

# **Site Sensitivity Verification Report**

Portion 125 and Portion 126 of Farm 559, Bettys Bay

May 2025

Consultant:

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# **DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET**

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## STATEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE

Lornay Environmental Consultants nor any of the authors of this report have any material present or contingent interest in the outcome of this report, nor do they have any financial or other interest which may affect the independence of the author(s) or Lornay Environmental Consulting. The consultant fees paid to Lornay Environmental Consulting for the completion of this report is in line with standard professional fees and daily rates. The settling of the professional fee is not dependent on the outcome of the report.

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This Site Sensitivity Verification Report has been prepared to support the proposed development of a single residential dwelling and associated access road infrastructure on Portion 125 and Portion 126 of Farm No. 559, as well as the Remainder of Farm No. 562, located between Kleinmond and Betty's Bay area within the jurisdiction of the Overstrand Municipality. The development footprint falls within a largely natural and vegetated landscape, where the primary objective is to establish a single residential dwelling on Portion 126 of Farm No. 559. This includes the construction of an access road that will connect the proposed dwelling from the Clarence Drive via municipal land (RE/562). The current land use zoning for Portions 125 and 126 is "Undetermined," and the properties are currently undeveloped. The Remainder of the Faerm 562 is current designated as "Open Space Zone 1". All three properties are currently undeveloped and are characterised by natural fynbos vegetation, contributing to the ecological sensitivity of the area.

This report serves to verify and ground-truth the environmental sensitivities identified by the National Webbased Environmental Screening Tool, assess the implications of the proposed development on the receiving environment, and provide guidance on the environmental management measures to be adopted in line with the relevant protocols under the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998), as amended.



Figure 1. Location of subject properties.

#### 2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Lornay Environmental Consulting (Pty) Ltd, was appointment by Elephant Ventures Africa cc, to undertake the required process in terms of the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998) and the Environmental impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, 2014, as amended, for the proposed development.

As required in terms of the legislation, a Screening Tool Report was generated. The following specialist assessments were identified in the Screening Tool Report and recommended to be undertaken:

- Landscape / Visual Impact Assessment
- Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment
- Palaeontology impact assessment
- Terrestrial Impact Assessment
- Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment
- Socio-Economic Impact Assessment
- Plant Species Assessment
- Animal species assessment

In accordance with the Procedures for the Assessment and Minimum Criteria for Reporting on identified Environmental Themes in terms of Sections 24(5)(a) and (h) and 44 of NEMA, this Site Sensitivity Verification Report (SSVR) has been compiled to provide information and motivation for the specialist studies included and / or omitted as part of the environmental process.

Theme	Very High	High	Medium	Low
	sensitivity	sensitivity	sensitivity	sensitivity
Agriculture Theme			Х	
Animal Species Theme		Х		
Aquatic Biodiversity Theme	Х			
Archaeological and Cultural				X
Heritage Theme				
Civil Aviation Theme				X
Defence Theme				X
Paleontology Theme		Х		
Plant Species Theme		Х		
Terrestrial Biodiversity Theme	Х			

#### **Agriculture Theme – Medium Sensitivity**

The subject properties are located on land currently zoned as "undetermined." However, the proposed development is consistent with the land use rights afforded by the zoning scheme, specifically for the establishment of a single residential dwelling. No agricultural activities are currently being undertaken on-site, and the scale of the proposed development is not anticipated to compromise the agricultural potential of the broader area. No further assessment required.

#### Animal Species Theme – High Sensitivity

According to the National Web-Based Environmental Screening Tool, approximately ten animal species of conservation concern have been identified as potentially occurring within on the broader subject properties, Portions 125 and 126 of the Farm 599 and Remainder of the Farm 562, on the farm , with sensitivity ratings ranging from Medium to High. These include eight avian (birds) species, one amphibian species (*Cape platanna Xenopus gilli*), and one invertebrate species (the mountain grasshopper *Aneuryphymus montanus*), as detailed in the table below. The proposed residential dwelling is situated on a previously disturbed quarry site in a

disturbed habitat, and the associated development footprint is minimal. Nevertheless, a pre-construction site walk-through will be undertaken to identify and appropriately manage the presence of any fauna, as well as nests or breeding sites.

For the construction of the access road, a range of mitigation measures will be implemented, including a Searchand-Rescue protocol for plant and slow moving / sedentary faunal species in the development areas. The use of a jeep track is proposed to further limit the extent of habitat disturbance and road engineering. According to the Freshwater Specialist, following mitigation, the impact on fauna is anticipated to be of Low negative significance. Therefore, the development layout has been designed to avoid encroachment into wetland habitat areas. Construction zones will be clearly demarcated to prevent unintended disturbance beyond the designated footprint. Although the alignment of the access road lies within a few metres of a hillslope seep wetland, it is highly probable that any biota loss will be localised and limited in extent (i.e., of low intensity). All the mitigation measures regarding the fauna being proposed by the freshwater specialist will be implemented.

#### African marsh harrier (Ave-Circus ranivorus)

The African Marsh Harrier is listed as a species of High Sensitivity on the National Environmental Screening Tool, primarily due to its reliance on wetland and marshland habitats, which are increasingly under pressure from agricultural expansion, urbanisation, and infrastructure development. It is currently classified as Vulnerable in South Africa, largely due to habitat degradation and loss of suitable breeding and foraging grounds.

This medium-sized raptor occurs in marshes, reedbeds, vlei margins, floodplains, and occasionally along seasonally inundated grasslands. It prefers wetland complexes with tall emergent vegetation, which provide cover for nesting and hunting. The species is known to nest on the ground, typically within dense reeds or sedges, making nests highly susceptible to disturbance during construction and vegetation clearance.

Within the context of the proposed development on Portion 126 of Farm 559, the proximity of the proposed jeep track to the R44 may reduce the habitat suitability for this species, however a pre construction site walk must be undertaken to survey for nests / presence of these birds.

#### Black Stork (Ciconia nigra)

Typically found near water sources like pools, lakes, and estuaries, and in other marshy or wetland areas. It is particularly reliant on the presence of intact freshwater ecosystems and surrounding riparian vegetation. Black Storks breed once annually, nesting in tall trees or cliff ledges often near water sources where they require minimal human disturbance for successful reproduction. This preferred habitat does not align with the site characteristics; however a preconstruction site scan must be done by the appointed ECO / other responsible person. The scan should observe for the presence of both this species and their nests. Should any nests or breeding activity be identified within or near the proposed development footprint, immediate consultation with the ECO to determine the way forward. Construction must be halted in the vicinity of the nest, and a suitable buffer zone must be implemented to avoid disturbance.

#### Lanner Falcon (Falco biarmicus)

They prefer open areas with good visibility for hunting, such as grasslands, fields, and along coastlines, rivers, and lakes. Lanner Falcons are most common around cliffs used for nesting and roosting, but may also use buildings, electricity pylons, and trees. A site scan for these species must be undertaken prior to construction of the development however their preferred habitat choice does not align with where the construction and operations will take place on this property. The preferred habitat does not align with the proposed development area on site.

#### Striped Flufftail (Sarothrura affinis)

The Striped Flufftail (*Sarothrura affinis*) is a small, secretive bird with a patchy distribution across eastern and southern Africa. They are typically found in areas with dense cover near open foraging areas, like dry upland grasslands or fynbos. They are found in fynbos regions. They are often associated with water sources but prefer

drier areas compared to other flufftail species A site scan for these species must be undertaken prior to construction of the development to prevent any of their habitat loss.

#### Verreaux's eagle (Aquila verreauxii)

They prefer mountainous, rocky terrain, especially areas with cliffs and ledges where hyraxes are abundant. Nests are typically built on cliffs or ledges, though they may also be found in trees or on artificial structures like power lines. Breeding seasons vary across their range, with peak breeding occurring in different months depending on location. Habitat preference does not align with development area on site.

#### Cape Platanna (Xenopus gilli)

The Cape Platanna is an endangered species found primarily in the Southwestern Cape. Its preferred habitat includes blackwater seepages and ponds, often within or near Mediterranean-type shrubby vegetation, freshwater marshes, and intermittent freshwater marshes. The site development layout has been designed to avoid encroachment into wetland habitat areas and the loss of these species. The site scan must be undertaken prior to construction, and demarcation of the development site must be made in order to avoid the extent to areas outside the development footprint.

#### The Black Harrier (Circus maurus)

The Black Harrier is a rare, endemic raptor found in southern Africa, particularly in the Western Cape province of South Africa. Its core range is within the Fynbos Biome, and it also extends to the southern reaches of the Karoo and Grassland biomes. Black Harriers prefer coastal and mountain fynbos, highland grasslands, Karoo sub-desert scrub, and open plains with low shrubs and croplands. They breed in the montane fynbos, renosterveld, and strandveld habitats. A site scan for Black Harrier nests must be conducted prior to construction. Should any nests be found, the proposed development must be postponed to a later date. Black Harriers, build their nests on the ground, in tall vegetation near wetlands or in reedbeds, using dried vegetation like stems, grass, reeds, and weeds.

#### Denham's bustard (Neotis denhami)

Denham's Bustard is a large terrestrial bird that can occur in relatively high densities within landscapes composed of a mosaic of cultivated pastures, croplands, and natural vegetation. Its habitat use is known to vary seasonally, reflecting its adaptability to different environmental conditions (Allan, 2002). The species exhibits flexible foraging habits and distinctive breeding behaviour, often influenced by habitat structure and human land-use patterns. Due to its conservation significance and sensitivity to habitat disturbance, a targeted site scan for Denham's Bustard must be conducted prior to the commencement of construction activities, however with the proposed activities confined for a small section of the property along the R44, no impact is anticipated.

#### Hottentot Buttonguail (Turnix hottentottus)

The Hottentot Buttonquail is mostly restricted to the Fynbos Biome in Western Cape. It occurs from Cape Point (Table Mountain National Park), eastwards throughout the Cape Fold Mountains, with records from Hottentots Holland and adjacent ranges (e.g. near Somerset West, Kogelberg, Kleinmond and the Limietberg-Bain's Kloof areas; Taylor 2000b). It is also known from the Langeberg and Overberg regions (Bontebok National Park, De Hoop Nature Reserve, Potberg, Malgas and Wydgelee; Ryan and Hockey 1995). In the east of its range, it extends eastwards to the border of Eastern Cape along the Outeniqua, Kamanassie, Gamkasberg and Kouga ranges (Lee 2013). It was previously recorded as far east as Addo Elephant Park and Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape (Grobler and Braack 1984) although there have been no recent records from this area (Allan and Colahan 1997). It also occurs in Strandveld along the West Coast, with occasional reports near Langebaan, and has been found breeding in Renosterveld near Melkbosstrand (Ryan and Hockey 1995).

A pre-construction site walk must be undertaken to detect any signs of the Hottentot Buttonquail, including calls, tracks and nesting evidence. If individuals are observed or habitat is confirmed to be suitable, mitigation measures such as timing construction activities outside the breeding season may need to be considered, however it is important to note that the development proposed is confirmed to the southern areas of the sites,

alongside the R44 road, and therefore it is not expected that habitat for this species would be lost due to the proposed development.

#### Yellow-winged Agile Grasshopper (Aneuryphymus montanus)

The Yellow-winged Agile Grasshopper is a Vulnerable invertebrate species according to the IUCN Red List, primarily due to ongoing habitat loss and degradation, and a decline in the number of mature individuals. This species is endemic to parts of the Western Cape and is considered to have a restricted and fragmented distribution, making it particularly sensitive to habitat transformation. It typically inhabits rocky foothill environments dominated by evergreen sclerophyllous vegetation, such as fynbos. It is believed to favour cooler, south-facing slopes that retain moisture and offer shelter, although this microhabitat preference remains under further ecological investigation. The species is generally flightless and has limited dispersal ability, which heightens its vulnerability to localised habitat disturbances.

The proposed development area falls within a region containing fynbos vegetation however the natural rocky terrain and slopes are further inland from the proposed development area. A pre-construction site survey must be conducted and If individuals are found within the proposed development footprint or immediate surroundings, a Search and Rescue operation must be initiated, with relocation to nearby suitable undisturbed habitat. Note Areas supporting rocky outcrops or south-facing slopes are further north on the submit property and not included in the development area discussed herein thereby reducing the overall risk to this species.

In conclusion, although there are 5 faunal species rated as high and 5 rated as low, for the property, the Screening Tool assessment was conducted for the entire property and not in the specific vicinity where the development is proposed. The development area has been historically disturbed by quarry activity and the road access route has been determined in conjunction with the botanist and wetland specialist to avoid sensitive areas. In addition, the road proposed will be low-key jeep track, and only used for domestic use, i.e there will not be high traffic traversing the property. The development areas are also confined to the southern areas on the properties, close to the busy R 44, which has already created impacts on the lower section so these properties. Given these factors, it is concluded that no further Faunal Assessment will be conducted beyond the recommendations for pre-construction mitigation above.

Sensitivity	Feature(s)
High	Aves-Circus ranivorus
High	Aves-Ciconia nigra
High	Aves-Falco biarmicus
High	Aves-Sarothrura affinis
High	Aves-Aquila verreauxii
Medium	Amphibia-Xenopus gilli
Medium	Aves-Circus maurus
Medium	Aves-Neotis denhami
Medium	Aves-Turnix hottentottus
Medium	Invertebrate-Aneuryphymus montanus

#### Aquatic Biodiversity Theme – Very High Sensitivity

The proposed single residential dwelling is situated on a historically disturbed quarry platform and lies more than 32m from the nearest delineated watercourses. A detailed aquatic biodiversity assessment confirmed the presence of a hillslope seep wetland and a channelled valley bottom wetland within the broader landscape. However, these wetland features will not be directly impacted by the residential footprint.

Notably, the construction of the proposed access road from Clarence Drive to Portion 126 will traverse Municipal land and pass in close proximity within a few metres to the hillslope seep wetland. Due to spatial constraints, it is not possible to align the access road in a manner that adheres to the recommended minimum 10m buffer from wetland habitat as stipulated by the Buffer Zone Guidelines (Macfarlane & Bredin, 2017). Given the proximity of the road to the wetland, the likelihood of disturbance to wetland habitat is considered Highly Probable. However, the extent of the impact is site-specific, limited to the hillslope seep wetland, and the duration is expected to be Short-Term, correlating with the construction phase of the road. As such, the overall impact significance is assessed to be Low (negative) in the absence of mitigation.

#### Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment – Low Sensitivity

The development proposed is not large scale, mitigation measures can be implemented for the construction phase in the unlikely event that finds are uncovered. Based on the scope of the development, it does not trigger the requirements set out under the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), which are described as below.

Section 38 of the Act states as follows:

38. (1) Subject to the provisions of subsections (7), (8) and (9), any person who intends to undertake a development categorised as-

(a) the construction of a road, wall, powerline, pipeline, canal or other similar form of linear development or barrier exceeding 300m in length;

(b) the construction of a bridge or similar structure exceeding 50m in length;

(c) any development or other activity which will change the character of a site-

(i) exceeding 5 000  $m^2$  in extent; or

(ii) involving three or more existing erven or subdivisions thereof; or

(iii) involving three or more erven or divisions thereof which have been consolidated within the past five years; or (iv) the costs of which will exceed a sum set in terms of regulations by SAHRA or a provincial heritage resources authority;

(d) the re-zoning of a site exceeding 10 000  $m^2$  in extent; or

(e) any other category of development provided for in regulations by SAHRA or a provincial heritage resources authority, must at the very earliest stages of initiating such a development, notify the responsible heritage resources authority and furnish it with details regarding the location, nature and extent of the proposed development.

#### **Civil Aviation Theme – Low Sensitivity**

The proposed development does not fall within any controlled civil aviation zones and is therefore not expected to interfere with aviation operations. No further assessment is required.

#### **Defence Theme – Low Sensitivity**

The subject properties do not fall within any designated military or defence zones. As such, no conflict with national defence interests is anticipated and no further investigation is required.

#### Palaeontology Theme – High Sensitivity

The development proposed is not large scale, mitigation measures can be implemented for the construction phase in the unlikely event that finds are uncovered. No further assessment required.

#### Plant Species Theme – High Sensitivity

This theme overlaps with the Terrestrial Biodiversity Theme. The site is generally in good ecological condition, with intact natural vegetation aside from a pre-existing access track. The vegetation comprises Hangklip Sand Fynbos, a Critically Endangered ecosystem type. Although plant Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) were identified elsewhere on the site, none were recorded within the quarry platform earmarked for development. The proposed dwelling and road extension have been strategically located to limit disturbance to sensitive areas. As a precautionary measure, a search and rescue operation will be conducted prior to construction to relocate any plants of conservation concern within the footprint.

#### Terrestrial Biodiversity Theme – Very High Sensitivity

The botanical assessment confirms that the vegetation on site is mapped as Kogelberg Sandstone Fynbos, which is a Critically Endangered vegetation type under the National Biodiversity Assessment 2018. The site is also included within a Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA1) in the Western Cape Biodiversity Spatial Plan. All of Portion 126 can be considered undisturbed and pristine with plant species of conservation concern identified, except for the two old gravel quarries, which have now naturally rehabilitated to some extent since being quarried some 10-15 years ago. The vegetation in the old quarries is a subset of what is present outside the quarries and is dominated by *Protea repens* and *Leucadendron laureolum*. No plant Species of Conservation Concern (SoCC) occur in the quarries.

## CONCLUSION

The specialist team involved in the project includes:

#### $ightarrow \,$ Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment: Nick Helme Botanical Surveys

The assessment confirms that the vegetation on site is mapped as Kogelberg Sandstone Fynbos, which is a Critically Endangered vegetation type under the National Biodiversity Assessment 2018. The site is also included within a Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA1) in the Western Cape Biodiversity Spatial Plan. All of Portion 126 can be considered undisturbed and pristine with plant species of conservation concern identified, except for the two old gravel quarries, which have now naturally rehabilitated to some extent since being quarried some 10-15yrs ago. The vegetation in the old quarries is a subset of what is present outside the quarries and is dominated by *Protea repens* and *Leucadendron laureolum*. No plant Species of Conservation Concern (SoCC) occur in the quarries.

#### → Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment

Based primarily on vegetation, location in the landscape and to some extent soils, the ground-truthing confirmed the presence of the mapped features but the extent of the hillslope to the south-east of the site in the vicinity of the proposed access route from Clarence Drive to the historic quarry was determined to be less than mapped and also the portion of the mapped hillslope seep immediately east of the graveyard was determined to comprise a channelled valley bottom wetland. Hillslope seeps were also identified either side of the existing access road to the graveyard but these were not delineated as these are not at any risk of being impacted as a result of the proposed development.