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27 July 2022

HERITAGE COMMENT

The Proposed Rectification in terms of Section 24G of NEMA for the Unauthorised Establishment of a Private Staging Facility on a Portion of the Property Rem of Portion 55 of the Farm Langewacht No. 2168 near Mooi River, KwaZulu-Natal.

Introduction

Green Door Environmental was appointed on behalf of Izusa Carriers (Pty) Ltd to provide a comment on the likely impact of the unauthorised establishment of the above-mentioned private staging facility on heritage resources in the Mooi River area of KwaZulu-Natal.

Background and Project Locality

Izusa Carriers (Pty) Ltd wishes to acquire retrospective Environmental Authorisation via a 24G Application process for the unauthorised establishment of a private staging facility on a 1.98ha portion of the property Rem of Portion 55 of the Farm Langewacht No. 2168, adjacent to the N3 Hidcote Turnoff near Mooi River, KwaZulu-Natal. The staging facility is located at GPS coordinates S29°9'1.59" and E29°58'23.01", approximately 6km north of Mooi River town. The staging facility was established in 2021 and is used for minor truck repairs (globes, tire pressures, lights, etc.) and as a stopover for drivers for the Izusa Carriers own private trucks. The trucks mainly transport maize, soya and wheat, as well as coal, chrome (from Rustenberg to Durban) and copper concentrate (from Palaborwa to Durban).

The Hidcote and Mooi River area is dominated by agricultural activities. The closest protected area is Wagendrift Nature Reserve and Dam which is located 16km to the north west of the property. The entire property is 43.79ha in extent and is owned by the Applicant, however only a 1.98ha portion has been developed. The site is surrounded by agricultural land and the N3 Highway to the west and south, an unnamed secondary road to the north, and a farmhouse and other buildings associated with the existing agricultural activities on Langewacht Farm to the east and south east (refer to Figure 1). The development footprint is located on land that previously comprised grassland and was used for livestock grazing. As shown in Figure 2 below, most of the site has been completely transformed by the staging facility development and currently comprises parking areas for trucks, roads, a workshop, and other associated buildings.

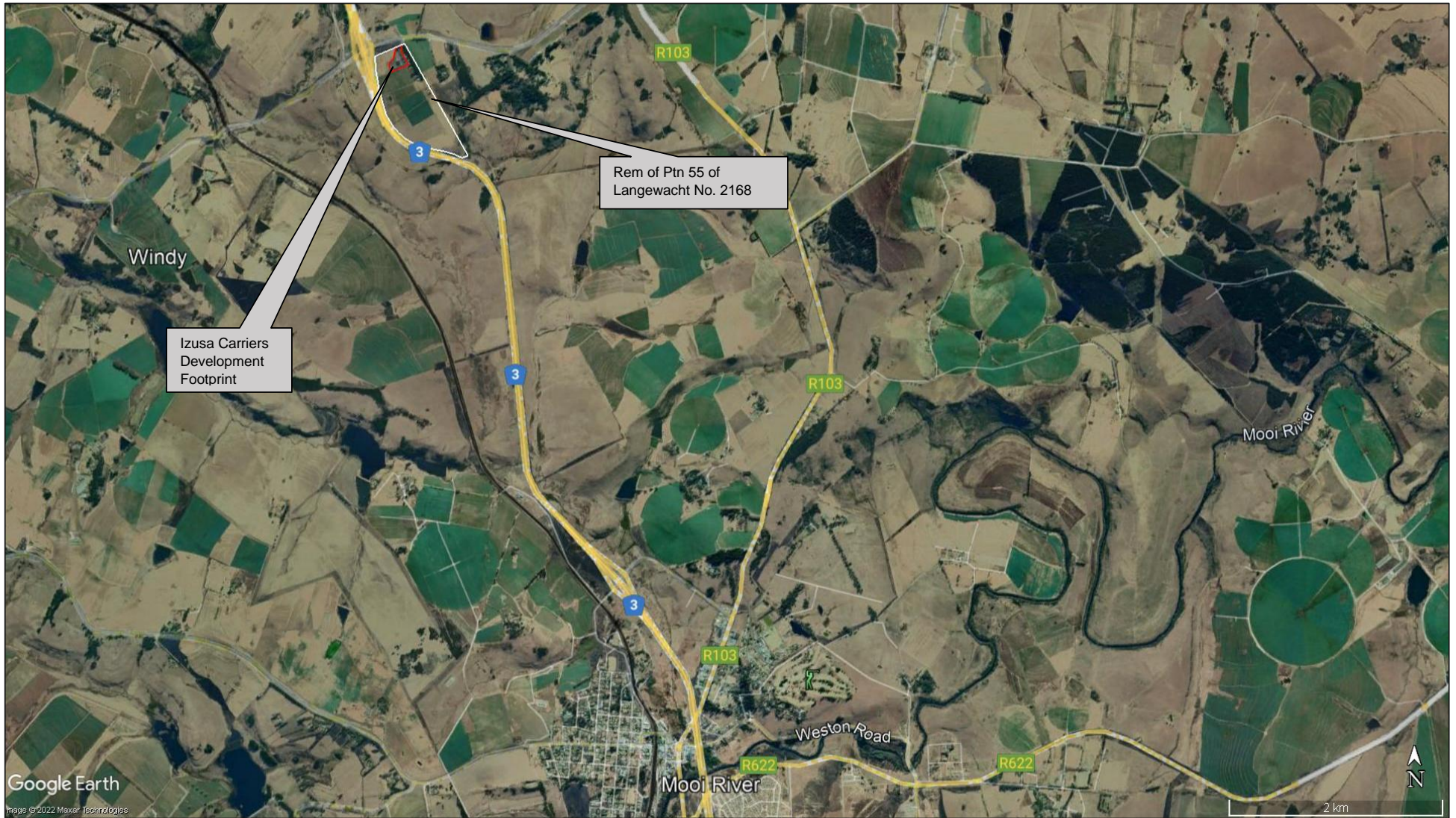


Figure 1: Locality Map for the Izusa Carriers Staging Facility Development Site.



Figure 2: Izusa Carriers Staging Facility Development Footprint.

Methodology

A desktop assessment and review of relevant current and historical aerial imagery of the study site was undertaken. Historical imagery was obtained from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform and the National Geospatial Information website (<http://cdngiportal.co.za/cdngiportal/>) in order to identify historical land uses associated with the study site and surrounds, and to identify the previous presence of any heritage resources on the development footprint. The SAHRIS website and Provincial Heritage Register were consulted for data on the presence and significance of any heritage sites within the larger Mooi River area. In addition, the available heritage literature covering the larger study area was also consulted.

Cultural Overview of the Study Area

The greater Mooi River area has been relatively well surveyed for archaeological sites by archaeologists from the then Natal Museum, as well as more recently by private heritage consultants over the past few years. The Weenen and Muden areas to the north east and east of the study site have also been well surveyed for archaeological sites. Findings of these surveys show that the larger study area was intensely occupied by Iron Age farming communities since the Early Iron Age, from around 500 AD, with a relatively large number of Iron Age sites recorded in the area (Prins, 2016). A range of other archaeological sites are also recorded in the KwaZulu-Natal Museum and Amafa heritage site inventories for the larger study area. These include one Early Stone Age site, four Middle Stone Age sites and more than twenty Later Stone Age sites. None of these sites are however located on the development footprint.

Furthermore, a large number of historical sites dating back to the colonial period occur on farms in the area. Some of these sites comprise graves and structures relating to early Voortrekker settlements. However, most of the sites comprise buildings that were erected by British colonists after 1850, who occupied farms previously inhabited by Voortrekker pioneers (Bizley and McKenzie, 2007; Prins 2016). All of these sites are over 60 years old and are protected by heritage legislation, however none are located on the development footprint.

Palaeontology

South Africa has a very rich fossil record, dating back over some 3.5 billion years. Fossil heritage is found in all provinces of South Africa. The palaeontological sensitivity of the study site as per the SAHRIS palaeo-sensitivity map is shown in Figure 3 below. The SAHRIS palaeo-sensitivity map shows the area as having an “insignificant/zero” sensitivity rating in terms of fossil sensitivity. As such, no palaeontological studies are required for the study site.

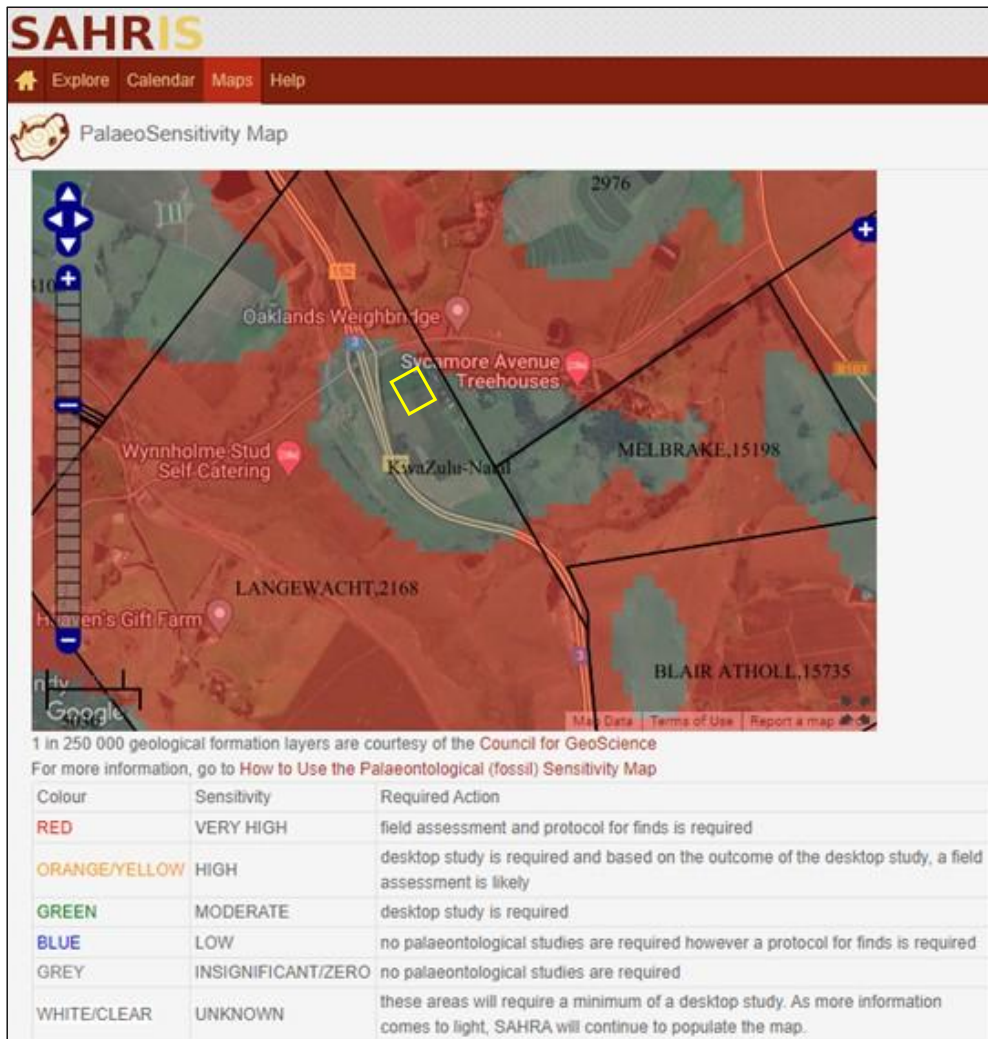


Figure 3: SAHRIS palaeo-sensitivity map for the study site (SAHRIS).

Desktop Assessment

An investigation into historical aerial imagery of the development site was undertaken in order to identify historical land uses on the site as well as the pre-development presence of any heritage resources on the site footprint. Aerial imagery from 1944, 1978, and 2008 (Figures 4 – 6) was used to identify past activity on the study site.

Aerial imagery from 1944 (Figure 4) shows the site and immediate surrounds as undeveloped, comprising grassland vegetation, with a row of trees along the eastern boundary of the site. There are no built structures present on the site in the 1944 aerial imagery. Aerial imagery from 1978 (Figure 5) shows little change to the site, with the site remaining undeveloped. The encroachment of trees onto the site is however evident, and the newly built section of N3 Highway is now also evident adjacent to the site in the 1978 imagery. There are no built structures present on or directly adjacent to the site.

Aerial imagery from 2008 (Figure 6) shows no significant land use change to the site, with the site still comprising grassland. Buildings are now evident to the east and south east of the site. Lastly, current Google Earth imagery from 2022 (Figure 7) shows the complete transformation of the site from grassland to hardened surfaces has occurred.



Figure 4: Historic aerial imagery of the development site from 1944 shows the site as undeveloped, comprising grassland, with trees and a dirt road adjacent to the eastern boundary. There are no buildings or other structures present on or directly adjacent to the site.



Figure 5: Aerial imagery from 1978 shows little change to the site, with the site remaining undeveloped. There are no built structures present on or directly adjacent to the site.



Figure 6: Aerial imagery from 2008 shows no significant land use change to the site, with the site still comprising undeveloped grassland. Built structures are now evident to the east of the site.



Figure 7: Current imagery of the site (2022) shows the complete transformation of the site from grassland to hardened surfaces.

Comment

The results of the desktop assessment show that the study site was undeveloped and comprised grassland prior to the development taking place in 2021. There were no built structures present on the site prior to the current development. The farmhouse and other agricultural buildings which are located adjacent to the site, to the east and south east, are all younger than 60 years old, having been built sometime after 1978. No heritage resources are evident on the site surface in the historic aerial imagery for the area. The site also does not form part of any known cultural landscape.

Based on the above, it is highly unlikely that any heritage resources or sites were impacted upon as a result of the unauthorised establishment of the Isuza Carriers staging facility development. As such, no mitigation or further studies are required.

Please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned should you have any queries or require further information.

Yours faithfully,



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References

Bizley, B. and McKenzie, P. 2007. An Historical Meander through the Midlands of KwaZulu-Natal. Midlands Meander Association, Howick.

Prins, F. 2016. Phase One Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment of Greenfields Farm at Mooi River, Mpofana Local Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal. Active Heritage cc. Unpublished Heritage Impact Assessment Report, SAHRA.

<http://cdngportal.co.za/cdngportal/>