Proposed Development on Erven 3025 and 9795, Constantia Uitsig Farm, Constantia Valley City of Cape Town

Visual Impact Assessment

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On behalf of: Meerenhof Properties (Pty) Ltd

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1 Introduction

1.1 Terms of Reference:

Constantia Uitsig is a wine estate in the Constantia Valley - an important heritage site and part of the Cape Winelands Cultural Landscape. The new owners wish to make Uitsig their private home and to use the farm for wine-making and equestrian purposes. The proposed demolitions and new development trigger a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA). As part of the HIA, Heritage Western Cape, who are the approving authority, require a Visual Impact Assessment (VIA).

A more detailed description and background to the project is given in the Draft Phase 1 Report of the Heritage Impact Assessment by Frik Vermeulen, Heritage Practitioner, (Dec. 2014), and is not repeated here, except where visual issues are indicated.

A Visual Baseline Study was prepared in April 2015, the intention of which was to inform the proposed development layout, and forms the basis for this VIA.

1.2 Definition of 'Visual'

The term 'visual' used in this report is taken in its broadest meaning to include visual, scenic, aesthetic and amenity values represented by the natural and the built environment, which can in totality be described as the area's 'sense of place'.

1.3 Assumptions and Limitations

Revised plans of the proposed facilities have been provided by Bouwer Architects (2015) of the overall development and of the entrance precinct. These current plans have been used as the basis for the VIA.

1.4 Methodology

The following steps have been followed in the baseline study and the VIA:

- A site inspection and photographic survey of the study area and surrounding area on 19 and 20 February 2015;
- A delineation of view catchment areas using a digital elevation model (DEM);
- The identification of landscape and cultural features from aerial photographs and fieldwork;
- The identification of important viewpoints, view cones, view axes and view corridors;
- An assessment of potential visual impacts using a range of quantitative and qualitative criteria;
- The formulation of mitigation measures to minimise potential visual impacts.

2 Description of Visual Characteristics

A description of the site and surroundings, as well as the visual significance of these is outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Site Description

Location	The site is located in the Constantia Valley, bordering on the Tokai Forest, about 18km south of Cape Town. (Figures 1 and 2).					
	The property is situated on Remainder of Erf 9795 Constantia (59.8ha) and Erf 3025 Constantia (3040m ²), the latter being the site of the former Tokai Primary School.					
	Access is from Spaanschemat River Road, a declared 'scenic route'.					
	The site is bounded by Nova Constantia Road to the east, Buitenverwachting to the north and west, and Tokai Forest to the south, Tokai Forest being part of the Table Mountain National Park.					
	Uitsig lies outside the urban edge, and is classified by SAHRA as a Grade I Heritage Site, (Vermeulen, 2014).					
Physical landscape	The site is located on the footslopes of the Constantiaberg, and ranges in elevation from 40m above MSL at Spaanschemat River Road to about 80m above MSL at the upper end of the site.					
	The area is underlain by coarse porphyritic granite (Cape Granite Suite), with outcrops visible on the northern slopes of the property. The granite is covered by light grey to pale red sandy soils of varying depth. (Geological Survey, 1984). Wine farming in the region has typically taken place on these granitic soils.					
	The rounded landform forming the main ridge of the site is typical of the weathered granites of the Cape Peninsula. The ridge divides the site into two separate viewsheds, a north-facing one and a south-facing one.					
	A tributary of the Spaanschemat River follows the northern boundary of the site, the low-lying area along the stream having wet alluvial soils.					

Existing land uses and	Most of the site is covered by vineyards, open fields and paddocks, along with two old Karri and Marri tree					
landscape features	avenues, which have heritage and visual significance, as well as more recently planted beefwood tree belts, which serve as windbreaks.					
	The central werf precinct has a mixture of old English oaks, which have historical and amenity value, along with gum trees, Norfolk Island pines, palm trees and a few other smaller species, which add to the verdant character of the precinct, but which do not all have botanical or heritage value.					
	The cricket oval is surrounded by valley cottonwood trees (poplars), which not only provide shade and wind shelter, but also spatial definition and visual enclosure to the oval.					
	The various buildings on the site have been described in detail in the Phase 1 HIA Report, (Vermeulen, 2014). These consist mainly of the homestead and other disused buildings which previously served as restaurants, guest cottages, health spa, workshops and horse stables.					
	The buildings on the farm are grouped into two precincts:					
	1. the main werf precinct which contains the old homestead, previous guest facilities and a series of small intimate courts and gardens, located on the crest of the ridge with good views to the north and south;					
	 the entrance precinct with the wine sales and the previous River Café restaurant, (previously the Tokai Primary School), along with some labourers' cottages, located at the bottom of the slope on Spaanschemat River Road. 					
	Recent work on the farm has included a metal palisade fence on the perimeter. A site has been cleared to the west of the old River Café building, apparently for a new 'pump track' for mountain bikes.					
Site context and character of the surroundings	Uitsig forms part of a group of wine farms on the eastern slopes of the Constantiaberg, including historic estates such as Groot Constantia, Klein Constantia, Nova Constantia and Buitenverwachting. The Tokai Forest and plantations to the west and south form part of the Cape Peninsula National Park. To the east, further down the slope, are the residential suburbs of Nova Constantia and Firgrove.					
Visual and heritage significance of the area	The historical pattern of vineyard cultivation, and the white-washed farmstead buildings grouped around walled 'werf' spaces, have become an important part of the cultural landscape, creating a strong sense of place and timeless quality, for which the Winelands are famed.					
	The Uitsig site forms one of the few remaining working farms in the Constantia Valley, an area historically famed for its vineyards and wines, much of which has been lost through urbanisation.					
	Spaanschemat River Road forms part of a scenic route network, linking with Ou Kaapseweg and other routes important for tourism in the Southern Peninsula.					

3 Description of the Project

Development proposals for the main werf area include a new homestead, stables and new indoor and outdoor dressage arenas. The latest plan indicates that the existing homestead would be restored and renovated.

Plans for the entrance precinct on Spaanschemat River Road include a winery and wine-tasting facility, and a formal garden layout for visitors. Old vineyards are gradually being replaced by new vineyard planting, and some of the beefwood tree belts are being removed where these negatively affect the vineyards and block views across the farm.

A detailed list of proposed facilities is given in Table 2 below, based on plans provided by the Architects.

Entrance Precinct:	Footprint	Height	Comments
New entrance court /security gate (Spaanschemat River Rd)	1 150 m ²	n/a	Type and colour unknown.
New guard house	296 m ²	4.6 m	Height and finishes unknown.
Alterations and additions for new restaurant ('Open Door")	720 m ²	7.8 m	. Mostly internal alterations.
New winery	1 590 m ²	10 m	Height and finishes unknown.
Wine-tasting facility	222 m ²	8.7 m	Height and finishes unknown.
Tourist facilities	385 m ²	5.4 m	Alterations to existing cottages on Spaanschemat River Rd.
Caretaker house	71 m ²	5.4 m	Alterations to existing cottage on Spaanschemat River Rd.
Cycle park clubhouse and bike workshop/store	693 m ²	8 m	Height and finishes unknown.
New pump track	13 800 m ²	n/a	
Water body and wetland	6 750 m ²	n/a	Existing wetland
Parking area (117 bays)	8 730 m ²	n/a	Paving materials unknown.
Formal gardens	9 694 m ²	n/a	Planting unknown.
Central Werf Precinct			
New manor house	608 m ²	7 m	Single storey. Finishes unknown.
New stables	1 170 m ²	9.4 m	Construction unknown.
New Indoor arena 70 x 37 m	2 586 m ²	10.7 m	Height and finishes unknown.
New outdoor arena 82 x 43 m	3 512 m ²	2.4 m	Type of hedge unknown.
New grass arena 85 x 54m	4 620 m ²	n/a	Type and colour of fencing unknown.
New lunge ring and horse walker	20m	n/a	Ø330m2. Type and colour of fencing unknown.
New fenced paddocks (4)	3 020 m ² x4	n/a	Type and colour of fencing unknown.
New Guest Cottages	122 m ²	7.4 m	Single storey. Finishes unknown.
New Greenhouse	140 m ²	7.2 m	Single storey. Construction unknown.
New Farm Store	137 m ²	5.7 m	Single storey. Construction unknown.
Paved courts and lapa	1 465 m ²	n/a	Paving materials unknown.
Access roads, service roads, forecourt, carports	± 800 m	n/a	4 to 6m width. Paving material unknown.
Paved footpaths	± 500 m	n/a	2m width. Paving material unknown.
Formal Landscape gardens (x2)	2 330 m ² x2	n/a	(see Landscape Concept Plan)
Associated landscaping		n/a	(see Landscape Concept Plan)
Outdoor lighting	n/a	?	Type and height of lighting unknown.

4 Planning Policy and Legal Context

Certain planning policies and legal parameters need to be taken into account. Those relating to heritage legislation are covered in more detail in the Phase 1 Heritage Report. Aspects that have visual or landscape implications are mentioned here.

- The proposal to apply for World Heritage Site status for the Cape Winelands Cultural Landscape adds significance to the area, and particularly for maintaining the landscape integrity of the vineyards on the mountain footslopes.
- The City of Cape Town's Southern District SDP (Sub-district 2) includes a number of policies, such as protecting the integrity of the urban edge, supporting viticulture production and maintaining the cultural landscape. Spaanschemat River Road is classified as a Scenic Route.
- Uitsig has been recommended by SAHRA as a Grade I National Heritage Site in the Constantia-Tokai Valley portion of the Cape Winelands Cultural Landscape.

5 Visual Assessment Criteria

5.1 Viewpoints and View Corridors (Fig. 3)Viewpoints have been selected based on prominent viewing positions and view corridors in the area, as well as sensitive receptors identified by the Heritage Practitioner. View corridors include the Spaanschemat River Road scenic route and other residential streets abutting the site. Local topography, foreground vegetation or buildings, and bends in the road tend to influence view cones.

5.2 Visual exposure (Fig. 4a and 4b)

Visual exposure of the study area is determined by the 'viewshed', being the zone within which the area is visible. The viewshed is determined by means of a digital terrain model (DTM) to determine the view catchment area. Given the largely domestic scale of the proposed development, it is expected that the visual influence of the development would be confined to the 'local scale'.

5.3 Visibility (Fig. 3)

Visibility tends to be determined by distance between the development and the viewer. Visibility in the case of residential scale development becomes negligible with distances over 1 km. Distance radii are shown in Fig. 3 to assist in quantifying visibility of the proposed Uitsig development. Degrees of visibility in relation to distance are based on the following:

Highly visible: Clearly noticeable within the observer's viewframe 0-500m **Moderately visible:** Noticeable in observer's viewframe 500-1km **Marginally visible:** Visible in the distance if pointed out to observer 1km-1.5km.

Table 3 gives an indication of the potential visibility ratings of the proposed development based on the thresholds indicated above, and on a study of the photographic montages, (Figures 8 to 13).

5.4 Visual Absorption Capacity

This is the ability of the landscape to conceal or screen structures. Development on the ridge or higher slopes would potentially be more visible, particularly when seen in silhouette against the skyline. Mature trees, avenues and tree belts, as well as existing buildings would tend to screen the proposed development. The entrance precinct at the bottom of the slope would be more concealed than the proposed development on the ridge, but would potentially be more visible from Spaanschemat River Road. In all cases visibility could potentially be increased by the possible removal of trees in the future.

5.5 Landscape Integrity

These are visual qualities represented by the intactness of the natural or cultural landscape, lack of visual intrusions or incompatible structures, and the presence of a strong 'sense of place'. These qualities enhance the visual and aesthetic value of the area. Areas of high landscape integrity/value include the orthogonal pattern of vineyards, and the historical werf framed by buildings and mature trees. Deviations from this pattern tend to compromise the integrity of the cultural landscape.

5.6 Visual Sensitivity

Visual sensitivity is determined by a number of factors in combination, including visually exposed areas, (such as the vineyards), prominent topographic or scenic features and steep slopes, which are more visible from a distance. The steep north-facing slopes that overlook the tributary stream tend to be visually sensitive.

5.7 Cumulative impacts

The proposed development needs to be seen in the context of existing surrounding development and any future proposed development. The addition of the proposed new manor house, horse arenas and winery would add to the existing building fabric on the site. No other development in the surrounding area, or future phases of development are known at this stage.

Table 3 Viewing Distances and Visibility

View-point	Location	Distance	Comment
1	The 'Range' Restaurant	92m to treebelt	Proposed development would not be visible beyond the dense treebelt.
2	Spaanschemat River Road at River Café.	107m	The proposed winery would potentially be partly visible from Spaanschemat River Road.
3	Spaanschemat River Road at Firgrove Way intersection	386m	The proposed indoor arena would be highly visible against the background of trees but the balance of the werf development would be mainly screened by existing trees.
4	Spaanschemat River Road at Nova Constantia Road intersection	387m	The proposed indoor arena would be highly visible against the background of trees but the balance of the werf development would be mainly screened by existing trees.
5	Nova Constantia Road at Wingerd Ave. intersection	297m	The proposed indoor arena would be highly visible in the middle foreground but the balance of the werf development would be screened by existing trees.
6	Nova Constantia Road at end of tree avenue	227m	The proposed indoor arena would be highly visible in the middle foreground but the balance of the werf development would be screened by existing trees.
7	Nova Constantia Road at bend in road	227m	The werf developments, including the proposed new manor house, would be mainly screened by existing trees.
8	End of Camelia Close	201m	The werf developments, including the proposed new manor house, would be mainly screened by existing trees.
9	Nova Constantia farmstead	278m	The proposed manor house would be clearly visible across the valley, although partly screened by trees.
10	Buitenverwachting access road	241m	The proposed manor house would be clearly visible across the valley, although partly screened by trees.
11	Buitenverwachting access road	129m	The proposed manor house would be clearly visible across the valley, although partly screened by trees.
12	Buitenverwachting wine cellar access road	439m	The proposed werf precinct development would be clearly visible beyond foreground trees.
13	Buitenverwachting staff manager's house	465m	The proposed winery would be clearly visible from the Spaanschemat River Road entrance.
14	Spaanschemat River Road at Uitsig Farm Main Entrance	80m	The proposed indoor arena would be highly visible against the background of trees but the balance of the werf development would be mainly screened by existing trees.

Table 4 : Potential Visual Impacts / Benefits before mitigation

Criteria	Comments	Central Werf Precinct	Entrance Precinct
Visibility of building facilities Distance from selected viewpoints (see Table 3)	Visibility is mitigated by the limited scale of the proposed development, but increased by the ridge topography.	Medium-high	High
Visibility of lights at night	Depends on lights from buildings, floodlighting, security lighting and area lighting. Information on lighting was not available.	Unknown	Unknown
Visual exposure Zone of visual influence or view catchment	Potential visual exposure is predominantly to the north for the central werf precinct, and to the south for the entrance precinct. The viewshed is generally restricted by the topography and tree-belts.	Medium	Medium
Visual absorption capacity (VAC) Lack of concealment	The ridge topography and open vineyard landscape has low potential for visual screening, but existing mature trees and tree tree-belts, where these are retained, would help with visual screening.	Medium	Medium
Visual sensitivity Effect on landscape features and scenic value	The surrounding historic wine farms, as well as the ridge landform and steep north-facing slopes, tend to be visually sensitive.	Medium-high	Medium-high
Landscape integrity Effect on character of the area	The proposed development is generally compatible with surrounding land uses, except the pump track and where development intrudes into existing vineyards.	Medium	Medium-high
Overall impact intensity	Combination of the criteria above.	Range is medium to medium-high	Range is medium to high

Table 5:	Rating of	Visual Impacts	before mitigation

Criteria	Scoring	Central Werf Precinct	Entrance Precinct
A. Extent Degree of influence over a geographic area.	Local (1) Regional (2) National (3)	1	1
B. Intensity Magnitude of the impact (see Table 4).	Negligible – Low (1) Low-medium (2) Modified – medium (3) Medium-high (4) Severely altered – high (5)	4	4
C. Duration Time-frame impact will be experienced.	Short-term up to 2 yrs (1) Medium-term 2-15 yrs (2) Long-term 15 yrs + (3)	3	3
Consequence	A+B+C	8 (Medium-high)	8 (Medium-high)
Probability	Degree of possibility of the impact occuring.	Probable	Probable
Significance	Consequence + probability.	Medium-high	Medium-high
Status	Negative or positive effect.	Negative	Negative
Confidence	Degree of confidence in predictions based photomontages.	High	High
Construction phase	Assumes short-term	Medium	Medium
Operational phase	Assumes long-term	Medium-high	Medium-high
Cumulative impacts	Adds to existing structures and roads	Medium-high	Medium-high

6 Visual Indicators and Recommended Mitigations

6.1 Visual Indicators

Visual indicators to inform future proposed development at the Uitsig site include the following:

- The backdrop mountain slopes of Constantiaberg and Vlakkenberg to the west of the site are an important scenic resource, particularly when seen from the viewpoints and view corridors surrounding the site, and need to be recognized in the site planning.
- The granite footslopes with the geometric pattern of vineyards, avenues, tree belts and compact farmsteads are part of a revered cultural Cape landscape and need to be maintained intact as far as possible.
- The tributary stream valley along the northern boundary of the site, together with the steep side slopes, are a local scenic resource and part of the Constantia riverine system that needs to be maintained as green open space.
- The old tree avenues, werf complex and cricket oval are important visual structuring elements in the landscape and should be taken into account in the site planning.
- Spaanschemat River Road, which is classified as a scenic route, is an important visual corridor with views towards the Uitsig farm and beyond, requiring careful treatment and controls to minimise visual intrusions.
- The agricultural landscape of Uitsig, seen together with those of adjacent farms such as Nova Constantia, Buitenverwachting and Klein Constantia needs to be maintained. Excessive commercial, tourism and recreational activities should be avoided in order to retain the rural ambience of the area.

6.2 Visual Mitigation

Recommended mitigatory measures to minimise potential visual impacts include the following:

- 1. Avoid new building development within the intact agricultural landscape, particularly the vineyards, and preferably confine new uses or buildings to the existing werf precincts in the form of restored or infill development.
- 2. Use new development to create or reinforce existing werf spaces and locate buildings in sympathy with the orthogonal grid of the existing settlement pattern.
- 3. Avoid free-standing buildings and other structures in open, visually exposed agricultural areas.
- 4. Maintain the visual green corridor along the tributary stream on the northern portion of the site and avoid building on the visually sensitive steep side slopes.

- 5. Avoid locating buildings on drainage lines, wetlands or seepage areas, which are important elements of the natural landscape, besides having ecological value.
- 6. Reinforce / supplement existing tree clumps, avenues and shelterbelts in sympathy with the existing grid of vineyards and fields.
- 7. Restrict buildings to 2 storeys, nestled into the landscape, and preferably articulate buildings and use lean-to's to reduce their scale, helping to maintain the rural fabric.
- 8. Avoid curvilinear or diagonal roads crossing the site or werf precincts, and preferably align internal roads and driveways along the existing orthogonal grid of vineyards and shelterbelts.
- 9. Align buildings and roads with the contours and avoid excessive cut and fill or visual scarring on the steeper gradients.
- 10. Avoid large parking areas and preferably create a series of small parking courts of no more than 20 cars. Screen parking with low walls, hedges or trees. Cars parked in shade are less visible in the landscape.
- 11. Avoid barrier kerbs on the estate roads, and use dish channels or swales to ensure that road design is in keeping with the rural context.
- 12. Use low-level outdoor lighting or bollard lights with down-lighters or reflectors to avoid light spillage and light pollution in the rural setting. Avoid floodlights and street lights.
- 13. Attach signs to walls where possible to avoid free-standing poles in the rural landscape. Where free-standing signs are used, these to not exceed 1.5m height. Avoid large billboard-type signs, banners and flags, particularly at the entrance precinct or along Spaanschemat River Road.
- 14. Avoid billboards and flags, particularly where these would be visible from Spaanschemat River Road, neighbouring homesteads and other sensitive receptors.
- 15. Avoid satellite dishes or aerials protruding above the roofline of buildings.
- 16. Locate all utility lines underground.
- 17. Prepare an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) to ensure strict controls and protection measures during the construction period to avoid damage to historical structures and valuable trees, and to minimise litter, dust and noise.

7 Conclusion and Recommendations

The Central Werf Precinct (Private Precinct):

The domestic scale of most of the proposed buildings and the screening effect of existing mature trees and windbreaks would generally result in a medium-high visual impact before mitigation, and medium after mitigation measures outlined in Section 6 above are implemented. The proposed indoor arena, because of its scale and location, where it intrudes into the existing vineyards, would be the most visible, particularly from Nova Constantia Road. However, proposed new tree-planting around the building could help to mitigate the visual effect over time, (see Fig. 15).

The Entrance Precinct (Public Precinct):

The proposed winery and upgraded restaurant would be partly screened from Spaanschemat River Road by existing tree belts. The uses are compatible with the general area, except for the pump track, and would result in upgrading of existing facilities. The potential visual impact would be medium-high before mitigation, and again slightly lower after mitigation measures outlined in Section 6 above are implemented. The visual effect of the proposed parking area in particular needs to be softened. Proposed tree planting in the various parking areas could help to mitigate the visual effects over time, as indicated in Public Precinct Parking Layout, (Fig. 14).

A Summary of the potential visual impacts, both before and after mitigation are given in Tables 6a and 6b below:

		Extent	Intensity	Duration	Consequence	Probability	Significance	Status	Confidence
	Vithout nitigation	Local (1)	Medium- high (4)	Ŭ	Medium-high (8)	Probable	Medium- high	- ve	Medium (based on available information)
-	Vith nitigation	Local (1)	Medium (3)	Long term (3)	Medium (7)	Possible	Medium	- ve	Medium (depending on mitigation)

Table 6a: Visual impacts without and with mitigation: Central Werf Precinct (Private Precinct)

Table 6b: Visual impacts without and with mitigation: Entrance Precinct (Public Precinct)

	Extent	Intensity	Duration	Consequence	Probability	Significance	Status	Confidence
Without mitigation	Local (1)	Medium- high (4)	Long term (3)	Medium-high (8)	Probable	Medium- high	- ve	Medium (based on available information)
With mitigation	Local (1)	Medium (3)	Long term (3)	Medium (7)	Possible	Medium	- ve	Medium (depending on mitigation)

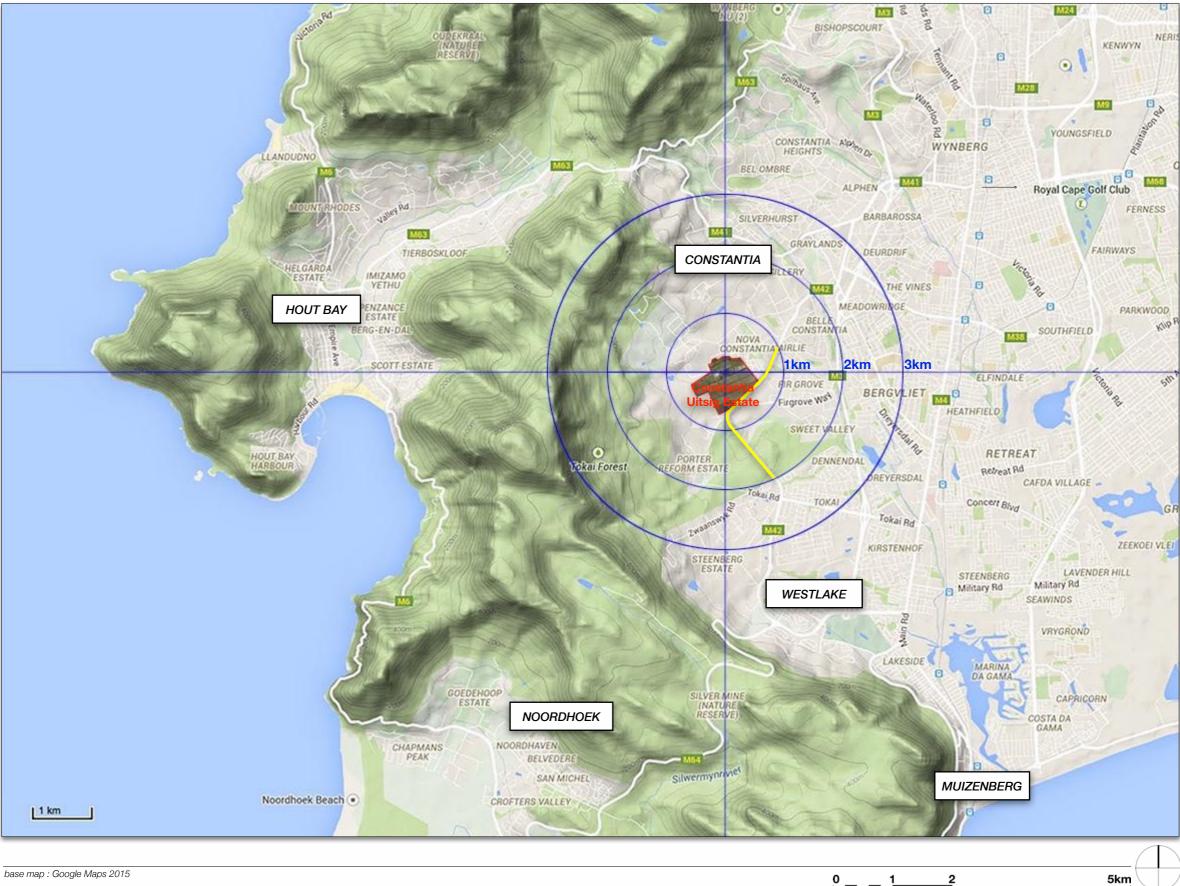
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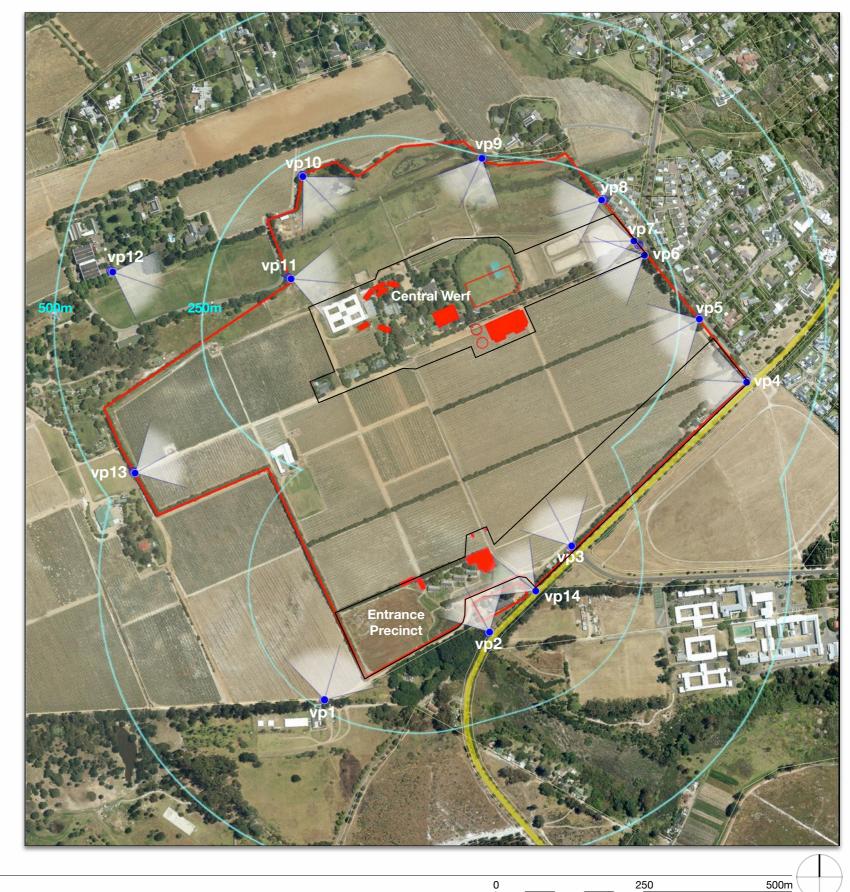
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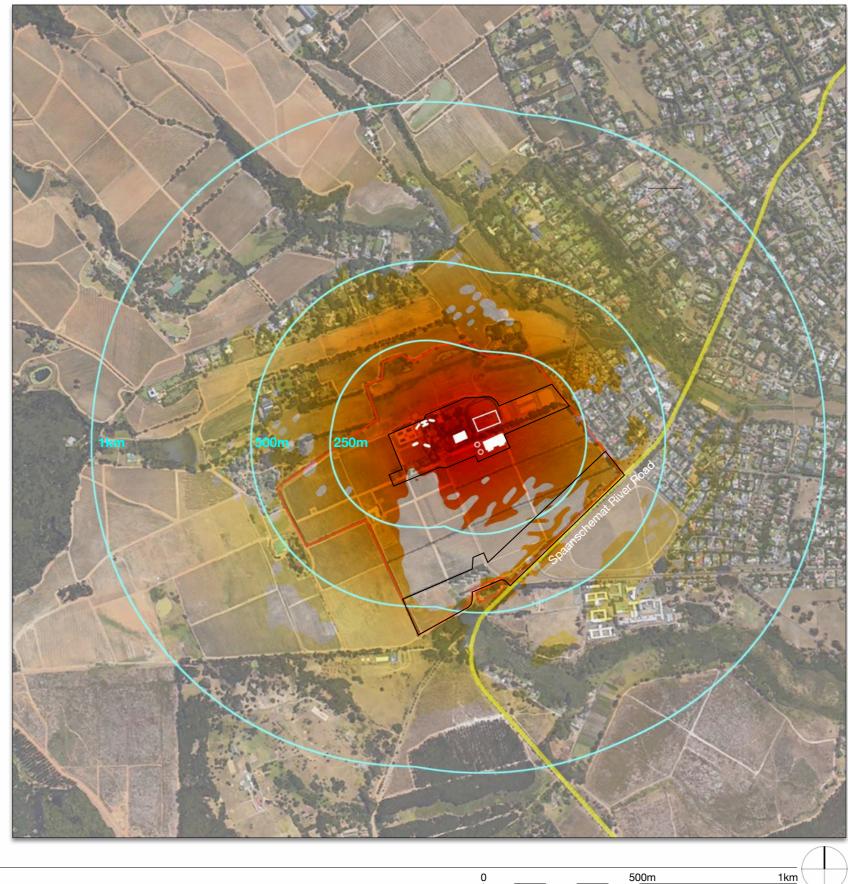






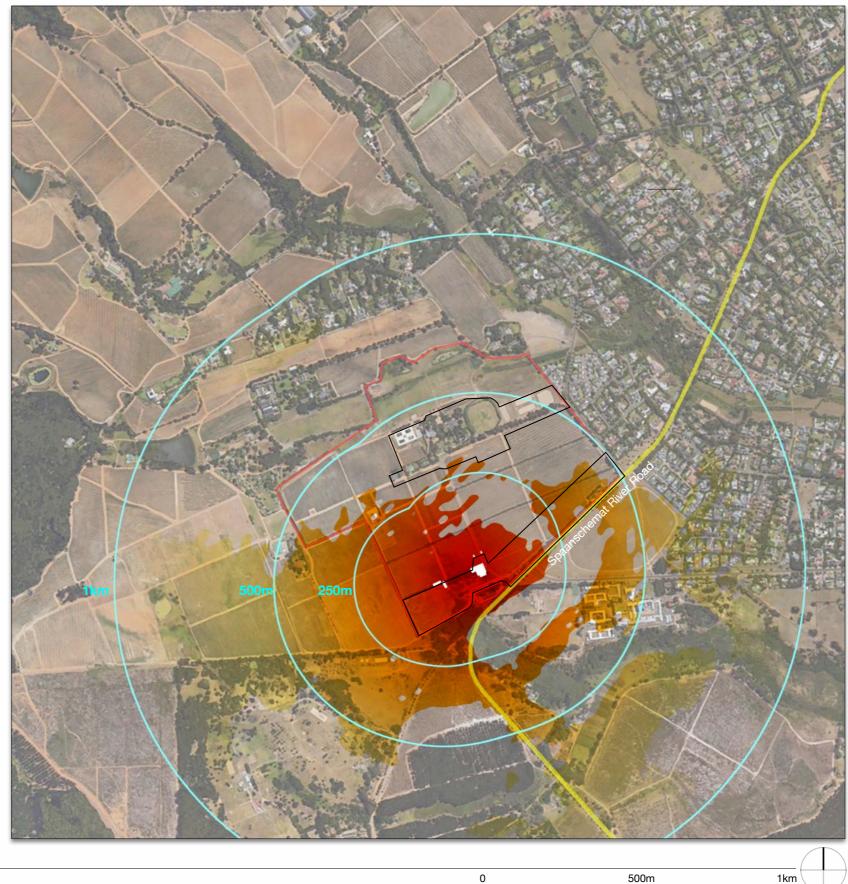
VISIBILITY GRADIENT LEGEND

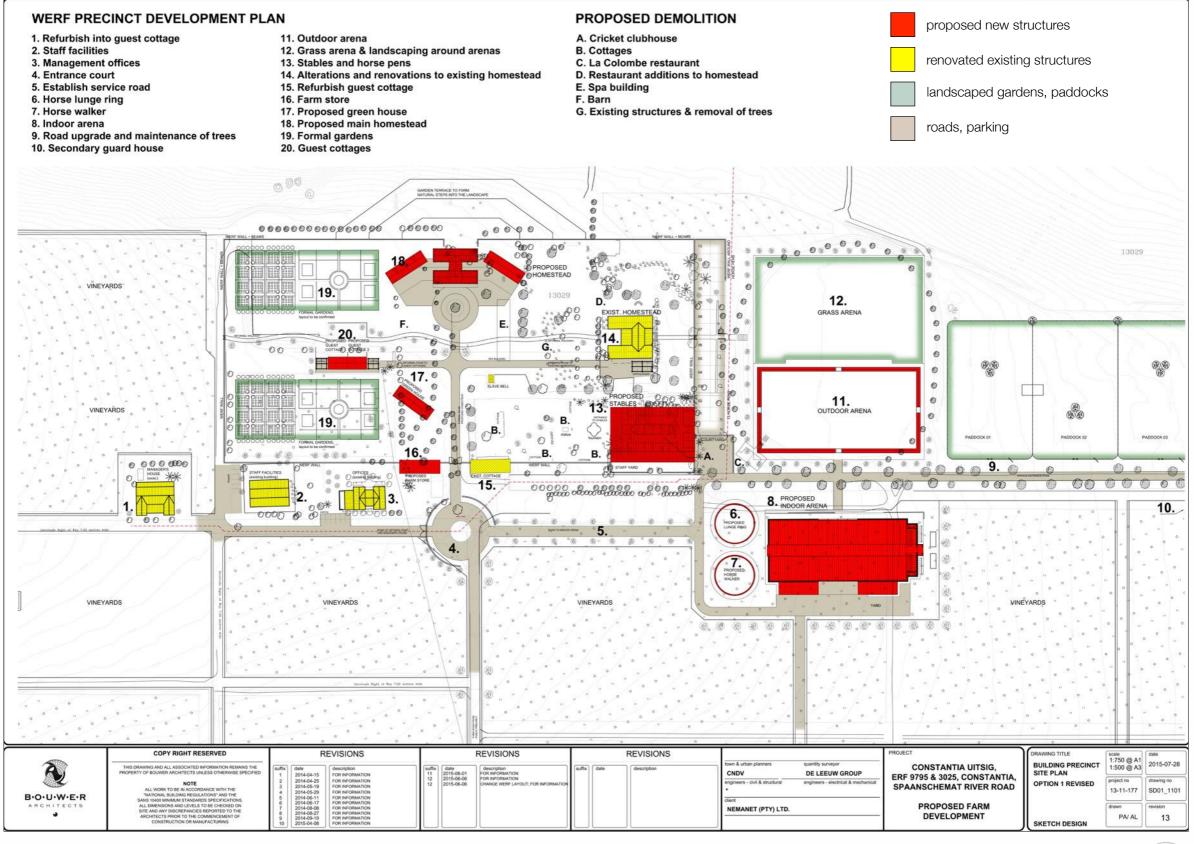
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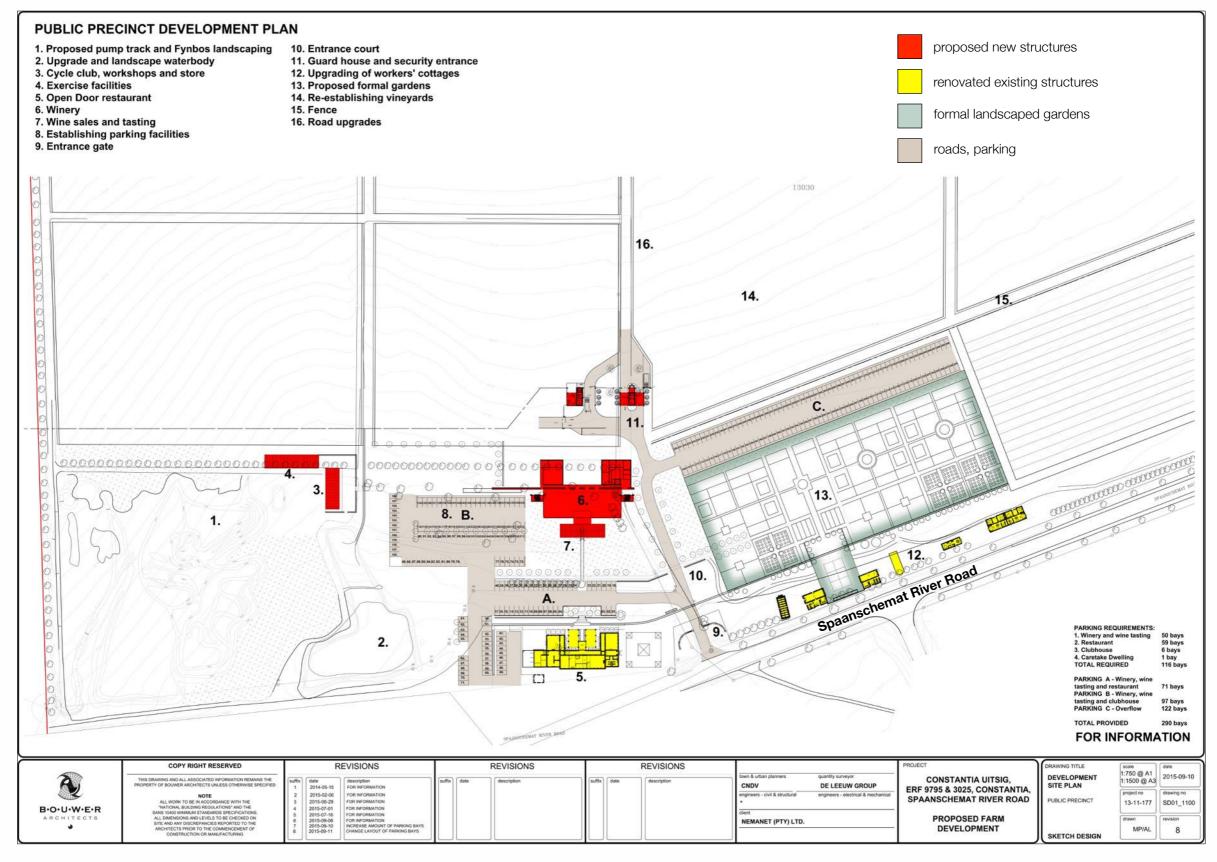
VISIBILITY GRADIENT LEGEND

red • area of high visibility orange • area of medium visibility yellow • area of low visibility uncoloured area • indicates view shadow area (no visibility)





SDP : Bouwer Architects 2015 Figure 5 • Proposed Central Werf Development (Private) Σ



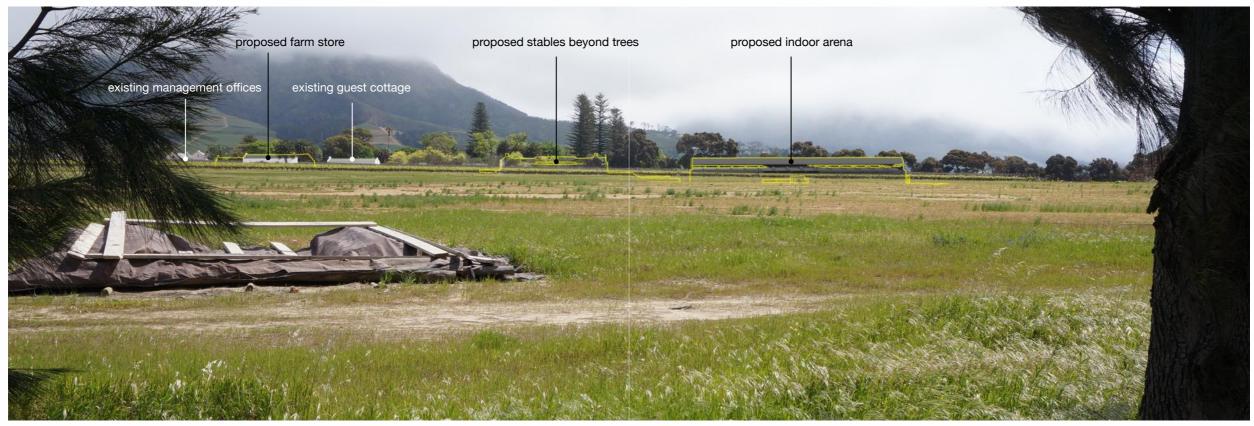
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viewpoint 1 • from The Range restaurant



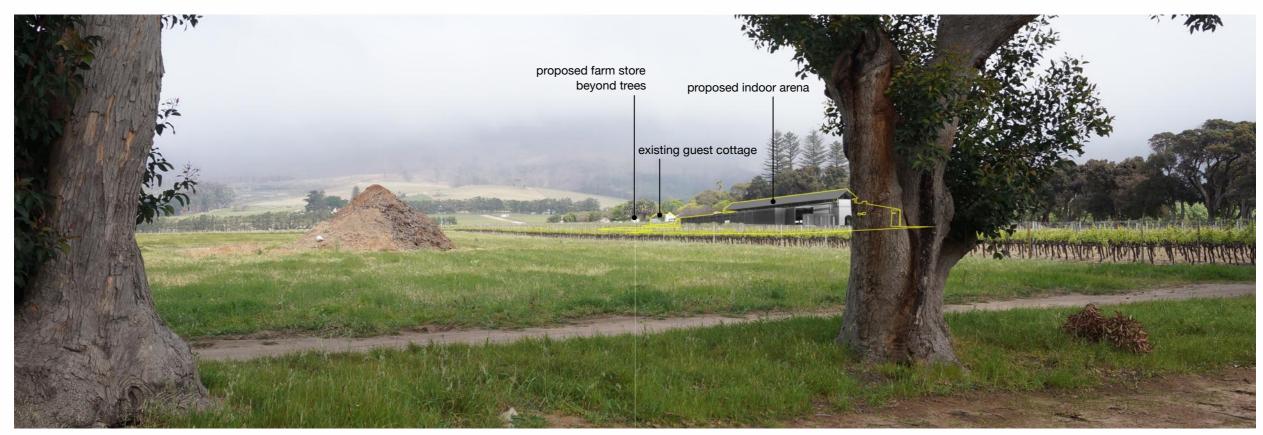
viewpoint 2 • from Spaanschemat River Road at the River Café



viewpoint 3 • from Spaanschemat River Road at the Firgrove Road Intersection



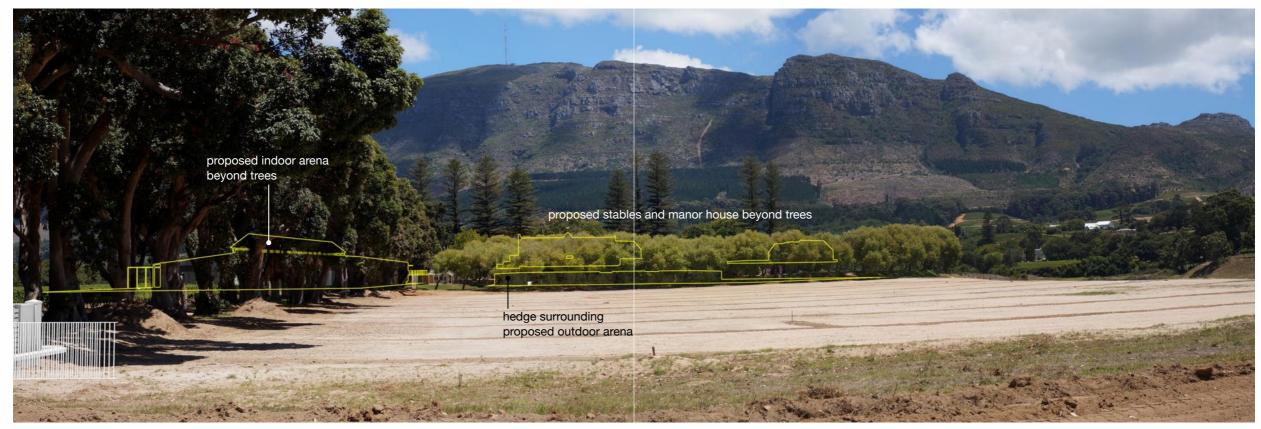
viewpoint 4 • from Spaanschemat River Road at the Nova Constantia Road corner



viewpoint 5 • from Nova Constantia Road at Wingerd Avenue intersection



viewpoint 6 • from Nova Constantia Road at tree avenue (proposed new entrance)



viewpoint 7 • from Nova Constantia Road at bend in road



viewpoint 8 • from the end of Camelia Close

photographs : bola/mlb 2015 Figure 10 • Viewpoints 7 and 8



viewpoint 9 • from the rear of the Nova Constantia farmstead



viewpoint 10 • from Buitenverwachting Access Road



viewpoint 11 • from Buitenverwachting Access Road



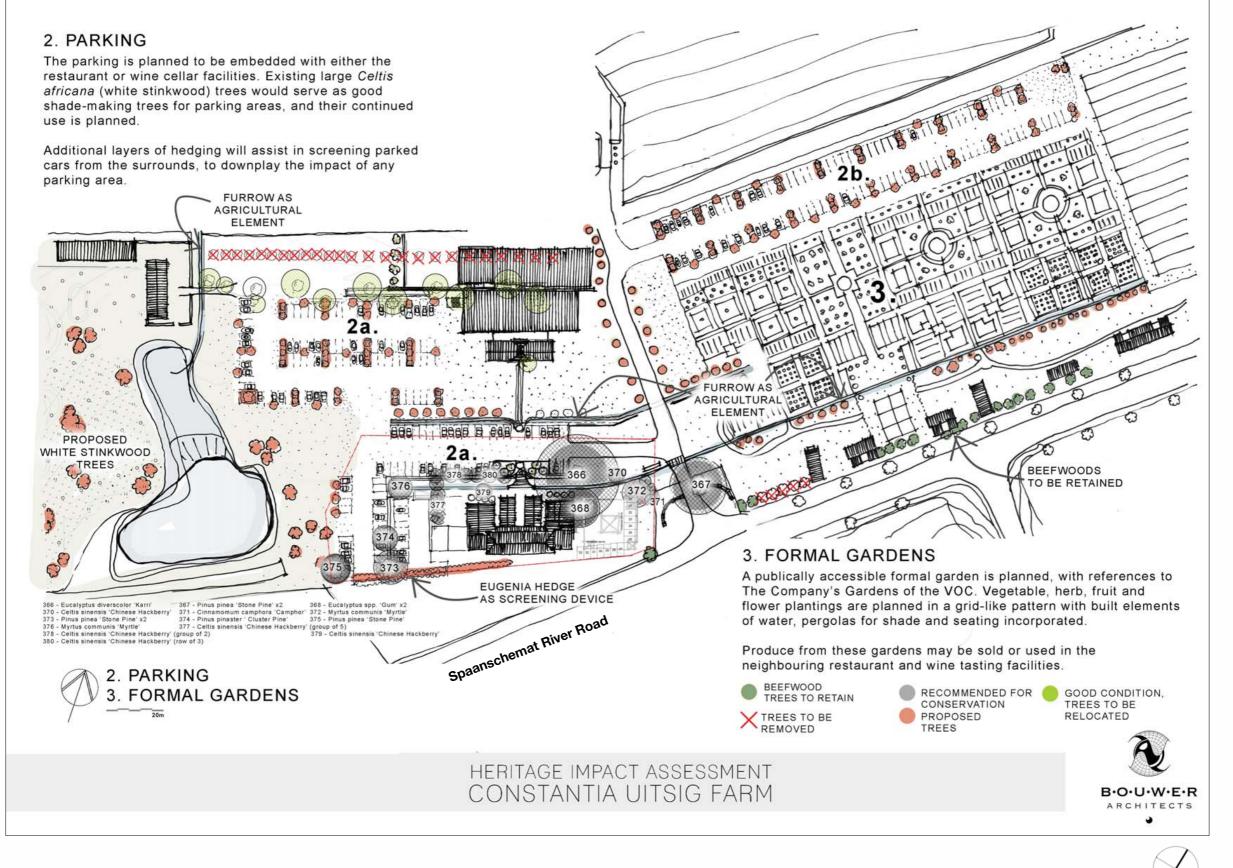
viewpoint 12 • from Buitenverwachting Wine Cellar Access Road

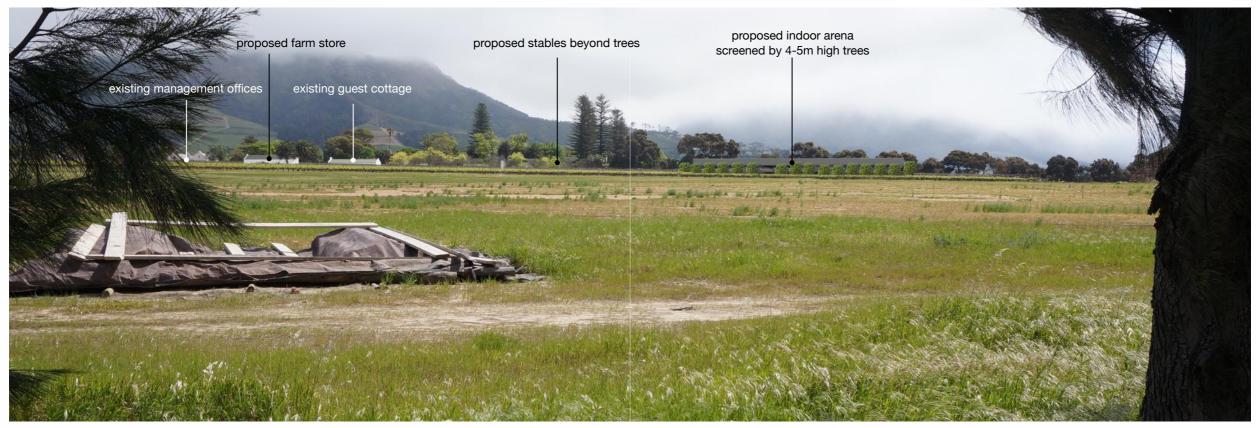


viewpoint 13 • from Buitenverwachting Staff Manager's House



viewpoint 14 • from Spaanschemat River Road at Constantia Uitsig Entrance





viewpoint 3 • from Spaanschemat River Road at the Firgrove Road Intersection



viewpoint 4 • from Spaanschemat River Road at the Nova Constantia Road corner

photographs : bola/mlb 2015