

# HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

undertaken in terms of Section 38 of the National  
Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)

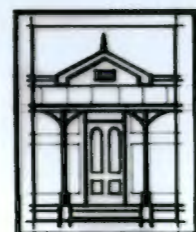
## ERVEN 27 AND 72, MCGREGOR OLD SCHOOL SITE

(3rd draft)

Submitted for HWC BELComm meeting, 14 May 2009



prepared by



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## SUMMARY OF APPLICATION:

**Section 38 application for erven 27 and 72, McGregor** – the site of the old school, comprising one erf with buildings on it and another with an earth dam and remains of the entrance gate to a building demolished pre-1997<sup>1</sup>. The applicants wish to develop the site as a retirement village comprising independent living units, assisted living units, frail care and communal facilities.

Should this adaptive re-use strategy and layout plan be supported in principle, subsequent applications in terms of section 34 would be required to alter the existing buildings on the site to accommodate the frail care and communal facilities.

### Heritage resources:

**tangible:** the old school building, erf 72;  
the hall and caretaker's accommodation building, erf 72;  
the plastered gate posts on erf 27;  
the earth dam on erf 27

**intangible:** the spatial language and character of the village of McGregor, which has developed since the establishment of the town in the mid-nineteenth century.

### Key heritage issues/ informants:

There are two buildings (both older than sixty years) and significant landscape features (the trees on the site boundaries, the earth dam and the *leiwater* channels on the site) on the site. The site is also on the northwestern edge of the town and part of both the urban language of the town and the view back to the town from the koppies north of town.

Any development on this large site will have a noticeable impact on the urban fabric of the village and must therefore respect the existing "urban rules" of McGregor. These "urban rules" are the design and heritage informants for this site.

The "urban rules" of McGregor can be broadly grouped into two groups: those evident and impacting at a townscape scale and those details of place-making at the individual building and streetscape scale.

The informants in the first group relate to how the town sits in its landscape and to the grid layout of the town. The landscape-related informants include:

- the way the towns in the area are linked by routes through the arable valleys,
- the views back to the town from the nearby dams and koppies and
- the edge between the town and the landscape beyond.

The grid-related informants are:

- the *leiwater* system,
- the "green" structure of trees that emphasises the main road and defines the edge of the town and the institutional zone of the old school site, and
- the way buildings relate to one another and the street within each block of the town grid.

The detail-level informants include:

- the way individual buildings relate to the street and the *leiwater* channel
- how the stoeps act as intermediate internal/external and public/private spaces
- the way the local architecture is typically detailed
- how buildings are grouped and what other devices are used to compose street corners
- how the street boundaries are detailed.

Intrinsic significance on the site lies in its low fence typical of McGregor boundary conditions; its lines of established trees that form part of the "green structure" of the town; and the school and hall/ church that are notable buildings within the town.

The old school building (typical of post-1900 Cape school buildings) and hall with caretaker's/ teacher's accommodation attached to it (typical in style of late C19th community facility buildings) are of local heritage significance and a grade 3B is proposed for them.

### Proposed development:

A retirement facility is proposed for the site, comprising:

- new independent living units on erf 27 and 72,
- assisted living units in a new building on erf 72,
- a frail care facility within the old school building and
- community facilities in the old hall and caretaker's house building,.

For the redevelopment proposed, erf 72 must be rezoned from Institutional 1 to Residential 2 with a consent use to allow a retirement village. Erf 27 must be rezoned from undetermined to Residential 2 with a consent use to allow a retirement village. The local draft Spatial Development Framework earmarks the site for community facilities.

### Impact of proposed development:

on intrinsic value of existing buildings – low on  
contextual value of site as part of the edge of town  
– high

### Recommended conditions to be attached to HWC's record of decision:

1. That the scheme be supported in principle, so that the town planning and other application processes can proceed.
2. That any detail refinement of the proposal required by HWC be done as a second phase of HWC comment.
3. That the local authority be required by HWC to develop and enforce a Site Management Plan for the construction period, that explicitly assesses and manages the impact of construction traffic on existing roads and surrounding buildings.

<sup>1</sup> In her study of McGregor, dated 1997, Robinson notes evidence of a building, by then demolished, and that its entrance gate still stands on the street edge of the site.



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## 1 Terms of Reference

This Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) report was commissioned by The Conversion Trust, current owners of erven 27 and 72, McGregor. They wish to rezone the site and develop a retirement village on it. The proposed development comprises independent living units on erf 27 and 72, assisted living units in a new building on erf 72, a frail care facility within the old school building and community facilities in the old hall and caretaker's house building.

The Notice of Intent to Develop application, submitted in terms of Section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act, required a full Heritage Impact Assessment for this site and of the proposed development. Therefore, the brief for this study was to provide Heritage Western Cape with the following information for decision-making purposes:

- A brief historical background to the site and its context,
- A register of heritage resources on the site,
- An identification of the heritage and design informants relevant to this site,
- An assessment of the significance of the resources identified,
- A set of guidelines for development on this site, drawing together the design informants and heritage resources identified previously,
- A description of the proposed development,
- An assessment of the impact of this development on the heritage resources previously identified and of the extent to which the proposal respects the heritage informants identified,
- An evaluation of the impact relative to the sustainable social and economic benefits to be derived from the development,
- The results of consultation with IAPs,
- Proposed plans for mitigation of the negative impacts on the heritage resources during and after the development

The report is to be tabled to interested and affected parties on 8 and 9 April 2009 and then submitted to Heritage Western Cape by 6 May 2009 for their BELComm meeting on 14 May 2009.

## 2 Study area

The subject of this report is the precinct (comprising erven 27 and 72, McGregor) known within the town as the old campsite or, currently, the Waldorf School site.

## 3 Background

In 2007, a Notice of Intent to Develop was submitted by Sharon de Gois, representing the then developers and prospective owners, to Heritage Western Cape. A Record of Decision was issued in May 2007 and an HIA and VIA study was started in response to the requirements of that Record of Decision.

The two reports were tabled at BELComm in late August 2008, with Kathy Dumbrell representing the heritage practitioner, Ms De Gois. By then, The Conversion Trust had taken ownership of the land and their design proposal was tabled at that meeting. The Committee's discussion of the project made clear that a study with a spatial emphasis was required for this site and so Kathy Dumbrell was appointed to rework Ms Gois's documentation to examine more explicitly the spatial and townscape informants for this site.

As the way the proposal fits into the townscape is critical in this case, the opinions of Professor Fabio Todeschini and Dr Hans Fransen have been sought, as they have previously studied both McGregor in particular and Cape villages in general.

The proposal tabled at BELComm was shown to each expert. Dr Fransen's response is included as an appendix to this report. Professor Todeschini's response to the proposal led to a series of revisions to the design, culminating in the proposal that is assessed in this report. He has also assisted in refining this report.

## 4 Method of investigation

The problem presented by a proposed development of this scale, on this site, in McGregor is a complex one and required a multi-faceted research method in compiling an HIA for it. Thus, a literature review of existing studies of McGregor was conducted, coupled with fieldwork to ascertain the changes in the townscape since the last study (Robinson 1997), to document aspects of the townscape and site that

are relevant to understanding the heritage and design formants for the site and to compile a heritage register for the site. In addition, the opinion of experienced heritage practitioners and researchers, specialising in townscapes and with a thorough knowledge of McGregor over decades, was sought. The resultant comments of these two experts, Dr Hans Fransen and Prof. Fabio Todeschini are included as appendices to this report and are referred to in more detail in the assessment of the proposal.

## 5 Introduction

Determining the heritage significance of this site is far more complex than merely listing the features that exist on the site today and assessing each for its intrinsic and contextual conservation-worthiness. The site is part of a broader context, the town, and its significance lies not only in the tangible resources on which constitute it, but also in the contribution any development on the site should make to the broader town context. This report will thus focus on assessing what qualities contribute most positively to the town's character, or heritage significance. These are the heritage informants for the site. The proposed development is then assessed based on the extent to which it reinforces those positive qualities and responds to the heritage informants.

The whole site (the two present-day erven) has housed a school (in various buildings and positions on the site) since before 1867<sup>2</sup>. It therefore has a long-standing association in the collective consciousness of the village residents as an institutional, more particularly, a school site with a large open field adjacent the Krans nature area on the northwestern edge of the town. This open land has been used as a *de facto* extension to the wilderness area.

The site, however, is part of the town, albeit on its edge, and so intervention on this site must be weighed against a framework of identified values rather than emotive or purely aesthetic, site-bound assessments. The purpose of this study is to identify those values, or heritage indicators at both the site and town scales, before assessing the design currently proposed for the site. The proposal must then, as the NHRA requires, be assessed against the identified indicators, weighted against issues of sustainability, both

<sup>2</sup> Lady Grey School Commission Minutes cited in De Gois. July 2008. Heritage Impact assessment: proposed development erven 27 and 72, McGregor (unpublished report), p.19.

social and economic, in the interests of the broader townscape and its socio-cultural context<sup>3</sup>

- 1 This report comprises three parts: first, the heritage resources and informants for the site are identified in order to compile a statement of significance and guidelines for new intervention on the site. Second, the proposed development is outlined, and, thirdly, it is assessed in terms of the informants, guidelines and significances identified in the first part of the study.

## 6 Brief literature review

The village of McGregor is widely recognised as an almost intact mid-nineteenth century town and has been the subject of many studies.

The 1965 reference work, *The Old Houses of the Cape*<sup>4</sup>, focusses on the area of the town bounded by Keerom, Buitenkant, Smit and Mill Streets. The village is described as having "hardly grown, if indeed it has grown at all" "since the end of the nineteenth century"<sup>5</sup>. The range of buildings in the town is described and some more noteworthy examples (in the opinion of the authors) are described in more detail. In the 1980<sup>6</sup> and 2000<sup>7</sup> revisions of this work, similar sentiments and focus were re-iterated. In *Old Towns and Villages of the Cape* (2006<sup>8</sup>), the analysis is focussed on the townscape and its evolution, rather on individual buildings. Together, this series of entries in this series of books represents a useful insight into the slow pace of development that characterised the town until the latter twentieth century.

In 1986, the first National Monuments Council conservation survey of the town was conducted<sup>9</sup>, documenting each building on each erf in the town. This work, and the 1997 update to it<sup>10</sup>, provides a record of the town at two moments in its history, allowing later researchers to chart changes in

3 This process both conforms to current, international best practice and to the requirements that Section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) places on a Heritage Impact Assessment study. 4 Fransen, H and Cook, Dr MA. 1965. *The Old Houses of the Cape*. Cape Town: Balkema 5 Fransen, H and Cook, Dr MA. 1965. *The Old Houses of the Cape*. p.328 6 Fransen, H and Cook, Dr MA. 1980. *The Old Buildings of the Cape*. Cape Town: Balkema 7 Fransen, Dr H. 2000. *The Old Buildings of the Cape*. Cape Town: Jonathan Ball 8 Fransen, Dr H. 2006. *The Old Towns and Villages of the Cape*. Cape Town: Jonathan Ball. p260 9 Pistorius, P. 1986. Conservation Study of McGregor. Unpublished NMC survey.

the 11 years between the two studies against their own fieldwork in the town. This has been done as part of the background research to this study and, as the fieldwork was done in 2008, we have a regular, 11 year gap between each of the three sets of images. This has proven most useful in understanding the village for the purposes of this study.

A most thorough Conservation and Development Study, focussing on townscape issues rather than on a survey of individual buildings, was conducted by Todeschini and Japha in 1993<sup>11</sup>. Despite now being sixteen years old, the study still provides the best understanding of the town identified then, such as the erosion of the rural quality of the 's character. Issues town through the removal of fruit tree orchards (the town was renowned for its apricots) and fewer paddocks within the town grid, have since become reality. Today, tree lines remain along some streets, but there are very few orchards or paddocks within the town. See Figures 1 and 2 alongside, which illustrates the change over the past fourteen years.

Two issues the study did not address fully, however, were the institutional spaces (the Church precinct on Voortrekker St, the Methodist church precinct and erven 72 and 27) and the future expansion of the town. The former issue was simply not addressed, while the latter was addressed by proposing expansion to the southeast of Buitenkant St. As that farming land is no longer affordable for the town to purchase for new housing, that option is no longer possible and so the study in effect provides no assistance in dealing with either the institutional precincts or the housing expansion question. As this study if of one of the institutional precincts, it was necessary to extrapolate the information to hand and the situation currently on the ground in order to formulate an approach to dealing with institutional space in the McGregor context.

10 Robinson, L. 1997. Conservation Study of McGregor. Unpublished NMC survey.  
11 Todeschini and Japha. 1993. Conservation Study of McGregor. Unpublished survey conducted for the local Municipality.



Figure 1: aerial photograph of McGregor, 2007 (Chief Directorate: Survey and Land Information)



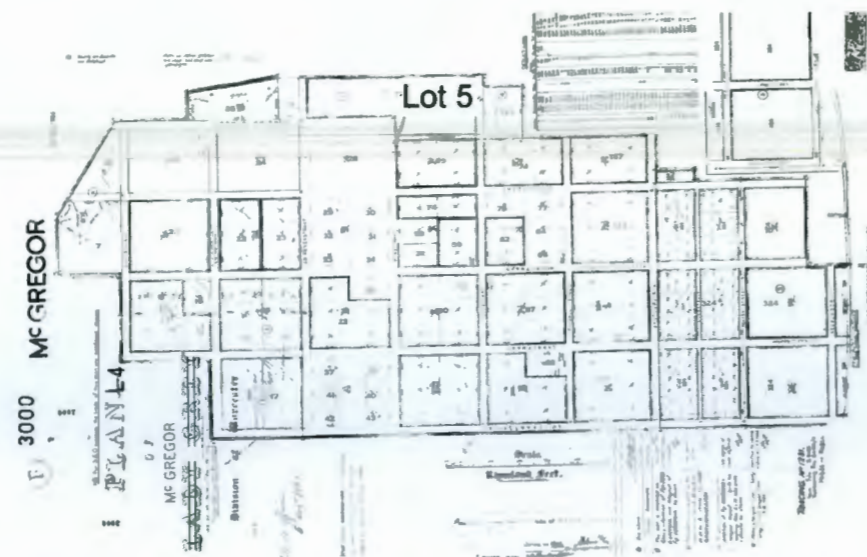


Figure 3: General Plan (dated 1856) of McGregor, showing the grid layout of the new town.

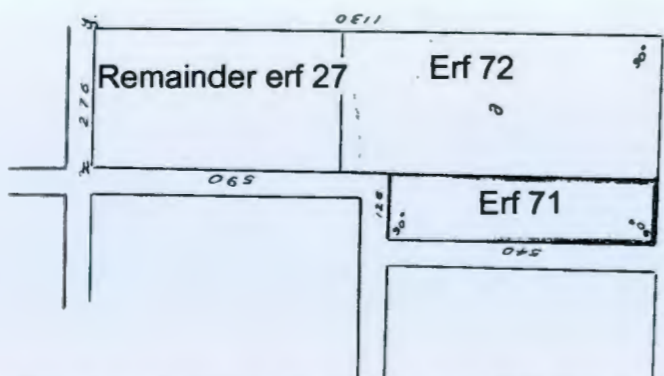


Figure 4: Diagram (from SG diag 535 dated 1866) showing Lot 5 and the three erven it was later subdivided into.

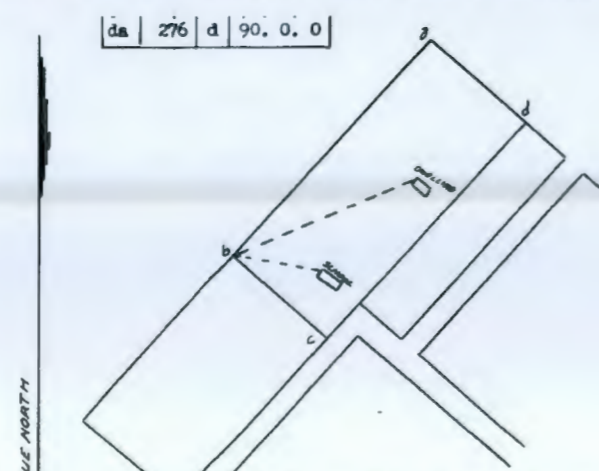


Figure 5: Diagram (from SG diag 198 dated 1874) showing a "school" and a "dwelling" on erf 72.



Figure 6: The view from the south dam, 2008

## 7 History of the town and site

In 1861, in anticipation of a new pass through the Riversonderend Mountains, a new town was laid out on the Robertson side of the expected pass. This new town, laid out purely speculative reasons, was originally called Lady Grey, but changed its name to McGregor in 1904, soon after it became an independent Dutch Reformed Church parish in 1901. The parish honours the Rev. Andrew McGregor, the Robertson minister who served McGregor until it became a separate parish.

Unfortunately, the pass was never built and so McGregor and Greyton are not linked by road. A hiking trail now links the two towns.

What became erven 72 and 27 is shown on the Figure 3 as "Lot V" or Lot 5. Figure 4 shows how the whole lot was later subdivided to form the erven we know today. Erven 71 and 72 were deducted from erf 27 in 1874 (see figure 4) and erf 71 in 1881. It was subdivided again in the twentieth century, into the current erven along Grewe St.

The 1874 deed diagram (Figure 5) of erf 72 shows two existing buildings, labelled "school" and "dwelling". The one labelled "school", no longer exists. It is shown set back from Darling St, but in line with Bree St. The other building, labelled "dwelling" is situated approximately where the current school building stands. Whether it was incorporated into the school building (built in 1876 by the School Board<sup>12</sup>), or demolished to make way for the new building, is uncertain. At the same time (1876), according to the minutes of the School Board, a dwelling for the teacher was also built.

<sup>12</sup> Lady Grey School Commission Minutes cited in De Gois. July 2008. Heritage Impact assessment: proposed development erven 27 and 72, McGregor (unpublished report), p.19.



Figure 7: The entrance to the town from Robertson in 1910

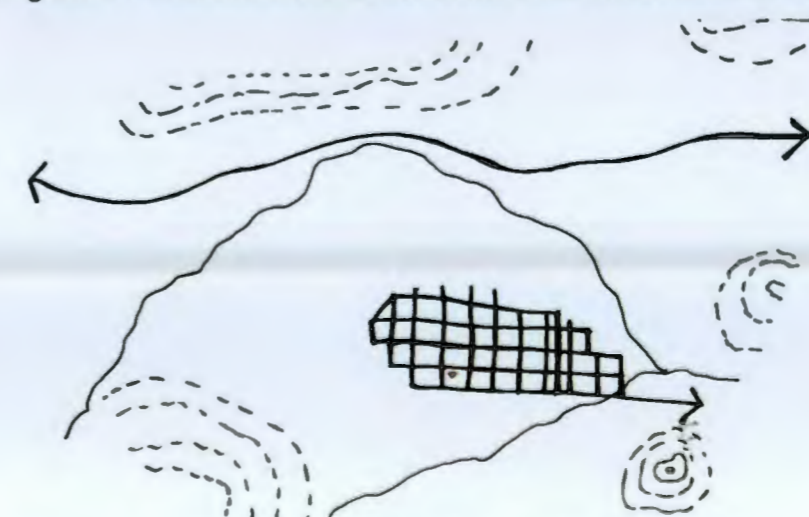


Figure 8: the proposed site of the town from an 1821 diagram. Note that there is only one entrance to the town and that the only existing road bypasses the town to the north. The town is proposed in a valley, surrounded by mountains and on two sides by rivers. Robertson is to the NE.

## 8 Heritage indicators

The town of McGregor has a cohesive character, yet closer inspection of its constituent elements reveals that there is, never the less, a wide variety of elements present at a detail level. The cohesion is achieved, not through homogeneity, but by providing a series of inter-related spatial ordering systems that operate at the greater scale, of the whole town, in its landscape. For any development on this site or, for that matter, anywhere in town, to fit into McGregor will not merely require the application of a "McGregor Style" to its architecture, but a deeper understanding of and adherence to these ordering systems.

The site is part of the greater town context, although on the edge of the town. This means that:

- It is part of the town grid, it is also served by leiwater channels along its Darling street edge,
- its earth dam is part of the historic water storage system for the town,
- from this site there are views across the Krans and river below it to the graveyard and old brickfields site,
- its low fence is typical of McGregor boundary conditions,
- its two lines of established trees (on the Krans edge of the site and between the school and the five erven facing onto Grewe St) form part of the "green structure" of the town, and the school and hall/ church are notable buildings within the town.

These ordering systems are the heritage informants for this site. The key ordering systems and the principles that underlie are therefore identified and explored in this report.

Working from the "macro" to the "micro" levels of scale, the following are identified:

## 8.1 Response to the landscape and geography

### 8.1.1 The town in the landscape

The initial layout of the town, argues Fransen<sup>13</sup>, was not in response to its geography or situation. The grid town was laid out as a speculative development in the light of the then promised pass to link Robertson and Greyton, which was never finished.

While it is clear that a town was founded as a speculative development, its siting was no accident. It lies on the outskirts of the Breede River valley and those mountains can be seen in the background around the town.

The primary access to the town is aligned to the Galg – a feature in the Robertson mountains. Figure 10 shows how valleys are occupied, cultivated and used as routes in this area.

As the whole town is placed on the north-facing slope of the foothills of the Skurweberg, those mountains form a backdrop to the town on its southwestern edge. The slope allows dams at the "back" of town to thus feed the whole town through a gravity-fed leiwater system.

Closer to the town, a series of koppies to the northwest of the town visually "contains" its edge in this direction. Between the edge of town and the koppies is the steep drop of the Krans to the Houtbaai stream that flows to the north and west of the town, forming a clear edge to the settlement. Erven 27 and 72 lie close to the ridge that then drops steeply to form the Krans (see Figure 11). This results in the highest part of the site being behind the dam wall, next to the entrance to the Krans area.

To the south east, the landscape "opens up to the flat plain of the Hoeksrivier"<sup>14</sup>. South and south-east of this river is farm land. The result is a varied urban edge, in terms of slope, vegetation and land use.

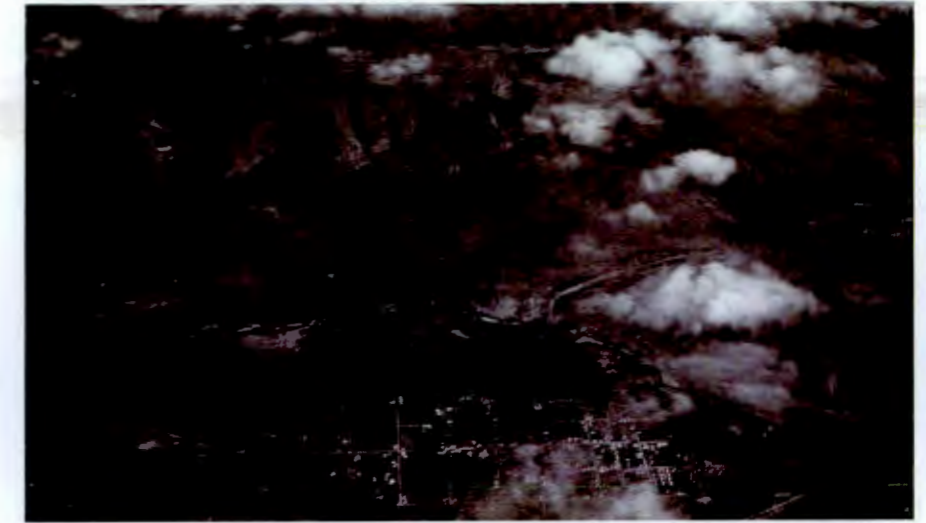


Figure 9: aerial photograph of McGregor, 1990. Note the relationship between town and landscape and the way the grid and buildings' relationships to it is emphasised by the distance from the subject.



Figure 10: The town within the arable valley/ route system of its area.

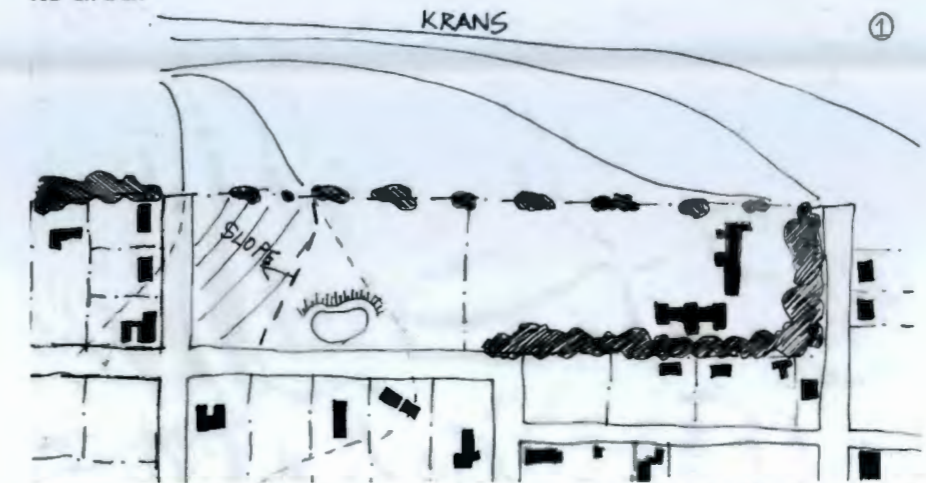


Figure 11: The site is on a ridge line, resulting in the hatched area being the highest part of the site.

13 Fransen, Dr H. 2006. *Old Towns and Villages of the Cape*, p.260

14 Todeschini & Japha. 1993. *Conservation Study*. Section 3.3 (Significant Landscape Features)



Figure 12: The view from the koppies north of the town

Figure 13: trees are coloured dark and building silhouettes outlined to show the way trees, buildings and the spaces between them contribute to the character of the northern edge town.



of

The koppies to the north, north-west, south and south-west provide good views of the town. These views back to the town are significant and must be considered in any design intervention.

Erven 27 and 72 are located on the northern edge of town. A part of his edge is illustrated in Figure 12. In it, the varied pattern of trees, buildings and the spaces between them can be seen. Overall, this edge of town is characterised by an irregular and varied interplay of trees, buildings and the spaces between the two.

Figures 13 to 15 document an analysis of the town edge and what a sympathetic intervention on this edge needs to comprise.

In Figure 13, the buildings, trees and spaces between were traced off the panorama and stylised in order to emphasise the pattern created by their interplay. Note that not all buildings face the edge, thus side gables, front views, the church spire, pitched and mono-pitched roofs all add variety to the overall silhouette and view.

The character of the town edge is significant and conservation-worthy and so development of vacant erven along this edge must add to this pattern. Thus, new infill to this edge must use trees, buildings and the spaces between them to compose a varied and irregular elevation in sympathy with the existing town edge.

Figure 14: A diagram showing a design approach for the northern edge of erven 27 and 72 that would result in an edge in sympathy with the original.



Figure 15: A site la the edge, including

Erven 27 and 72 represent a large segment of the town edge, as can be seen in Figures 12 and 13. Figure 14 illustrates a design approach for the northern edge of the site where buildings sometimes face the edge, but at other times a side gable can be seen. This, together with the use of low walls and a variety of trees, creates a varied edge in sympathy with the original. What is shown in Figure 14 results in a site diagram as shown in Figure 15.



## 8.2 Key townscape ordering element: the grid

Most notable in McGregor is its layout, which remains true to its original grid in all but four places – the old mill site; the new (post-1987) housing between Buitenkant St and the river; the post-1997 informal settlement across the river from the town, on the Buitenkant St edge of town; and where Bree St ends at the boundary of erf 27. (See Figure 16)

The grid layout of the town does not continue through our site and the grid steps at Darling St, with the blocks lying between Grewe and Mill St slightly different in size to the rest. This is shown in Diagram F below. The dotted lines in Figure 16 show how the street grid would continue through erven 27 and 72, based on the pattern set up by the existing grid. This divides the two erven, creating two precincts on the site. Creating precincts on the site is a useful device for lessening the impact of development in heritage terms. This is because it will break the perceived scale of the development within its context. As there are subtly different precincts within the overall town grid already, using this device will not be out of keeping with the character of McGregor. Creating a series of precincts on the site will allow the designer to introduce the subtle variations of density, scale and building type that characterise the varied character of the existing precincts within the town.

Different precincts within the town are:

- the town centre or "High Street", linking public facilities (the old police station, shops, and the church) (See Diagram H)
- residential areas – less dense north-west of Voortrekker St and more dense south-east of Voortrekker St.
- The institutional precinct of the original school and Dutch Reformed church site used prior to the building of the church in 1905 (the site under study here)
- the mill precinct to the far west of the town

Within the grid, the way blocks are cut up into erven and how individual buildings are laid out on each erf is also important in McGregor. The buildings were historically sited along the street edges, reinforcing the importance to one's experience of McGregor of the grid layout, blocks and street edges. The three are closely linked. This is illustrated in Figure 18 (a drawing of the town dating to 1980 by Dr Hans Fransen<sup>15</sup>).

15 Fransen, H and Cook, Dr MA. 1980. *The Old Buildings of the Cape*. p.

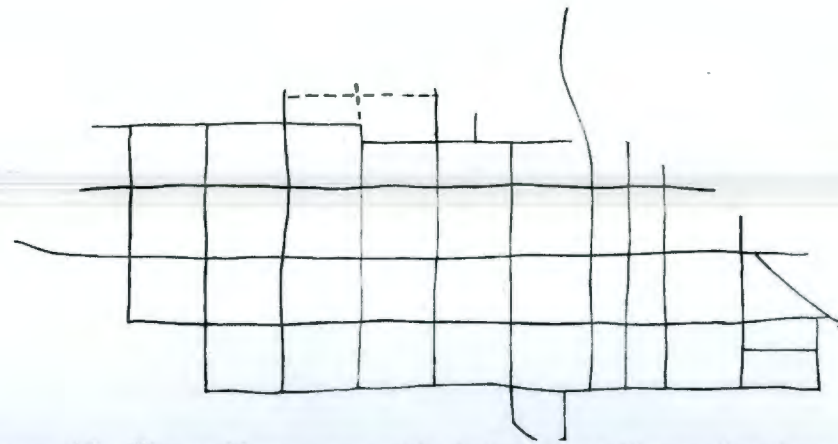


Figure 16: The grid system, with dotted lines illustrating how it might be completed across erven 72 and 27.

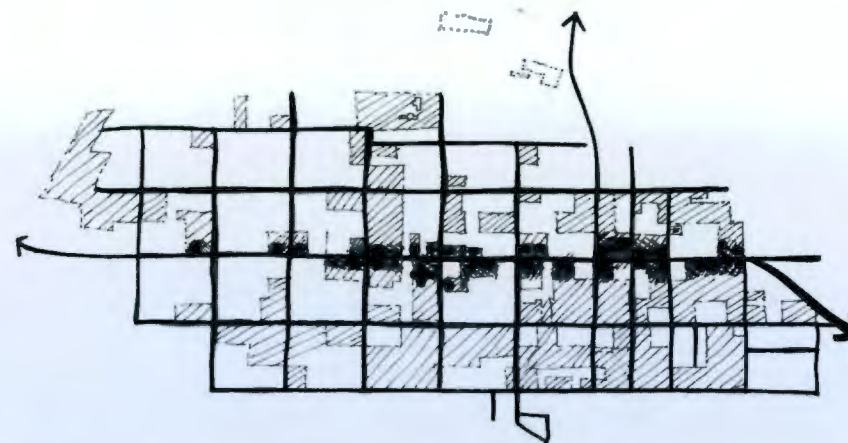


Figure 17: The grid system, with pre-1942 development shown. The denser occupation along the "High Street" or centre of the town, Voortrekker St, is emphasised. Note that the church is also part of the route.



Figure 18: A diagram by Fransen illustrating the way buildings historically related to the street edge.

Note that buildings not only relate to the street, but to each other in how they are placed on the site.

In Figure 19, the hatched blocks represent where buildings could be placed on the site to adhere to this existing pattern of relating to both the street and each other. As there are already buildings across Van Reenen, Darling and Church St from the site, those buildings should guide how new buildings are placed on it. In Darling St, one erf is undeveloped, and so the relationship set up by the other buildings has been used to suggest a location for a building opposite that vacant erf.

In addition to the above, other features of the town serve to reinforce the grid layout that underlies the spatial ordering of the town. These are the *leiwater* system, the trees alongside certain streets and way individual properties make their edges with the street. These features are discussed below:

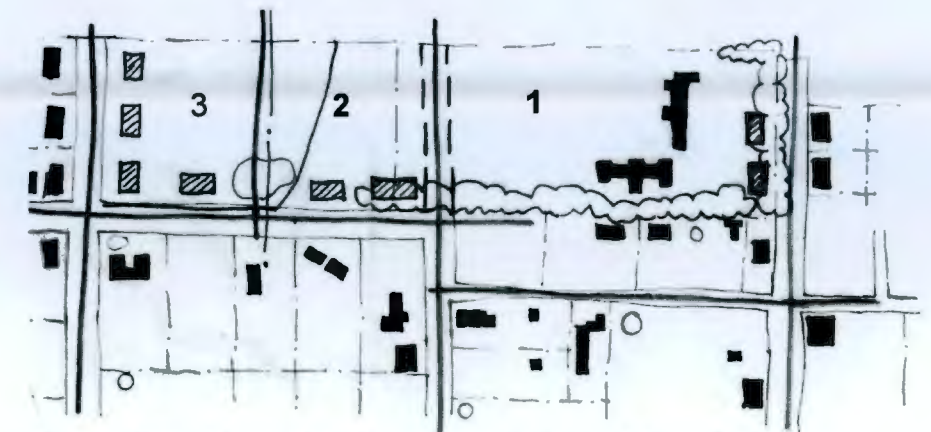


Figure 19: Shows the three precincts and how buildings might relate to one another on the street edges.

### 8.2.1 Response to the grid I: *leiwater* and dams

A characteristic of historic Cape towns is the way in which residents were provided with irrigation water. Often, the *leiwater* system was used. This meant the provision of a network of channels, sometimes with sluice gates and other means of providing certain erven with water on certain days.

In grid towns, such as McGregor, these *leiwater* channels often ran alongside roads to most efficiently get water to each erf. The channels thus added to the experience of the town as one ordered by a grid layout. This is also true for McGregor. In addition, in McGregor a series of smaller storage dams for each erf's *leiwater* creates another layer of features characteristic to this town. Erven 27 and 72 exhibit both features.

A *leiwater* channel runs along Darling St and water is stored in the earth dam on erf 27. Water channels from the site's own earth dam, traversing the site as far as the old hall and also diverting water off the site and into the Krans area are still evident on the site, although no longer all in use.

These channels and the dam divide the larger block to the south west of Bree St into two precincts. See Figure 19, where this is illustrated. The site can thus be treated as three separate precincts, which, by creating subtle differences between each, will help to create a similar variety to that which characterises the town as a whole.

In addition to the ordering function of the water system, at a detail scale, the channels themselves, when water bubbles through the system, provides a unique character to one's experience of McGregor's streets. This is a conservation-worthy detail to consider. The *leiwater* system should be maintained as a heritage resource for the town.



Figure 22: The way *leiwater* needs for a specific erf (here the house on the corner of Darling and Bree) can create a detail treatment that adds variety to the streetscape. The glimpse through the fence to a carefully positioned and proportioned storage dam adds to the character of the pedestrian street experience.



Figure 23: A diagram of the town grid showing the way significant avenues and copses of trees reinforce the grid pattern

Figure 24: The prominent tree line along Church St viewed from behind the site's immediate neighbours.



### 8.2.2 Response to the grid II: Trees and hedges

Another of the ordering elements of the town that reinforces the underlying grid structure can be described as a "green grid" - the trees, hedges and other planted features that are used to define space at various scales in the town.

As can be seen in Figure 23 alongside, significant clumps and avenues of trees are spread throughout the town, but in particular trees emphasise the centre or "High Street" precinct of the town, with some lines of trees running along cross streets to Voortrekker St.

In addition, trees along Darling St and along the Krans edge of town define the northern edge of town. Walking along this northern edge of town, the stumps of large trees can still be seen. From this, it is clear that the tree line along the northern edge of town was previously an even stronger feature of the town's edge than it is today. Trees are also used to define the graveyards and the entrance to the town.

Interestingly, the old school precinct is very clearly defined by a tree line, marking this precinct as different within the townscape. Diagram j alongside illustrates this. This could have been to differentiate the institutional space from the residential erven that were its closest neighbours, or as a windbreak. Either way, the result is a prominent landscape feature that clearly marks erf 72 as a separate, institutional precinct within McGregor.

Within the blocks of the town grid, trees and hedges are also used to define individual erven. This use of planting to define the edges of properties will be discussed further as part of the analysis of the elements that contribute to the conservation-worthy character of McGregor's architecture and streetscapes.

In Figures 11 to 20 above, the way the town is ordered, and how this should inform the site-plan design on erven 72 and 27 is illustrated. To summarise, therefore, any intervention on these two erven will have to be guided by the following design principles and approaches in order to minimise impact of the new interventions on the existing character of McGregor:

- 1 **The northern site edge** needs to fit into the character of the existing town edge. As the northern edge of erven 27 and 72 currently contributes one building and a patchy line of trees to this view from the koppies, the opportunity exists for a development to enhance this edge, which is important in defining the edge of town to the north. The existing view is stylised and diagramatised in Figure 13. Figures 14 and 15 illustrate how new infill to this edge view might be created in sympathy with the existing, showing what one needs to see as a view and what that means the site plan approach needs to be. This, in effect, determines an appropriate approach to intervention along the Krans edge of the site.
- 2 The portion of the site at the top of Van Reenen St is the **highest part of the site**. Buildings on this portion will therefore be most visible and must be treated sensitively.
- 3 **The grid layout of the town** must extend across the site. This will create two precincts on the site and, by extending Darling St, the view along this street and out of town will be preserved. (See Figure 16)
- 4 The relationship between buildings across a street must be respected. In McGregor, **buildings relate directly to the street and to each other**.
- 5 **The leiwat system and existing earth dam** must be retained. Doing so will create another division of the site, subdividing the area south west of Darling St into two precincts.
- 6 The above-mentioned design informants **create three precincts within the site**, which will help to reduce the scale of a development intervention. Each of these precincts must then be treated slightly differently, both in layout and architecture (more about that in the next section of this report), in order to achieve the variety needed to **echo the varied character of McGregor**, where varied precincts already exist (see Figure 17)
7. **The existing prominent tree lines** define the former institutional precinct of the old school site very clearly. This space should be treated differently to the other two precincts on the site. Here, a denser occupation of the land would be in keeping with the school building typology.

Using these seven principles generates the design diagram illustrated below (Figure 22). Note the longer buildings in the institutional precinct, nominally more "school building-like" to better keep with the existing character of that precinct.

The site plan diagram proposed in Figure 22 would, in terms of the design informants identified for this site, "fill in" this site in a way that fits appropriately into the town of McGregor. A design proposal along these lines is a reasonable one to put forward for this site. It would create an extension of the residential quality of the town, with the old school campus, behind a tree line, providing the opportunity for a slightly denser development.



Figure 22: Shows the three precincts and how buildings might relate to one another on the street edges.

But what is not addressed in Figure 22 is what can be done in the "spaces between". Certainly, the institutional precinct could accommodate higher density development, as the natural extensions to a school building over time would most certainly have been to add quadrangles of classrooms, linked to the original school buildings. What additional fabric could be inserted into the diagram proposed by Figure 22 (in the other two precincts of the site) is more difficult to determine in broad principle terms. Any further addition of fabric would move away from a single residential type of development and create a denser occupation pattern on this site than on its immediate neighbours.

While denser housing precincts do exist in the town, on this site, a dense development is not the first option and so any proposal for a layout denser than that shown in Figure 22 must be assessed on its merits and against the following principles:

- 1 An increased density should not create a housing estate within McGregor, but, by adhering to the seven principles above and ensuring that the visual impact on the Krans. Bree St, Church St, Van Reenen St and Darling St, a precinct of denser housing, such as those in Tindall, Loop, Long and Buitenkant streets should be created. This would **create a village within the village**, rather than a housing estate.
- 2 **A different density of development is appropriate in each of the three precincts of the site**. The old school site can accommodate the most intense development, with the area between the dam and Van Reenen St able to accommodate the least density of development. The precinct between Bree St and the dam should be treated as an intermediate precinct, with a density and layout in keeping with that character.

Figure 22 summarises the analysis above and provides a strategy for developing an appropriate site plan for erven 27 and 72. But new work in McGregor must not only fit into the existing town layout, but also respect the detail elements that contribute to the special qualities of McGregor.

Thus, the next section of this report will identify the architectural and fine-grained space-making elements and approaches that need to be respected to make new buildings and spaces that fit into the character of McGregor.

### 8.3 A "McGregor style"

McGregor has been described as a remarkably intact mid-nineteenth century village. But that does not mean there has been no new building in the town since then. Some insertions into the townscape have been gently absorbed into its fabric and have become seamlessly part of it, while others are always identifiable as new and different.

To guide development, it is necessary to understand what it is about the buildings that have been added over the years, yet have fitted into the town, that facilitated that process.

This work has already been done and a thorough set of guidelines<sup>16</sup> for design of new work and alterations to existing work is the result. As the core work has been done, this section of the report serves not to re-do it, but to illustrate the principles outlined in the guidelines in order to provide a framework for assessing the architecture proposed in the scheme this report must assess.

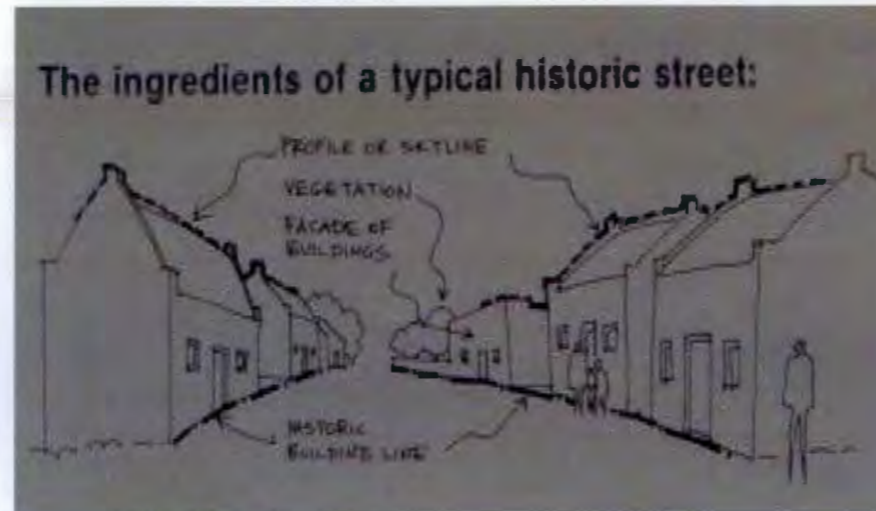
#### 8.3.1 The street

As has been outlined earlier in this report, one of the characteristics of McGregor is the way buildings relate to the street and to one another. Figure 23 shows how this is illustrated in the current guidelines for the village.

"Die Trein" and its neighbours in Voortrekker Street display the qualities identified in the sketch. The view in Figure 24 can therefore illustrate the way the elements of a street combine to create the character that one experiences within the space. Even though this is the main street of town, and tarred, the road is simply made, without raised sidewalks. The road surface simply changes from tar to gravel. The *leiwater* channel marks the edge of the street and the start of the house's realm. This boundary is further marked by the low shrubs in front of the stoep.

#### 8.3.2 The urban block

Figure 25 shows what, in the McGregor "pattern", generally lies behind the street edge: a private green space surrounded by houses. Historically, this would have been vegetable garden or orchard, but over the last twenty years or so this pattern has largely vanished. In the case illustrated in Figure 25, the centre space is visible because a number of the houses have deteriorated. This threatened fabric is some of the most conservation-worthy in McGregor.



<sup>16</sup> Todeschini and Japha. c1993. *McGregor, a unique village*.

### 8.3.3 The corner

The McGregor guidelines advocate leaving corners undeveloped where possible, but avoiding having to design a new corner condition does not address the issue. Existing corner treatments are as subtly varied as the other features of the McGregor landscape. The focus here is on how buildings relate to the corners, in order to better understand what makes a successful corner in this context.

Figure 26 is the sketch included in the guidelines and illustrates how some corners are made with buildings, while others are fenced as garden or paddock. Figure 27 illustrates one permutation of the corner – with an external hearth visible from the street – while Figure 28 illustrates another. Note also that the one building in Figure 28 has only one window facing the street. This is typical of the oldest buildings in McGregor. The complex of buildings has clearly evolved over time, with different buildings added at different times. That these comprise a lean-to addition to a palmiet-thatched barn-form building with simple gables with another barn-form building (this one with a more elaborate gable) helps to reinforce the sense of the complex having “grown” into its present form.

The corners illustrated here draw much of their interest and character from the variety of building types that are used to compose them.

### 8.3.4 The individual building

In McGregor, it is the subtle variations on the inherent “rules” of space-making that give the village a coherent, yet interesting character. In addition, there are different building types interspersed among the predominant barn-form cottages.

As a result, it is with hesitation that the term “McGregor style” is used here. The village design guidelines tend towards exemplifying the cottage type as “the McGregor style”, but caution should be exercised in development control within the town. Tending towards one building type and approach too rigidly in this town could destroy the very character that is so conservation-worthy. Designers should be encouraged to understand the principles that apply and to know how they might vary yet achieve the same outcome in terms of space-making.



Figure 26: A sketch of a typical corner condition from the McGregor guidelines



Figure 27: A corner house with its external chimney facing the one street edge.



Figure 30: A sample of the variety of buildings within McGregor



Figure 28: Here two buildings form the corner.



Figure 29: Here two buildings form the corner.

The character of McGregor does not easily lend itself to new work in contrast to the existing fabric. A strategy of design in sympathy with the existing is to be favoured in this village. To do that, the architectural language of the town must be made explicit and proposals assessed with reference to that language and to precedent within the village.

The characteristics of the McGregor cottage type are summarised in Figure 31, drawn from the guidelines.

Figure 32 shows how these elements combine in reality. Note the palmiet roof with leg-of-mutton gable over the door and the twelve-pane, vertically proportioned casement windows. The fanlight is an unusual feature and an example of the subtle variety within the architecture of the village. The house also has a symmetrical façade. The bamboo fence is one of the traditional fence types within the village. The range of fence types is illustrated in Figure 33. Figure 34 shows a contrasting boundary treatment to that in Figure 32.

What is not shown in Figure 31 is a loft door or loft ventilator. The loft door is generally not a full-size door and a simple plank door. In monopitch buildings the roof ventilator helps in the climate control of the house, cooling the roof space in summer. The ventilator is often an interesting feature of the façade. The Methodist school complex has a building with a very ornate ventilator and another like it adorns a building in Voortrekker Street.

This then summarises the simplest (and often oldest) cottage type found in the village. Versions of this building type, with sheet metal roofs, or leanto's added over time are also found,

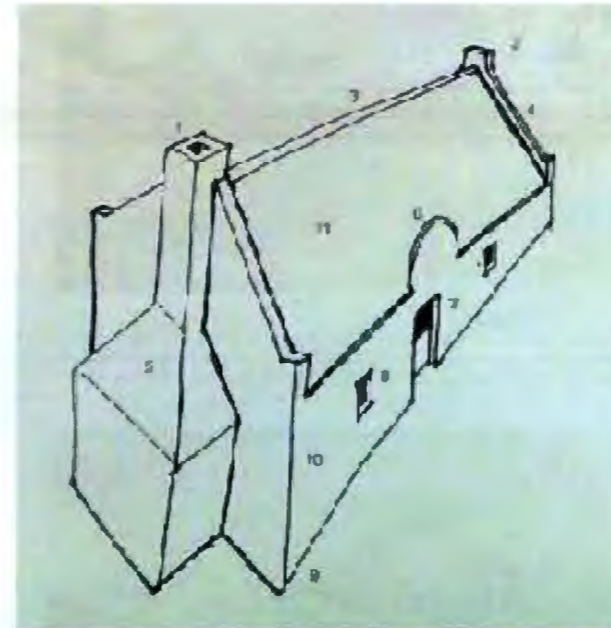


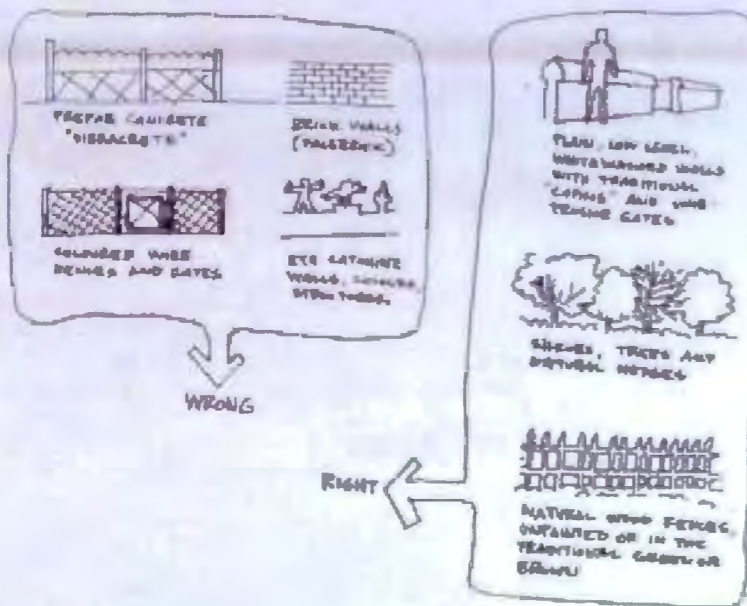
Figure 31: The elements of the traditional cottage, from the guidelines

- 1 Chimney to the outside of the gable wall - alternatively - in some cases - on the inside
- 2 Stack chimney to match the real roof, on the opposite side
- 3 Ridge of clay and lime to protect apex of thatch roof
- 4 Protruding gables to protect thatch ends from the elements
- 5 Chimney and door to the outside of the gable wall is known as an 'abba'je' (Afrikaans diminutive for a child being carried on his mother's back)
- 6 Small central gable to direct rainwater away from front eaves
- 7 Small window openings and thick walls for coolness in summer and warmth in winter
- 8 Walls are built on flat areas which act as a barrier to prevent rising damp
- 9 Walls: sun-dried clay bricks, plastered with clay and finished with lime without a coat of lime, clay walls are eroded by rain to the point where the entire structure collapses
- 10 The plan (as seen from above) is rectangular and narrow. The match dimension was limited by the relatively short lengths of timber which used to be available for the construction of roof trusses
- 11 The pitch of the roof is shown as an important ingredient. The cottage's overall appearance. The pitch should be close to 45°
- 12 Upper door opens independently forming an opening which can serve as window



Figure 34: This cottage has a front garden bounded by a low wall.

Fences and walls which may be out of character should not be allowed to obstruct historic building facades



There are also buildings in the town that, because they are unique objects within the townscape, create focal points in the urban fabric. Examples include the double-storied Victorian house on Voortrekker Street and the villa across the road from the NG Church.

The elements outlined above form architectural design informants and can be used to design new work in sympathy with the historic building fabric of the village. Caution must be exercised so that this does not merely become the application of a style, but rather the re-use of traditional solutions to design constraints.

## 9 Heritage resources on the site

### 9.1 Buildings older than 60 years

#### 9.1.1 The old school (dormitory) building

According to School Board minutes<sup>17</sup>, this building was built in 1876, at the same time as a new residence for the teacher was built.

The building has a hipped corrugated iron roof, with a centre gable containing 4 arched windows facing onto the schoolyard (now tarred parking area) and flanked by wings with protruding eaves over part of each. Further classrooms are to the RHS (as you face the centre gable) and may have been later additions in a sympathetic style. Some sliding sashes and decorative eaves detailing survives, while some façades have steel windows. Internally, woodwork and plan layout survives.

Proposed grade: 3B

#### 9.1.2 Hall – former church community facility

The building has some features that most probably date to around 1900, or the latter 1890s. The hall may have been added to the dwelling built in 1876 to house the teacher, but using similar materials and in a sympathetic style, making exact dating of building phases difficult before measured drawings and restoration work is undertaken. Certainly, the similarities in style and materials indicates that the two phases occurred soon after one another.

Proposed grade: 3B

#### 9.1.3 summary

Both buildings mentioned above have intrinsic, local heritage significance but low provincial and national intrinsic significance. They are typical of their type and time. A grade 3 is thus proposed for each. Late C19th and Edwardian buildings are rare in McGregor and these two buildings have been identified as notable buildings in all 3 studies of the town (Pistorius 1986, Todeschini & Japha 1993 and Robinson 1997). In addition, they retain the features that warranted this earlier attention. As their heritage value is not merely contextual, a Grade 3B is proposed for each.

<sup>17</sup> Lady Grey School Commission Minutes cited in De Gois. July 2008. Heritage Impact assessment: proposed development erven 27 and 72, McGregor (unpublished report), p.19.



Figure 35: The school, with centre gable visible, as seen from the school yard.



Figure 36: The hall, from the current entrance.  
Figure 37: Detail of the caretaker's cottage (obscured by tree in RHS of Figure 5)



Figure 38: side view of existing school building  
Figure 39: Detail of school building windows  
Figure 40: Side view of verandah in Figure 37.

## 9.2 Site features

### 9.2.1 The earth dam

The earth dam (age unknown) forms part of the water provision system crucial to the town's early survival and viability as a settlement. It is an important artefact of that layer of the town's history. This feature thus has high associational heritage value. As a dam requires constant maintenance and intermittent repair, it cannot be considered a static artefact of intrinsic heritage value. Rather, it is its landmark and associational values that are of significance. Also, the dam offers an opportunity for interpretation of the water supply system so important to the life of the town in its early days. It should be incorporated into any new development on the site.

### 9.2.2 The old gate near the Van Reenen/Darling Street corner

A pair of low, plastered walls flanking an old entrance to the site still exists in the overgrown bush on this corner of the site. With its curved plan form and simple plaster banding as its coping, it could be either late C19th or, more likely, early to mid-C20th. As artefacts of the history of the site, this feature has low intrinsic and associational heritage value. It might be possible to incorporate it into new movement routes through the site, or to leave it unaltered as part of the edge condition of the site. Its level of heritage significance does not, however, warrant it being a design generator for the site. Robinson's 1997 study<sup>18</sup> notes evidence of a demolished structure on erf 27, with this gate the surviving artefact of that building.

## 9.3 Summary: Statement of significance

The site is part of a broader context, the town, and its significance lies not only in the tangible resources on it, but also in the contribution any development on it should make to the broader town context.

The site has on it buildings of significance to the local heritage register, but not ones with high provincial or any national heritage significance.

In terms of the broader town context, the chief significance of this site is that, by virtue of its size, any development on it will have an impact on the spatial language and character of the whole town. Thus, for any development to be viable in spatial terms, it must adhere to the existing spatial language of the town and enhance the special qualities of the town.

Eight urban-scale heritage informants impact on the site:

- 1 **The northern site edge** needs to fit into the character of the existing town edge. As the northern edge of erven 27 and 72 currently contributes one building and a patchy line of trees to this view from the koppies, the opportunity exists for a development to enhance this edge, which is important in defining the edge of town to the north. The existing view is stylised and diagramatised in Figure 13. Figures 14 and 15 illustrate how new infill to this edge view might be created in sympathy with the existing, showing what one needs to see as a view and what that means the site plan approach needs to be. This, in effect, determines an appropriate approach to intervention along the Krans edge of the site.
- 2 The portion of the site at the top of Van Reenen St is the **highest part of the site**. Buildings on this portion will therefore be most visible and must be treated sensitively.
- 3 **The grid layout of the town** must extend across the site. This will create two precincts on the site and, by extending Darling St, the view along this street and out of town will be preserved. (See Figure 16)
- 4 The relationship between buildings across a street must be respected. In McGregor, **buildings relate directly to the street and to each other**.
- 1 **The leiwater system and existing earth dam** must be retained. Doing so will create another division of the site, subdividing the area south west of Darling St into two precincts.
- 2 The above-mentioned design informants **create three precincts within the site**, which will help to reduce the scale of a development intervention.
- 3 Each of these precincts must then be treated slightly differently, both in layout and architecture (more about that in the next section of this report), in order to achieve the variety needed to **echo the varied character of McGregor**, where varied precincts already exist (see Figure 17)
- 4 **The existing prominent tree lines** define the former institutional precinct of the old school site very clearly. This space should be treated differently to the other two precincts on the site. Here, a denser occupation of the land would be in keeping with the school building typology.

<sup>18</sup> Robinson. 1997. Conservation Study of McGregor for the National Monuments Council. Unpublished report. Entry 02.01

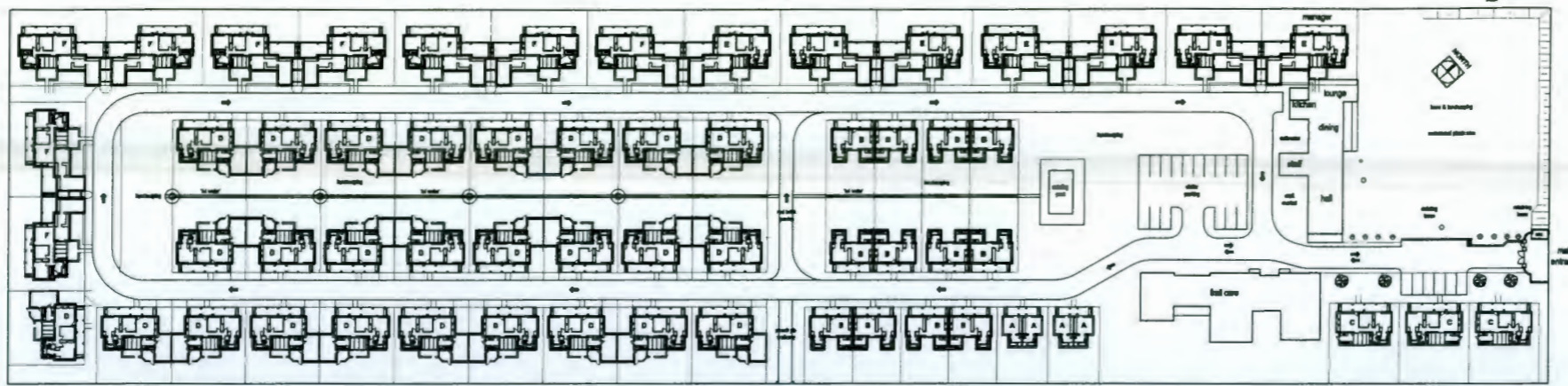


## 10 The proposed development

The following pages document the proposal by the developers, The Conversion Trust, for a retirement village, with a range of accommodation types, on the site.

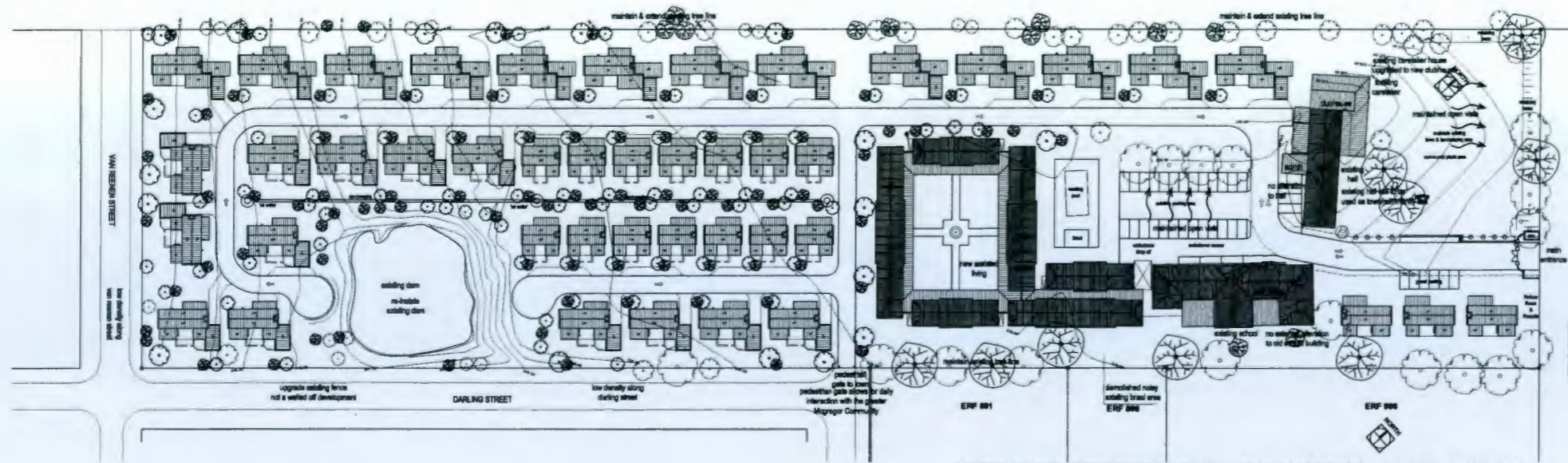
The scheme proposes adaptive re-use of the existing buildings older than 60 years on the site, the insertion of a new quadrangle of assisted living units as an addition to the existing school block and the development of one- and two-bedroomed, freestanding and terraced independent living units.

The scheme presented here is in fact the fifth version of the design. The first version included only independent living units, some with three bedrooms. There were 72 units in that first proposal. The second scheme responded to research into the retirement village market. The number of independent living units was reduced and assisted living and frail care introduced into the design. Both proposals were quite repetitive in plan, repeating identical units, albeit a range of unit types, across the site. The third proposal was tabled at BELComm in August 2008. By this stage the number of independent living units had again reduced and the assisted living units incorporated as a quadrangle extension to the existing school building. No substantive attempt was made at mitigating the scale of the development and the units remained repetitive. The fourth version of the scheme evolved out of consultation with Dr Fransen, Prof. Todeschini. A revised approach to the site, with the creation of three distinct precincts, resulted in the site layout being changed. The make-up of the independent living units was changed, with the three-bedroom units being removed and assisted living and one-bedroom units being emphasised. Units were designed as semi-detached units, which reduced their footprint and created more open space in the development. In response to issues raised in consultation with community in early April 2009 and a design workshop held on site with the heritage consultants, the design has been revised to this (fifth) version.



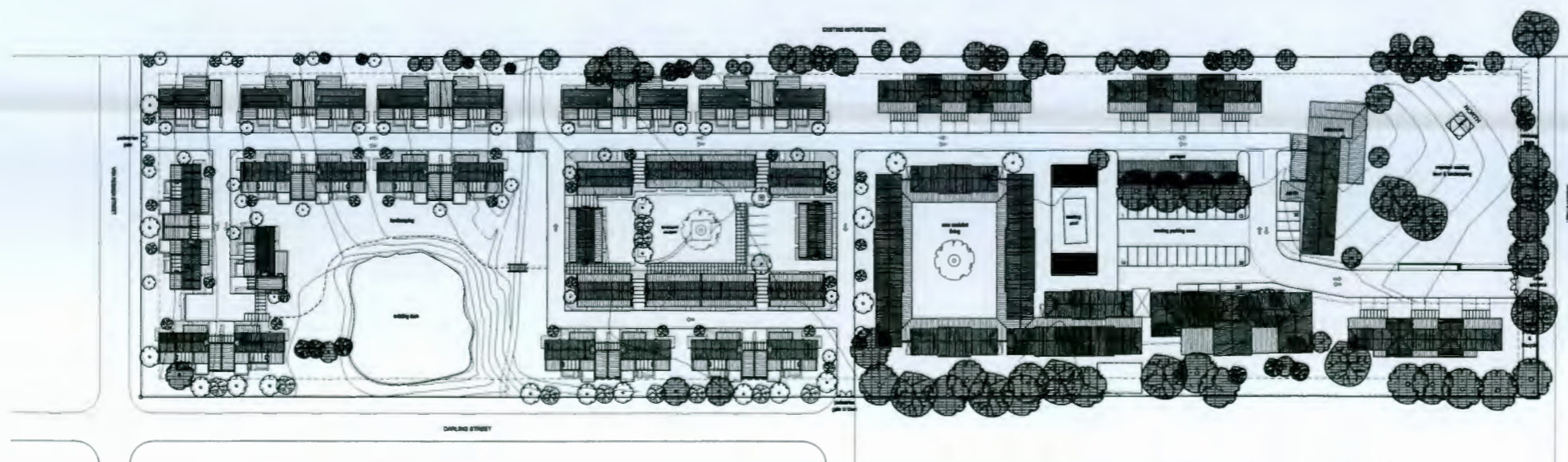
SITE PLAN - APRIL 2008

	UNIT TYPE	UNIT QUANTITY	UNIT AREA m <sup>2</sup>
INDEPENDENT LIVING	A	4	31
	B	12	67
	C	3	85
	D	26	106
	E	7	122
	F	5	160
	G	4	182
<b>TOTAL AREA</b>			<b>6399</b>



HERITAGE WESTERN CAPE SUBMISSION - AUGUST 2008

	UNIT TYPE	UNIT QUANTITY	UNIT AREA m <sup>2</sup>
ASSISTED LIVING	A1	19	29
	A2	15	46
INDEPENDENT LIVING	B	14	67
	C	3	85
	D	13	85
	E	5	99
	F	8	130
<b>TOTAL AREA</b>			<b>5074</b>



CURRENT SITE PLAN - APRIL 2009

	UNIT TYPE	UNIT QUANTITY	UNIT AREA m <sup>2</sup>
ASSISTED LIVING	A	14	48
	B	19	29
INDEPENDENT LIVING	C	8	47
	D	12	50
	E	10	47
	E2	10	47
	F	12	88
	F2	10	88
<b>TOTAL AREA</b>			<b>5047</b>



## 11 Assessment of impact of development on heritage resources

At a site-scale, the adaptive re-use proposed for the two buildings older than 60 years on the site is appropriate and can be executed sensitively.

In a similar project by the same firm in Napier, using the old school site there, interventions into the existing buildings – built in 1907 and subsequently added to in the same style until about the 1950s – have been successful architecturally and in conservation terms. The interventions have not altered substantially the fabric or character of the buildings and it is reasonable to assume that the same effect is possible here.

This part of the project will thus have a low impact on the existing heritage resources.

As the old gates and earth dam are not being affected by this proposal, the impact on them is very low.

It is acknowledged that this site has as its heritage informants not only site features, however. Thus, the greater scale informants, outlined above in Section 8, must guide development on this site. The impact of the proposed development on these elements must be minimised by design in sympathy with them.

By virtue of its size, any development using the whole site will have a potentially great impact on these “higher order” elements identified in Section 8 of this report. The ways in which this proposal addresses those informants and, in so doing, mitigates its impact on them, is discussed below.

In assessing the design proposal, the extent to which each of these elements have been incorporated and respected within the new design must be weighed against the overall integration of all the elements into a cohesive whole that responds sensitively and appropriately to the McGregor context and this particular site within the town.

## 12 Assessment of the space-making proposed

### 12.1 How does the scheme incorporate the heritage informants?

The proposal is essentially in line with the principles outlined in section 8 above and with the diagram summarising those principles (Figure 22, repeated below for ease of reference). The scheme addresses the eight principles in the following ways:

**The northern site edge** The Krans edge elevation incorporates a variety of unit types, some seen from the side, which will create an infill to the existing town edge that is in keeping with the existing.

**The highest part of the site** On this part of the site, the existing urban quality is continued by relating new buildings to existing buildings across Van Reenen St. The number of units in the central portion of the street block is limited, which helps this precinct blend into its context.

**The grid layout of the town** The extension of Bree St across the site completes the town grid.

**The relationship between buildings across a street** On all three street edges, buildings are sited to directly relate to the buildings across the street from them.

**The *leiwater* system and existing earth dam** These are left intact. A green zone is to be developed around the dam, with a route to the Krans left open for views and pedestrian access.

**Scale** The development is large. It occupies a very large tract of land in the town. In reality, however, the scheme is likely to be built in stages over at least 5 years.

The scale has been mitigated by the use of precincts with varying densities and layouts.

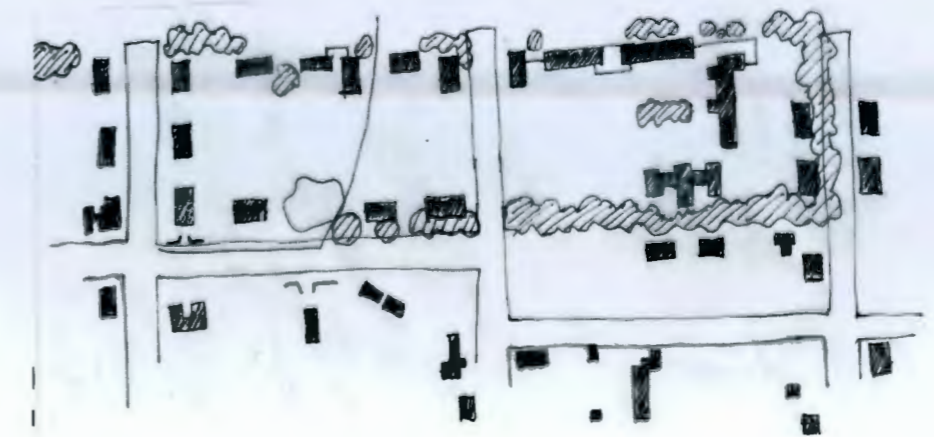
The individual buildings are appropriately scaled for both the immediate context and the townscape. The

scale of the existing buildings is not changed. The alterations are merely internal, except where the terrace is added to the caretaker's cottage on the old hall building. The assisted living courtyard and other new buildings in this precinct are all scaled to match the existing institutional buildings on the site.

**Variety** The number of unit types and the varied way in which they are laid out gives sufficient variety for the detail design to refine the principles set up by this scale of drawings.

**The existing prominent tree lines** These are used to screen the institutional precinct, just as they have for many years. The incorporation of these elements into the design is appropriate.

While the scheme demonstrates the principles outlined above and in Figure 22 below, it does propose more dense development than that shown on Figure 22. The dense development in precinct 1 (the institutional precinct) is in keeping with the existing institutional buildings and enhances the institutional character of that precinct. It can thus be supported. The courtyard architecture proposed in Precinct 2 is a hybrid between the individual house, the terrace (like “Die Trein”) and the institutional building. It too can be supported as a way of making an intermediate space between Precincts 1 and 3. The treatment of precinct 3 has successfully increased the density of the development in that area from the existing pattern of the area, but remained in keeping with it. Thus, overall, the proposal is an puts forward an acceptable site layout



## 12.2 What is the visual impact of the scheme?

Though the development is large, the slope of the land (albeit very gentle), the tree lines and the earth dam are existing features that mitigate the visual impact of the scheme. As can be seen in the panorama – Figure 41 – the dam obscures views to and from Darling St.



Figure 41



Figure 42

Figure 42 shows the whole town edge on the Krans side. This view was taken from the koppie across the Houtbaai Rivier and north of the town. Figure 43 is an enlargement of our site and Figure 44 an enlargement of the Kantoor St block, showing how views through to other buildings behind, together with the buildings on the street edge, make the town edge look quite dense in places. In section 8, the argument was made for a particular approach to the design of the town's northern edge. This informant has been respected in the design and so, while buildings are going to be added to the town's edge, their impact on the character of that edge will be low. As the new development will be in keeping with the existing, it will not be distracting to the viewer by being a discordant, different element within the whole.

Figure 43



Figure 44

Along the street edges, there will be impact in that there are new buildings on the street edge. As the buildings are sited to relate directly to the existing buildings across the roads from the site, the impact on the streetscape will be no more than that of the town grid being "filled in" over time. The impact of each building on the street will have to be managed by careful detailing of the building/ street interface. As a *leiwater* channel still runs along Darling St, that element of the traditional McGregor street is there to be incorporated into the new development.



### **13 Evaluation of impact relative to the sustainable social and economic benefits to be derived from the development**

Development can bring social and economic benefits to McGregor, which should not be overlooked.

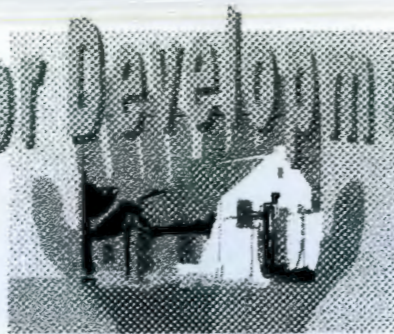
However, the villagers consider there to be pressure on water supply and sewerage infrastructure for the village. The concern is that a development of this scale will over-extend the existing system. The local authority engineers do not seem to share this concern (refer to the email correspondence with the engineers included in Section 14 below).

In the short term, construction work will provide jobs for local builders and, possibly, project managers. However, the longer term, sustainable jobs that this project will create are the best measure of the positive contribution this development can have on McGregor.

In this case, the additional houses and residents would provide a range of new townspeople. Some will require high levels of care, while others will require help from care-givers. Some women in the town are already trained as care-givers by Hospice and this development will expand the demand for such carers. In addition, the maintenance and catering functions of the complex will require staff. A programme of building skills within the town so that local people have preference in recruiting people for the posts created by the new development will be undertaken by the complex management.

**14 Results of consultation with  
IAPs**

# McGregor Development Forum



PO Box 494, McGregor, 6708  
eMail: [developmentforum@mcgregor.co.za](mailto:developmentforum@mcgregor.co.za)  
Fax: 086 612 6715 / Tel: 023 625 1380

Thursday, April 09, 2009

The Developers  
Nic Border  
Kathy Dumbrell  
Prof Todeschini

re: PROPOSED RETIREMENT VILLAGE & ASSISTED LIVING AT THE KAMPTEREIN

Dear Sirs / Madam,

On behalf of the members of the MDF we object to the above proposed development on the grounds of ecological / environmental impact — until we know how this development will impact on the infrastructure of the village.

Your development has come at a very sensitive time in McGregor — we have been fighting for years for housing for the indigent population of the village and now, after protesting against destroying the Krans Nature Reserve, a large, dense, expensive development is being proposed, for obviously wealthy purchasers — certainly the existing senior residents of McGregor will not be able to afford the proposed selling prices.

R6M has been finally promised by the Municipality to develop the Steen Oonde area for low cost housing infrastructure for at least 350 houses and if you increase the demand for water, sewage, etc. by another 92 units this will impact negatively on the village.

We request detailed information regarding the ecological / environmental impact studies with regard to our concerns, as well as your proposals, in writing, regarding your promises to the people for employment, quotations regarding selling prices of units, the municipality's comments regarding infrastructure capabilities etc.

Yours sincerely,

Henry Kraukamp  
Chairperson: McGregor Development Forum

"Sheepstor"  
1. van Reenen Street  
McGregor

(DO NOT USE FOR MAIL. NO DELIVERIES.)

P. O. Box 102  
McGREGOR  
6708

Phone or Fax 023 625 1976  
Cell phone 072 426 9817 (Pam)  
Cell phone 082 928 8102 (Roger)

Delivered by hand.

Reference - Proposed Development in McGregor

April 9<sup>th</sup> 2009

Dear Sirs,

"Kampterein" McGregor.

Following the presentation on April 8<sup>th</sup> of the proposed Development for the Kampterein site in McGregor the following points seem to need better clarification:

1. There are no facts and figures regarding the impact on fresh water supply and sewage disposal facilities. Good quality water is already a problem in McGregor and we are told that the sewage processing plant is near it's limit for capacity. The relatively high "human density" of this project might become a major problem. What studies have been done? Can we please see the results?
2. What guarantees are there that this project will not end up, as many others have, by becoming yet another "ordinary housing development" because the requirements of a retirement village proved to be too expensive. There are other examples of this in the Western Cape and probably elsewhere.

Further to these points let me say that I am, in principle, not against the development provided it really can be carried out in the manner you are proposing. I do have doubts regarding the financial viability which is the reason for my Point 2 query.

Thank you for a detailed presentation.

Yours sincerely,

(Roger J. Verrall)

09.04.09

**Re: Kampterrein Development  
Mc Gregor**

**To: The Conversion Trust**

**From: Lorraine Piers  
No: 1 Grewe Str.  
Mc Gregor 6708  
P.O.Box 369  
Tel: 023 6251 843**

**Response to the planned project.**

I, as a ratepaying resident of Mc Gregor, having viewed the model and plans presented on the 8.04.09 at the Kampterrein hall, I would like to raise some points concerning this project. I have to keep this brief, due to time constraints, however, you can see that there are many points to consider concerning this project. Many points I have not even raised. I personally am not in favour of this, and strongly object to shipping the elderly out here to Mc Gregor.

**The present infrastructure of the village is not able to carry the impact of such a project.**

**-Heritage:**

Mc Gregor is laid out in generally large plots of 1000m<sup>2</sup>, some larger, a few smaller, in keeping with the general character of the village. The plots around the Kampterrein are mostly 1000m<sup>2</sup>, particularly on the edge of the Kranz. According to the assessment document, HIA, the areas planned to be built will be 1000m<sup>2</sup>. However, on the model there is no evidence of that at all, the planned housing units are very close together and form clusters of buildings to maximise space! This is not in keeping with the heritage character of the village at all.

**Frail Care:**

Where will the future clients come from?  
Local frail residents are cared for by the village, i.e. locals look after each other in their own homes, feed them, care for them and help them in their own environment, without further costs. Most elderly residents are off a pension and cannot afford expensive care. The locals do not need a separate Frail care unit.  
Doctors and nursing staff?  
Where will they be sourced?  
Will there be a doctor permanently on the premises?  
There is no trained medical staff in the area.  
Doctors from Robertson have no interest in coming to Mc Gregor.

**Jobs created:**

This village is known for it's difficulty in finding good trained reliable staff. Due to the history of the "dop system" on the winefarms, and the seasonal work, there is not much of a need for a regular job, and therefore staff are not reliable and steady for employment. Training is needed, who will train the staff?

**Water:**

Our water system is frail itself, supply is not always regular, the quality and quantity leaves much to be desired.  
How will the supply needed for this project be catered for?

**Sewage:**

Our present sewage system is outdated and overloaded already!  
How will the extra waste from the Kampterrein be eliminated?????

**Planned Low-cost Housing on the Kranz**

The planned low-cost housing for the coloured community has been in discussion for years. Three areas are in discussion:  
-Kranz and Grewe Str,  
- the Steenoonde(Brickworks)  
- and Smith Str area near the drinking water dam.  
All the impact assessments are being done at present. Different groups wish for one of each of these areas, for various reasons. There is a very strong lobby from the ANC councillor to build **283 low-cost houses on the whole of the Kranz, from the lei-water dam down to the the bottom of the village. This is directly adjacent to the Kampterrein!**  
The impact of such a development is to be considered when placing the elderly and frail next to a "Location" of this dimension.

Signed: Lorraine Piers



\*\*\*\*\*



## 15 Plans for mitigation of negative impacts on heritage resources during and after the development

One of the conservation-worthy elements of McGregor is the gravel road system. The impact of construction traffic on these roads must be carefully managed.

**A Site Management Plan** must be developed to monitor and control building activity and its impact on the roads and existing built fabric of McGregor, the Krans and the site.

A Site Management Plan should be developed in consultation with the local authority but the following should be considered for inclusion in that plan:

- requirements for dampening the gravel road surfaces along the routes trucks use in order to minimise dust
- the size of trucks be limited or their routes restricted to protect any sensitive buildings or landscape features in the town
- construction traffic be directed up Church St while working on Precinct 1, up Bree St while working on Precinct 2 and up Van Reenen St while working on Precinct 3.

## 16 Conclusions

Erven 27 and 72, though for a long time institutional in use and sparsely populated with buildings, now has a development proposed for it.

The process of negotiating an appropriate new use and development for this site has brought to light that there are conflicting values<sup>19</sup> attached to it and it is therefore necessary to discuss the issues in order to achieve the best conservation and sustainable social and economic development solution for the town.

This is not a scenario unique to this site; it is in fact one quite often encountered in contemporary heritage resource management all over the world. Dialogue and negotiation between all interest groups and champions is the only way to reach a sustainable and appropriate solution. In the South African context and particularly in a rural village such as this, potential investments must be carefully considered as the potential positive economic, developmental and social impacts are enormous. The balance to be achieved is that development in old villages needs to foreground and address heritage concerns so that the qualities for which the village is currently valued are not lost as a consequence of development occurring.

This study serves to outline the heritage informants for the site (which in this case must be considered at a town scale and applied to this site on the town's edge) and list the heritage resources and features on the site, in order to facilitate both negotiation and heritage authority decision-making on the issue. This is quite a descriptive process and has been explored above.

In addition, the proposed design has been evaluated against the ordering systems and urban elements identified in the first part of this report.

The scheme, though large, has responded, overall, quite appropriately to the informants identified. The town grid, tree line, street edge, and boundary elements are respectfully drawn on to blend the new interventions into the existing urban fabric. A series of precincts breaks the scale of the scheme, which is vital to its ability to become seamlessly part

<sup>19</sup> This concept is explored in various ways by various authors in English Heritage's *Conservation Bulletin* Issue 60: Spring 2009, but the term is coined by Drury, p.9 of that issue.

of the urban fabric. Never the less, a large scheme can never seamlessly blend into the town.

This site can accommodate more intervention than, for example, a site in the middle of the town grid, by virtue of being on the edge of town. In addition, as it has been marked as different (by being an institutional site) in the townscape. This too is in the favour of a development such as this on this site.

The architecture is appropriate in style and scale to the context and will not detract from the existing noteworthy buildings on the site.

The scheme is far along the road to being right for the site and the iterative process should now reach a sufficient level of agreement and resolution of the design for IAPs and decision-makers to support the proposal in principle, subject to further refinement in the detail resolution stages of the project.

## 17 Recommendations

- 1 That the scheme be supported in principle, so that the town planning and other application processes can proceed.
- 2 That any detail refinement of the proposal required by HWC be done as a second phase of HWC comment.
- 3 That the local authority be required by HWC to develop and enforce a Site Management Plan for the construction period, that explicitly assesses and manages the impact of construction traffic on existing roads and surrounding buildings.



### **18.1 Appendix 1: comment by Dr Hans Fransen**

Dr Fransen has now seen the proposal twice. He first saw the version that went to BELComm in August 2008 and the attached letter is his response to that proposal. Subsequently he has seen the current proposal and considers it an improvement upon the scheme he first saw.

Hans Fransen (PhD Natal, DPhil hoc. Stell)  
Art and Architectural Historian, Heritage Consultant  
14 Kenmain Gardens, 2 Myrtle Road, Kenilworth  
Tel. 021 797 7792 email fransen@telkomnsa.net

## PROPOSED RETIREMENT VILLAGE MCGREGOR

Architect: Nic Border, Sunset Beach, Cape Town.

### *Independent Assessment*

#### 1. Brief

This assessor was asked to give his frank outsider opinion on the acceptability or otherwise of a proposed development in the village of McGregor, from the point of view of the existing historical built environment.

#### 2. Need for and feasibility of the project

At first sight the proposed complex may seem somewhat too substantial for a village the size of McGregor. I have been assured, however, that in the area there is a great need for retirement and frailcare accommodation, including in the nearby town of Robertson.

#### 3. Existing character of the urban environment

McGregor is generally considered to be one of the best-preserved 19<sup>th</sup>-century towns in the Western Cape. Many dozens of the characteristic rectangular thatched and whitewashed cottages dating from the early decades of its existence still survive, often in highly attractive groupings.

In its town layout, however, it is not memorable. This probably has to do with its origins as a speculative venture, in the mistaken expectation of a pass being built through the Sonderend Mountains which would have attracted business to this otherwise remote part of the Cape. As it happened, the pass did not materialize, which contributes to its well-preserved state. A Dutch Reformed parish – so often the *raison d'être* of Cape towns – was founded here only in 1903

The street pattern of McGregor consists of near-square blocks, with a row of three blocks halved in order to provide cheaper stands. This grid is placed in an area near the confluence of two small rivers, but without any meaningful relationship to either (a *leitmotif* in so many Cape towns being their alignment with a river, leaving a well-watered strip of arable land). Nor was the McGregor grid given the articulation that so many “church towns” have in the situation of the church as its main focus.

#### 4. Position of the complex in the grid

The projected complex occupies a position at the very edge of the grid, stretching over the length of two blocks, one half of it consisting largely of an existing school complex. Care has been taken to respect the existing grid by means of the the continuation of Van Reenen, Bree and

Church Streets into the layout which, however, in no way affects the main existing grid. Another feature that is intended to minimize the impact of a foreign element like this is the retention or reinstatement of a farm dam. As a result of the topography, the intended complex does not disturb the town silhouette or landscape view to any great extent.

#### 5. Architectural design

The units are without exception single-storeyed and the one- to three-roomed units all of related design, with a pitched-roof rectangular core and flat-roofed accretions of simple plastered design that is neither modern “high-tech” nor imitation “Cape”. The arrangement of the units within the complex appears somewhat too cramped although the amount of erf space seems adequate for their intended use. The architect has undertaken to improve the spacing at least of the first row facing Darling Street – where the reinstated dam already provides some relief.

#### 6. General remarks and conclusion

This assessor is by inclination and reputation a conservationist, with a particular interest in the built environment both rural and in a village context. His first, knee-jerk response to the proposed development was one of disapproval. However, on closer scrutiny, he has to admit that the projected complex will have minimal harmful impact on the existing historical charm of the village. It will not imperil any of the abundant interesting structures or streetscapes. And he is satisfied that the architect is approaching the project with the sensitivity required in this particular environment.

Ref.: Fransen, H.: *Old Towns and Villages of the Cape*, Ball, Jeppestown, 2006.

Kenilworth, 17 February 2009

Dr. Hans Fransen

18.2Appendix 2: comment by Professor Fabio  
Todeschini

**FABIO TODESCHINI**

B. Arch. (Cape Town), M. Arch (Penna), M.C.P (Penna),  
MCIA, MSAIA, MUDISA, MAHAP, Pr Arch, TRP.SA,  
55 Dorp Street, Bo-Kaap, Cape Town 8001, South Africa.  
Home 27214222046 email: fabio.todeschini@uct.ac.za

Architect  
City Planner ☎ (021) 6502385  
Urban Designer 📠 (021) 6502383  
Heritage Practitioner 📞 084 257 2981

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2009

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**McGREGOR: PROPOSED RETIREMENT DEVELOPMENT - THE OLD SCHOOL SITE AND ADJACENT LAND**

During the last week of February 2009 I was approached by Nic Border, Architect, to give advice on how to proceed with revisions to a development proposal that had been turned down by the Built Environment and Landscape Permit Committee of Heritage Western Cape (a Statutory Committee of which I was a member for a number of years from its inception but of which I am not currently a member). I imagine that I was also approached in this regard because during the early 1990s, together with my then professional partners Derek and Vivienne Japha, the firm of Todeschini and Japha, Architects and Town Planners, was commissioned to prepare a Conservation and Development Plan for McGregor, which we did prepare.

Initially I was not inclined to become involved even as advisor to the proposed development, because I continue to believe that McGregor is a special conservation-worthy town and it seemed that the proposal would tend to counter this. However, I did ask a few questions, one of which was something along the lines of: "what benefits could the development bring to the town's population?" When I was told that in the order of 60 sustainable jobs would be created, I agreed to meet on the matter and, in due course, I agreed to be an independent professional advisor to the project. I record that I have no financial interest in the development beyond being an advisor.

The reason I agreed to be an advisor on the project, spanning concerns relative to townscape design and heritage resources management, was that as a city planner and built environment professional I am aware that the conservation of fine environments like McGregor is often best served by enabling some appropriate development, particularly if such development can bring social and economic benefits to communities that are in great need. In other words, I was persuaded that to turn away or reject out of hand a potential investment and development of the order of R70million, which inter alia could provide scores of sustainable jobs for a small town like McGregor, is not sensible. Rather, I decided to provide advice so as to try and improve the proposals and attempt to ensure that they be so framed as to be in keeping with, and not to do damage to, the special qualities of McGregor.

Over many weeks, and following numerous meetings and discussions, the proposals have been revised repeatedly and progressively, in accord with my advice and in the light of comments received by others, including members of the McGregor community.

I record that, 16 years after formulating the recommendations of the Todeschini and Japha report of 1993 relative to the 2000m<sup>2</sup> minimum recommended land subdivisions for the part of McGregor where the proposed development is sited, I am now of the view that such control is questionable and not in the public interest (see Figure 1, reproduced overleaf). The application of such a control would be currently too simplistic in a context where agricultural practices have changed and have largely disappeared and where, in any event, it is quite apparent that smaller subdivisions have been approved in recent years.

*not defined*

*NB*

*\**

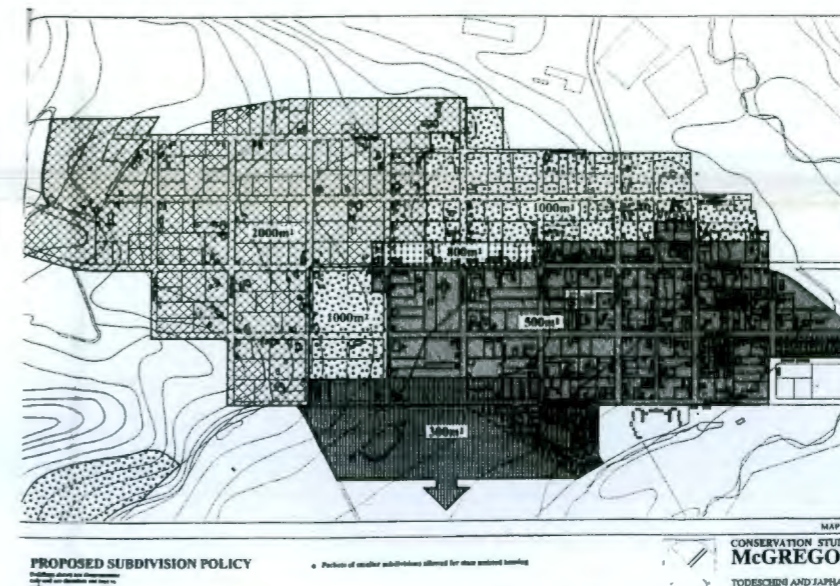


Figure 1: Facsimile extract from 1993 report.

There are several reasons for this change of view on my part:

- Circumstances have altered over the past 16 years. Orchards have largely disappeared and many developments and subdivisions have been permitted that have eroded the "open agricultural" character of this westerly part of town. Note that heritage resources and land management plans should be revisited, revised and up-dated every 5 years or so and that this may not have been systematically undertaken in McGregor in recent decades.
- 16 years ago none of us imagined that a new institutional use could be proposed for the site in question.
- As long as it does not generate excessive vehicular traffic, the proposed switch in institutional use from education to health of the site in question is very appropriate, as may be interpreted from a reading of Figure 2, below, when we bear in mind the location of the site in question and its position relative to the core of the town.

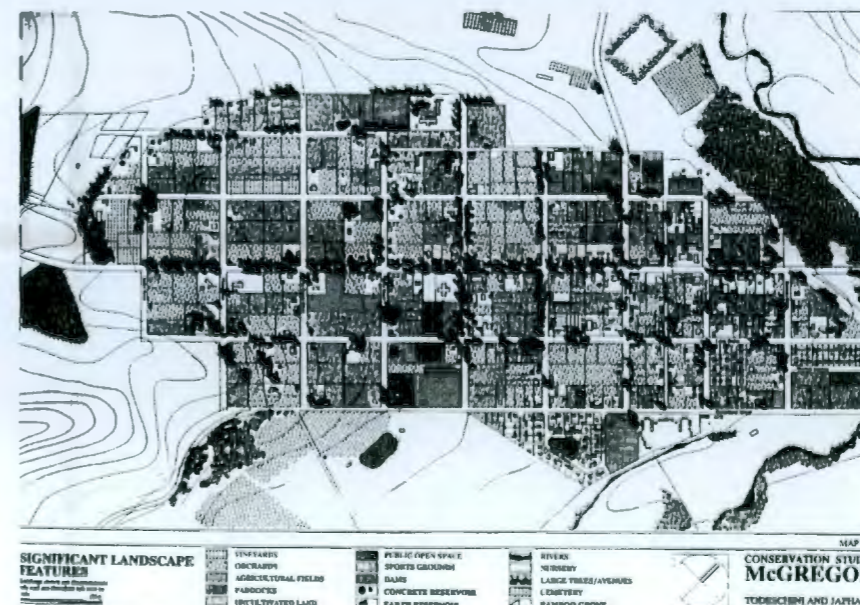


Figure 2: Facsimile extract from 1993 report.

Early on in the process of providing advice on possible development proposals on the project, I produced a version of the diagramme appearing as Figure 3, below.

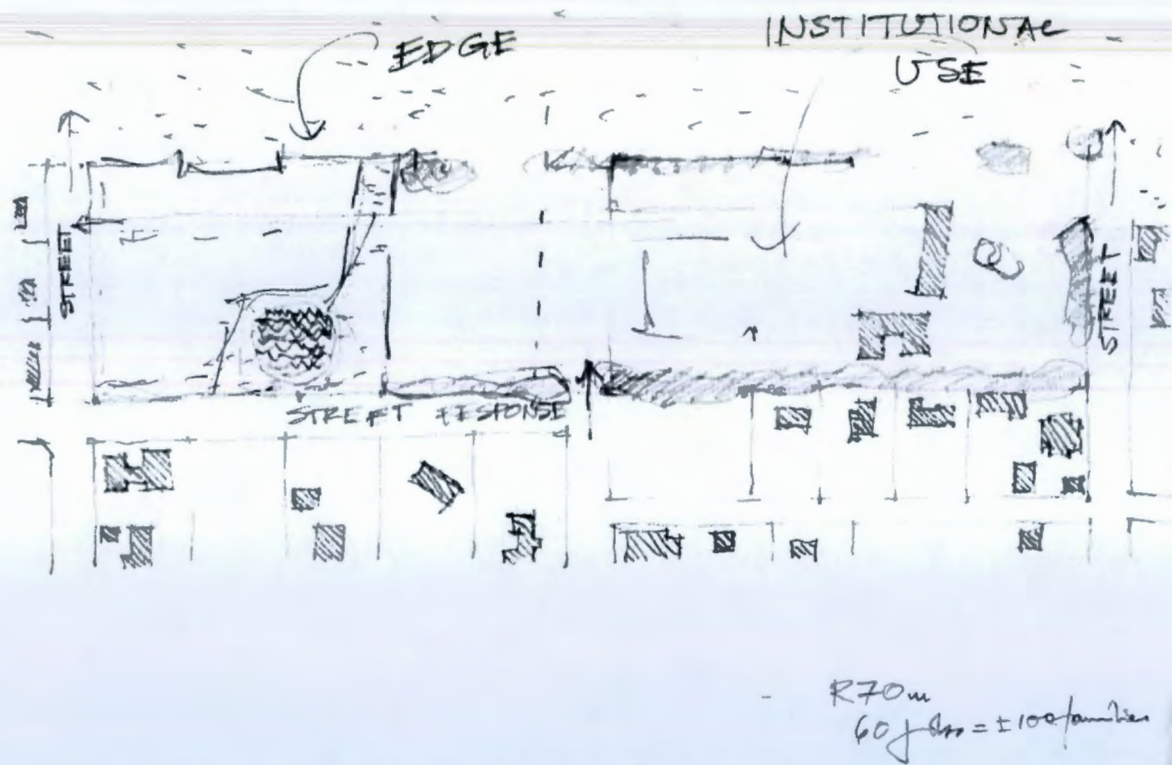


Figure 3: Diagramme of Major Development Informants and Constraints for the project.

The diagramme drew attention to the possibility of considering the proposal as comprising 3 distinct precincts:

- A northern 'Institutional' precinct, in the lee and to the west of the historic Eucalyptus tree-belt, where a configuration of new buildings could and should respond to the scale of the significant two existing old historic buildings and could conform to a quadrangular footprint and an appropriate architectural scale. The only individual residential buildings that should be considered in this precinct are one or two individual dwellings responding across the street to existing dwellings, right at the north-east edge of this precinct. (NB)
- An intermediate precinct in the middle part of the site in question, also sited in the lee of an historic tree belt where development forms could be down-scaled.
- A southern precinct where an historic dam and lei-water should feature significantly as part of considerable open land, with some residential development that could respond to existing development sited across the public streets, largely gaining access therefrom. f

I have to indicate unequivocally that in general terms the proposal as now framed has my support. I think the proposed development will not be intrusive or out-of-scale with its setting and I think that in terms of use and character the proposal is suited to the town. The phased implementation of the proposal could bring considerable benefits to the community and the municipality. Phased

Prof. Fabio Todesschini

**18.3 Appendix 3: Registers of attendance at public meetings**



ATTENDANCE REGISTER (CONT)

9 APRIL 09

NAME	CONTACT	COMMENT.
DAVID	082 4765202	100% - Jolee. Loopstr. 17
JACOBUS LUKAS	0822 7661693	Byfante Jolee. me emigra.
Fatima Rekeg	0827661693	Brijantie Jolee. Loopstr 17
Mrv. P. Tiras	0236251782	Bright Idies. Loopstr.
SALMON ADENOOT	0799102258	100%
KETTIE ADENOOT	079102258	100%
D. WOSCH	0236251479	100%
J. Jansen	0769545984	Excellent development
S. Tiras	0828166337	100% great.
A. MELLOZ	0236251723	GOOE IDEE EERSTELMAN 2.
H. HARTMAN	0768873227	WGRK SKEPPING HOFSTRAAT.

Barry Street  
Langstraat McJonger

ATTENDANCE REGISTER

20 attendees

9 APRIL 09

NAME	CONTACT	Address or organis
Anne Binds	0236251380	McGregor Bev. Forum repr.
Lorraine Piers		resident 99 Long St
Ray Gregory	0 821	resident
Gordon Campbell	campbie@iafrica.com	resident 31 Mill St.
Eunice Regue	0712027271	Tindall St.
Anna Filies	"	"
Sheron Tiras	0828166337	Loop St
Patricia Tiras		
Janet Forrester	0236251387	4 Darling St.
Geoff Braunrigg	0236251590	32 Bree St
Jill Hogan	jill.hogan@mat.org.za	McG Heritage Society repr. + MDF
Myrna Rabins	myrnar@breede.co.za	"
Celiane Lord.	023-6251-262.	93 Voortrekker St. McGaughey
VRL WEE DEN	023-6251635	10 Smit Street
TIGER MEYER	023-6251628	no 78 Mill St.
Jill Meyer	023-625-1626	No 7 Smit Street.
Carol Smith	0236251656	Voortrekker Street

+ Bruno  
 + Gami Filis  
 + Douglas + Manka  
 + Darkshit  
 NAME

33 attendees

NAME	CONTACT NO	COMMENT
J Filie's	0820979663	
G. Snyders	0828427040	
Elise Keyser	0827432706	Baie goed, onsekerstelling. Baie goeie idee Ek dink dit is 'n voordeel van ons GEMEENSKAP Ek steun 100% Tot groot voordeel vir ons dorpe Om gewing Sal tot werkskepping lei vir gemeenskap en ander uitweg vir ons ouers
Margaret Booysse	0236251776	
Christina Leckey	0827639492	
Evon Leckey	023-6251719	
Rosina van Rooyen	0768169330	
Louise Snyders	023-6251682	
Naomi Snyders	0824502872	
P. Tiras	0236251782	
A. May		
Puan de la Rive	0236251535	
HENRY KRAUKAMP	0826916763	LYK BEHOEWEND! looko interestig. Employment opportunity positive. P.O Box 133
BARBARA JACOBS	0236251484	
P. E. TISER	0726146538	
G. ALLEN	0820981196	100% SUPPORT
E. Smoos	0739587689	"
A. BOOYZEN	0721222288	"
L. ROOI		"
K. Simons	0724063622	100% Support
C. BRITZ	0794609097	100% Baie goed.
Z. ROOI	0727160081	100% Baie goed
Z. TIRAS	0236251-805	Baie goed.
S. Hartman	0726887260	100% Ek steun.
Yt. Loosch	0236251537	100% ek steun
P. Loosch	0236251537	Baie goed
J Filie's	0820979663	Baie goed
J Filie's	0820979663	Baie goed
Muller	0739976662	

**18.4 Appendix 4: questions and issues raised at the public meetings, with response from developer and heritage professionals present**

18.5 Appendix 5: Outline of evolution of project by architect Nic Border

**Developer's Address: Public Meeting 27 April 2009**

My introduction to McGregor came via a team of contractors we've been employing for the past twelve years. Every Monday they load their bakkies at 5.00am and commute through to Cape Town for the week, to return to their families on the weekend. Over the years I've got to know them and they've proved to be one of the most respectful, hard working and loyal building teams we've ever had the pleasure of working with.

All of these people were born in McGregor, most of their parents were born in McGregor, and some of their grandparents were born in McGregor.

I came with the intent of finding some small local building opportunity for them, perhaps buying one or two cottages and then renovating and selling them. However, while walking the streets with David Tiras, I was exposed to a far greater social problem than I ever imagined existed in what I perceived as an idyllic country village: crumbling historical houses, overcrowding, unemployment, alcoholism, disparate families and lack of opportunity. While in this numbed state of shock, David Tiras quietly whispered in my ear, "Nic, die NG Kerk wil die Kampterrein site verkoop."

I approached the NG Kerk in 1996 with the intent of entering into a joint venture with them, where they would put in the land as collateral and I would manage the development process and obtain finance in the traditional way through our banking systems. I saw it as a wonderful opportunity where the NG Kerk could maintain long term ownership and management of the facility, and run it as a non profit 'Ouetehuis' as they do in so many of our historical country towns like Robertson, Montague and Napier to name but a few.

Unfortunately, this particular site was owned by the NG Kerk singel van Swellendam, and involved 10 constituencies who, after a number of meetings, decided that the management and ownership structures would be too complex and that a straight purchase would be preferred. I was obviously extremely disappointed as firstly, I felt the church had missed a wonderful opportunity to give something back to the community of McGregor and build some much needed bridges, and secondly, without the land as collateral, I would now need to approach private venture capital companies to finance the project.

At the same time as I approached Prescient for finance, two other groups became interested in the site and the purchase process became a concealed tender process. We submitted an offer, but lost out to a higher offer made by the Repo Wild Group, who proposed cutting up the existing buildings into 5 units and subdividing the remaining land into 1000 m2 erven. I felt shattered and needed some time to re-group.

However, from a personal point of view, one positive offshoot had emerged. Prescient had formed a trust called 'The Conversion Trust' for the Mc Gregor bid, and they still liked the concept of 'Destination Retirement Villages in the country'. They made me a 20% profit share partner, and urged me to start looking for similar opportunities.

We spent the next two years travelling to country villages all over South Africa, armed with Hans Fransen's book 'Old Towns & Villages of the Cape', in which he vividly describes the growth of these towns from the days of the first land surveyors who road out on horse back. We visited Greyton, Riebeck West, Darling, Montague, Napier, Prince Albert, Suurbraak, Swellendam, De Rus, and Bedford among others. What we found was that there was

already a clear trend of people breaking away from the cities to a more tranquil country lifestyle. They came from all over South Africa, many from overseas, some escaping crime, some for health reasons, most just seeking a smaller, more humane environment to spend the latter part of their life in. We realized that only about 10% of sales would come from local inhabitants, and that we would have to market nationally.

The move from the city to the country is a big one. You invariably sell your business and your home at city prices, buy a country cottage, possibly start a small country business, and bank the change for contingency purposes. It's a big decision because the move is often final, as one can invariably not afford to buy back into the city. So where to next? Who looks after you in your old age?

We asked this question to hundreds of people throughout these villages. Most people who have made the move to the country are fiercely independent people. They have to be to make such a large move. Most joked that they hoped to drop while extending their vegetable patch; others simply denied that they would ever grow old! We discovered that this was an extremely important psychology to bear in mind when designing retirement villages: one has to ensure that the independent facilities are kept very separate from the assisted living facilities, and these in turn, kept very separate from the healthcare facilities. No one likes to be reminded of where they might be heading, but everyone likes to know that those facilities are there, just in case!

We've had feisty 70 year olds poking us in the chest saying 'we don't need you, our community takes care of us!' This is largely true, and really encouraging for us. Most of these towns have wonderful supportive communities where people are acting as unofficial carers already. This works fine on a casual basis, but as soon as one has ones first fall, or stroke, or develops Alzheimer's, where one suddenly requires daily 24 hr care, then this system starts to fail.

We realised we had to change our model, and introduce a far higher ratio of assisted living units in relationship to independent living units. We realised we would not necessarily attract the 50 - 70 year olds as they would more than likely choose to live independently in the greater village. Our market was mainly for the over 70 year olds, requiring smaller, more affordable units, living inwardly around courtyards and 'village squares'. By buying existing buildings for use as the common facilities such as the healthcare & clubhouse, we would not only be able to reduce the number of independent units required to finance these facilities, but also be able to develop these facilities first, & build confidence in an industry that has been tarnished by a few broken promises.

The organizations that are currently providing these facilities in these small towns are invariably non-profit organisations like the NG Kerk, the ACVV and Rotary, where it became a natural progression of looking after their specific communities. However, we found that these facilities were hugely inadequate and under-supplied, and often prescriptive in whom they accepted in.

In January 2008, we were suddenly approached by the group that had purchased the Kampterrein site from the NG Kerk. Their development option period was expiring with the NG Kerk, and they were keen to sell and utilize their capital elsewhere. We entered into a purchase agreement with them and took transfer of the property in June 2008. The instant I approached the private sector for finance, the fundamentals of the project changed. What

started as a social project suddenly had to have satisfactory returns relative to its risks. I also now had a financial stake in the project.

The first port of call with any development involving buildings with heritage value, is obtaining approval from Heritage Western Cape, which calls for input from local heritage groups and any interested and affected parties. We appointed Sharon de Gois to carry out the HIA and Tertius Smit, an architect based in Worcester, to carry out the VIA. We first met with the Mc Gregor Heritage Society in April 2008, with the same scheme that we had based our tender on two years earlier. A number of changes came out of this meeting, and the scheme presented to HWC in August 2008 was substantially improved. However, our application was not supported by HWC as the committee felt it was too dense and did not respond appropriately to the morphology & development pattern of Mc Gregor.

We realized we needed to consult with a Heritage practitioner that had more spatial experience, and appointed Kathy Dumbrell to firstly advise on, and secondly assess the heritage significance of the site in context. We also required further professional assistance at a macro and urban design level, and consulted with Dr Hans Fransen who is a conservationist and as mentioned earlier, had studied and written a book on the growth of small towns in South Africa. We debated the appropriateness of the project from a historical context, while assessing the urban environment of Mc Gregor. He urged us to avoid cul de sacs in our road layouts as roads in country towns tended to travel straight through to the town grid. He also encouraged us to study the existing town streetscape and to try to repeat rhythms from those that were most successful. I would like to read the closing paragraph of his report as I think it sums up how some of you may be feeling right now.

***"This assessor is by inclination and reputation a conservationist, with a particular interest in the built environment both rural & in a village context. His first, knee-jerk response to the proposed development was one of disapproval. However, on closer scrutiny, he has to admit that the projected complex will have minimal harmful impact on the existing historical charm of the village. It will not imperil any of the abundant interesting structures or streetscapes. And he is satisfied that the architect is approaching the project with the sensitivity required in this particular environment".***

We next approached Professor Fabio Todeschini for consultation at an urban design & planning level. Fabio is an architect, city planner, urban designer and heritage practitioner, and like Hans Fransen, is a conservationist at heart. He had also done a historical conservation & development study of Mc Gregor in the 90's, and no urban designer had a better knowledge of the town. We knew we would have a tough time with him and would have to sacrifice some floor area, but we also knew that we would end up with an educated, balanced point of view from someone who intricately understands the fine balance between development & conservation. Some of the improvements that came out of his input include the dividing of the site into three distinct precincts; the first being the extension of the existing buildings as an institutional precinct, the second as an intermediate precinct, while the third as a rural precinct responding to the surrounding erven fabric. This helped to break the scale and monotony of the design, creating villages within a village, and avoiding repetition. The bulk of the density became grouped in the institutional precinct, designed as smaller units within institutional type buildings. Among other things, he advised us to extend the existing tree line along Darling street, open up the dam area with views over the kranz, and to reduce the density in the rural precinct.

More recently, we also consulted with a local architect, Bruno de Robillard, who is not only passionate about keeping the historical qualities of Mc Gregor, but is also directly affected by the development as he lives directly opposite the rural precinct. Like many of you who have grown accustomed to looking over open fields towards the kranz, and while I in no way proclaim that he is excited by the scheme or even supports it, he was accepting of the fact that some form of development would occur sooner or later, and he was prepared to offer his input in order to achieve the best design solution possible. His input on the treatment of roads, pathways, werv mure and finer architectural elements was invaluable and we look forward to his further consultancy during the detailed architectural design process. His consultancy also lead to the omission of the internal road in precinct three, and houses along Van Reenen and Darling Streets now have direct access from outside the development. This responds directly to the existing rural edge found along these two streets. We have also created three vehicular access gates, where we had only one previously. This not only reduces the long term vehicular impact on Church St, but also extends the town grid along Bree Street and allows us to phase the project easily and with minimum impact over three phases. The impact during the construction process will also be greatly reduced.

We have thus spent the past year trying to balance the investment demands of a private equity fund with the heritage parameters of a town that is one of the best preserved 19<sup>th</sup> century towns in the Western Cape. While the heritage process has been arduous to us and has cost us a year of holding costs to date, we recognize the terrific value that has been added to the project.

The design development drawing records this progress from a scheme of 71 independent units with 71 cars, to the current proposal of 58 independent units with 48 cars. Most notable to the property fund is that this equates to a reduction of 1 750 m<sup>2</sup> of saleable floor area. Since assisted living units have no kitchens and their occupants have no cars, municipalities throughout the country evaluate them as being part of the healthcare, i.e. they have no independent impact on the town.

We are currently busy with a similar project in Napier, where we purchased an old Victorian School that was abandoned, dilapidated and in desperate need of repair. We began by renovating the existing building, and have just commenced with the construction of the assisted living units. We have received such positive feedback from surrounding residents and are being inundated with enquiries from nursing sisters, nurses, carers, catering managers and maintenance staff.

We hope that our proposed project in Mc Gregor will have a similar effect, and other than the short term impact an investment of approximately 70 million will have on the local construction companies and related real estate industries, the project will create employment opportunities for at least 60 people on a long term, sustainable basis. As the skills level required to operate such a facility is of a relatively low level, all the posts can be filled by people already residing in Mc Gregor with the minimum of amount of training.

We realize we still have a long road to travel as we have not even commenced the town planning application process yet. We are aware of some of your concerns for the lack of water and sewerage services, as well as the impact 48 more cars may have on your town. All of these issues will have to be addressed during the town planning process and I ask that we defer debate on these matters until then. We will be applying for a consolidation of the

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Fransen  
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two erven and a rezoning, and owing to the specific nature of the existing institutional site, are confident that this will not serve as precedent for other high density developments in McGregor.

In our previous public meetings we have been shocked by the vociferous resistance we have encountered by some residents residing in the so called 'Bo Dorp', while we have been overwhelmed by the terrific support from residents residing in the 'Onder Dorp'. It saddens me that such a divide occurs in this day and age based largely on economic and racial lines, but it would be equally naïve to ignore this fact. One side of town is desperate to preserve the open country spaces and 19<sup>th</sup> century character of Mc Gregor, while the other is desperate for sustainable employment and the opportunity to work within their own town.

We sincerely hope that we have now reached a happy compromise between these two worlds, and that this project can serve as a unifying opportunity for Mc Gregor, rather than a divisive one.

Nic Border.

27 April 2009