



**Rosemary's Garden Design Approach  
to the Development of  
Remainder of Portion 2 of Erf 1, Simbiti**

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## 1. Contextual Background.

Simbithi Eco Estate was created on the farm "Beverley", located on either side of the old Shakas Rock Road. The estate layout as developed, excluded the land on which the existing farm homestead was situated, which has remained in the Ladlau family ownership. This portion of land incorporated the homestead and various small out buildings, was excluded in the urban design development of the estate. The house together with an extensive cultivated garden developed by Rosemary Ladlau, is set in a portion of indigenous coastal forest.

The farm was originally purchased by George Ladlau in 1919 and was taken over as a sugar farm by his son, Winston George Ladlau (Mannie Ladlau) in 1947. The existing homestead was built in 1955 to the design of well-known Durban Architect, Allan Woodrow (Mannie's brother-in-law). On taking up residence on the farm, Rosemary Ladlau started to establish the extensive garden on the eastern portion of the land adjacent to the house, on her father-in-law's condition, to retain the indigenous trees surrounding the house.

The garden has over the years developed into an internationally recognised botanical benchmark, for an exotic Natal coastal garden. As an international floral art judge, Rosemary has had many visits from renown horticulturists and the gardens have been published in books on South African Gardens. The gardens are considered as an important landmark and are important to be kept in perpetuity. To this end the development strategy includes establishing a "Garden Servitude" over this zone of the land, which will be administered by a Trust, ensuring that the integrity of the Garden as sacrosanct in terms future development over this portion of the land.



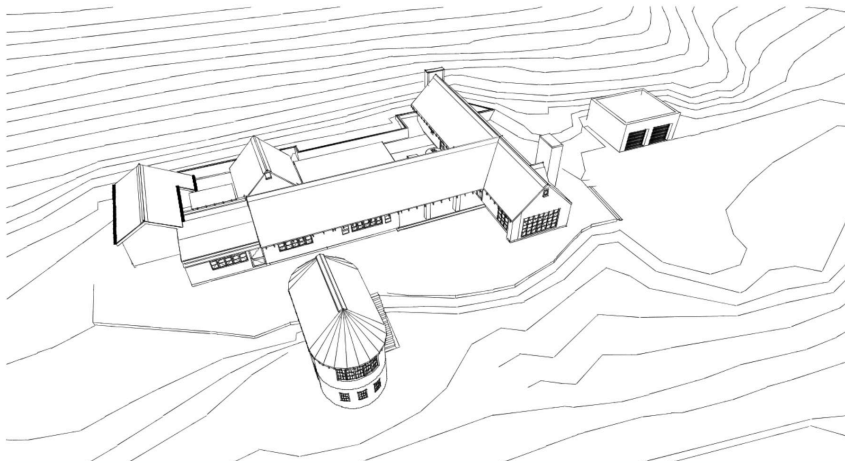
**FIG. 2.01:** DESIGN APPROACH TO THE OVERALL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE EXISTING BUILDINGS AND NEW STRUCTURES.

## 2. Design Approach to the Overall Development Through the Existing Buildings and New Structures

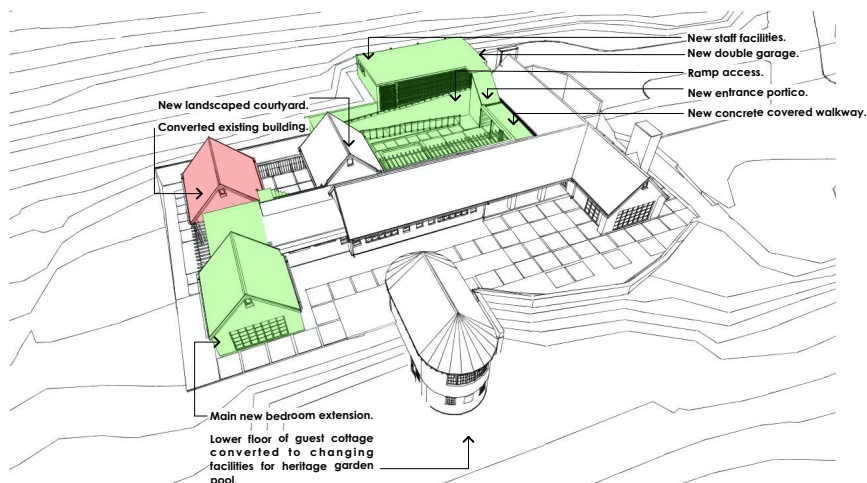
The physical relationship between the homestead and the garden are critical and are to be enhanced by ensuring undisturbed views of both and are to be maintained in relation to one another. The gardens are to be fenced with non-intrusive barriers, protecting the vegetation from the ever present fauna. Access to the gardens will be maintained for the residents of the sectional title development, as well as by means of controlled access of residents from the wider Simbithi Estate.

Within the overall site development strategy, the maintenance and integrity of the indigenous forest is as imperative in ensuring the special qualities of the remaining natural asset, are maintained. A sectional title development is envisaged, which will ensure the whole property remains intact and not subdivided into a series of individual stands with each site being treated with disparate architectural treatment. To further enhance the integration of new developments, a design code, structured to ensure all indigenous trees are retained and planting palette for each site's individual exclusive use areas, remains within the indigenous code. A full vegetation survey has been carried out by Johan Bodenstern of Indiflora, identified all the trees to be retained as well as the removal of non-indigenous varieties. These elements have been incorporated into the overall survey plan, and are determinants in defining the potential "Real Rights" sites. These are areas where removal of alien plants will take place, which will maintain the balance by indigenous trees being taken into design consideration in each site utilisation planning.

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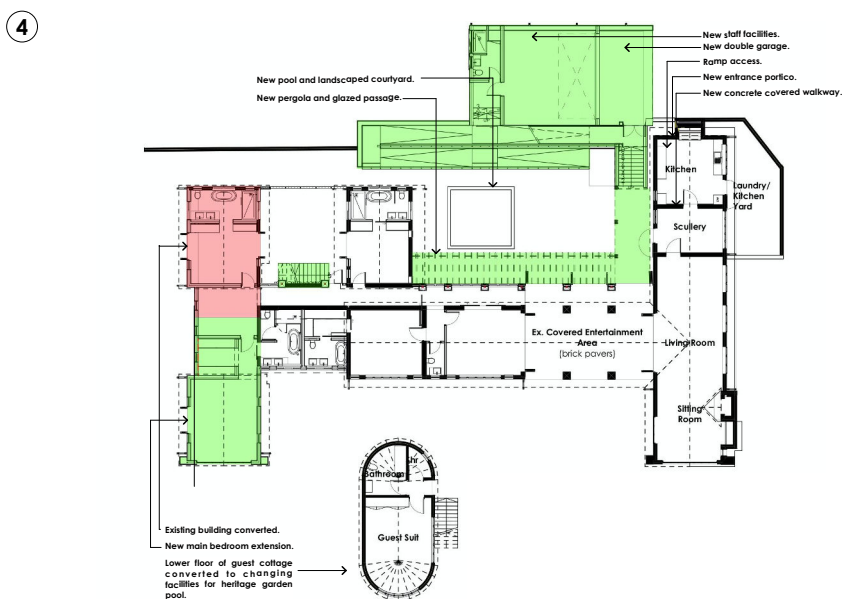
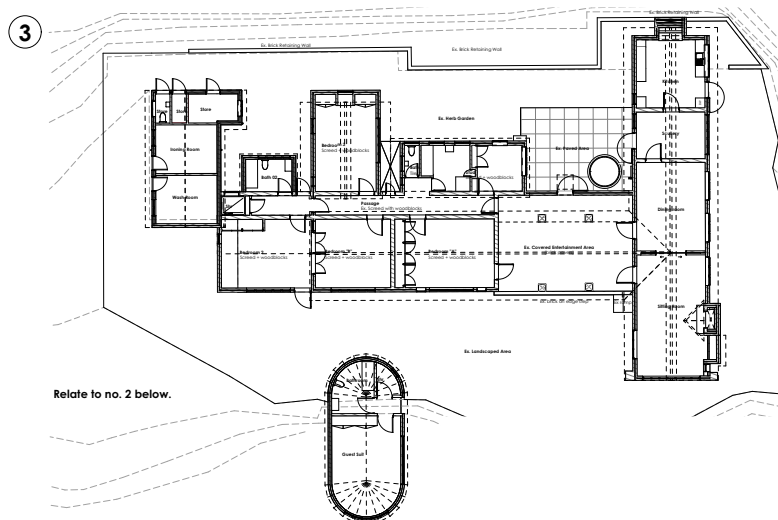
FIGURES 3.01 - EX. HOMESTEAD & FIG.3.02 - PROPOSED ADDITIONS & ALTERATIONS TO EX. HOMESTEAD

### 3. The Existing Homestead

The existing building represents an architecture representative of a coastal environment with respect to the simple building form. Complimentary elements of high pitched roofs, white stucco plastered walls and dark hardwood timber joinery to the openings, combine into single storey east facing building, sitting elegantly on a slightly raised stone-walled plateau, overlooking the sprawling garden.

The integrity of the external east and north facing elements of the building contrast with the rear of the main building, which is less elegant with attached low mono pitched low structures, accommodating utility accommodation.

The original architectural drawings provides an insight into the carefully crafted elements of the overall building as well as to some fine detailing. The existing structure, as designed by Allan Woodrow, was to respond to the climate, the garden and an outdoor lifestyle. Notable features are high ceilings with cross ventilation between roofs, and open outdoor living room. Detailing of joinery consists of large stable pattern doors, tall casement windows and in certain cases stained glass windows designed by the architect. The separate free-standing guest cottage pre-dates the main house and is utilises the same joinery detailing. A stone basement to this building forms a continuum with the dressed stone retaining wall forming the edge of the "heritage garden."



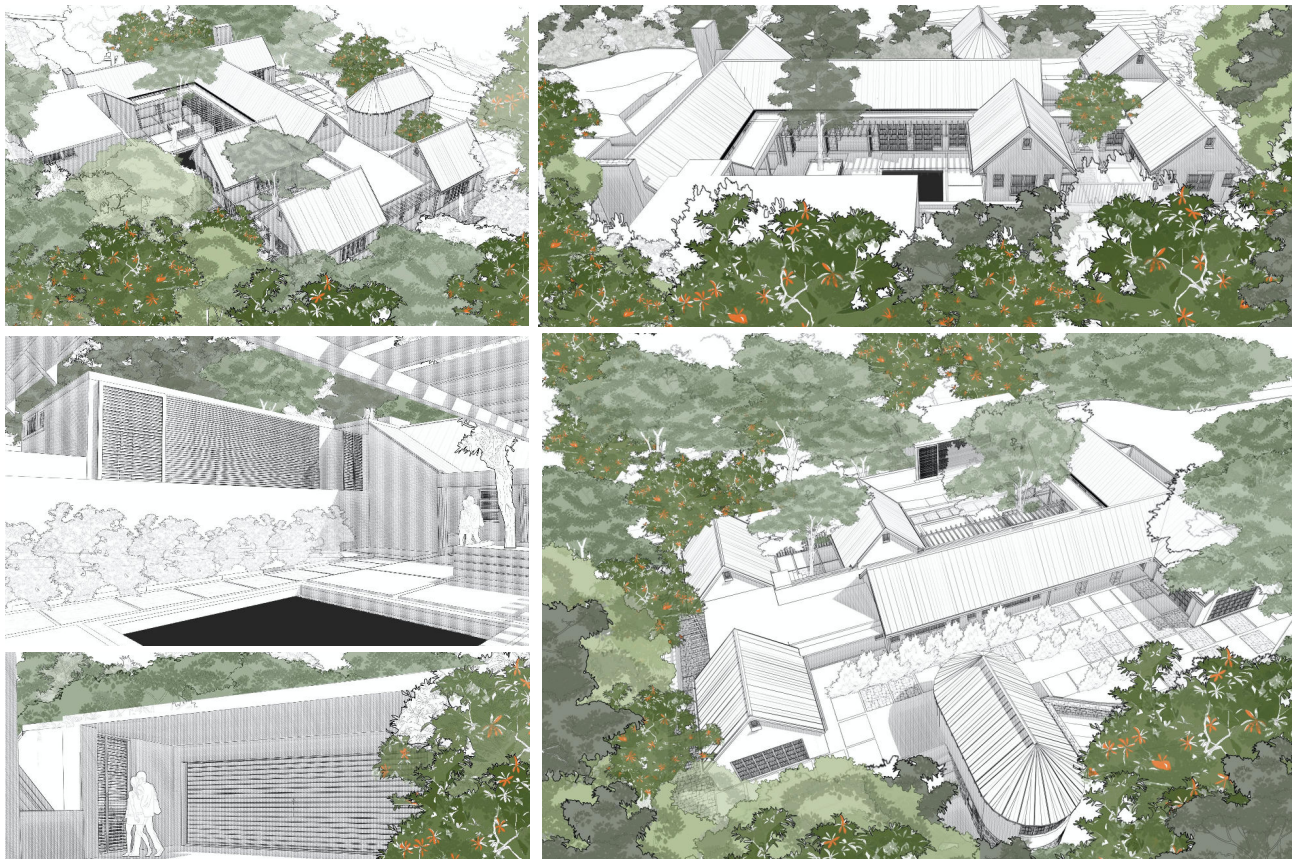
**FIG. 3.03** PLAN OF EX. HOMESTEAD & **FIG. 3.04** PROPOSED ADDITIONS & ALTERATIONS TO EX. HOMESTEAD.

The design approach, to the design of additions and alterations to the existing homestead, are informed by the principles of clearly defining the different layers of time and period. These are manifest in the new additional buildings being treated as clearly distinct from the original structure. Application of this treatment in the new entrance and garage facility, incorporating the access ramp and stair, when entering the house from the higher level on the western edge of the house. This defines and creates a landscaped entrance courtyard, this space extends the living area of the house into a private outdoor space off the living area.

By removing the low mono-pitched utility accommodation on western edge of the existing house and being replaced by a glazed internal walkway with a shading pergola along this edge of the house provides the other side of the living outdoor courtyard. This together with the existing breezeway open living room, links are restored between the house and the traditional relationship with the heritage garden.

The southern portions of the house utilises an existing outbuilding building, by converting this into a bedroom wing around a private bedroom courtyard. This wing is extended on the east side with a new main bedroom, projecting from the existing main facade of the house. As part of the overall form of the complex this forms a counter point to the projecting lounge on the northern face of the existing house.

Internal alterations are limited to the creation of modern bathroom facilities within the existing spaces, whilst maintaining the lofty ceiling spaces by retaining the existing roof structure and the introduction of raking ceilings. These elements retain the existing system of cross ventilation through the gable walls. The major change to the overall existing palette of materials and finishes is the change of roofing material from thatch to a corrugated aluminium metal sheeting. A dark coloured sheet will maintain the wall / roof colour relationship. The economics of replacing the thatching material as well as the fire regulations involved in replacing this material is considered prohibitive. The overall roof form will be maintained and as the same material and colour will be applied with all the individual house within the development, a unity of form and materials will prevail.



**FIG. 3.05 PROP. ADDITIONS & ALTERATIONS - UNITY OF FORM AND MATERIALS.**

## 4. The “Heritage Garden”

Rosemary Ladlau established the garden on her arrival on the farm in 1947. The development over the period since inception has developed into an internationally renowned garden, known as Beverley Estate

The integration of plants include indigenous trees, as for an example, the giant *Ficus Natalensis* adjacent to the homestead, which is surrounded by a wide variety of exotic plants, such as *Philodendrons*, bright bougainvilleas, ferns of a wide variety including delicious monster creepers. This garden is different from the manicured, primly bordered and religiously ordered traditional garden. Beverley’s Garden has a wild and natural luxuriance of the coastal African garden. The study and protocols applied by web known horticulturist, Johan Bodenstien, attests to the value of maintaining this incredible collection, which forms one of the reference points for the overall development. The gardens will be under the control of an ongoing Trust Body for future maintenance, drawing funding from the body corporate sectional title levy fund.



FIG. 4.01 - THE “HERITAGE” GARDEN.

## 5. The Individual Houses on Separate Sites within the Development.

The design of the proposed houses are considered as free standing, low impact buildings in the context of being integrated into their forest setting. The design criteria are as follows:

- **Plan Forms:**
  - Plans & enclosures are to be carefully defined geometry with maximum transparency
  - No fences or screens to be integrated with house form , with swimming pools & water features, restricted to private garden spaces or courtyards.
  - Light weight screens supporting columns may be set on the edge of verandahs in a vertical configuration.
- **Walls & Roofs:**
  - Roofs are to be low profiled, understated single storey except where topography allows double levels by purposefully envisaged to integrate spatially with the landscape.
  - Roofs are to be low profile with large overhangs.
  - Roofs are to integrate drainage & edge details integral with the structure.
  - Fully glazed walls with or without vertical mullions.
  - No reflective or coloured glass are permitted, only clear or light grey tinted accommodating thermal performance glass.
- **Materials:**
  - Materiality is to be natural materials & simplicity to facility the blending into the landscape.
  - Wall materials are to retain their original form & may include brick, hardwood, glass, rammed earth & stone.
  - Fenestration frames & mullions to be dark, earthy tones.
  - Pathways & paving; Gravel, natural stone, crushed or river stone with pre-cast kerning
- **Services:**
  - Simplicity of Services are to be concealed either within the building structure or screened from view & integrated in the architecture.
  - Rainwater harvesting is encouraged & tanks to be integrated into the architectural design
  - All electrical services are to be integrated into the architectural design,
  - External lighting is to be carefully integrated into the architectural design to alleviate light pollution.

The design as illustrative of the maximum footprint for each demarcated site and will be individually designed as and when each site is sold. The Simbithi Building code is to be incorporated into the design code as set out above. The architecture is to be reflective of the composition of its parts, relying on harmony, rhythm, and proportion. It is through these devices, and the relationships of people, building and environment.



FIG. 5.01 - GUIDE LINES APPLIED TO PROP. REAL RIGHT SITES.