

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT
DEVELOPMENT OF RESIDENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN 32M
OF A WATERCOURSE AND THE CLEARANCE OF INDIGENOUS
VEGETATION ON THE REMAINDER OF PORTION 7 OF THE FARM
WILDE ALS SPRUIT NO. 1085 FOR THE PROPOSED ANNANDALE
COUNTRY ESTATE DEVELOPMENT
UMNGENI MUNICIPALITY

PROJECT BACKGROUND & DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The Elizabeth Mary Butler Will Trust are the landowners of Remainder of Portion 7 Wilde Als Spruit Farm No. 1085 in Balgowan, uMngeni Local Municipality, uMgungundlovu District (outlined in red in Figure 1 below). The property is 14.03 hectares in extent and is currently zoned as “*Agricultural*”. The property has been excluded from the provisions of the Subdivision of Agricultural Land Act, Act No. 70 of 1970 (Act 70/70 consent). Consent was granted by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries on the 10th December 2021.

The landowners have given permission for Collins Residential (Pty) Ltd, a development company, to apply for Environmental Authorisation from the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) for the development of the proposed Annandale Country Estate. Annandale Country Estate will be comprised of 35 large free-standing residential erven, 20 smaller residential erven and 12 semi-detached cottages (Figure 2). The total development footprint is approximately 7.25 hectares, with the remaining 6.78 hectares remaining open space. The existing farmhouse on the property, which is of heritage value, will be retained as a Club House.

Due to the rural location of the property, the development does not have access to municipal services. Potable water will therefore be supplied using a borehole on site and a package plant established to treat sewage. Treated wastewater will be discharged into the existing stormwater system, north of the property.

The property falls within a sensitive area identified in the uMgungundlovu Environmental Management Framework (EMF). The following sensitivities have been identified in the EMF: water production feature, water quality feature, flood risk feature, biodiversity features and wetland features. Although largely landscaped, the development will require the clearance of more than 1 hectare of indigenous vegetation triggering Activity 27 of Listing Notice 1 and Activity 12 of Listing Notice 3 (National Environmental Management Act; Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2014 as amended).

A watercourse has been delineated running through the centre of the site. An existing road crossing this water feature will be upgraded. Residential infrastructure and associated services will be constructed within 32m of the watercourse triggering Activity 12 of Listing Notice 1 and Activity 14 of Listing Notice 3. Excavation within the watercourse triggers Activity 19 of Listing Notice 1. The overall construction of the Annandale Country Estate on land zoned Agricultural, triggers Activity 28 of Listing Notice 1. The proposed development requires Environmental Authorisation through a Basic Assessment process.

A separate Water Use Authorisation (WUA) application will be submitted to the Department of Water and Sanitation in terms of section 21 of the National Water Act (1998). A WUA is required for:

- Abstraction of water from the borehole (section 21a),
- Upgrading of the existing road crossings the watercourse and development of infrastructure close to the watercourse (section 21c & i); and
- The operation of the private wastewater package plant (section 21f & g).

This Background Information Document (BID) has been prepared to provide information on the process which will be followed to assess the environmental impact of the proposed Annandale Country Estate.

Figure 1: Study Area for the Proposed Annandale Country Estate, Outlined in Red.

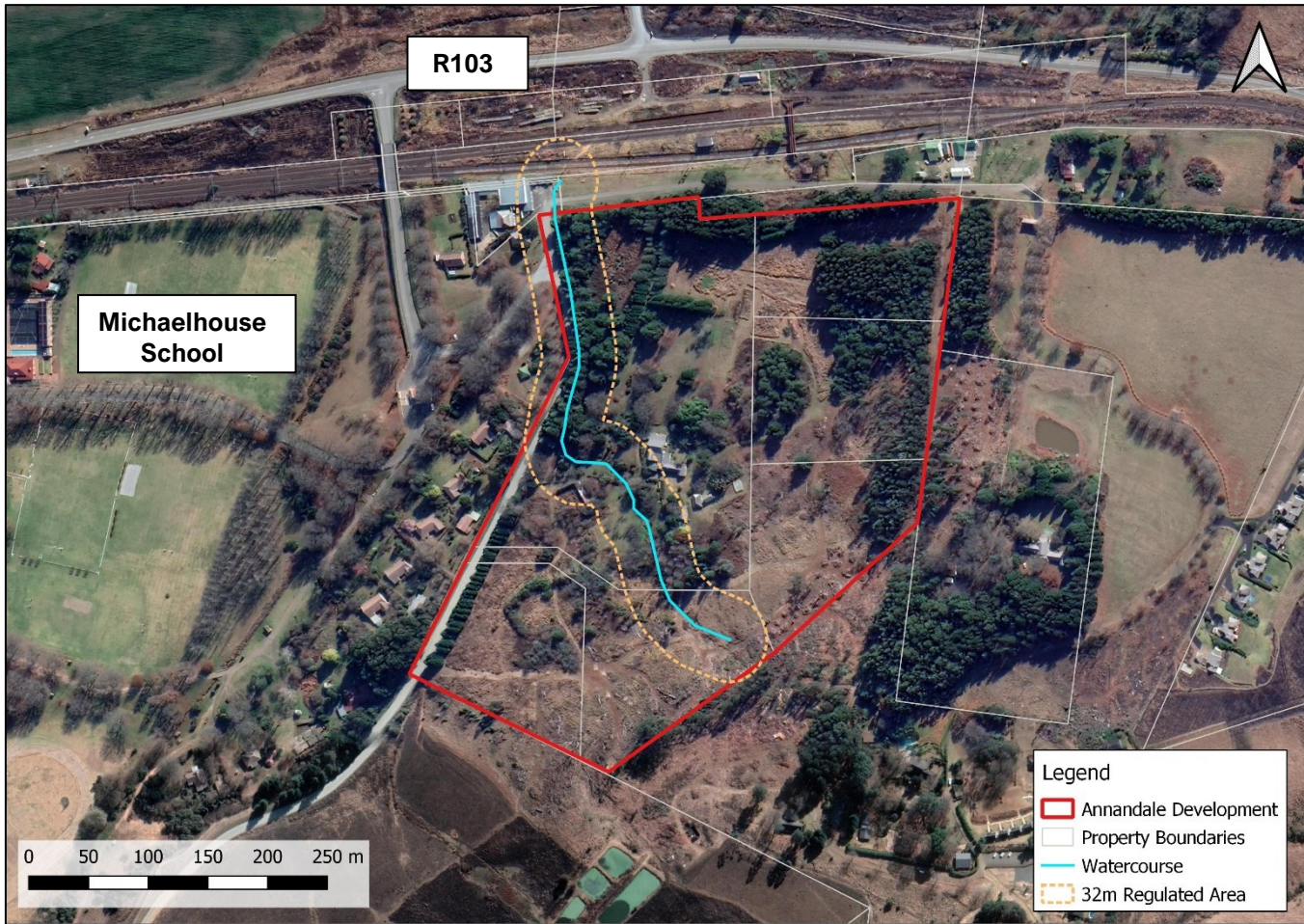


Figure 2: Conceptual Layout for the Annandale Country Estate Development (Source: Nsika Architects, 2022).



SITE ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Vegetation

The property falls within the Michaelhouse Grasslands (KZN 68) ecosystem type which is classified as *vulnerable* by the South African National Biodiversity Institute. The property has been landscaped over the years and exotic tree species planted in areas. A vegetation specialist has been commissioned to accurately describe the vegetation on site however the remaining grassland appears to be secondary.

- Watercourses

The study area is located within the U20B quaternary catchment. GroundTruth Water, Wetlands and Environmental Engineer delineated a modified freshwater ecosystems running through the centre of the site (visible in Figure 1). A detailed Aquatic Impact Assessment will be provided by GroundTruth and included in the Basic Assessment Report.

- Heritage

The site is rich in heritage with the built heritage specialist dating the original farmhouse back to the late 1800's. There are two other outbuildings on the property but are of lesser importance, being constructed more recently. There is an old stone structure near the entrance to the farm which was likely built to accommodate livestock. The original farmhouse will be retained in its current form as a Club House with the old stone structure forming a feature near the entrance to the Estate.

The study area falls within a "high" palaeontological sensitive area. A Desktop Palaeontological Impact Assessment will be required to confirm the likelihood of uncovering fossils during construction and the submission of a Protocol for Fossil Finds.

- Other site sensitivities

The property falls within a sensitive area identified in the uMgungundlovu Environmental Management Framework (EMF). The following sensitivities have been identified in the EMF: water production feature, water quality feature, flood risk feature, biodiversity features and wetland features.

The Annandale Country Estate is located within 5km of the Michaelhouse Nature Reserve. The Reserve was formally declared as a Nature Reserve in terms of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (2003) on the 19th November 2013.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The key aspects which will form the focus of the Environmental Impact Assessment are:

- To assess the change in land use from agricultural to residential. This includes the loss of open space, faunal movement corridors, stormwater management with the increase in hard surfaces etc.
- To assess the proposed road upgrade and proximity of infrastructure to the watercourse. Recommendations and mitigation measures to be provided by aquatic specialist and included in the Environmental Management Program; and
- To provide measures in the EMPr to be adhered to during construction so that construction-related impacts (noise, dust, waste management etc.) are managed and controlled on site.

A number of specialist studies are currently underway to fully assess the impact of the proposed development on the surrounding environment. Please refer to the table below showing a list of specialist studies to be undertaken during the Environmental Impact Assessment.

It is noted that the abstraction of water from the borehole and operation of the private package plant will be fully assessed during the WUA application. Additional specialist input will also be provided in the WUA application, which will also be made available for public comment.

Study	Specialist	Objective
Heritage Impact Assessment	Jean Beater	A Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment will be carried out to confirm if the site has any heritage or cultural value.
Built Heritage Statement	Lindsay Napier	The history of the site and age of the infrastructure will be determined. Section 34 of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) states that “no person may alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure which is older than 60 years without a permit” issued by AMAFA.
Palaeontology Impact Assessment	Marion Bamford	The property falls within a “highly” sensitive palaeontological area. A desktop assessment is therefore required by AMAFA.
Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment	GroundTruth	Assessment of present ecological state, ecological importance and sensitivity, and risks posed to the identified freshwater ecosystems. The report must comply with the “Protocol for the Specialist Assessment and Minimum Report Content Requirements for Environmental Impacts on Aquatic Biodiversity” published on the 20 th March 2020. The Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment must provide recommendations and mitigation measures to be adhered to during the design and operational phases of the development.
Wetland Assessment	GroundTruth	To delineate any wetland associated with the freshwater ecosystems on site and recommend buffers.
Engineering Services Report	UPM	UPM will prepare the Engineering Services Report (ESR) to describe the bulk water and sewer reticulation networks. The water and sewer pipeline routes will be provided in the ESR as well as more technical details of the proposed package plant.
Stormwater Management Plan	UPM	A stormwater management plan will be compiled by the engineer to ensure that all stormwater is attenuated on site before being discharge into the nearby valley lines.
Geotechnical Assessment	TBC	A Geotechnical Engineer will be appointed to comment on the underlying geology and any building restrictions / recommendations.

Adjacent landowners have been notified of the application and signboards erected near the entrance to the site. As advised by the ward councillor, an advert was published in the local newspaper, The Village Talk. Initial concerns will be identified during the notification phase of the public consultation process. A copy of the Draft Basic Assessment Report, including copies of all specialist reports, will be provided to all registered Interested & Affected Parties (I & APs). I & APs will have 30 days to comment on the Report. The Final Basic Assessment Report, including all public correspondence will then be submitted to EDTEA for assessment.

Specialist studies listed in the table above are currently underway. Depending on the input received, the Draft Basic Assessment Report will be submitted for public comment during June 2022.



EAP CONTACT DETAILS:

Stephanie Denison
 +27 (0) 82 929 4662
 steph@confluencesd.co.za