

## ABLUTION BLOCKS, FORMER TOKAI PRIMARY SCHOOL - BRIEF HERITAGE STATEMENT

### 1. Historical Background

The property on which the Tokai Primary School and its two ablution blocks were built was a portion of 'Buitenverwachting', which was known in the late 19<sup>th</sup> C as 'Plumstead'. This estate, which was over 192ha in extent, was assembled by Stephanus Petrus Lategan, who purchased one portion in 1881 and another in 1885 (Deeds Registry)

In 1892 SP Lategan sold a portion to his son Willem Hendrik Lategan, who renamed that portion 'Constantia View' (later known as 'Constantia Uitsig'). In 1900, following the death of SP Lategan, the remainder portion of 'Plumstead' was divided between his other two sons, Johannes Retief Lategan and Daniel Stephanus Lategan. JR Lategan sold his portion to his brother Willem Hendrik in 1902 and, after Daniel Stephanus became insolvent in 1908, Willem Hendrik also purchased his two portions from their respective owners (Burman (1979), *Wine of Constantia*, p137).

Neither the date of construction nor the name of the architect of the school buildings is known, as the original building plans are not on record at the City of Cape Town. According to the Educational Gazette of **1902**, the school was opened at the start of the 3rd term of that year. It was a '3rd class public undenominational (A3) school' and in its first term, there were already 56 pupils, all of them white (Sigrid Howes, Centre for Conservation Education, pers. comm. 18 June 2014).

It is most likely that the school was built by the Colonial Government by agreement with DS Lategan, as the land on which it is situated remained in this family's ownership until 1917.

On 5 April 1917, the property, which is now Erf 3025 Constantia was subdivided from Erf 3023 and sold to the Trustees of the **Tokai Undenominational Public School** by Willem Hendrik Lategan for the amount of 250 Pounds Sterling (Deed of Transfer T2266/1917).

According to Sigrid Howes, the school largely accommodated children of warders at Porter Reformatory and Pollsmoor Prison. By the 1920s, it was an Afrikaans school, called Tokai Primêre Skool. By 1921 the school had 137 pupils, all still white. It is not known when the school was opened to 'coloured' children, but the establishment of new and better equipped white schools in the area in the 1950s - Bergvliet Primary school and Sweet Valley Primary School - would have led to a drastic reduction in numbers of white children at Tokai School.

In 1968, seven years after the Union of South Africa became a Republic, the property was transferred to the Republic of South Africa.

It is also not known exactly when the Tokai Primary School closed, but the forced removals in terms of the Group Areas Act would have had a drastic effect on the school's numbers. In the early 1980s the remaining few learners were relocated to the Constantia Primary School at the corner of Ladies Mile and Spaanschemat River Road.

In 1994, following an extensive period of disuse, the property was purchased from the State by the Constantia Valley Local Council, who intended to lease it out as a creche/pre-primary school. This use did however not materialise and it was sold to Constantia Uitsig Farms (Pty) Ltd in 2001 to become a one-stop wine shop for the wine estates in the area (Henry Aikman, former planner at Constantia Valley Local Council, pers. comm. 12 June 2014 ). Soon thereafter, it was converted to also accommodate a restaurant, known as the River Café.

The two freestanding ablution blocks, which would originally have been for one for boys and one for girls, are flat-roofed and 25m<sup>2</sup> each. They have been altered to become unisex toilets for restaurant patrons, but are now largely unused, since there are also toilets in the restaurant building.

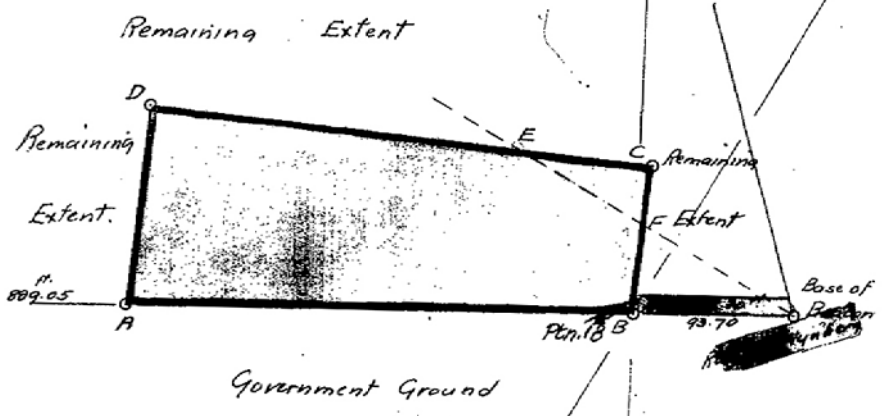
The numerical data of this diagram are

consistent

N<sup>o</sup> 274. 1917<sub>2RB</sub>

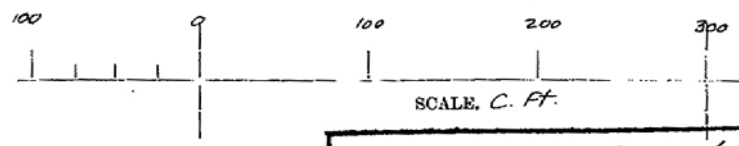
Approved No. 478  
 1917  
*F. F. Allard.*  
 SURVEYOR

Examiner.



SIDES.	
	— C. Ft.
AB	301.61
BC	87.00
CD	300.00
DA	118.10
ANGLES.	
	° ' "
A	84. 4. 50
B	95. 55. 10
C	90. 0. 0
D	90. 0. 0

Fig. ABFE quitrent = SR 203 - 93  
 CEF Freehold = 10 - 00.



ERF 3025 Constantia

The above figure ABCD represents 213 Morgen  
93 Square Feet of Land at Constantia  
 in the Cape Division, being Lot Tokai School  
 a part of Lot A, Estate Plumstead, transferred to J. R. Lategan 20<sup>th</sup> August 1900.

Bounded NW<sup>chs</sup> & SW<sup>ch</sup>s by Remaining Extent  
NE " " Remaining Extent and Passage 10<sup>ft</sup>  
SE " " Government Ground

M 2358  
M 2359.

I hereby certify that the survey from which the above diagram is framed has been made by me,  
 Surveyed and beaconed by me according to Regulations  
*J. J. Beesley* November 1916  
 Government Land Surveyor.

I certify that this diagram belongs  
 to the Deed of Disposal this day made  
 in favour of the Public Undermunicipal  
 School of Tokai. 5 April 1917 (N<sup>o</sup> 2266)

Chief Clerk.

AH 188/433 (1)  
 AH 188C (5889)  
**FOR ENDORSEMENTS  
 SEE BACK OF DGM.**  
 3025



Extract from the 1945 aerial photograph, with the U-shaped, pitched-roof school building at the centre and its toilet blocks on either side (Source: Chief Directorate Surveys & Mapping, Job 203B, Strip 5, Tile 2700)

## 2. Statement of Significance and Conclusion

The site is located in the greater Cape Winelands Cultural Landscape, which was identified as a Grade 1 Heritage Site by SAHRA in 2006. In terms of a memorandum of understanding between HWC and SAHRA, HWC is the approving authority and SAHRA is a commenting authority for applications in terms of Section 34 and 38 of the NHRA.

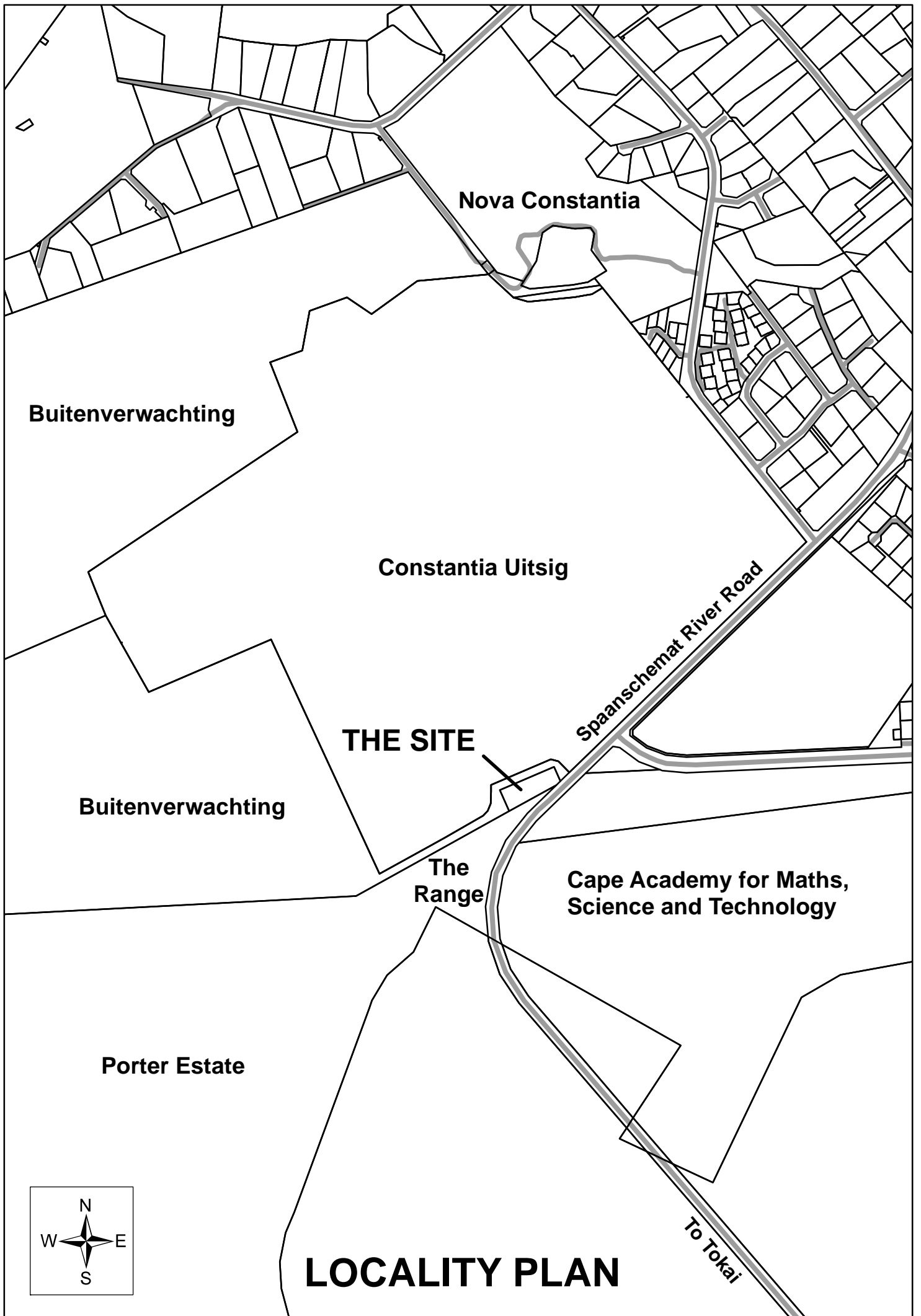
The school building is considered to have historical and social significance as part of the history of Constantia. Architecturally, it is typical of a late-Victorian school and, despite its alteration into a restaurant and shop, being largely open plan inside and at the back, still has distinctive 'institutional' characteristics and its public facades (west, south and east), visible from Spaanschemat Rover Road, are largely intact. In the 1991 Todeschini & Japha Constantia-Tokai Valley Conservation Study, the school building is described as "*pre-1915 buildings of historic interest*". In the 2007 Heritage Study by Todeschini & Blanckenberg, it is considered to be either Grade 3A or 3B.

The author considers the grading of the school building to be Grade 3C architecturally, as only its exterior is intact, but its grading is elevated to Grade 3B, due to its social and historical significance.

The two toilet blocks, the subject of the attached demolition application, are **not** deemed to be gradable. They are not architecturally noteworthy, many finishes including roofs, tiles and sanitaryware are all new and their spatial relationship with the main school building is tenuous. They make no significant contribution to the character of the site or the greater Constantia Valley. They are not essential to the operation of the restaurant - Ablution Block 1 is occasionally used by security and maintenance staff and Ablution Block 2 serves as 'overflow facility for patrons of the restaurant (there are more conveniently-located toilets in the main building).

Furthermore, Ablution Block 1 and surrounding vegetation obstruct north-western views towards Buitenverwachting and the mountain from the restaurant and Ablution Block 2 obstructs views of the main façade of the old school building from the entrance. It is concluded that their demolition will not be a loss to the national estate, will improve the landmark setting of school building and should be supported.

Frik Vermeulen  
Pr Pln B Tech TRP M Phil CBE MSAPI MAPHP  
Heritage Practitioner



**Nova Constantia**

**Buitenverwachting**

**Constantia Uitsig**

**Spaanschemat River Road**

**THE SITE**

**Buitenverwachting**

**The Range**

**Cape Academy for Maths, Science and Technology**

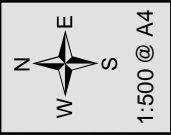
**Porter Estate**

**To Tokai**

**LOCALITY PLAN**







Erf 9795

Constantia Uitsig

Entrance

Ablution Block 2  
to be demolished

Erf 3025  
Constantia

Existing Restaurant and Wine Shop

Erf 3346

Ablution Block 1  
to be demolished

Erf 9796

Erf 3341

SPANSGHEMAT RIVER ROAD



## ABLUTION BLOCK 1



View from the restaurant towards the west, with the mountain view obstructed by the abluition block and hedge.



South elevation





West elevation



Interior of the building



## ABLUTION BLOCK 2



View from Spaanschemat River Road, with the restaurant on the left and the main entrance on the right. Ablution Block 2 is behind the bushes at the centre of the image.



View from the south-west





View of Ablution Block 2 from the north, with the restaurant in the distance on the right



Interior views