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FIRST PHASE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS AT THE SOETDORING ECO PARK, FREE STATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Certain developments are planned at the Soetdoring Nature Reserve near the Modder River and along the R700 road between Bloemfontein and Bultfontein, Free State.

The developments will include an information centre, a cultural village and chalets between the entrance road and existing farm buildings. The development of an Eco Park is planned to the west towards the Modder River in a concentration of extended erosion dongas.

These areas do not contain any cultural or historical material.

I recommend that the proposed planning and development of the sites may proceed.

INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

INVESTIGATION

An information centre, a cultural village and chalets and an Eco Park are planned at the Soetdoring Nature Reserve along the R700 road between Bloemfontein and Bultfontein, Free State.

The sites were visited and inspected on foot on 20 February 2007. Marguerite Wessels of MDA Environmental Consultants, Bloemfontein, accompanied me to the sites.

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

The two areas of development are indicated on Maps 2 and 3. The land was formerly part of the farm Stoomhoek 826 (Figs.6-7), adjacent to the Modder River. It is now included into the Soetdoring Nature Reserve (Surveyor-General O.F.S. 1973).

An information centre, cultural village and chalets (Fig.1) will be placed along the entrance road (Fig.3) from the R700 main road between Bloemfontein and Bultfontein (Map 1).

The Eco Park (Fig.2) is planned in an area of extensive erosion dongas next to the Modder River (Fig.11).

GPS coordinates (Cape scale) are given below:

ENTRANCE GATE	28°48'38"S 026°06'32"E	Altitude 1252m (Fig.3).
CEMETERY	28°48'30"S 026°06'24"E	Altitude 1259m (Fig.5).
CULTURAL VILLAGE	28°48'25"S 026°06'22"E	Altitude 1256m (Fig.1).
ECO PARK	28°48'34"S 026°05'53"E	Altitude 1255m (Fig.2).

RESULTS

No stone flakes or tools or other archaeological or historical material was found at any of the sites.

A little fenced cemetery, which contains two unidentified graves (Fig.5), is located near the existing buildings. This locality could possibly be on the edge of the proposed area of developments at the entrance road.

Scatters of household debris occur on the surface in some places (Fig.10), but seem to be of minor significance.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The proposed developments at the Soetdoring Nature Reserve will have no impact on any cultural or historical material.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no obvious reasons to delay the commencement of further planning and development of the two sites and I recommend that the work may proceed.

MITIGATION

Concerning the areas for the proposed developments, mitigation measures will only be required in the case of the cemetery. Care should be taken not to disturb the graves during the building phase. The graves should be properly fenced and I recommend that the cemetery should be planned and included as part of the development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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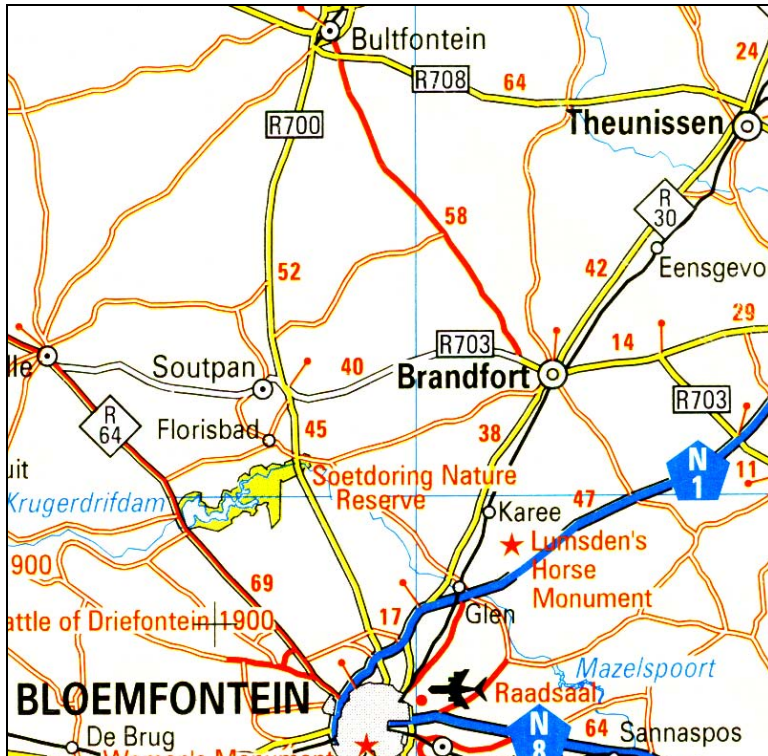
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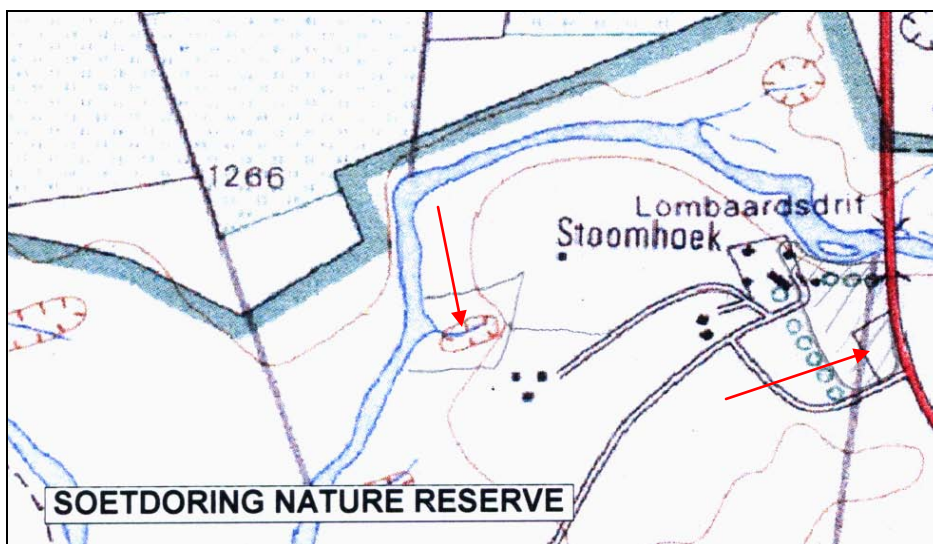
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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS



Map 1 Locality of the Soetdoring Nature Reserve between Bloemfontein, Brandfort and Bultfontein.



Map 2 The locality of the two areas selected for development at the Soetdoring Nature Reserve.



Fig.1 Plan indicating the proposed information centre, cultural village and chalets.



Fig.2 Plan of the proposed Eco Park in the Soetdoring Nature Reserve near the Modder River.



Fig.3 Entrance road from the R700 between Bloemfontein and Bultfontein.



Fig.4 The area proposed for the cultural village and chalets.



Fig.5 Two unidentified graves in the area near the entrance road.



Fig.6 The elegant farmhouse had been transformed into a conference centre.



Fig.7 The outbuildings had been part of the old farmyard.



Fig.8 The area for the proposed Eco Park.



Fig.9. The dongas will become part of the Eco Park development.



Fig.10 Patches of household debris are found in the dongas.



Fig.11 A view of the Modder River near the planned Eco Park.



Fig.12 Blue shale is exposed by the erosion of top soil in the dongas.