

7 March 2014

Dr. Mariagrazia Galimberti
South African Heritage Resources Agency

Via: SAHRIS



Dear Mariagrazia

SECTION 35 (4) PERMIT APPLICATION TO ALLOW FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF AN OLD BUILDING AND ASSOCIATED ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE AT THE VOORSPOED DIAMOND MINE, KROONSTAD, FREE STATE PROVINCE.

This letter acts as a cover letter for the permit application to allow for the destruction of an old building and associated archaeological site located at the Voorspoed Diamond Mine, near Kroonstad, Free State Province. The destruction of the building is required to allow for the expansion of the mine pit.

This application follows on a long process during which a number of heritage studies and reports had been undertaken. The following list provides a chronological framework and background for the process which has been followed thus far before the appointment of PGS Heritage. It must be noted that the framework provided here is based on available information only, and as such may not necessarily represent the entire framework.

- The site was first identified during September 2004 by Dr. Julius Pistorius as part of his work in terms of a heritage impact assessment for De Beers' proposed Voorspoed Mine. The site was included in his report as site number HB01 and apart from the fact that he refers to the building as a 'historic building, Dr. Pistorius also states that spokespersons had indicated that the building may have been a police station. Furthermore, Dr. Pistorius identified several large middens to the north, south and west of the building and indicated that these middens may have been associated with the original function of the building, or alternatively that they are associated with the more recent occupation of the building by farm labourers (Pistorius, 2004).
- On 7 December 2005 a Level 2 heritage impact assessment was undertaken by Dr. Robert de Jong of Cultmatrix (De Jong, 2005). Through archival research they established that the building in question was not the police station, but can plausibly be identified as mine offices for the old Voorspoed Mine. They also suggested a date of construction for the building between 1906 and 1907.

The report by De Jong (2005) recommended that a destruction permit for the demolition of the building be granted by the Free State Provincial Heritage Resources Authority and that a number of conditions would likely be levied by the latter authority. In the words of the author of the report, these conditions are:

- *Complete documentation of the building.*
- *Research regarding architectural history and footprint of the mine, the site and the building in question...*
- *Archiving the documentation at Heritage Free State as well as at a reputable institution concerned with architectural heritage conservation...*
- *Sampling of middens (historic waste deposit areas) on site surrounding the building by a qualified archaeologist (test excavations to obtain any interesting samples of artefacts contained in the middens).*

It is the last item on this list which has special relevance for the present study. In this regard, the report of De Jong (2005) also recommended that the mine should “...engage the services of a qualified archaeologist to sample the contents of the middens”.

- A permit application to have the building destroyed was applied for by the mine during February 2006.
- In April 2006 the mine received a permit to have the building demolished, but the one year duration period of the permit was not acted upon by the mine in part due to the halting (or reduction) of mining activities.
- During 2010 (possibly 2012) Mr. Sidney Miller visited the building to assess it and to investigate the viability of conducting archaeological excavations of the associated historic middens.
- During January 2013 (possibly before that date) the architectural firm Roodt Architects became involved and sent a letter to the Permit Committee of Heritage Free State to ask for the permit to be renewed.
- On Wednesday, 3 April 2013 a letter was written by Ms. Mariagrazia Galimberti of the South African Heritage Resources Agency in response to the abovementioned application for the renewal of the permit which had been issued by the Free State Provincial Heritage Resources Authority. In the letter a list comprising five points was made to indicate the requirements of the SAHRA Archaeology, Palaeontology, Meteorites, Heritage Objects and Burial Grounds and Graves permit committee.
- The mine contacted PGS Heritage on 24 April 2013 and asked us for assistance in addressing these points.

The aim of the archaeological and heritage work undertaken by PGS Heritage was to address the requirements listed in the SAHRA letter of Wednesday, 3 April 2013. The listed requirements from this letter will be provided here and will be discussed individually. In each case reference would be made to the studies undertaken by PGS Heritage which specifically addresses each particular requirement.

- ***An assessment of the building must be undertaken before applying for a destruction permit to SAHRA. A report from this exercise must be submitted to SAHRA for further comments.***

Mr. Mauritz Naudé was appointed by PGS Heritage to undertake an architectural historical assessment of the building during June 2013. The assessment report accompanies this application and is titled Voorspoed Assessment of Building.

The following recommendations are made in the Architectural Historical Assessment of the Building:

“The building may be demolished and the proposed development may continue on the following conditions:

The building must be properly recorded prior to demolition: (a) photographically recorded and described according to standard architectural vocabulary; (b) measured drawings of the floor plan, elevations and essential architectural elements and details; (c) the information must be compiled in a report and (d) included into the submission to the heritage authorities as part of application for a demolition permit.”

Mr. Naudé was appointed by PGS Heritage to undertake the recommendations made in his assessment report as well. The report containing the documentation and recording of the building accompanies this application and is titled Voorspoed Recording of Building.

- ***Test excavation of the identified archaeological midden/s in the area is requested. An archaeologist will need to apply for a Phase 2 excavation permit. In terms of s.38(4)(b&c) of the National Heritage Resources Act, the provisions of s. 35 apply. The specialist will require a mitigation permit from SAHRA. On receipt of a satisfactory mitigation (Phase 2) permit report from the archaeologist, the heritage authority will make further recommendations in terms of the site. If the significance of the site is medium-high further mitigation before destruction may be requested. If the site is of high heritage significance, SAHRA may request that it be conserved, that mini-site management plans, interpretive material and possibly protective infrastructure be established.***

An archaeological excavation permit was applied for by Polke Birkholtz (as Project Manager and Archaeologist) and Joanna Behrens (as Principal Investigator). On 29 August 2013 an archaeological excavation permit (Permit Case ID: 629; SAHRA Reference: 9/2/234/0004) was issued by SAHRA. Archaeological excavations and mitigation were undertaken and the excavation report accompanies this application and is titled De Beers_Voorspoed Mine_Old Building_Phase 2 Archaeological Mitigation Report.

The report found that the archaeological site is of Medium to Low Significance, and made the following recommendations:

“It is recommended that a destruction permit be issued for the site on the undertaking that the following conditions will be met by the mining company within two years after the destruction permit is issued:

- *A poster display must be compiled and established at the main entrance to the mine. This display should provide information on the history of mining activities at the mine and specifically the history of the Voorspoed Diamond Mining Company Limited. The history of the old building should also be provided in the display. The display must be illustrated with old photographs of the mine and historic maps.*
- *A small publication must be funded by the mining company which records the history of the early mining activities and the Voorspoed Diamond Mining Company Limited in particular. The history of the old building should also be included in this publication.*

After the cessation of mining activities and subsequent rehabilitation in the area where the site is located, the following must be undertaken:

- *The site should be memorialized with the erection of a laser printed granite plaque at the spot where the site is located. This plaque should provide a short overview of the history of the Voorspoed Diamond Mining Company Limited as well as the site”.*
- ***A map highlighting the position and extent of the mining activities in relation to the heritage resources must be submitted to SAHRA***

A map was compiled by the Voorspoed Mine and accompanies this application. This map file is titled *Current Pit in Relation to Old Building*.

- ***A historical archaeologist must survey the area around the building and a report from this assessment must be submitted to SAHRA for further comments***

During the archaeological mitigation undertaken from Monday, 23 September to Friday, 27 September 2013 both the project archaeologist Polke Birkholtz and principal investigator Joanna Behrens walked intensively around the old building. The result from this foot survey is provided in the report titled *De Beers_Voorspoed Mine_Old Building_Phase 2 Archaeological Mitigation_Immediate Surroundings and Cultural Landscape* which accompanies this application.

The report made the following recommendations with regard to the immediate surroundings of the old building and site:

- *“All heritage features that could be identified within the direct surroundings of the site were recorded on the archaeological site layout plan and were included in the archaeological mitigation of the site. As a result no further mitigation measures would be required.”*

- ***The cultural landscape related to the history of the mine must be assessed properly***

As part of this study Polke Birkholtz of PGS Heritage has undertaken an intensive historic study on the old Voorspoed Diamond Mine. This history of both the mine and building site is provided in both the archaeological mitigation report as well as the report dealing with the immediate surroundings and wider cultural landscape. A detailed assessment of the wider cultural landscape was undertaken and is contained in the report which accompanies this application and is titled *De Beers_Voorspoed Mine_Old Building_Phase 2 Archaeological Mitigation_Immediate Surroundings and Cultural Landscape*.

The study identified three features within the cultural landscape namely the original water reservoir, the old school yard as well as the site of the old mine village. The following recommendations were made with regard to these three features:

- *Recommendations in terms of the Water Reservoir*

If no need exists for the structure to be demolished or impacted upon, the best option would be for it to be preserved in situ as a tangible remnant of the original mine infrastructure. Should any impacts be expected within the site boundaries as delineated in this report, archaeological mitigation and permitting would be required.

- *Recommendations in terms of the School Yard*

While no tangible remnants of the original school building appears to have been preserved, the eucalyptus trees surrounding the school yard defines a tangible link with the original school and school yard. The architectural study has showed that these eucalyptus trees are not associated with the original school. However, it is recommended that they be replaced on a tree-for-tree basis by indigenous trees and by doing this the delineation of the original school yard can be preserved.

- *Recommendations in terms of the Mine Village*

No tangible remains of the original mine village could be observed. However, it is still possible for subterranean middens and archaeological features to be present at the site. As a result, should any impacts be expected within the demarcated site boundaries, archaeological mitigation and permitting would be required.

The study also made the following General Recommendations:

- *Six cemeteries were identified during the 2004 heritage study across the mining property. However, these cemeteries are located away from the mine and its associated activities. A conservation management plan must be compiled with which the future conservation of these six cemeteries can be achieved. The three identified sites from the wider cultural landscape must also be included in the conservation management plan.*

It is evident from the abovementioned items as well as the reports accompanying the permit application that the requirements identified in the SAHRA letter have now been met. Furthermore, all these reports agree that the site may be destroyed to allow for the proposed expansion of the mine pit.

A letter from the General Manager of the De Beers Voorspoed Mine as applicants in this matter also accompanies this application. In the letter the socio-economic impacts should the destruction permit application not be approved, are provided. The letter provides the following impacts:

- *Current life of mine (LoM) is until 2021 with the possibility of extension. We currently employ 400 plus employees and provide an additional 400 plus positions for contractor. Should the permit not be granted, the LoM would be shortened as this is directly related to the expansion of the Pit. Expansion of the Pit cannot be undertaken without destroying the site. The future life of mine is dependent upon this expansion.*
- *Negatively impacting on Voorspoed Mine's social development programmes in the context of generally recognized standards of sustainable development by integrating the social, economic and environmental factors in planning the mining operations throughout the life of mine is accomplished by the following:*
 - a. *Promoting employment and contributing to the economic welfare of people in the Fezile Dabi District Municipality and South Africa in general;*
 - b. *Extending Voorspoed Mines contribution to the socio-economic development of the Fezile Dabi District Municipality and more specifically the Moqhaka and Ngwathe Local Municipalities.*
- *Negatively impacting on our Community Development Programmes which includes the following:*
 - a. *Education and upliftment support which looks at the lack of Maths and Science capacity in the schools;*
 - b. *Small business development projects;*
 - c. *Upgrading of rural schools by addressing the lack of adequate infrastructure.*

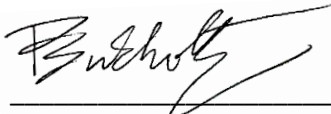
In the letter the General Manager also states that “...should the permit be granted we undertake to implement the following actions so as to preserve the memory of the 1906 Voorspoed Diamond Mine:

- *Record in a small publication the history of the site by including maps, photographs and the results of the archaeological excavations. Such publications will create public awareness of the early mining history and copies of such a publication can be presented to schools, public libraries from the surrounding communities and towns as well as presenting a copy to SAHRA.*
- *Displayed here on mine would be a compilation of information, maps and photographs highlighting the history of Voorspoed Mine placed thus making employees, contractors and visitors aware of our history.*
- *A granite commemoration plaque to be erected at an appropriate position on the mine which will compliment the eventual rehabilitation of the present mine at its closure.*

In summary then, it is the opinion of the project manager and author of this cover letter that the old building and associated archaeological site may be destroyed on the condition that the recommendations made in the various reports forming part of this study are adhered to.

I trust that you will find the contents of this letter in order. As always, please contact me should there be any enquiries.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Birkholtz', written over a horizontal line.

Polke D. Birkholtz
Director (PGS Heritage)