ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE PROPOSED NEW UITSPAN SUBSTATION, ERF 2 ROBERTSON, ROBERTSON MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT, WESTERN CAPE

(Assessment conducted under Section 38 (8) of the
National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999) as part of an EIA)

Prepared for

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UCT Archaeology Contracts Office was requested by SHE Cape Environmental to conduct an Archaeological Impact Assessment for the proposed construction of the Uitspan substation on erf 2, Robertson, in the Robertson Magisterial District. The new substation will replace the neighbouring one which will be decommissioned. The project is subject to the EIA legislation such that Heritage Western Cape are required to provide comment.

The site lies on a gently sloping hill alongside the existing electrical substation. It is covered by indigenous vegetation and is crossed by several vehicle tracks and footpaths. A large portion has been terraced in the past.

Four small Early or possibly Middle Stone Age flakes were located. These are deemed to be of very low significance and, subject to the approval of Heritage Western Cape, it is recommended that the proposed project be allowed to proceed with no further archaeological work being required.

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

The UCT Archaeology Contracts Office was requested by SHE Cape Environmental to conduct an Archaeological Impact Assessment for the proposed construction of the Uitspan substation on erf 2, Robertson, in the Robertson Magisterial District (Figure 1). The new substation is required as a result of capacity shortage in the area. The neighbouring substation will be decommissioned.

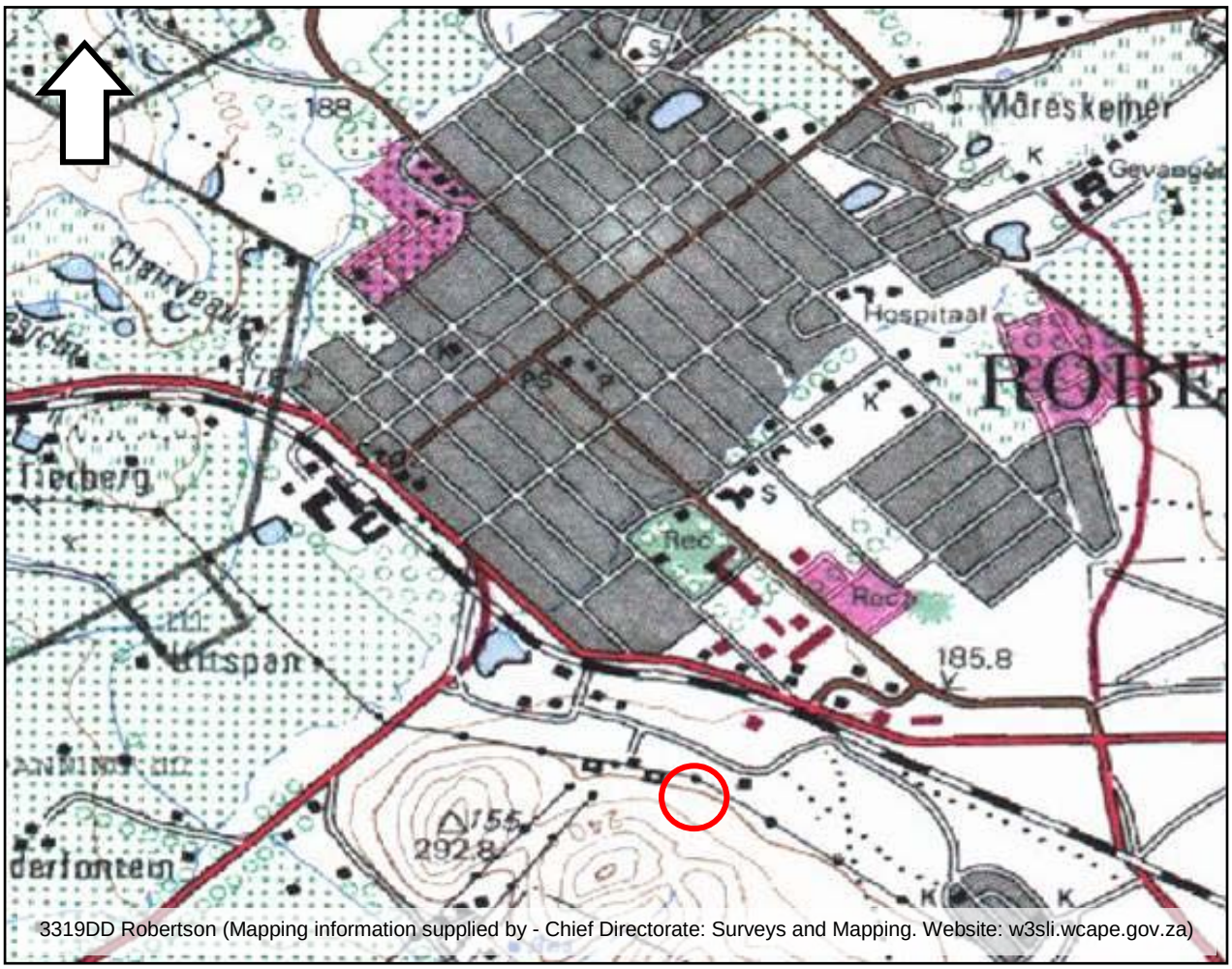

Figure 1: Map showing the location of the site on the southern edge of the town of Montagu.

2. HERITAGE LEGISLATION

The National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) No. 25 of 1999 protects a variety of heritage resources including palaeontological, prehistoric and historical material (including ruins) more than 100 years old (Section 35), human remains (Section 36) and non-ruined structures older than 60 years (Section 34). Landscapes with cultural significance are also protected under the definition of the National Estate (Section 3 (3.2d)). Under Section 38 (1) of the act the affected property requires heritage assessment based on its size of greater then 5000 m^2.

Since the project is subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment, Heritage Western Cape (HWC) is required to provide comment on the proposed project in order to facilitate final

decision making by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEA&DP).

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The site lies on a gently sloping hill on the southern edge of Robertson. Several other electrical installations are present along the edge of the hill and the new substation will be added to the eastern end of the existing facilities (Figure 2). The immediate area is covered by indigenous vegetation, predominantly succulents and small bushes. Many spaces are present in between but overall ground visibility is limited to about 20% outside of the cleared areas and tracks that cross the site. The lower part of the site has been terraced in the past such that the original surface is largely no longer intact. These terraces are clearly visible in Figure 2. Figures 3 to 9 provide an overview of the site.

Figure 2: Aerial photograph from Google Earth showing the local context of the site on the southern edge of Robertson. The existing electrical facilities are located to the west of the current study site.

Figure 3: View of the site looking up slope towards the south.

Figure 4: View of the site looking down slope towards the north.

Figure 5: Excavated gully and foot path on site.

Figure 6: Footpath and vehicle track on site. The existing substation is visible in the background.

Figure 7: Vegetation on site.

Figure 8: Spaces exposing gravel within the vegetation.

Figure 9: One of the levelled terraces with litter accumulation.

4. HERITAGE CONTEXT

The site lies on the southern edge of Robertson, in close proximity to the industrial part of the town. Other electrical facilities (both substations and power lines) exist in the area. To the north are various light industrial buildings although many of the nearest stands have yet to be developed.

Some Early or possibly Middle Stone Age artefacts, usually in a secondary context, would be expected in the greater Breede River Valley area, but Later Stone Age material is less likely.

5. METHODS

A foot survey of the site was conducted on 17th September 2009. Since an exact footprint was not available I made sure to cover a large enough area based on the existing substation alongside the study site. Figure 10 shows the walk paths in the area surveyed. Note that this is only the development site and not the entire area of erf 2.

Figure 10: Walk paths on site.

5.1. Limitations

The terraced area resulted in original land surface having been destroyed. However, these excavations did expose gravels that could be searched for artefacts.

The relatively dense plant cover made it difficult to see anything from a distance so close examination of the exposed surface along the walk paths had to suffice. However, this is unlikely to have had any negative effect on the overall outcome of the survey.

6. FINDINGS

6.1. Early/Middle Stone Age artefacts

Four flakes of three to five centimetre length were found in the study area amongst the surface gravels on one of the excavated terraces. These artefacts are illustrated in Figures 11 and 12. They were collected together and photographed at approximately S 33° 48’ 57.2” E19° 53’ 12.4”. They are most likely Early Stone Age but could be Middle Stone Age.

Figure 11: The dorsal surfaces of the four flakes. Scale in cm.

Figure 12: The ventral surfaces of the four flakes. Scale in cm.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The stone artefacts located during the survey are of very low significance and are not in primary context. Besides movement and possible destruction of the artefacts (and others like them), no other archaeological impacts are likely to take place during the proposed substation construction.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Subject to the approval of Heritage Western Cape, it is recommended that the proposed project be allowed to proceed with no further archaeological work required.