

**LETTER OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EXEMPTION FROM A PHASE 1
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HERITAGE INVESTIGATION FOR THE PROPOSED TOWNSHIP
ESTABLISHMENT ON PORTION 3, RIEKERTS LAAGER 165JR, SIYABUSWA,**

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

COMPILED FOR

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed development area is located on *portion 3 of the farm Riekerts Laager 165JR*, Vaalbank, Siyabuswa, to the west of Vaalbank B, Siyabuswa. The Dr. J.S. Moroka Local Municipality wishes to formalise 70ha of an existing residential area and to provide new, serviced stands. Proposed new houses will be provided in the central eastern section (approximately 15ha), to meet the growth demand of the existing Vaalbank B township (See Map 2 & 3 and fig. 1-10).

The study area is situated on topographical map 1:50 000, 2528BB (Map 1), which is in the Mpumalanga Province. This area falls under the jurisdiction of the Dr. J.S. Moroka Local Municipality and Nkangala District Municipality.

The proposed development is adjacent to the existing Vaalbank B township, Siyabuswa and the locals use the vacant section for collecting of firewood and medicinal plants, grazing their livestock (cattle) and dumping of refuse. Cattle tracks are visible and were surveyed, throughout the entire vacant section. The central section is used as a soccer field and will be kept as a public open space.

The majority of the area is already extensively transformed by human induced impacts such as an established housing development (approximately 80%), and I recommend that the proposed project be exempted from a full phase 1 study, as the survey revealed no archaeological or historical remains in the remaining area. I am convinced that the proposed development will have no impact on the cultural or historical environment.

Further planning of the proposed project may continue, and no mitigation measures are needed for the proposed development with a condition that should any archaeological or human remains be observed during construction, a qualified archaeologist must be notified and an assessment must be done.

INTRODUCTION & DESCRIPTION

The development area is located on a 70ha section of *portion 3 of the farm Riekerts Laager 165JR*. The property is located in the Dr. J.S. Moroka Local Municipality and will be used to formalize an existing residential area and provide new serviced stands. The objective of the project is to formalize the existing residential dwellings and provide services to improve living conditions of the residents, and to meet the growth demand of the existing Vaalbank B township. New houses will be provided in the vacant or central section of approximately 15ha. Approximately 500 stands (including the existing dwellings), will be supplied (see Map 2 & 3). The proposed land uses are: residential (481), business (8), Institutional (10), municipality and a public open space. The access road to the site will be on the D-1944 road connecting to the R568.

- **Terms of reference:** As specified by section 38 (3) of the NHRA, the investigation focussed on the identification and mapping of heritage resources; the assessment, description and evaluation of possible archaeological and heritage sites, the potential impact of the development and to make recommendations to minimize possible damage to such sites.
- **Legal requirements:**
The legal context of the report is grounded in the National Heritage Resources Act no 25, 1999, as well as the National Environmental Management Act (1998) (NEMA):

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The investigation provided the opportunity to examine the piece of land proposed for the development. The majority of the site has already been transformed by informal / permanent housing. The central eastern section, as well as the immediate surrounds of the site consists of degraded woodland. Wood harvesting and overgrazing by cattle are the main negative impacts in these areas. The land consists of a light sterile sandy soil and is classified as Mixed Bushveld or Central Sandy Bushveld. Cattle paths, vehicles tracks, a trench from south to north, and rainwater trenches caused further damage to the soil surface. The area contains a grass cover scattered with low shrubs and trees. Although the grass cover was dense in places the tracks and erosion in this section made it possible to extensively survey the area and no severe limitations were experienced. The results of the biodiversity investigation indicate that

the natural habitats on site have been lost or severely degraded as result of human induced impacts.¹

METHODOLOGY

The investigation was conducted on foot and per vehicle by three people, and standard archaeological and recording methods were applied. A survey of literature was done to obtain information about the archaeology and cultural heritage of the area. There are no museums in Siyabuswa or at Marble Hall which could be consulted, and no historical information was available at the municipality. Salamina Lekwati, a resident of the area for twenty years was interviewed for information regarding the study area. The author also relied on aerial images to assemble background information. The layout of the area was plotted by a GPS (Garmin etrex). A digital photographic recording method was used.

The SAHRA database for archaeological and historical impact assessments was consulted and revealed other recent Archaeological Impact assessment reports in the area of Siyabuswa:

- A. Van Vollenhoven: August 2012: *Report on a cultural Heritage Impact Assessment for the proposed Canyon Springs Coal project, Siyabuswa district, Mpumalanga Province* – The report revealed an archaeological site with Middle and Late Stone Age tools were identified as well as some Iron Age artifacts and decorated pottery. Mitigation measures were recommended by exclusion from the development or a Phase 2 study;
- C. Van Wyk Rowe: July 2012: *Phase 1 Archaeological / Heritage impact assessment for proposed residential township (Moripe garden): Remaining extent of Portion 7 of the farm Kameelrivier 160JR, Siyabuswa, Mpumalanga Province* – The report revealed foundations of recent structures which had no heritage significance.

INVESTIGATION

Most of the area was covered by grass with low shrubs and trees classified as degraded woodland. The area has been severely transformed by human induced impacts such as informal and permanent housing (Fig. 1 & 2), and the central section by overgrazing, harvesting and erosion. Local residents have demarcated some sections by fencing and structures, in the central section (Fig. 7). No archaeological sites or material were found during the survey. In

¹ Afrika Enviro & Biology: Biodiversity & Habitat Report on portion 3 of Riekerts Laager 165JR, Feb. 2014.

general it would appear that it is unlikely that any archaeological or heritage remains of any value will be found *in situ* or of any contextual value will be exposed during the development.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Primary and secondary sources were consulted to place the study area in archaeological context. Ethnographical and linguistic studies by early researchers such as Ziervogel, Theal and Van Warmelo shed light on the cultural groups living in the area since ca 1600. Historic and academic sources by Küsel and Bergh, were consulted, as well as historic sources by Makhura and Webb. The SAHRA database was also consulted (see section on Methodology).

The author had to rely on the assistance of local people documenting relevant history in the area. The 1974 topographical map 2528BB revealed no disturbance on the site. Approximately 80% of the site has been transformed by human induced impacts such as informal and permanent houses (See Map 2 & 3). The remaining section of the study area is currently utilized by the local people to collect firewood, medicinal plants and for livestock grazing. (See Map 2 and Appendix 1 for photographic evidence).

Very little contemporary research has been done on prehistoric African settlements in the study area. According to Bergh, there are no recorded sites that date from the Stone Age, (including Rock paintings or engravings), or Early Iron Age. It can be confirmed that none of the above mentioned sites were encountered during the survey.²

The Siyabuswa area was very sparsely populated during the 19th century. Bergh³ does not indicate any cultural group specific to the Siyabuswa area, although the surrounding area from Middelburg, Pretoria, Warmbaths (Bela Bela), and Nylstroom were inhabited by the Ndebele, and small groups of KôPa (baSotho) and Kgatla. Ethnographical and linguistic studies by early researchers such as D. Ziervogel and N.J. Van Warmelo, does not include this area. It may be assumed that some of the *Ndzundza* Ndebele, Manala Ndebela and Hawduba Ndebele were the dominant groups as they do occur extensively in the surrounding areas.⁴ The local inhabitants of Siyabuswa, currently consists of various groups including Ndebele, Sotho and Pedi.⁵

² J.S. Bergh, *Geskiedenis Atlas van Suid-Afrika Die Vier Noordelike Provinsies*, pp. 4-7

³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴ N.J. Van Warmelo, *A preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa*, p. 18.

⁵ Siyabuswa Mpumalanga, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siyabuswa,_Mpumalanga

- **AmaNDEBELE**

According to Van Warmelo, the *amaNdebele* are the earliest known offshoot of the *Nguni* group. The Ndebele is divided into two groups, the Southern and the Northern, and they are separated from one another. A certain legendary chief *Msi* or *Musi* heads a list of about twenty-five successive chiefs who lived just north of where Pretoria now stands. His two sons were *Manala* and *Ndzundza* and form the most important tribes of the Southern group. The *abagaNdzundza* moved eastwards and settled near Roos Senekal, and it is said that some of *Manala*'s followers, the *abagaManala*, settled in the Witbank district. The tribes slowly broke up after the days of the *Republic*.⁶

- **CENTRAL SOTHO**

The tribes in this group were at one time largely under the rule of the baPedi, who's last independent king was *Sekhukhune*, who's stronghold was to the east of Siyabuswa (Steelpoort area), although his domain was extremely large.⁷ Great numbers of *baSotho* who belong to the above group, who still speak *sePedi* but which became detribalized, live in the districts of Middelburg, Lydenburg, Witbank and Springs. They mingled freely with other groups such as the Zulu, Swazi and Tonga.

- **HISTORY OF SIYABUSWA**

During the apartheid era, Siyabuswa was the capital of the KwaNdebele Bantustan. It served as a capital from 1981 to 1986 when KwaMhlanga replaced it. Most of its inhabitants are members of the Ndebele ethnic group. Currently Siyabuswa is also home to several ethnic groups, namely the Ndebele, the Pedi and the Sotho people.⁸ Siyabuswa is approximately 10 km from Marble Hall.

LOCALITY

The proposed development area is located on *portion 3 of the farm Riekerts Laager 165JR*, to the west of Vaalbank B, Siyabuswa. The Dr. J. S Moroka Local Municipality wishes to formalize an established township, Vaalbank C which forms part of the proposed development. The area consists of 70ha of which approximately 80% has been transformed by human induced impacts such as established houses (see Map 2 & 3, as well as Appendix 1 for photographic evidence). The study area falls within the Nkangala District Municipality.

⁶ N.J. Van Warmelo, *A preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa*, p. 87.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁸ Siyabuswa Mpumalanga, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siyabuswa_Mpumalanga

The remaining central section of land (approximately 15ha) consists of light sandy soils and is currently used as a soccer field and open area (see Map 2 and fig. 6). Cattle, vehicle tracks and erosion are visible in this section and most of it contained a grass cover with low bushes and scattered trees (Fig. 8 & 9). The proposed development is adjacent to the existing Vaalbank B township, Siyabuswa and the locals use the vacant central eastern section for the collecting of firewood, medicinal plants, grazing their livestock (cattle) and the dumping of refuse (Fig. 10). The central section is used as a soccer field and will be kept as a public open space (Fig. 6).

GPS co-ordinates (see Map 2, Google images of study area) (Appendix 2).

GPS Co-ordinates		
Study area	South	East
A	S 25° 09' 29.42"	E 28° 49' 58.29"
B	S 25° 09' 35.40"	E 28° 50' 10.38"
C	S 25° 09' 32.62"	E 28° 50' 12.86"
D	S 25° 09' 35.91"	E 28° 50' 17.35"
E	S 25° 09' 50.53"	E 28° 50' 05.72"
F	S 25° 09' 55.21"	E 28° 50' 06.98"
G	S 25° 09' 59.39"	E 28° 49' 46.14"
H	S 25° 09' 50.29"	E 28° 49' 42.16"
Soccer field	S 25° 09' 44.48"	E 28° 49' 56.64"

FINDS

No archaeological sites, material or graves were found during the survey. A resident, Salamina Lekwati (who lived in the area and collects firewood in the central section) also confirmed that she has never encountered any graves or sites of cultural value. In general it would appear that it is unlikely that any archaeological or heritage remains of any value will be found *in situ* or that any contextual value will be exposed during the development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The impact which will result from the new development on archaeological or historical heritage resources is considered to be of no significance. There are no compelling reasons to stop the proposed development.

MITIGATIONS

Archaeological material or graves are not always visible during a field survey and therefore some significant material may only be revealed during construction activities of the proposed development. It is therefore recommended that the developers be made aware of this possibility and when human remains, clay or ceramic pottery etc. are observed, a qualified

archaeologist must be notified and an assessment be done. Further research might be necessary in this regard for which the developer is responsible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Salamina Lekwati (resident in Vaalbank C) for giving information on the area.

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PERSONAL INFORMATION

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MISCELLANEOUS

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