

# **HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT: DEVELOPMENT OF ERF 1897, BLUE DOWNS, CITY OF CAPE TOWN, WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE**

(Assessment conducted under Section 38 (8) of the  
National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999)

**Case No: 110818JL12**

**Case ID: 1501**

**Unique Letter ID: 1427**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Archaeology Contracts Office at the University of Cape Town was appointed by Nicolas Baumann, on behalf of the client, to undertake an Impact Assessment on Erf 1897, Blue Downs. This assessment forms part of the EIA process which is currently at the Scoping phase.

The property is bounded by Hindle Road to the south, Eersriv Way to the west and it situated to the west of the R102 and the railway line. The aim of the project is to develop the 42.3ha of land for a mix of residential, business, institutional, transport and Open Space Zone spaces.

**Heritage Western Cape (Case No: 110818JL12) have asked for an HIA consisting of an archaeological and palaeontological study with an integrated set of recommendations.**

In his palaeontological assessment of the property, Graham Avery (report attached) indicated that it is unlikely that the overlying loose surface sands of the Witzand Formation will contain fossils. However fossils have been found from underlying Pleistocene sediments at Swartklip (8km to the south) and from sand mines near Macassar (9km to the south-east). Fossils of this age are rarely found and are known to occur sparsely. It is important that any penetration into the subsurface deposits be carefully monitored by a palaeontologist so that information and/material can be recorded and recovered.

In terms of archaeology, very little pre-colonial material has been found in this part of the Cape Flats. Archival resources indicate that the area was only settled toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and there is no evidence for any early historic settlement on the property.

The property was surveyed by Lita Webley and Jayson Orton on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 2011. They found:

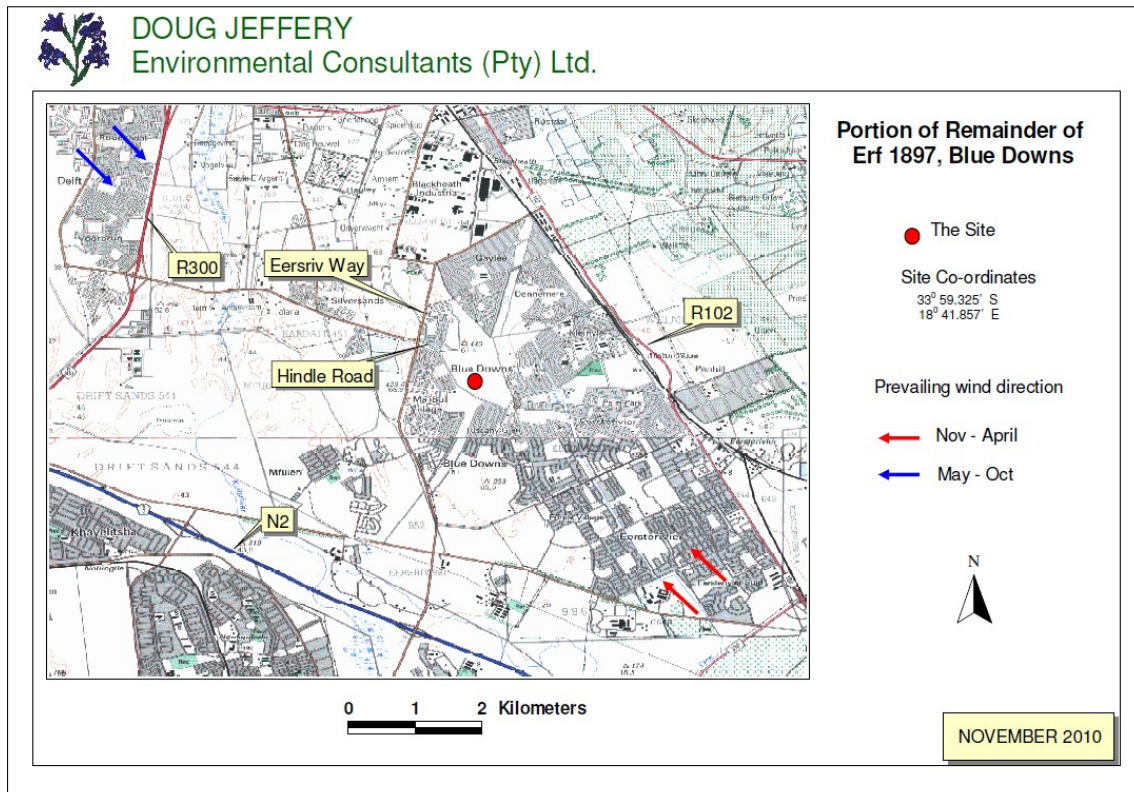
- No outcrops or exposures of calcrete or any other rock which might contain fossiliferous material;
- No pre-colonial or colonial archaeological remains were uncovered;
- No buildings or ruined buildings, structures or graves were found.

There are no significant heritage indicators which would prevent the development.

- The palaeontological assessment recommends that on-site monitoring should be undertaken if excavations are undertaken into underlying Pleistocene sediments in order that information and/material can be recorded and recovered. Protocols for dealing with palaeontological material must be included in the Environmental Management Plan. All material which is recovered will be lodged in the collections of the Iziko South African Museum. Avery recommends that the palaeontologist responsible for monitoring the site apply for a permit for collection ahead of excavation to avoid time delays during construction.
- If any human remains are uncovered during building operations, work should cease in that area while the matter is reported to Heritage Western Cape, SAHRA and the police.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Archaeology Contracts Office at the University of Cape Town was appointed by Nicolas Baumann, on behalf of Doug Jeffrey Environmental Consultants, to undertake a Heritage Impact Assessment on a portion of the remainder of Erf 1897, Blue Downs. It is bounded by Hindle Road to the south, Eersriv Way to the west and it situated to the west of the R102 and the railway line (Figure 2). Dr Graham Avery, of the Iziko South African Museum was appointed to undertake the Palaeontological Impact Assessment.



**Figure 1:** 1:50 000 map (3418 BA Mitchell's Plain and 3318 DC Bellville) showing the location of Erf 1897, Blue Downs, with Hindle Road to the south, Eersriv Way to the west and the R102 toward the north-east.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The property, Portion of Remainder of Erf 1897, is some 42.30ha in size. The City of Cape Town proposes to rezone and subdivide the land. The aim of the project is to develop the 42.3ha of vacant land for mixed-use including residential, business, institutional, transport and public open space (Figure 3). The development is in keeping with the surrounding areas, with low to middle income residential development and commercial land use. The development will require access roads off Hindle Road and from smaller streets in The Conifers, which adjoin the development.

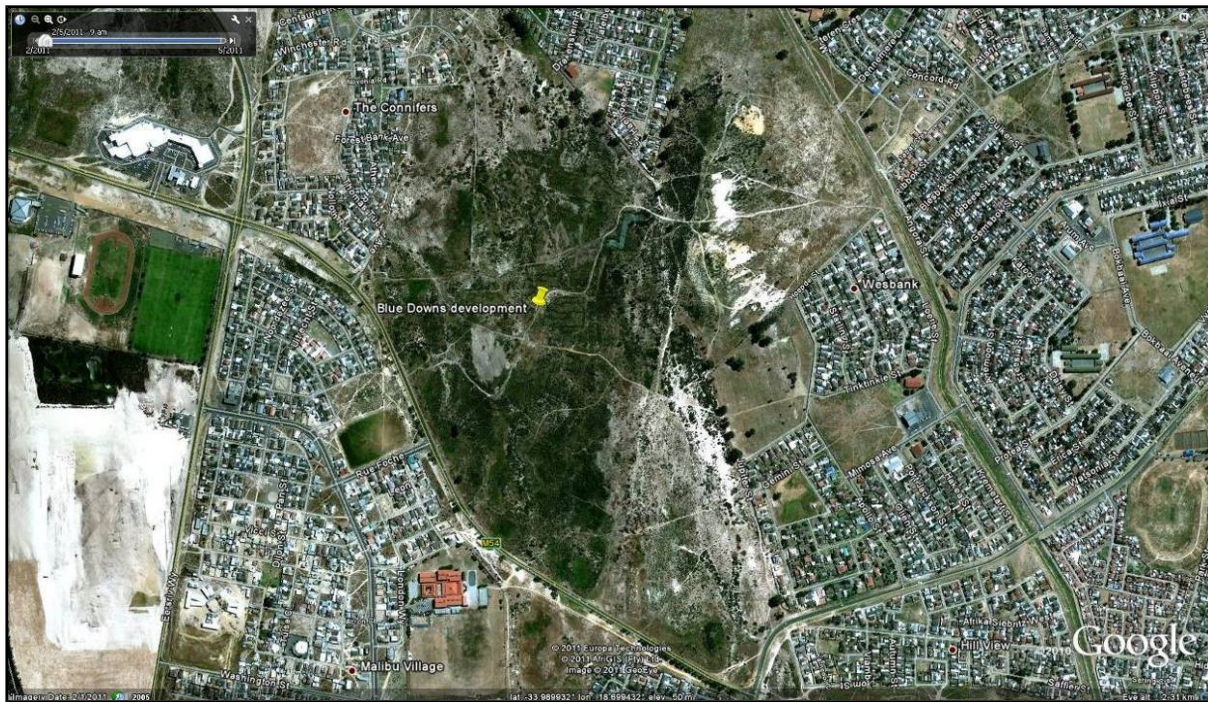


Figure 2: An aerial view of the proposed development area, surrounded by high density housing.

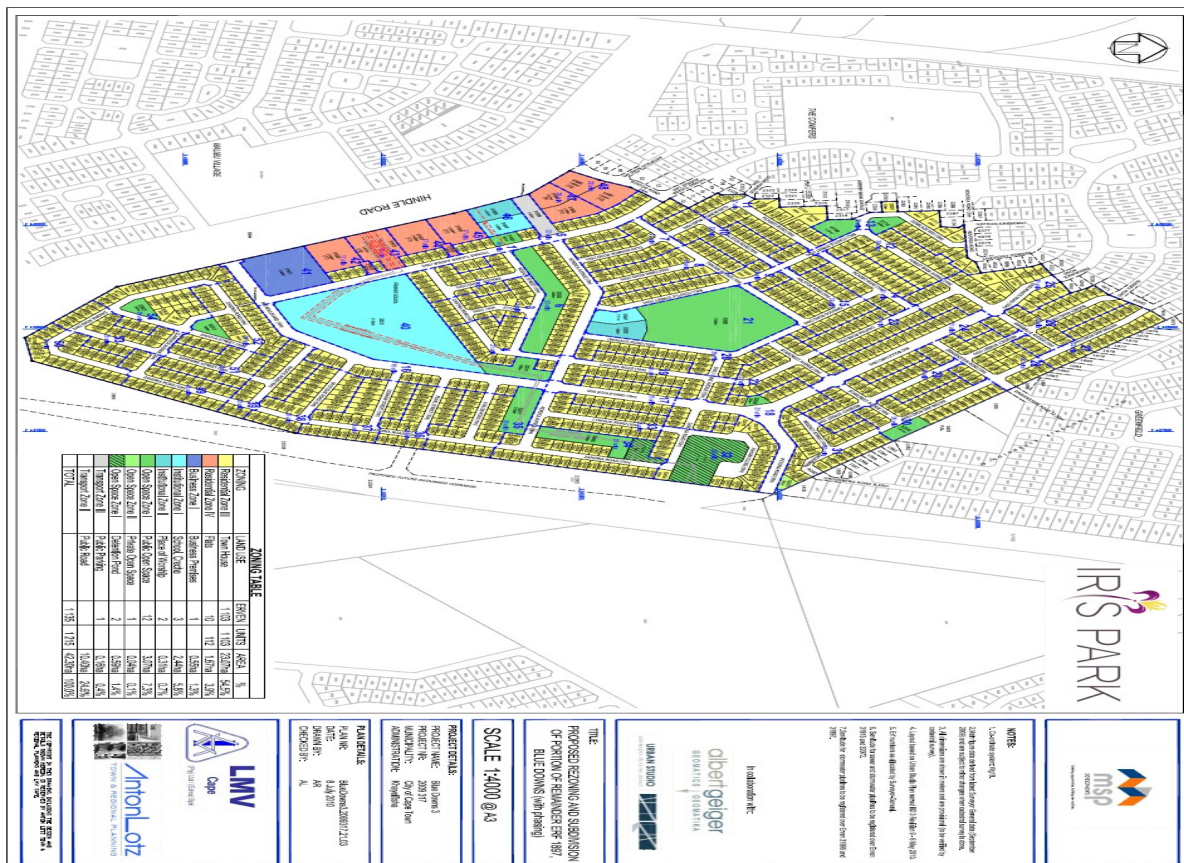


Figure 3: The proposed design of Erf 1897 (map supplied by client).

### **3. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The interim comment of Heritage Western Cape with regard to a NID submitted in August 2011 states that (Case No: 110818JL12):

“An HIA is required consisting of an archaeological study and a palaeontological study with an integrated set of recommendations”.

This assessment includes:

- A desktop palaeontological assessment (full report attached as an Appendix at the end of the report);
- A site visit and desk top study to determine the pre-history and history of the property;
- The rating of significance of heritage resources on the property;
- An assessment of whether the development of the property will result in a loss of significant heritage resources for the City of Cape Town;
- Recommendations for mitigation if necessary.

### **4. LEGISLATION**

The National Heritage Resources Act, No 25 of 1999 (Section 38 (1)) makes provision for a compulsory notification of the intent to development when any development exceeding 5000 m<sup>2</sup> in extent, or any road or linear development exceeding 300m in length is proposed.

The NHRA provides protection for the following categories of heritage resources:

- Cultural landscapes (Section 3(3))
- Buildings and structures greater than 60 years of age(Section 34)
- Archaeological sites greater than 100 years of age(Section 35)
- Palaeontological sites and specimens
- Shipwrecks and aircraft wrecks
- Graves and grave yards (Section 36).

### **5. BACKGROUND TO THE ERF**

There is very information on the general area.

#### ***5.1 Palaeontology***

Dr Graham Avery, the archaeo-zoologist at the Iziko South African Museum, was commissioned to undertake a desktop assessment of the property. This report is appended at the end of the HIA. The later geology of the Cape Flats area has also been succinctly summarized by Pether (2007). The upper Witzand formation of loose aeolian sands was deposited mainly during the Holocene (last 10 000 years). Fossils are scarce in this formation. The underlying Pleistocene, Pliocene and Miocene sediments are fossiliferous. For example, palaeontological exposures of Middle

Pleistocene age have been reported from Swartklip (about 8km to the south on the coast), and from the sand mines near Macassar (Late Pleistocene), about 9km to the south-east. The Swartklip hyaena accumulation is particularly important because of its contribution to our knowledge of local biodiversity and glacial (Ice Age) palaeo-environments.

## **5.2 Archaeological Background**

Very little archaeological work has been carried out in the general vicinity of the study area due to the rapid urban expansion of the City of Cape Town.

Although southern Africa has been occupied by hominids for more than one million years, little evidence of the earliest occupation is preserved within the local region. There are no reports of Early Stone Age implements from this general area (Orton pers comm.). However, Hart (2004) has noted the presence of ESA material on the lower slopes of the Helderberg and more elevated parts of the Somerset West area. During his assessment of the Bluedowns-Firgrove 132kV powerline, Halkett (2002) reported on dispersed Early Stone Age (ESA) artefacts, including flakes, cores and a single cleaver all made on quartzite.

Middle Stone Age (MSA: 200 000 – 20 000) artefacts, of the Stillbay type have been collected in the region of Maitland to the south-west of the study area (Goodwin 1926, 1928) and at a site described as being between Milnerton and Maitland (Goodwin & Van Riet Lowe 1929).

In general, Later Stone Age (LSA: <20 000) sites are far more commonly encountered than earlier material. This may be largely due to burial of older sites beneath recent sand. LSA artefacts have been noted from the vicinity of Maitland (Goodwin & Van Riet Lowe 1929).

Morris (1992) has catalogued human burials from South Africa and records numerous burials from the Milnerton (13 listed), Blaauwberg (20 listed) and Melkbosstrand (22 listed) areas.

Orton has undertaken a number of surveys in Kuils River, Blackheath and at Eerste River (Orton 2005; 2006 & 2007) and has reported that no Stone Age or colonial archaeology was present. His comment with respect to Blackheath (Orton & Hart): “No material of particular heritage or archaeological significance was located in the study area. However, all the material seen can be regarded as part of the previous cultural landscape of farming that was present in the area. Individually, none of these items is in any condition worthy of conservation and none retain any meaningful context in terms of their earlier function”.

## **5.2 Historical Background**

According to the 1898 map of the south-western Cape, there was no development in the general area of Blue Downs/Eerste River until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

There appears to have been some Crown Land near the Eerste River Station toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of this Crown Land was reserved for the Eerste

River Station between 1899 and 1906 (CGR 2/1/609) and the subdivision of Crown Land at the Eerste River Station took place around 1918 (PAS 2/379). The land between the Kuils River and Eerste River was being sold from around 1899 (PWD 2/5/400). There were numerous applications from the 1890s for Lots of land in the vicinity of the station.



**Figure 4:** The 1902 Divisional Map of Stellenbosch.

There is also a reference to squatting on Crown Land near Eerste River in 1897 (LND 1/464). The 1902 Divisional Map of Stellenbosch shows numerous plots of land in and around the station of Eerste River, as well as a single reference to “Blue Downs”. There were complaints about shifting dunes (AGR 51) between 1890 and 1897; and a shortage of water (AG1759) in 1907.

The South African Wimbledon Association owned a rifle range to the north of the site (ACLT 10185) in 1884 and this is indicated on Figure 4. The 1926 aerial maps show numerous plots of arable land around the station. Correspondence between 1921 and 1933 are concerned with the proposal that certain portions of the Eerste River Forest Reserve on the Klipfontein-Faure Road should be set aside for “coloured” settlement on the Cape Flats (ACLT 751).

## **6. DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

The most distinctive characteristic of the area is the undulating topography. There are numerous low hills which appear to be old sand dunes that are now covered in vegetation. It is not clear whether some of this undulating landscape has been artificially created by sand mining in the past.



**Plate 1:** View eastward across the area.



**Plate 2:** View westward, towards Conifers, a housing estate bordering on the proposed development.

The land is currently entirely undeveloped and is covered by a combination of indigenous Cape Flats Dune Strandveld vegetation and some exotic Port Jackson and eucalyptus trees (Plates 1 & 2). There are a number of groves of blue gum (*Eucalyptus* sp.) trees in the northern section of the land.



**Plates 3 & 4:** View of the illegal dumping on the site.

Illegal dumping has taken place particularly in those areas adjoining residential properties. Several informal paths cross the land. Although the vegetation limited visibility over much of the site, the paths and tracks afforded the opportunity to examine sandy areas for artefacts.





**Plate 5:** Leaking pipes (a pipeline servitude crosses the property) have resulted in an artificial wetland in the northern section of the site.

The land is currently vacant but at least 2 informal houses were noticed in the bush (Plate 6).



**Plate 6:** Some informal housing hidden in a thicket of Port Jackson.

## **7. SURVEY METHODS**

The property was visited by Lita Webley and Jayson Orton on the 4 August 2011. The survey was conducted by vehicle and on foot, and a Garmin GPS unit was used to record sites.

### **6.1 Limitations**

Access to the central areas of the property was particularly difficult. We were unable to drive across the site due to the thick vegetation and large vegetated dunes. Surveying had to be conducted on foot. However, we were concerned about safety issues due to the presence of informal housing and the fact that there were a number of people making use of the paths across the land.

## **8. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY**

We found no outcrops or exposures of calcrete (in other words surface deposits) which might contain fossiliferous material.

Although the property was thickly vegetated, there had been a recent fire which exposed a large area of land. It was possible to survey these areas. No pre-colonial or colonial archaeological remains were uncovered.

No buildings or ruined buildings, structures or graves were found.

## **9. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The fossil material in the sediments underlying the surface Witzand Formation is potentially highly significant. Excavations for foundations and infrastructure such as pipelines may penetrate into underlying Pleistocene sediments. Although fossils in these sediments are rare, if encountered, they must be recorded by a palaeontologist. The earliest (Late Miocene and Pliocene) deposits are unlikely to be disturbed by normal housing development.

No pre-colonial or colonial archaeological remains were recovered during the survey. While it is possible that stone artefacts may be uncovered during the construction work, they will not be *in-situ* and they are likely to have low significance.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are no significant heritage indicators which would prevent the development. However, the following recommendations are made to mitigate potential impact:

- Avery (see Appendix) recommends that bulk earthworks for foundations and infrastructure, which may penetrate into underlying older Pleistocene sediments, be monitored by a palaeontologist who also has knowledge of archaeology so that potential material can be appropriately recorded. It is important that there is close co-operation between the contractor and the palaeontologist. Further, protocols for dealing with palaeontological material must be included in the Environmental Management Plan. All material which is recovered will be lodged in the collections of the Iziko South African Museum. Avery recommends that the palaeontologist responsible for monitoring the site apply for a permit ahead of excavation to avoid time delays during construction.
- If any human remains are uncovered during building operations, work should cease in that area while the matter is reported to Heritage Western Cape, SAHRA and the police.

## **11. REFERENCES**

Avery, G. 2011. Palaeontological Assessment Erf 1897, Blue Downs (3418BA Mitchell's Plain & 3318DC Bellville). Unpublished report for Doug Jeffrey Environmental Consultants.

Halkett, D. 2002. Phase 1 Archaeological assessment of the Bluedowns-Firgrove 132kV powerline. Unpublished report for Eskom.

Hart, T. 2004. Heritage Impact Assessment of a portion of the remainder of Farm 681 situated near Firgrove, Western Cape Province. Unpublished report for Crowther Campbell & Associates.

Orton, J. 2004. Heritage scoping study for the proposed rezoning and subdivision of Erf 5540, Eerste River. Unpublished report for CCA Environmental (Pty) Ltd.

Orton, J. & Hart. 2005. Heritage Impact Assessment of the proposed Saxdowns Road, Blackheath. Unpublished report for Ninham Shand (Pty) Ltd.

Orton, J. 2006. An initial Heritage Impact Assessment on Erf 1366, Eerste River. Unpublished report for Mr T Wessels.

Orton, J. 2007. Further investigations into Heritage Resources on Farms 517, 517/1, 518, 518/1, 521/4, 522/3 & 522/4, Kuils River, Kuils River Magisterial District, Western Cape. Unpublished report for Shining Oaks Investments 7 cc.

Orton, J. 2007. Heritage Statement for a Proposed Road on Farms 530, 533 & 1388, Kuils River, Kuils River Magisterial District, Western Cape. Unpublished report for Shining Oaks Investments 7 cc.

Pether, J. 2007. Fossils in Dunes. Palaeontology in the Witzand Formation: a general discussion document.

### **Cape Archives**

CGR 2/1/609

PAS 2/379

PWD 2/5/400

LND 1/464

AGR 51

AG1759

ACLT 10185

ACLT 751

## APPENDIX 1