

# Archaeological Impact Assessment

**Title: Keurkloof (Prima Klipbrekers) Quarry, Robertson.**

Proposal to convert from old order to new order mining rights at an existing quarry,  
**Breede River/Winelands Local Municipality, Western Cape.**

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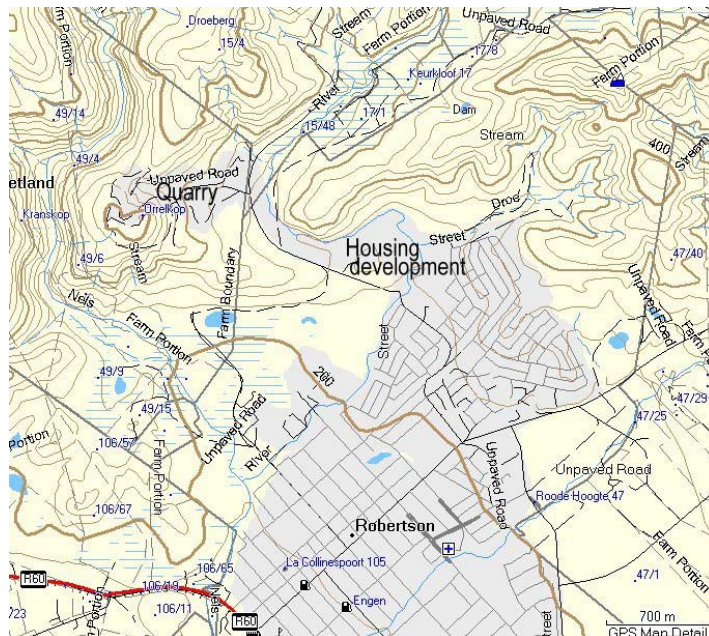
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**Figure 1. Location of the Keurkloof Quarry in relation to the town of Robertson**

## **Executive Summary**

A survey of the archaeological resources was carried out the Keurkloof Quarry area. No archaeological, palaeontological or other cultural resources that might be impacted by development were recorded. A potential concern is the visual impact of extending the quarry in the focus area. This is a management problem but does effectively limit the elevation to which operations can proceed on the slopes of the Droeberg.

## **Background Information**

The Keurkloof Quarry is an established, operating aggregate quarry on the northern border of the town of Robertson (Figure 1) on farm Wolwe Kloof 49/2. Application is being made in terms of the legislation to convert old order mining rights to new order rights. This is the reason commissioning and archaeological impact assessment.

## **Archaeological Background**

The gravels of the Breede River are associated with Earlier Stone Age artefacts with reports of these artefacts being found in the plough zone of vineyards, as is the case widely in the Western Cape. The closest major archaeological site is Montagu Cave excavated in the 1920s and 1960s. It is significant in showing these intermontane valleys were occupied from the Earlier to the Later Stone Age. This makes it possible archaeological materials would be found at or in the surrounds of localities like Keurkloof.

## **Description of the property**

The property (Figure 2 & 3) is dominated by the hill Orrelkop and the ridge of the Droeberg running north from it with concordant summits of 460 m. The slopes are steep but flatten on the eastern side. The ongoing quarrying operations are on the west side of Orrelkop making a deep cleft in this hill. The intention is to extend future operations along the lower flanks (below 320 m) of the Droeberg towards the northeastern corner of the property. It is at or below this elevation on the flatter ground that most of the plant and stockpiling areas are situated and where SitePlan Consulting (Figure 2) have identified a focus area for botanical and archaeological survey. The focus area has a maximum length of 500 m and maximum width of 250 m. This is about 12 ha rather less than the 25 ha indicated by SitePlan on their plan in Figure 2.

## **Methodology**

The survey ran traverses across the focus area, paying special attention to the northeastern corner where the terrain seemed to offer the best potential encountering archaeological occurrences. Exposures on the edge of quarried areas were examined as well as the slopes of Orrelberg and the magazine area. The stockpile area and lowest slopes are disturbed.

Observations were extended to the surrounds to gauge the wider visual impact of the developments.

The survey was carried out over one day.

### **Observations and Results**

There are no buildings or structures older than 60 years that have significance on the property. In the survey no prehistoric archaeological artefacts were observed. The aggregate being mined is Precambrian Malmesbury Group (Norreen Formation) limestones with felspathic grits, greywackes, slates and conglomerates and is not fossiliferous. Examination of the surficial deposits, scree and soil, in exposures showed no younger palaeontological materials.

The quarry operations have a visual impact on the landscape. The high cliff (>400 m) in Orrelkop (Figure 4) is visible from a distance in the town and from the valley to the north and this is a negative impact. Operation at a lower elevation (below 320 m) in the focus area of the proposed extension will be less visible. The smaller excavation in the focus area below 300 m has low visibility and without being prescriptive it suggests that this elevation or lower is optimal to minimise the visual impact.

The quarry is on the urban edge in a narrow neck leading to scenic rural cultural landscape of farmlands to the north (Figure 5). This cultural landscape is significant. Minimising the visual impacts of the quarry operations has to be a management priority. This does not gainsay the value of the efforts at rehabilitation already undertaken in this well run quarry.

There is a museum on the site (Figure 6). This is an old plant with conveyors and a hopper. It is commendable that this example of industrial archaeology has been conserved in the context where it was used.

### **Sources of Risk and Statement of Significance**

The apparent absence of archaeological and palaeontological materials on the site suggests the risk of further excavations uncovering such materials is low. The significance of the property in these terms is rated as low.

Future operations will have a visual impact and it has been noted that the setting, the rural landscape of valleys and dissected hills to the north, is of significance.

### **Recommended Mitigations**

It is recommended that should any excavations by chance uncover buried palaeontological or archaeological materials including human remains that Heritage Western Cape is notified (Mr N Ndlovu, Senior Heritage Officer – Archaeologist, Private Bag X9067, Cape Town 8000, Tel: 021 483 9687, Fax: 021 483 9842, [nndlovu@pgwc.gov.za](mailto:nndlovu@pgwc.gov.za) ). Features like burials for example can occur in unpredictable locations.





Figure 3. Aerial view of the quarry.



Figure 4. Looking across the focus area for future development towards the quarry face.



Figure 5. Looking northeast across the focus area towards farmlands in the valley from which future developments will be visible.



Figure 6. The museum preserving the old crushing plant – an industrial artefact.