HWC CASE 23100220

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ON RUSTY GATE MOUNTAIN RETREAT, FARMS 824, 826 & 887 NEAR VILLIERSDORP, CALEDON DISTRICT, THEEWATERSKLOOF LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, WESTERN CAPE

Assessment conducted under Section 38 (3) of the National Heritage Resource Act (No. 25 of 1999)

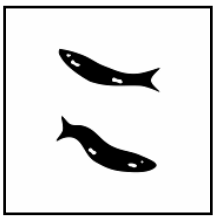
Prepared for

Lornay Environmental Consulting
PO Box 1990, Hermanus, 7200
michelle@lornay.co.za

On behalf of

Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat (Pty) Ltd

By:



ACRM
5 Stuart Road, Rondebosch, 7700
jonathan@acrm.co.za

FEBRUARY
2024

Executive summary

1. Name of site

Proposed development on Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat, Farm Nos 824, 826 and 887, Caledon District, Theewaterskloof Local Municipality, Western Cape

2. Site location

Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat is located about 10kms south-east of Villiersdorp. Access to the guest farm is via Divisional Road (DR1313), off the R43 between Villiersdorp and the N2 (Figures 1-3).

3. GPS Co-ordinates

34° 2'8.87" S 9°22'40.11"E

Figure 1. Locality Map. Red polygon shows the approximate location of the study site between Greyton and Villiersdorp

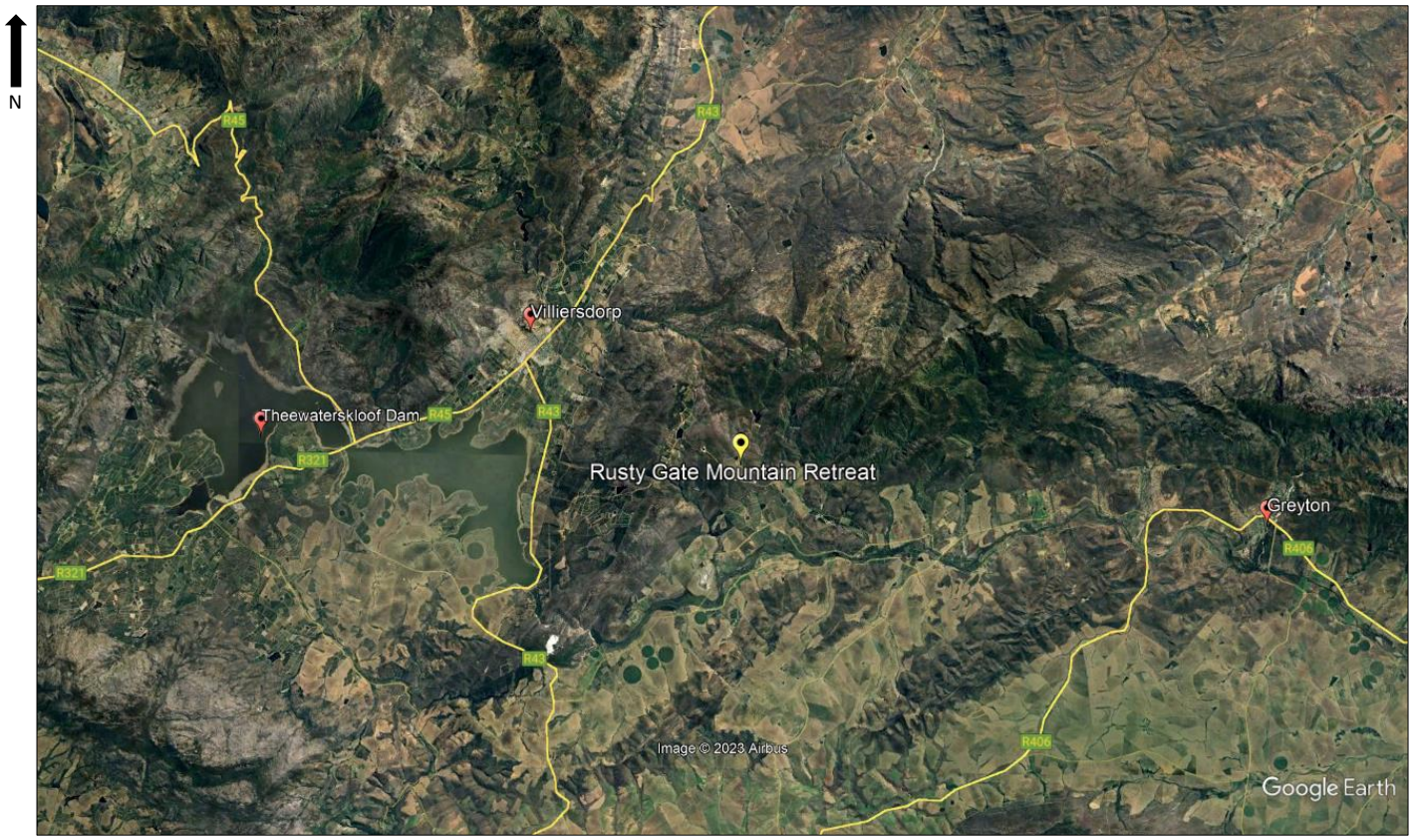


Figure 2. Google Earth satellite map indicating the location of the Rusty Gate Mountain retreat near Villiersdorp in the Overberg region of the southern Cape.

Figure 3. Close up Google Earth satellite map of the proposed development site

4. The development proposal

Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat is a self-catering guest farm located in the Riviersonderend Mountains in the Caledon district of the Theewaterskloof Local Municipality. The owners wish to increase tourism revenue capacity through construction of additional self-catering accommodation units and camping sites on the property.

Farm 826 was developed in the mid 1980's as a commercial nursery for apple and pear trees. In 2013 new owners started using existing buildings and infrastructure on the three farms for commercial tourism as a self-catering guest farm. The current owners purchased Farms 824, 826 and 887 in 2019 and have been operating as a self-catering guest farm with a focus on eco-tourism under the registered trade name Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat.

Regarding the proposed development, the following development opportunities have been identified (Figure 4).

- x 6 camping sites
- x 4 eco-pods
- x 10 eco-cabins
- An open-air amphitheatre
- Main dwelling
- Conference facility, and
- Sundowner boma

The combined, footprint area of the development is less than 1.0ha in extent.

Figure 4. Google Earth Site Layout Plan for the proposed Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat.

A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) comprising an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA), and a Palaeontological Impact Assessment (PIA), was requested by Heritage Western Cape (HWC) following the submission of a Notice of Intent to Develop (NID).

ACRM was appointed by Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat to conduct the AIA and to write up the integrated HIA, which includes comments from the local Theewaterskloof Municipality, registered conservation bodies and Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs).

A PIA has been conducted by consulting palaeontologist John Almond of Natura Viva.

Lornay Environmental Consulting is the independent environmental assessment practitioner (EAP) responsible for facilitating environmental authorisation for the project.

An environmental Basic Assessment (BA) process will be followed in the application.

5. Aim of the study

The overall purpose of the study is to assess the sensitivity of archaeological and palaeontological heritage resources on the proposed development site, and to determine potential impacts (of the development) on such resources.

6. Constraints and limitations

There were no constraints or limitations associated with the study.

7. Results

7.1 Archaeology

No archaeological heritage resources were recorded during a field assessment conducted on 22nd November 2023. This is not surprising as the proposed development sites/footprint areas are very, small, while the high elevation of the farm is not conducive to encountering much archaeological heritage.

7.2 Palaeontology

According to Almond (2024), the project area lies on the dissected southern limb of a major anticline of Table Mountain Group (TMG) sediments of Early to Middle Palaeozoic age which are assigned to the Peninsula, Pakhuis, Cederberg, Goudini and Rietvlei Formations. As shown on the 1: 250 000 geological map the bedrocks are transected by several major faults in the region and locally show closely spaced fold axes.

Provisional palaeosensitivity mapping suggests that the TMG braided fluvial to shallow marine quartzitic formations (Peninsula, Goudini, Rietvlei Formations) are generally of Low to Medium sensitivity, with at most low diversity trace fossil assemblages and rarer shelly marine faunules associated with finer-grained facies. The glaciogenic Pakhuis Formation has hitherto only yielded occasional trace fossils and possibly palynomorphs. It is probable that finer-grained, clay-rich facies (*e.g.* mudrocks, siltstone interbeds), including Soom Member of the potentially High Sensitivity, post-glacial Cederberg Formation, have been preferentially tectonized as well as subsequently subject to deep chemical weathering in Cenozoic times. Significant impacts on fresh (unweathered) Cederberg Formation mudrocks, which within less deformed and weathered sectors of the CFB have yielded an important shelly fossil biota showing soft-part preservation as well as microfossils are considered highly unlikely here.

7.3. Built Environment

No buildings, structures or features will be impacted by the proposed development.

7.4 Graves

No graves were encountered during the field assessment.

8. Comments

Comments from Theewaterskloof Local Municipality, registered conservation bodies and Interested and Affected Parties will be included in the Final integrated HIA report to be submitted to Heritage Western Cape.

9. Anticipated impacts

Regarding archaeological heritage, no significant impact on Stone Age archaeological resources is anticipated.

Regarding palaeontological heritage, `no significant impacts on local palaeontological heritage resources are anticipated' (Pether 2024).

10. Conclusion

The proposed Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat development near Villiersdorp does not pose a threat to local archaeological heritage resources.

According to Almond (2024), `the overall palaeo-sensitivity of the project area is rated as being LOW to VERY LOW'.

Therefore, there are no objections to the proposed development.

11. Recommendations

1. No archaeological mitigation is required prior to construction excavations commencing.

2. No archaeological monitoring is required.

3. Pending the exposure of significant new fossils (*e.g.* shelly invertebrates, well-preserved trace fossil assemblages) during construction, no further specialist palaeontological studies are recommended here and there are no objections on palaeontological heritage grounds to authorization of the proposed development (Almond 2024)

12. Authors notes

Kaplan, J. 2024. Heritage Impact Assessment, proposed development on Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat, Farm Nos 824, 826 & 887, Greyton, Theewaterskloof Local Municipality, Western Cape, Cape Town

Almond, J. 2024. Palaeontological Heritage Comment. Rusty Gate Mountain retreat Development on Farms 887, 824 and 826 near Villiersdorp (Caledon District, Theewaterskloof Local Municipality), Western Cape. Report prepared for ACRM, Natura Viva Cape Town

Table of Contents

	Page
Executive summary	
1. INTRODUCTION	7
2. THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL	8
3. HERITAGE LEGISLATION	9
4. THE STUDY SITE	10
5. STUDY APPROACH	17
5.1 Method	17
5.2 Constraints and limitations	17
5.3 Identification of potential risks	17
6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT	17
7. RESULTS OF THE STUDY	18
7.1 Archaeology	18
7.2 Palaeontology	18
7.3 Built Environment	20
7.4 Graves	20
8. COMMENTS	20
9. ANTICIPATED IMPACT S	20
9.1 Archaeology	20
9.2 Palaeontology	20
10. CONCLUSSION	20
11. RECOMMENDATIONS	20
12. REFERENCES	21
Appendix A: Desktop Palaeontological Impact Assessment	22

1. INTRODUCTION

ACRM was instructed by Lornay Environmental Consulting on behalf of Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat (Pty) Ltd to conduct a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for a proposed guest farm development on Farm Nos 824, 826 and 887 near Villiersdorp (Theewaterskloof Local Municipality), in the Overberg region of the Western Cape (Figures 1 & 2).

A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) comprising an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) and a Palaeontological Impact Assessment (PIA), was requested by Heritage Western Cape (HWC) following the submission of a Notice of Intent to Develop (NID).

ACRM was appointed to conduct the AIA and write up the integrated HIA, which includes comments from the local Theewaterskloof Municipality, registered conservation bodies and Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs).

A desktop PIA has been conducted by consulting palaeontologist John Almond (2024).

Lornay Environmental Consulting is the independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) responsible for facilitating environmental authorization for the proposed development.

An Environmental Basic Assessment (BA) process will be followed in this application.

Figure 1. Locality Red polygon shows the approximate location of the study site between Greyton and Villiersdorp

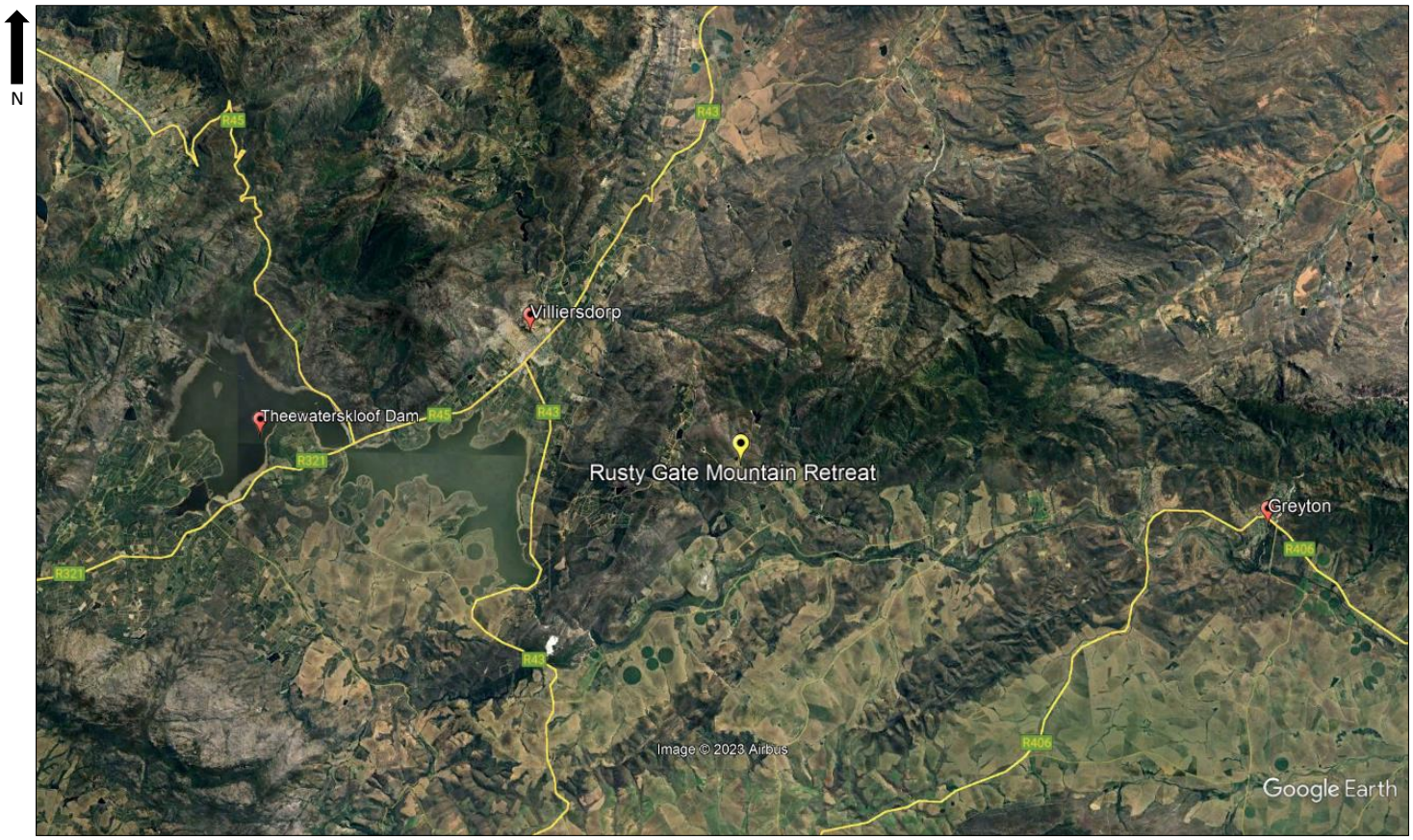


Figure 2. Google satellite map indicting the study site (yellow pin), located between Villiersdorp and Greyton in the Overberg region of the Western Cape

2. THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat (Pty) Ltd is a self-catering guest farm located in the Riviersonderend Mountains in the Caledon District of the Theewaterskloof Local Municipality.

Farm 826 was developed in the mid 1980's as a commercial nursery for apple and pear trees. In 2013 new owners started using existing buildings and infrastructure on the three farms for commercial tourism as a self-catering guest farm. The current owners purchased Farms 824, 826 and 887 in 2019 and have been operating as a self-catering guest farm with a focus on eco-tourism under the registered trade name Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat.

The owners of Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat now wish to increase tourism revenue capacity through construction of additional guest accommodation units and campsites on the property.

The following development opportunities have been identified.

- x 6 camping sites
- x 4 self-catering eco-pods
- x 10 self-catering eco-cabins
- Open air amphitheatre
- Main dwelling
- Repurposed conference facility
- Sundowner boma

The self-catering units will be designed to function “off-the-grid” i.e., using renewable energy, and efficient water demand etc. There will be minimal excavations, where accommodation units will be built on elevated platforms placed on top of raised pillar/stilt foundations. Where possible conservancy tanks (for water & sewerage) will be built underground. Existing farm roads will also be used, and no new access roads will need to be constructed. Sewage and wastewater at the campsite will be managed via a single conservancy tank system with sufficient capacity for all six camping stands.

The combined footprint area of the development is less than 1.0ha in extent.

A Site Development Plan is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Google Earth Site Layout Plan for the proposed Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat

3. HERITAGE LEGISLATION

The National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA No. 25 of 1999) protects archaeological and palaeontological sites and materials, as well as graves/cemeteries, battlefield sites and buildings, structures and features over 60 years old. The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) administers this legislation nationally, with Heritage Resources Agencies acting at provincial level. According to the Act (Sect. 35), it is an offence to destroy, damage, excavate, alter of remove from its original place, or collect, any archaeological, palaeontological and historical material or object, without a permit issued by the SAHRA or applicable Provincial Heritage Resources Agency, *viz*. Heritage Western Cape (HWC).

Notification of HWC is required for proposed developments exceeding certain dimensions (Sect. 38), upon which they will decide whether or not the development must be assessed for

heritage impacts (an HIA) that may include an assessment of archaeological (a AIA) or palaeontological heritage (a PIA).

4. THE STUDY SITE

Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat is located about 10kms south-east of Villiersdorp (Figure 4). Access to the Farm is via Divisional Road (DR1313), off the R43 between Villiersdorp and the N2. It is a winding, steep gravel road to reach the guest farm, which is located against the backdrop of the Riviersonderend Mountains. The three farm portions combined, measure about 290ha in extent.

Farm 826 and existing infrastructure was initially developed in the mid 1980's as a commercial nursery for apple and pear trees. In 2006 the previous owners purchased the property for personal use and started using existing buildings infrastructure for commercial tourism as a self-catering guest farm. The current owners purchased the farm in 2019 as a going concern and has been operating as a self-catering guest farm with focus on eco-tourism.

The proposed development sites/footprint areas are very small, and most are covered in dense natural vegetation (Fynbos & Protea), on both steep and level rocky slopes (Figures 5-18).

The proposed self-catering accommodation units (eco cabins & eco pods) are discreetly located giving visitors a sense of privacy, peace and quiet.

Figure 4. Close up Google Satellite map of the existing Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat.

Figure 5. Proposed self-catering eco pod (a). View facing south.

Figure 6. Proposed self-catering eco cabin (a). View facing south.

Figure 7. Proposed self-catering eco cabins (b). Yellow polygon indicates the approximate location of the site. View facing south.

Figure 8. Proposed self-catering eco cabins (c). View facing east.

Figure 9. Proposed self-catering eco cabins (d). View facing south.

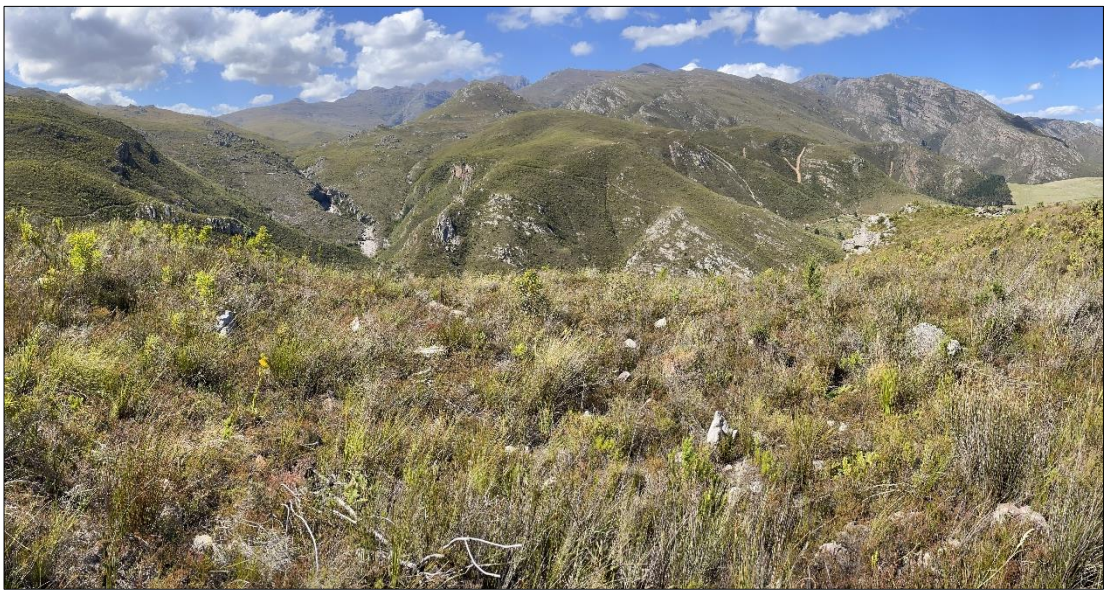


Figure 10. Proposed self-catering eco-cabin (e). View facing east.

Figure 11. Proposed self-catering eco pod (b). View facing east.

Figure 12. Proposed self-catering eco cabin (f). View facing north.

Figure 13. Proposed self-catering eco-cabin (g). Vie facing northwest.

Figure 14. Proposed camping site. View facing south.

Figure 15. Proposed camping site. View facing south.

Figure 16. Proposed sundowner boma. View facing south.

5. STUDY APPROACH

5.1 Method

A field assessment of the proposed development site was conducted by ACRM on 21 November 2023.

A desk top study was also undertaken to describe the heritage context of the surrounding area.

5.2 Constraints and limitations

There were no constraints or limitations associated with the proposed development.

5.3 Identification of potential risks

There are no archaeological or palaeontological risks associated with the proposed Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat development.

6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

A thin, uneven scatter of Early Stone Age (ESA) and Middle Stone Age (MSA) implements was recorded in grazing lands and in old, terraced fruit orchards on the Farm Elandskloof, in the valley below Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat (Kaplan 2015). The tools comprised mostly large, angular chunks, cores, flakes, and miscellaneous retouched/utilised pieces. No formal tools such as handaxes, choppers, or cleavers were found.

Apart from the above study, according to SAHRIS, no other archaeological surveys have been done in the area surrounding Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat.

Archaeological remains have however, been recorded in Villiersdorp and the nearby area. For example, large numbers of patinated and weathered, ESA tools including handaxes, cleavers, retouched pieces, flakes, chunks, and cores were documented on the northern edge of the Theewaterskloof Dam (Kaplan 2007a), a few kilometres south of Villiersdorp, while Yates (2005) recorded large numbers of ESA tools, including retouched flakes, choppers, cleavers and handaxes, at the Gloria Cove resort on the western edge of the dam. Yates (2005) noted that most of the tools from Gloria Cove were also made on highly patinated flaked quartzite cobbles, most of which were confined to a cobble or pebble horizon alongside the edge of the dam, in a disturbed and degraded context. A study conducted by Orton (2014) for a proposed housing development near Villiersdorp, and by Tusenius (2012) for a proposed borrow pit close to the Theewaterskloof Dam, encountered no archaeological resources. According to the SAHRIS website isolated ESA tools collected from the Villiersdorp area are accessioned by the Archaeological Data Recording Centre at Iziko: South African Museum.

ESA tools including large angular flakes, chunks and cores were recorded by Kaplan (2006) between Greyton and Genadendal, and on the gravel road to Boesmanskloof, while small numbers of ESA and MSA tools were also recorded in grazing lands and washed slopes on the Farm Blue Hippo north-east of Greyton (Kaplan 2007b, 2013).

Historic records indicate that the valley, extending through to Greyton in the south would have been prime grazing lands for Khoekhoen groups during the last two millennia (Hart & Webley 2010).

7. RESULTS

7.1 Archaeology

No archaeological heritage resources were recorded during the baseline study (Figure 17). This is not surprising as the footprint areas/development sites are very, small, while the high elevation/altitude of the farm is not conducive to encountering much archaeological heritage.

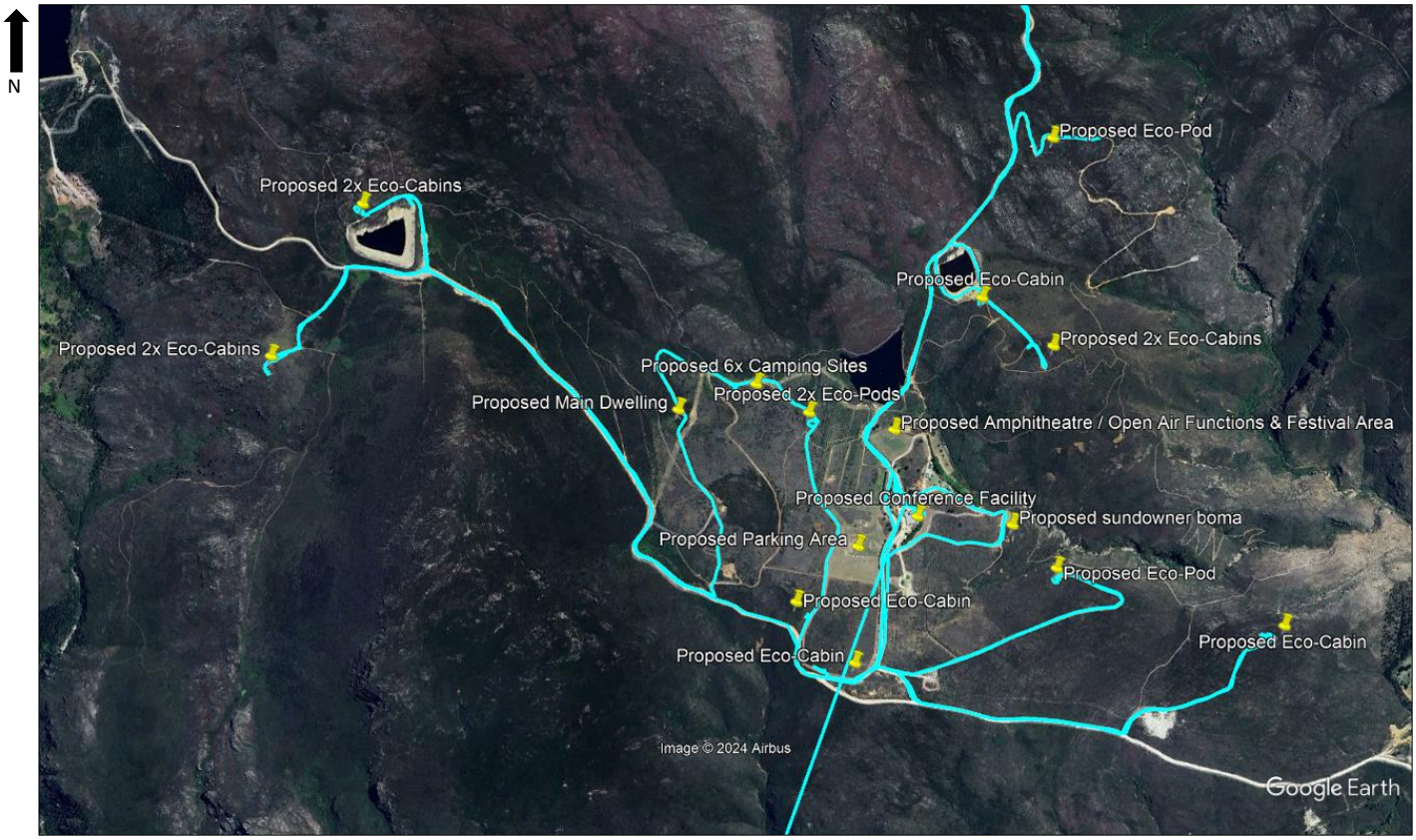


Figure 17. Track path in blue.

7.2 Palaeontology

According to Almond (2024), the project area lies on the dissected southern limb of a major anticline of Table Mountain Group (TMG) sediments of Early to Middle Palaeozoic age which are assigned to the Peninsula, Pakhuis, Cederberg, Goudini and Rietvlei Formations (Figure 18). As shown on the 1: 250 000 geological map the bedrocks are transected by several major faults in the region and locally show closely spaced fold axes.

Provisional palaeosensitivity mapping suggests that the TMG braided fluvial to shallow marine quartzitic formations (Peninsula, Goudini, Rietvlei Formations) are generally of Low to Medium sensitivity (Figure 19), with at most low diversity trace fossil assemblages and rarer shelly marine faunules associated with finer-grained facies. The glaciogenic Pakhuis Formation has hitherto only yielded occasional trace fossils and possibly palynomorphs. It is probable that finer-grained, clay-rich facies (*e.g.* mudrocks, siltstone interbeds), including Soom Member of the potentially High Sensitivity, post-glacial Cederberg Formation, have been preferentially tectonized as well as subsequently subject to deep chemical weathering in Cenozoic times. Significant impacts on fresh (unweathered) Cederberg Formation mudrocks, which within less deformed and weathered sectors of the CFB have yielded an important shelly fossil biota showing soft-part preservation as well as microfossils are considered highly unlikely here.

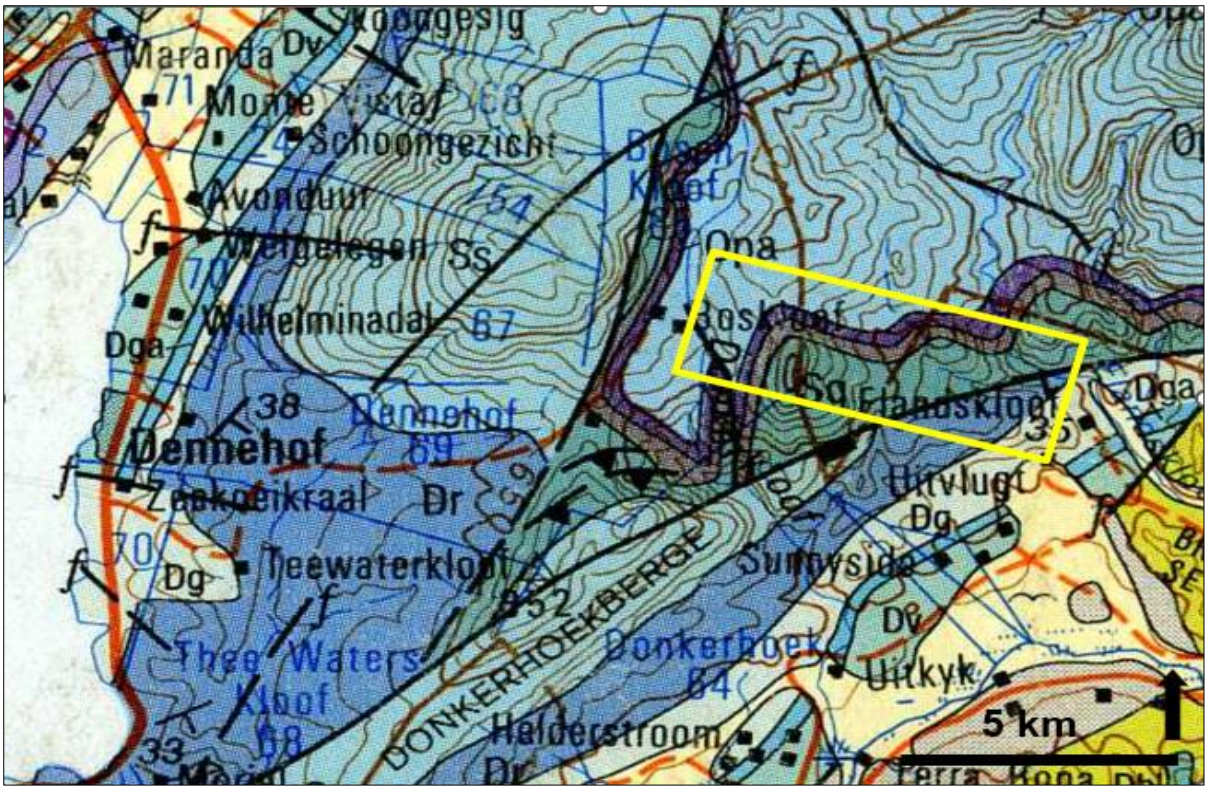


Figure 18. Extract from the 1: 250 000 geological sheet 3319 Worcester (Council for Geoscience) showing the *approximate* location of proposed Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat development near Villiersdorp, Western Cape (yellow rectangle) (Almond 2024)

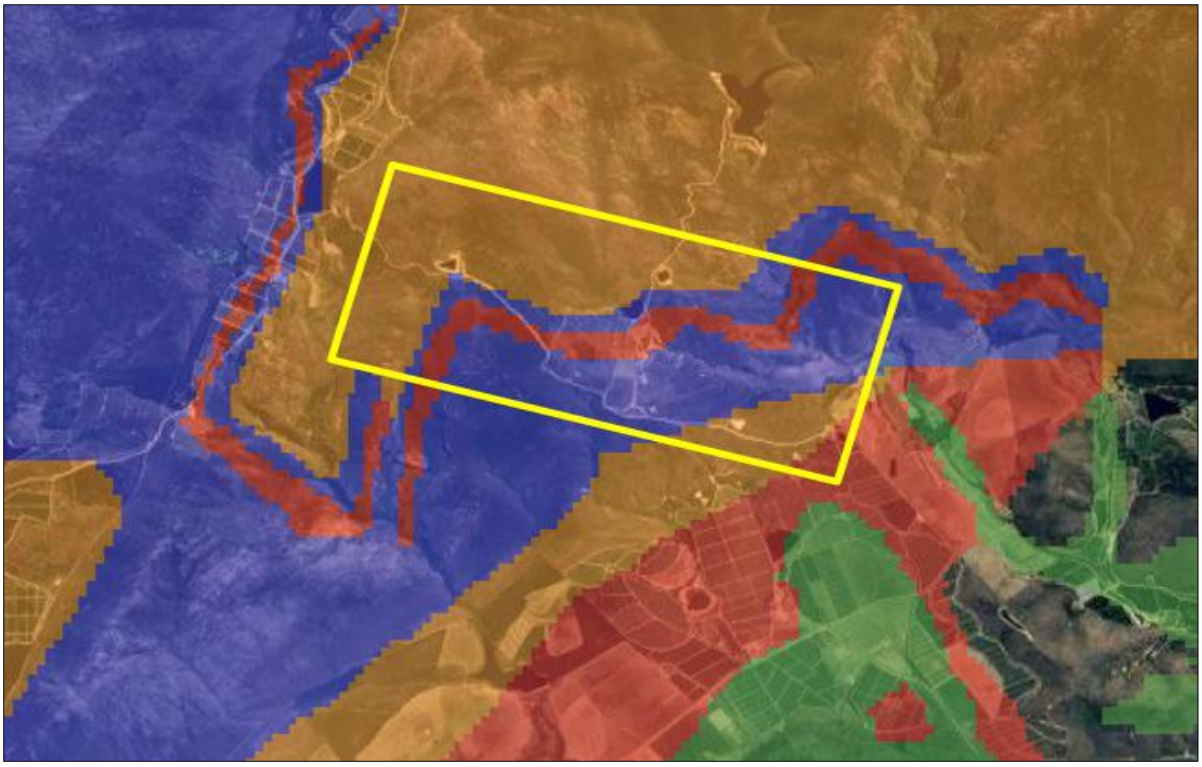


Figure 19. Provisional sensitivity mapping of the based on the SAHRIS palaeosensitivity map of the proposed Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat development project area (*outlined* by the yellow rectangle) near Villiersdorp, Western Cape. The narrow Very High sensitivity zone represents the mudrock-rich Cederberg Formation, but this is likely to be highly weathered and deformed in the study area, so good fossil preservation here is unlikely (Almond 2024)

7.3 Built Environment

No buildings, structures or features over 60 years of age will be impacted by the proposed development.

7.4 Graves

No graves were encountered during the field study.

8. COMMENTS

Comments from Local Theewaterskloof Municipality, registered conservation bodies and Interested and Affected Parties will be included in the Final integrated HIA report to be submitted to Heritage Western Cape.

9 ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

9.1 Archaeology

Impacts on Stone Age archaeological resources are expected to be Very Low.

9.2 Palaeontology

The very small footprint of the proposed development (small total surface area *plus* shallow, small-scale excavations) `no significant impacts on local palaeontological heritage resources are anticipated as a result, of the Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat Development' (Almond 2024).

10. CONCLUSION

The proposed Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat development on Farm Nos 824, 826 and 887 near Villiersdorp does not pose a significant threat to local archaeological heritage resources.

According to Almond (2024), `the overall palaeo-sensitivity of the project area is rated as being LOW to VERY LOW'

Therefore, there are no objections to the development proceeding.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding a proposed eco-tourism development on Farms 824, 826 and 887 near Villiersdorp, the following recommendations are made.

1. No archaeological mitigation is required prior to construction excavations commencing.

2. No archaeological monitoring is required.

3. Pending the exposure of significant new fossils (*e.g.* shelly invertebrates, well-preserved trace fossil assemblages) during construction, no further specialist palaeontological studies are recommended here and there are no objections on palaeontological heritage grounds to authorization of the proposed development (Almond 2024)

12. REFERENCES

Hart, T. & Webley, L 2010. Heritage Impact Assessment, proposed floodwater alleviation measures along the Scholtz River, Greyton, Caledon District, Western Cape. Report prepared for Ecosense Environmental Consultants. Archaeology Contracts Office, Department of Archaeology, University of Cape Town.

Kaplan, J. 2015. Archaeological Impact Assessment, proposed resort development on Re Portion 8 of Farm Elandskloof No. 59, near Villiersdorp, Western Cape. Report prepared for Tommy Brummer Town Planners. ACRM, Cape Town

Kaplan, J. 2013. Heritage Impact Assessment, the proposed Saratoga Resort on Portion 3 of the Farm Just in Time No. 137 and Farm Ontevrede No 138 near Greyton, Caledon District. Report prepared for Withers Environmental Consultants. ACRM Cape Town

Kaplan, J. 2007a. Archaeological Impact Assessment, the proposed Bumsy Bay Resort development, Erf 6 Villiersdorp. Report prepared for Withers Environmental Consultants. ACRM Riebeek West.

Kaplan, J. 2007b. Archaeological Scoping the proposed Saratoga Mountain Manor. Report prepared for Withers Environmental Consultants. ACRM, Riebeek West

Kaplan, J. 2006. Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment proposed Jagersbos-Greyton 66kV powerline and Greyton substation, Western Cape Province.

Orton, J. 2014. Heritage Screening Study for the proposed development of low-cost housing on Portions 1, 22, 32 & 72 of Farm Waterval 72, Villiersdorp, Caledon Magisterial District, Western Cape. Report prepared for Guillaume Nel Environmental Consultants. Asha Consulting, Cape Town

Tusenius, M. 2012. Archaeological Impact Assessment of a proposed borrow pit on Portion 1 of Farm 112, Theewaterskloof Dam Area, Overberg District, Western Cape. Report prepared for Vidamemoria Heritage Consultants. Natura Viva cc, Cape Town.

Yates, R 1994. Phase 1 Archaeological impact assessment proposed development Gloria Bay Resort Theewaterskloof Dam Villiersdorp. Report prepared for Dennis Moss Partnership. Archaeology Contracts Office, Department of Archaeology, University of Cape Town.

Appendix A

Palaeontological Impact Assessment