

PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Ihlokozi Rural Housing Project
Wards 6 and 8
Ubuhlebezwe Local Municipality
KwaZulu-Natal



August 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is proposed to build approximately 2600 houses in Ihlokozi (the project area) of Ward 6 and 8 of the Ubuhlebezwe Local Municipality. This project is an insitu upgrade project and as such the new structures will be built within existing iMizi.

Since the above development is not regarded by the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) as a listed activity in terms of section 21 of the Environment Conservation Act (ECA) (No. 73 of 1989), only section 28 (1), (2) and (3)(a) to (f) of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) (No. 107 of 1998) must be followed, which addresses Duty of Care and Remediation of Environmental Damage.

It is envisaged that biophysical and socio-economic environmental impacts will be minimal, due to the fact that the area is already extensively settled and thus modified, and that houses will be built within the area of existing homesteads.

This Preliminary Environmental Scan will consider the current environment and the likely impacts that the project will have on the environment. The Environmental Assessment Practitioner will submit this report to the Department (EDTEA) and request a response from them, confirming that there is no need for a formal Environmental Authorization process.

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Human Settlement introduced a Rural Housing Subsidy Scheme Policy for housing developments in the Tribal Authority areas, where each qualified beneficiary will be a member of the “family” of an existing homestead / kraal (see Department of Housing: Final Draft: National Housing Programme: Housing Subsidy Scheme: Part 3: Chapter 11). Approximately 2600 houses have been allocated for this project, depending on the number of qualified beneficiaries.

The project consists of the building of houses within the existing homesteads / kraals. In terms of section 3.3.1 of chapter 3 of the aforementioned draft a pre-feasibility environmental risk assessment for the Ihlokozi project must be submitted to the proponent. This report fills that requirement. In order to commence this construction project, M Linley approached HSG to undertake an environmental scan, forward it to EDTEA and request an appropriate response.

No development will occur within the 100 year floodline, within 32m of a stream, or within a wetland.

The Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) indicated that the developments are not regarded as a listed activity in terms of section 21 of the Environment Conservation Act (ECA) (No. 73 of 1989) or GN.R. 1182 of 5 September 1997 (as amended). Thus;

section 28(1), (2), (3)(a) to (f) of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) (Act 107 of 1998), which addresses Duty of Care and Remediation of Environmental Damage, will apply to the developments;

the process may involve the compilation of an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for submission to EDTEA.

This investigation took the form of a desktop study and a site visit undertaken on 12 August 2015.

2. LOCALITY AND SERVICES

The proposed development area of Ihlokozi is south east of Highflats. The area has no administrative/commercial centre within its boundary but is serviced with schools and stores and is close to Highflats. Electricity and potable water is available to the community. . No water born sewage is present. The central co-ordinate is 30⁰ 19' 27"S and 30⁰ 15' 23"E. A locality map based on the topographical is attached in Appendix 1 entitled Ihlokozi rural housing project.

The land proposed for development is currently owned by the Ingonyama Trust and comprises of low density scattered rural dwellings (iMizi), and associated agriculture (both grazing and crops). Refer to Appendix 2 for a settlement plan on an aerial photograph entitled draft settlement plan.

The project area is approximately 15 kilometres square in extent, the area currently settled covers only a portion of this, and the actual footprint of the buildings is of course much less still (each new dwelling being around 40 square metres).

The tar road (R612) through Highflats to Mzinto is just to the north of the project area. The P73 (which is currently being upgraded) leads off the R612 into the area which is served by a network of local dirt roads.

3. NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL

3.1 Topography

The topography is quite undulating with the altitude increasing from 920m by the Mtwalume stream in the east to 1040m amsl in the west. There are cliffs associated with the incised valley of the Mtwalume river, but all the houses appear to be on the plateau above the cliffs.

3.2 Geology

The report on the geotechnical nature of the development area must be scrutinized to determine the likelihood of unstable ground and foundation requirements. The steep slopes and cliffs should be avoided.

3.3 Water Resources

Most of the streams flow north and east and flow into the Mtwalume river. The major tributary in the area is the KwaMfulamkulu. No houses are to be built within 32m of these streams. No major wetlands occur associated in the area.

Rainfall in the region ranges from 700 - 800mm per annum.

3.4 Vegetation

The region is generally well vegetated, it is predominantly natural, only subsistence and community agriculture is practiced in places. The vegetation present comprises, with increasing altitude, Ngongoni veld in the valleys to the east and KwaZulu Sandstone Sourveld (80%) to the west according to Mucina 2006 – The Vegetation of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland.

According to Ezemvelo's Cplan database, the area is of high conservation significance (or irreplaceability), with most of the area being at 1 ie totally irreplaceable.

3.5 Visual

The area is currently occupied by rural housing and this will remain the predominant land-use.

3.6 Pollution

Air quality is dominated by dust from the roads and smoke from the dwellings and veld fires. The major roads are already a source of noise and light pollution. Care must be taken not to pollute the water courses.

3.7 Cultural

AMAFA can be contacted to ascertain whether any culturally significant sites are present in the study area (Mr Sya Nondumo). If so these should be noted and left undisturbed.

If any artefacts are discovered during the project implementation, construction must be stopped and AMAFA contacted immediately.

4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Little economic activity is present within the study area. The main source of income is likely to be from migrant labour. Some employment opportunities exist on the nearby forestry plantations, sugar cane farms and towns. The area is served by local schools and stores. The nearest commercial centre of any significance is Highflats. Thus this housing upgrade project could inject some cash into the local economy if local labour is sourced.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

This will take the form of a Social compact between the tribal authority and the local municipality and meetings with the community leadership, the housing forum steering committee and the developer. The

beneficiaries of the project have already been identified, hence the proposal to build these 2600 houses.

6. WATER, SANITATION, ROADS AND STORM WATER

Bulk water is available in some parts of the ward. There is no waterborne sewage system in the area and VIP toilets are in evidence. The district road from Highflats leads into the area. District and local roads with culverts for storm water serve the area.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on the site visit and scrutinizing the aerial photography, none of the proposed houses fall into an environmentally sensitive area.

The main concern would be to prevent any construction material or runoff from entering the local streams. To this end the construction camp should be sited well away from the streams and/or cliffs, adjacent to an existing road for easy of the delivery of materials etc

This project should (if the construction is managed properly) have little detrimental impact on the natural environment and has the potential to enhance the social and economic status of the intended beneficiaries.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M.S. Webster', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

M.S.Webster

Appendix 1: Ihlokozi Rural Housing Project Locality Plan

Appendix 2: Settlement Plan

Appendix 3 : Typical Photographs of the project area



