

Boschendal Heritage Impact Assessment

(Scoping Phase)

Identifying Settlement Informing Issues



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IDENTIFY SETTLEMENT INFORMING ISSUES

1. ADOPTING AN APPROACH

Boschendal is a key precinct within the wine and fruit lands, (as opposed to the wheat lands of the Swartland) of the Western Cape, an area of such beauty, historical significance and uniqueness that consideration is being given to seeking world heritage status for the entire area. It follows that, appropriately, a conservative approach should be adopted towards any proposals to change its character. This does not mean that no change, particularly in the form of urban development, can be considered. It does mean, however, that the impact, particularly visual impact, of any new development should be unobtrusive and that patterns of development should be in keeping with historical patterns. This document seeks to identify the main issues related to settlement which need to be considered at regional, sub-regional and local scales and to develop a set of principles which should inform attitudes towards new development.

2. THE REGIONAL SCALE

Figure 1 identifies the main issues at a regional scale. The agricultural valleys of the Western Cape are an important part of the unique landscape of the Western Cape. In terms of landform and land use, all have similar characteristics: steep weathered sandstone ridgelines, commonly under mountain fynbos or forest; more rounded granite intrusions in places on the steeper slopes; fertile mid-slopes which have long been farmed (commonly, they are under vines or fruit); settlements on the lower slopes; and river floodplains on the valley bottoms.

Historically, patterns of settlement have responded to the landscape. There is archaeological and linguistic evidence of significant Khoi occupation in the area in times before the settlers of the Dutch East India Company arrived in the Cape. Some of the migratory paths into the mountains (for instance, to the Silvermine area and to popular and accessible places to gather mushrooms and other wild fruits and vegetables) are still used by local inhabitants today.

Subsequent more permanent agricultural settlement also responded logically to the landscape, leaving a rich heritage within the cultural landscape: gracious Cape Dutch homesteads; werfs defined by low walls; planted windbreaks; hedges; and agricultural outbuildings, almost all on the lower slopes.

However, all of these valleys are under attack from unregulated urbanisation. Some of the valleys, such as Constantia, have been almost entirely overrun by suburban development and their rural qualities almost entirely destroyed. All of the others are under increasing threat. Significantly, most of this pressure is not generated by local economic need: most demand is generated by the very amenity of these places: it is the desire to privatise amenity, as opposed to need, which generates demand and commuter patterns to and from Cape Town have increased significantly.

The Groot Drakenstein-Simondium Valley, of which Boschendal is an important component, is also one of the least developed of the valleys. These facts reinforce the need to adopt a custodial approach towards it: it is the responsibility of this generation to ensure that its unique characteristics and qualities are retained for future generations.

Figure 2 shows the primary pattern of regional settlements and infrastructure. The relatively evenly spaced small towns almost all originated as central places providing services for their agricultural hinterlands. The range of the towns was established primarily in terms of movement on horseback. Two points emerge strongly from this diagram. The first is the rapid encroachment of the metropolitan urban edge. The second is the background nature of the Boschendal site. It is remote from concentrations of regional infrastructure. Indeed this remoteness is an important part of its attraction.

3. THE SUB - REGIONAL SCALE

Figure 3 maps sub-regional constraints and informants. Shown here is landform, surface water, good and moderate soils, nature reserves, elements of the cultural landscape, both built and planted, publicly significant views, settlements, and elements of regional infrastructure, including the rail and road movement network and dams. Clearly revealed is the balance which exists between wilderness, rural and urban landscapes. A distinctive urban corridor, not necessarily continuous in nature, is taking root in association with the N1 between Cape Town and Paarl. Elsewhere, the settlement pattern is ordered around a system of narrower routes linking agricultural central places. The dominant pattern is one of 'beads on a string' allowing significantly-scaled continuous swathes of green. There is also a tendency for settlement to gravitate towards significant concentrations of regional infrastructure. Both of these patterns should be respected in the planning of any future development. It can be seen that locationally Boschendal lies at an important cross-road condition between Stellenbosch and Paarl: it serves as a forecourt space announcing entry into the Franschoek Valley.

4. LOCAL SCALE

Figure 4 shows a composite of the elements contributing to the character of the local area and important dimensions of the cultural landscape, both built and planted. A significant quality, which cannot be mapped but which is of great significance, is the authenticity of the agricultural experience. Boschendal is a working agricultural area and it has the sights (not always neat), noises and smells associated with this.

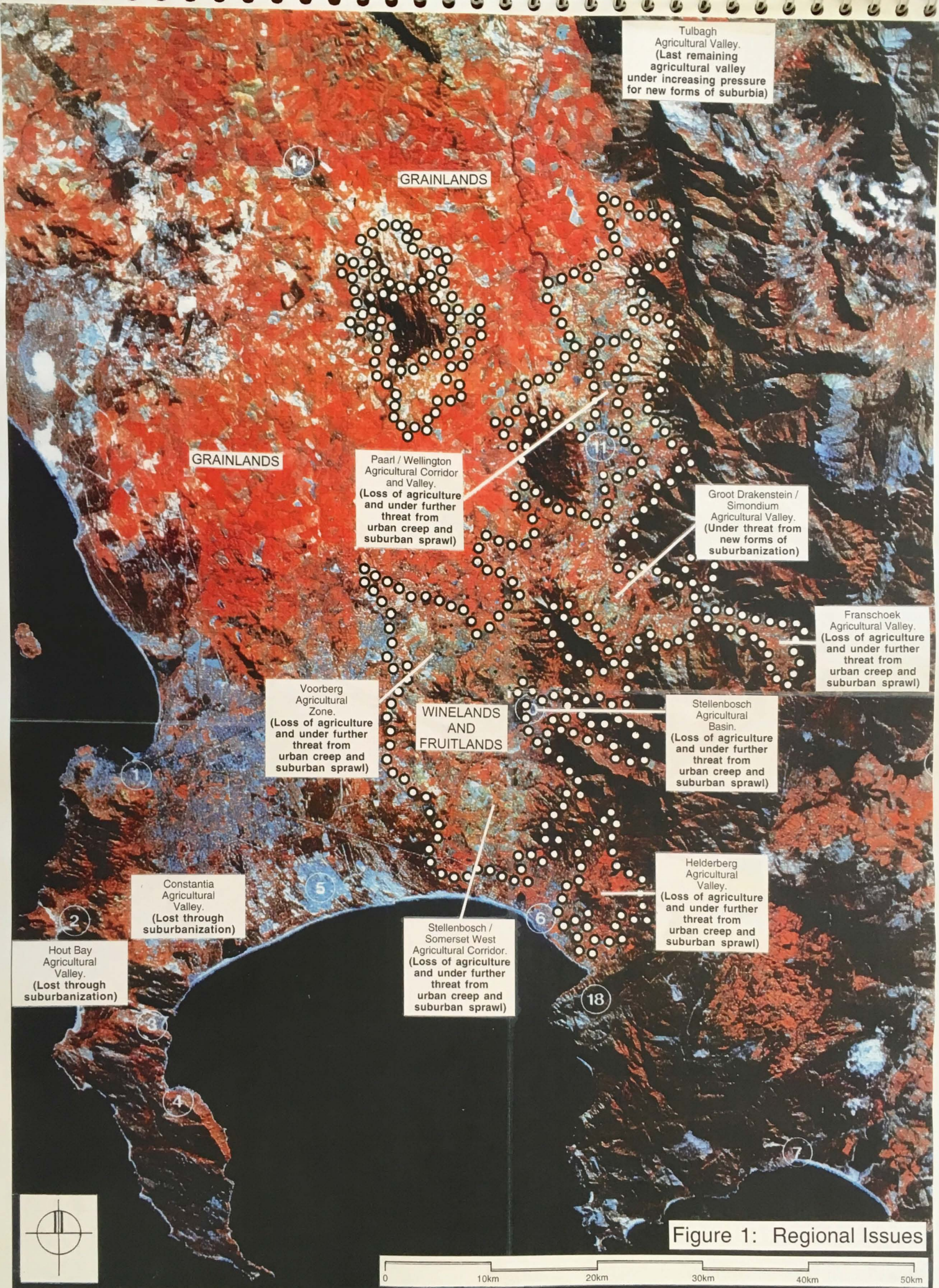
The figure also identifies some of the emerging threats to that quality:

- Increasing suburbanisation;
- Commercialisation (particularly in the form of bed and breakfast establishments);
- The replacement of authentic or working agricultural activity with artificial substitutes (where vineyards operate more as gardens than having an economic function);
- Incremental reductions in erf sizes.

5. SOME GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENT

From the information and issues presented, a number of principles relating to how new development proposals should be viewed can be distilled.

- No development in river floodplains;
- No development on good agricultural soils;
- No development on steeper slopes (as a guideline, McHarg's criterion of 9° is suggested);
- Make development as visually unobtrusive as possible (through planting, cutting, control of heights and so on);
- No development on ridgelines and hills;
- Make erven larger, and buildings footprints smaller, as slopes steepen;
- Retain all important elements of the existing cultural landscape;
- Do not block currently used and historical community access paths to wilderness areas;
- No blockages to important public viewing cones and vistas and their backdrops;
- Retain the feel of agricultural dominance: this requires that the 'beads on a string' pattern of settlement be continued, allowing large uninterrupted swathes of agricultural production;
- Preserve the feeling of a working agricultural landscape (as opposed to a passive green one);
- New development should be informed by existing infrastructure;
- Reinforce the emerging N1 corridor.



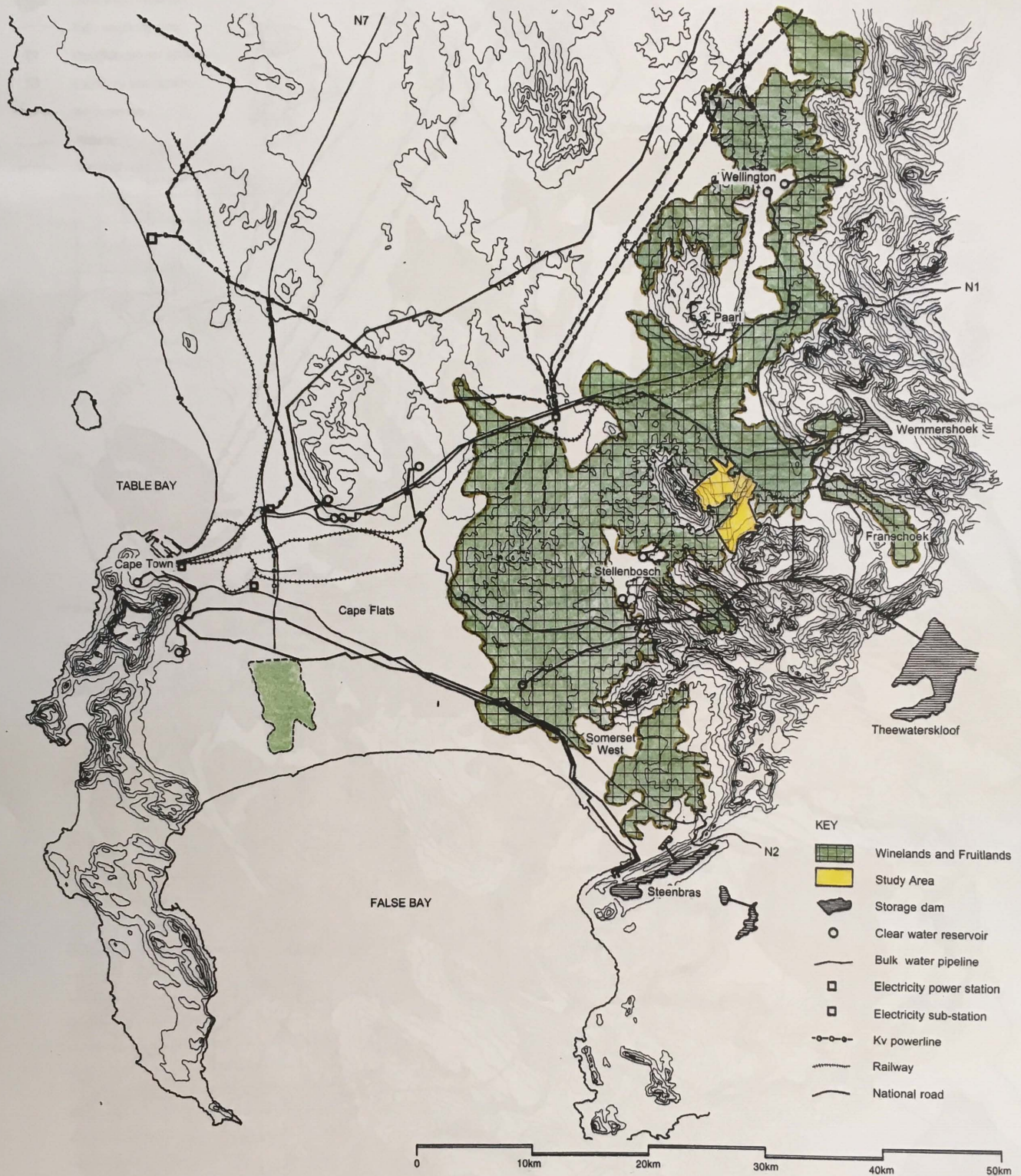












Figure 2: Regional Constraints and Informants

- KEY**
-  Good Soils including High and Moderate Potential for Perennial and Annual Crops
 -  Nature Reserves
 -  Storage dam
 -  Clear water reservoir
 -  Bulk water pipeline
 -  Electricity power station
 -  Electricity sub-station
 -  Kv powerline
 -  Railway
 -  National road

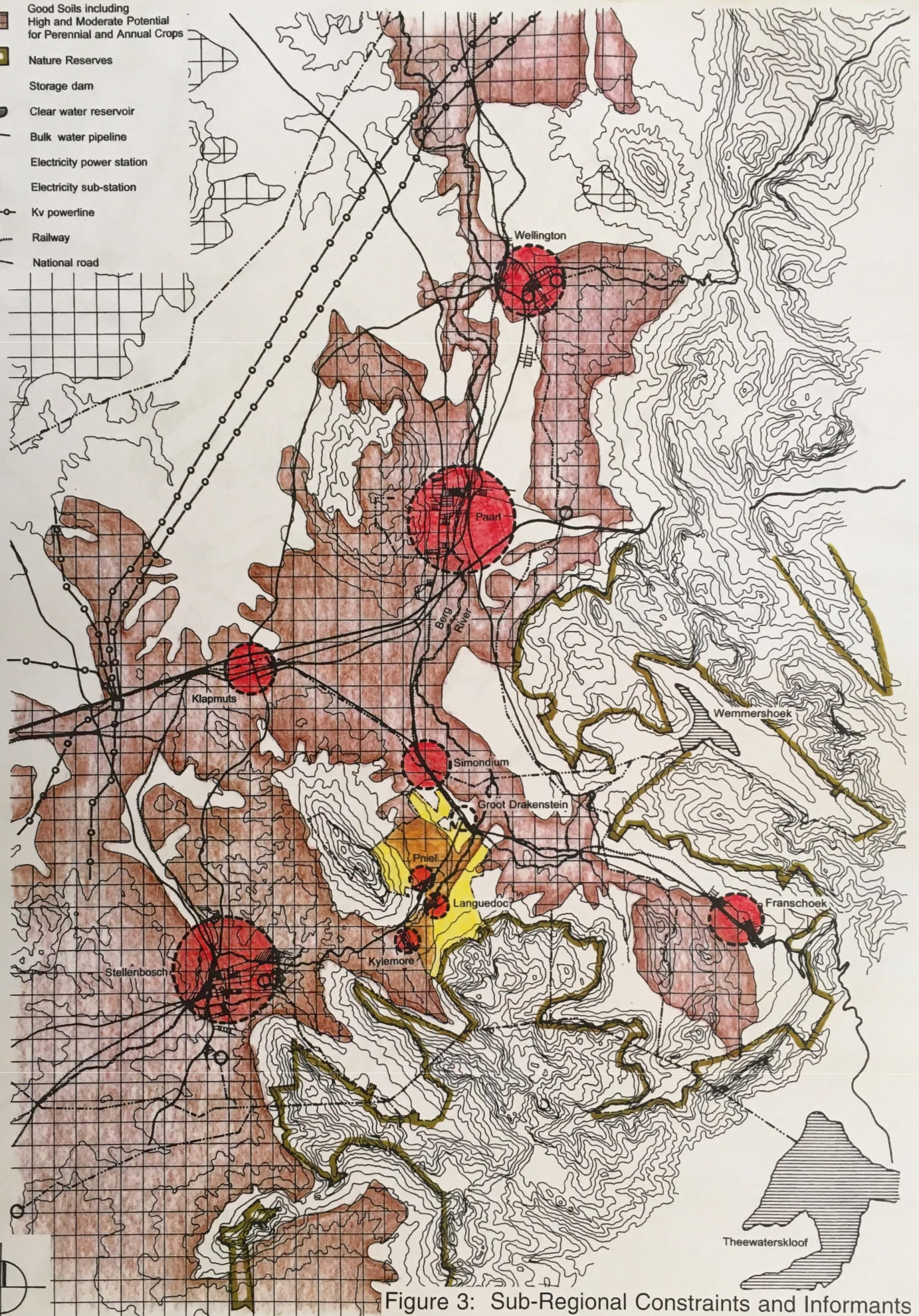


Figure 3: Sub-Regional Constraints and Informants

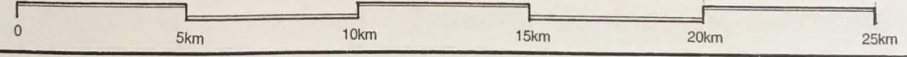




Figure 4: Local Area: Character Contributing Elements