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FIRST PHASE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS AT THE BIG HOLE, KIMBERLEY, NORTHERN CAPE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A conference centre, water feature and amphitheatre are planned near the Big Hole in Kimberley.

The proposed developments will cover part of the old mine dump and an existing parking area.

The area is disturbed by old mining activities and recent excavations to build a parking lot. The land planned for the water feature and amphitheatre appears to be disturbed without any developments visible.

In the test pits there was a clear top layer of mining dump above the original red sand deposit. The soil appeared to be sterile, but it might contain cultural material and other objects of historical value.

There seems to be no obvious reason to delay the developments and I recommend that the proposed developments and planning may proceed on condition and provided that in the case of the discovery of any cultural, historical or skeletal material the work must be stopped immediately for inspection by officials from the McGregor Museum, Kimberley.

I further recommend that the developers should involve officials of the McGregor Museum, Kimberley to visit the site regularly to assist with the developments and to control the removal of finds and to ensure that no valuable objects will be destroyed.

INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

INVESTIGATION

The site at the Big Hole, Kimberley, was visited on 3 August 2006 in the company of Dr Johan du Preez of MDA Environmental Consultants, Bloemfontein.

The area was examined for possible archaeological and historical material and to establish the potential impact on any cultural material that might be found. The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is done in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), (25 of 1999) and under the Environmental Conservation Act, (73 of 1989).

LOCALITY

A conference centre, water feature and amphitheatre are planned near the Big Hole in Kimberley (Map 1). The site is located near the corner of West Circular and South Circular (Map 3). The proposed developments will include a part of the old mine dump (Fig.1) and an existing parking area (Fig.3). The Open Mine Caravan Park is situated closely behind the area proposed for the new developments (Fig.9).

The whole area seems to be disturbed by the original mining activities and more recent excavations and the building of the parking lot. The land planned for the water feature and amphitheatre appears to be disturbed without any developments visible (Figs.7&8).

The following GPS coordinates (Cape scale) were taken (2824 Kimberley):

Parking area	28°44'21"S. 024°45'16"E. Altitude 1214m (Fig.3).
Water feature	28°44'25"S. 024°45'17"E. Altitude 1209m (Fig.8).
Mine dump	28°44'22"S. 024°45'15"E. Altitude 1219m (Fig.1).
Test pit	28°44'22"S. 024°45'16"E. Altitude 1214m (Fig.10).
Caravan Park	28°44'23"S. 024°45'14"E. Altitude 1217m (Fig.11).

RESULTS

The mine dump and test trenches appeared to be sterile (Fig.2), and it was possible to identify the top layer of mining dump above the original red sand deposit in the test pits (Fig.10).

No archaeological material or cultural and historical remains were found on the surface.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

It is anticipated that the proposed developments at the Big Hole, Kimberley, will have no impact on any visible archaeological and cultural remains on the site.

Being such an important historical site, it might be possible, however, to find cultural material and other objects of historical value during the work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the possibility of the recovery of cultural objects, there seems to be no obvious reason to delay the developments. I recommend that the proposed developments and planning may proceed on condition and provided that in the case of the discovery of any cultural, historical or skeletal material the work must be stopped immediately for inspection by officials from the McGregor Museum, Kimberley.

MITIGATION

Concerning the developments at the Big Hole, Kimberley, I further recommend that the developers should make an arrangement with the officials of the McGregor Museum, Kimberley, to visit the site regularly and to assist with the removal of finds and to ensure that nothing of value will get destroyed.

Every archaeological and historical site is unique and should be treated as a non-renewable commodity. All efforts should be made to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or destruction of the area. It is stressed, therefore, that in case of the discovery of any human or cultural material of significance during the course of the work, all activities should temporarily be stopped in the specific area for inspection by specialists from the McGregor Museum, Kimberley.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Dr Johan du Preez from MDA Environmental Consultants, Bloemfontein, for taking me to the site. I also owe gratitude to David Morris of the McGregor Museum, Kimberley, for comments on the evaluation of the site.

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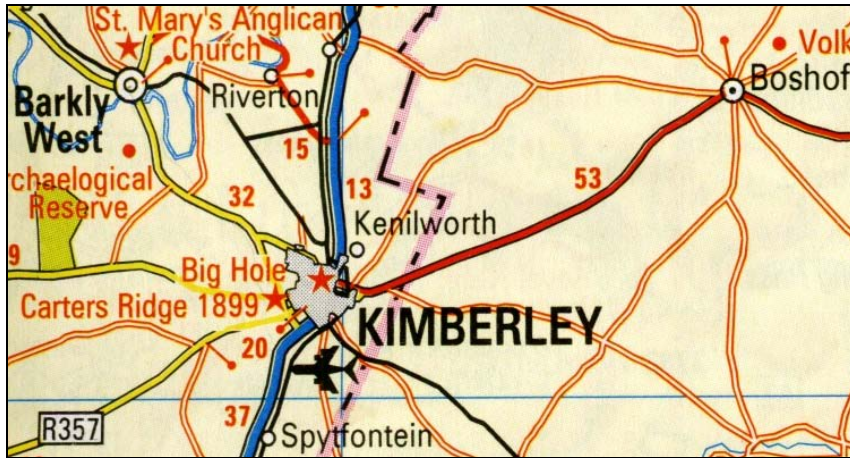
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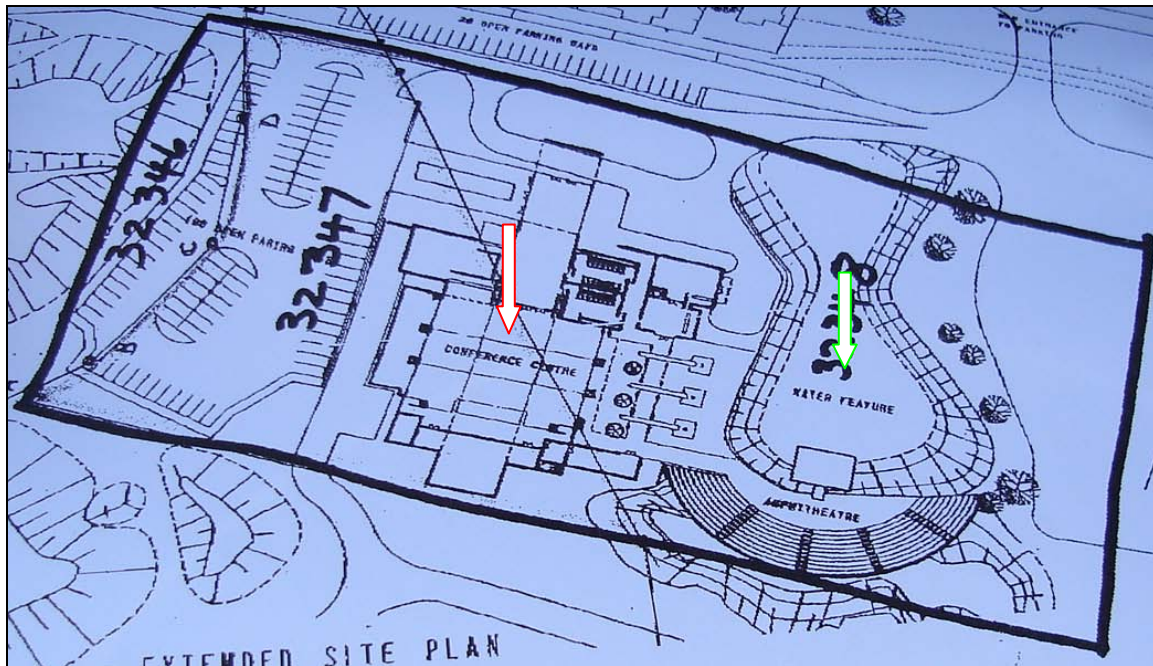
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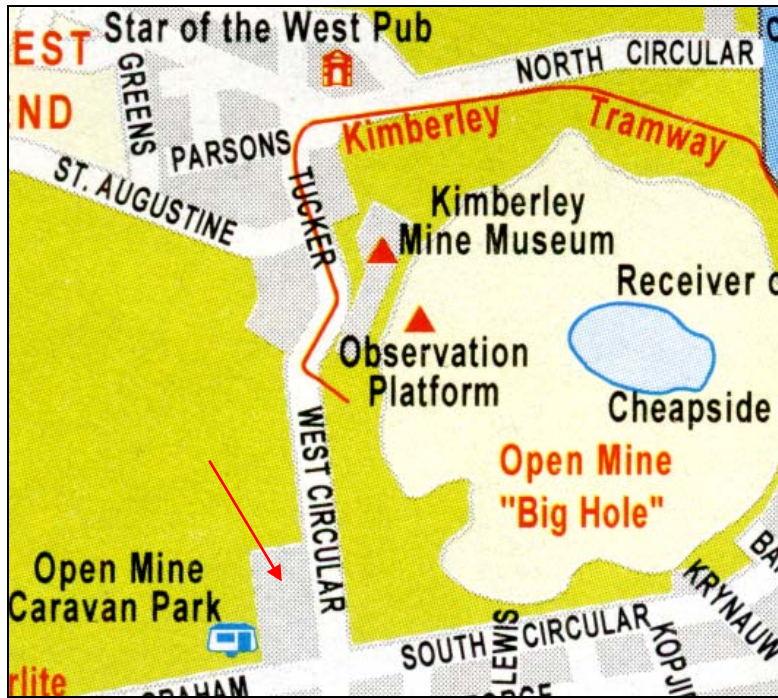
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS:



Map 1 Locality of Kimberley in relation to Barkly West and Boshof.



Map 2 Layout plan of the proposed developments. Existing parking area shown on the left, the new conference centre indicated in red and proposed water feature on the right.



Map 3 Developments are planned at the corner of West Circular and South Circular near the Open Mine Caravan Park.



Fig.1 The partly removed old mine dumps.



Fig.2 Height of the partly removed old mine dump.



Fig.3 Facing the old mine dumps across the parking area.



Fig.4 The parking area opposite the mine museum.



Fig.5 Soil from the test excavation seems to be without any cultural material.



Fig.6 The area proposed for the placing of the water feature.



Fig.7 Disturbed soil in the region facing south west.



Fig.8 The area proposed for the installation of the water feature.



Fig.9 View from the mine dump facing west across the Open Mine Caravan Park.



Fig.10 The test pit shows the sterile mine debris above the layer of Kalahari red sand.



Fig.11 Photograph taken from the entrance gate of the Open Mine Caravan Park.