

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

As part of the

BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS

For the

PROPOSED RIETVLEI CEMETERY, WITHIN THE UMZIMKHULU LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

1. Introduction

The Umzimkhulu Local Municipality has identified the need to establish a cemetery in the town of Rietvlei. Before the expansion of the cemetery can commence, environmental authorisation from the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs, in compliance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations of 2010, is required. In order to obtain this authorisation a Basic Assessment is currently being undertaken by Enviroedge on behalf of the Umzimkhulu Local Municipality.

2. The Project

The town of Rietvlei is located in ward 12, in the southern most region of the Municipality, approximately 32km south west of the Umzimkhulu central business district. The proposed site is located to the south east of the village centre on a vacant portion of land which land use is subsistence agriculture and vacant/unspecified. An existing grave yard exists approximately 200 metres to the north east of the site, and has reached full capacity. The proposed cemetery establishment is aimed to provide burial sites which will directly cater to the Rietvlei and nearby communities for the next twenty (20) years, and as such approximately two hectares (2ha) of land will be required. The project is aimed to provide a burial location in close proximity for the local community, so as to prevent 'back yard burials' and also to help reduce the need to travel to district cemetery sites. The cemetery establishment aims to cater for all cultural needs within the municipal area. The proposed cemetery site is situated at 30°29'27.02"S 29°50'5.30"E.

3. The Biophysical Environment

Rivers and topography: The proposed cemetery site is located on a north east facing hill side with an average gradient of 1:6. The site drains towards a perennial tributary of the Donkerhoekspruit River which is approximately 300 metres to the east. The Donkerhoekspruit River joins the Mahobe River further to the east. An incised non-perennial stream exists 400 metres to the south of the proposed site.

Vegetation: The study area falls within the Savanna Biome, and Mucina and Rutherford (2006) classify the vegetation group as Ngongoni Veld (SVs 4). Common features of this vegetation class is dense tall grassland that is overwhelmingly dominated by unpalatable, wiry Ngongoni grass and with a low species diversity. Adequate soil cover was noted across the site with sections of rocky outcrops further south of the proposed site. Vegetation cover exists across the entire site owing to adequate soil cover, however rocky outcrops were noted further south of the proposed site.

Geology and Soils: Mucina and Rutherford (2006) describe the geology as acidic, leached, heavy soils derived from Karoo Supergroup sediments and intrusive Karoo Dolerites. Glenrosa and Mispah soils also occur.

Conservation Value: The Ngongoni Veld is classified as vulnerable with an associated target value of 25%.

Climate: The study area mainly receives summer rainfall with some winter rainfall. Infrequent frosts do occur. Some valleys are sheltered and may show weak rain shadow effects. The average annual precipitation ranges from 700mm to 1100mm.

4. Public Participation

Members of the public have the opportunity to be consulted during the Public Participation Process. If you would like additional information or would like to be part of this process please register with Steven Whitaker using the contact details below.

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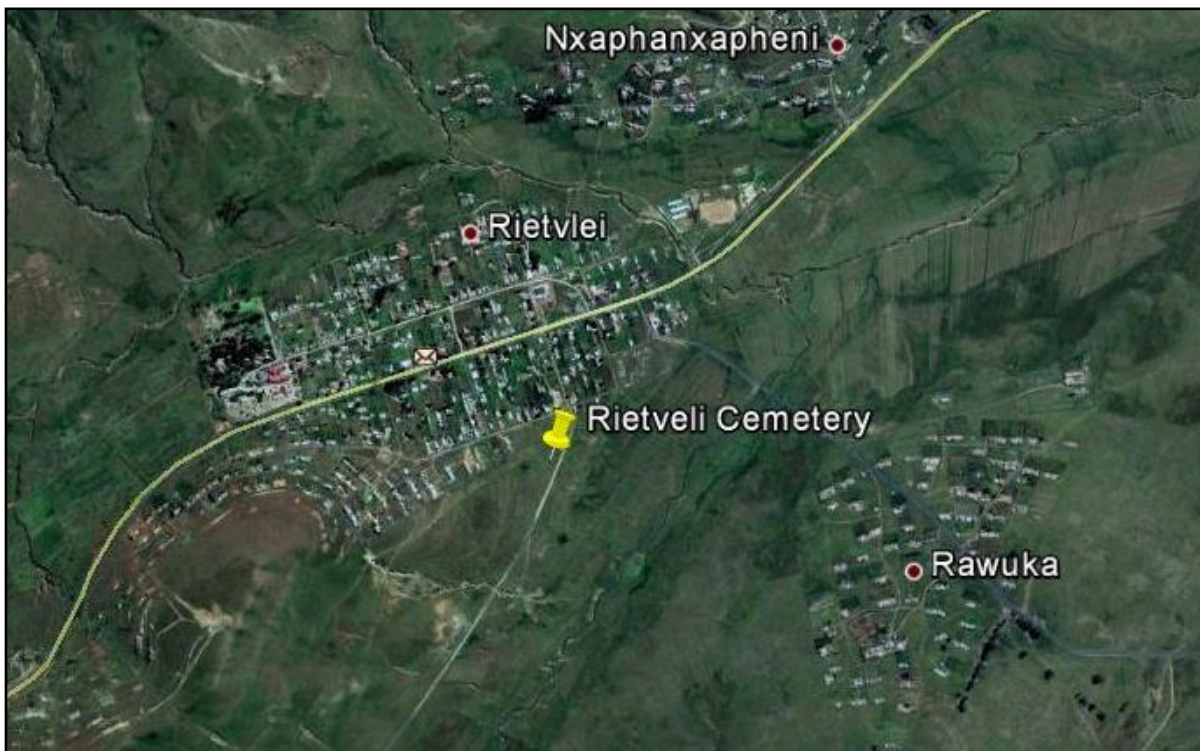


Figure 1. Google Earth Image showing location of the proposed cemetery site expansion.

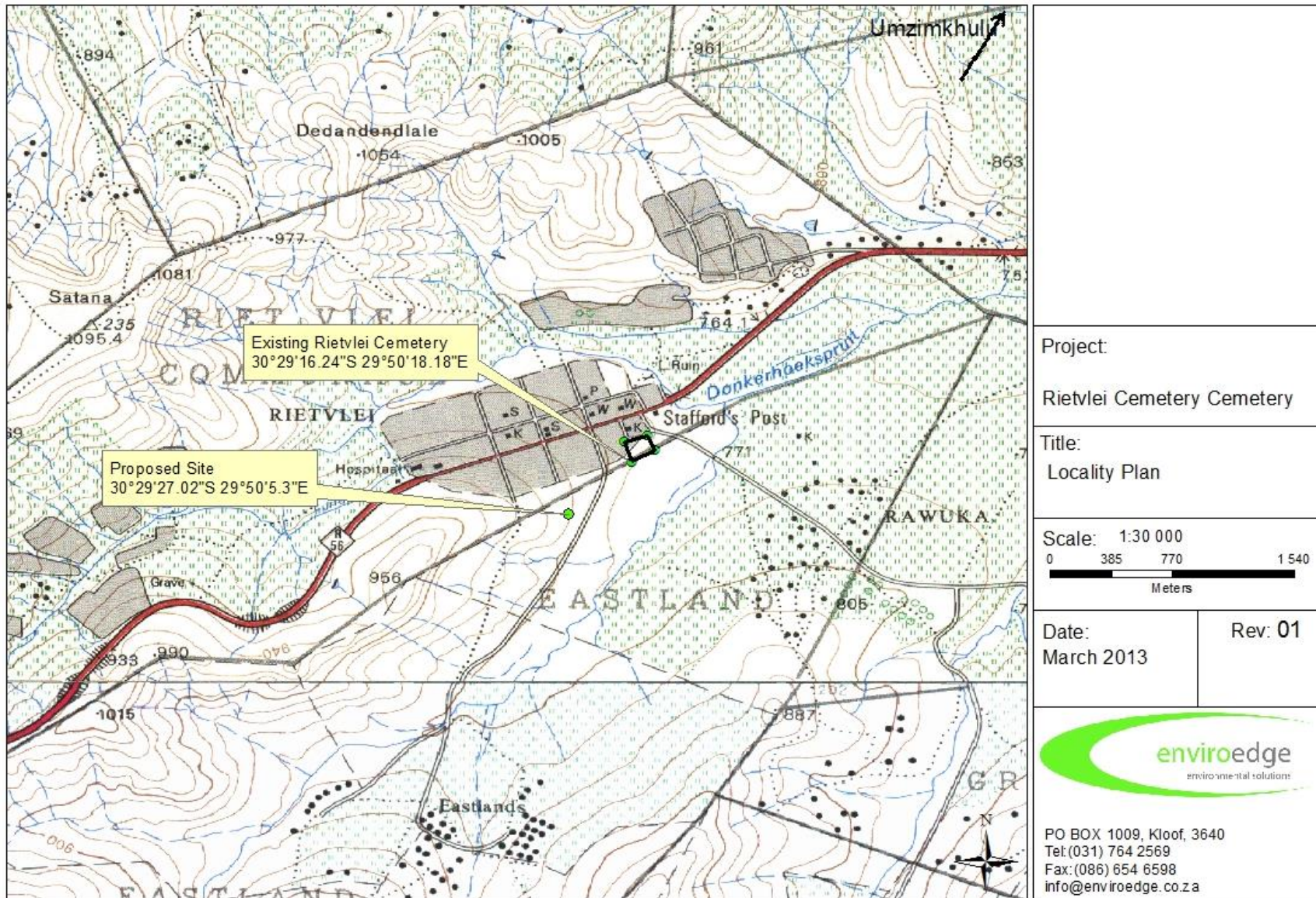


Figure 2. Topographical Plan showing the Rietvlei cemetery site location in relation to the existing cemetery.