

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT



THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF A 2.5 MEGAWATT SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV) FACILITY ON ERF 77, GREENBUSHES, WITHIN THE NELSON MANDELA BAY MUNICIPALITY, EASTERN CAPE

INTRODUCTION

Habitat Link Consulting (Pty) Ltd has been appointed by Rent-A-Store (Pty) Ltd to apply for an Environmental Authorisation (EA) for the abovementioned project. The proposed development will include the installation of a number of solar panels to be connected to the municipal electricity grid in order to supply renewable (solar) energy. The development will take place on Erf 77, Greenbushes, situated approximately 15 km west of the Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth) city centre, within the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (Figure 1).

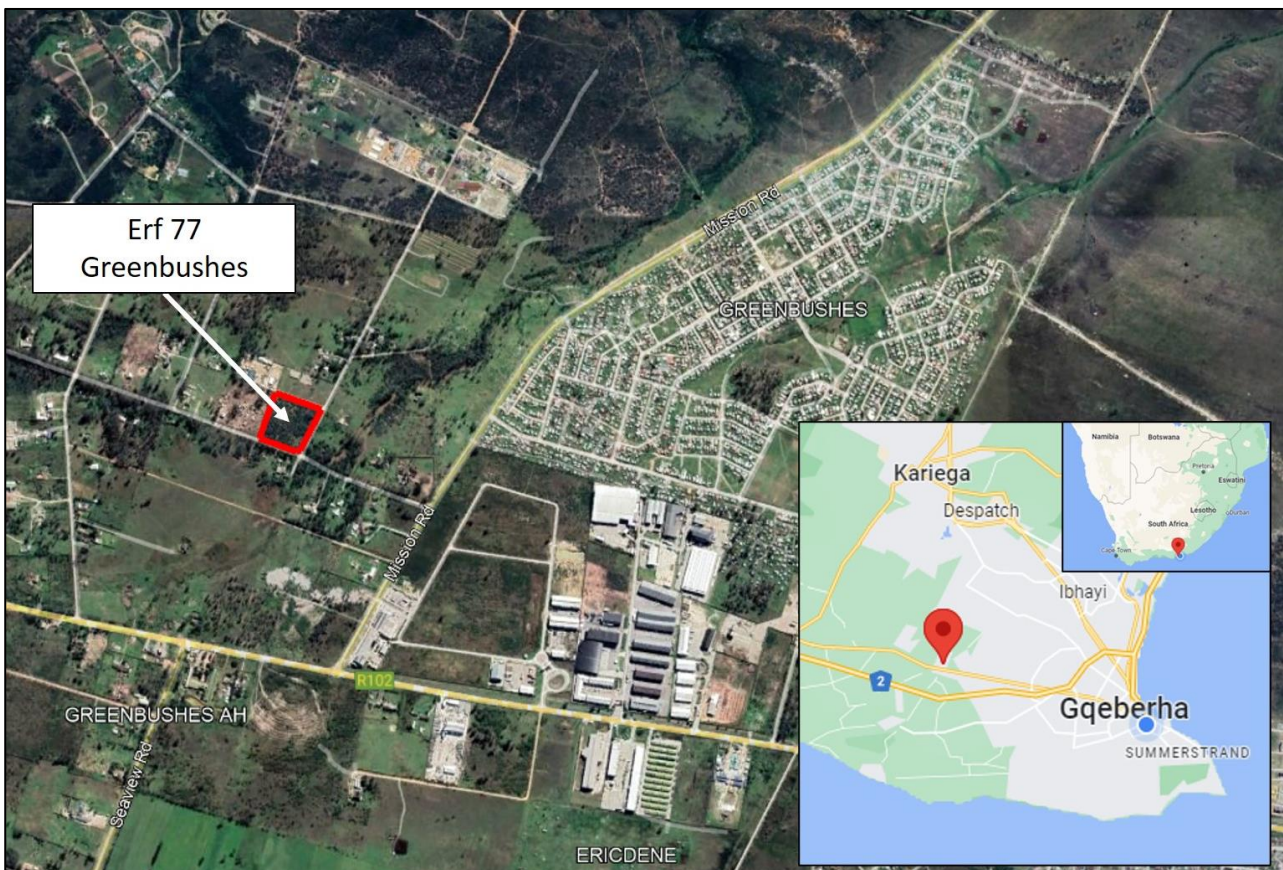


Figure 1: Locality map of the proposed solar PV development on Erf 77, Greenbushes, within the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, Easter Cape.

AIM OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this Background Information Document (BID) is to ensure that people who are interested in, or affected by, the proposed project are provided with the relevant information, including the process being followed. Registering as an Interested and/or Affected Party (I&AP) allows individuals or groups to contribute ideas, issues, and concerns relating to the proposed project. I&APs also have an opportunity to review all of the reports and submit their comments on these reports. All of the comments that are received will be included in the final reports that are submitted to the Competent Authority (CA). All I&APs are hereby invited to register their interest and submit initial comments on any aspect of the project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant (Rent-A-Store Pty Ltd) proposes to develop a new 2.5 megawatt (MW) solar PV facility within the 2.2 hectare (ha) property located in Greenbushes. The proposed facility, which will consist of approximately 40 solar panels varying from 60 m² to 240 m² in size, will feed renewable energy to the existing municipal electrical connection via a new mini substation. The development will also consist of several buildings including a meter room, control room, security house and ablution facilities. Stormwater from the site will be diverted to a proposed retention pond in the south-east corner. Access to the site will be obtained off Pennelsdrift Road and a new internal access road will be established along the boundary of the property. Several parking spaces will be allocated near the buildings (Figure 2).

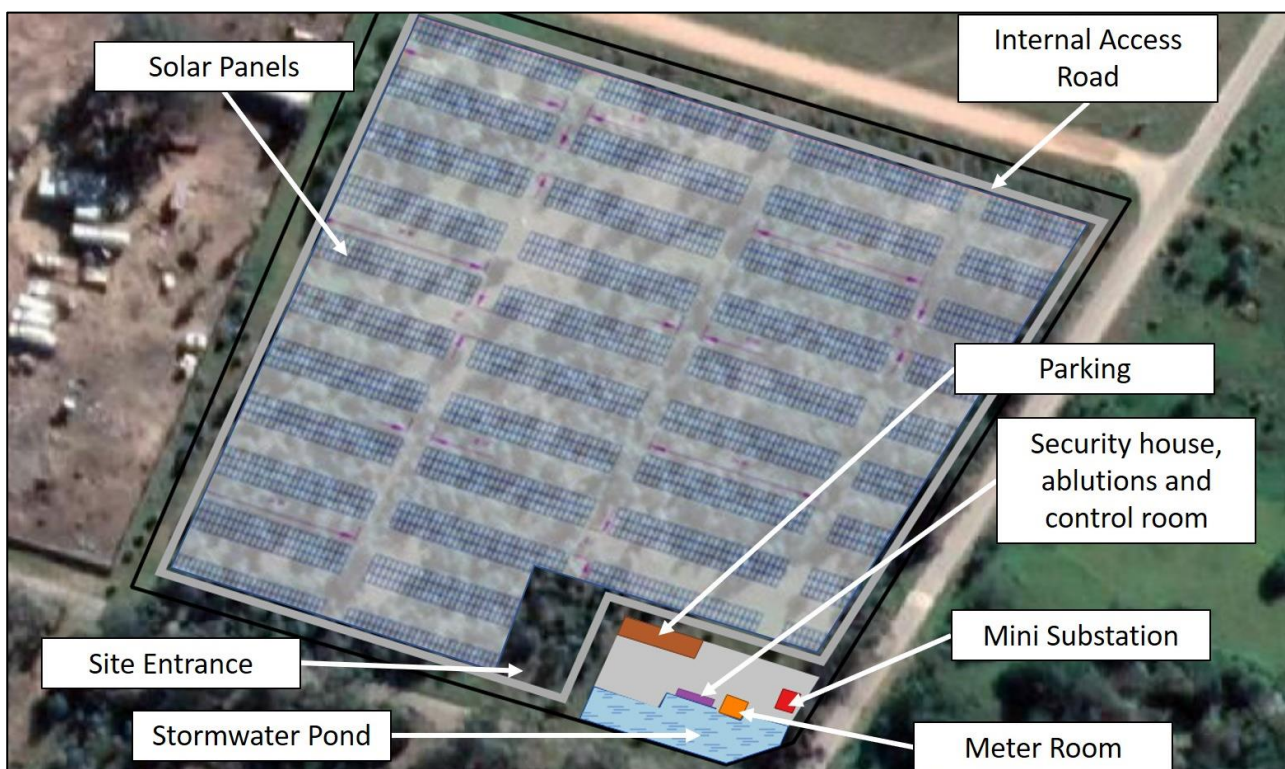


Figure 2: Proposed site layout.

The proposed solar energy generation facility will initially produce 1.6 MW of green power (and later be upgraded to 2.5 MW), which can then be distributed to businesses in the area. This green power will allow these business to meet their sustainable mandates and assist with the exponential costs of electricity. This facility will also help to alleviate electrical consumption, improving grid stability and reducing load shedding.

The site currently consists of vacant land with vegetation cover in the form of alien (black wattle) species (Figure 3). The south-eastern corner of the property is located within 100 m of a non-perennial tributary and the entire property is located within 500 m of a wetland, as defined by the National Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Areas (NFEPA, 2011). According to the Nelson Mandela Bay Bioregional Plan (2009), the property is not classified as a protected area or critical biodiversity area, but is located within vegetation classified as Rowallan Park Grassy fynbos, listed as 'vulnerable' and listed as a Threatened Ecosystem.



Figure 2: Current status of the proposed development site.

APPLICABLE LEGISLATION

National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) (Act No. 107 of 1998, as amended)

The proposed development constitutes listed activities in terms of the 2014 EIA Regulations (as amended) as promulgated under NEMA. As such, the proposed development requires an EA prior to commencement of construction and operation. The following listed activities published in GN R. 983 and 985 (as amended in GN R. 327 and 324) are potentially triggered:

Activity No.	Description	Triggering activity
LISTING NOTICE 1 – GN R. 983 (GN R. 327)		
Activity 1	The development of facilities or infrastructure for the generation of electricity from a renewable resource where— (i) the electricity output is more than 10 megawatts but less than 20 megawatts; or (ii) the output is 10 megawatts or less but the total extent of the facility covers an area in excess of 1 hectare.	The proposed solar PV facility will exceed 1 ha in size. The development will be located outside urban areas and will not occur on any existing infrastructure.
Activity 27	The clearance of an area of 1 hectares or more, but less than 20 hectares of indigenous vegetation	The proposed development may require the clearance of vegetation that is considered 'indigenous'.

Based on the listed activities identified, the proposed project will be **subject to a Basic Assessment process**. The impacts associated with these activities will need to be assessed during this process and include the necessary specialist studies. The Competent Authority (CA) is identified as the Eastern Cape Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT).

National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) (Act No. 25 of 1999, as amended)

The NHRA provides for the protection and management of South Africa's heritage resources. Section 38 of the NHRA notes that '*any person who intends to undertake a development categorised as—*

(c) any development or other activity which will change the character of a site—

(i) exceeding 5 000 m² in extent; or

(d) the re-zoning of a site exceeding 10 000 m² in extent

must at the very early stages of initiating such a development, notify the responsible heritage resources authority and furnish it with details regarding the location, nature and extent of the proposed development.'

The proposed development will change the character of the site. As such, the provincial heritage authority must be notified of the development and the relevant heritage assessments undertaken as part of the Basic Assessment process. Any additional requirements will be determined by the relevant heritage authorities during the NEMA process.

National Water Act (NWA) (Act No. 36 of 1998, as amended)

The NWA is the primary regulatory legislation for the control, management and use of water resources. Section 21 of the NWA sets out water uses that may require registration or licencing. This includes any water abstraction or development activities that may impact upon the flow and function of watercourses. According to Section 21 of the National Water Act (NWA) (Act No. 36 of 1998, as amended), water use activities include (amongst others): (a) *abstraction of water*; (i) *altering the bed, banks, course or characteristics of a watercourse*.

The proposed development may require abstraction of water from boreholes and is also located in proximity to wetlands as well as drainage lines as defined by the relevant spatial datasets. As such, the need for a Section 21 water use authorisation (WUA) will be discussed with the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) and any applications required will be submitted as part of this process.

BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The listed activities trigger the requirement of a Basic Assessment process (Figure 4). A draft Basic Assessment Report (BAR) will be compiled and will comprehensively describe the activities and impacts that the project may have on the receiving environment, including specialist reports and details from the public participation (PPP) process.

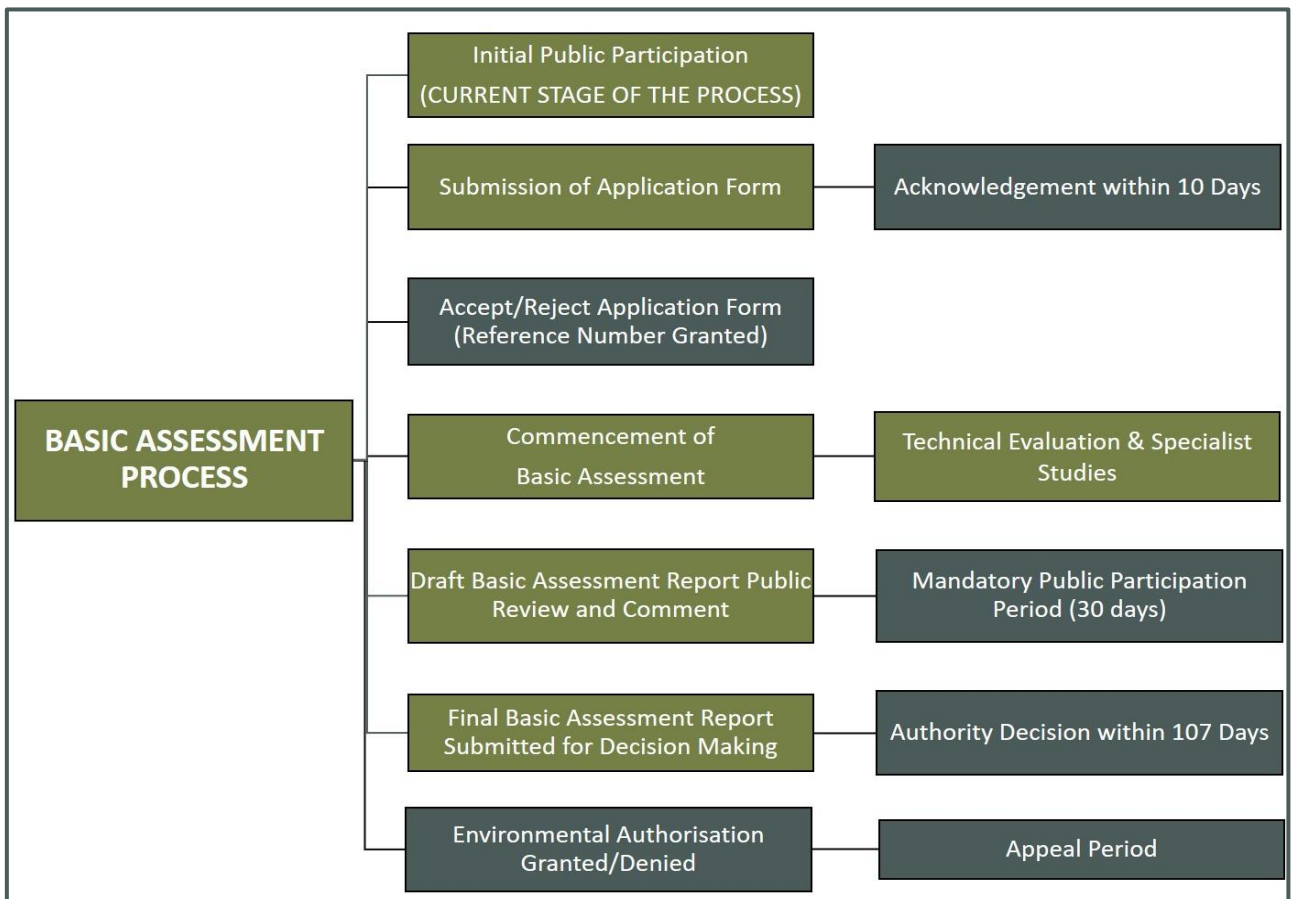


Figure 4: Basic Assessment process.

In addition, an Environmental Management Programme (EMPr) will be compiled for the proposed development in order to make provision for relevant environmental management and mitigation measures. The draft BAR and EMPr will be published for a 30-day public commenting period. Subsequent to the review and commenting period, a final BAR will be compiled for submission to the competent authority. Following the issuing of the EA, all registered I&APs will be notified accordingly and given the opportunity to appeal against the decision, should they so wish to do so.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT

The following preliminary environmental issues (negative and positive) have been identified and will be investigated during the assessment process:

- Loss of vegetation and faunal communities;
- Impact on water availability and water scarcity;
- Impact on water resources (sedimentation, water quality etc.)
- Soil compaction, erosion and stormwater management;
- Dust, noise and other nuisance aspects;
- Traffic congestion impacts;
- Health, safety and fire risks;
- Generation of waste (e.g., spoil material, cleared vegetation and construction waste);
- Impact on visual aesthetics;
- Loss of sites of archaeological and/or palaeontological importance;
- Employment creation and socio-economic benefits; and
- Renewable energy production.

These and other impacts will be assessed in detail during the assessment process and mitigation measures to reduce the significance of the negative impacts will be provided in the reports.

DELIVERABLES

The environmental assessment will culminate in the compilation of a Basic Assessment Report (BAR) and Environmental Management Programme (EMPr). The BAR will be submitted to DEDEAT, the regulatory authority responsible for the review of the report. Following review of the report, DEDEAT has to reach a decision as to whether, and under which conditions, the project may proceed, based on environmental considerations. An environmental authorisation will be granted or refused based on the information provided in the Basic Assessment Report. I&APs who have registered will be notified of the environmental authorisation decision.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS AND INVITATION TO COMMENT

The Public Participation Process (PPP) provides people who may be affected by the proposed development with an opportunity to provide comment and to raise issues of concern about the project, or to make suggestions that may result in enhanced benefits for the project. Should you wish to express your views regarding this proposed development, please send us your written comments. All registered Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs), together with the comments received, will be submitted to the (DEDEAT).

Please submit your name, contact information (address, telephone number, email address, postal address) and any written comments to Habitat Link Consulting:



Postal Address: 117 Cape Road, Mount Croix, Port Elizabeth, 6001

Tel or WhatsApp: 082 930 8711

Email: comments@habitatlink.co.za or roberto@habitatlink.co.za