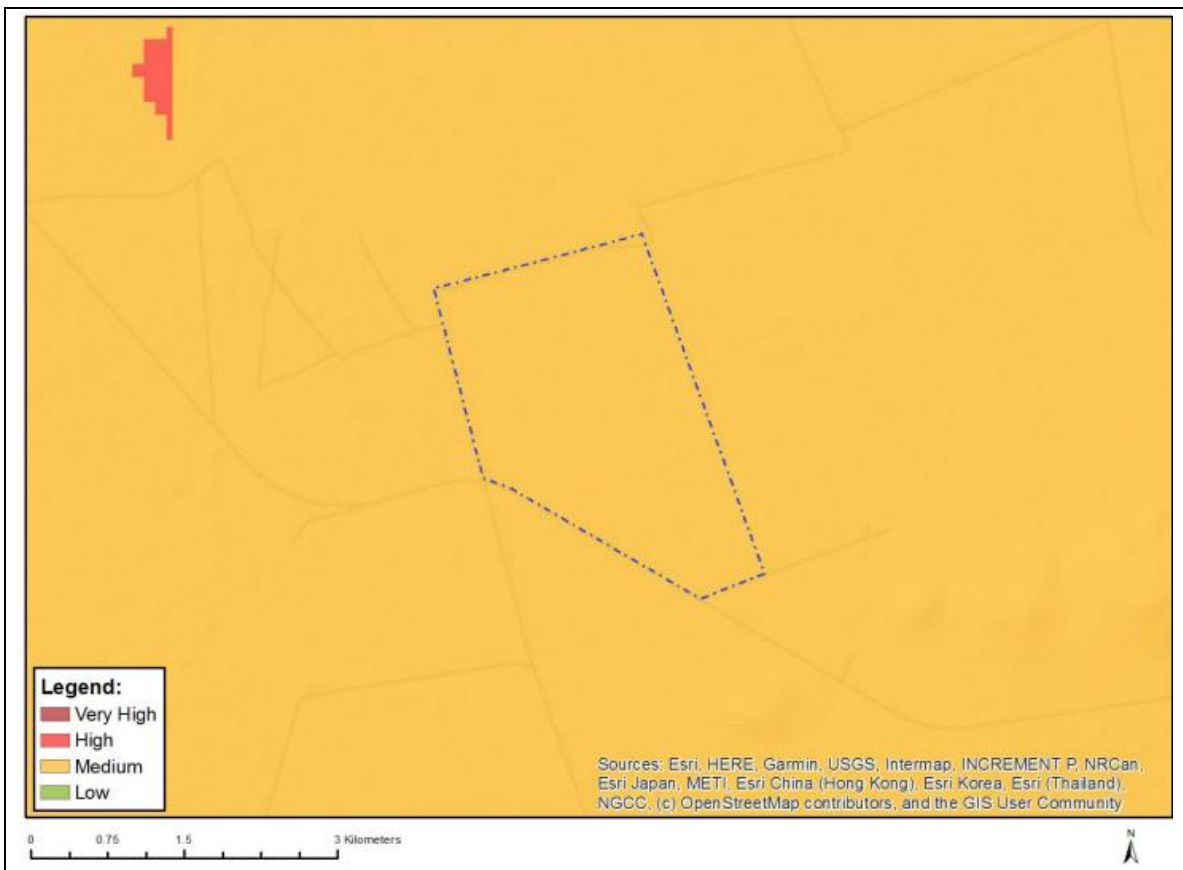


Figure 1.2: Animal sensitivity as indicated by the DFFE Screening Tool Report

1.2.3 Aquatic Biodiversity Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as low. Refer to Figure 1.3 below.

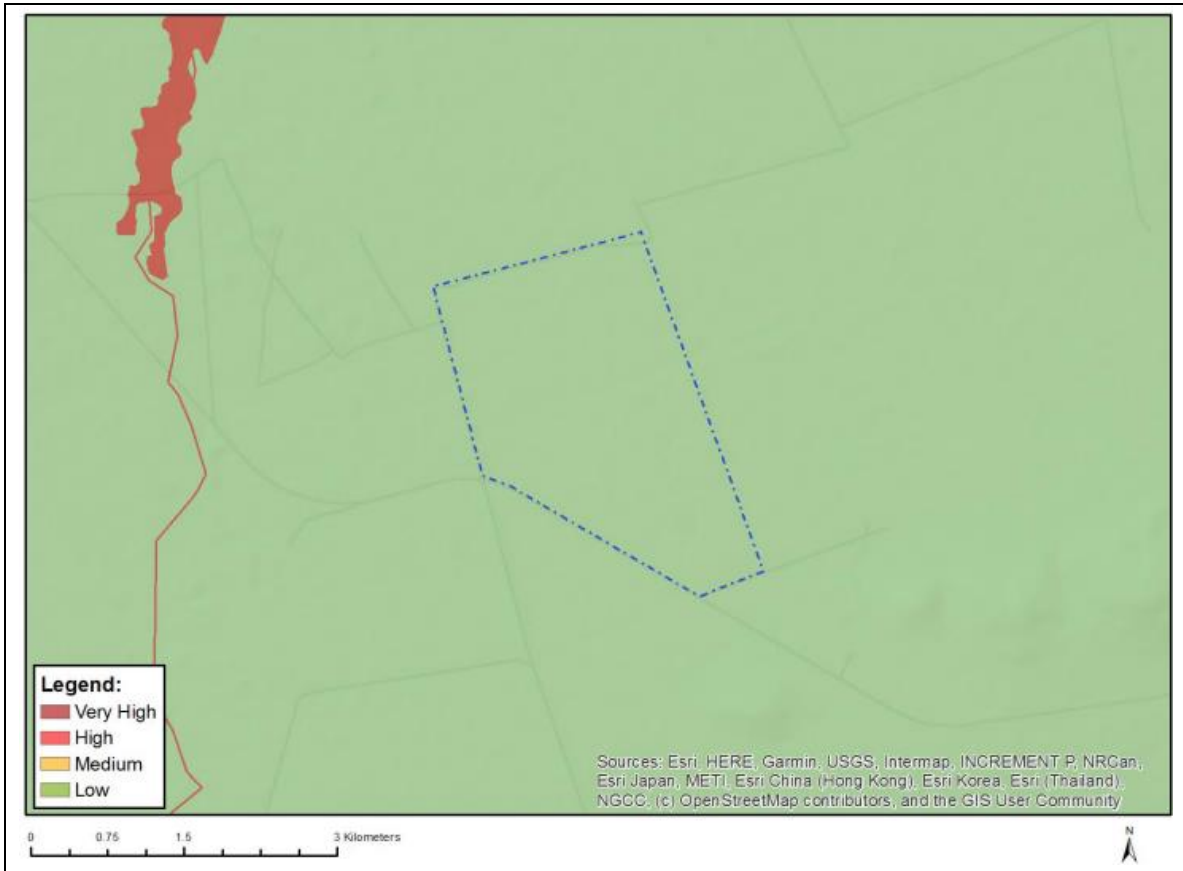


Figure 1.3: Aquatic Biodiversity sensitivity as indicated by the DFFE Screening Tool Report

1.2.4 Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as low. Refer to Figure 1.4 below.

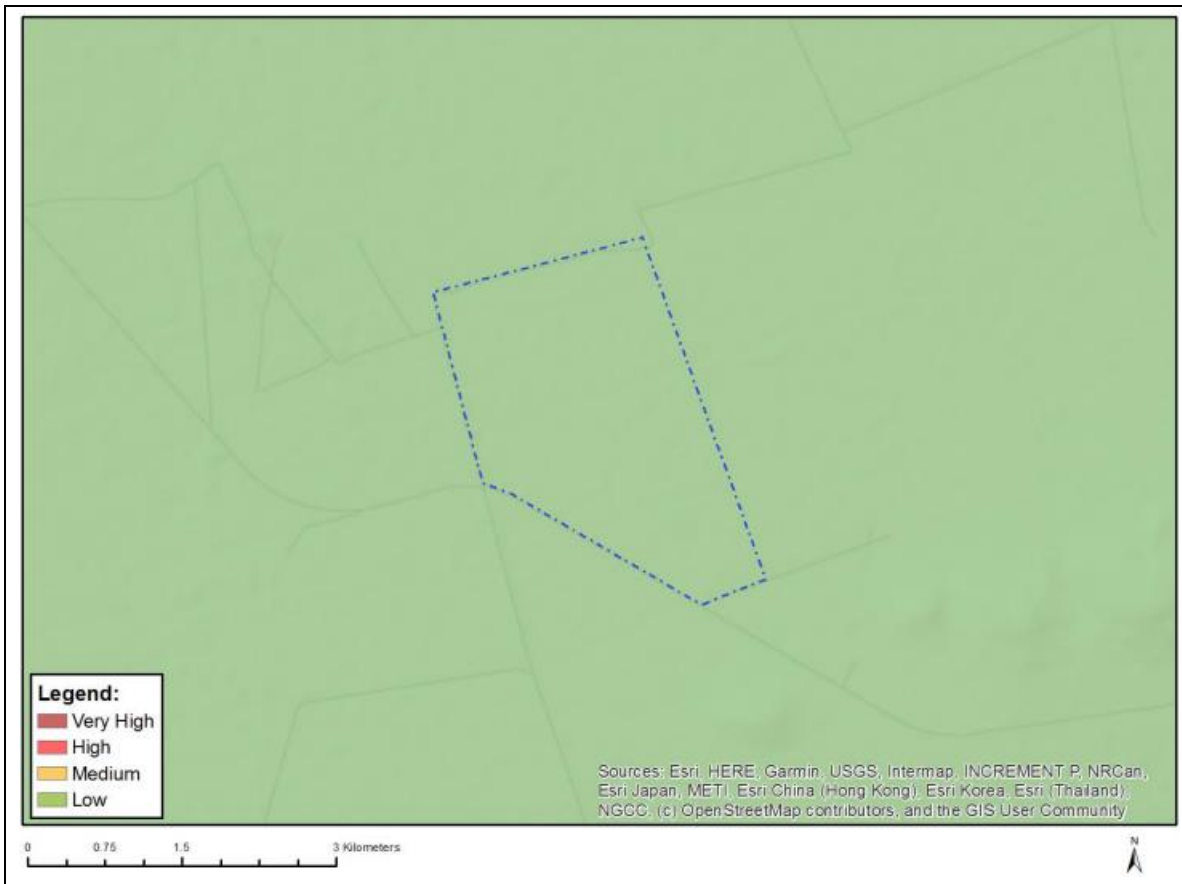


Figure 1.4: Archaeological and Cultural Heritage sensitivity as indicated by the DFFE Screening Tool Report

1.2.5 Avian Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as low. Refer to Figure 1.5 below.

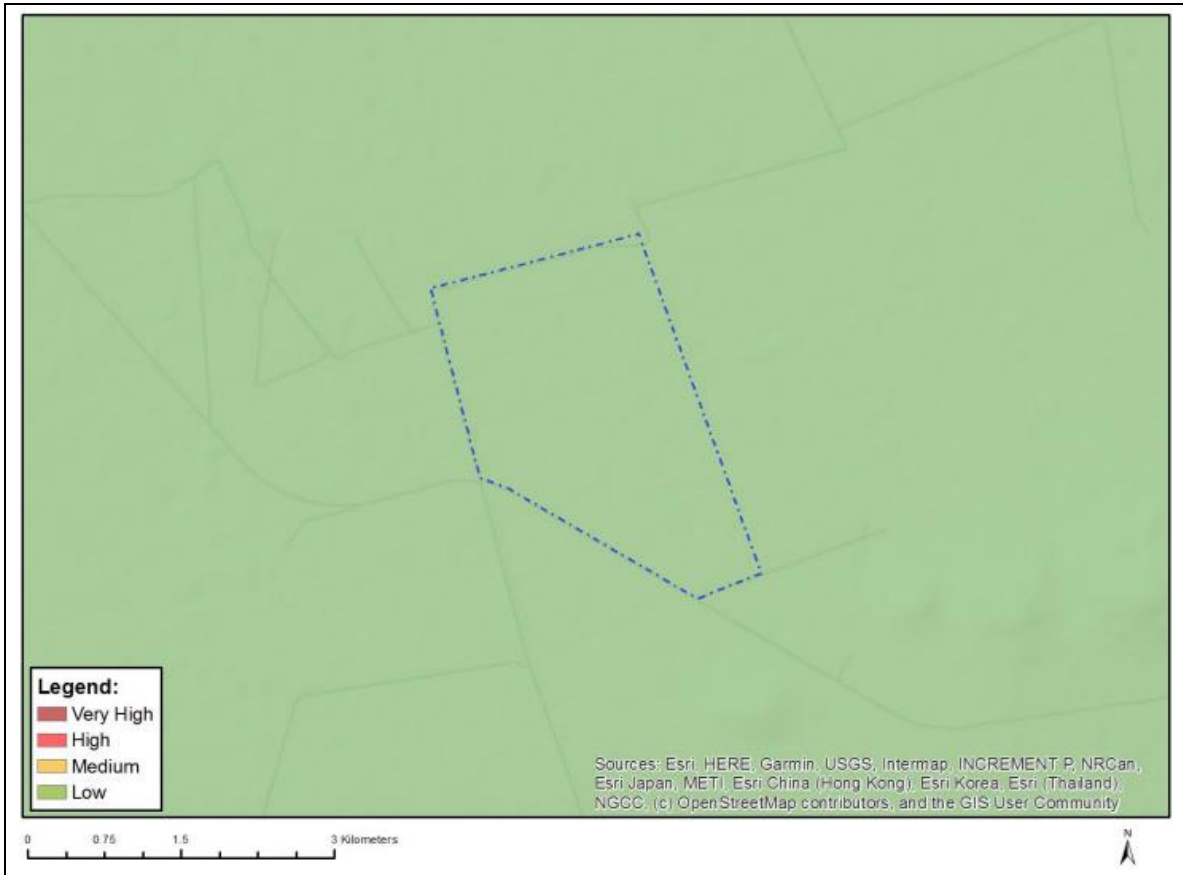


Figure 1.5: Avian sensitivity as indicated by the DFFE Screening Tool Report

1.2.6 Landscape (Solar) Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as very high. The project is located between 1.5 and 3 km of a nature reserve with Mountain tops and high ridges, as well as within 1.5 km of a nature reserve. Refer to Figure 1.6 below.

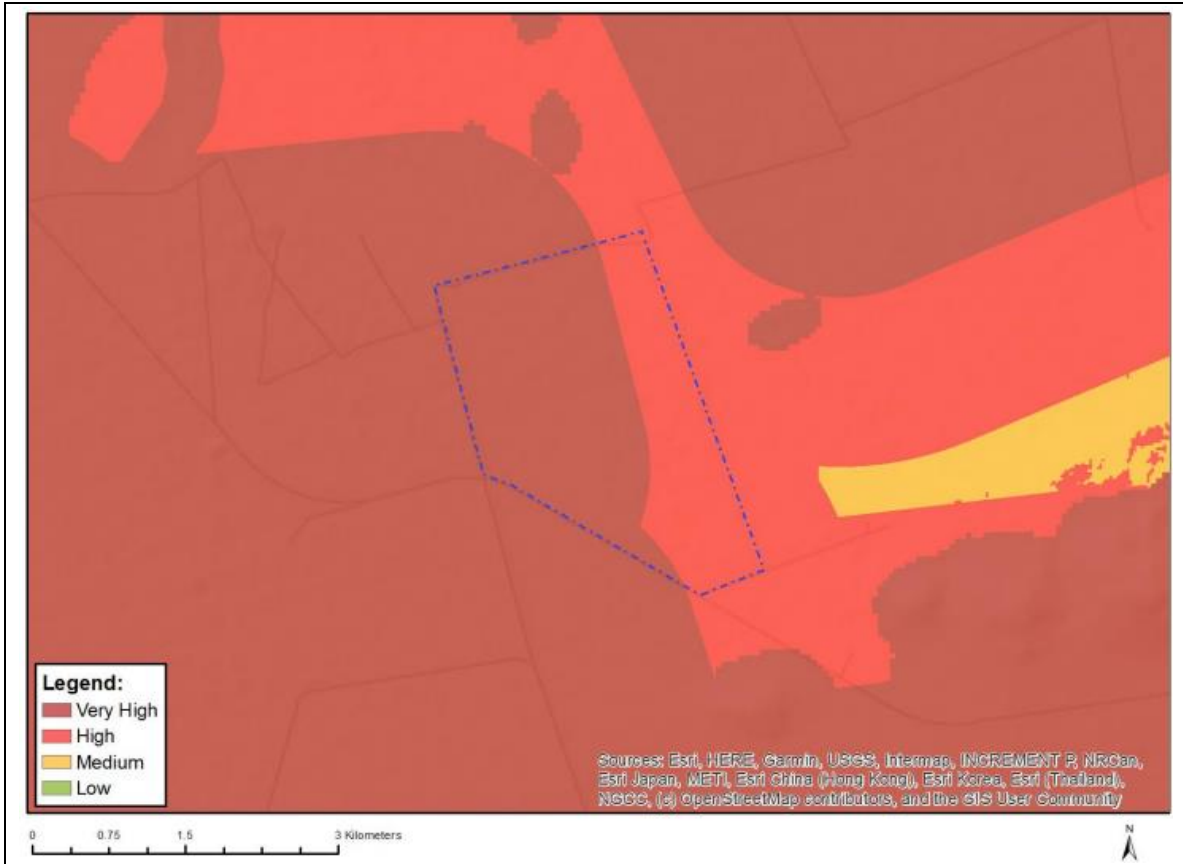


Figure 1.6: Landscape (Solar) sensitivity as indicated by the DFFE Screening Tool Report

1.2.7 Palaeontology Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as medium to very high, due to the potential to have features with medium paleontological and Very high paleontological sensitivity. Refer to Figure 1.7 below.

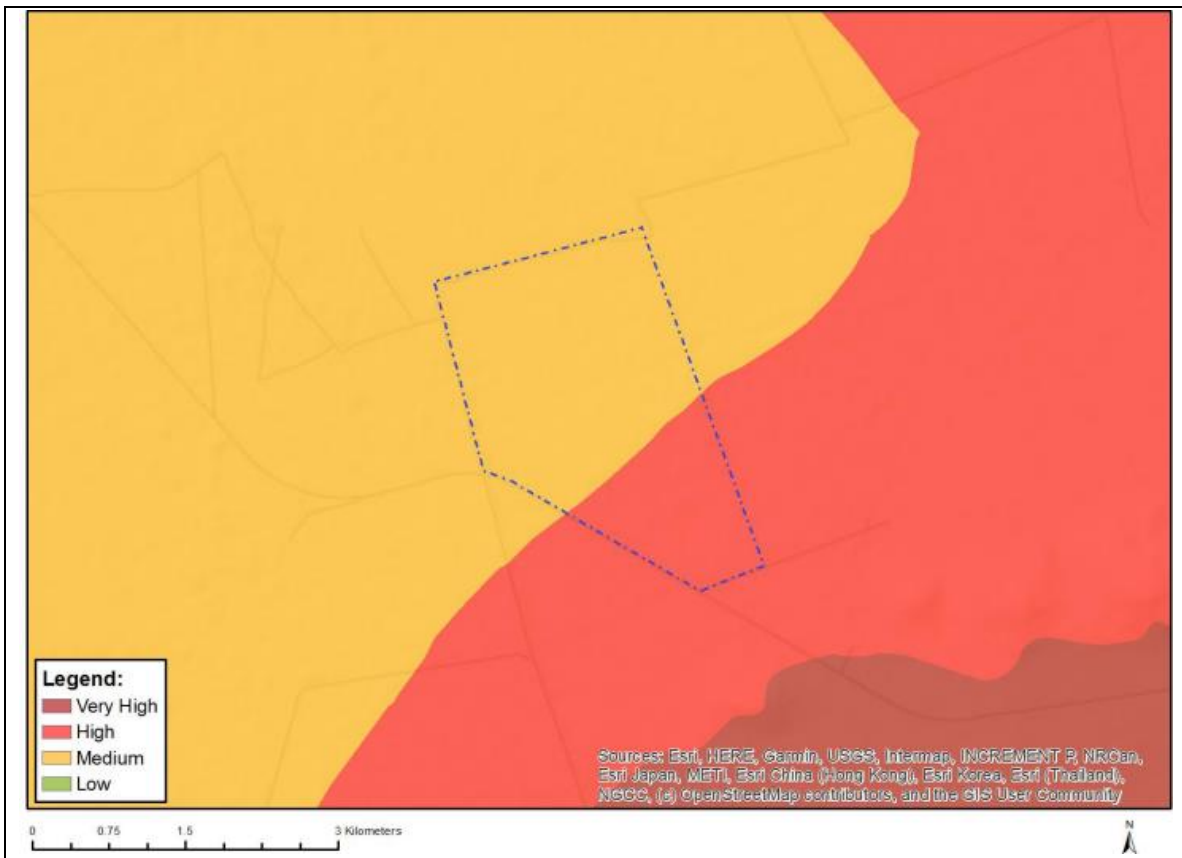


Figure 1.7: Palaeontology sensitivity as indicated by the DFFE Screening Tool Report

1.2.8 Plant Species Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as low. Refer to Figure 1.8.



Figure 1.8: Plant Species sensitivity as indicated by the DFFE Screening Tool Report

1.2.9 Terrestrial Biodiversity Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as low to very high, due to the presence of ESA 1 and Philip Wulfohn Private Nature Reserve. Refer to Figure 1.9 below.

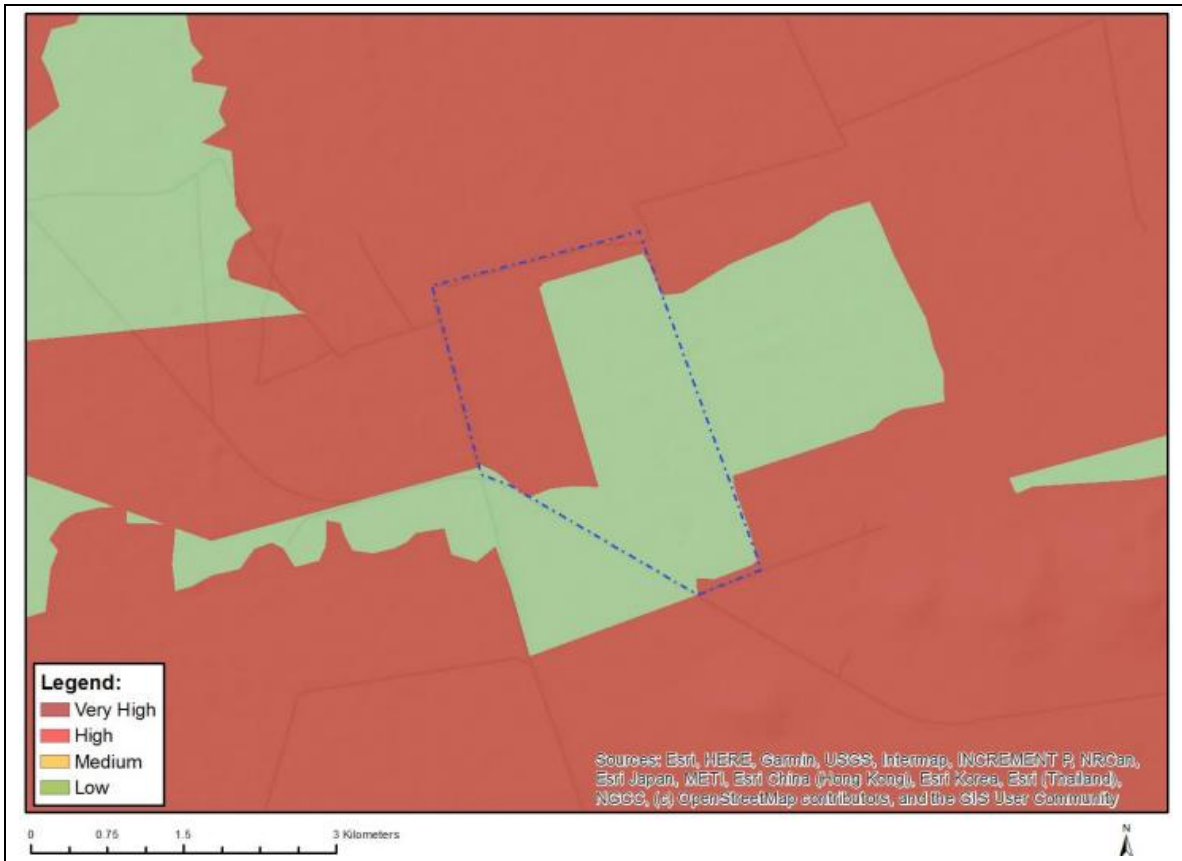


Figure 1.9: Terrestrial Biodiversity sensitivity as indicated by the DFFE Screening Tool Report

1.3 Sensitivities of the studies not conducted as part of the Scoping and EIA process.

This report has been produced specifically to consider the Civil Aviation, Defence and RFI theme and addresses the content requirements of (a) and (b) above.

The remaining required specialist studies have been undertaken as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process as listed in the DFFE Screening Tool Report. The only study not considered as relevant is the Geotechnical Assessment which will only be undertaken before construction begins as part of the micro-siting of the facility layout. The consideration of geotechnical aspects is considered to be of a technical concern rather than an environmental concern.

The sensitivities for the Civil Aviation, Defence and RFI themes associated with Palladium Solar Power Plant are as follows:

1.3.1 Civil Aviation Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as Medium due to that it is within 8 km of an other civil aviation aerodrome in close proximity of the project site. Refer to figure 1.10 below.

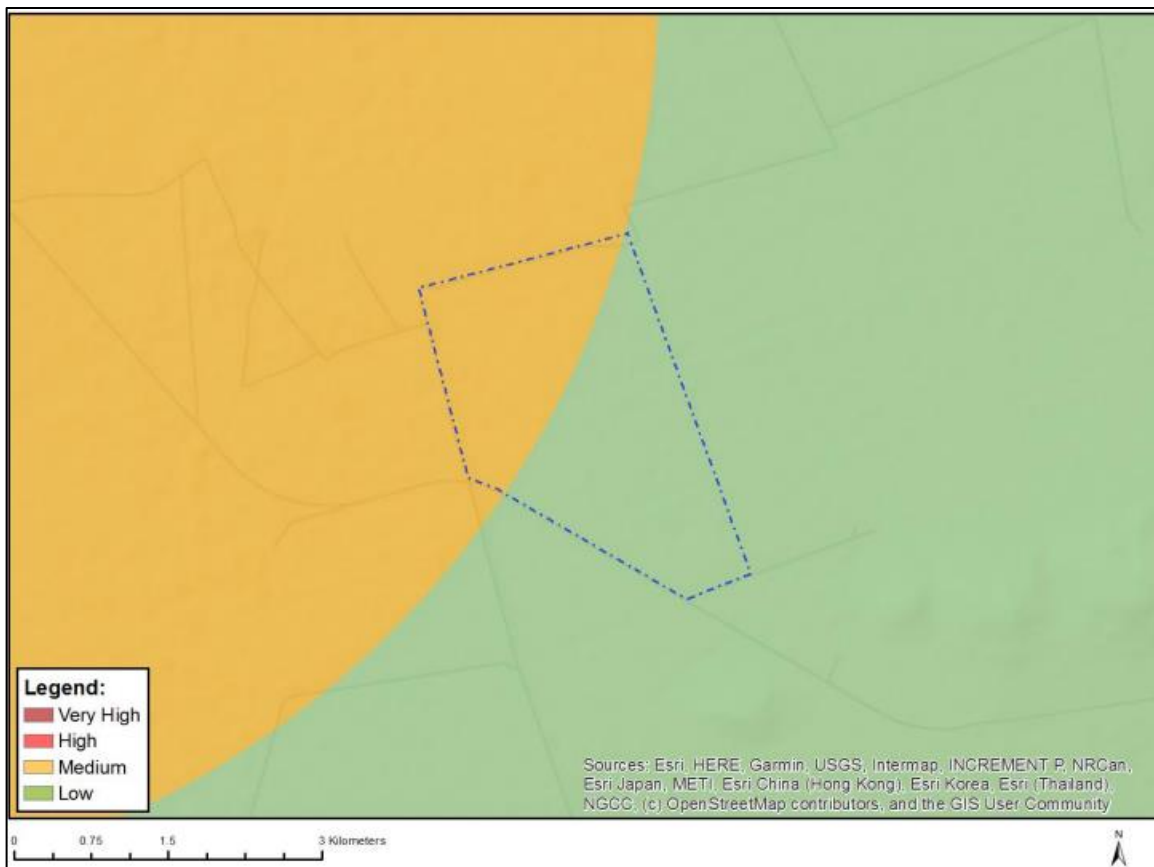


Figure 1.10: Civil aviation sensitivity as indicated by the DFFE Screening Tool Report

1.3.2 Defence theme

The defence theme is considered to be low for the proposed project. Refer to Figure 1.2 below.



Figure 1.11: Defence theme sensitivity as indicated by the DFFE Screening Tool Report

1.3.3 RFI Theme

The sensitivity of the RFI theme is considered to be low for the proposed project. Refer to Figure 1.3 below.

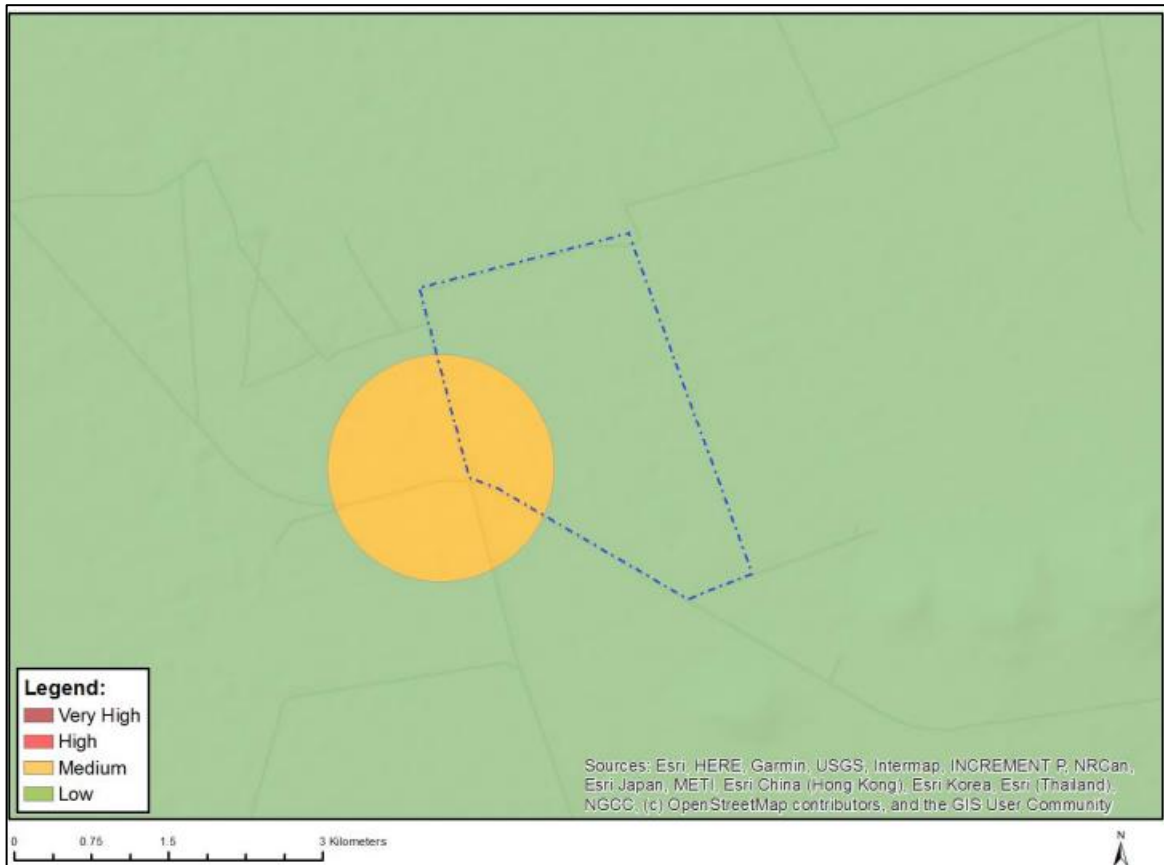


Figure 1.12: RFI theme sensitivity as indicated by the DFFE Screening Tool Report

1.4 Current/ Verified Land Use

The current land use of the property is mainly used for agricultural purposes, which includes cattle grazing. The project is located approximately 2 km north of the mining town of Northam. The majority of the project area of influence (PAOI) is located within an agricultural region, and the immediate area is presently used mainly for game farming, grazing and crop farming, ESKOM infrastructure, including various high voltage lines. Refer to Figures 1.4 – 1.7 for photographs of the existing Eskom Infrastructure and current land uses.



Figure 1.13: Aerial view of the PAOI

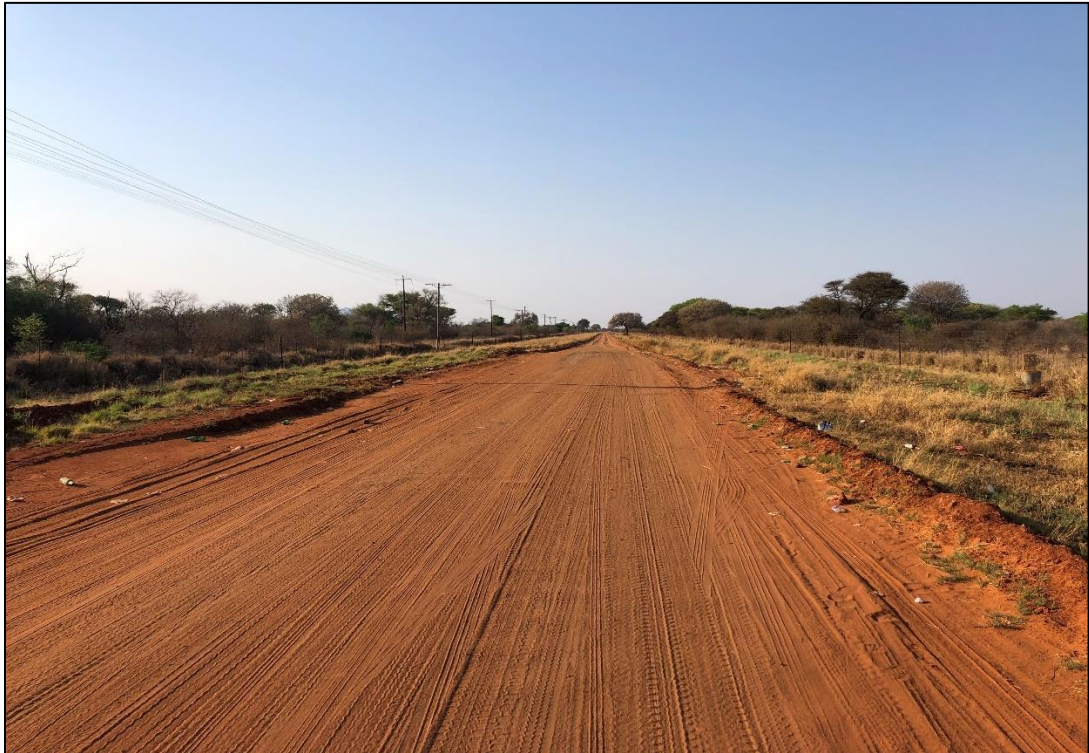


Figure 1.14: Eskom power lines within the PAOI



Figure 1.15: Aerial view of the surrounding landscape and existing roads

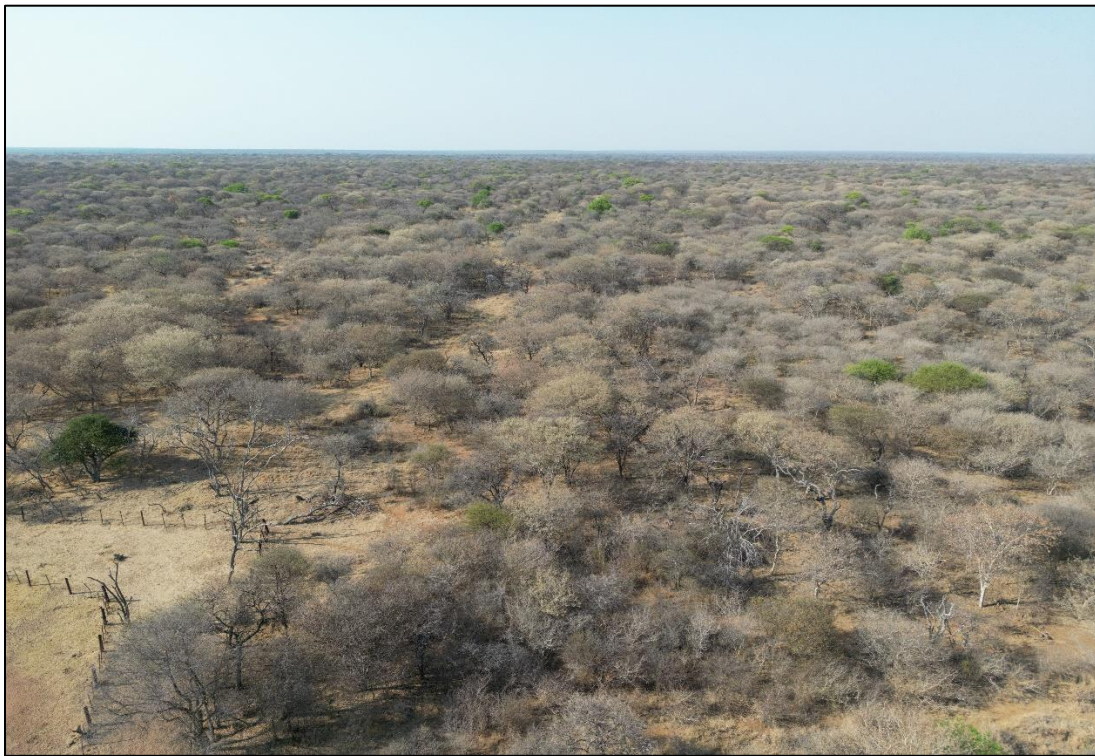


Figure 1.16: Current land use of the PAOI (farm access)

2 SITE VERIFICATION

This section will evaluate and verify the sensitivity ratings provided by the DFFE Screening Tool Report and provide feedback from the EAP.

2.1 Agriculture Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as very high, with site ranging from medium to high due to a medium Land capability;11. High/12. High-Very high/13. High-Very high/14. Very high/15. Very high.

Table 2.1: Verification of DFFE Screening Report Sensitivity Ratings for the Agriculture Theme

Identified Sensitivity		Comment
<u>DFFE Screening Report</u> Very high Specialist assessment must be conducted in accordance to Procedures for the Assessment and Minimum Criteria for Reporting on identified Environmental Themes in terms of Sections 24(5)(a) and (h) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998, when applying for Environmental Authorisation, which were promulgated in Government Notice No. 320 of 20 March 2020.	<u>EAP Feedback</u> Medium	The identification of the site as very high sensitivity considering agriculture is disputed to by the EAP. This is based on the current land use of the site being used for grazing purposes. The proposed site is used for grazing as the area cannot support cultivation due to non-arable lands and climate limitation. An Agricultural Agro-Ecosystem Specialist Assessment (Appendix E4) have been provided for the site in accordance with the Protocols (G.NR 320).

2.2 Animal Species Theme

The majority of the site is medium. The medium sensitivity is Mammalia-*Crocidura maquassiensis* Mammalia-*Lycaon pictus* and Reptilia-*Kinixys lobatsiana*.

Table 2.2: Verification of DFFE Screening Report Sensitivity Ratings for the Animal Species Theme

Identified Sensitivity		Comment
<u>DFFE Screening Report</u>	<u>EAP Feedback</u>	The identification of the site as medium sensitivity considering animal species is

<p>Medium</p> <p>Specialist assessment must be conducted in accordance to Procedures for the Assessment and Minimum Criteria for Reporting on identified Environmental Themes in terms of Sections 24(5)(a) and (h) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998, when applying for Environmental Authorisation, which were promulgated in Government Notice No. 1150 of 30 October 2020 (i.e. protocols for terrestrial plant and animal species)</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>dispute to by the EAP. This is based on the current land use of the site being used for gazing purposes.</p> <p>The majority of animals in the project site have been introduced into the area as the farm is being used for gazing purposes. The medium sensitivity is evidence of existing SCC or protected species occurrence on site.</p> <p>A Terrestrial Animal Species Specialist Assessment Report (Appendix E1) have been provided for the site which includes an animal species assessment site accordance with the Protocols (G.NR 1150).</p>
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2.3 Aquatic Biodiversity Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as low.

Table 2.3: Verification of DFFE Screening Report Sensitivity Ratings for the Aquatic Biodiversity Theme

Identified Sensitivity		Comment
<p>DFFE Screening Report</p> <p>low</p> <p>Specialist assessment must be conducted in accordance to Procedures for the Assessment and Minimum Criteria for Reporting on identified Environmental Themes in terms of Sections 24(5)(a) and (h) and 44</p>	<p>EAP Feedback</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>The identification of the site as low sensitivity considering Aquatic Biodiversity is agreed to by the EAP. This is based on site inspection and desktop assessment.</p> <p>No wetlands or riparian features were identified within the project footprint. The desktop assessment confirmed that there are no NFEPA wetlands located on or in close proximity to the project site. The proposed facility will have negligible to no influence on the ground water systems associated with the strategic water source area.</p>

of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998, when applying for Environmental Authorisation, which were promulgated in Government Notice No. 320 of 20 March 2020.		A Wetland Baseline & Risk Assessment Report has been commissioned.
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2.4 Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as low.

Table 2.4: Verification of DFFE Screening Report Sensitivity Ratings for the Archaeological and Cultural Theme

Identified Sensitivity		Comment
<u>DFFE Screening Report</u>	<u>EAP Feedback</u>	
Low	Low	
As no specific assessment protocol has been prescribed, the required level of assessment must be based on the findings of the Initial Site Sensitivity Verification and must comply with Appendix 6 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations promulgated under sections 24(5) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (The Act), where a specialist assessment is required.		<p>The identification of the site as low sensitivity considering Archaeological and Cultural Heritage is agreed to by the EAP. This is based desktop assessment and site inspection.</p> <p>No sites or features of cultural or heritage significance were identified on the project site through review of satellite imagery and site inspection.</p> <p>A Heritage Impact Assessment (Appendix E5) was conducted to ensure that no Cultural or Heritage features are missed on site. The assessment confirmed the low sensitivity rating as no sites, features or object of cultural significance were identifies.</p>

2.5 Avian Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as low.

Table 2.5: Verification of DFFE Screening Report Sensitivity Ratings for the Avian Theme

Identified Sensitivity		Comment
<u>DFFE Screening Report</u> Low Specialist assessment must be conducted in accordance with Procedures for the Assessment and Minimum Criteria for Reporting on identified Environmental Themes in terms of Sections 24(5)(a) and (h) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998, when applying for Environmental Authorisation, which were promulgated in Government Notice No. 320 of 20 March 2020.	<u>EAP Feedback</u> Low	The identification of the site as low sensitivity considering Avifauna is agreed by the EAP. This is based desktop assessment and site inspection. An Avifaunal Impact Assessment (Appendix E2) have been provided for the site in accordance with the Protocols (G.NR 320).

2.6 Landscape (Solar) Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as very high. The project is located between 1.5 and 3 km of a nature reserve with Mountain tops and high ridges, as well as within 1.5 km of a nature reserve.

Table 2.6: Verification of DFFE Screening Report Sensitivity Ratings for the Landscape (Solar) Theme

Identified Sensitivity		Comment
<u>DFFE Screening Report</u> Very high As no specific assessment protocol has been prescribed, the required level of assessment must be based on the findings of	<u>EAP Feedback</u> Low	The identification of the site as Very High sensitivity considering Landscape is disputed by the EAP. This is based on the overall low visual impact that the solar facility will have on the surrounding landscape and the relatively short power line route. A Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix E3) have been conducted for the site. The

<p>the Initial Site Sensitivity Verification and must comply with Appendix 6 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations promulgated under sections 24(5) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (The Act), where a specialist assessment is required.</p>		<p>specialist confirmed that the sensitivity of the site is Low.</p>
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2.7 Palaeontology Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as Medium to Very high, due to the potential to have features with medium paleontological and very high paleontological sensitivity.

Table 2.7: Verification of DFFE Screening Report Sensitivity Ratings for the Palaeontology Theme

Identified Sensitivity		Comment
<p><u>DFFE Screening Report</u></p> <p>High</p> <p>As no specific assessment protocol has been prescribed, the required level of assessment must be based on the findings of the Initial Site Sensitivity Verification and must comply with Appendix 6 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations promulgated under sections 24(5) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998</p>	<p><u>EAP Feedback</u></p> <p>Low</p>	<p>The identification of the site as high sensitivity considering Palaeontology is disputed by the EAP. This is based on the site inspection conducted.</p> <p>A Palaeontological Impact Assessment (Appendix E6) have been conducted for the project.</p>

(Act No. 107 of 1998) (The Act), where a specialist assessment is required.		
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2.8 Plant Species Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as low.

Table 2.8: Verification of DFFE Screening Report Sensitivity Ratings for the Plant Species Theme

Identified Sensitivity		Comment
DFFE Screening Report	EAP Feedback	
Low	Low	
Specialist assessment must be conducted in accordance to Procedures for the Assessment and Minimum Criteria for Reporting on identified Environmental Themes in terms of Sections 24(5)(a) and (h) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998, when applying for Environmental Authorisation, which were promulgated in Government Notice No. 1150 of 30 October 2020 (i.e. protocols for terrestrial plant and animal species		<p>The identification of the site as low sensitivity considering plant species is agreed to by the EAP. This is based on the current land use of the site being used for grazing purposes.</p> <p>The site inspection indicated that the area is low sensitive to species. Refer to Figure 1.13 – 1.17 for photographs of the general condition of the site.</p> <p>The Terrestrial Plant Species Compliance Statement (Appendix E1) have been provided for the site accordance with the Protocols (G.NR 1150).</p>

2.9 Terrestrial Biodiversity Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as very high, due to the presence of ESA 1 and Philip Wulfsohn Private Nature Reserve.

Table 2.9: Verification of DFFE Screening Report Sensitivity Ratings for the Terrestrial Biodiversity Theme

Identified Sensitivity	Comment

<p>DFFE Screening Report</p> <p>Very high</p> <p>Specialist assessment must be conducted in accordance to Procedures for the Assessment and Minimum Criteria for Reporting on identified Environmental Themes in terms of Sections 24(5)(a) and (h) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998, when applying for Environmental Authorisation, which were promulgated in Government Notice No. 1150 of 30 October 2020 (i.e. protocols for terrestrial plant and animal species</p>	<p>EAP Feedback</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p>The identification of the site as very high sensitivity considering Terrestrial Biodiversity is disputed by the EAP. This is based on the current land use of the site being used for grazing and site inspection.</p> <p>The site is currently used for grazing and the site inspection confirmed that in terms of terrestrial biodiversity the site is located within ESA 1 which is degraded and heavily impacted on by Anthropogenic activities.</p> <p>The Terrestrial Biodiversity Specialist Assessment (Appendix E1) have been provided for the site accordance with the Protocols (G.NR 320).</p>
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2.10 Civil Aviation Theme

The site sensitivity is classified as low with no civil aviation infrastructure located in proximity to the proposed development that will be affected.

Table 2.10: Verification of DFFE Screening Report Sensitivity Ratings for the Civil Aviation Theme

Identified Sensitivity		Comment
<p>DFFE Screening Report</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>As no specific assessment protocol has been prescribed, the required level of assessment must be based on the findings of the Initial Site Sensitivity Verification and must comply with</p>	<p>EAP Feedback</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>The identification of the site is disputed to by the EAP, medium sensitivity considering civil aviation as the closest aerodrome, the Polokwane International (PTG) Airport Modimolle Airport is located ~43.3 km north of the proposed development. This is based on the current land use of the site being used for agricultural purposes.</p> <p>The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has been identified as an I&AP, and has received the Draft Scoping report for review and commenting. No comments from the CAA</p>

Appendix 6 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations promulgated under sections 24(5) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (The Act), where a specialist assessment is required.		have been received as part of the public participation process.
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The proposed development will not have an unacceptable negative impact on civil aviation installations based on the findings of the site visit and the lack of civil aviation infrastructure within the general area.

Based on the above, the EAP agrees with the outcome and results for the Civil Aviation Theme for the Palladium Solar Power Plant.

This assessment is considered sufficient for the civil aviation theme. There is no reason for the development not to proceed based on the results of the assessment and no objections are made.

2.11 Defence Theme

The defence theme is considered to be low sensitivity for the proposed.

Table 2.11: Verification of DFFE Screening Report Sensitivity Ratings for the Defence Theme

Identified Sensitivity		Comment
DFFE Screening Report Low As no specific assessment protocol has been prescribed, the required level of assessment must be based on the findings of the Initial Site Sensitivity Verification and must comply with Appendix 6 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations promulgated under	EAP Feedback Low	The site verification report confirms the low sensitivity of the sit as the closest military operations are the Pretoria South African Military Base located ~62.5km north of the affected property. The project is therefore not expected to have an impact on Defence Installations.

sections 24(5) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (The Act), where a specialist assessment is required.		
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The proposed development will not have an unacceptable negative impact on defence installations. Considering the site under assessment and the surrounding defence aspects the sensitivity is confirmed as low.

This assessment is considered sufficient for the defence theme. There is no reason for the development not to proceed based on the results of the assessment and no objections are made.

2.12 Radio Frequency Interference (RFI) Theme

The sensitivity of the RFI theme for the project is low.

Table 2.12: Verification of the DFFE Screening Tool Report Sensitivity Ratings for the Radio Frequency Interference (RFI) Theme

Identified Sensitivity		Comment
<u>DFFE Screening Report</u> Low As no specific assessment protocol has been prescribed, the required level of assessment must be based on the findings of the Initial Site Sensitivity Verification and must comply with Appendix 6 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations promulgated under sections 24(5) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (The Act), where	<u>EAP Feedback</u> Low	<p>The site verification is inconclusive as no desktop information could be sought; however on-site evidence of the low sensitivity was available during the site inspection since no potential RFI could be identified.</p> <p>The South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO) have been consulted regarding the development of the project and the Scoping Report has been circulated to SARAO for review and commenting. No comment has been received from SARAO to date.</p>

a specialist assessment is required.		
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The EAP was not able to verify the findings of the Screening Tool. A desktop based assessment into telecommunications; Radio Astronomy Advantage Areas and Weather Radar installation areas was undertaken, however no information is readily available. The EAP could not confirm if any features are present in proximity to the proposed development.

However, as the theme is of a low sensitivity, no unacceptable impact is expected to occur. I&APs that may be impacted in this regard will be consulted during the process and all comments will be considered.

3 CONCLUSION

The DFFE Screening Tool Report identified twelve (12) specialists' studies to be conducted, which includes Agricultural Impact Assessment, Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment, Palaeontology Impact Assessment, Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment, Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment, Avian Impact Assessment, Civil Aviation Assessment, RFI Assessment, Geotechnical Assessment, Plant Species Assessment and Animal Species Assessment. The screening report identified the Defence Theme as having a low sensitivity, however no study was recommended.

The Agriculture, Aquatic Biodiversity, Landscape, Palaeontological and Terrestrial Biodiversity Themes sensitivities are disputed by this report. The Animal Species, Avian, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage and Plant Specie themes sensitivities are agreed to. Specialist assessments have been conducted for the above-mentioned themes and confirms the EAPs feedback.

The medium sensitivity ratings for the Civil Aviation and low sensitivity for Defence and RFI theme is confirmed by the site verification report. Therefore, the project will not have an unacceptable negative impact on any of the above identified themes. No specialist studies were conducted for the Civil Aviation, Defence and RFI themes based on the findings of the site verification report. The relevant stakeholders will be consulted as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process to obtain comment on the proposed development.