

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF ERF 2074 MARINE WAY, PLETTENBERG BAY

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Introduction

The National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 makes provision for a compulsory HIA when an area exceeding 5000 m² is being developed (National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999: page 55). This is to determine if the area contains heritage sites and to take the necessary steps to ensure that they are not damaged or destroyed during development. Dr Webley of the Albany Museum was approached by Grant Johnston Associates and requested to undertake a first phase HIA assessment survey of erf 2074 Marine Way, Plettenberg Bay.

Terms of Reference

Dr Webley was requested to survey erf 2074 Marine Way, prior to its development for residential units (36 single residential and 60 town house units). In the preliminary environmental report (20 January 2005) mention was made of the discovery of stone artifacts (cores) which might be impacted. It was also mentioned that the original stone house on the property might be older than 60 years, and would require a permit from Heritage Western Cape prior to demolition.

Archaeology of the Plettenberg Bay area

Plettenberg Bay is most famous for the archaeological sites of Nelson Bay Cave on the Robberg Peninsula and Matjies River Cave at Keurbooms River. Both these sites contain substantial shell midden deposits in caves. There are also many Holocene shell middens along the coast. Less well known are the scatters of Early and Middle Stone Age artifacts which have been found in recent surveys (2004) at Ganse Vallei and Ladywood, Plettenberg Bay.

Field Report

Erf 2074 is a long, narrow site situated on the south side of Marine Way and is some 6,4 ha in extent. The site was surveyed on 16 May 2005. I was accompanied by Mrs D Grant who indicated that the most sensitive areas were those on the southern boundaries of plots 13 and 15 (see attached map). This area is situated on the edge of an escarpment, overlooking the Piesang Valley and it quite densely covered in fynbos.

Locality 1: is an odd shaped stone tool lying on the side of the road near the southern end of the property. It is possible that it was flaked by a vehicle? The flaked stone tools appear to be more concentrated on the escarpment overlooking the Piesang River than elsewhere on the property, but this could be related to greater visibility in the fynbos area.

S 34°03'18,9"

E 23°21'37,1"



Locality 2: are what appears to be badly weathered stone tools lying underneath the pine trees which are located in the centre of the property. It is more difficult to locate stone tools in this area because of the pine needle cover.

S 34°03'21,2"

E 23°21'39,1"



There appears to be some flaked quartzite cobbles along the red brick wall on the western edge of the property, but these may relate to builder's rubble used in the construction of the wall.

Locality 3 (Stone House): There is a well-established stone house located towards the front of the property. The consultants requested information on the status of the building and whether it could be demolished during development. It is not possible, from a mere visual inspection of the outside of the building, to establish its age. Further, the building has been extensively renovated in the recent past.

S 34°03'11,0"

E 23°21'37,7"



Renovated stone house

Conclusions and Recommendations

All archaeological sites are protected by the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999) and it is an offense to destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or disturb archaeological sites without a permit issued by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA).

No archaeological sites were discovered during the survey of erf 2074 Marine Way. However, it is possible that sites may be buried under the soil and grass surface. For this reason every care should be taken during the bulldozing of the area. Archaeological sites, including fossilized bone or human remains, should be reported to SAHRA and to the archaeologists at the Albany Museum, immediately.

a) I would recommend that development of the area can take place but that every care should be taken to avoid destroying archaeological sites which may be located beneath the soil surface. When leveling of the soil takes place, contractors should look for the following features:

1. Dense accumulations of marine shell – evidence of a prehistoric shell midden.
2. Concentrations of shell associated with pieces of bone, pottery and stone artifacts.
3. Concentrations of fossilized bone.
4. Concentrations of blue and white china, pieces of iron, coins, etc.
5. Human remains including burials.

b) With regard the status of the stone building; the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999) clearly protects all buildings older than 60 years. The Act states “No person may alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure which is older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant provincial heritage resources authority” (clause 34). It is not possible from a visual inspection of the building to be confident on its age. However, the title deeds will reflect the age of the dwelling and this is a relatively simple matter to resolve. If the structure is older than 60 years, permission to demolish will have to be obtained from Heritage Western Cape.