

**HERITAGE SURVEY FOR THE DIHLABENG MALL, BETHLEHEM,  
FREE STATE**

A Phase I report prepared for Seaton Thompson and Associates  
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# **HERITAGE SURVEY FOR THE DIHLABENG MALL, BETHLEHEM, FREE STATE**

## **Executive Summary**

*The project area was examined in July 2011. There are no heritage sites of any kind inside the project area.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Bethlehem Property Development (Pty) Ltd intends to establish a shopping mall next to the casino in Bethlehem, Free State (Figure 1). Known as the Dihlabeng Mall (28 14 33.3S 28 19 35.3E), the development covers some 9.2 hectares. The mall will include paved parking as well as the normal shops and banks.

Among other things, the original development did not include a heritage survey. To rectify this omission, Bethlehem Property Development (Pty) Ltd commissioned Seaton Thompson to be the Environmental Coordinators for the project. Seaton Thompson in turn commissioned Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to examine the area for sites of archaeological and historical value in terms of Sections 35 and 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act No. 25 of 1999). In particular, it was ARM's duty to search for Stone Age remains.

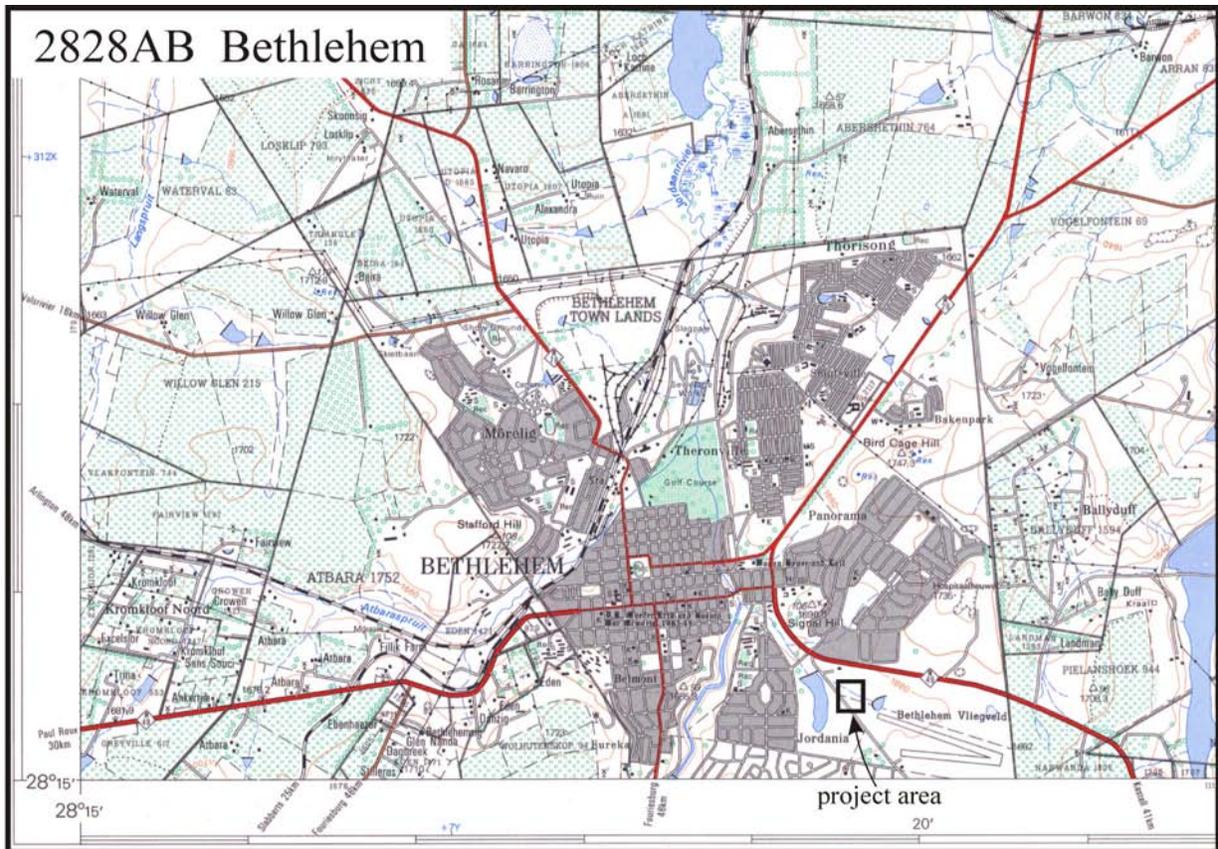


Figure 1. 1:50 000 map showing the project area.

## BACKGROUND

Bethlehem Property Development (Pty) Ltd purchased Erf 3371 from Robs Investment Holdings (Pty) Ltd (a private company), and a Portion of ERF 4752 from the Frontier Inn Hotel and Casino (Peermont Global Eastern Freestate (Pty) Ltd). Both portions straddled a wetland on the slope below the casino. To construct the casino, a level platform was made on a slope, and the excess soil and rock was dumped down slope, along with modern rubble left over from the casino building. This happened about six years ago. When Bethlehem Property Development (Pty) Ltd began in 2009, their contractors scraped the topsoil and imported fill to create platforms on Erf 3371 (Figure 3). In 2011, the contractors scraped topsoil off the casino portion (Figure 2). Bethlehem Property Development (Pty) Ltd did not go through the complete EIA process prior to development, due to this a S24G Rectification Report (NEMA, 107 of 1998) was submitted to Free State Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, a positive authorisation to continue was granted.

In South Africa, no group of people lived in a wetland. Such areas, however, could have been the locus for butchery sites. Thus it was necessary to examine the area for Stone Age remains.

## **METHOD**

One ARM staff visited the project area on 19 July 2011 in the company of Walter Dhooge of Seaton Thompson. ARM staff traversed the small area by foot, examining every cutting and trench.

The South African Heritage Resources Agency recognises National and Provincial Monuments for conservation purposes. None of these exist in the immediate project area. For the rest, site significance is based on five main criteria: (1) primary versus secondary context; (2) amount of deposit; (3) number and variety of features; (4) uniqueness; and (5), potential to answer present research questions. Sites with no significance do not require mitigation, low to medium sites may require limited mitigation, and high significance requires extensive mitigation, while outstanding sites should not be disturbed at all.

## **RESULTS**

Originally, a black turf, derived from the wetland, formed the topsoil. Underneath this layer was a yellow decomposing mudstone that graded into the mudstone bedrock. This sequence was evident in the cuttings across the project area and the long trenches that followed the boundaries dissected the centre.

If present, Stone Age artefacts would be in the turf or at the junction of the turf with the decomposing mudstone. No such artefacts were found in the topsoil in portion 4752 or the cuttings and trenches elsewhere. In fact, no heritage remains of any kind were noted.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is most unlikely that heritage sites existed within the project area before development began. On heritage grounds, then, there is no reason why the Dihlabeng Mall project should not proceed.