



**BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT
FOR
HHALMENSE GRAVEL ROAD**

OCTOBER 2020

Prepared by



1. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this Background Information Document (BID) is to provide Interested and Affected Parties (I&AP's) with background information about the proposed upgrade of existing Hhalmense Access Road in Stulwane area and explore all the relevant environmental regulations for this proposed project. It also aims to inform I& AP's on how to fully participate in the environmental authorisation process and encourages response to documents distributed. All I&AP's are invited to assist the Environmental Assessment Practitioner in identifying possible impacts and to suggest possible mitigation measures through commenting on the proposed project. The subsequent comments will be submitted to the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DEDTEA) as application for environmental authorisation for this proposed upgrade of existing Hhalmense Access Road is required.

2. INTRODUCTION

Nzingwe consultancy has been appointed by Okhahlamba Local Municipality to be the independent Environmental Assessment Practitioners (EAP's) for the proposed project upgrade of existing Hhalmense Access Road, in Stulwane area. The proposed road is 2km long including the link road that connects the community situated higher in the village.

The road is visually and structurally in a very poor condition. There is currently no gravel wearing course for the entire section of the road. This severely limits the use of the roads particularly during the rainy season when the road gets slippery. There is one formalised crossing which consists of a 600mm concrete pipe. On the river section, there is no formal crossing.

The proposed development site possesses environmentally sensitive areas such as a watercourse, and it will have several impacts on the receiving environment, this includes negative environmental impacts. Therefore, measures should be taken to protect the receiving environment from degradation.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 Location and direction

The site is located in Ward 2 of the Okhahlamba Local Municipality in the area known as Stulwane. The nearest towns are Winterton and Estcourt in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The area is in Upper Tugela location, 4794.

Table 1: Coordinates of the proposed site

Proposed description	Road Start	Road End
Stulwane area (Ward 2)	28° 52' 25.70" S 29° 20' 26.50" E	28° 52' 55.88" S 29° 20' 16.98" E

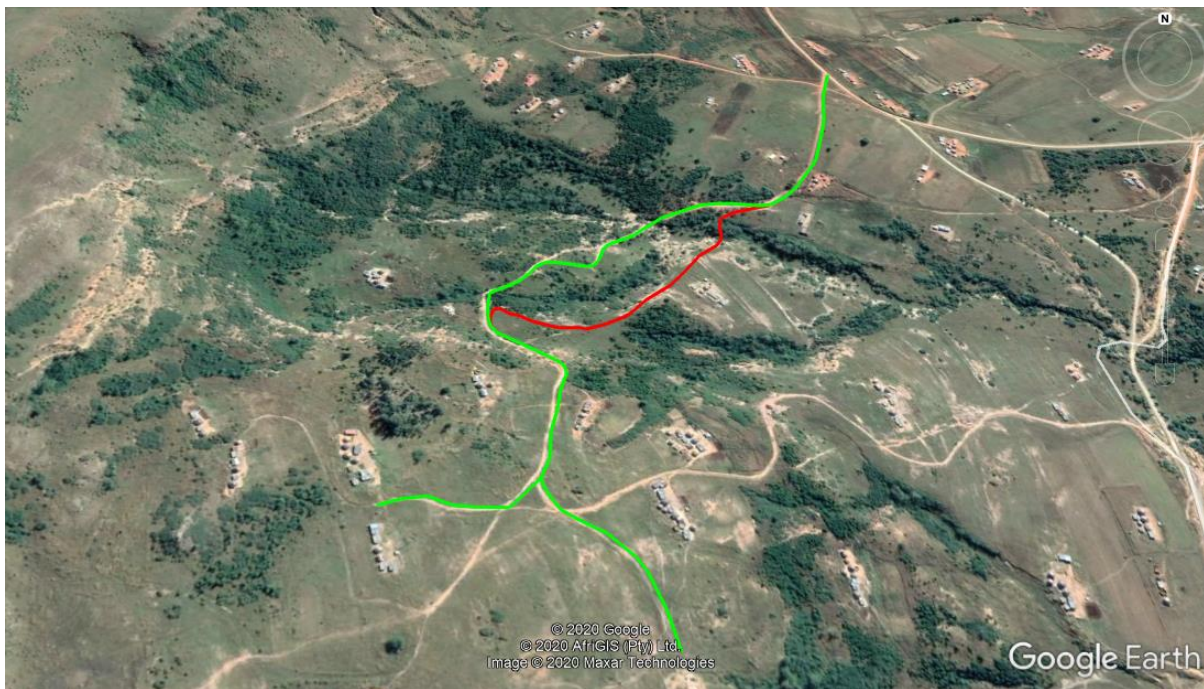


Figure 1: Location of the proposed site

The green line on the map represents the proposed route of the gravel road, where as the red line represents the alternative route of the road.

Currently there is an informal foot path surrounded by few dispersed rural households with subsistence farming. The proposed site is in Ward 2 within Okhahlamba Local Municipality, under uThukela District Municipality. The Hhalmense access road is in a poor condition with no gravel wearing course. The road is in poor shape at some sections which is evident by sections that are frequently subjected to ponding. There are no side drains on the road. The

current track is on the cut which is why there is a challenge of draining the water hence the ponding that is seen during rainy seasons.

The site can be assessed from the N3 national road taking the Bergville off ramp and turning left on to R74. Drive on this road for about 41km. Take left into road P10-2 road towards Cathedral Peak and drive for another 15km. Take a right to road P394 road towards Emmaus Hospital and drive for another 10.5km. From there take a left to D1256. Drive on this road for 1.8km, Hhalmense Access Road starts on the right next to concrete break pressure tank.

3.2 Proposed project scope

The proposed construction of Hhalmense Access Road entails the construction of a 2km long and 6m wide gravel road in Stulwane, near Winterton. The road will have other associated infrastructure such as a culvert at the river crossing and other stormwater structures such as pipe crossings using 600mm and 900mm diameter bedding. In addition, guard rails will be provided for the steeper sections. Also, the existing pipe crossing will be upgraded, this is mainly because smaller diameter pipes are difficult to clean when blocked. An allowance for 900mm diameter pipe will be made for specific sections of the road. The type and class of pipes will be Spigot and Socket stormwater pipes, 100D to accommodate heavier traffic.

The proposed upgrade of existing Hhalmense Access Road will comprise the following elements:

- a) 150mm thick gravel-wearing course with an average width of 5m
- b) Provision of pipe crossings using a 600mm and 900mm diameter of Class 100DD on Class C bedding.
- c) Headwalls to be provided at the inlets and outlets of each crossing.
- d) The stormwater drainage will be designed for 1:10 year floods. Also to be included is the provision of side drains of depth range of 300mm below shoulder break point.
- e) A culvert crossing over the river with allowance for overtopping.
- f) Provision of guardrails for the steep sections.
- g) Provision of link access for the houses at the top section.

4. APPLICABLE ENVIROMENTAL LEGISLATION

In terms of the National Environmental Management Act No. 107 of 1998 (as amended) Listing Notices GNR 327- 324, in line with Environmental Impact Assessment regulations of 2014 (as amended in April 2017) , the proposed road is currently a walkway and the proposed road will transverse a watercourse. Additionally, the development will have construction of pipe culvert structures, therefore an Environmental Authorisation and Water Use License Application is required.

Therefore, the following activity is triggered:

Activity Triggered	Listing Notice	Activity Description	Description of project activity that triggers listed activity
Activity 19 of GNR 327	LN1	The infilling or deposition of any material of more than 10 cubic metres into, or the dredging, excavation, removal or moving of soil, sand, shells, shell grit, pebbles or rock of more than 10 cubic metres from i. Watercourse	The proposed upgrade of existing Hhalmense Access Road which include a culvert crossing over the river will result in excavated material of more than 10m ³ .

5. IMPACTS ANTICIPATED

5.1 Clearing of vegetation

The proposed upgrade of existing Hhalmense Access Road will require the removal of vegetation during the construction phase. Removal of vegetation will risk the disturbance of biodiversity. Rehabilitation measures need to be applied after construction where vegetation clearance is inevitable.

5.2 Soil and geology

Excavation activities will leave the soil loose and unstable which increases soil loss and degrades soil quality. Vegetation should be planted after construction is completed to restore soil quality and avoid further soil loss. Appropriate machinery and equipment must be used to ensure that chemicals and concrete mixing that will be done during construction will not be in contact with the soil so as to avoid soil contamination.

5.3 Stormwater Runoff and Erosion during Construction

The disturbance of the soil in terrestrial and steep areas by construction activities will likely result in erosion, if not carefully controlled. All forms of runoff and erosion control measures such as erecting gabion retaining walls and provision of stormwater drainage should be applied to the construction sites to minimize erosion risks, especially on steeper slopes.

Stormwater management must approximate pre - construction conditions in terms of water quality, intensity of release and spatial distribution of release points. A storm water management/ maintenance plan must also be outlined in the EMP.

5.4 Disturbance of watercourse

During the construction of box culvert bridge, biodiversity will be impacted negatively. This development will cause sedimentation and debris deposition which will increase pollution and alter habitat for aquatic organisms especially in the watercourse. Measures should be taken to ensure that installation of culvert pipe will have minimal impact on the watercourse.

5.5 Air quality

The area is in rural area with very little emissions and thus the general air quality is good. Dust will be generated during construction from the construction vehicles; however, this will only be confined to the construction phase. However, measures to control dust such as fine water sprays must be used to dampen down the site.

5.6 Soil Contamination

Leakage of hazardous substances from construction vehicles and construction machinery will result in soil contamination.

5.7 Visual Impact

Earthworks associated with the proposed upgrade of existing Hhalmense access road will contribute to a change in the natural appearance of the area.

5.8 Socio-economic impact

It must be ensured that excavated areas during construction are clearly marked and demarcated to avoid for possible injuries, since the proposed site is in close proximity of the households. This development will also bring about change in terms of the livelihoods of the local communities as many job opportunities will be created for the local communities during the construction phase of this development.

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Your comments are important in identifying environmental issues (biophysical, economic, and social) that will help focus the impact assessment and enhance the decision – making process. Interested and affected parties are encouraged to register in order to receive information and recording of their comments. To ensure that you are registered as an Interested and Affected Party you are requested to provide us with your details and any comments, queries or concerns with regards to the above-mentioned project.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR REGISTRATION AND COMMENTS

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