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# ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY SANDERLINGS, PLETTENBERG BAY

Prepared for

**SRK CONSULTING ENGINEERS AND SCIENTISTS**

By

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### Executive summary

One archaeological site was located during a baseline study of Sanderlings, Plettenberg Bay, on the southern Cape coast.

The proposed Sanderlings development envisages an 'ecovillage' development. <sup>2</sup> *concept*

The archaeological site, comprising a low density scatter of fragmented shellfish remains, a few pieces of weathered ostrich eggshell, and some stone flakes, was located on a high, partially vegetated sand dune on the eastern boundary of the study area. The site has been given a low conservation rating.

A few quartzite chunks were also located on the south facing barrier dunes east of the parking area, while a number of stone tools were found alongside the gravel roads bordering the study site. None of these finds <sup>15</sup> ~~are~~ considered to be significant.

The study area is severely vegetated, resulting in low archaeological visibility. Sites may therefore be hidden among the vegetated frontal dunes. There is also the possibility of human burial remains being uncovered or disturbed during implementation of the project.

The overall impact of the proposed Sanderlings development on archaeological sites is, however, considered to be low.

The probability of locating of significant archaeological sites in the vegetated dunes during implementation of the project is also considered to be low. Research has shown that few sites are located among dunes which run parallel to long sandy beaches.

Buildings/ruins located in the study area are not considered to be architecturally or historically significant. As a result, the impact of the proposed development on them is considered to be low.

The following archaeological recommendations are made.

- The site is suitable for development. However, should development take place in the vegetated frontal dunes, some archaeological monitoring may be required.
- No immediate archaeological mitigation is required.
- No further detailed studies are required.
- The proposed development may uncover or disturb human burial remains. should any human remains be disturbed or uncovered during earthworks, these should immediately be reported to a professional archaeologist. Burial remains should be treated sensitively at all times.

The above recommendations are subject to the approval of the National Monuments Council Plans Committee.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and brief

The Agency for Cultural Resource Management has been requested by SRK Consulting Engineers and Scientists to undertake a baseline archaeological study of Sanderlings, Plettenberg Bay, on the southern Cape coast.

The proposed development envisages an 'ecovillage' <sup>conserv</sup> development.

The aim of the study is to assess the archaeological significance and sensitivity of the site, and to propose measures to mitigate against any significant impacts arising out of the proposed development.

## 2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference for the baseline study were:

1. to determine whether there are likely to be any archaeological or historical sites of significance
2. to identify and map any sites of archaeological and/or cultural significance;
3. to assess the sensitivity and conservation significance of archaeological sites;
4. to assess the status and significance of any impacts resulting from the proposed development; and
5. to identify mitigatory measures to protect and maintain any valuable archaeological sites that may exist.

## 3. THE STUDY SITE

The study site for the proposed Sanderlings development is illustrated in Figure 1. The site is located on the eastern shores of the Keurbooms River, about six kilometres east of Plettenberg Bay, on the Cape south coast.

## 4. STUDY APPROACH AND DOCUMENTATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

The approach used in the baseline archaeological study entailed a detailed foot survey of the proposed site. A desk top study was also undertaken.

According to the records of the Archaeological Data Recording Centre (ADRC) at the South African Museum (Cape Town) <sup>however</sup> no sites have been located or mapped in the study area.

The Plettenberg Bay region is, <sup>however</sup> well known for its archaeological sites. More than 36 sites have been mapped in the area, including 22 caves/rock shelters (Kaplan 1993). The majority of sites occur on, <sup>or close to</sup> the Robberg Peninsula.

These include the well known Nelson Bay Cave. Sites also occur at Platbank, Uiteindelik, Beacon Island, Hangklip and Keurbooms River State Forest.

Records from the ADRC indicate that one site (a shell midden) has been mapped at Keurbooms River Beach, while Mortelmans (1946) described Later Stone Age<sup>1</sup> (LSA) and Middle Stone Age<sup>2</sup> (MSA) sites in association with raised beaches at Keurbooms River Beach. The Matjies River cave (declared a National Monument in 1960) near Keurbooms River Beach was described by Perinquey (1911) and Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe (1929).

Research into the archaeology of the coastal zone has shown that there is a close correlation between the distribution of archaeological sites and the physical environment (Kaplan 1993). Rocky headlands acted as foci that attracted Stone Age people as they offered greater opportunities for the exploitation of marine foods, particularly shellfish. By contrast, far fewer sites are located among sand dunes associated with long sandy beaches. However, this does not obviate the need to search all areas carefully for sites. The distribution of archaeological sites has as much to do with unpredictable human choices and needs as it has to do with the availability of predictable food resources and shelter.

## 5. RESULTS OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

One archaeological site was located during a baseline study of Sanderlings (Figure 2). A number of buildings/ruins were also located.

### SD 1

**SD 1** comprises a low density scatter of fragmented shellfish remains (white mussel and some whelk), a few pieces of weathered ostrich eggshell, and some stone flakes and chunks. The site is located on a high sand dune on the eastern boundary of the study area, overlooking the Dune Park Holiday Resort. The dune has been partially cleared of vegetation. A small water tank has been constructed on top of the sand dune.

Significance of finds: low

Conservation rating: low

Suggested mitigation: none required

A few quartzite chunks were located on the south facing barrier dunes in the eastern portion of the study area, about 100 metres north of the car park.

MSA quartzite flakes and chunks were also located alongside the gravel roads bordering the study area.

Significance of finds: low

Conservation rating: low

<sup>1</sup> a term referring to the last 20 000 years of precolonial history in southern Africa.

<sup>2</sup> a term referring to the period between 20 000 and 200 000 years ago.

Suggested mitigation: **none required**

#### **SD 2-9**

Eight buildings/ruins were located in the northern-eastern and eastern portions of the study area (Figure 2). The structures are not considered to be architecturally or historically significant.

Significance of finds: **low**

Conservation rating: **low**

Suggested mitigation: **none required**

#### **6. CRITERIA USED IN THE EVALUATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES**

The criteria used in evaluating the importance of archaeological sites and buildings/ruins on the Sanderlings site includes the following:

- \* the state of preservation of the sites;
- \* the range and density of domestic cultural material present on the sites;
- \* type of site; for example cave/shelter, shell midden, open air site;
- \* approximate age of site;
- \* rarity of occurrence;
- \* regional, national and international importance; and
- \* architectural and historical integrity of buildings and structures

#### **7. IMPACT STATEMENT**

The impact of the proposed development on archaeological remains in the study area is considered to be low.

The development may, however, impact on 'hidden' sites in the vegetated barrier dunes.

Development in the dune system may also disturb or uncover human burial remains.

## 8. CONSERVATION SIGNIFICANCE AND SENSITIVITY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN SANDERLINGS

The archaeological sensitivity of SD1 is considered to be low. The site has also been disturbed as a result of partial vegetation clearing.

The conservation significance of SD1 is also considered to be low. The significance rating is based on the low range of domestic and cultural material present, the low density of archaeological remains, and the partially disturbed nature of the site.

Overall, the study area is severely vegetated, resulting in extremely low archaeological visibility. Sites may, however, be hidden among the vegetated dunes. There is also the possibility of human burial remains being uncovered or disturbed during implementation of the project.

The conservation significance of SD2-9 is considered to be low. The buildings/ruins do retain any architectural integrity or historical significance.

## 9. LEGISLATION

Archaeological sites are protected by the National Monuments Act (Act No. 28 of 1969 as amended). It is an offence to disturb, remove or destroy from its original site, or excavate any such site without a permit from the National Monuments Council.

Human burial remains are also protected under the National Monuments Act, and the Human Tissues Act.

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

With regard to the proposed Sanderlings development, the following archaeological recommendations are made.

1. The site is suitable for development. However, should development take place in the vegetated dunes, some archaeological monitoring may be required.
2. No immediate archaeological mitigation is required.
3. No further detailed studies are required.
4. The proposed development may uncover or disturb human burial remains. Should any human remains be disturbed or uncovered during earthworks, these should immediately be reported to a professional archaeologist. Burial remains should be treated sensitively at all times.

The above recommendations are subject to the approval of the National Monuments Council Plans Committee.

## 11. REFERENCES

- Goodwin, A.J.H., & van Riet Lowe, c. 1929. The Stone Age cultures of South Africa. *Annals of the South African Museum* 27: 1-289.
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- Mortelmans, G. 1944. Plages soulevees a industries lithiques de la region de Keurbooms River, District de Knysna. *South African Journal of Science* XLI:375-396.
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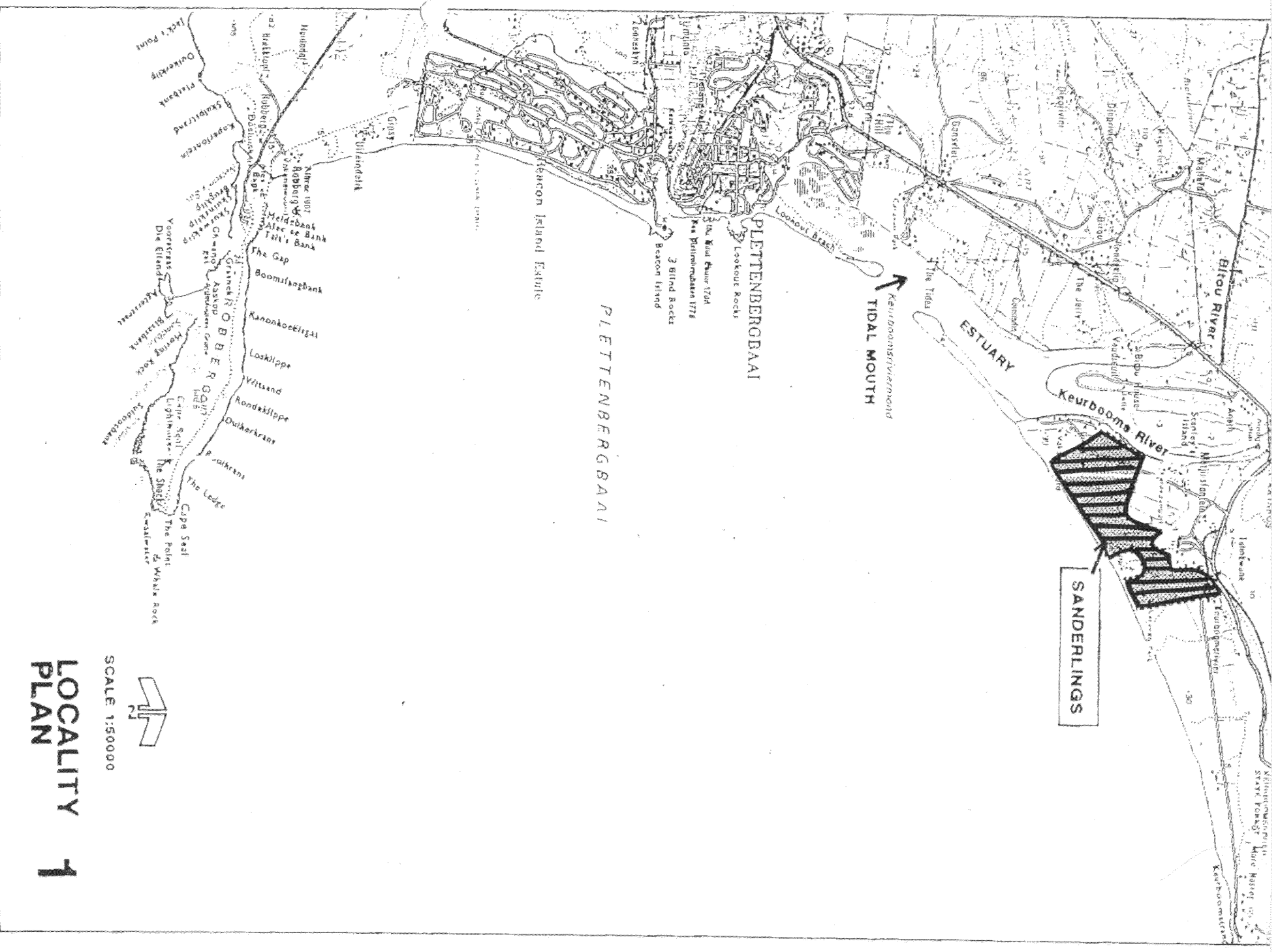


Figure 1. Archaeological study, Sanderlings, Plettenberg Bay: study area