

# **A DESKTOP ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE BOULEVARD PRECINCT, BRAM FISCHER AIRPORT, BLOEMFONTEIN**

(In terms of Section 38 of the NHRA of 1999)

Prepared for

## **Vidamemoria Heritage Consultants**

Vidamemoria Planners cc  
t/a Vidamemoria Heritage Consultants.  
P.O. Box 50605  
Waterfront  
8002

On behalf of

## **Airports Company South Africa (ACSA)**

November 2013



Prepared by

Dave Halkett

## **ACO Associates cc**

Physical: Unit C26, Prime Park, Mocke Rd, Diep River  
Postal: 8 Jacobs Ladder St James, 7945  
david.halkett@aco-associates.com  
Tel: 021 7064104  
Cell: 0731418606  
Fax to e-mail: 086 603 7195

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	3
2. INTRODUCTION .....	4
2.1 The site and development proposal .....	4
3. METHODS USED IN THE ASSESSMENT .....	5
4. SITE ASSESSMENT.....	5
4.1 Site context.....	5
4.2 Other heritage projects in the area .....	9
4.2.1 Heritage observations .....	9
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	10
6. REFERENCES .....	10

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The desktop archaeological impact study of the Boulevard Precinct site at Bram Fisher Airport can find no indication that significant archaeological or historical resources will be found on the site. There is always a possibility that buried human remains or other heritage resources may be encountered during bulk earthworks and they should be immediately reported to SAHRA if found.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

ACO Associates cc was requested by Vidamemoria Heritage Consultants to assess the proposed development site, to the east and west of the entrance road to the Bram Fisher Airport in Bloemfontein (Figure 1).

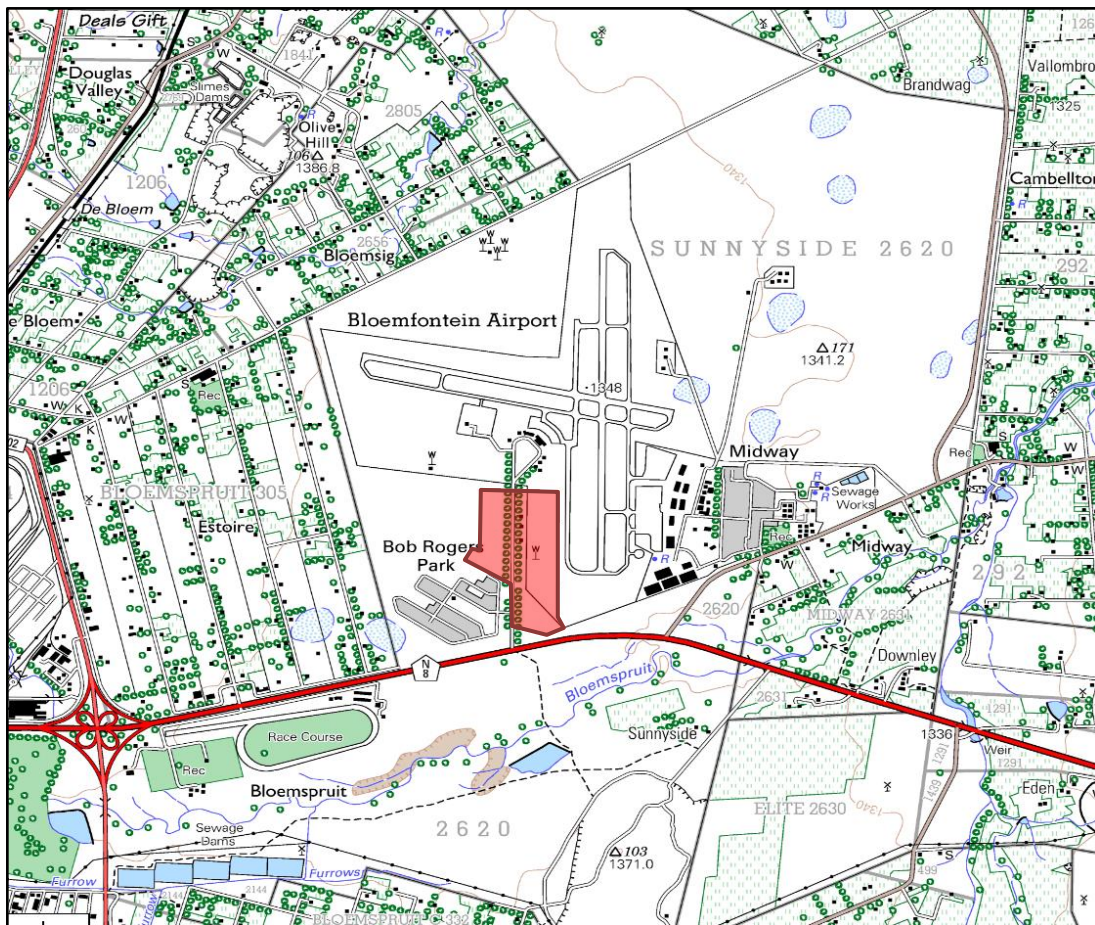


Figure 1: The location of the proposed Boulevard Precinct is shown by the red infilled polygon

### 2.1 The site and development proposal

Bram Fischer Airport (formerly known as Bloemfontein Airport) site, subdivision 3 of the Farm Sunnyside No. 2620 is located approximately 8km to the east of Bloemfontein CBD. The site, owned by the Airports Company South Africa (ACSA) is located within the urban edge and is zoned Special Use Zone Cxxi in terms of the Bloemfontein Town Planning Scheme No. 1 of 1954. The site is located along the N8 Corridor and has been identified by the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality as one of the corridor nodes, and is perceived as a catalyst to the successful development of the corridor. The Bloemfontein Airport Development Framework (2010) conceptually divides the site into five precincts: Terminal, Boulevard, General Aviation, Airport Industria and Grasslands. The focus of this application is on The Boulevard Precinct, which measures approximately 53ha in extent.

In 2009, the entire Subdivision 3 of the Farm Sunnyside No. 2620 was rezoned to a Special Use Zone with specific rights to accommodate the existing development including the road lodge hotel which was constructed in 2010. In 2012, the Special Use Zone was amended to include additional developments (hospital, warehousing, self-storage and business premises) within the Boulevard Precinct. ACSA will apply for a further amendment to the Special Zone Cxxi in the form of the Basket of Rights application to accommodate further developments on the Boulevard Precinct. The proposed land uses will have a total bulk of approximately 176 500m<sup>2</sup> and will comprise offices, commercial, motor car dealer and showroom, 2 x service stations and convenience shops, retail / shops, auctioneer, 100 bed hotel with 80 seat conferencing facility, 300 seat conferencing facility and

showground, medical facilities, industry, including industrial shops, warehousing and distribution centres / warehouse wholesale, car rental and a logistics centre.

In addition to the above bulk and associated land uses, approximately 100 000m<sup>2</sup> of bulk will in the future be accommodated on The Boulevard Precinct. The land use composition of this additional bulk has not been defined at this stage, given that this development will occur in the long term.

### 3. METHODS USED IN THE ASSESSMENT

We inspected the site on Google Earth to determine location, context, and present condition (disturbance, vegetation, existing infrastructure etc). We examined the SAHRIS database to determine if any other heritage related projects had been undertaken in the vicinity, that could inform the assessment process. We have looked back over the available series of aerial photographs on Google Earth to determine land use changes on the site and in the vicinity.

### 4. SITE ASSESSMENT

#### 4.1 Site context

The following Google Earth images describe visually the changes to the land since 2002, particularly the development of the eastern part of the proposed site. By first examining the series, it will become evident that large sections are disturbed.



**Figure 2:** The site (red polygon) on 21 April 2002. The airport access road is well established and some minimal development is seen to the east. Possible pre-existing disturbance to the east of the buildings may relate to airport construction?



**Figure 3:** The site (red polygon) on 21 May 2009 shows some addition to the built area. Pre-existing disturbance is more evident in this image. Airport security fence has shifted to the east.



**Figure 4:** The site (red polygon) on 17 June 2010. Considerable changes are evident both to the built environment and to road infrastructure. A new building (hotel) is added to the west of the road, and the approach road has been converted to dual carriageway with traffic circle. New roads feed off the circle to east and west.



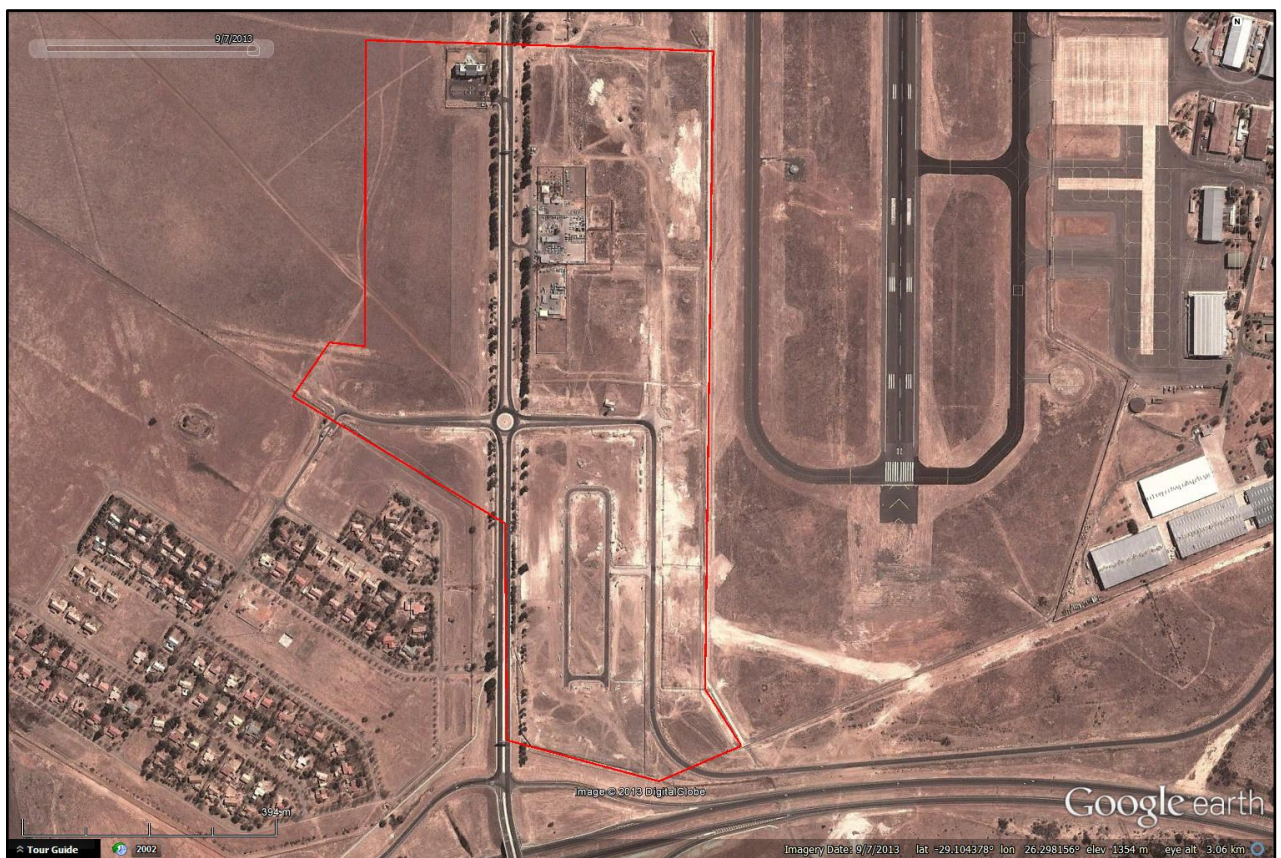
**Figure 5:** The site (red polygon) on 25 August 2010. Much the same as in June with additional earthmoving in the south of the site.



**Figure 6:** The site (red polygon) on 17 May 2012. Much the same as in 2010.



**Figure 7:** The site (red polygon) on 20 December 2012. Much the same except crop marks visible on the upper western part of the site suggesting previous agriculture.



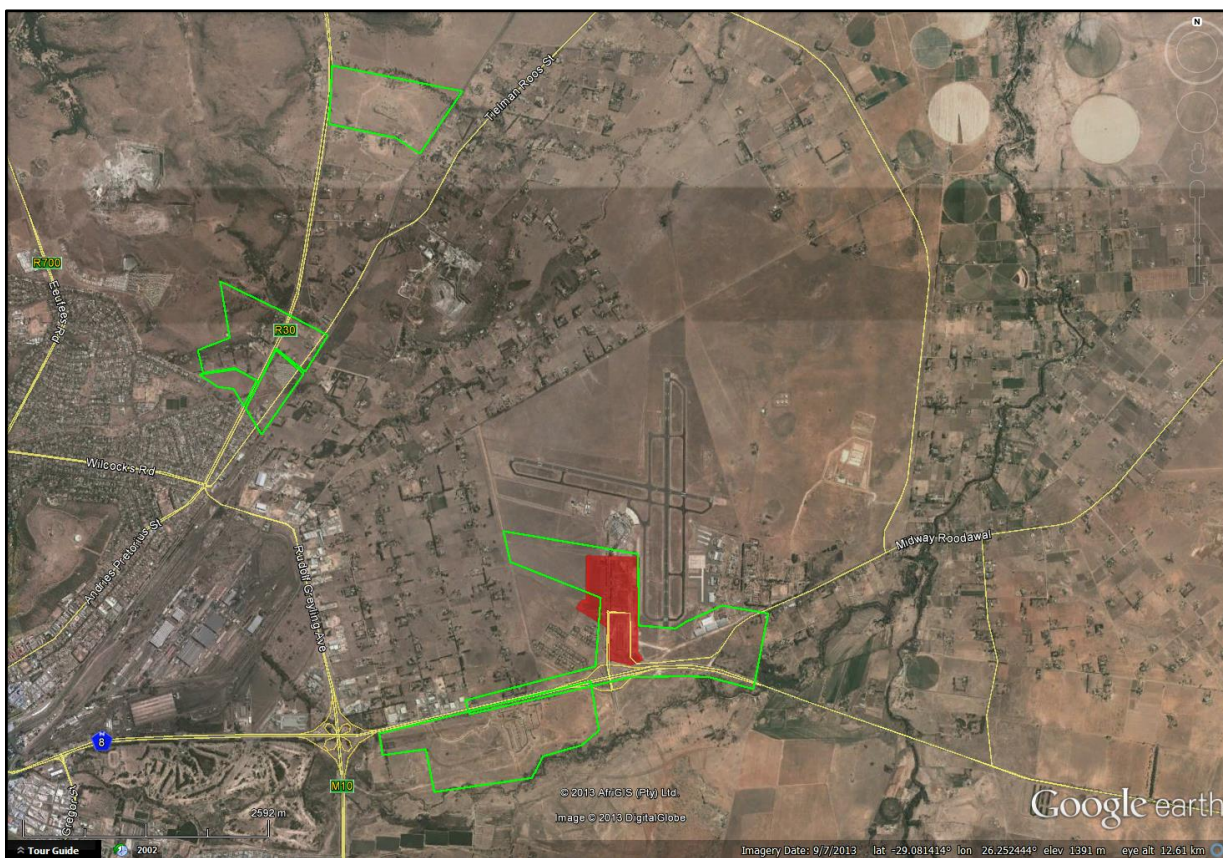
**Figure 8:** The site (red polygon) on 7 September 2013. There is the addition of new road layouts on the southern part of the site, and generally an indication of overall disturbance of the eastern parts.



## 4.2 Other heritage projects in the area

We have examined the SAHRIS database to determine what other heritage projects have been undertaken in the vicinity of the study site. This gives some indication as to what heritage resources may be expected in the area.

We have ascertained that Mr Cobus Dreyer has undertaken a number of heritage studies around Bloemfontein). While there are many projects indicated on the database map, we have focused on five of those which are in closest proximity to the study site and deemed most relevant (see Figure 9). One of Dreyer's studies (Dreyer 2008c) appears to overlap the Boulevard Precinct that we are assessing here, but we have found on reading the report, that the SAHRIS polygon is somewhat larger and more extensive than it should be given that the study was an examination of the proposed new access roads and alterations to the approach road to Bloemfontein airport. The study is not well described or mapped but seems to have been confined to the proposed roads, and therefore does not seem to fully overlap this Boulevard Precinct site. His comments however are broad and confirm our conclusions in the desktop study.



**Figure 9:** Other relevant heritage projects on the SAHRIS database are shown by green polygons in relation to the study site (red)

### 4.2.1 Heritage observations

On plots 18, 20 & 21 on the farm Deales Gift 2804, the northernmost of the polygons in Figure 9, Dreyer reported the ruins of labourer's houses ( $29^{\circ}03'21''\text{S}$ .  $026^{\circ}16'24''\text{E}$ ) with associated ash heaps located along the north-facing slope of the hill. A cluster of about 63 graves was located at the foot and towards the eastern end of the hill ( $29^{\circ}03'25''\text{S}$ .  $026^{\circ}16'29''\text{E}$ ). There was no indication of other archaeological, historical material or Anglo-Boer War relics in the inspected area and neither was any ceramic ware found. (Dreyer 2005:2).

At subdivision 7 of the farm Roderick's Park 2032 and subdivisions 5 & 15 of the farm Hillside 2827, part of the cluster of polygons in the central west on Figure 9, Dreyer observed that: "the land used to be agricultural fields and the surface is covered with short grass at present. The soil

surface appears to be sterile and no indication of any archaeological, historical or cultural material was found” (Dreyer 2006:1-2).

Situated adjacent to subdivision 7, Dreyer’s assessment of residential developments planned on the remainder of Roderick’s Park 2834 found that: “the land shows signs of previous damage by building and excavation activities for the installation of services. No archaeological or other cultural material was found on the soil surface” (Dreyer 2008b:1).

The site of the old Bloemfontein Race Course, the southernmost polygon on Figure 9, is described by Dreyer as: “fallen into disuse and some of the buildings and structures are showing signs of neglect and deterioration. None of these structures seems to be unique specimens of their times, demanding preservation and protection, however. No archaeological and cultural remains were found in the proposed area of development either” (Dreyer 2008a:1).

In the study of new roads around Bloemfontein airport, which appear on the aerial photos of 2010 were probably built to coincide with the Fifa World Cup Soccer Tournament (see figures 4-8). Dreyer notes: “many developments and upgrading took place over the years and numerous alterations had been done, resulting in severe damage to the environment. No archaeological and cultural remains or historical material were found in the proposed areas of development” (Dreyer 2008c:2). These comments concur to some degree with the disturbances that are evident on the aerial images as described in the captions of Figures 2-8.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In our opinion, the eastern part of the site has been heavily disturbed, and is unlikely to contain archaeological or historical material. The land to the west appears to have been used for agriculture in the past and is therefore also unlikely to preserve any in situ archaeological or historical remains. We have taken cognisance of Dreyer’s observations of a general paucity of heritage remains in the area in coming to our conclusion. We believe that, based on the balance of probabilities, there is a very low likelihood of impacting heritage resources on the Boulevard Precinct site.

As there is always the possibility that buried remains may be uncovered in the course of bulk earthworks, it should be a requirement that any heritage resources found on the affected site must be reported to SAHRA. If human remains are found, work must cease in that location until a forensic examination is undertaken by an archaeologist.

## **6. REFERENCES**

Dreyer, C. 2005. First phase archaeological and heritage assessment of the proposed residential developments on plots 18, 20 & 21 on the farm Deales Gift 2804, Bloemfontein. Unpublished report prepared for Bokamoso Environmental Consultants.

Dreyer, C. 2006. First phase archaeological and cultural investigation of the proposed residential developments at Roderick’s Park 2032 & Hillside 2827, Bloemfontein. Unpublished report prepared for MDA Environmental Consultants.

Dreyer, C. 2008a. First phase archaeological and cultural heritage assessment of the proposed developments at the Bloemfontein Turf Club, Bloemfontein. Unpublished report prepared for Spatial Solutions Incorporated.

Dreyer, C. 2008b. First phase archaeological and historical investigation of the proposed township establishment at the remainder of Roderick’s Park 2834, Bloemfontein. Unpublished report prepared for MDA Environmental Consultants.

Dreyer, C. 2008c. First phase archaeological and cultural heritage assessment of the proposed developments at the Bloemfontein Airport access road, Bloemfontein. Unpublished report prepared for Enviro-Namic Environmental Consultants, Pretoria.