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HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT: PROPOSED WAREHOUSE DEVELOPMENT ON REMAINDER OF PORTION 4 OF BRAKFRONTEIN 399 JR, CENTURION

SUBMITTED TO: Rock Environmental Consulting

DATE OF SUBMISSION: 1 April 2003

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report fulfils the requirements for a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) as provided for in the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999). The area that is proposed for warehouse development was surveyed. With the exception of a site associated with one of the independent African Churches, no significant heritage resources that will be affected by the road works were identified.

PART 1: REPORT ON PROJECT EXECUTION

1.1 Background

This study and report is part of an environmental impact assessment for a proposed warehouse development on the remainder of portion 4 of the farm Brakfontein 399 JR in Centurion. This warehouse site is situated in the corner formed by the Old Johannesburg Road (R 101) and the intersection of the N 1, R 28 and N 14. Because this site is in an urban area, it was assumed that it would impact on a number of heritage resources.

1.2 Legal context

This study constitutes a heritage impact assessment (HIA) as part of the environmental impact assessment required for the upgrading and realignment of the K 71. In terms of Section 38 (1) and Section 38 (2)(a) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999), a heritage impact assessment is required by the responsible heritage resources agency, which, in this case, is the Gauteng provincial heritage resources agency based in Johannesburg.

The purpose of this HIA is to alert the developer/contractor and the provincial heritage resources agency at the earliest possible stage about existing and potential heritage resources that may be affected by the proposed development, and to recommend mitigatory measures aimed at reducing any negative impacts on these heritage resources.

1.3 Terms of reference

Cultmatrix cc, a heritage management consulting agency, was appointed by Rock Environmental Consulting to undertake a heritage impact assessment of the site and to submit a report in this regard.

1.4 Status of this document

This document constitutes the report required to submit to the environmental consultant, the developer or his/her agency and to the provincial heritage resources agency the findings and ensuing recommendations of a heritage impact assessment in terms of Section 38(3) of the act.

1.5 Project team

The heritage scoping was undertaken by Dr R C de Jong (Principal Member of Cultmatrix cc), who is a qualified historian and heritage management specialist. He is knowledgeable with the history of the Centurion area and participated in a heritage survey in 2000.

1.6 Method of work

- Perusal of 1:50 000 maps, other maps. Rock Environmental Consulting provided the consultant with a small map of the affected area, showing the proposed warehouse development
- Field trips on 21 and 27 March, during which the site was surveyed on in order to identify sites of heritage significance.
- Perusal of existing databases of heritage sites, including the 2000 report on the Centurion heritage survey.
- Report.

1.7 Limitations

- No heritage information was obtained from any public participation/social impact assessment processes.

PART 2: HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF HERITAGE RESOURCES IN AFFECTED AREA

2.1 Description of the area surveyed

In general terms, the southern Centurion area is typical Highveld, a landscape characterised by gently sloping plains, separated by relatively deep valleys carved out by the Rietspruit, Olifantsspruit, Hennops River and smaller watercourses. At places there are ensembles of large granite boulders, rocky outcrops and hillocks. Except where human settlement has occurred, the plains are generally treeless. Clumps of vegetation occur at many outcrops and hillocks, and the vegetation is denser in the river valleys.

This environment formed the basis for the patterns of human occupation that emerged since Early Stone Age times. The river valleys, boulders and rocky ridges were habitat to groups of Stone Age people, and here scattered stone artefacts have been found and can be expected as signs of occupation. Settlement by Iron Age communities took place near rivers and close to rocky outcrops. Clumps of trees often indicate the presence of remaining stonewalls and other structures, although none which are of Iron Age origin have been found.

White farmers, settling in the area since the middle of the 19th century, carved up the landscape into a number of farms, which even today form the framework for agricultural, residential and other forms of development.

Many portions of the Centurion landscape are today covered by residential, industrial and commercial development, often engulfing and obliterating farmsteads, graveyards and other signs of earlier human occupation. However, these developments in themselves are also a part of our cultural heritage.

2.2 Short history of the affected area

The history of human occupation of and settlement in the Centurion area, known so far, goes back at least 150 000 years, when groups of Early Stone Age people appeared periodically. These people survived by manufacturing simple tools and weapons of stone, bone and wood, which they used for hunting and gathering edible plants. No permanent settlement took place and no Early Stone Age sites were found during the HIA.

Following the Early Stone Age, Midrand was the scene of the periodic occupation by Middle and probably also by Late Stone age groups. Some of the local rock was suitable for manufacturing stone artefacts. Settlement, which was only of a temporary nature, often occurred at sheltered spots close to rivers.

Occupation of Centurion by the first groups of Iron Age settlers began some 1600 years ago. These people spoke Bantu languages, kept domesticated animals, grew crops and manufactured pots and iron implements. Like the Stone Age people, they also hunted and gathered edible plants. No Iron Age sites or artefacts were found.

In the 1820s the first white people appeared on the scene, hunters, traders, missionaries and other travellers. Permanent occupation by whites began in the early 1840s, when Voortrekker farmers such as Rasmus Elardus Erasmus (1830-1891) established the farm Brakfontein.

The original farm Brakfontein 104 (now 399 JR) was situated to the south of central Pretoria. The original owner of the farm was Rasmus Elardus Erasmus (1830-1891), who settled there in 1841. He most probably gave the farm this name after the brackish water in the Rietstroom running through the western corner of the farm near Sunderland Ridge. The battle of Rooihuiskraal was fought on the farm during December 1880 and February 1881. The Ben Schoeman (N1) and N 14 freeways cut through the farm. Suburbs such as Rooihuiskraal, Hauweloord and The Reeds were established on the farm. The farm has been cut into various sections by the Old Johannesburg Road (established in the 19th century) and the N 1, R 28 and N 14 freeways of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 General remarks

With the exception of the site described below, no significant archaeological and historical sites, structures, buildings and objects were detected specifically in the area earmarked for development. The proposed road development will therefore not negatively impact on this area within the context of heritage conservation. This is due to the fact that the area has already been changed by human interventions such as agricultural activities, the illegal dumping of building rubble, excavations and a small number of informal dwellings. This does not mean that there are no such sites, structures, buildings and objects at all. It can happen that they will only become visible when actual construction work begins.

We therefore recommend that:

- Construction work be monitored for the discovery of any archaeological and historical sites, structures and objects through excavation activities;
- This recommendation must be included in construction tender documents

3.2 Identified site

Place of religious gatherings

Location: Close to the Old Johannesburg Road (it is visible from this road) near the fly-over bridge at the N 14/N 1/ R 28 interchange. Co-ordinates S 25°52,779; E 28°09,702.

Description: Three-quarter circle of benches constructed from rejected building materials situated under a clump of trees

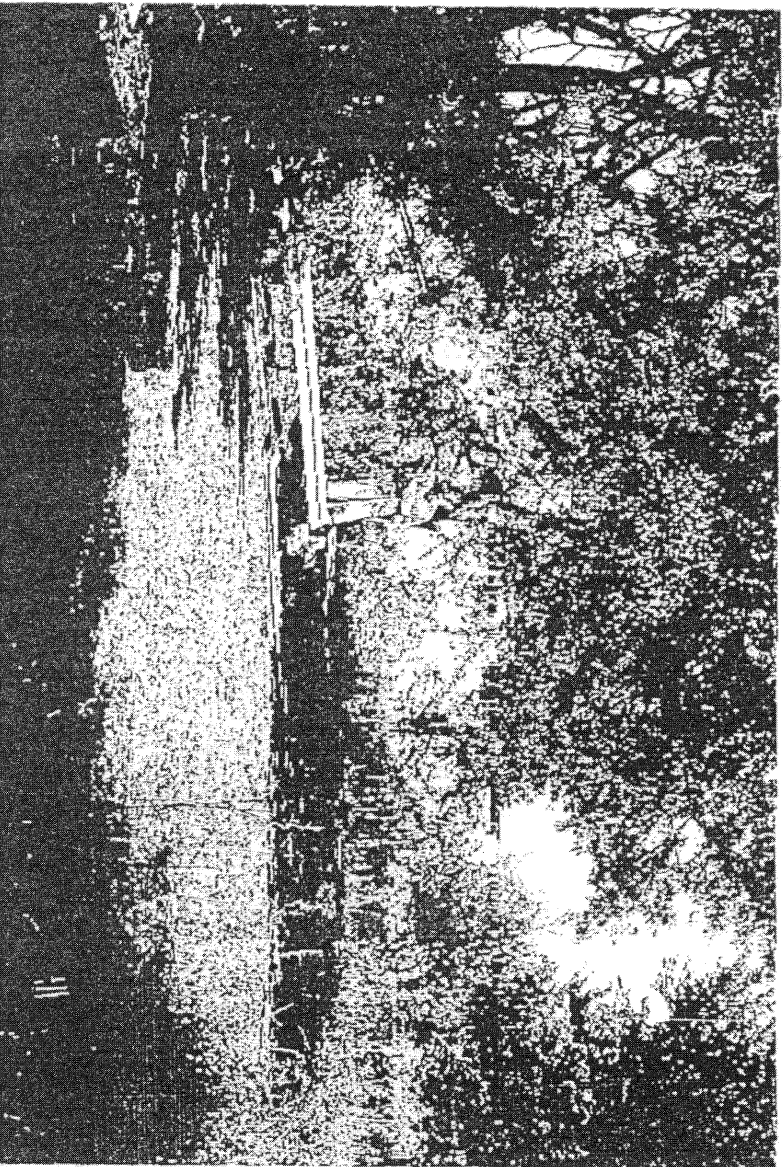
Discussion: This site is used for religious purposes and is of very recent origin.

Heritage significance: Associated with a particular religious community (probably the ZCC or one of the other Independent African Churches) for social, spiritual and cultural reasons. It is not a unique site as there are thousands of similar places, and its heritage significance is therefore low.

Significance of impact: High

Recommended management action: This site is of a type commonly found elsewhere in the region and in other parts of South Africa, where members of Independent African Churches gather on Sundays for religious worship. Although the heritage significance is low, the existence of the site must be treated with respect. The developer must contact the persons who gather here in order to negotiate an alternative place of worship, or by relocating the benches to another site. Once this has been done the site can be destroyed.

Legal requirements: None.



PART 4: INFORMATION SOURCES USED IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

CULTMATRIX CC, 2000, *Erfenisbestuur an toeristerostas*. Final report submitted to the Centurion Town Council, June 2000.

National Heritage Resources Act, No 25 of 1999

VAN DER WAAL, GM (ed), 2000, *Pretoria Historical Dictionary*, April 1999. Unpublished report for the Pretoria City Council, December 2000.