

EARLS COURT - *LIFESTYLE ESTATE*

Portion of Erf 464, George, Western Cape

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL - "LIFESTYLE" - DEVELOPMENT

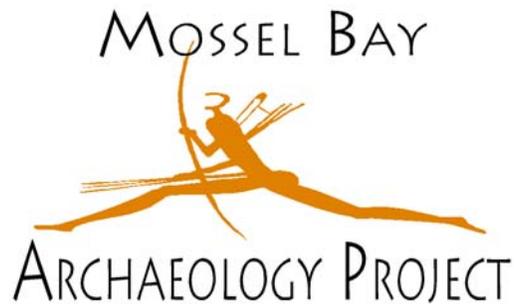
HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

FINAL REPORT

Prepared For:

Sharples Environmental Services CC

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Executive Summary

The proposed development of a residential – “lifestyle – estate situated between the suburb of Heather Park, Fancourt Golf Estate, the Links at Fancourt and King George Park in the town of George, Western Cape will involve major alteration to the natural and built environment including considerable earth movement. In accordance with requirements of Environmental Impact Assessments, the Mossel Bay Archaeology Project, Cultural Resource Management division (MAPCRM), was appointed to conduct the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA).

The Archaeology Contracts Office of the University of Cape Town conducted work for the proposed road route through this part of George and they recovered a few stone artefacts of Early Stone Age (see terminology) origin. Other than this, there is no record of previous archaeological research in the immediate vicinity of the proposed site. Through consultation with Ms Kathy Schulz of the George Museum we discovered that early, indigenous settlements, dating to the mid to late 19th Century may have existed on Erf 464. Such settlements, according to Ms Schultz may include “kraals” for domestic animals. No sites of pre-historic significance occur on the site of the proposed development, though features associated with an old aerodrome used during World War II (concrete hanger floors and ruins from one structure) that are now derelict and in a state of decay were located.

Developers must apply for a permit from the Provincial Heritage Resources Authority (Heritage Western Cape [HWC]) to damage and/or destroy the features associated with the old airfield prior to construction. Photographs, information and, potentially, artefacts concerning the old aerodrome and its use during World War II can be used for a display that should add a point of interest/attraction to the development as well as ensuring that this portion of George’s history does not remain in the archives.

It appears that the proposed development will not have adverse affects on the general Heritage Environment (ambience, sense of place, built structure, historic landscape, oral histories, etc), but these issues should be investigated further during the mitigation phase.

During the fieldwork for this study, no pre-historic archaeological sites were discovered and therefore no archaeological mitigation prior to the construction phase is required. Prior to the clearing of vegetation and earth movement, it is impossible to determine whether archaeological materials, such as those referred to above, occur among vegetation and/or beneath the ground surface. **Because sites or archaeological materials may be uncovered during the construction phase, it is recommended that monitoring of earth moving be undertaken by - or under the supervision of - a professional archaeologist.** Writing and providing guidelines for non-archaeologists to recognize and assess the significance of archaeological sites or materials is not feasible. It takes many years of study, training and experience to attain the necessary expertise to recognize and adequately assess the significance of archaeological sites and materials. It follows that a professional archaeologist must be employed to deal with Heritage Resources.

If a permit is obtained from HWC and the recommended monitoring is adopted and adhered to, then the proposed development is environmentally acceptable from a Heritage perspective. Developers should allow 60 working days for the permit application process to be completed. Heritage Western Cape is currently understaffed and I cannot get a firm commitment regarding the timing of permit applications from that department. The development option is preferred over the “no-go” alternative as the site is currently used for dumping. Development will uplift the site to blend and add to the surrounding establishments such as the Fancourt Golf Estate, King George Park, the Links at Fancourt and the residential suburb of Heather Park. From a heritage perspective, the “no-go” alternative is

not preferred because information about the heritage of the area (e.g., the old aerodrome) will not be exposed and will remain in archives at the George Museum.

1. Introduction

MAPCRM was appointed to undertake a specialist study to determine the potential impact of the proposed Earls Court Lifestyle Estate on the Heritage (historic and pre-historic archaeological) resources of the area. The proposed development will include:

- Building of secure housing units;
- Roads and entrances to the project;
- Green areas (planting of grass, shrubs and trees);
- Canal and dams;
- Walkways;
- Fountains; and
- Clubhouse with various facilities for: gymnasium, tennis court, squash court, barbeque facilities, swimming pool, playground for children, offices for management – staff of the clubhouse, postal boxes, recreation hall, volleyball court, crèche, clinic, Jacuzzi, storage area for maintenance equipment etc.

1.1 Background

The objectives of the HIA include the following:

- To assess the potential impacts associated with the proposed development and compare these with the "no-go" alternative;
- To identify mitigatory options to minimize potential negative impacts and enhance positive impacts; and
- Indicate the environmentally preferred alternative.

The terms of reference (TOR) for the HIA are to:

- a) review available data regarding sites of archaeological or historical importance in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development (dealt with in Section 2)
- b) identify any sites of archaeological or historical importance within the development area (dealt with in Section 3)
- c) describe the historical and/or archaeological significance of sites typical to the immediate area and any sites that may be identified within the development area (dealt with in Sections 2 and 3)
- d) assess the impact of the proposed development on the historical and/or archaeological sites described (dealt with in Section 4)
- e) recommend measures that should be implemented during the construction phase should any potential sites be uncovered (dealt with in section 5)
- f) prepare and submit a HIA report to the environmental consultant (Sharples Environmental Services CC) that meets standards required by Heritage Western Cape in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act, No. 25 of 1999.

1.2 Study Area

Figure 1 shows the location of the proposed site for the Earls Court Lifestyle Estate relative to Fancourt Golf Estate, Heather Park and King George Park in George, Western Cape. The boundaries of the site are schematic and not perfectly scaled. Figure 2 shows a more

detailed version of Figure 1 and the rough outline of the area studied during the fieldwork for this HIA as well as the rough positions of features associated with the old aerodrome. To the best of our knowledge, no previous archaeological research was conducted on Erf 464, George.

1.3 Approach to the Study

Prior to and after conducting the fieldwork for this study, a few pertinent parties were consulted regarding heritage issues relating to the study area. The Archaeology Contracts Office (ACO) at the University of Cape Town was consulted regarding their work in connection with a bypass road route in the immediate vicinity of Erf 464, George. Although they found a few stone artefacts of Early Stone Age origin, no sites of significance were discovered. The main limitation to their investigation was very dense vegetation cover that restricted inspection of the area as well as the ground surface.

Ms Kathy Schulz of the George Museum was consulted regarding more recent heritage concerns and we discovered that early, indigenous settlements, dating to the mid to late 19th Century may have existed on Erf 464. Such settlements, according to Ms Schultz may include “kraals” for domestic animals. No traces of such settlements were found during our fieldwork, but this may be attributed to very poor visibility caused by dense vegetation. It is possible that such archaeological traces will be uncovered during the clearing of vegetation and earth movement phases of the proposed development. Ms Schulz also provided aerial photographs of the study area as well as information about the old aerodrome.

Mr. Piet Earl, director of EARP Projects PTY (Ltd) was contacted to obtain maps and plans as well as information on the planned structural facilities and services for the proposed development.

Almost the entire study area is very densely vegetated by grass, bush and a wide variety of indigenous and exotic trees, rendering the ground surface invisible (Plates 1 & 2). Less than 5% of the ground surface is exposed for visual inspection and this was the major limiting factor to conducting a detailed and comprehensive study of the area. Large areas with very dense vegetation were impenetrable and could not be investigated. It is possible that archaeological sites or materials are currently covered by vegetation and sand/sediment and are therefore not currently visible.

On 24 November 2003 the site was traversed by vehicle in a systematic manner and exposed ground surfaces were inspected on foot. Where remaining features of the old flight hangers and associated structures were identified, their locations were fixed with a Geographical Positioning System (GPS), they were photographed and recorded in a notebook. A comprehensive digital photographic record was made and is available on request. These strategies are consistent with methods used for HIAs. Because they are associated with World War II, the aerodrome features are protected in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act, No. 25 of 1999 and therefore a permit for their destruction must be obtained from Heritage Western Cape.

Due to the above-mentioned limitations and potential for the existence of heritage features (Early Stone Age artefacts/sites, indigenous settlements, as well as structures, refuse and/or artefacts associated with the World War II era) in the studied area, an archaeologist should monitor the clearing of vegetation as well as earth moving activities during the construction phase of the proposed development.

2. Description of the Affected Environment

Heritage resources differ in a fundamental and crucial way from most other environmental resources; they are entirely irreplaceable and not renewable. Rapid and widespread development in the George and surrounding areas is a serious threat to Heritage Resources. Unless long-term conservation and management plans are put in place, the Heritage Resources of the affected environment are in grave danger of being lost forever.

In view of this, a permit for damaging/destroying features of the built environment associated with the old aerodrome must be applied for and obtained from Heritage Western Cape prior to the construction phase of development. Additionally, the potential existence of Heritage Resources on Erf 464, George, - as described above – necessitates archaeological monitoring during the construction phase of development. Provided a permit is granted by Heritage Western Cape and that monitoring is carried out, the site for the proposed development does not appear sensitive from a Heritage perspective and most likely has a high tolerance to disturbance.

3. Identification of Heritage Sites During the 2003 Survey

On 24 November 2003 a survey of the study area revealed the presence of two large areas of continuous concrete slabs (flight hanger floors), the ruins of a structure that was likely associated with the airfield, and an old tar road leading to the ruined structure (see Figure 2). After an archival search, Ms Schulz provided the following information. Plate 3 is an aerial photograph taken in 1936 prior to the construction of the aerodrome at George. The aerodrome (George Airport) was built in 1936 and registered as an A3d aerodrome (A1a being top of the scale of ratings for aerodromes). With the outbreak of war in 1939, the South African Defense Force commandeered the George Airport. In 1940 it became an air school (number 61AS) for advanced navigational training for which it was upgraded. Plate 4 is an aerial photograph of the area taken in 1968 that shows features of the aerodrome referred to as part of the upgrade of the airport. Ten large hangars were built to house various types of airplanes (Plate 5). Staff living quarters, training classrooms, engineering shops, stores and many other buildings needed in times of war were built. In 1942 a WAAF camp was completed.

Some of the buildings were converted into the old Outeniqua Bowling Club (old engineering workshops), which were initially used as the local the Coca Cola factory. The air force squash courts continued to be used for that purpose. A general reconnaissance unit operated at this time, flying coastal patrols during the war years. Pilots were referred to as the “Brylcream Boys”. Airways road in Heather Park ended at the entrance to 61 Air Strip.

The Air School closed its doors on 8 April 1945 and resumed operations as a domestic aerodrome. Construction on the current George Airport started in 1971, was completed in 1977 and opened on 27 May 1977. Aerial photographs of the area taken in 1998 show that most of the runways are no longer visible and that substantial trees had grown since 1968 (Plate 6). Also visible are some structures appearing in a fairly good state of repair (Plate 6). By 1999 or 2000, the only evidence for the former aerodrome is the V-shape of the two flight hanger floors (Plate 7).

Due to limitations described earlier, the entire study area and ground surface could not be inspected comprehensively. The GPS coordinates for some aerodrome features are given below (map datum WGS 84) and their rough positions are shown in Figure 2 (also see Plate 5). Table 1 summarizes the age, significance and required mitigation for heritage resources discovered during fieldwork and the archival search as well as Early Stone Age implements

discovered in this part of George by members of the Archaeology Contracts Office.

Flight Hanger B

The south-eastern extent of the floor of flight hanger B is at S 33.96255° and E 022.42377° and the north-western extent is at S 33.96092° and E 022.42075°. While a large part of this hanger floor is *in situ*, large areas are warped and/or undulating while others were lifted mechanically and bulldozed into piles of concrete rubble (Plates 8 & 9).

Flight Hanger A

Due to dense vegetation cover, *in situ* parts of this hanger floor were not visible and therefore, GPS readings were not taken. Nevertheless, the position and extent of this floor is clear on aerial photographs (Plates 4, 5 and 6 and also see Figure 2). Large parts of this concrete floor were lifted mechanically and bulldozed into piles of rubble (Plate 10).

Ruin

The structure in ruins is situated at S 33.96022° and E 022.42071°. Only the floor and foundations of this building survive and no artefacts indicative of the World War II era were noted in the immediate vicinity of the ruin. It is unlikely, therefore, that this particular structure was associated with human habitation, but was likely a maintenance or service facility for the old aerodrome (see Plates 11, 12 & 13). The “airing or breathing” pipe visible on Plate 9 suggests the presence of a subterranean fuel tank associated with the ruin. A tar road of questionable age leads to this area (Plate 14).

Table 1. Age, significance and required mitigation for discovered heritage sites.

Site Name	Period/Age	Potential Significance	Mitigation
aerodrome	Early/mid 20 th Century	Local / National	Obtain permit for destruction from Heritage Western Cape
none	Mid/late 19thCentury	Local / National	Monitor clearing of vegetation and earth movement during construction phase
none	Early Stone Age	National / International	Monitor clearing of vegetation and earth movement during construction phase

4. Sources of Risk, Impact Identification and Assessment

The National Heritage Resources Act, No 25 of 1999 protects all archaeological sites and they may not be destroyed, damaged, excavated, altered, defaced or disturbed without a permit issued by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) or a Provincial Heritage Resources Authority (PHRA, Heritage Western Cape [HWC]).

The proposed development should not have obvious adverse affects on the general Heritage Environment (ambience, sense of place, built structure, historic landscape, oral histories, etc), but these issues should be investigated during the mitigation phase.

The old aerodrome and associated structures - now mostly in a state of ruin – will be entirely destroyed as a result of the proposed development, and therefore, a permit must be applied for and obtained from Heritage Western Cape for their destruction. Unlike most other environmental resources, heritage resources can never be replaced, replicated or renewed and this makes them particularly vulnerable to permanent destruction. Any form of excavation, earth movement and vehicular traffic may disturb, alter and/or destroy potential heritage/archaeological sites. Monitoring by – or under the supervision of - a professional archaeologist is therefore recommended during site clearing and the construction phase of development.

The impact assessment of the proposed development on Heritage Resources is summarized in Table 2. The assumption in the “Assuming Mitigation” columns is that all mitigatory measures recommended in this document are adopted and adhered to.

Table 2. Impact on and Loss of Heritage Resources (archaeological sites)

	CONSTRUCTION		OPERATION	
	Without Mitigation	Assuming Mitigation	Without Mitigation	Assuming Mitigation
Extent	Local/Regional	Local	Indeterminate prior monitoring (IPM)	IPM
Duration	Permanent	Permanent	IPM	IPM
Intensity	Low	Low	IPM	IPM
Probability	Probable	Probable	IPM	IPM
Significance	Medium	Medium	IPM	IPM
Status	Negative	-ve & +ve	IPM	IPM
Confidence	High	Medium	IPM	IPM

If no measures are adopted to mitigate impacts then the “no-go” alternative is the preferred option.

5. Recommended Mitigation Measures and Management Actions

The old aerodrome and associated structures/features, even though in ruins and a state of decay, are protected under the National Heritage Resources Act, 25 of 1999. As such, a permit for their destruction must be applied for and obtained from Heritage Western Cape before commencement of the construction phase of development. The presence of the aerodrome can be utilized positively as an attractive/interesting feature of the development. The above and additional information gathered by Ms. Schulz may be used to create an interesting display of the history of the aerodrome. Additionally, this will ensure that this part of George’s history is not lost to the archives, but can be used in a positive and attractive manner.

Due to the potential presence of stone artefacts originating from the Early Stone Age – such as those discovered by members of the Archaeology Contracts Office – as well as information gained from Ms Schultz of the George Museum, – pertaining to the potential presence of early indigenous settlements in the area – it is strongly recommended that the clearing of vegetation and movement of earth during the construction phase of development be monitored by a professional archaeologist. In the event that archaeological sites or materials are unearthed during the construction phase, the archaeologist should be given

sufficient time and resources for mitigation (to obtain permits from HWC and to conduct archaeological excavation).

Writing and providing guidelines for non-archaeologists to recognize and assess the significance of archaeological sites is not feasible. It takes many years of study, training and experience to attain the necessary expertise to recognize and assess the significance of archaeological sites adequately. It follows that a professional archaeologist must be employed to deal with Heritage Resources.

6. Environmental Acceptability and Comparison of Alternatives

The negative impact of the development on the heritage of the area is that the built environment will be destroyed during the construction phase. However, the former built environment is now in ruin, so only the remaining floors, wall footings and foundations will be affected. The potential presence of heritage materials may also be affected, but this can be resolved by adopting the recommended mitigation during the clearing of vegetation and movement of earth in the construction phase of development. Provided that mitigatory measures - as recommended above - are employed, the proposed development is acceptable. Although the “no-go” alternative does not have the same negative impacts as the proposed development, the latter has the positive impact of uplifting the currently deteriorating portion of Erf 464 to blend and add to the surrounding natural and built environment. If the “no-go” option was chosen, the physical heritage of the area will be lost by decay through time, and the heritage will not be exposed to the public. Additionally, the potential presence of refuse from the World War II era, associated with the old aerodrome, may provide additional artefacts/evidence to enhance our knowledge of that period in George’s history.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

Very dense vegetation cover restricted a detailed and comprehensive archaeological survey of the site proposed for development. The old aerodrome and associated structures, though in a state of ruin, are protected by law and a permit from Heritage Western Cape must be obtained for their destruction. Photographs, information and, potentially, artefacts (that may be discovered during archaeological monitoring) concerning the old aerodrome and its use during World War II can be used for a display that should add a point of interest/attraction to the development as well as ensuring that this portion of George’s history does not remain in the archives. The potential existence of pre-historic and more recent Heritage Resources within the area earmarked for development necessitates archaeological monitoring during the construction phase of development. Provided the recommended mitigation measures - described several times in the body of this document - are adopted and adhered to, the development option is preferred over the “no-go” alternative.

8. Terminology

Early Stone Age: This period in pre-history roughly dates between 2.2 million and 250 000 years ago.

Acknowledgements

We thank the following people for assistance in gaining information regarding heritage resources related to Erf 464, George and the immediate surroundings: Mr. Royden Yates (Iziko – South African Museum), Mr. Tim Hart (Archaeology Contracts Office, University of Cape Town) and Ms. Kathy Schultz (George Museum). Maps, plans and information provided by Mr. Piet Earl are much appreciated. Management of the Dias Museum at Mossel Bay provided office and work space. The map in Figure 1 was supplied by the Chief Directorate: Surveys and Mapping, Mowbray, Cape Town.

References

George Museum – Library Files:

- George Air School
- George Airport number 2
- Union Airlines

Figures and Plates

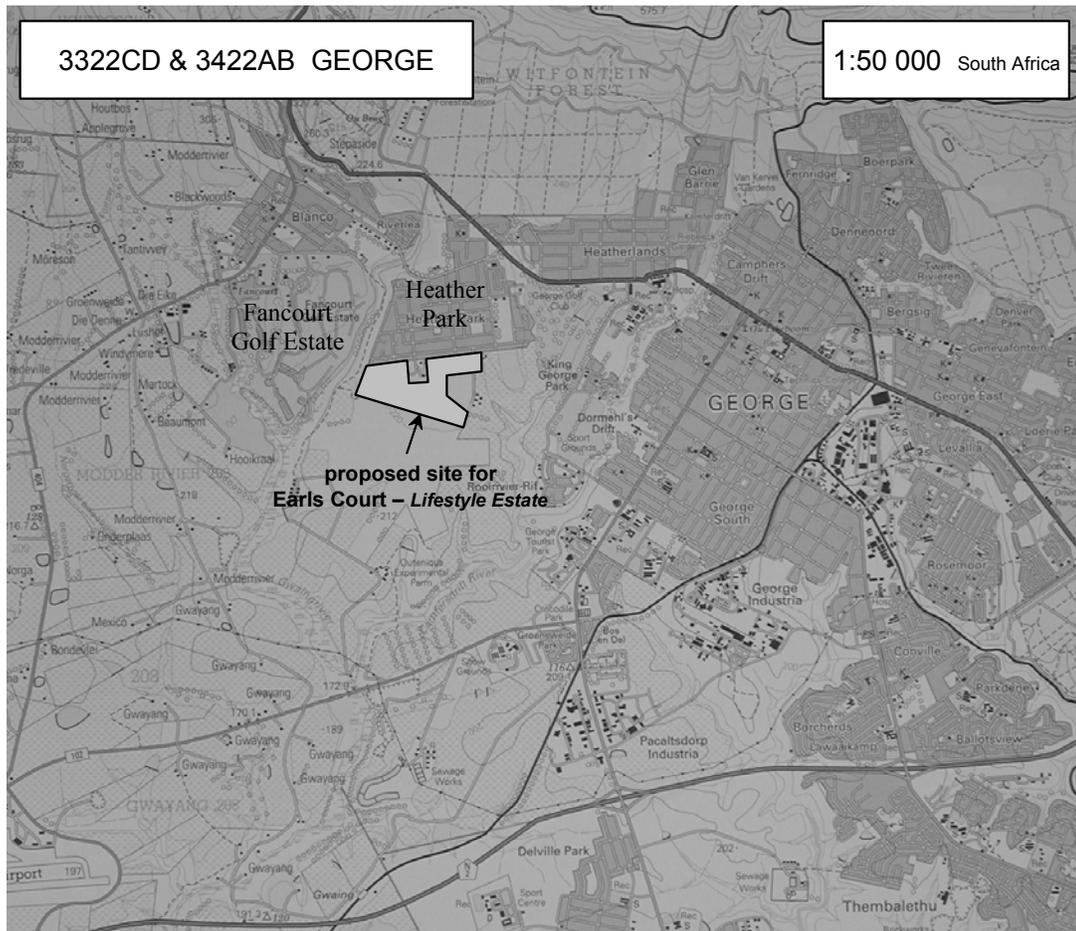


Figure 1. Location of proposed development – Earls Court *Lifestyle Estate* – on portion of 1:50 000 map, 3322CD & 3422AB, George, Western Cape.

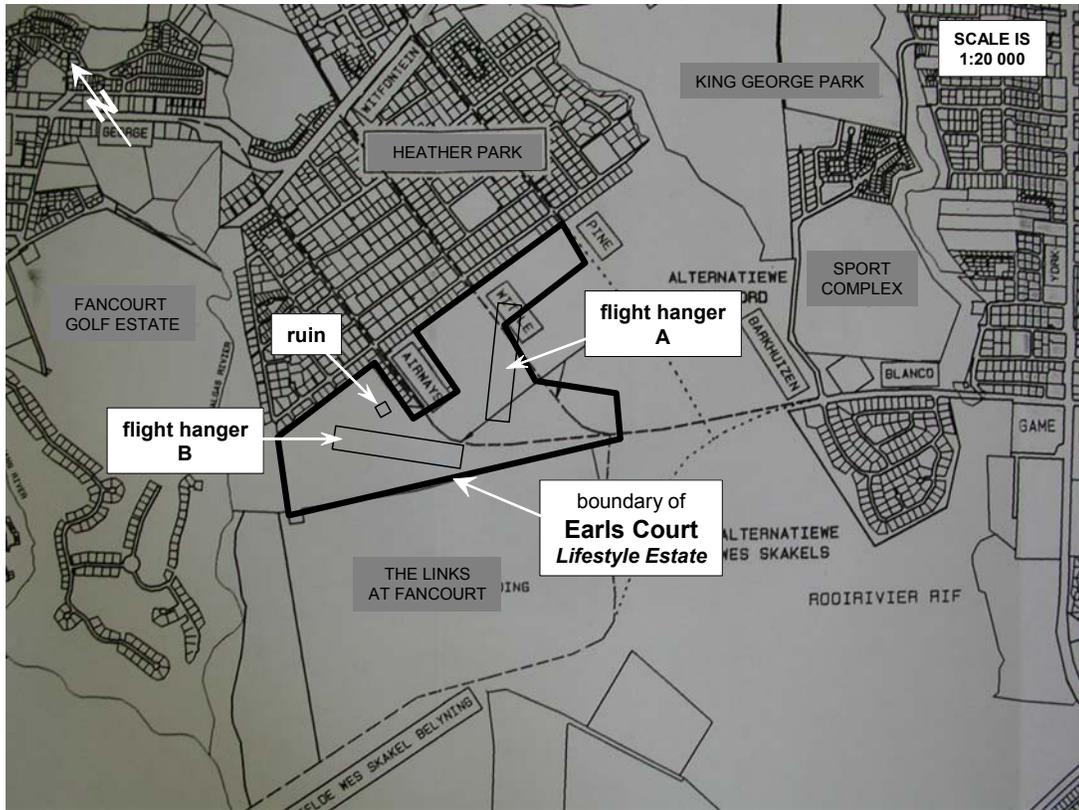


Figure 2. Location of proposed development – Earls Court Lifestyle Estate – on 1:20 000 map indicating rough positions of airfield features.



Plate 1. Vegetation cover.



Plate 2. Vegetation cover.

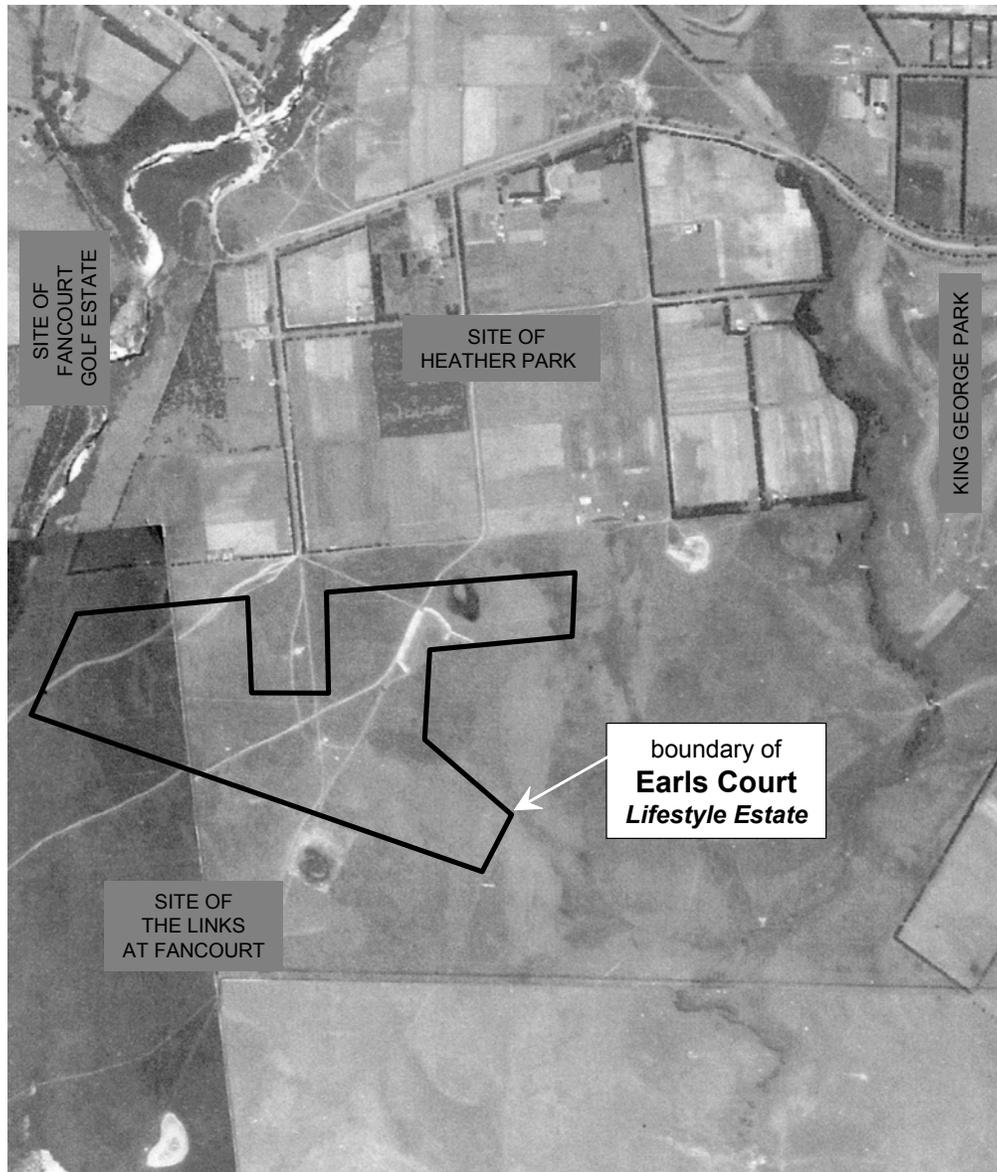


Plate 3. An aerial photo of George taken in 1936 showing the future sites of the Fancourt Golf Estate, the suburb of Heather Park, King George Park, the Links at Fancourt and the proposed site for the Earls Court Lifestyle Estate.

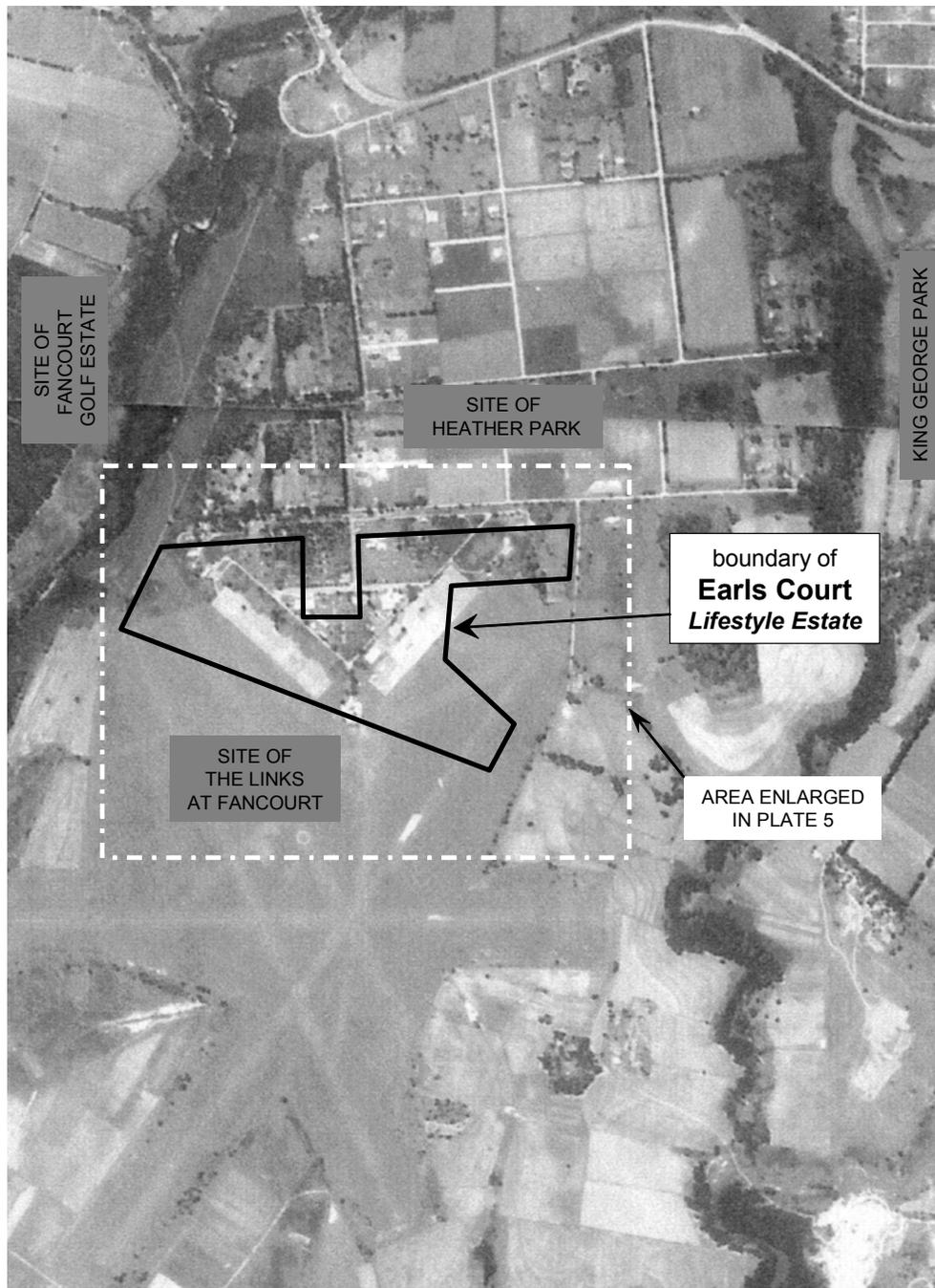


Plate 4. An aerial photo of George taken in 1968 showing the old aerodrome (see Plate 5), built in 1936, relative to the future sites of the Fancourt Golf Estate, the Links at Fancourt and the suburb of Heather Park. King George Park was already established.

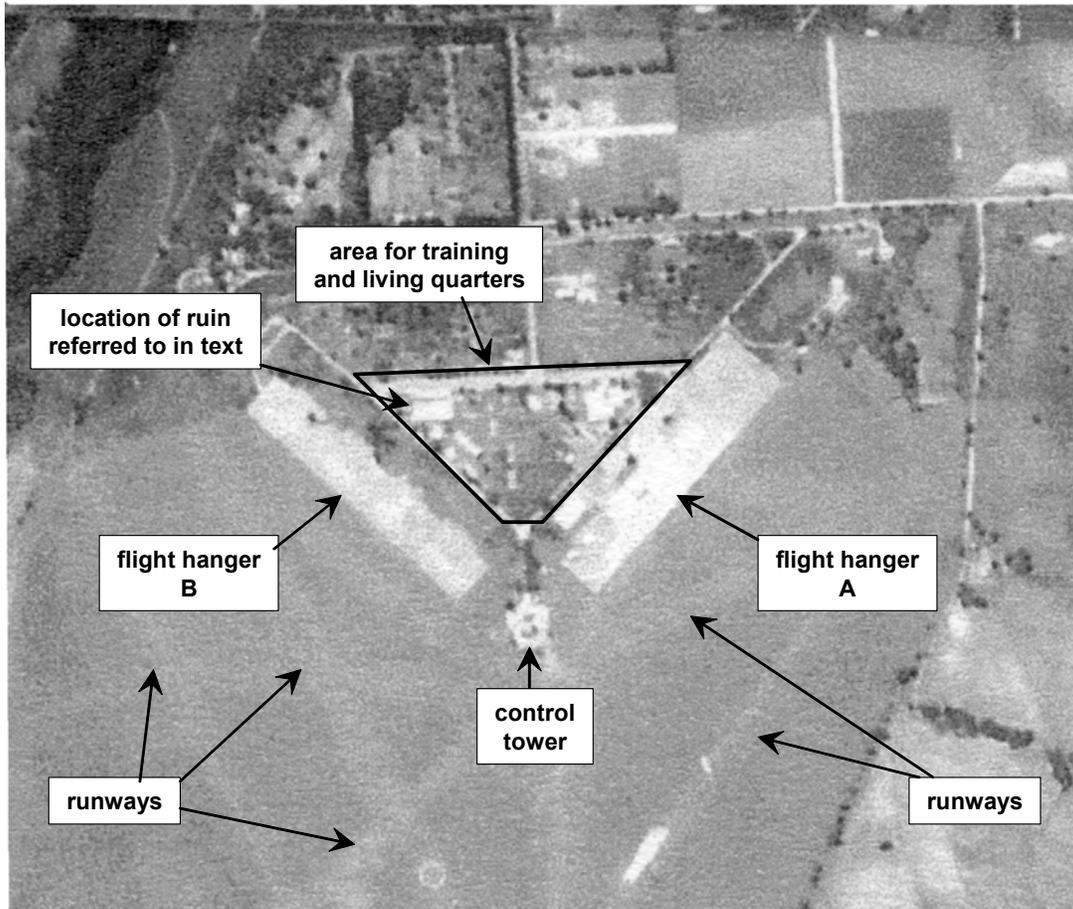


Plate 5. This enlarged portion of Plate 4 shows more detail of various features associated with the old aerodrome.



Plate 6. This aerial photo, taken in 1998, shows several structures still standing at the site of the old George Airport and World War II Air Strip (number 61). The Fancourt Golf Estate and the suburb of Heather Park are in place.



Plate 7. This aerial photo taken in 1999 or 2000 shows very little trace of the former aerodrome, and the area is much more densely vegetated today (2003). Within the boundary of the proposed development one can still see the V-shape of the former flight hanger floors. The Links at Fancourt is already in place.



Plate 8. A portion of the floor of flight hanger B.



Plate 9. Concrete rubble at the north-westerly extent of flight hanger B.



Plate 10. Pile of concrete rubble from flight hanger A.



Plate 11. Floors and wall footings of ruin.



Plate 12. The bulk of this ruin feature suggests it to be a base/housing for heavy equipment or machinery.



Plate 13. This is likely an “airing/breathing” pipe of a subterranean fuel tank.



Plate 14. Tar road leading to area containing ruins.