

**HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED
CONSOLIDATION AND SUBDIVISIONS OF THE REMAINDERS OF THE
FARMS RUSTENBURG NOS. 53, 55, 105 AND 108: PART OF THE
NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE OF IDA'S VALLEY, STELLENBOSCH**



Figure 1: Topocadastral map depicting the National Heritage Site of Ida's Valley (bounded by the red line) and the Reminders of the Farms Rustenburg (bounded by the green line), courtesy Director of Surveys and Mapping, Mowbray.

**PREPARED AT THE REQUEST OF THE OWNERS OF THE PROPERTIES
IN QUESTION
8th March 2013**

by

FABIO TODESCHINI

B. Arch. (Cape Town), M. Arch (Penna), M.C.P (Penna.),
MCIA, MSAIA, MUDISA, MAHAP, Pr Arch, TRP.SA,
55 Dorp Street, Bo-Kaap, Cape Town 8001, South Africa.
email: fabiodesigncape@gmail.com

Architect
City Planner
Urban Designer
Heritage Practitioner

084 257 2981

1. Introduction and Purpose

Figure 1 locates the National Heritage Site of Ida's Valley in context, as well as the Rustenburg Farm remainders, which are the subject of the proposed consolidation and subdivisions.

Ida's Valley continues to be a significant National Heritage Site managed in the terms of the SAHRA-approved 'Conservation Management Plan' (CMP) of May 2008 and, of course, of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act No. 25 of 1999). In particular, the contents of Sections 9 "Application Procedures for Any Change" and Section 10 "Heritage and Environmental Impact Assessments" of the CMP apply. Moreover, revised draft 'Guidelines for Conservation and Development in Ida's Valley' have been prepared and are to be submitted to SAHRA for approval.

The CMP clearly sets out the over-arching principle: *"do as much as necessary to care for the site and to maintain its usefulness, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained"*.¹ Under the section heading of 'Understanding the Site', the CMP continues as follows:

*"The site should be understood as existing in a state of 'unfolding and becoming': it is the product of the layering of natural and cultural processes over time. It is simply impossible for such processes to be 'frozen' or suspended, as they can be in regard to museum objects of material culture. The heritage site which is the subject of this report continues as 'living heritage': it necessarily endures and weathers the elements and peoples' inevitable adaptations for economic, aesthetic and other reasons. Thus, the current time and the immediate and longer term future are the joint responsibility of heritage resource and environmental policy and management, on the one hand, and of development and agricultural productive planning, on the other. For this to occur responsibly, the major features and themes of the processes that have underpinned and produced the site and its overall landscape and use require understanding, in the first instance. Such understanding will facilitate the determination of the 'degree of freedom' for tolerable to desirable and appropriate change."*²

Section 6 of the CMP (the Main Policy Features) identifies eighteen specific 'Development Principles', including the following which are relevant to this application:³

- 6.1 *"The agricultural fertility and productivity of the site, particularly as a core of the Cape Winelands, should be preserved.*
- 6.2 *The mitigation of existing commercial activity by surrounding it with agricultural activity should be maintained.*
- 6.3 *Existing agricultural activities, particularly viticulture, should remain viable and develop appropriately with new technology, with mitigation of any negative impacts on the cultural landscape.*
- 6.4 *Any development authorized by SAHRA in terms of these guidelines should be sustainable and appropriate to the context.*
- 6.5 *Change is undesirable where it reduces cultural significance. The amount and nature of change to the site should be guided by the cultural significance of the place and its appropriate interpretation.*

1. *Ida's Valley CMP*, p. 13.

2. *Ibid*, p. 16.

3. *Ibid*, p. 37.

- 6.6 ...
- 6.7 *Any building or other development work must be submitted to SAHRA for approval.*
- 6.8 *The owners' needs and resources should be a factor taken into consideration."*

So, as is foreseen in the CMP and in the guidelines, it is both inevitable, and to some degree desirable, that some tangible changes to the physical properties of Ida's Valley take place over time. An example of desirable change are the products of the on-going and current initiatives relative to the eradication of invasive alien vegetation in the valley,⁴ while, the words "*maintain its usefulness*" in the mentioned over-arching principle allude to other evolving realities that may have to feature in considerations of management of the status quo, possibly leading to some change. An example of such realities are the considerable international economic difficulties facing farming enterprises generally, and the wine industry in particular, at the current time. These require appropriate adjustment to operations.

The owners of the properties in question⁵ have for some years entertained a number of possibilities of land consolidation and subdivisions with the aim of rendering the properties more financially viable. Some draft proposals that, inter alia, would have led to the creation of a number of small-holdings further to the south of the Remainders of the Rustenburg Farms within Ida's Valley were put to the SAHRA BELCom for comment quite some time ago, together with the then earlier draft 'Guidelines for Conservation and Development in Ida's Valley'. In the interim and on reflection, the owners have decided not to proceed with those draft proposals but to find other ways to promote the longer-term financial sustainability, and maintain the agricultural usefulness, of their land-holdings.

With those aims in mind, proposals for consolidation and subdivision limited to the Remainder of the Rustenburg Farms have been framed by the land surveyors David Hellig and Abrahamse and an application therefore has been prepared by Peter Mons, planning and development consultant in association with the said land surveyors. These proposals are the subject of this Heritage Impact Assessment.

The rest of this document is structured as follows: Section 2 sets out the proposals in outline;⁶ Section 3 articulates the issues raised; Section 4 provides an argued assessment of the proposals; and Section 5 draws conclusions and makes recommendations.

2. The Proposals

Because of the complex and long history of previous subdivisions, not all currently existing land units comprising the Remainders of the Farms Rustenburg make sense: one is only about 2.5 ha in extent and cuts right across the slopes of the Simonsberg in a narrow wedge shape, and in some instances their cadastral boundaries do not relate well to the valley topography and to the landform (see figure 2).

4. *Ibid*, p. 38, under Section 7: Required Actions.

5. Rustenschoon Properties (Pty) Limited, which also owns properties other than the 'Remainders of the Rustenburg Farms' in Ida's Valley.

6. As already mentioned, the full application and motivation document is that prepared by Peter Mons, professional planning and development consultant, in association with David Hellig and Abrahamse, professional land surveyors.

Authority, the Municipality of Stellenbosch). The application documents prepared by Peter Mons and David Hellig and Abrahamse deal with all of these matters and marshal evidence to show that the proposals are sensible in these regards. Moreover, the proposed consolidation and subdivisions have the support of the Department of Agriculture and of the Department of Water Affairs. The proposals as they relate to road access and the provision of services to the subdivisions appear to be entirely rational.

Following on the relevant principles of the Conservation Management Plan for Ida's Valley already identified in this report, the heritage issues appear to me to relate to the following six questions. Would the proposals:

- ☐ alter the rural quality of Ida's Valley?
- ☐ lead to a diminution of the agricultural fertility and productivity of the site?
- ☐ promote the mitigation of existing commercial activity by surrounding it with agricultural activity?
- ☐ promote and improve the viability of agricultural activities, particularly viticulture?
- ☐ be appropriate to the context and be sustainable?
- ☐ Reduce the cultural significance of Ida's Valley?

The issues will be addressed in the following section.

4. Independent Assessment of the Proposals

As clearly set out in the CMP:⁷ "The physical character of the place is due to the following major elements, which are spatialised in the following pages:

- ☐ Mountain backdrop (natural, wilderness);
- ☐ Framing Hills and some forested steep slopes and crest lines;
- ☐ Watercourses:
 - Valley streams & assoc vegetation;
 - Historic channels;
 - Dams;
- ☐ Farmland:
 - Vineyards on slopes (ever higher);
 - Orchards & windbreaks on slopes (Glenelly, Glenbawn, High Rustenberg);
 - Pastures;
 - Tree belts of stature (windbreaks, etc.);
- ☐ Homestead and Farm Nuclei;
- ☐ Routes;
- ☐ Cadastral pattern;
- ☐ Relationship to the Idas Valley Village;
- ☐ Other significant structures."

The following maps and text appearing here on pages 6 to 15 are reproduced from the CMP, because they help to remind us all of what the extant essential rural productive landscape character is in Ida's Valley and what its underpinnings are.

7. *Ida's Valley CMP*, p. 20.

“

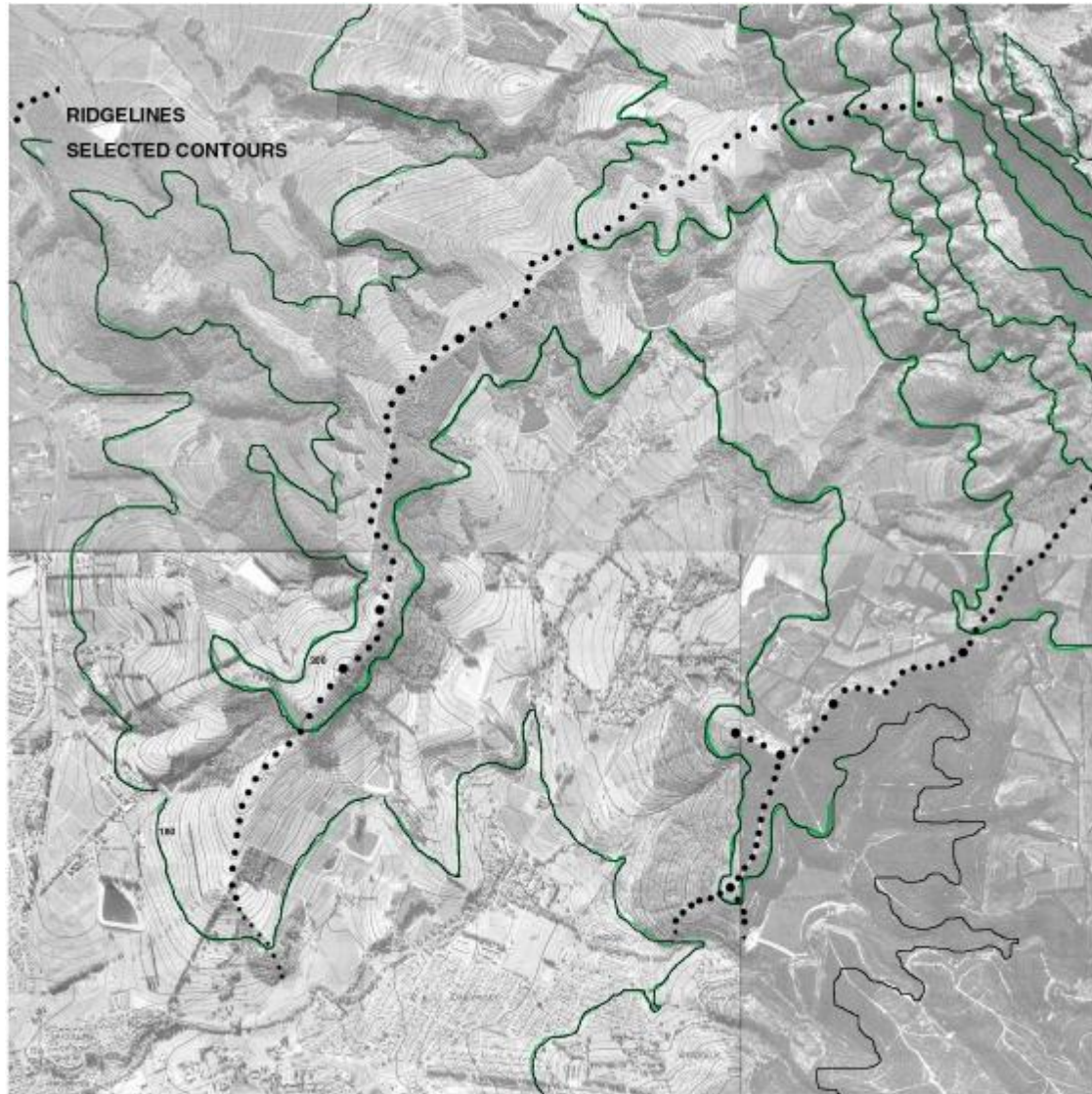


Illustration 14: The **Mountain Backdrop, Framing Hills**,
with steep slopes, **Peaks** and **Crest lines**
(P. Pistorius, revised F. Todeschini)

1

Idas Valley is clearly defined as a distinctive valley landscape by its topography. From the towering "body" of the Simonsberg in the north east (1 390m), two low "arms" stretch out south-south-westwards, enclosing the valley to each side. The "shoulders" are at 400-500m, sloping down to "fists" of about 300m – at any point the hills are roughly 100-150m above the valley floor, which itself slopes south-eastwards.

Within this framework, the valley topography is complex. The mountain and hills are intricately folded and eroded by the winter streams that rush off the steep slopes and the springs that continue to seep through the hotter months. There is thus a great variety of hills and sub-valleys, humps and hollows with differing orientation and micro-climates. As a result, the valley is a "many-placed place" with numerous sub-areas of distinctive character.

These elements define the visual scope and experience of the valley, which has a floor, sides, enclosing steep slopes.

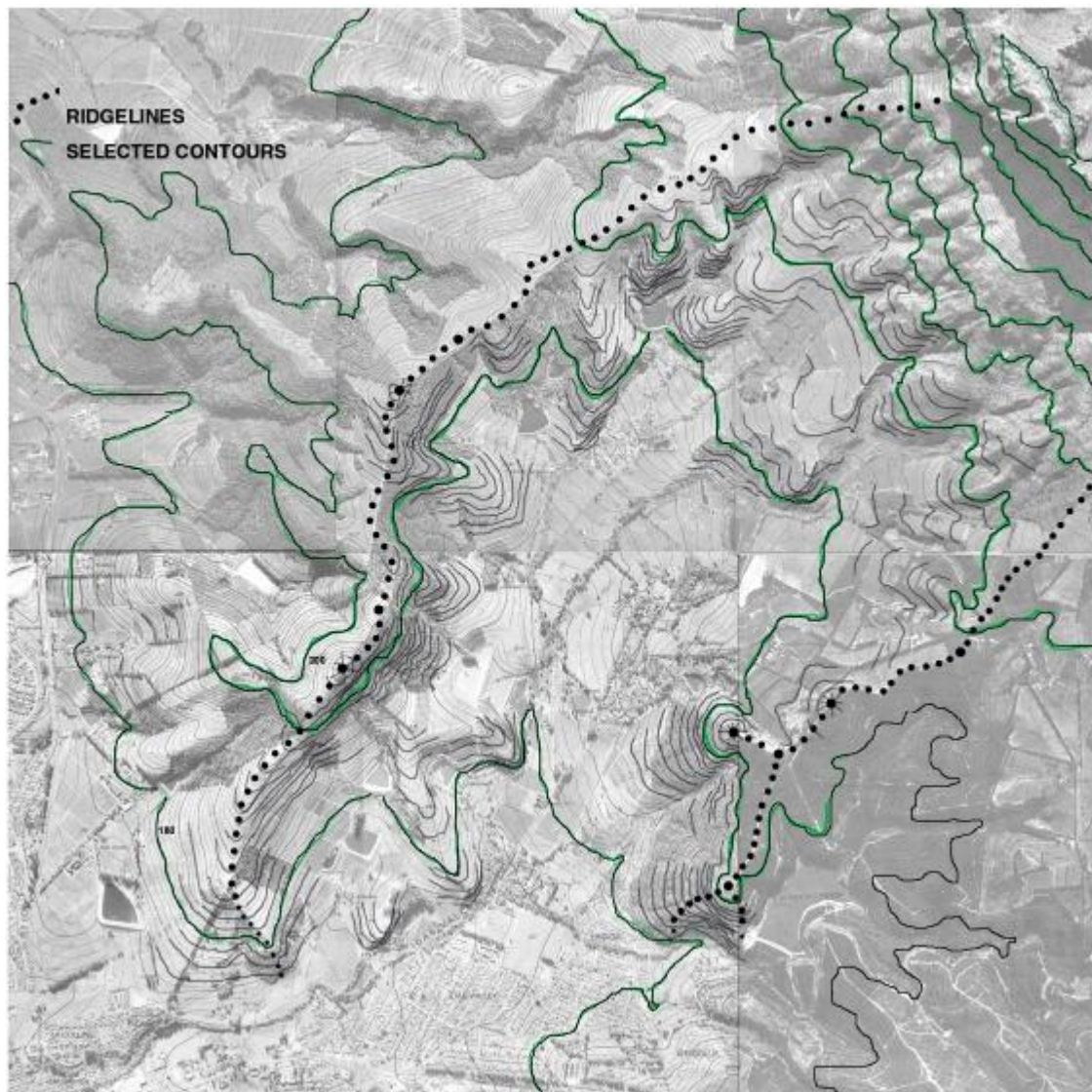


Illustration 15: As prior, but with Steep, Enclosing Slopes Emphasised
(F. Todeschini)

2

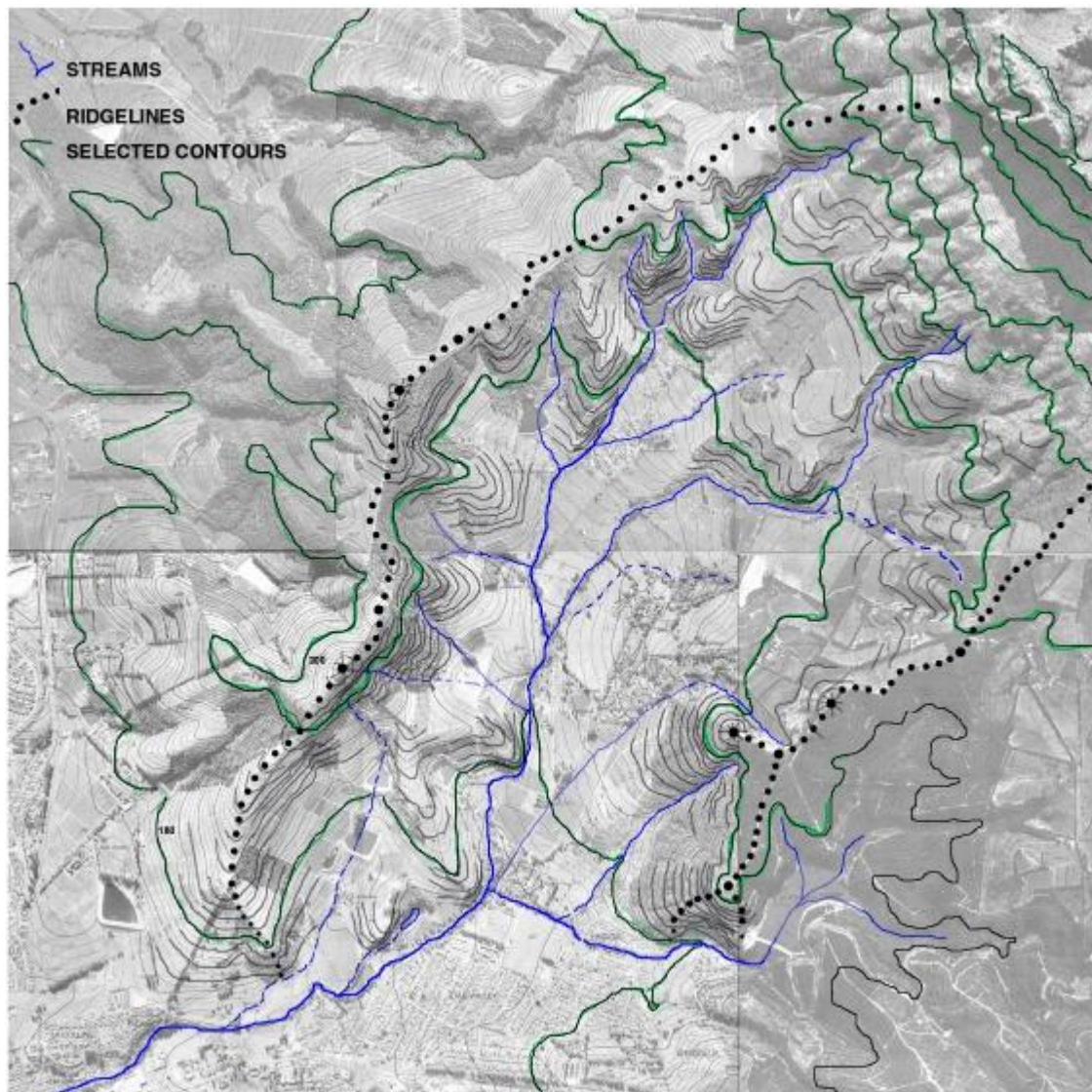


Illustration 16: The Original **Watercourses and Streams**

(P. Pistorius, revised F. Todeschini)

Naturally, water is a prerequisite for permanent settlement and agriculture.

3

As a river valley, the area is well-watered. The Krom River is the main water course. Its two principal sources, both on the Simonsberg (on Schoongezicht and Rustenberg, respectively), are fed by numerous streams and springs in the folds of the hills. The Kromme River, which rises beyond the eastern hills, flows westward to join the Krom near Ida's Valley farmstead.

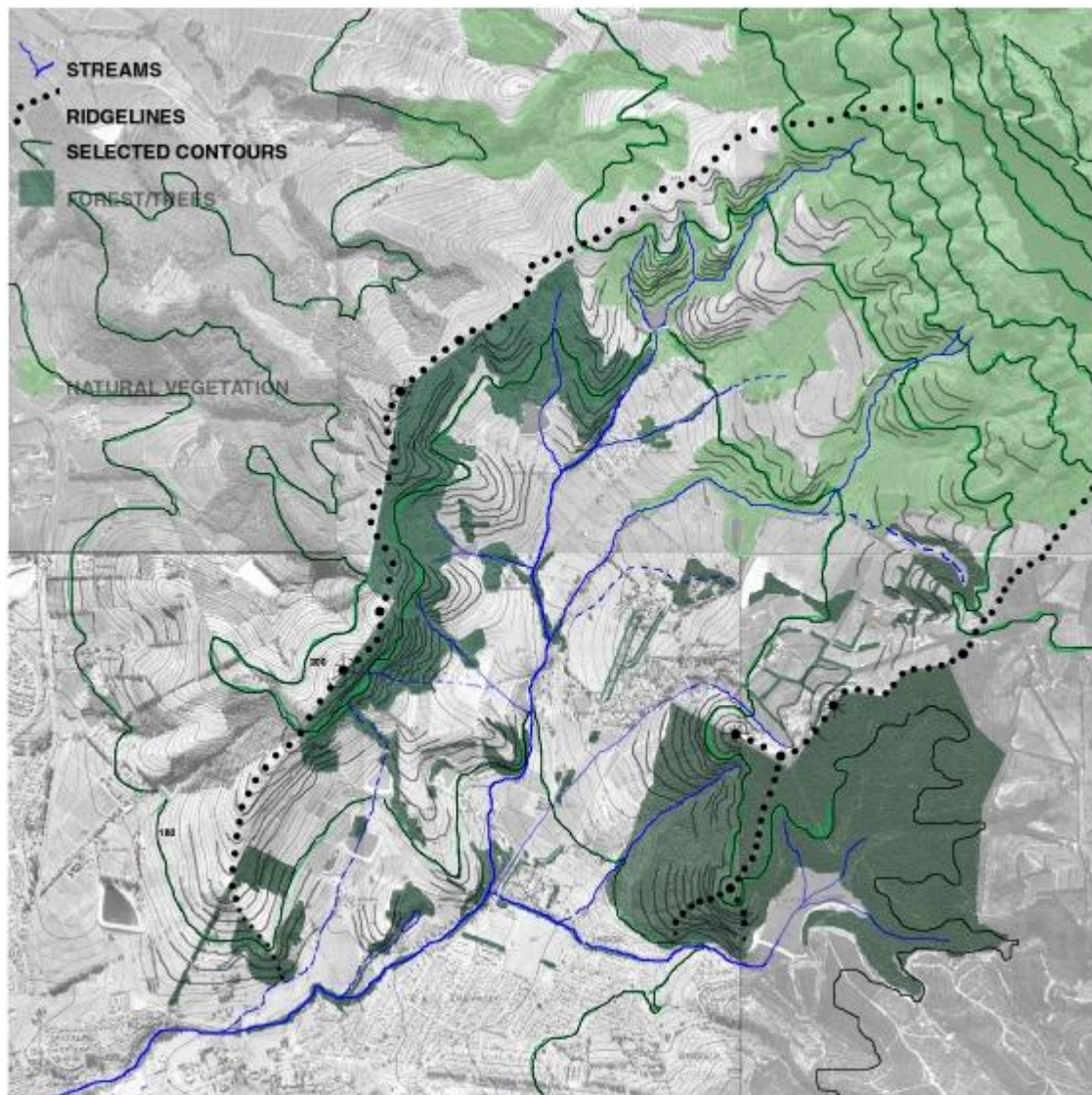


Illustration 17:
The Surviving Near 'Natural' Landscape and **Vegetation**
(P. Pistorius, revised F. Todeschini)

4

The sandy boulder gravel soils of the mountain slopes and the rich, deep alluvial soils of the valley floor support a rich variety of natural flora. Douglas Houston gives a vivid description of the natural state of the valley vegetation, before modification by settlers: "Visualise the tree lined banks of the river and its tributaries – Yellowwoods, Wit Els, Rooi Els, Amandels and Wilde Olienhout. In the floor of the valleys would be Klipkershout trees (Mountain Maytenus) up to 2000 years old; giant wabome, the Protea Arborea ... Many other proteas, leucospermums and leucodendrons including silver trees on the slopes of the hills, and a tremendous variety of fynbos such as Slangbos, Rhenosterbos, Taaibos and Hottentotskooigoed covered the land with an impenetrable barrier two or three meters high when mature. Under this dense cover was the latent grass crop, dormant roots and seed." (Houston, 1981:29).

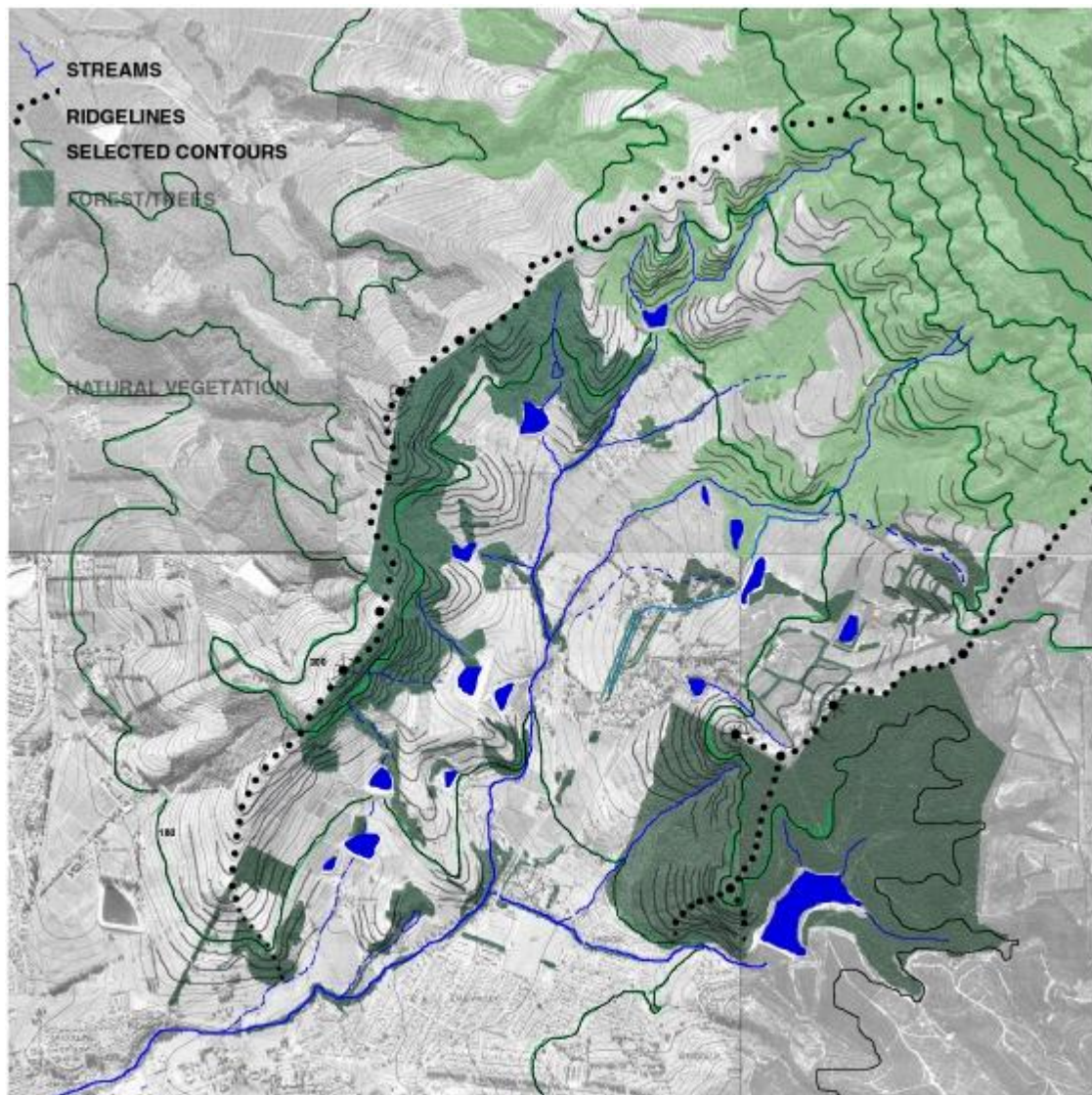


Illustration 18: Current **Streams, Channels and Dams** in the
Overall Near-Natural setting
(P. Pistorius, revised F. Todeschini)

5

The water network has been significantly changed by the construction of dams since the mid-20th century; the dams are now an important element of the cultural landscape. The network of windbreaks, which divided the landscape into a checkerboard of "rooms" in the heyday of fruit farming, is still evident in parts, notably Kelsey Farm and High Rustenberg, but much reduced elsewhere in the valley.

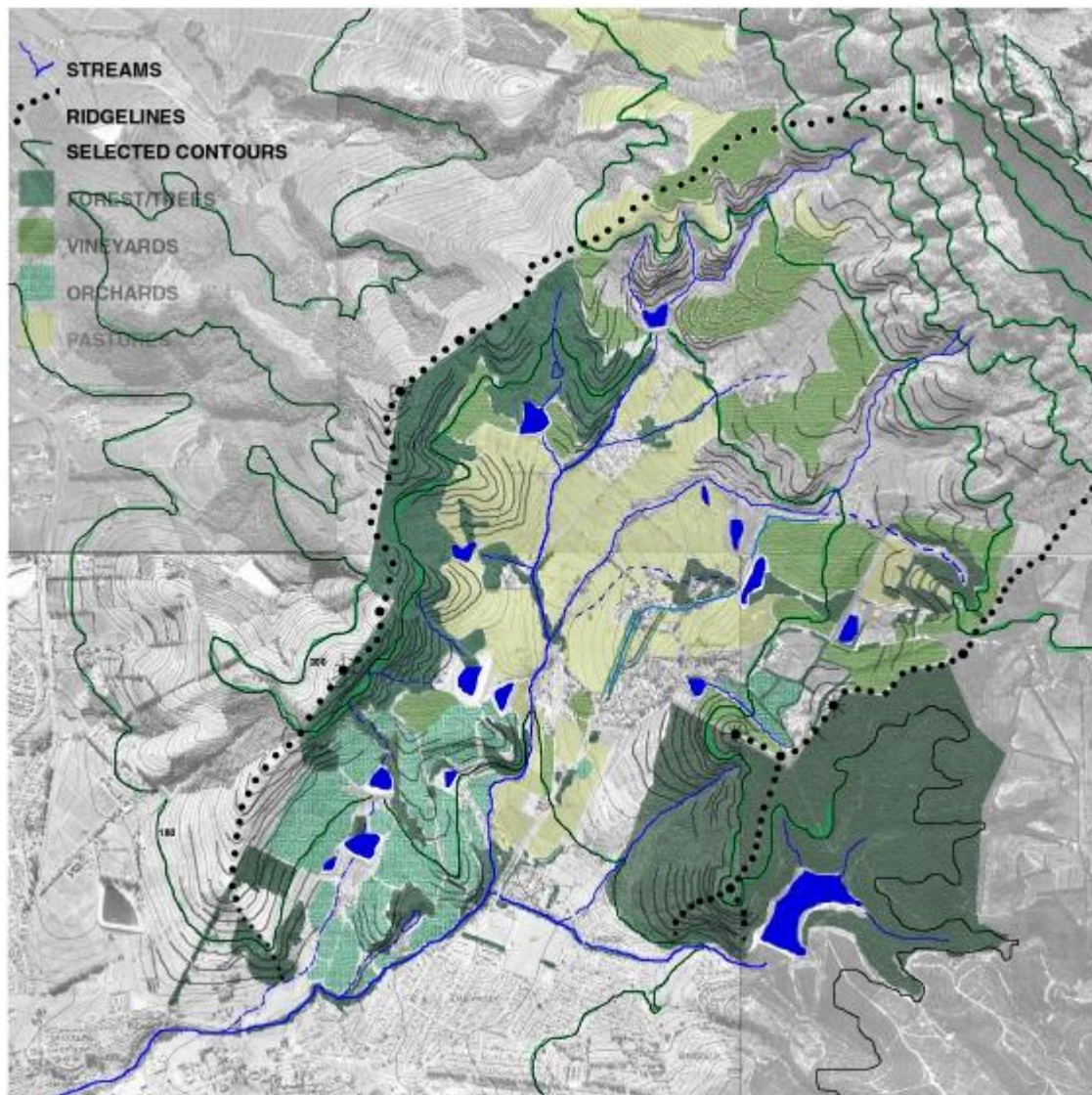


Illustration 19: **Agricultural Land**

(P. Pistorius, revised F. Todeschini, May 2008)

Farming activities have responded to the particular conditions in the different sub-areas of the valley (slope, hydrology, orientation, etc.), as well as to external factors such as economic changes and technological advances. The rural landscape is at present a patchwork in which the broad patterns are: steep mountain slopes are indigenous bush, while steep hillsides are forestry (gums and various pines); higher cultivatable slopes are vineyards (particularly in the northern part of the valley) or orchards (Glenbawn, Glenelly, part of High Rustenberg); the “valley floor” is predominantly pastures and fodder crops for the Rustenschoon dairy herd.

6

Some changes in the spatial organisation of agricultural production in Idas Valley are reflected in the two illustrations overleaf, traced from aerial photographs of 1938 and 1980, respectively. Because of the far more widespread cultivation of fruit trees in the earlier years reflected, many more tree windbreaks and shelter-belts were in evidence in 1938, as compared to 1980. In contrast, the 1980 drawing shows the construction of very many dams for irrigation, as well as the presence of much denser forested slopes.

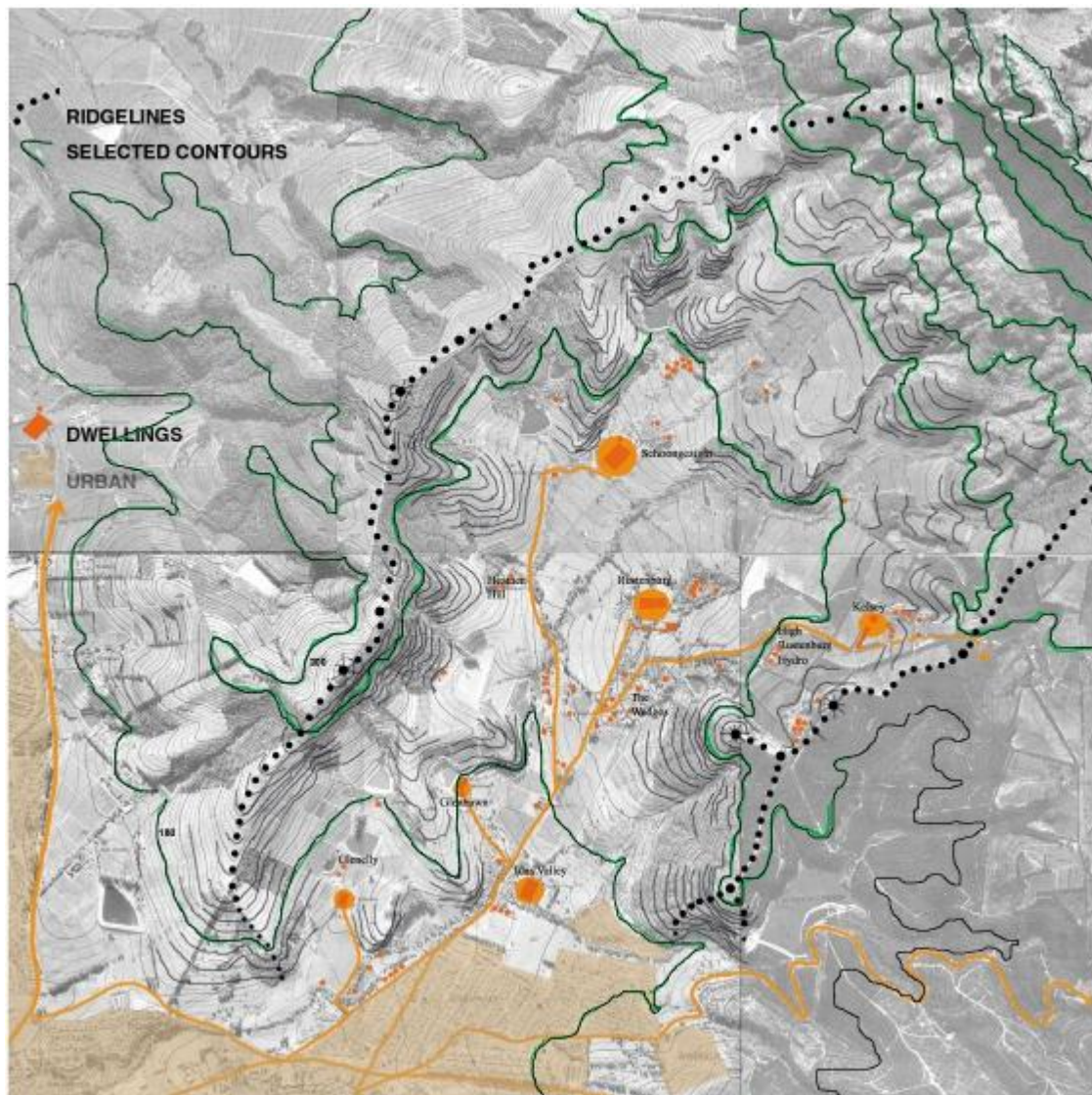


Illustration 21: **Routes, Major Homesteads and Urban**

(P. Pistorius, revised F. Todeschini)

The three old Cape farms and their farmsteads – Ida's Valley, Rustenburg and Schoongezicht – are superb examples of their type and period. The dwellings and farmsteads of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – Schoongezicht cottage and werf extensions, Glenbawn, Glenelly, Kelsey, etc., as well as the cluster of smallholdings known as the "Wedges" – are also of historical and cultural interest, reflecting the ongoing evolution of the practice of agriculture in the valley and patterns of dwelling in this particular rural landscape. The formalisation and modernisation of workers' housing (particularly on Rustenschoon), which has resulted in the loss of many vernacular structures and dwelling sites, is nevertheless an illustration of changing labour practices and shifts in South African society in the last decades of the twentieth century. There are still examples of typical vernacular dwellings at Glenelly.

7

There is a typical dwelling pattern that applies to the great farmsteads and most of the other houses on the farms: dwelling sites are close to streams (or constructed water channels) and are consequently "tucked in" to the folds of the landscape, often looking out over the valley. This pattern does not apply as consistently to the Wedges and other smallholding subdivisions of Rustenburg, where siting choices were limited by the size of

the properties, and which have a different relationship to the greater landscape. But although many of the dwellings have wonderful views, Entabeni is the only house that stands up on the horizon and "commands" the landscape. The softening effect of garden vegetation also helps to integrate the dwellings with the landscape.

There are two very important linear networks: of 'country' access roads, often associated with rows of oak, plane, flowering gum and other exotic trees; and of water – streams and constructed channels – associated particularly (but not exclusively) with poplars and oaks.

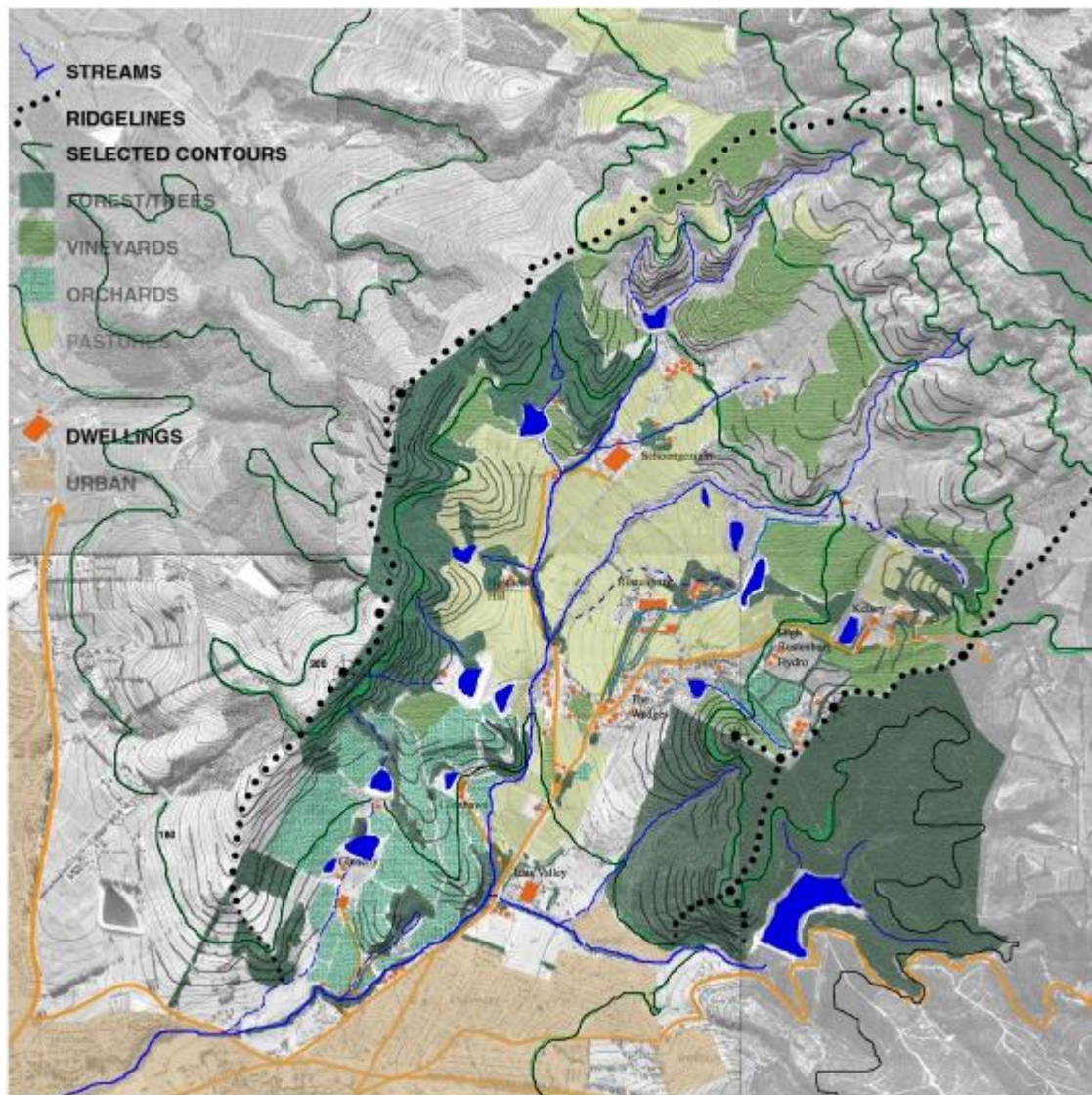


Illustration 22: **Settlement / Landscape Adapted by People**
(P. Pistorius, revised F. Todeschini, May 2008)

8

The interaction of people with the natural landscape over a long period has resulted in the formation of a cultural landscape that is itself complex and various.



Illustration 23: **Cadastrals** in Context
(P. Pistorius, revised F. Todeschini)

9

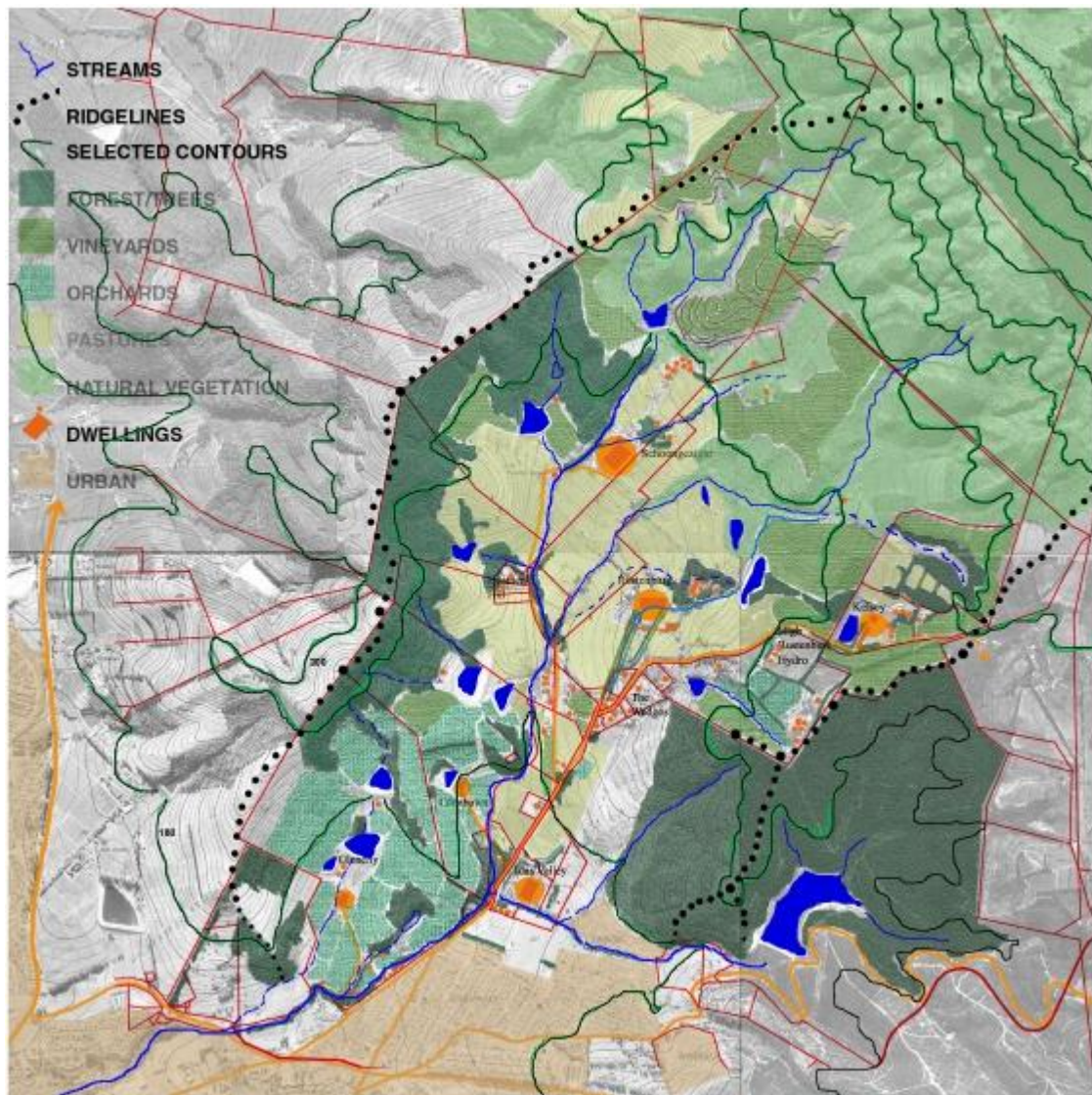


Illustration 24: **The Cultural Landscape Synthesis** ! Notable Elements, including all the foregoing: (P. Pistorius, revised F. Todeschini, May 2008)

10

- ☐ Mountain backdrop (natural, wilderness);
- ☐ Framing Hills and some forested steep slopes and crest lines;
- ☐ Watercourses:
 - ☐ Valley streams & assoc vegetation;
 - ☐ Historic channels;
 - ☐ Dams;
- ☐ Farmland:
 - ☐ Vineyards on slopes (ever higher);
 - ☐ Orchards & windbreaks on slopes;
 - ☐ Pastures;
 - ☐ Tree belts of stature (windbreaks, etc.);
- ☐ Homestead and Farm Nuclei;
- ☐ Routes;
- ☐ Cadastral pattern;
- ☐ Relationship to the Idas Valley Village.”

I suggest that close examination of, and reflection about, possible developments in terms of the content of the foregoing pages 6-15 establishes that:

- The existing cultural landscape synthesis is not assisted in that area of the valley termed 'Remainder of the Rustenburg Farms' by the current and lawful cadastral boundaries that are clearly not responsive to the landform;
- The presence of the existing four farms on the 'Remainder of the Rustenburg Farms' could give rise to more new buildings 'as of right' than would arise if the proposed consolidation and subdivisions into three farms were to be authorised and take place. Such new buildings that could be constructed in terms of current rights could be sited at relatively high elevations, such that they could well be somewhat intrusive visually. However, the proposals would lead to a significant improvement in this regard, to the extent that no new building nucleus would be necessary.

In consequence, the answer to the first of the issues identified on page 5 of this report, is unequivocal: the proposals would not alter the rural qualities of Ida's Valley in any negative way. Rather, they would have the effect of further promoting and improving the rural qualities of Ida's Valley.

The answer to the second of the issues identified on page 5 of this report is also unequivocal: the proposals would not lead to a diminution of the agricultural fertility and productivity of the site. Rather, they would lead to an improvement in their sustainability.

The answers to the third, fourth and fifth of the issues identified on page 5 of this report, are also unequivocal:

- the proposals would have the effect of mitigating the visibility of existing commercial activity by surrounding it with agricultural activity. In fact, as discussed above, the proposals would have the effect of not permitting some 'as of right' possible new buildings on the site;
- agricultural viability, particularly viticulture, would be improved;
- the proposals would be appropriate to the context and be sustainable.

The proposals would not reduce the cultural significance of Ida's Valley in any way, the sixth issue listed on page 5 of this report.

5. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, and in the light of the powers and duties of the Ida's Valley Heritage and Environmental Association (IVHEA), which has responsibility through its structures for implementing the CMP in Ida's Valley, I recommend that the IVHEA comment favourably on the application and that the South African Heritage Resources Agency approve it.



Fabio Todeschini

8th March 2013