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ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE GRAVES AT THE PROPOSED HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS NEAR THABONG, WELKOM, FREE STATE

INVESTIGATION

The site for the proposed housing development at Thabong, Welkom, was visited and inspected on 1 March 2004. I was accompanied to the site by Mr Henk Wolmarans and other staff-members of Laubscher, Slabbert and Brink, Professional Land Surveyors and Town and Regional Planners.

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 land for the proposed housing development is part of the original farm Dankbaar 130 in the district of Welkom (Surveyor-General 1973). The site could be recognised on the 1984 Kaalvlei ortho-photograph (2726DD22) and also on the 1991 Thabong photo.

The proposed development is planned to cover an area, which is located adjacent to the existing township of Thabong. The specific area (27°57'26"S. 026°50'42"E. Altitude 1376m) covers about 20m x 10m..

The area consists of sterile red sandy soil with a short grass cover, which is clearly the remains of old plough lands.

FINDS

The area under discussion lies slightly higher than the surrounding land (Fig.). At least one grave (27°57'27"S. 026°50'42"E. Altitude 1374m) (Fig.) and several other stones protruding from the surface (Figs.), suggest that this could have been a grave-yard in bygone days.

No indication of any other archaeological or historical material was found in the inspected area, neither was any stone tools or ceramic ware found.

Together with the disturbances mentioned above it also seems unlikely that remains of any early human occupation could have survived in this area. The locality is likewise not close enough to the higher ground to be the obvious living site for people during prehistoric times.

DISCUSSION

Judging from the cobbled stones on the main grave and the way in which other possible graves are marked only by single headstones, it could be accepted that these were the graves of farm labourers.

According to the discussion with the land developers, it is planned that this area will be left out of the proposed housing scheme. The piece of land will be properly fenced and kept as a cemetery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

No obvious reasons could be found to delay the commencement of further planning and development of the site.

After examination by the archaeologist, it is recommended that the proposed developments may proceed.

MITIGATION

Concerning the area of the cemetery, the mitigation measures as proposed are fully supported.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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