

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT (BID)



**BID for the Proposed UCL Avo Packaging Plant on Portion 22 (of 18) of Erf 162
Uitmundend, uMtshwathi Local Municipality, uMgungundlovu District Municipality, KZN.**

A Project of UCL Company (Pty) Ltd.

17th September 2021

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION

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Compiled and Authorised by:

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Background Information Document (BID) is to provide information to Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) regarding the Proposed UCL Avo Packaging Plant on Portion 22 (of 18) of Erf 162 Uitmunten, uMtshwathi Local Municipality, uMgungundlovu District Municipality. Wallace and Green (Pty) Ltd. has been appointed by UCL Company (Pty) Ltd to provide Independent Environmental Consulting Services for the Proposed UCL Avo Packaging Plant.

LOCATION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed UCL Avo Packaging Plant is located within Portion 22 (of 18) of Erf 162 Uitmunten (Centre Point Coordinates: 29°20'16.12"S; 30°38'0.53"E) adjacent to the UCL Sugar Mill in the town of Dalton, uMtshwathi Local Municipality, uMgungundlovu District Municipality, KZN. The proposed Avo Packaging Plant will be located on a 9.43 ha patch of land (presently under sugarcane cultivation) of which 1.4 ha will be utilised as the development area. As the site is within an active sugarcane farm, the catchment area of the Avo Packaging Plant is also primarily dominated by active sugarcane cultivation as well as a functioning sugar mill. The site is situated on a fairly low gradient slope which drains in a north easterly direction towards the Pambanyoni Stream, a watercourse located approximately 350m downslope of the site.

CO-ORDINATES OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Latitude /Longitude	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
UCL Avo Packaging Plant (Northern Boundary)			
South	29	20	9.91
East	30	38	3.40
South	29	20	13.06
East	30	38	6.96
UCL Avo Packaging Plant (Southern Boundary)			
South	29	20	17.98
East	30	37	54.05
South	29	20	20.43
East	30	37	57.36



Figure 1: Google Earth Image illustrating the locality of the Proposed Avo Packaging Plant.

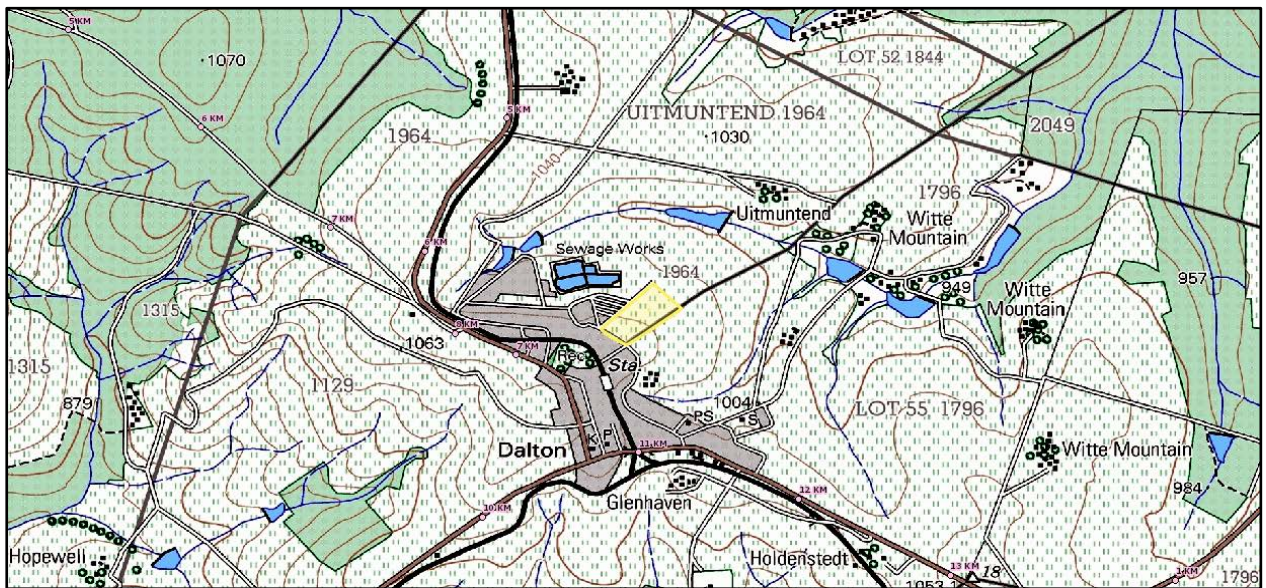


Figure 2: Locality Map illustrating the location of the Proposed Avo Packaging Plant.

PROJECT DETAIL

The UCL Avo Packaging plant will be purchasing the avocados from the surrounding farmers, where it will be packaged and essentially distributed for sale. The study area is surrounded by neighbouring towns of Cool Air and New Hanover, which lies approximately 3.8 km north and 8.4 km west respectively. The study area can be accessed via the R614 (which traverses the town of Dalton) and Jacaranda Road. It is envisaged that the proposed development will seek to employ approximately 64 personnel during the construction phase and 39 staff members during the operational phase broken up into 11 skilled employees and 28 unskilled employees.

The proposed Avo Packing Plant development will encompass the following:

- A Bulk Fruit Storage unit;
- Control Room;
- Carton Manufacture;
- Carton Storage;
- Carton Offload;
- Refrigeration;
- Dispatch area;
- Staff Offices; and
- Canteen area.



Figure 3: Overall Site Plan for the Avo Packaging Plant

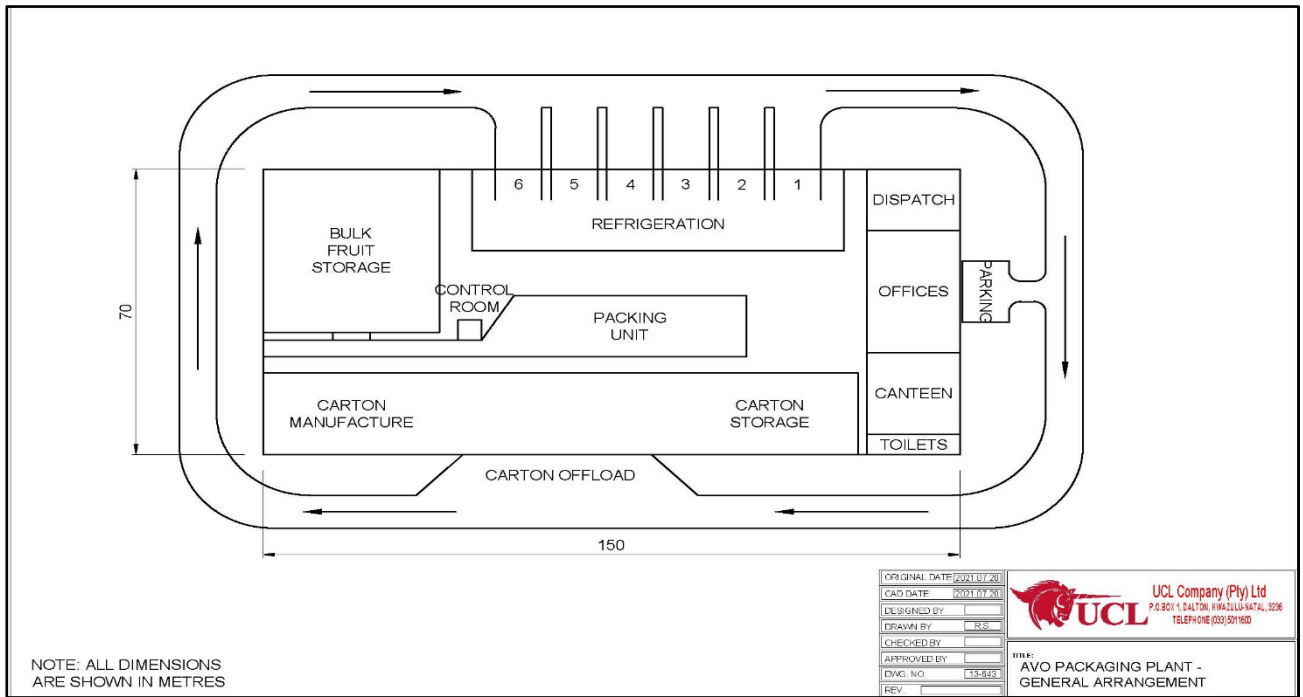


Figure 4: General Arrangement of the Avo Packaging Plant

ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION

The proposed development triggers the following listed activities, thus requiring an Environmental Authorisation from KZN EDTEA (to be confirmed) in terms of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA).

GNR	Activity Number	Activity as per legislation	Activity applicability
Listing Notice 1 (Basic Assessment)			
Government Notice Regulation (GNR) No. 983 of the EIA Regulation (2014)	Activity 28	<p><i>Residential, mixed, retail, commercial, industrial or institutional developments where such land was used for agriculture, game farming, equestrian purposes or afforestation on or after 01 April 1998 and where such development:</i></p> <p><i>(i) will occur inside an urban area, where the total land to be developed is bigger than 5 hectares; or</i></p> <p><i>(ii) will occur outside an urban area, where the total land to be developed is bigger than 1 hectare;</i></p> <p><i>Excluding where such land has already been developed for residential, mixed, retail, commercial, industrial or institutional purposes.</i></p>	The proposed development of the Avo Packaging Plant will occur outside an urban area and be located on a 9.43 ha patch of land of which 1.4 ha will be utilised as the development area.

A person who wishes to commence a Listing Notice 1 activity must conduct a Basic Assessment according to the EIA Regulations, 2014 (as amended). This process, inclusive of public participation, is described below.

OUTLINE OF THE BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS, INCLUDING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Basic assessment process being followed comprises of the following:

- Submission of an Application for Authorisation to EDTEA;
- Public Participation Process;
 - Notification and distribution of the Background Information Document (this document) to identified stakeholders and I&AP's to announce the project and inviting stakeholders to register as an I&AP and participate in the public participation process;
 - An advertisement in the local newspaper (**Details will be available in the Draft Basic Assessment Report**).
 - Placement of a site notification at the site notifying I&AP's of the proposed activity and inviting them to register; and;
 - Relevant I&AP's consultation to address issues and concerns raised;
- Compilation of a Draft Basic Assessment Report for I&APs to review and comment, which will be available for review and comment via the Wallace and Green website – www.wallaceandgreen.co.za for a period of 30 days.
- Submission of a Final Basic Assessment Report and details of I&AP consultation to the EDTEA, for a decision;
- Communication to I&APs regarding the decision made by EDTEA on the application for Environmental Authorisation.

SPECIALIST EVALUATION

To inform the Basic Assessment Report several specialist studies were undertaken such as the Terrestrial Ecological Study, Wetland Delineation and Functional Assessment and Agricultural Potential Assessment; the key findings of which are summarised below. ***The full specialist reports will be made available for public comment as part of the Basic Assessment Report.***

Terrestrial Ecological Study:

A Terrestrial Ecological study was undertaken by the Biodiversity Company for the Proposed UCL Avo Packaging plant. The project area has been transformed from its original state by the long existing sugar cane plantations and the subsequent disturbance since. The direct footprint area does not support any Species of Conservation Concern (SCC's), nor does it represent the sensitivities identified in the screening tool. The "very high" terrestrial biodiversity sensitivity within the project area, of the screening tool is due to the ecosystem sensitivity of the area, i.e., falls within a Strategic Water Source Areas (SWSA). However, due to the historic and current transformed state of the area, the project area does not contribute to the classification and the sensitivity is determined to be very low. The project area has an overall very low sensitivity. Although no sensitive species were found in the project area it is still likely that such species may occur nearby or access / forage in these areas surrounding the project area, although very unlikely. The project area falls within a SWSA, based on this it is thus important that the management outcomes be adhered to in order to mitigate an indirect impact that might stem from the development. It is of the specialist's opinion that the project area was historically used for sugar cane plantation and is still in a transformed state, resulting in a very low habitat sensitivity.

Wetland Delineation and Functional Assessment:

As per the Wetland Delineation and Functional Assessment report, dated June 2021, the desktop conservation and biophysical information determined that the site is located within the Southern

Drakensberg SWSA as well as a catchment identified as an Upstream Management Area, as part of the NFEPA project. A FEPA wetland was also identified within 2km downstream of the site. The baseline assessment of wetland habitat found that a Channelled Valley Bottom (CVB) wetland (Wetland Unit W01), dominated by mixed sedgeland-reedland vegetation, was located approximately 420m downslope within the receiving area of the proposed development site. Wetland Unit W01 was assessed as being in a 'largely modified' condition (PES D) and of moderate Ecological Importance and Sensitivity (EIS), whilst providing two key ecosystem services, namely: 'Phosphate Assimilation' and 'Nitrate Assimilation'. Given the location of the proposed development within an area of ecological significance, it is of paramount importance that potential impacts to nearby watercourses are effectively addressed. Potential impacts to wetlands located downslope of the proposed development were split into two groups, namely: Sedimentation and Erosion; and Water and Soil Pollution. The abovementioned impacts assessed as being of moderately low significance, even in the case of no mitigation measures being applied due to the considerable distance between the assessed unit and the proposed development site. It is, however, recommended that provided mitigation measures are adhered to, which would reduce the potential impact ratings to negligible.

Agricultural Potential Assessment:

The development takes place within the context of an existing sugarcane field yielding 100 tons per crop on a 20-month harvesting cycle, a typical figure for the soils, rainfall and heat units prevalent at the site. The long term economic and social benefits are positive in that the development of the site will provide long term employment for members of approximately 95 families, the most important form of food security. It is estimated that 75% of the supply chain volume will come from small scale community farmers in an area where there is little or other employment than sugarcane and timber. The soils are deep clay loams and clay with a good agricultural potential. Although the target site has a good agricultural or agribusiness potential it is currently producing sugarcane in excess of mill requirement. From an agronomic perspective the site lends itself to far more productive and valuable crops than sugarcane. The proposers of the development have looked at other agri-processing options and have chosen the option of a grading, packing, cooling and retail distribution investment. There is no agronomic or agribusiness reason why the change of land use should not be approved.

Geotechnical Assessment:

As per the Geotechnical assessment compiled by Drennan Maud (Pty) Ltd, dated 13th August 2021, the clay soils prevailing in this area are likely to be stable in the excavation sidewalls for the duration of construction, and no special shoring precautions are anticipated for conventional, relatively shallow trenches. All such excavations will however need to be protected during periods of heavy rainfall. The specialist concluded by indicating that there are no foreseeable potentially "fatal flaws" on the selected site, and the very gentle natural slope makes for a highly practical work environment.

Further specialist studies and technical reports were conducted such as:

- Desktop Heritage Impact Assessment; and
- Stormwater Management Plan.

The findings and recommendations of the above-mentioned studies will be discussed in the Basic Assessment Report.

Your contributions are important

You can get involved in the process:

1. By responding (by phone or e-mail) to our invitation for your involvement in the process;
2. By completing the attached comment form and e-mailing it to Wallace and Green;
3. In writing contacting or telephoning consultants if you have a query, comment or require further project information; and
4. By reviewing and commenting on the BA Report within the allowed 30-day review period.

In terms of the NEMA EIA Regulations 2014 (as amended) you are invited to formally register as an I&AP.

Please note that in terms of Regulation 56 (c), I&APs need to disclose any direct business, financial, personal or other interest which they may have in the approval or refusal of the application.

Please register by **1st November 2021** by completing the enclosed registration and comment sheet and please declare the interest with regard to the project with your comments.



REGISTRATION FORM:
**Proposed UCL Avo Packaging Plant on Portion 22 (of 18) of Erf
 162 Uitmuntend, uMtshwathi Local Municipality, uMgungundlovu
 District Municipality, KZN.**

Attention: Rivash Pahlad

Office No: 031 563 4466

E-mail: rivash@wallaceandgreen.co.za

Fax No: 086 613 8535

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms)		Phone	
Name		Fax	
Organisation / Interest		E-mail	
Signature			

Please tick the appropriate circle and confirm your contact details above:

Registration

<input type="radio"/>	I would like to register as an Interested and Affected Party for the BA process for this Project
<input type="radio"/>	Non stakeholder: I would like you to take me off your distribution sheet for the Proposed. I would not like to receive any further information regarding this process.

Other

If you know of any other individual or organisation that would be interested in registering as an Interested and Affected Party please provide their contact details:

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms)		Phone	
Name		Fax	
Organisation / Interest		E-mail	
Signature			

I hereby delcare the following business, financial, personal or other interest in the approval or refusal of the application:
