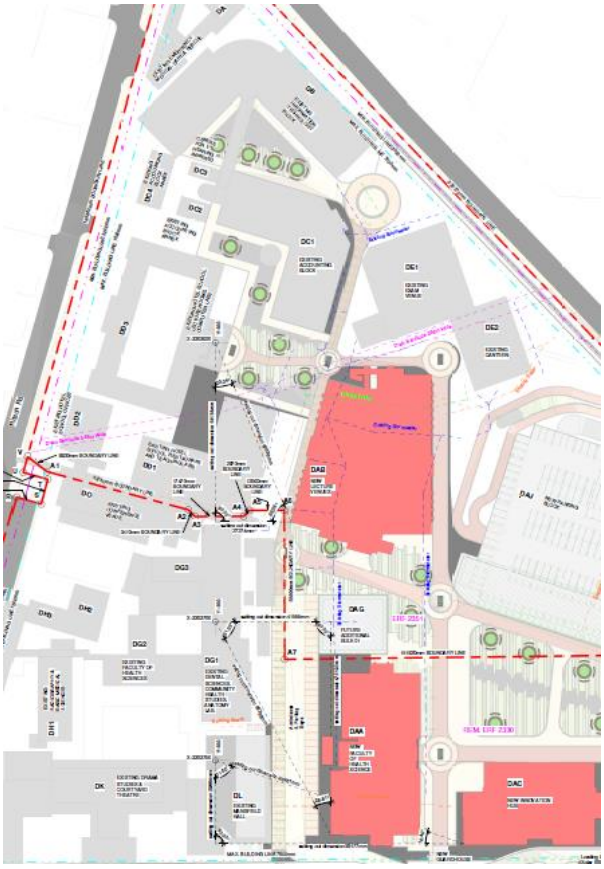
VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY – RITSON CAMPUS

Proposed development of the New Innovation Hub, Lecture Venues, Health Sciences, Arts and Design Buildings



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

uKuza Consulting was appointed by the Durban University of Technology to undertake a visual impact assessment for the proposed development at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) – Ritson Campus. This campus is located within the eThekwini Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal.

As requested by AMAFA the report addresses the following: Visual heritage impact assessment report from the back of the existing buildings, ie Mansfield Hall and Dental sciences, community health studies and anatomy Lab buildings, and Steve Biko Road including renditions of existing buildings.

The Durban University of Technology currently has approximately 33 000 students and is located in both Durban and Pietermaritzburg. The proposed development at the Ritson Campus aims to increase the capacity of the Technicon and the quality of education, while ensuring the promotion of education to serve the interests of a growing population, thereby improving lives and livelihoods.

The proposed development for the Durban University of Technology Ritson Campus, is necessitated by several factors. Firstly, DUT's current campuses are spread out over several sites around Durban, and the new development will amalgamate some of these buildings into a more coherent campus. Secondly, there is a distinct need for additional teaching space as well as more innovative learning environments. Lastly, the development forms part of the long term spatial development plan for DUT. The Ritson Campus development will include the provision of new lecture venues, health sciences, arts and design faculties as well as the provision of improved parking and entrances to the campus.

We, Ukuza Consulting visited the site on 31 May 2022, undertaking only a surface study, as well as a literature survey. The listed buildings and protected structures on and near to the site were identified and documented.

We request that Amafa aKwaZuluNatali provide support for the proposed development at the DUT Ritson Campus to proceed, subject to the monitoring advised. Should permission be granted for the development to proceed, the client is reminded that as per the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999, a developer must cease all work immediately and notify Amafa should any heritage resources be discovered, both on the surface as well as sub-surface.

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2
1. Introduction 4
1.1 Purpose of the Study 4
1.2 Scope of the study 4
1.3 Limitations and Assumptions 4
1.4 Methodology 5
2. Project Description 5
3. Project Location 8
4. Location of Heritage Buildings 11
5. Discussion 14
5.1 Intersection of Steve Biko and Ritson Road 14
5.2 Back of the Existing Buildings 16
5.2.1 Mansfield Hall 16
5.2.2 Dental Sciences, Anatomy Lab and Community Health Studies 18
5.3 Steve Biko Road 20
6. Recommended Monitoring and Mitigation Measures 22
7. Conclusion 22
8. Bibliography 23
APPENDIX A: PHOTOGRAPHS 24
APPENDIX B: SDP 30

1. Introduction

uKuza Consulting was appointed by the Durban University of Technology to undertake a visual impact assessment for the proposed development of the New Innovation Hub, Lecture Venues, Health Sciences, and Arts and Design Buildings at Durban University of Technology – Ritson Campus, located within the eThekwini Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act No 25 of 1999 (refer to Appendix A). The proposed development at the the DUT Ritson Campus aims to ensure the promotion of education to serve the interests of a growing population, thereby improving lives and livelihoods.

South Africa is a country which is rich in natural and heritage resources, from various periods in history. Resources are both tangible such as buildings, trees and structures, as well as intangible, such as living and cultural heritage. The protection of these resources must be ensured, as they can be jeopardized by both natural and human activities. In terms of human activities, there exists legislation to ensure the protection of these heritage resources. According to Section 27(18) of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), No. 25 of 1999, no person may destroy, damage, deface, excavate, alter, remove from its original position, subdivide or change the planning status of any heritage site without a permit issued by the heritage resources authority responsible for the protection of such site.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to analyse the existing urban fabric of the proposed development site and the effect of the design of the new buildings on this fabric. The existing buildings are examined in terms of their heights, spatial layouts, and construction materials. The study looks at the new buildings in terms of the current buildings, and streetscapes, and assesses the extent to which they fall in line with current heritage values of the buildings.

The study also aims to develop guidelines within which the design should be developed to ensure that the impact of the new development on the existing urban fabric, and streetscapes in terms of its heritage value is mitigated.

1.2 Scope of the study

As requested by AMAFA the report addresses the following: Visual heritage impact assessment report from the back of the existing buildings, ie Mansfield Hall and Dental sciences, community health studies and anatomy Lab buildings, and Steve Biko Road including renditions of existing buildings.

The buildings are examined as at their current design stage, using the drawings and renders provided by the architect.

1.3 Limitations and Assumptions

- Study based on visits to site, and studying of surrounding buildings and aerial images, GIS etc
- Visual impact based on current level of drawings and renders

1.4 Methodology

- Conducting a desk-top investigation of the area, in which literature, and maps were studied.
- A visit to the proposed development area, including taking pictures of the existing streets, intersections and buildings
- Assessment of renders and drawings provided by the architects, Ikamva Architects SA, while considering the current buildings, and streetscapes

2. Project Description

The proposed development is to be undertaken on a portion of the Durban University of Technology – Ritson Campus. This has been demarcated in red in the image below.

FIGURE 1: THE DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY - RITSON CAMPUS (GOOGLE EARTH)

The proposed development for the Durban University of Technology Ritson Campus, is necessitated by several factors. Firstly, DUT's current campuses are spread out over several sites around Durban, and the new development will amalgamate some of these buildings into a more coherent campus. Secondly, there is a distinct need for additional teaching space, as well as more innovative learning environments. Lastly, the development forms part of the long term spatial development plan for DUT. The Ritson Campus development will include the provision of new lecture venues, health sciences, arts and design faculties, as well as provision of improved parking and entrances to the campus (DUT Spatial Plan 2020 - 2040).

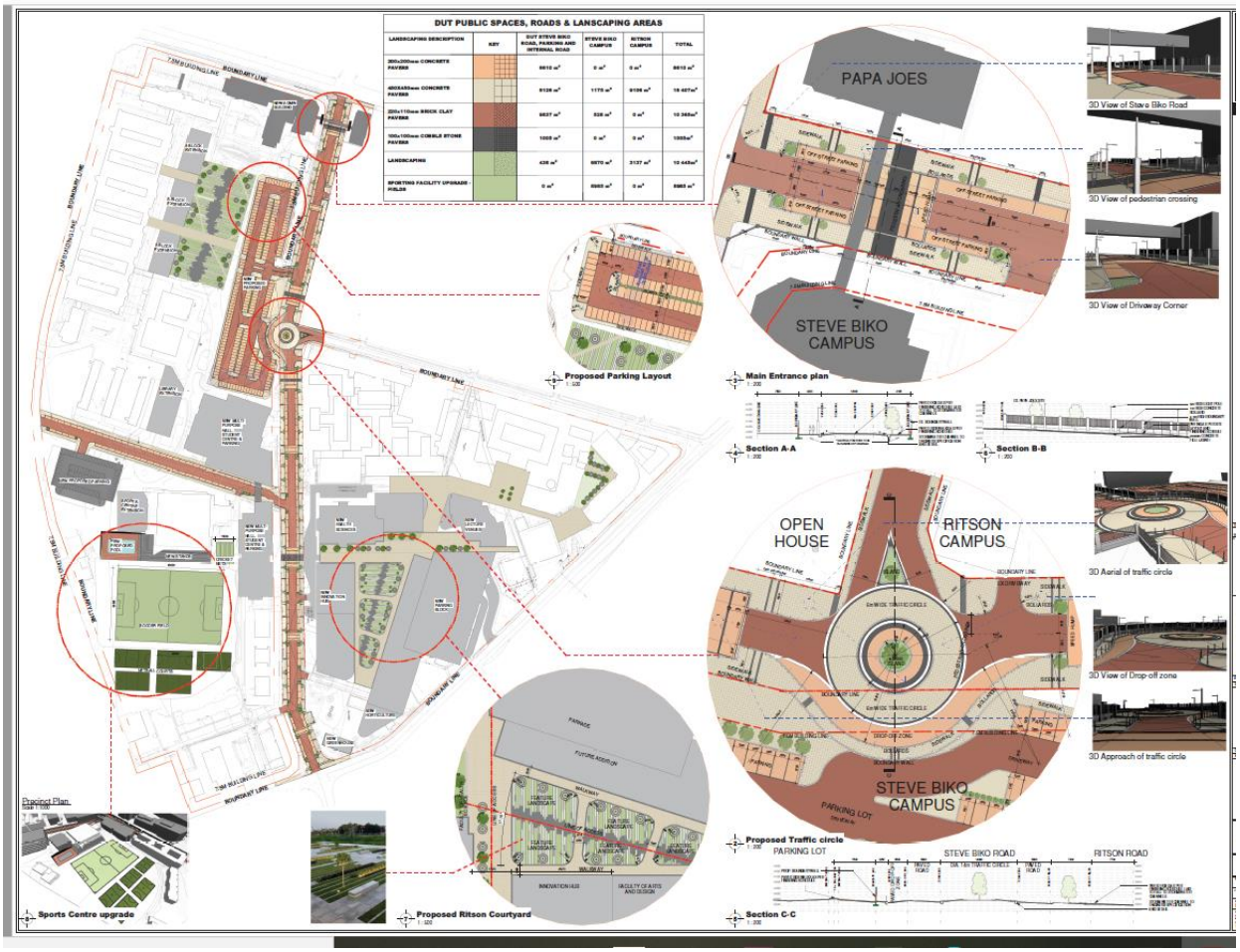


FIGURE 2: THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT THE DUT RITSON CAMPUS (PRAGASEN GOVENDER ARCHITECTS)
(See Appendix C for full image)

The planned development on Ritson Campus, shown in Figure 2 above, will comprise several buildings, with a total bulk of approximately 52 000 square metres. There will be minimal demolition.

Currently, the Ritson Campus, houses a number of buildings that cater to the Health Science, Arts and Design and Accounting and Informatics faculties. The proposed development site is located to the east of the existing buildings on the campus, where there is currently a parking lot in the centre, which is accessed off Winterton Road. Two smaller parking areas are located off Steve Biko Road and one off Ritson Road.

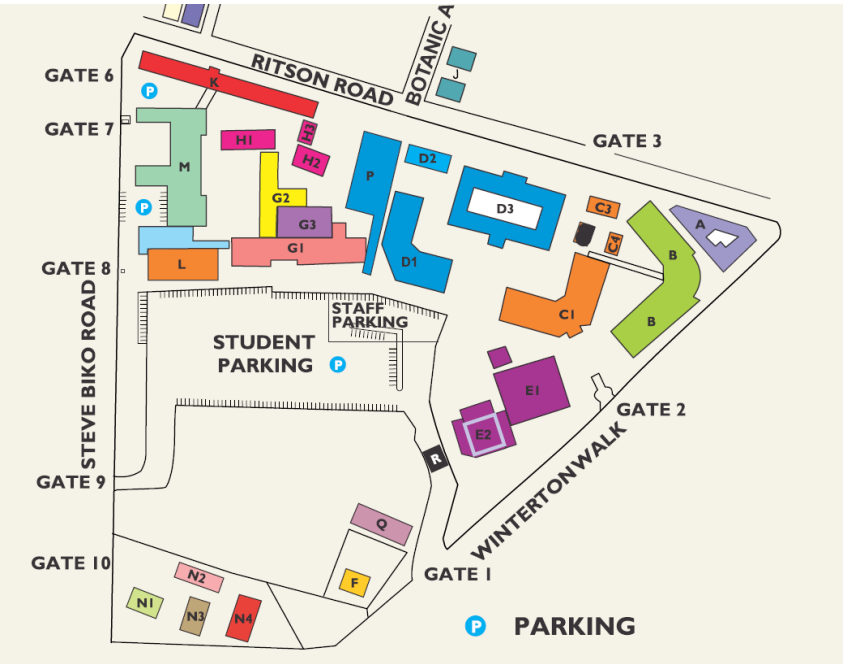


FIGURE 3: CURRENT LAYOUT OF THE RITSON CAMPUS (DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY)

The proposed construction will be limited to a portion of the Ritson campus, demarcated Area B in the image below. The portion demarcated Area A is existing and will not be the site of any development.

FIGURE 4: THE DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY - RITSON CAMPUS (GOOGLE EARTH)

3. Project Location

The proposed development is located within the premises of the Durban University of Technology in the Ritson Campus, within the EThekwini Metropolitan Municipality of the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa. Access to site is off the N3 National Road into ML Sultan Road.

At the time of investigation, the area within which the proposed development is located comprised existing buildings, parking bays, parkhomes and containers used as clinics and venues.

The Ritson campus is divided into 3 erven as shown in the cadastral below.

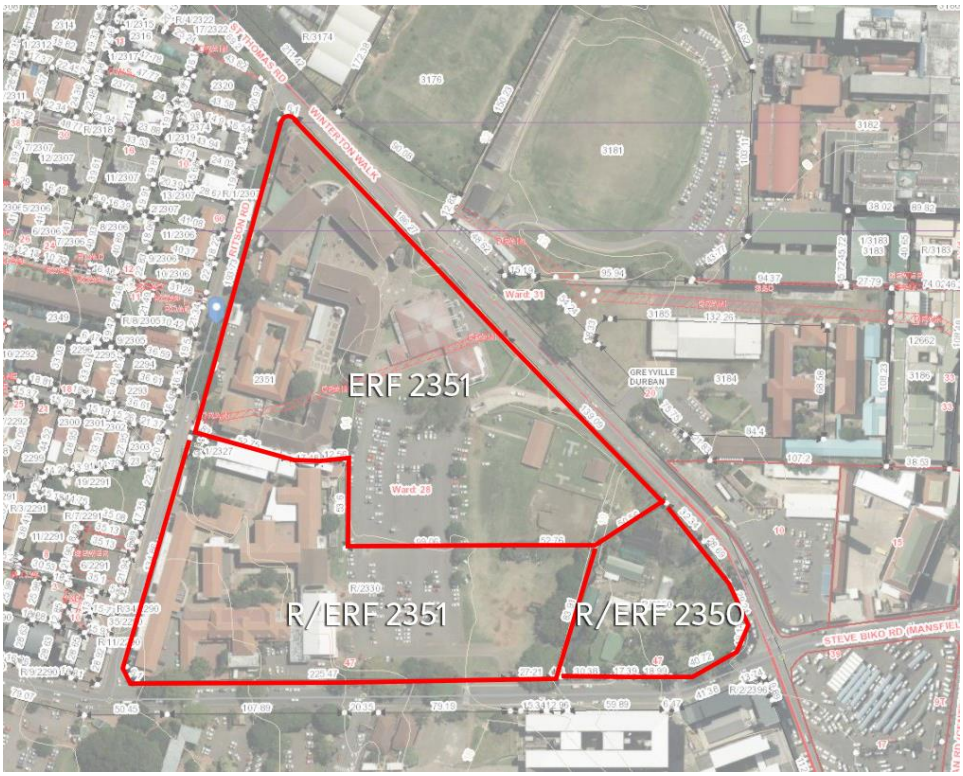


FIGURE 5: CADASTRAL INFORMATION OF DUT RITSON CAMPUS (GIS.DURBAN.GOV.ZA)

The Durban University of Technology, formerly known as the Natal Technikon, was started in 1922 and is located on near the Durban CBD in Kwa-Zulu Natal (South African History Online, 2011). DUT has been located using a red dot on the map below.

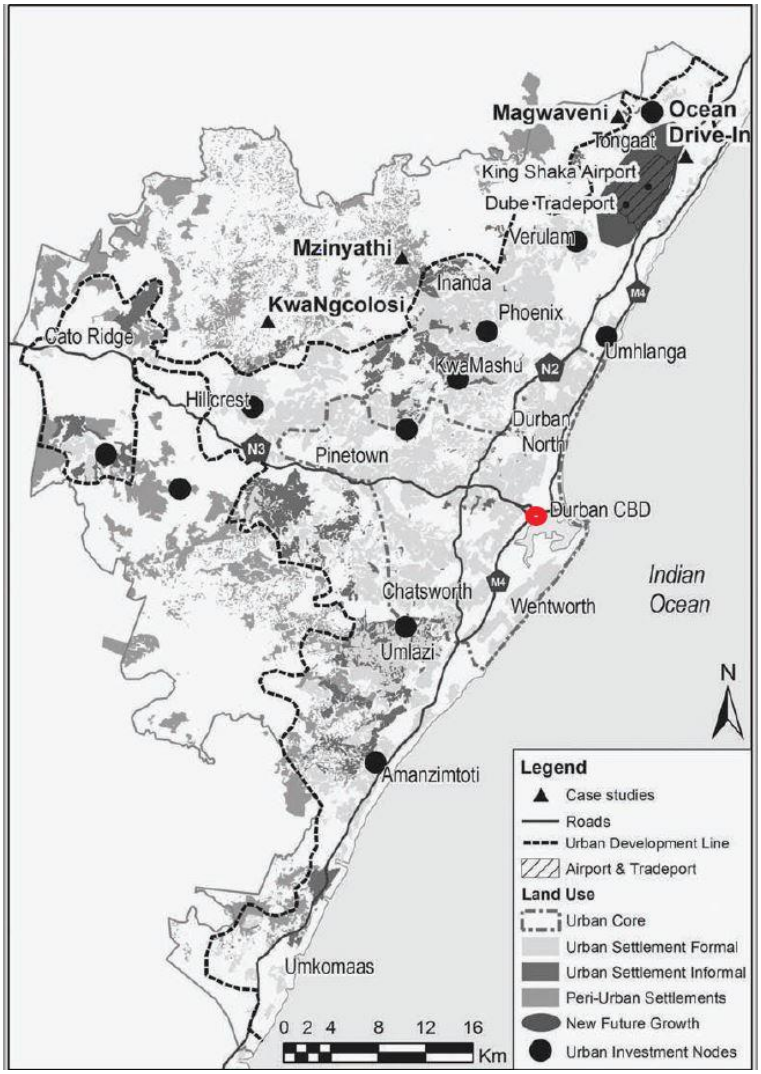


FIGURE 6: REGIONAL MAP OF KWAZULU NATAL (HTTPS://WWW.RESEARCHGATE.NET/FIGURE/THE-URBAN-CORE-AND-RURAL-PERIPHERY-OF-ETHEKWINI-MUNICIPALITY-SOURCE-MAP-PRODUCED-BY_FIG1_)

DUT operates on five different campuses in Durban, and two in Pietermaritzburg, offering tuition through its six faculties of Accounting and Informatics; Applied Sciences; Arts and Design; Engineering and the Built Environment; Health Sciences; and Management Sciences. Figure 7 below shows the location of the Ritson Campus in the larger Durban context. DUT Ritson Camous has been demarcated using a red triangle.

FIGURE 7: LOCAL MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF DUT RITSON CAMPUS (GOOGLE MAPS)

The Ritson Campus is bounded on the west by Ritson Road, on the south by Steve Biko Road, and on the north and east by Winterton Walk, as can be seen in Figure 8.

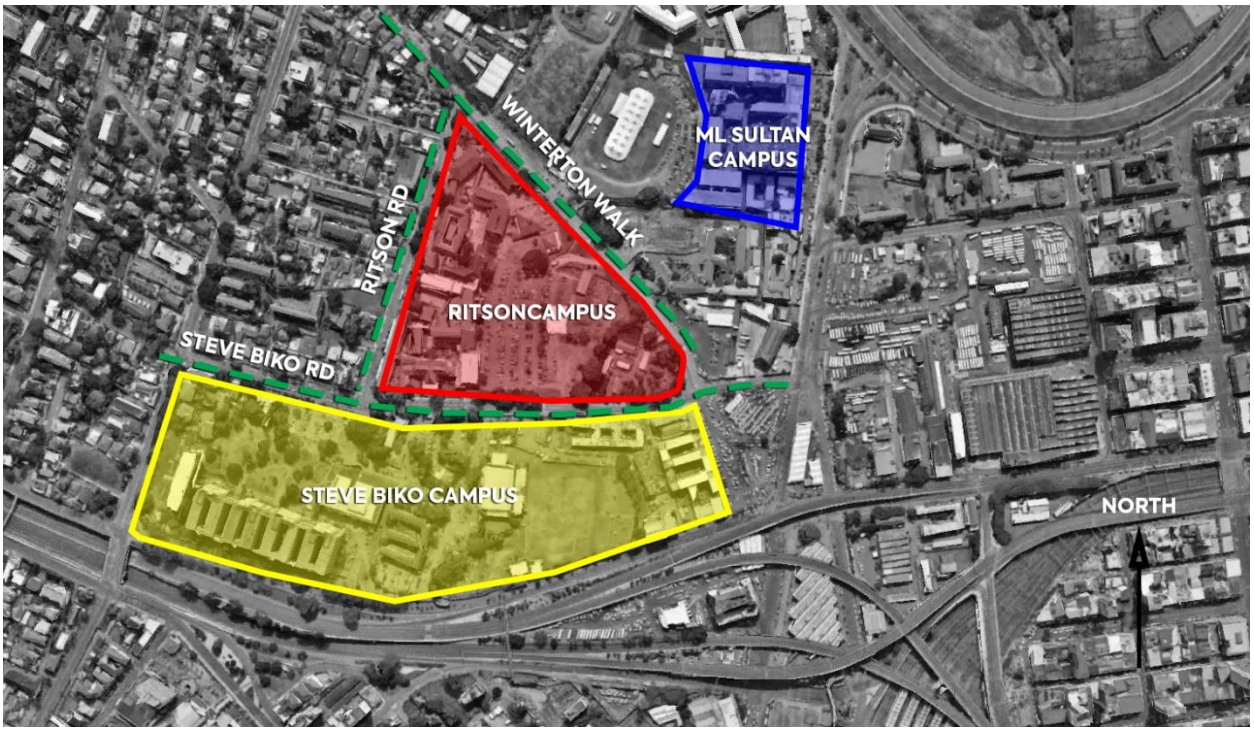


FIGURE 8: LAYOUT OF CAMPUS AND SURROUNDING ROADS (GOOGLE MAPS)

4. Location of Heritage Buildings

The heritage buildings have been marked ‘A’ and ‘B’ in Figure 9 below, and their position is shown relative to the proposed construction area which is marked ‘C’.

The building marked ‘A’ in Figure 9 has been listed in Brian Kearney’s ‘A Revised Listing of the Important Places and Buildings in Durban’. This building is currently being used as the DUT Drama building. It is on the west of the site, on the corner of Steve Biko and Ritson Road, and it’s protection must be ensured during the construction phase. This building is not in direct contact with the proposed New Innovation Hub, Lecture Venues, Health Sciences, and Arts building.

The building marked ‘B’, which is used for the hotel school lecture rooms, computer labs, faculty of accounting and informatics, executive dean’s office and faculty office is currently considered to be a protected building as it is older than 60 years. This building will not be directly affected by the construction, although its protection should be ensured.

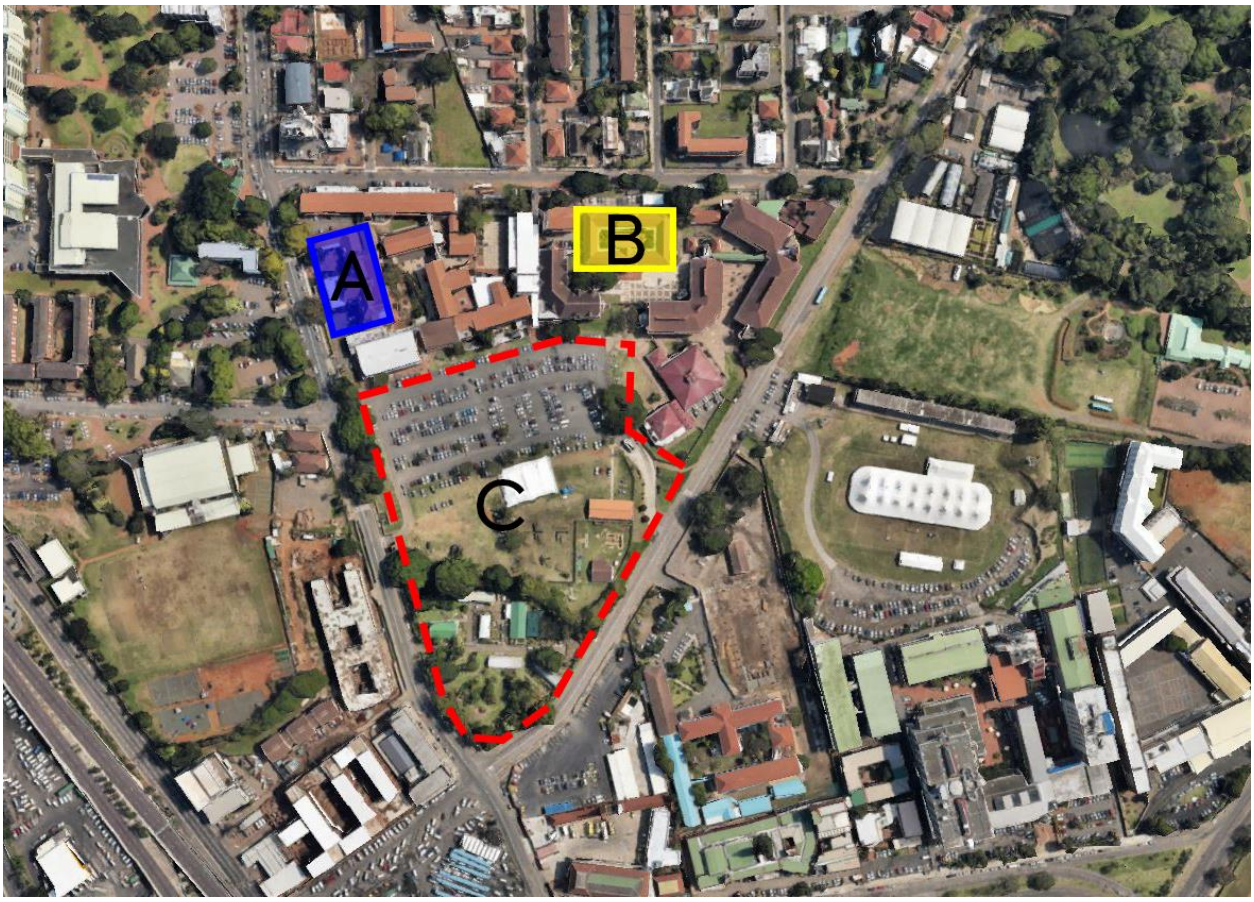


FIGURE 9: LOCATION OF THE HERITAGE BUILDINGS RELATIVE TO THE DEVELOPMENT AREA (GOOGLE EARTH)

The development does not fall in direct contact with either of the heritage buildings, as shown in Figure 9 above. The main entrance of the proposed development is off Winterton Walk at Gate 1, while the listed building, the DUT Drama Building is on the western edge of the site, adjacent to Gate 7, off Steve Biko Rd.

Please see images of the listed building below, taken during the site visit. The remainder of the pictures can be found in Appendix A.

FIGURE 10: ROAD FRONTAGE OF THE LISTED BUILDING

FIGURE 11: COURTYARD OF THE LISTED BUILDING

FIGURE 12: ENTRANCE TO THE LISTED BUILDING (AUTHOR)

5. Discussion

Certain key areas have been identified for the visual impact assessment, in keeping with the request from AMAFA. The first discussion is surrounding the intersection of Steve Biko and Ritson Road, which is the location of the new controlled access in the proposed plan. The interface between the existing buildings such as Mansfied Hall, anatomy lab etc and proposed buildings is then examined. Finally, the streetscape and existing buildings on Steve Biko Road are discussed.

5.1 Intersection of Steve Biko and Ritson Road

The proposed development intends to create controlled access at the corner of Steve Biko Rd and Ritson Rd, at the location of the current intersection as shown in Figure 13 and 14. An additional controlled access point is planned at the corner of Ritson Rd and Winterton Walk. The aim of this intervention is to reduce vehicular traffic by creating a more pedestrian friendly street. This is necessary as a large majority of the students travel by foot, or use public transport and then travel by foot. It will also encourage students to walk by improving their safety by insulating the campus from the public street interface.

Essentially, the closure of the public street will result in a portion Steve Biko Rd becoming part of the new development, i.e. an internal road as opposed to a public street. The proposed controlled access is depicted in Figure 14 below.

At the two controlled access points mentioned above, shown in Figure 15, a guardhouse, together with a canopy spanning the entire width of the street is planned. As shown in the rendered image, the design of the canopy is intended to create a transparent lightweight structure that does not overpower the existing urban fabric. The use of glass and cantilevered concrete, perforated with a timber roof screen, is intended to promote the idea of transparency, while maintaining the purpose of access control, both pedestrian and vehicular.

FIGURE 13: EXISTING INTERSECTION OF STEVE BIKO AND RITSON ROAD

FIGURE 14: RENDER SHOWING PROPOSED ACCESS

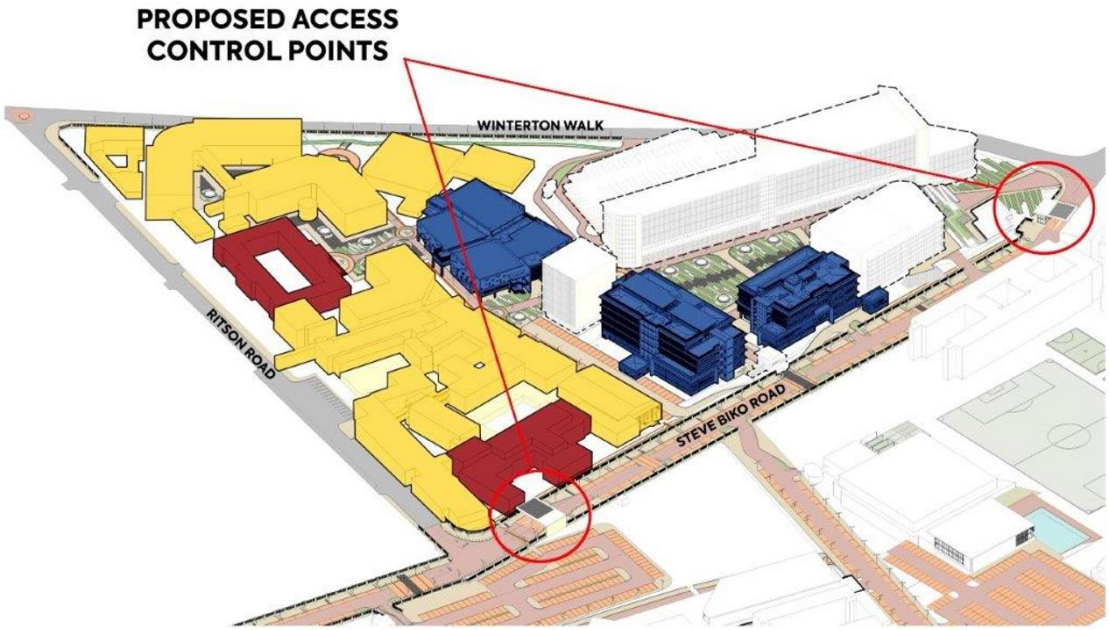


FIGURE 15: RENDER SHOWING PROPOSED ACCESS (IKAMVA ARCHITECTS SA)

5.2 Back of the Existing Buildings

5.2.1 Mansfield Hall

A road is proposed between the existing Mansfield Hall, anatomy lab, community health studies and the new buildings. As per the existing buildings, the proposed buildings have been designed using similar materials. The new buildings as shown in Figure 16, provided by the project architect, Ikamva Architects SA, will be constructed using a concrete framed structure with facebrick infilling large cubic forms perforated with aluminimiun and glass openings,

The proposed buildings are also similar in height and proportion. As shown in the rendered image below, the road between the buildings is a two way street with pedestrian throughfares on either side of a parking aisle. The road, parking aisles and pedestrian walkways set the buildings back from each other, creating a visual buffer between the new and old structures.

FIGURE 16: IMAGE SHOWING THE BACK OF MANSFIELD HALL

FIGURE 17: RENDER SHOWING PROPOSED BUILDINGS (IKAMVA ARCHITECTS SA)

5.2.2 Dental Sciences, Anatomy Lab and Community Health Studies

In terms of their design, as per the current renders provided by the project architect, buildings of similar heights, materiality and proportion are planned opposite the Dental Science and adjacent buildings. There is also a similar road, and pedestrian sidewalk as shown in the rendered image of Mansfield Hall, Figure 19.

The new street and building facades aim to achieve architectural synchronicity with the existing buildings thereby creating a homogenized campus. Again, similar materials and building forms as the existing will be adopted.

FIGURE 18: IMAGE SHOWING EXISTING DENTAL SCIENCE, ANATOMY LAB AND COMMUNITY HEALTH STUDIES

FIGURE 19: RENDER SHOWING PROPOSED BUILDINGS (IKAMVA ARCHITECTS SA)

FIGURE 20: RENDER SHOWING PROPOSED BUILDINGS (IKAMVA ARCHITECTS SA)

5.3 Steve Biko Road

The proposed buildings along Steve Biko Road have been set back from the street considerably, in line with the existing buildings. Please see figure 21 for existing buildings along Steve Biko Road.

In terms of access, as per the proposed site development plan, there is pedestrian access into the buildings directly from the street. There is also a service access to the back of the buildings. This has been strategically done to create a more integrated spatial interaction between street, people, cars and buildings. Direct vehicular and pedestrian access has been proposed off the street, which further emphasizes this design philosophy.

The street elevation of the proposed development shown in Figure 23 below demonstrates that the new buildings will maintain the heritage of red brick, concrete and glass that is predominant in the construction of both Mansfield Hall and the listed building that now occupies the Drama department at DUT.

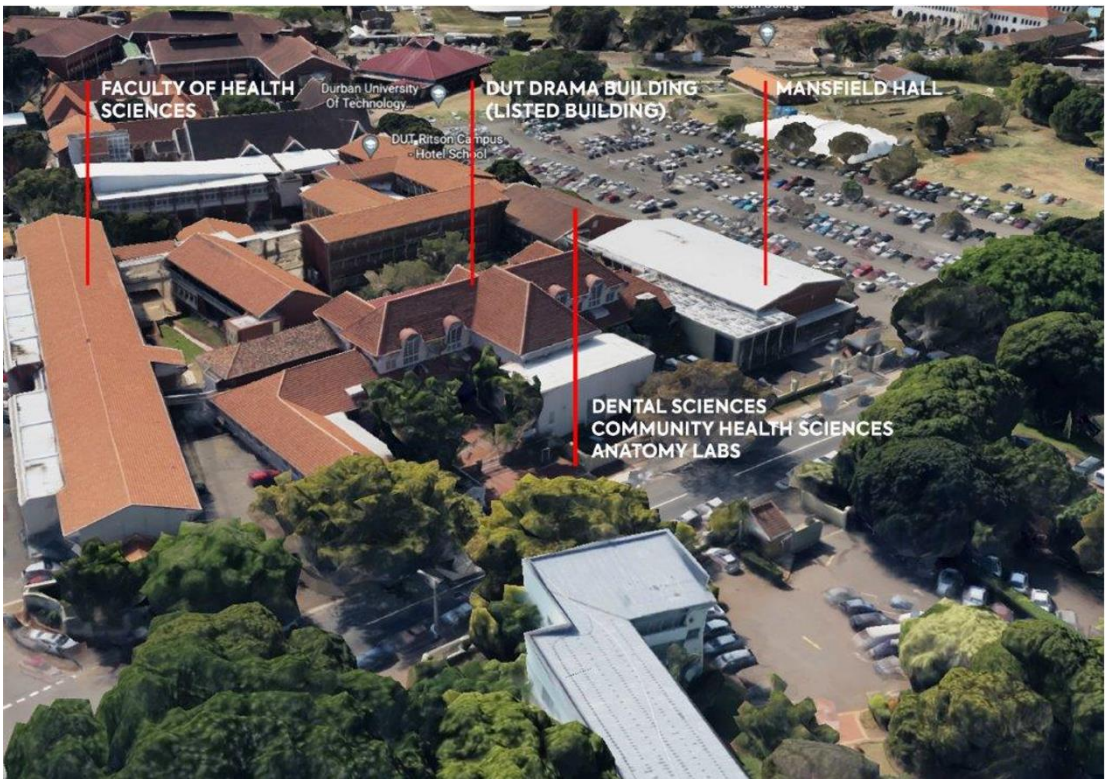


FIGURE 21: EXISTING BUILDINGS ON STEVE BIKO ROAD

FIGURE 22: CURRENT VIEW OF MANSFIELD HALL FROM STEVE BIKO ROAD

FIGURE 23: RENDER SHOWING PROPOSED VIEW FROM STEVE BIKO ROAD (IKAMVA ARCHITECTS SA)

6. Recommended Monitoring and Mitigation Measures

1. It must be ensured that the existing heritage buildings are properly secured to prevent any damage to them. These buildings cannot be altered in any way without obtaining a permit from AMAFA.
2. Trees that are protected under the National Forest Act, 1998 (Act No 84 of 1998) must be identified by a specialist as per the 1999 Heritage Resources Act, as it is an offence to remove a heritage resource without a permit.
3. The new buildings should be in line with the existing in terms of their set backs from the road as well as heights and materiality.
4. The heritage specialist should be involved in guiding the design process to ensure that the design is in harmony with the heritage value of the area.

7. Conclusion

We request that Amafa aKwaZuluNatali provide support for the proposed development at the DUT Ritson Campus to proceed, subject to the monitoring advised, and have submitted this report in fulfilment of the requirements of the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999.

Should permission be granted for the development to proceed, the client is reminded that as per the Act, the developer must cease all work immediately and notify Amafa should any heritage resources be discovered.

8. Bibliography

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APPENDIX A: PHOTOGRAPHS

PROPOSED PARKING LOT FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

PROPOSED PARKING LOT FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

PROPOSED PARKING LOT FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

LISTED BUILDING – DUT DRAMA BULDING

LISTED BUILDING – DUT DRAMA BUILDING

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LISTED BUILDING – DUT DRAMA BUILDING

PROTECTED BUILDING

PROTECTED BUILDING

PROTECTED BUILDING

APPENDIX B: SDP