

# HERITAGE STATEMENT

prepared for

NUR EL HUDA MOSQUE COMMITTEE

June 2014

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NUR EL HUDA Erf 1895  
BO-KAAP, CAPE TOWN

## Executive summary

*vidamemoria* heritage consultants were approached by the **Nur-El-Huda Mosque Committee** to assist in obtaining heritage approval for alterations and additions to the existing mosque located on **Erf 1895, Leeuwen Street, Bo-Kaap Town**.

The site falls outside of any urban conservation areas and / or Heritage Overlay Protection Zones, however does fall within the proposed **Bo-Kaap Grade 1 National Heritage Area**. The mosque was constructed in 1958 and proposed alterations and additions do not fall within the ambit of Section 34 of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA 25 of 1999). The proposals do not trigger any further provisions of the NHRA and thus application is to be considered in terms of Section 7 of the National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act (Act 103 of 1977). Comment must be obtained from the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA): Built Environment Unit.

Nur-el-Huda Mosque is located in Leeuwen Street, Bo-Kaap. The site is considered to possess historic, cultural and religious significance. The proposed grading of the site is **Grade 3 A heritage resource** based on associational and contextual significance. The site is considered to be significant within the context of group of mosques in the Bo-Kaap and could be considered for grading as Grade 2 within a serial nomination.



Locality of Nur-el-Huda Mosque along Upper Leeuwen Street, Bo-Kaap

The site contributes to the green framework and character of Upper Leeuwen Street and heritage indicators thus relate to impact on surrounding context in terms of height, massing, views and materiality.

Submission of initial **Proposal A** was made to officials and interested and affected parties. Initial plans were approved in October 2011 by the City and supported by SAHRA. Plans comprised additions to the mosque along the northern and eastern boundaries of the property. Further to approval of plans in October 2011, the Mosque Committee proposed additional

development to optimise site footprint, with additional development proposed along the western and southern boundaries. Plans dated June 2012 for **Proposal B** indicated proposed extensions along Leeuwen Street boundary. Submission regarding proposal B was not supported by the City of Cape Town and heritage concerns were raised by SAHRA Built Environment Unit.

Further to discussion between the architects, heritage consultants and the Mosque Committee in lieu of feedback received from The CoCT and SAHRA regarding Proposal B, it was decided that Proposal A as submitted and approved in 2011 would be resubmitted for consideration. This application thus considers **resubmission of Proposal A**. Motivation for expansion is concerned with sustainability of the mosque, optimising the mosque in terms of space as a multipurpose community facility and providing opportunity for Ghusl at the mosque (during funerals).

Proposal A has a positive response to set backs along Leeuwen Street and in maintaining the existing green framework. The proposal contributes to retaining rhythm of scale and massing along Leeuwen Street. Visual linkages of the minaret from lower slopes of BoKaap will be retained. The mosque will retain its existing façade thus retaining distinctive appearance and remaining a visual focal point for view terminating at the intersection of Lion Street and Leeuwen Street as well as along Leeuwen Street.

The proposal will result in no impact on identified heritage resources. No negative heritage impact is expected with high social benefits to the local community.

Consideration should be given to madrasa facilities within the mosque as the Nurul Huda madrasa in the 1980s accommodated one of the three largest madrassas in the Bo-Kaap. This would result in a high positive heritage social benefit to the community. It is recommended that **resubmission of Proposal A be supported**.

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- Annexure 1:* Proposal A: approved plans Comment from  
*Annexure 2:* Comment from City of Cape Town dated October 2010  
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*Annexure 4:* SAHRA dated 6 August 2010  
*Annexure 5:* Comment from SAHRA dated 2 April 2013

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

*vidamemoria heritage consultants* were approached by the **Nur-El-Huda Mosque Committee** to assist in obtaining heritage approval for alterations and additions to the existing mosque located on **Erf 1895, Leeuwen Street, Bo-Kaap Cape Town**. *vidamemoria* has previously advised the Mosque Committee on an ad-hoc basis and are currently assisting the Mosque Committee on a pro bono basis with necessary heritage submissions. This report has been compiled by Lonica Barnes, Adiel Hartley and Quahnita Samie.

Various submissions were made to the City of Cape Town and SAHRA with regard to Erf 1895 by the Mosque committee over the period 2010 - 2013. The drawings have gone through a series of iterations, changes and approvals at the City of Cape Town. This report will provide background to such submissions and highlight alternative submitted for consideration.

The purpose of the heritage statement is to assist in the understanding and assessment of cultural significance and provide a basis for comment by the South African Heritage Resources Agency and decision making by the City of Cape Town.

## 1.2 Legal framework

The site falls outside of any urban conservation areas and / or Heritage Overlay Protection Zones, however does fall within the proposed **Bo-Kaap Grade 1 National Heritage Area**. The mosque was constructed in 1958 and proposed alterations and additions do not fall within the ambit of Section 34 of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA 25 of 1999). The proposals do not trigger any further provisions of the NHRA and thus application is to be considered in terms of Section 7 of the National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act (Act 103 of 1977). Comment must be obtained from the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA): Built Environment Unit.

SAHRA: Built Environment Unit in its capacity as a commenting authority requested that a heritage specialist be appointed to provide a heritage statement be submitted for consideration to provide clarity on:

- Date of construction of the mosque
- Prior uses of the site and building
- Photomontage to map the context of the building interior and outstanding features
- Height of next door building should be considered as part of the context

Heritage statement would determine if the development would be exempted from further and more detailed studies and comments of the Bo-Kaap Civic Association must be submitted.

## 1.3 Methodology

In researching the Nurul Huda Mosque, the following methodology was adopted:

- A site visit was conducted to examine the site and its surrounding context
- In exploring history of the Mosque and area, accessed historical resources at the Western Cape Archives
- Survey diagrams and aerial photography were used to explore context of the site

- An inspection of the interior of the mosque was conducted
- Secondary sources included key texts by Aghmat Davids (1980) and Townsend (1977)
- Consideration was given to the historical, spatial, social and political context of the mosque
- Consultation included interaction with the members of the Nur-El-Huda Mosque Committee, Bokaap Civic Association (Chair Mr Shaboodien), City of Cape Town Heritage Resources Section, and South African Heritage Resources Agency

#### 1.4 Limitations

- Very limited information was available regarding the Nurul Huda Mosque. Few sources relating to mosques in the BoKaap mentioned the Nurul Huda Mosque
- Various sources were considered, with minimal relevant information available. The street directories at the South African library did not include the property. No information was found within the SAHRA case files and most sources relating to the Bokaap concentrated on the 'historic core' of the area concentrated near Wale and Chiappini Streets
- The main section of the Mosque was easily accessible, however the living space occupied by the care taker was considered as private space and therefore was not accessed

#### 1.5 Site location and context

Nur-El Huda Mosque is located in Upper Leeuwen Street on an upward slope towards Signal Hill within the **Schoone Kloof** section of Bokaap. The Leeuwen Mansions are located adjacent to the mosque and the site is surrounded by low rise residential development to the south and medium density residential development to the north. The surrounding context is characterised by much altered residential dwellings lacking positive spatial relationship to its context.



Figure 1: Locality of Nur-el-Huda Mosque along Upper Leeuwen Street, Bo-Kaap

Within the context of the Bokaap, Stadzigt and the Malay Quarter contain the highest concentration of heritage resources contributing to the historical, cultural and architectural significance of the area. Schoone Kloof is characterised by many residential dwellings that have been altered and an updated survey is required to determine current architectural significance. Nur-El-Huda was identified for inclusion within the Proposed Bokaap Conservation area in 1998 (Pistorius 1998:9), however no formal declaration had been effected.

Upper Leeuwen Street is fairly wide, cobbled in areas with a strong green network relating to the park and along the edges of the street between Lion Street and Pentz Street. The block on which the mosque is located comprises 19 residential units ranging from single residential to the Leeuwen Street Mansions block of flats, Leeuwen Street park which stretches to Dorp Street and lies adjacent to the first farmhouse in BoKaap, namely 79 Dorp Street. The building faces Dorp Street and despite sharing a boundary with the mosque site bears no relationship to the mosque due to existing residential development adjacent to the mosque, slope and obstruction of views.



Figure 2: View in a southerly direction along Leeuwen Street with Nur-el-Huda in the background



Figure 3: View in a westerly direction towards Lion Street



Figure 4: View in a southerly direction along Leeuwen Street with Nur-el-Huda in the background and adjacent residence



Figure 5: View in a southerly direction along Leeuwen Street residential development along Leeuwen Street



Figure 6: View in a southerly direction along Leeuwen Street with single storey residences along the lower portion of Leeuwen Street



Figure 7: View in a northerly direction with Leeuwen Mansions in the foreground and Nur-el-Huda in the background

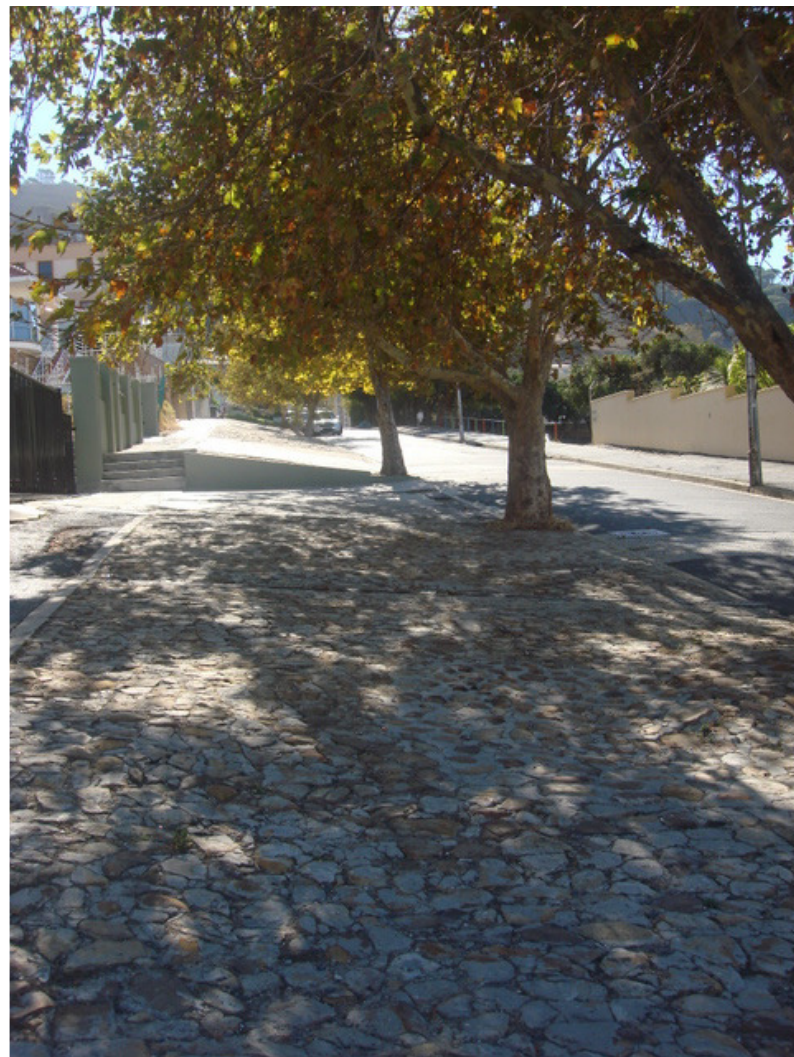


Figure 8: View in a northerly direction along Leeuwen Street towards Leeuwen Street Park and mature trees along sidewalk



Figure 9: Access to Dorp Street homestead from Leeuwen Street adjacent to the mosque



## 1.6 Site description

Nur El Huda mosque is located on the slopes of Signal Hill and enjoys uninterrupted views across Bokaap towards Table Mountain. The property measures 510 m<sup>2</sup> comprising the mosque and an undeveloped portion. The southern portion of the site consists of vacant portion earmarked to accommodate proposed residential unit. The approach to the mosque incorporated green space and a low boundary wall. Upper Leeuwen Street is fairly wide, with sidewalks and mature trees lining the western side of the road. The green space and palm tree provide continuity of the green network along Leeuwen Street. The internal layout of the mosque consists of a male section, female section and the care takers section. Both the male and female sections comprise of their own access door; a small foyer for shoes; a prayer room; and an ablution area.



Figure 10: Nur El Huda Mosque



Figure 11: Northern boundary of Nur El Huda Mosque



Figure 12: Southern boundary of the mosque



Figure 13: Nur El Huda Mosque in its immediate context



Figure 14: Aerial photo 1945

## 2. IDENTIFICATION OF HERITAGE RESOURCES

### 2.1 Historical background

Bokaap is recognised as one of the oldest residential neighbourhoods in Cape Town with a unique character and the highest concentration of pre-1850 architecture in Cape Town (Fransen 2004:52). The history and development of Bo-kaap is linked to the growth of Cape Town. As the population of Cape Town grew rapidly after 1780 so did the Bo-kaap. Troops of various nationalities were stationed at the Cape attracting immigrants and 'Platte landers' to supply their needs, in accommodating the influx, the town grid was extended up to the slopes of Signal Hill towards Waalendorp. From the 1780's the slopes of Signal Hill had been 'parceled out in plots' for housing construction in the area to be known as 'Bo-kaap'.

The residents of Bo-Kaap were mostly descendants from slaves who were imported to the Cape by the Dutch during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They ranged from Africa, Indonesia, Java Malaysia, and elsewhere in Asia. The people situated in Bo-Kaap were known as "Cape Malays", despite the community being made up of a mixed racial group people still referred to Bo-Kaap as the Malay Quarter.

After the emancipation of the slaves (1834-1838) there was increased pressure for modest housing and many Muslim freed slaves moved into the new parts of Bo-Kaap or took over houses from the immigrants, who had begun to move to the Southern Suburbs. The 'old Malay Quarter' then developed as a mixed neighbourhood with a predominance of Muslims.

Islam reached the Cape as early as 1654 when the VOC brought the political exiles, slaves and convicts to the Cape. In 1694 the first Muslim community was established in Macassar with the arrival of Sheikh Yusuf, however, the development of the second Muslim community in the Bo-Kaap led to the growth and expansion of Islam at the Cape. Under the Dutch East India Company, Muslims were not allowed places of worship, so prayer meetings were held in private homes or in the quarry in Chiappini Street. Religious freedom was granted in 1804 which further granted permission to build a mosque during the first British Occupation in Bo-kaap. The Auwal Mosque was considered as the main religious institution in the life of the Cape Muslim community at the time (Davids 1980: 93). However, by 1824 there were 2 mosques, 5 prayer rooms and 4 madrassas in the Bo-Kaap as greater religious freedom after the end of VOC restrictions resulted in the emergence of open Islamic practice (Worden 2004: 125-126). Another contributing factor as noted by Schofield (1861:14) is that by 1842 there were only 4 Imams that were Hadjies and disputes were developing within congregations, causing division and necessitating additional mosques.

In 1913, Erf 1895 was transferred from Benjamin Johan Solomon to Friedman. In 1939 it was transferred from Friedman to Sadien and in 1957 transfer estate Sadien for purposes of establishment of Nur-el-Houda Jamaa mosque (Malay group). In 1939 the Jassiem family had constructed a **prayer room** in Schoone Kloof, Cape Town, where in 1958, the **Nurul Huda Masjid** was established. The majority of the population in this area were Muslims. The first imam of the masjid was Sheikh Mogamat (Muhammad) Talieb Jassiem (1958-1972), followed by Sheikh Tape(1972-1974) and Imam Abduraghmaan ('Abd al-Rahman) Abrahams (1974-1990). In the 1980s The Nurul Huda mosque accommodated a madrassa, which was one of the three largest during this time.

## 2.2 Identification of heritage resources

Figure 15 indicates local area boundaries as described by Aghmat Davids (1980) and heritage resources as identified within the Buildings of Cape Town: Phase 2 (1983). Heritage resources are scattered throughout the Bo-Kaap incorporating residential dwellings, mosques and the Tana Baru. The proposed Grade 1 National Heritage Site boundary is indicated by the Penny Pistorius boundary (refer Figure 16). The location of the mosque is indicated in red.



Figure 15: Local area boundaries as described by Aghmat Davids (1980) and heritage resources as identified within the Buildings of Cape Town: Phase 2 (1983) and guidelines as prepared by Penny Pistorius in 1998

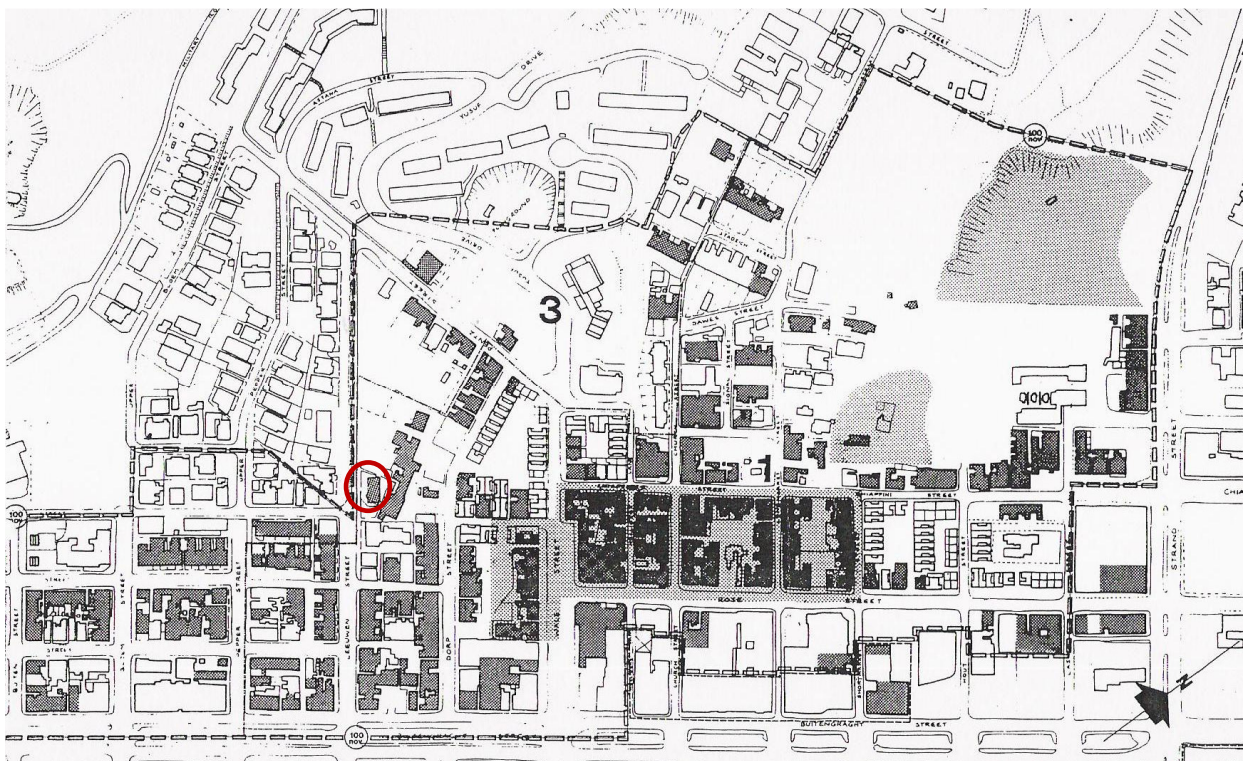


Figure 16: Proposed urban conservation boundary and proposed Grade 1 boundary (Penny Pistorius, 1998)

## 2.3 Statement of significance

The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) has considered the significance of Bo-Kaap on a much broader scale than the current Malay Quarter declaration, highlighting social value, spiritual value and 'intangible aspects of inherited culture' (SAHRA, 2003 and NHRAct 1999:8). Nurul Huda is located within the Schoone Kloof area which is in close proximity to the declared Malay Quarter, and lies within the boundary of the proposed Bokaap National Heritage Site declaration, considered being of national importance due to its cultural, historical and architectural significance.

Under the Dutch East India Company, Muslims were not allowed places of worship and prayer meetings were held in private homes or in the quarry in Chiappini Street. Religious freedom was granted in 1804 which further granted permission to build a mosque during the first British Occupation in Bo-kaap. In 1939 the Jassiem family had constructed a prayer room in Schoone Kloof, Cape Town, where in 1958, the Nurul Huda Masjid was established, incorporating one of the largest Madrassas.

The site is considered to possess historic, cultural and religious significance. The proposed grading of the site is Grade 3 A heritage resource based on associational and contextual significance. The site is considered to be significant within the context of group of mosques in the Bo-Kaap and could be considered for grading as Grade 2 within a serial nomination.

## 2.4 Heritage Indicators

The site contributes to the green framework and character of Upper Leeuwen Street and heritage indicators thus relate to impact on surrounding context in terms of height, massing, views and materiality. It should be noted that the character of the street changes along its route.

### Indicators

*Indicators relating specifically to section of Leeuwen Street between Lion Street and Pentz Street*

- Set backs from Leeuwen Street
- Existing green framework incorporating mature trees, semi private gardens and visual linkages to Leeuwen Street Park
- Profile of existing façade and materiality to retain distinctive masjid appearance
- Visual focal point for view terminating at the intersection of Lion Street and Leeuwen Street
- Retain rhythm of scale and massing along Leeuwen Street
- System of low walls and semi-private spaces along Leeuwen Street

*Also to be considered*

- Visual linkages of the minaret from lower slopes of BoKaap
- Proximity to identified and declared heritage resources, specifically 79 Dorp Street

### 3. PROPOSALS

Various submissions were made to the City of Cape Town and SAHRA with regard to Erf 1895 by the Mosque Committee over the period 2010 - 2013. Plans have gone through a series of iterations, changes and approvals at the City of Cape Town. The following is a brief overview of plans submitted and approved, revised submission and plans now being considered for approval.

#### Submission 1: Proposal A

Submission of initial proposal was made to officials and interested and affected parties. Initial plans were approved in October 2011 by the City and supported by SAHRA. Plans comprised additions to the mosque along the northern and eastern boundaries of the property.

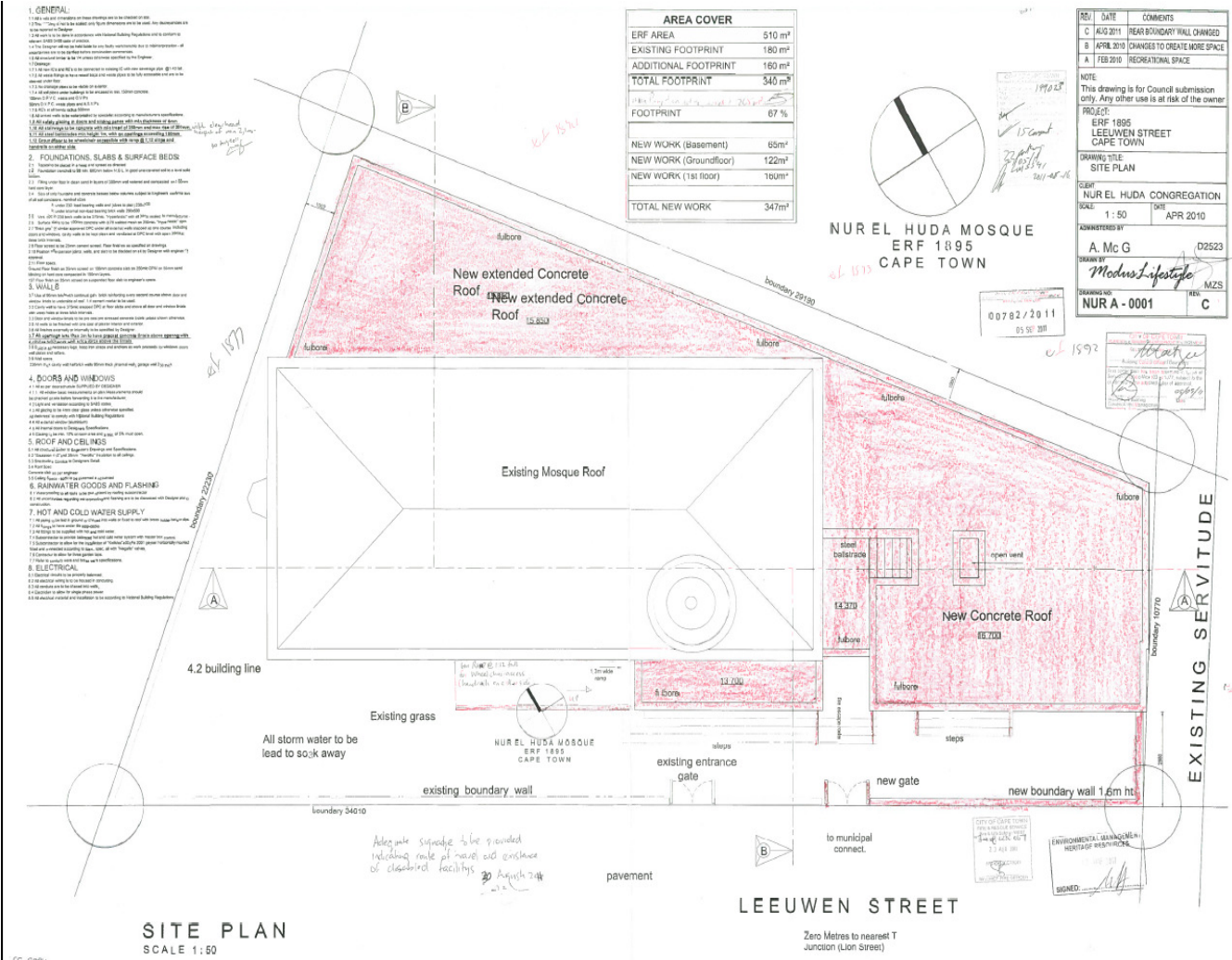


Figure 17: Initial proposal: Proposal A as approved by the City of Cape Town and SAHRA

LUMS gave approval for the consent and departures for the application No. 199023 on the 27 May 2011 with the following conditions:

- 1) Within 90 days of the occupation of the mosque extension, the owner shall plant a minimum of three trees on the property. Such trees will be planted and maintained at the cost of the owner.
- 2) The total floor area of the prayer area may not exceed 270m<sup>2</sup>.
- 3) The owner shall ensure that a night watchman/ security guard is on-site from 19h00- 07h00 during the construction period.
- 4) The two residential units may only be used to accommodate the sheik and caretaker/staff of mosque.

## Submission 2: Proposal B

Further to approval of plans in October 2011, the Mosque Committee proposed additional development to optimise site footprint, with additional development proposed along the western and southern boundaries. Plans dated June 2012 indicate proposed extensions along Leeuwen Street boundary. Plans were submitted by the architects for the mosque committee and no heritage assessment had been conducted prior to submission.

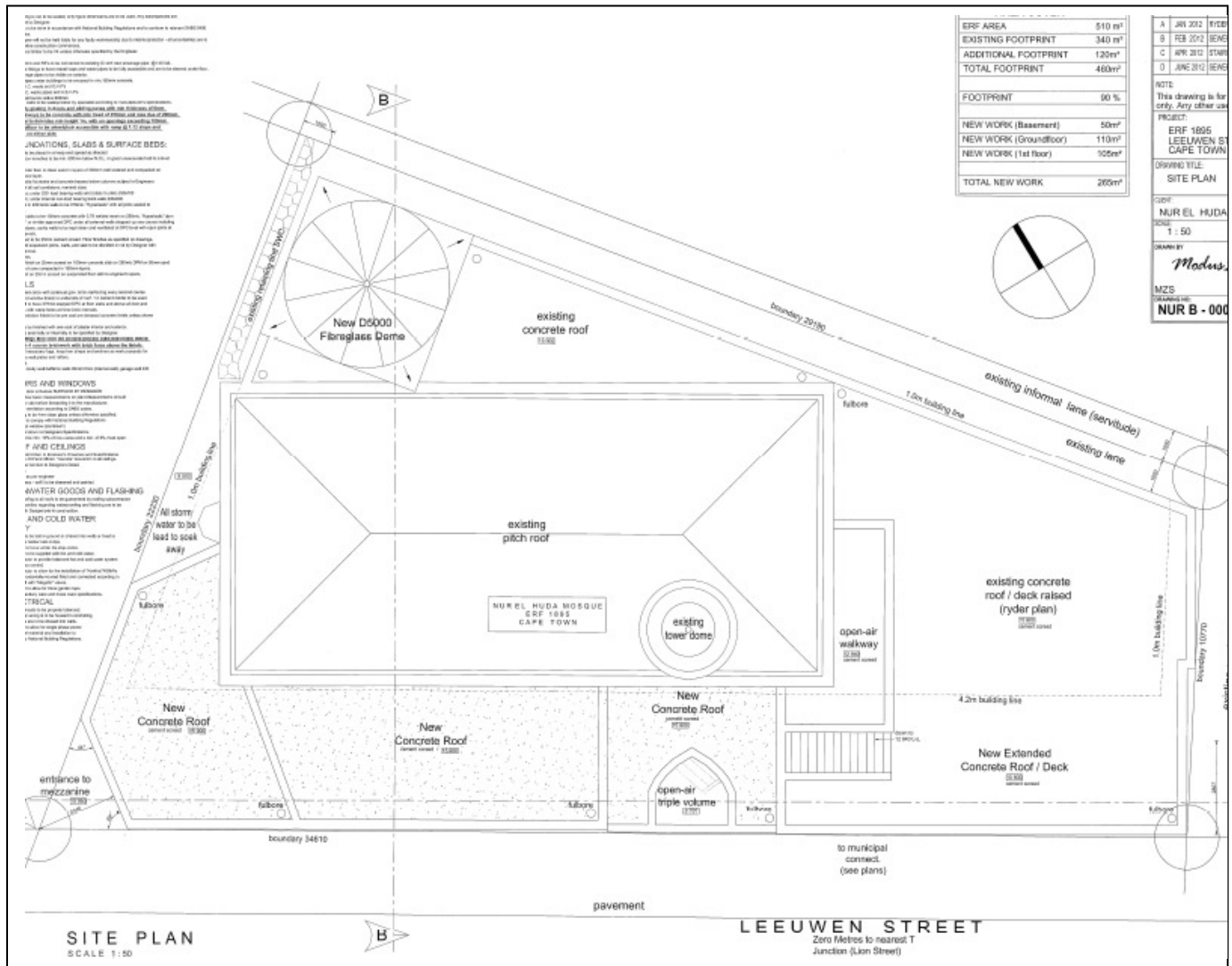


Figure 18: Proposal B dated June 2012

File reference LM5541 (29.10.2012) was closed on 4.6.2013 due to failing to provide Council with the outstanding information and/or documentation necessary to consider the application.

### Submission 3: resubmission of Proposal A

Further to discussion held 21 March 2014 between the architects, heritage consultants and the Mosque Committee in lieu of feedback received from The CoCT and SAHRA regarding Proposal B, it was decided that Proposal A as submitted and approved in 2011 would be resubmitted for consideration. Refer to Annexure 1 for approved plans: Proposal A.

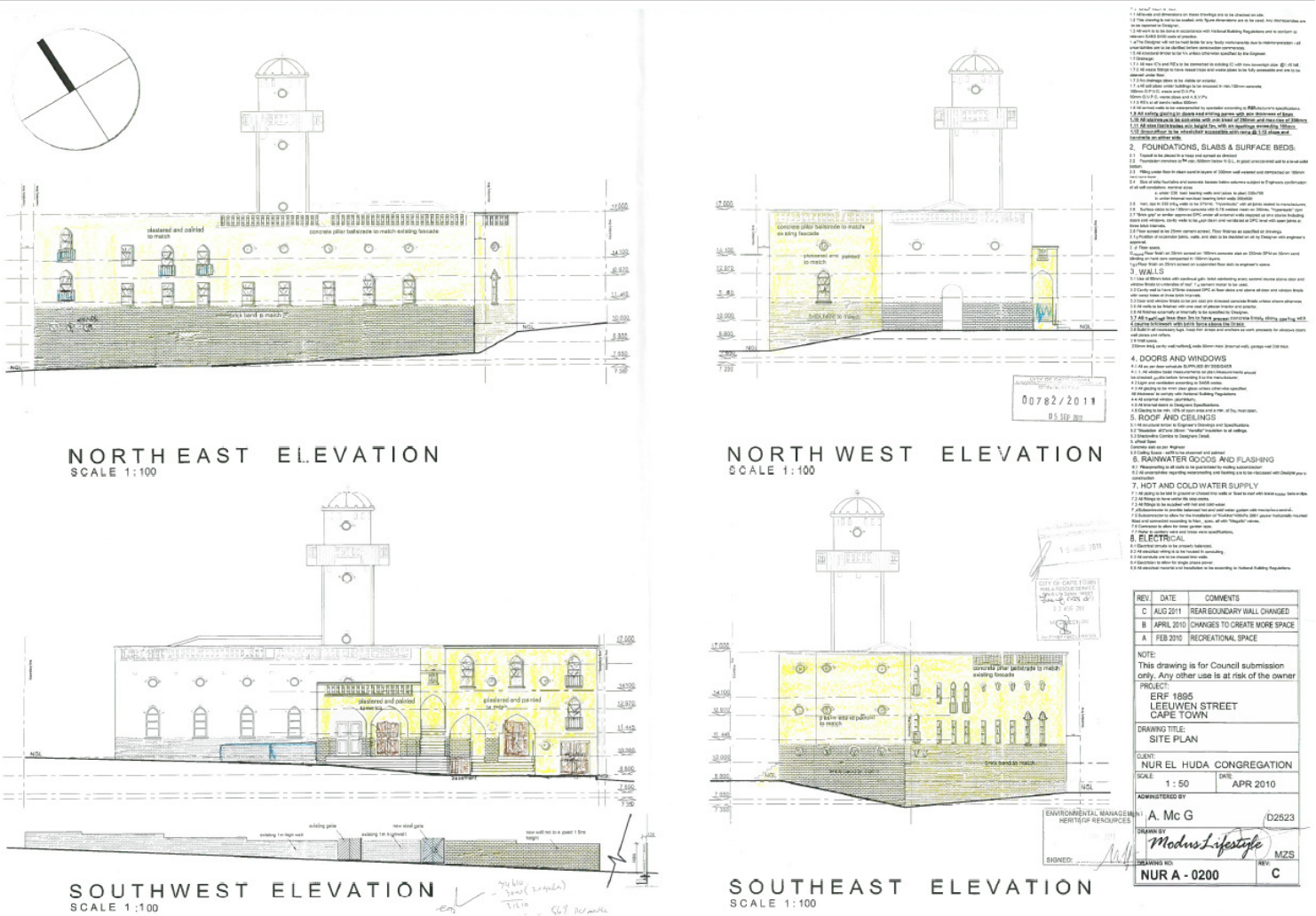


Figure 19: Initial proposal: Proposal A as approved by the City of Cape Town and SAHRA



### **Local Authority: City of Cape Town**

Application expansion of the Nur-el Huda Mosque was discussed with the City of Cape Town: Heritage Resources Section. It was noted that the mosque is ungraded and does not fall within a declared urban conservation area.

**Submission 1 Proposal A:** Ungraded building outside any UCA but inside the Grade 1 Proposed National Heritage area. Section 108 does not apply. SAHRA must comment (See Annexure 2: Comment dated 13 October 2010 and 30 May 2011)

**Submission 2 Proposal B:** City received the further changes to the application to extend mosque. Further amendments to the plan show a Fiberglass dome and building right up to the street boundary on Leeuwen Street. From Upper Leeuwen Street the new proposal has negative visual impact and proposed additions increase the scale and impact on the street. The proposal will have a negative impact on the street as well as historical environment and as such, additional rights applied for cannot be supported (See Annexure 3: Comment dated 18 September 2012)

### **South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA)**

**Proposal A:** Comment dated April 2010 requested comment from the BoKaap Civic Association and a heritage statement. Further to engagement with vidamemoria, SAHRA Built Environment Unit confirmed that there was no need for further investigation on the site in terms of the general protections that may be in place on the site (See Annexure 3: reference to SAHRA comment dated 18 February 2011)

**Proposal B:** SAHRA comment noted that the existing structure is not older than 60 years but falls within the proposed Grade 1 Bo-Kaap Cultural Landscape. The increased floor area of the mosque, particularly the prayer room, raised concern as it impacted on the site extent with follow-on impacts in regard to building lines. The Committee did not support the application (See Annexure 4: SAHRA comment dated April 2013)

### **Bokaap Civic Association**

Proposal for alterations and expansion were presented to the Bokaap Civic Association for comment. Comment was obtained from the chairperson of the Bo-Kaap Civic association, Mr Osman Shaboodien.

**Proposal A:** No objection to the expansion of the mosque.

**Proposal B:** No objection to the expansion of the Mosque pending detail of the design.

**Resubmission Proposal A:** supports resubmission of proposal A for approval. Mr Shaboodien was present at meeting held with the Mosque Committee held 21 March 2014.

## 5. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Assessment of impact considers criteria in terms of Section 7 of the National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act, comments noted by SAHRA Built Environment Unit and the City of Cape Town: HRS and heritage indicators identified.

Proposal A would not result in a negative impact on the surrounding context and will not result in an unsightly or objectionable expansion of the mosque. Proposal A will not derogate from the value of adjoining properties.

The structure is not older than 60 years, however the site represents associational and contextual heritage significance. Significance is related to prior use of the site as a Masjid and a Madrassa and expansion of the mosque and continued use as a madrassa will result in a positive heritage and social impact.

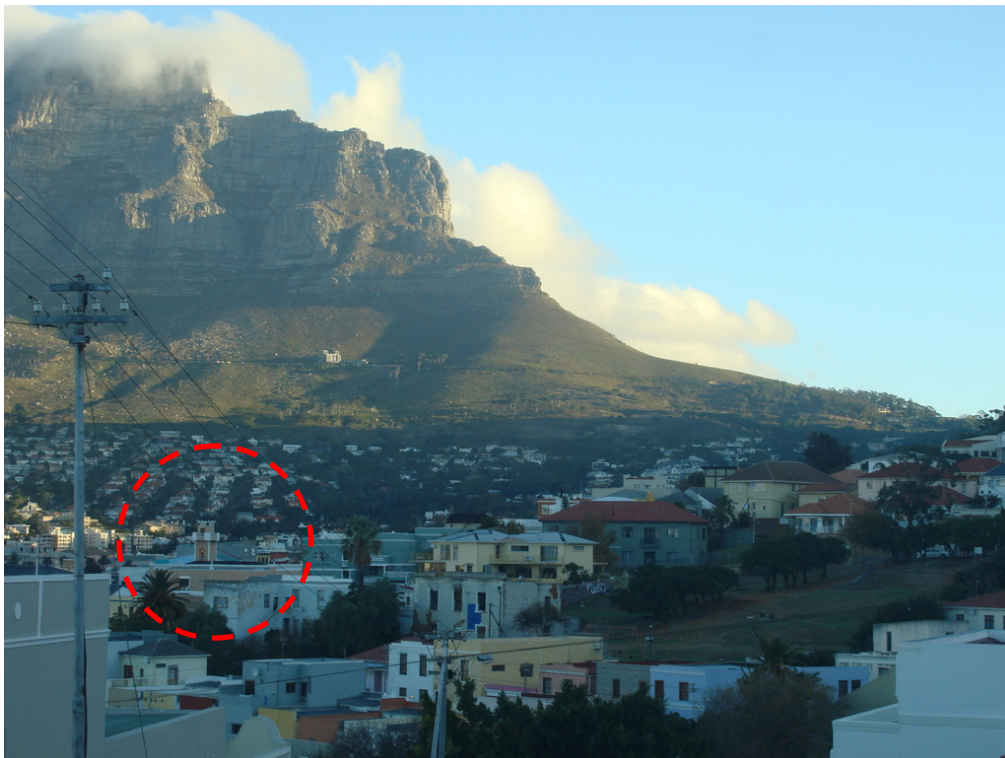


Figure 20: View of mosque in context from the Tana Baru

Proposal A has a positive response to set backs along Leeuwen Street and in maintaining the existing green framework. The proposal contributes to retaining rhythm of scale and massing along Leeuwen Street. Visual linkages of the minaret from lower slopes of BoKaap will be retained. The mosque will retain its existing façade thus retaining distinctive appearance and remaining a visual focal point for view terminating at the intersection of Lion Street and Leeuwen Street as well as along Leeuwen Street.

The proposal will result in no impact on identified heritage resources. No negative heritage impact is expected with high social benefits to the local community.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Motivation for expansion is concerned with sustainability of the mosque, optimising the mosque in terms of space as a multipurpose community facility and providing opportunity for Ghushl at the mosque (during funerals).

Further expansion of Nurul Huda as proposed within Proposal B resulted in a number of concerns relating to visual impact and further departures required for the site. The Mosque Committee thus decided to revert to previous plans (Proposal A) and re-adjust internal arrangements.

Consideration should be given madrasa facilities within the mosque as the Nurul Huda madrasa in the 1980s accommodated one of the three largest madrassas in the Bo-Kaap. This would result in a high positive heritage social benefit to the community.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is therefore recommended that **resubmission of Proposal A be supported.**

## References

- Bradlow F R and Cairns M (1978): *The Early Cape Muslims – A study of their mosques, genealogy and origins* A.A.Balkema, C Town
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- South African Heritage Resources Agency(April 2003):*Statement of Significance Bokaap* File ref 9/2/018/0008 (Q Samie)
- Townsend S and Townsend L (1997): *Bo-Kaap Faces and Facades* Howard B Timmins, Cape Town
- Worden et al (2004) *Cape Town The making of a city* David Philips Publishers, South Africa

## Images and maps

- Aerial photography 1945: 6: 504 – 506 obtained from Surveys and Mapping
- Digital version of Snow, Thom and Wilson obtained from City of Cape Town GIS and mapping department
- Extract Group Areas Map 01 and 04 Land Survey Branch Municipality of Cape Town, 1975
- *Photographs* by Y Samodien otherwise specified

## Acknowledgements

- Bo Kaap Civic Association: Chairperson Mr Osman Shaboodien
- City of Cape Town: Brian Martin and David Hart
- Surveys and Mapping: Marlon Porter