



## Site Sensitivity Verification Report

Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat Pty Ltd  
Farm 824, Farm 826 and 887, Caledon RD

May 2023  
Updated October 2024  
Updated May 2025

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## DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

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CLIENT: RUSTY GATE MOUNTAIN RETREAT (PTY) LTD

TITLE: Site Sensitivity Verification Report for the Proposed  
Expansion of Rusty Gate for the Farm 824, Farm 826 and  
Farm 887 Caledon RD , Theewaterskloof

REFERENCE: SSVR/824/826/887/REV 2

REPORT DATE: May 2023 – Updated May 2025

## **STATEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE**

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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

The Site Sensitivity Verification (SSV) Report provides information relating to the various protocols identified in the Screening Tool for the proposed expansion of the Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat (Farm 824, Farm 826 and Farm 887 in Caledon RD). The three farms are located in close proximity to Greyton on the Helderstroom Road, in the Theewaterskloof Municipal area and against the slopes of the Riviersonderend Mountains.

## 2. ACTIVITY

Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat is an existing tourism accommodation offering, located in close proximity to Greyton and Villiersdorp. The farm was initially established in the 1980s as a nursery and apple orchard and seven labourers' cottages were developed for the staff. A shed and main building was also developed at that time for processing. Overtime these were amended to offer self-catering overnight tourism. The applicant purchased the property in June 2019.

There are three Farm properties which are included in the application:

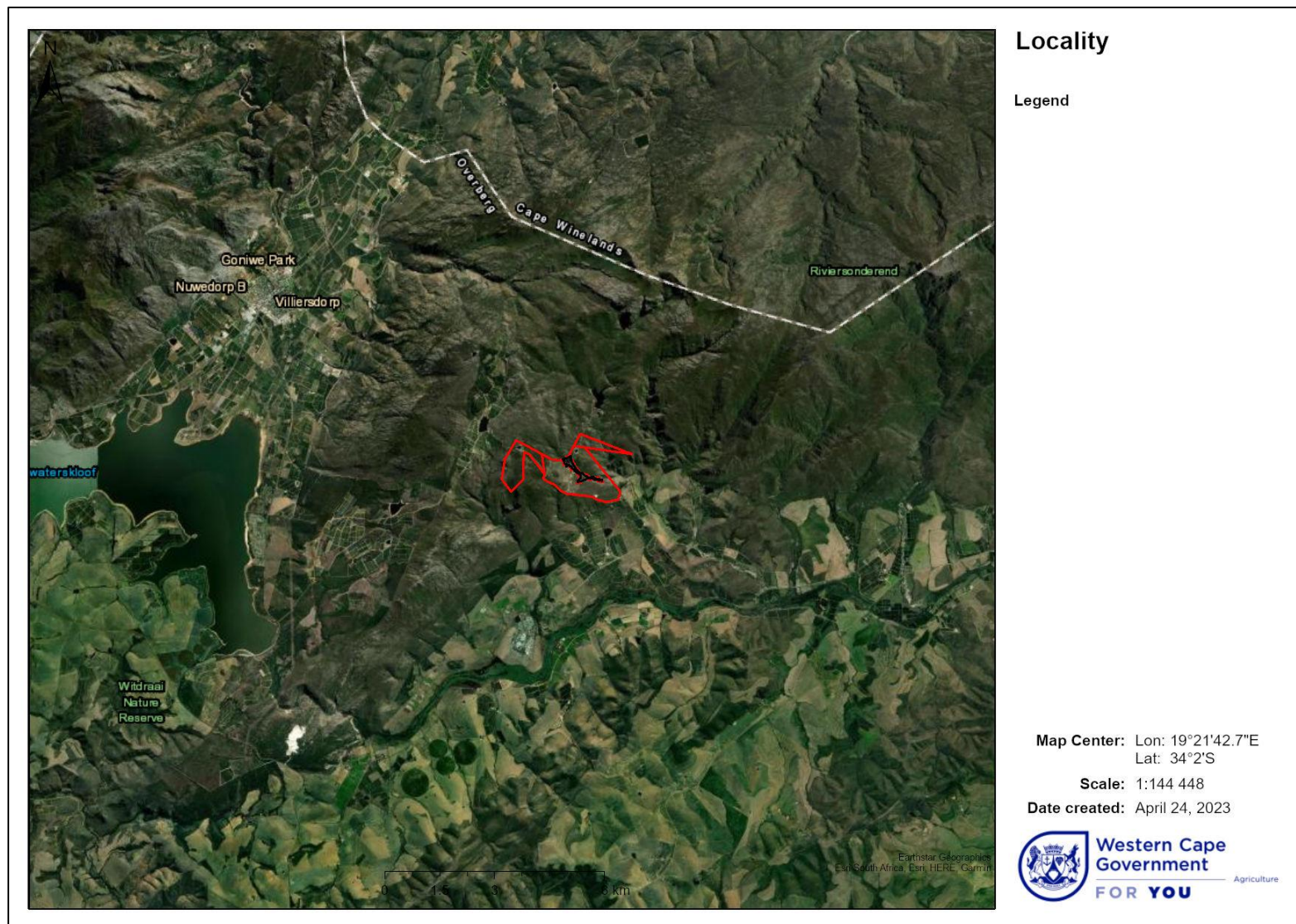
- Farm 824 – 73.14 HA,
- Farm 826 – 190.32 HA
- Farm 887 – 27.79 HA.

The following activities are proposed as per Layout Alternative 3:

	New Development Type	No. of units	Pax	Size per unit	Total Size (m <sup>2</sup> )
2	Main Dwelling	1	6	120	120
3	Camp site (plus internal road)	6	36	225	1600
5	Eco pods	2	4	56	112
7	Eco cabins	2	8	124	248
8	Eco cabins	2	8	124	248
22	Conference facility	1	0	0	150
25	Eco cabins	6	4	124	744
26	Sundowner boma	1	0	0	80
27	Eco pods	2	4	56	112
28	Eco cabin	1	4	124	124
			88		3538

The main activities expected during the construction phase include:

- Minor construction works for the additions and alterations, eco pods and eco cabins will be raised off the ground on stilts. No major foundation work is required for these. Internal access roads already exist.
- Delivery of construction materials
- Storage and / or stockpiling of construction materials
- Mixing and preparation of construction materials



**Figure 1.** Location of Farm 824, Farm 826 and Farm 887, Caledon RD



### 3. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Lornay Environmental Consulting (Pty) Ltd, was appointment by Rusty Gate Mountain Retreat (Pty) Ltd, 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.

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.

### 4. DESKTOP ANALYSIS

The three farms are Farm 824, Farm 826 and Farm 887, located in close proximity to Greyton on the Helderstroom Road, in the Theewaterskloof Municipal area. The majority of the infrastructure is located on Farm 826. Large scale once off events such as mountain bike races or music festivals, are held once to twice per year. All services for this type of use are temporary in nature and brought onto site for the event and then removed again. The eco cabins and eco pods proposed will be raised off the ground on stilts, with minimal foundations for the footings. Parking areas for each unit will be in the form of a designated bruschcut area, in order to lime vegetation removal. Most the of the eco cabins and eco pods are located within the old orchards. The preferred alternative sees all new proposed development to be located more than 32 m from the edge of any watercourses. The proposed camp sites require limited disturbance or preparation except for the ablution and kitchen facilities which will be formalised structures.

### 5. SITE ASSESSMENT

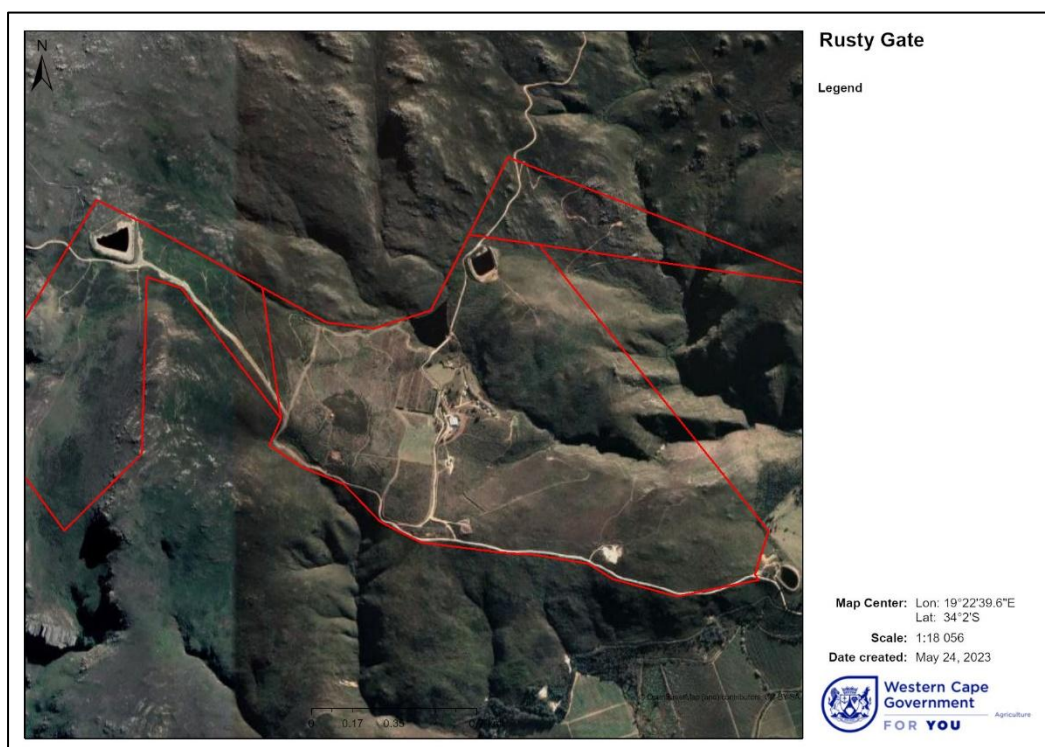
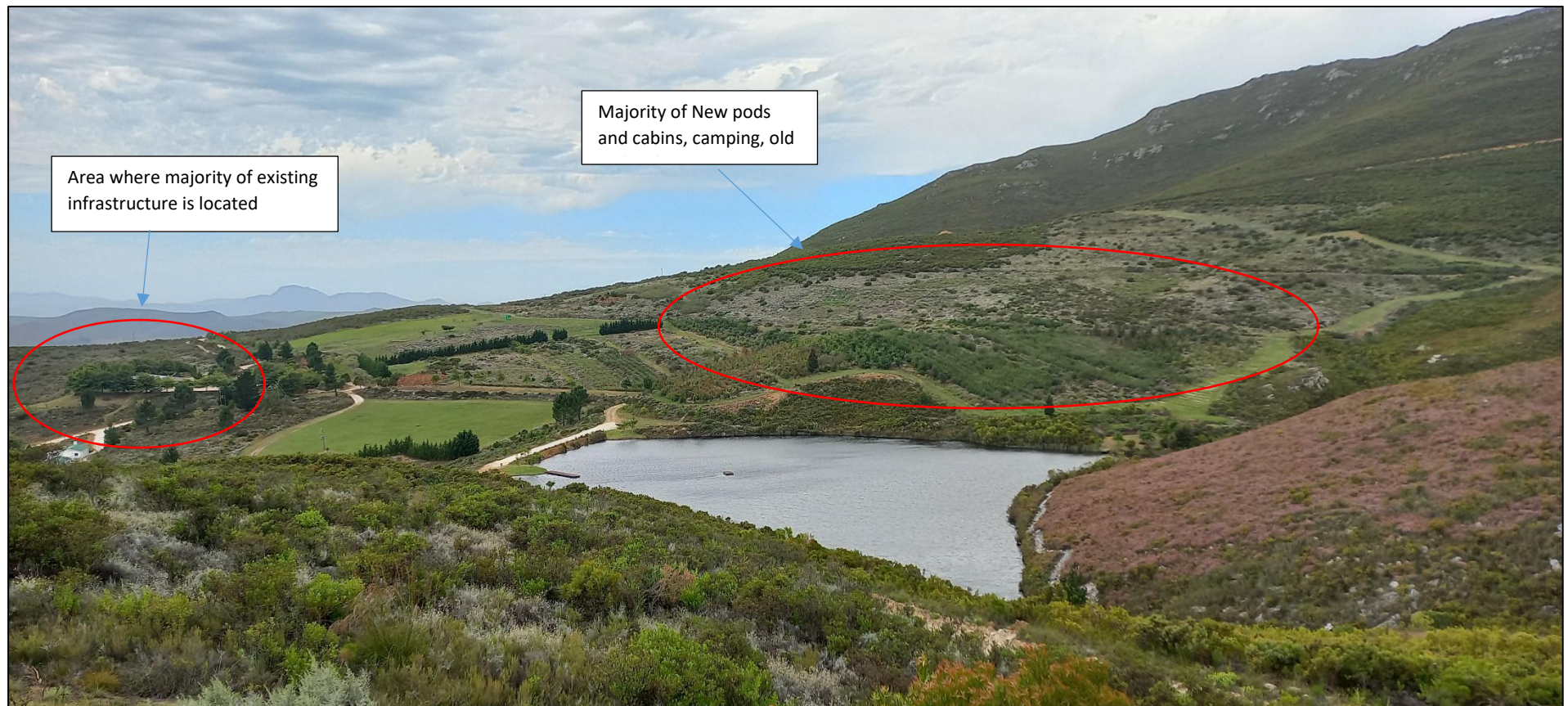
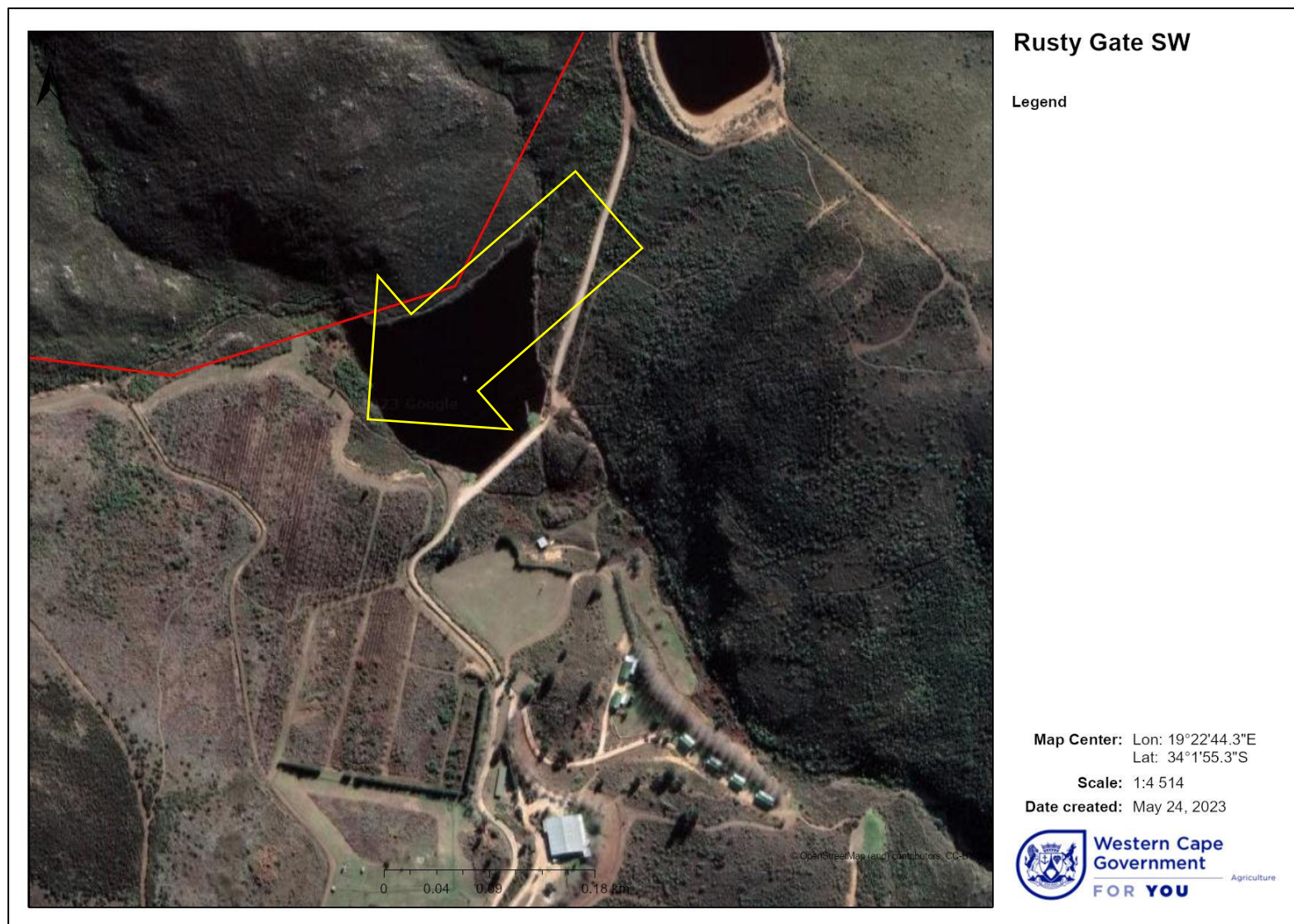


Figure 1. Aerial view of applicable properties



**Photo 1.** Photo looking towards the south west, as per the aerial image below.





**Photo 3.** Aerial map indicating where the photo was taken from, note the old orchards and disturbed areas.

## 6. APPLICABILITY OF RECOMMENDED SPECIALIST STUDIES

The DEA Screening Tool was applied to the proposal and subject properties. The following themes and protocols were identified as applicable:

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

The following specialists were identified in the Screening Tool relative to the Themes above:

*Landscape / Visual Impact Assessment* – the proposal involves the minor clearance of vegetation and expansion of existing tourism overnight. The proposal entails small eco cabins which are predominantly located on transformed areas and old agricultural land and are designed to blend into the environment. The units will also be raised. A Notice of Intent to Develop was submitted to Heritage Western Cape and in response to comment received a full Heritage Impact Assessment with Archaeological Impact Assessment and Palaeontological Impact Assessment was undertaken. Heritage Western Cape confirmed in their letter dated 18/07/2024, that the HIA is endorsed, and no further actions are required in this theme (Appendix E). No further action or assessment required.

*Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment* – A Notice of Intent to Develop was submitted to Heritage Western Cape and in response to comment received a full Heritage Impact Assessment with Archaeological Impact Assessment and Palaeontological Impact Assessment was undertaken. Heritage Western Cape confirmed in their letter dated 18/07/2024, that the HIA is endorsed, and no further actions are required in this theme (Appendix E). No further action of assessment required.

*Palaeontology impact assessment* – A Notice of Intent to Develop was submitted to Heritage Western Cape and in response to comment received a full Heritage Impact Assessment with Archaeological Impact Assessment and Palaeontological Impact Assessment was undertaken. Heritage Western Cape confirmed in their letter dated 18/07/2024, that the HIA is endorsed, and no further actions are required in this theme (Appendix E). No further action of assessment required.

*Terrestrial Impact Assessment* – A Terrestrial Impact and Plant species assessment has been undertaken. Findings from this assessment resulted in changes to the initial site plan and evolution of alternatives.

*Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment* – A Aquatic Biodiversity Assessment was undertaken. Some of the proposed expansion sites were found to fall within 32m of watercourses or regulated zones, however the preferred alternative sees all new proposed activities located outside 32m of any applicable watercourses. Therefore, even though this has been identified as high, the mitigation of shifting the development outside of the 32m buffer zones, negates the requirements for further Aquatic specialist input. The Risk Matrix as required in terms of the National Water Act, was undertaken and the conclusion was that a LOW risk is applicable, as such a General Authorisation for 21c&l is applicable and will commence in due course.

*Socio-Economic Impact Assessment* – The expansion of the Rusty Gate tourism offering is not significantly different to what already takes place on the property. Socio-Economic impacts are expected to be positive through the provision of skills transfer and jobs during the planning, design, construction and operational

phases. In addition, the positive spin off for local spending and tourism for the greater Villiersdorp and Greyton areas is significant. Rusty Gate hosts once off, daily large scale events such as trails running, mountain bike races and music festivals and these once off events attract large numbers of tourists the area.

*Plant Species Assessment* – A Terrestrial Impact and Plant species assessment has been undertaken. Findings from this assessment resulted in changes to the initial site plan and evolution of alternatives.

*Animal species assessment* – A Animal Species Assessment was undertaken. The alternative layouts evolved in response to findings in this assessment where locations of units were shifted to avoid habitat of species of conservation concern. The findings of the report also offer opportunities at Rusty Gate for Ecotourism relative to the species recorded on site and vast open space remaining. The Animal Species report was updated to full impact assessment in April 2025.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

Based on the information above and the proposed development, the following assessments were conducted:

1. Agricultural Assessment
  2. Terrestrial / Ecological Assessment
  3. Heritage Assessment
  4. Archaeological Assessment
  5. Palaeontological Assessment
  6. Aquatic / Freshwater Assessment
  7. Faunal / Animal Species Assessment
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