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Comprehensive and Professional Solutions for all Heritage Related Matters
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To: Me. A.van deVenter-Radford
Deputy Director Heritage: Research, Professional Services & Compliance

Amafa aKwazulu Natali
P.O.Box 2685
PIETERMARITZBURG
3200

RE: LETTER OF EXEMPTION FOR FULL HIA & SHORT REPORT: DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW PRIVATE HOSPITAL ON ERVEN 3215 AND 3217 – 3228 ESTCOURT, AS WELL AS THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ACCESS ROAD AND BRIDGE ON PORTION 1 OF ERF 1109 AND PORTION 1 OF ERF 1096, AND A RESIDENTIAL PORTION ON ERVEN 3211 – 3214, IN ESTCOURT, UMTSHEZI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, UTUKELA DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, KWA-ZULU NATAL

APELSER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTING cc (APAC) was approached by Seaton Thomson & Associates to undertake a Desktop (Basic) Heritage Assessment for the above development in Estcourt. A Draft Basic Assessment for the Development has been completed by the client, including a field visit, and based on this information, as well as scans of the aerial imaging of the development (study area) site, it is believed that a Full HIA (field visits and surveying) will not be required for this project. A number of recommendations and protocols regarding any possible unknown cultural heritage (archaeological & historical) sites, features and material that could be uncovered during future development activities are put forward at the end of this document, and if adhered to there should be no reason from a Cultural Heritage perspective for the development not to continue.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

The project has a small residential component, a new private hospital and access road. The residential portion consists of 4 erven (Erven 3211 – 3214) and the hospital site, which is very much the main component of the development, consists of 13 erven, which are to be consolidated. The 13 erven are Erf 3215 and 3217 – 3228 Estcourt. Stuart Road, which is an existing road reserve (although not built), will be formally closed and consolidated into the hospital development. The small residential component will be accommodation for nurses, doctors and security personnel, but this will be commenced as a second phase, after the hospital is operational. The hospital is proposed to be 3 storeys high and have 128 beds.

AJ Pelser BA (UNISA), BA (Hons) (Archaeology) [WITS], MA (Archaeology) [WITS]

Beatrix Bed & Breakfast Trading as A Pelser Archaeological Consulting

The site is located south of Estcourt, and south of the stream parallel to Roland Hellet Avenue. There is currently no formal access to the site, and it is proposed that an access road from Roland Hellet Avenue be constructed over the stream, to the site. This access road will form an extension to Jannie De Waal Avenue, and this extension will be on an existing servitude that has been proclaimed many years ago as a future extension. This proposed access road and bridge is on Portion 1 of Erf 1109 and Portion 1 of Erf 1096 Estcourt, which as indicated, are proclaimed/ registered future roads. The hospital site is approximately 1.8 Hectares in size, and the access roads will cover 1 hectare in extent, with the residential portion 0.3 hectares.

The current access to the site is via a dirt road, which is an extension of Heritage Road, off Roland Hellet Avenue. This is an informal dirt road, and as such a formal and more direct route to the proposed hospital is planned. Currently, the closest private hospitals are in Howick, Ladysmith and Hilton. The Ladysmith hospital is some distance from the N3 highway and from the central Drakensberg, and as such there is no private healthcare facility in the central Kwa-Zulu Natal area, and close to the central Drakensberg. Establishment of a facility such as this is critical in this area.

Based on information provided by the client (Seaton Thomson) the topography of the area is relatively flat and open, with the area having been burnt just prior to their site visits. There is some small rocky outcrops present. Visibility was therefore very good. Some erosion was evident. From the aerial views (Google Earth) of the study area it is clear that the site is open and flat, with very sparse tree cover. The photographs provided by the client also clearly show this.

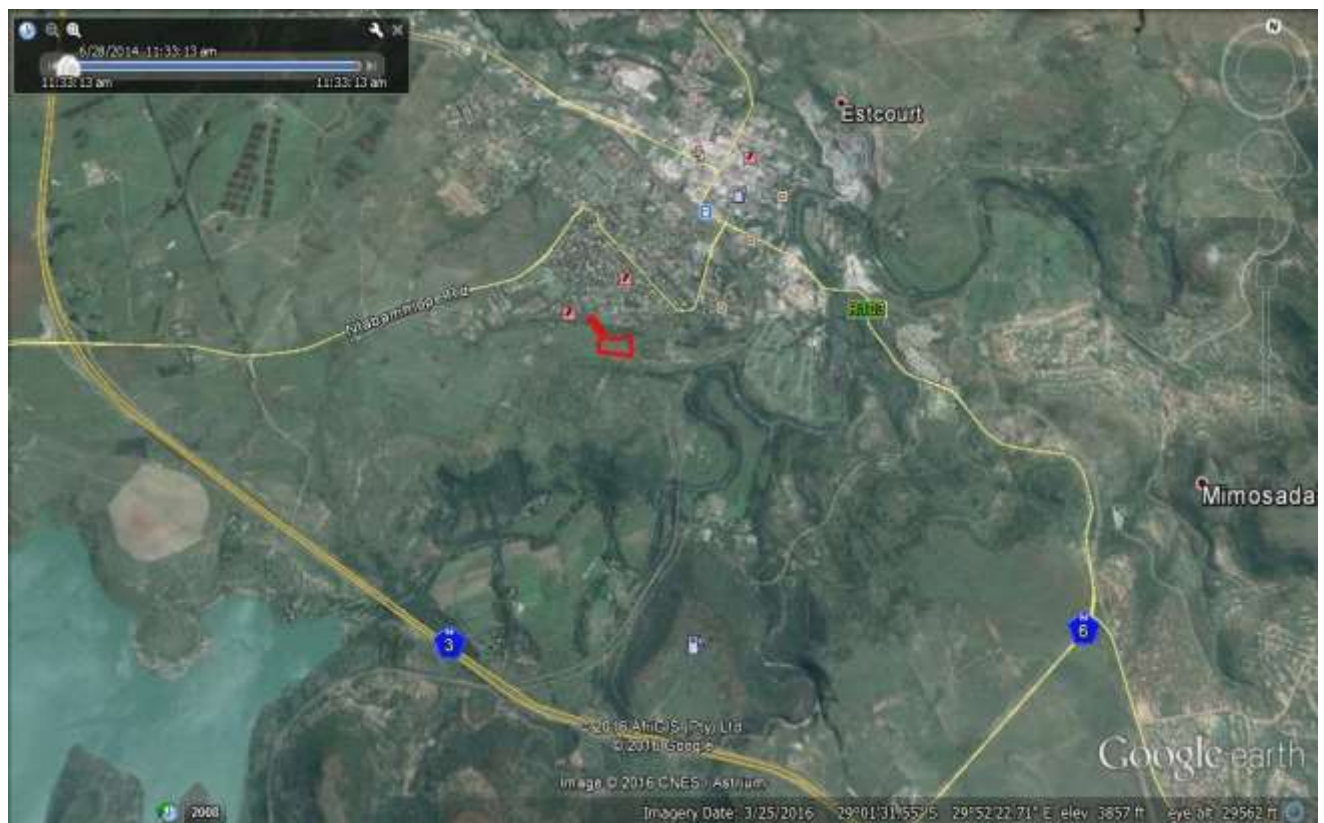


Figure 1: General location of study area (Google Earth 2016).

Figure 2: Topographic location of site (provided by Seaton Thomson & Associates).



Figure 3: Closer aerial view of study area (Google Earth).



Figure 4: Aerial image showing hospital site footprint, access road & proposed bridge (courtesy Seaton Thomson & Associates).

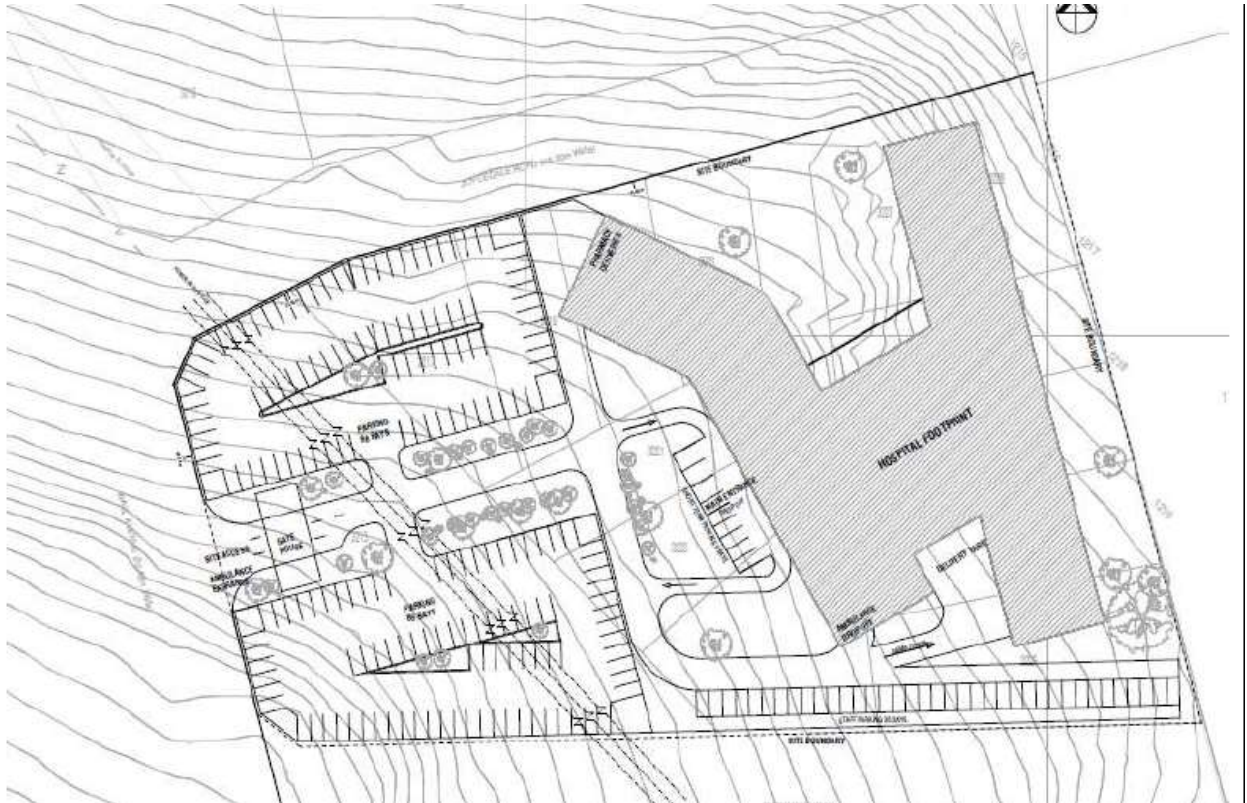


Figure 5: Layout Plan for the Estcourt Private Hospital (courtesy Seaton Thomson & Associates).



Figure 6: A view of the study area. Note how open & flat the area is. Provided by Mr. Brian Gardner (Seaton Thomson & Associates).



Figure 7: Another view (Mr. Brian Gardner).



Figure 8: A section of the area with more vegetation (close to the spruit) & some rocky outcrops (Brian Gardner).



Figure 9: Another view showing the relative openness of the area & the sparse tree and grass cover (Brian Gardner).



Figure 10: A powerline corridor pass through a section of the study area & has already impacted on the site as well (Brian Gardner).

BACKGROUND & DISCUSSION

APELSER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTING cc (APAC) was approached by Seaton Thomson & Associates to undertake a Desktop (Basic) Heritage Assessment for the development of a new Private Hospital on Erven 3215 & 3217 – 3228 Estcourt, as well as the construction of an access road and bridge on Portion 1 of Erf 1109 & Portion 1 of Erf 1096, and a Residential Portion on Erven 3211 – 3214, in Estcourt. A Draft Basic Assessment for the Development has been completed by the client, which included a field visit. According to the client a walk-through of the site was conducted and found that there were no cultural or historical features present on the site. At the time of the study the site had very recently been burnt by a fire which would have exposed any packed rocks that could be graves or old kraals. None of these were noted on the site. The greater Estcourt and Kwa-Zulu Natal area is however known for various historical battles of the Anglo-Zulu War and Anglo-Boer War (Gardner 2016: 13).

Work undertaken by the author of this report in the area during a study for the proposed Ariadne-Venus 400 KV Transmission Line between Estcourt and Pietermaritzburg identified a number of archaeological & historical sites in the larger geographical area. This included Stone Age, Iron Age and more recent historical sites (Pelser 2010).

A number of Late Iron Age stone walled features and sites were visible on the line during a fly-over, and include livestock enclosures, hut bays and other features that represent larger settlements and smaller homesteads (Pelser 2010:16-17). Although it is not possible to really determine to which time-period or groups the sites belong to, it is possible that some Early Iron Age sites could be found in the area as well. Sites, based on decorated pottery, dating to between AD 750 and 1050, are known to occur in the larger geographical area. These sites, including Ndongondwane and Ntsekane belong to the so-called Kalundu Tradition of the EIA (Huffman 2007: 309 & 313). Late Iron Age sites, belonging to the Moor Park facies of the Urewe Tradition, and dating to between AD 1350 and 1750 can also be expected (Huffman 2007:159). None of these types of sites are visible on the aerial (Google Earth) views of the Hospital Site, which is very open area with no dense vegetation cover.

The first Europeans in the Estcourt area were the Voortrekkers, who camped close to the area on the banks of the Bushmans River. The town was apparently named after Thomas Estcourt, a member of the British parliament, in 1863. Pietermaritzburg was established in 1838, and is named after Piet Retief and Gerrit Maritz, two of the Voortrekker leaders (Pelser 2010: 15). From the Ariadne-Venus study (Pelser 2010) it was determined that by far the largest number and range of cultural heritage sites in the larger geographical area date to the more recent historical period (early 19th to mid-20th century). This includes graves and graveyards, old farmsteads, Anglo-Boer War (1899 – 1902) sites, railway stations and bridges.

An old railway bridge (**See Figure 11**) was identified in Estcourt (Pelser 2010: 20) while Fort Durnford (dating to 1873) and the Zaailaager (Gerrit Maritz) Monument in Estcourt is also situated in Estcourt (p.18). None of these sites are however close to the Hospital site and will therefore not be impacted at all.

The study area falls on a portion of the original farm Wagendrift 798. An old map of this farm was located in the database of the Chief Surveyor General (www.csg.dla.gov.za). The age of this map could not be determined from document (**CSG Document 100OG304**), but it does show that the farm was surveyed and mapped before the town was formally established and that it was located in the Voortrekker Field-Cornetcy of Bushman's River. A dam, homestead and related buildings and trees (possible orchards and others) are shown on the map, and although it is not possible to determine where exactly these were located in terms of the modern Estcourt town, it is clear that there is a possibility of historical sites and remains being present in the area. The subterranean presence of archaeological and/or historical sites, features or artefacts are always a distinct possibility.



Figure 11: Old railway bridge in Estcourt.

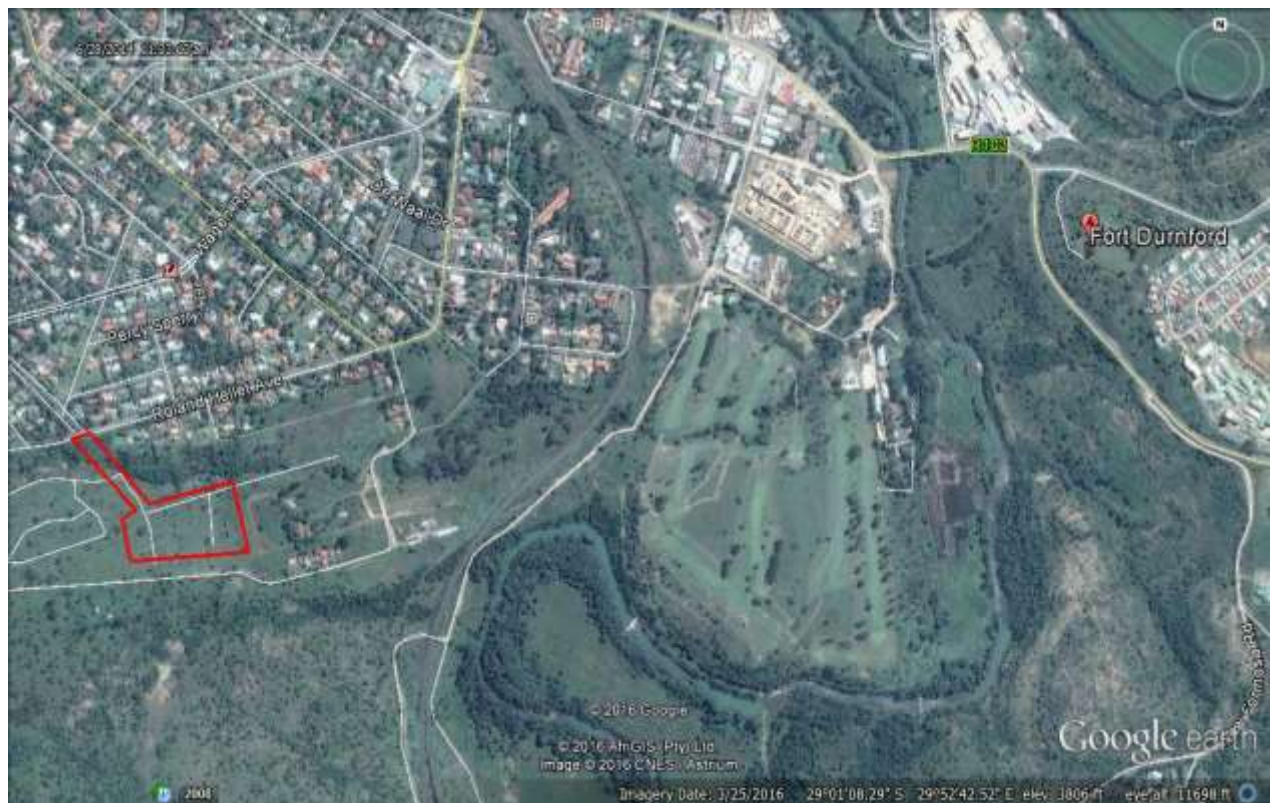


Figure 12: Aerial image showing location of study area in relation to Fort Durnford (Google Earth 2016).

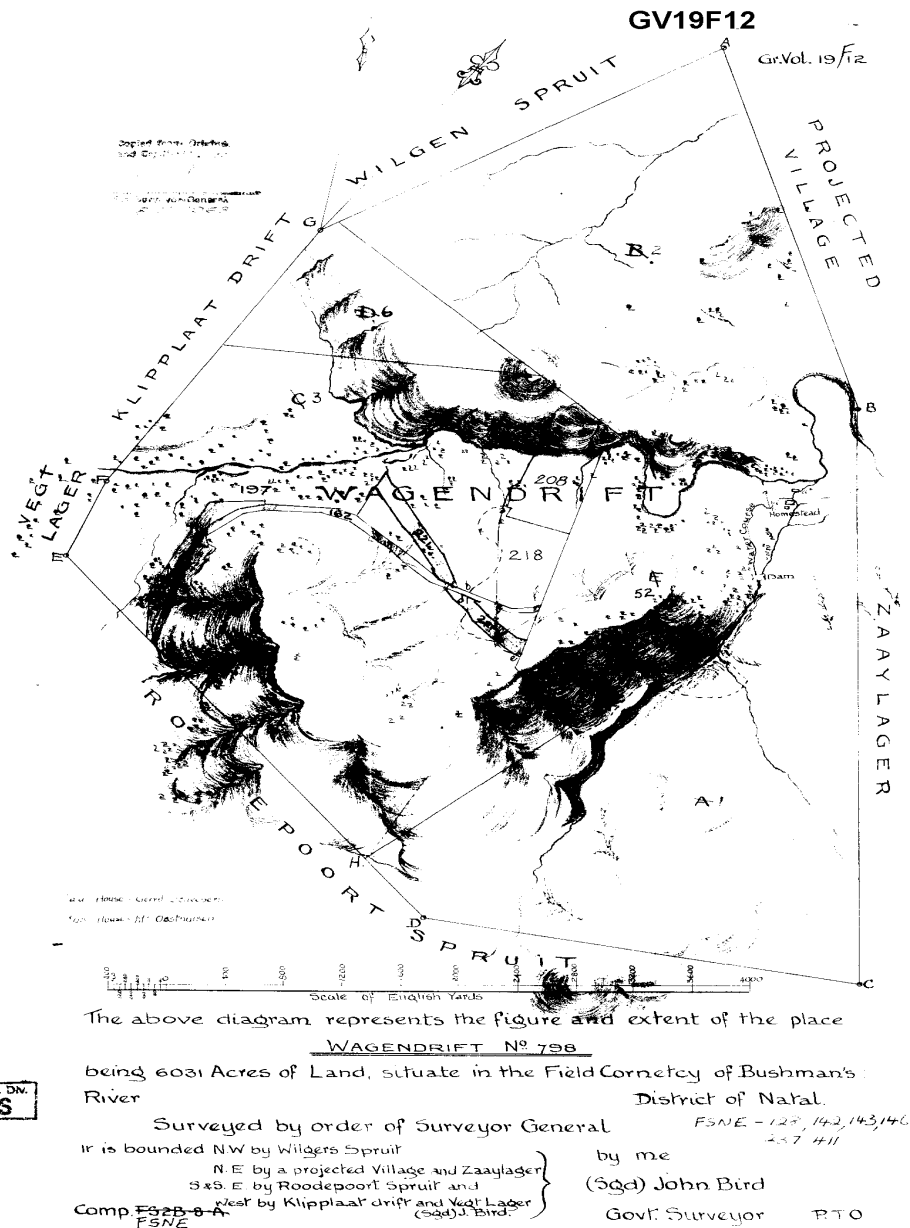


Figure 13: Old map of the farm Wagendrift, on a portion of which the Hospital Site is located (www.csg.dla.gov.za).

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

APELSER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTING cc (APAC) was approached by Seaton Thomson & Associates to undertake a Desktop (Basic) Heritage Assessment for the development of a new Private Hospital on Erven 3215 & 3217 – 3228 Estcourt, as well as the construction of an access road and bridge on Portion 1 of Erf 1109 & Portion 1 of Erf 1096, and a Residential Portion on Erven 3211 – 3214, in Estcourt. A Draft Basic Assessment for the Development has been completed by the client, which included a field visit. According to the client a walk-through of the site was conducted and found that there were no cultural or historical features present on the site. At the time of the study the site had very recently been burnt by a fire which would have exposed any packed rocks that could be graves or old kraals. None of these were noted on the site.

Based on the information provided by the client, as well as scans of the aerial imaging of the development (study area) site, it is therefore believed that a Full HIA (field visits and surveying) will not be required for this project. Known archaeological and/or historical sites (such Fort Durnford & the Zaailager Monument in Estcourt) in the area will also not be impacted by the proposed development.

From a Cultural Heritage perspective, the development should be allowed to continue without the required Full Phase 1 HIA. Please except this document as a Letter of Exemption for the Full HIA and provide the client with the necessary comments and Record of Decision in this regard as soon as possible so that development actions can be finalised. However, with a heritage specialist not having done a physical assessment of the study area, care should be taken during the development actions. The subterranean nature of archaeological and/or historical sites, features or artefacts makes finding and exposing previously unknown and invisible cultural heritage remains a possibility, and this aspect needs to be kept in mind at all times. Unmarked graves are included here. Care should therefore be taken during any development activities that if any of these are accidentally discovered, a qualified heritage specialist should be called in to investigate.

Should there be any questions regarding this document please contact the author of this letter as soon as possible.

Kind regards,

Anton Pelsner



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Aerial view of the study area – Google Earth 2016

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