



**LORNAY**

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING

## **SITE SENSITIVITY VERIFICATION REPORT (SSVR)**

Unauthorised Clearance of Indigenous Vegetation on Portion 7 of the  
Farm Rietfontein No. 259, Caledon RD

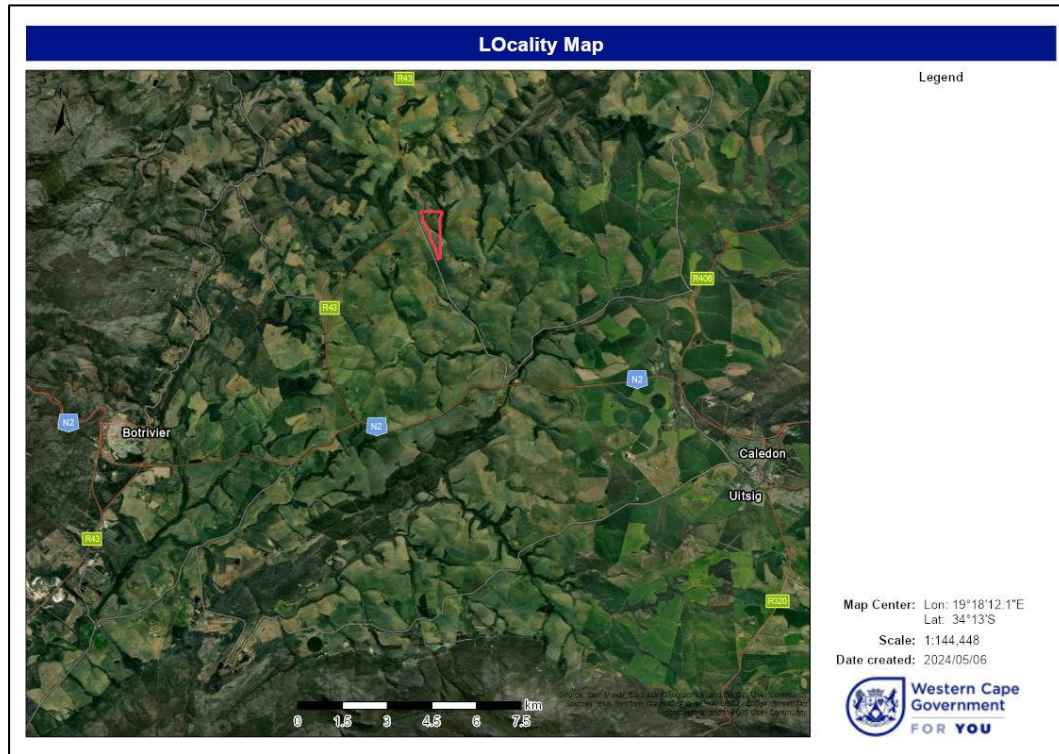
**May 2025**

**Compiled by:**

Lornay Environmental Consulting (Pty) Ltd

## INTRODUCTION

This application concerns the unauthorized clearance of indigenous vegetation for establishment of new cultivation area on Portion 7 of the Farm Rietfontein No. 259, Caledon RD. Approximately 1.67 ha of indigenous vegetation was cleared to facilitate the establishment of the cultivated area. This action was undertaken without the requisite Environmental Authorization, resulting in the disturbance of indigenous vegetation and the alteration of the natural landscape.



**Figure 1.** Locality of subject property

The preliminary layout alternative is as follows and was assessed by all specialists.



**Figure 2.** Alternative 2 (preferred) – proposed site plan for the residential development

#### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Lornay Environmental Consulting (Pty) Ltd, was appointed to undertake the required Environmental Authorisation (EA) application process in terms of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, 2014 (as amended) promulgated under the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (No. 107 of 1998; NEMA), for the proposed project.

Based on the classification selected and the known impacts with the proposed development, the Screening Tool lists the following specialist assessments to be included in the BAR process and / or motivation as to why these specialists are not applicable to the site

- 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

**Table 1:** Environmental Sensitivities on the property

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			

**Agricultural Theme (High Sensitivity)**

The Screening Tool report identifies the site as having a High Agricultural Sensitivity, primarily due to its location within an area characterized by extensive agricultural land use. The subject property is situated within a broader agricultural zone, with adjacent properties actively engaged in agricultural production. The unauthorised clearance of indigenous vegetation occurred within cultivated areas designated for agricultural development, aligning with the overarching land-use practices in the region. Given the agricultural context and the existing land use designation, the activity undertaken are consistent with the property's primary use. Therefore, no further agricultural assessment is deemed necessary.

**Animal Species Theme (High Sensitivity)**

The Animal Species Theme is classified as High Sensitivity, which typically indicates the potential for the presence of significant fauna or habitats essential for the conservation of specific animal species. However, a site inspection undertaken by the EAP confirmed that the site along with its surrounding context supports the motivation that the unauthorised clearance for cultivation occurred within a landscape primarily characterised by agricultural activities, with limited ecological functionality for supporting sensitive animal species due to fragmentation of the existing natural areas. No further assessment required.

**Aquatic Biodiversity Theme (Very High Sensitivity)**

The Aquatic Biodiversity Compliance Statement was conducted by Delta Ecology. The report indicated that there were no rivers, or natural / artificial wetlands within the cleared area. Surrounding the area cleared of vegetation are various watercourses located downstream; a northern drainage line is located 51 m away, with an associated CVB wetland, which lies 90 m away. Both watercourses are separated by dense natural terrestrial vegetation. To the east, a CVB wetland is located 100 m from the cleared area, with a buffer comprising an agricultural field and natural vegetation. No further assessment is required.

**Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Theme (High Sensitivity)**

The unauthorised clearance of indigenous vegetation occurred within an area designated as Agricultural Zone 1, a zoning specifically intended for agricultural purposes. This classification indicates that the land use is aligned with the primary function of agriculture, including activities such as cultivation. The surrounding area is characterised by extensive agricultural transformation, with significant portions of the landscape already converted to intensive farming operations. This historical and ongoing agricultural activity has influenced the cultural and environmental context of the region, resulting in a landscape where natural features and indigenous vegetation have been systematically altered to support farming practices.

Although the Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Theme is rated as having high sensitivity, it is essential to consider that the specific area in question forms part of an established agricultural landscape. The NHRA (Act 25 of 2008) is not applicable to the proposed development:

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<sup>2</sup> in extent; or
  - (ii) involving three or more 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<sup>2</sup> 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.

Given this and the transformed site and surroundings, no further Heritage Impact Assessment is required.

#### **Civil Aviation Theme (Medium Sensitivity)**

The proposed site is located within Agricultural Zone 1, which aligns with the current agricultural land use in the area. Given the established agricultural context, there are no anticipated impacts on civil aviation operations or air traffic. Since the land is already designated for agricultural purposes and does not interfere with aviation infrastructure or regulations, no further assessment is deemed necessary.

#### **Defence Theme (Low Sensitivity)**

No impacts on defence related activities are anticipated, as the proposed development site is situated within an agricultural zone. Given that the area does not intersect with any defence zones or areas of high strategic importance, no further assessment is required for this theme.

#### **Palaeontology Theme (Very High Sensitivity)**

The proposed development site is located within Agricultural Zone 1, a designation that aligns with ongoing agricultural activities in the area. As the land is actively used for farming, the natural features and geological strata in the region have already been significantly altered by agricultural practices. Based on the existing land use and transformation of the landscape, no further palaeontological assessment is considered necessary for this application.

#### **Plant Species Theme (Medium Sensitivity)**

A Botanical Assessment was conducted on site by Nick Helme Botanical Surveys. According to the SA Vegetation Map there is only one original natural vegetation type in the study area – Western Ruens Shale Renosterveld which is gazetted as critically endangered. Approximately 6ha of remaining natural vegetation in the study area ranges from poor to pristine condition, with degradation caused by proximity to production lands and associated high levels of fertiliser and pesticide runoff, which encourages invasion of alien grasses. No plant Species of Conservation Concern (SoCC) were recorded in the ripped areas during the survey. However, two SoCC were recorded within 200m in the remaining Renosterveld areas.

#### **Terrestrial Biodiversity Theme (Very High Sensitivity)**

Given the existing agricultural land use and the nature of the site, which has already undergone significant transformation, the terrestrial biodiversity of the area has been substantially altered. The Botanical Assessment

indicate that while the site is home to critically endangered Renosterveld vegetation, the landscape has already been impacted by agriculture, particularly through fertilization, pesticide use, and the invasion of alien species.

#### **Specialist Assessments Identified by Screening Tool**

##### **Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment:**

Given the agricultural context and the transformation of the landscape, this assessment will not be included as part of the environmental impact evaluation. No further assessment required.

##### **Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment:**

As the land has already undergone significant agricultural modification, the likelihood of impacting undiscovered archaeological or cultural heritage is very low or negligible. In terms of the NHRA, the activities did not trigger the need to submit an application to Heritage Western Cape. No further assessment required.

##### **Palaeontological Impact Assessment:**

As indicated above, the site has already been impacted. No further assessment required.

##### **Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment:**

This assessment was conducted and incorporated on the Botanical Assessment report, see Appendix F1.

##### **Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment:**

As confirmed in the Aquatic Biodiversity Compliance Statement, there are no watercourses or wetlands affected by the activity occurred on site. No further specialist assessment is required.

##### **Socio-Economic Impact Assessment:**

The proposed activity is expected to yield positive socio-economic benefits for the community, with no negative impacts identified. No further specialist input required.

##### **Plant Species Assessment:**

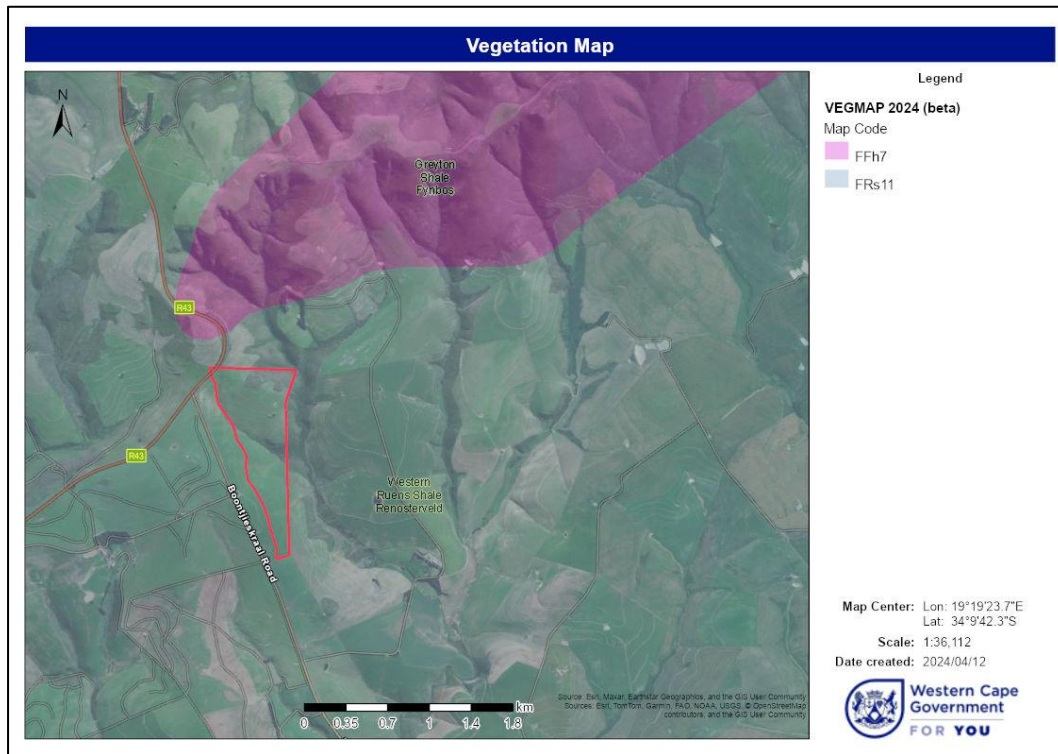
This assessment is covered by the Botanical Assessment report, refer to Appendix F1.

##### **Animal Species Assessment:**

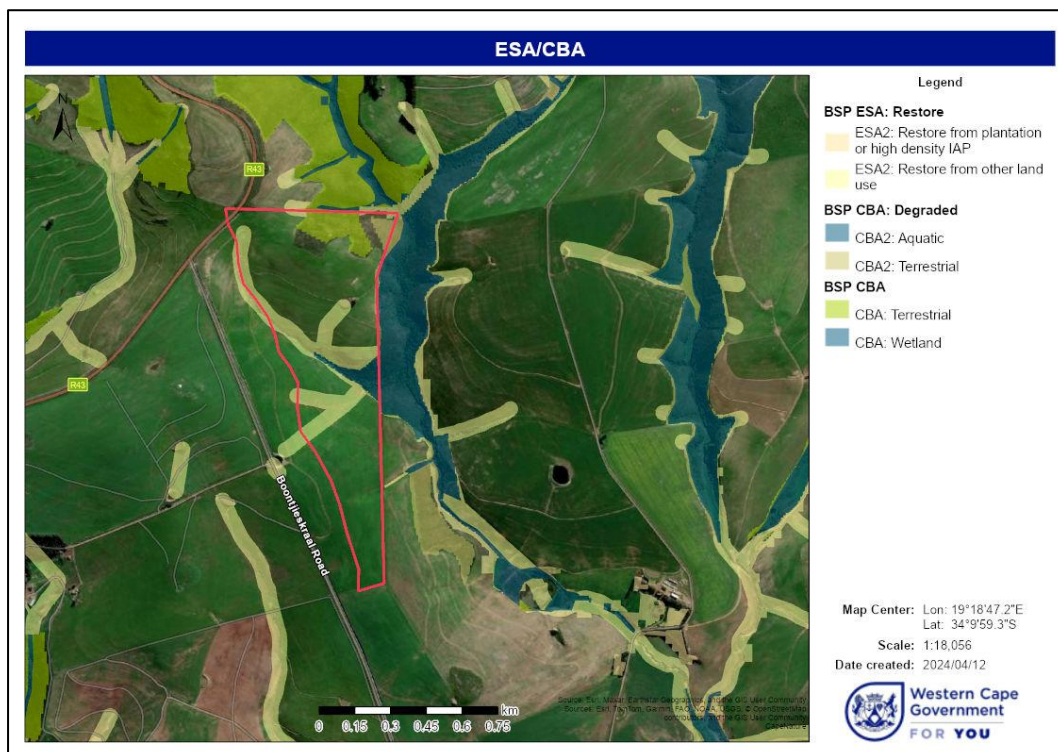
This assessment will not be undertaken, given the existing agricultural land use and nature of the site, which has already undergone transformation. The area is characterised by transformation due to agricultural activities taking place in the area. The animal species assessment is disputed to very low to negligible. Therefore, no further assessment required.



## PRELIMINARY SITE ASSESSMENT



**Figure 3:** Vegetation type associated with the subject property.



**Figure 4:** CBA/ ESA Mapping associated with the subject property.

## CONCLUSION

The following specialists were appointed:

- **Aquatic/Freshwater Specialist:** The Freshwater specialist was consulted to compile a compliance statement regarding the possible watercourses or wetland on site. The report determined that there were no rivers, or natural / artificial wetlands within the cleared area. Surrounding the area cleared of vegetation are various watercourses located downstream; a northern drainage line is located 51 m away, with an associated CVB wetland, which lies 90 m away. Both watercourses are separated by dense natural terrestrial vegetation. To the east, a CVB wetland is located 100 m from the cleared area, with a buffer comprising an agricultural field and natural vegetation. No further assessment is required.
- **Terrestrial/Botanical Specialist:** A comprehensive Botanical Assessment was conducted by Nick Helme Botanical Surveys on the proposed site. The study area is dominated by Western Ruens Shale Renosterveld, a critically endangered vegetation type according to the South African Vegetation Map. Approximately 6ha of natural vegetation remains in the study area, ranging from poor to pristine condition. This remaining vegetation has been affected by agricultural activities in the surrounding areas, with high levels of fertilizer and pesticide runoff contributing to the invasion of alien grasses. While no plant species of conservation concern (SoCC) were recorded within the disturbed areas, two SoCC were observed in the remaining Renosterveld areas, located within 200 meters of the disturbed site. Given the already altered nature of the land, no further significant impacts on plant species are anticipated from the proposed development. Therefore, the botanical assessment and mitigation measures are considered sufficient.

Kind regards,



**MICHELLE NAYLOR**