

# ANNEXURE I 2: SITE SENSITIVITY VERIFICATION REPORT

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## SITE SENSITIVITY VERIFICATION REPORT FOR THE PROPOSED TOWNSHIP DEVELOPMENT ON PORTION 28 OF FARM NO. 468, STELLENBOSCH, WESTERN CAPE.

### INTRODUCTION

This Site Sensitivity Verification (SSV) Report forms part of the Basic Assessment Process that will be undertaken for the proposed township development on Portion 27 of Farm No. 468 Stellenbosch, Western Cape. Uniqon (Pty) Ltd, the proponent, intends to develop a township that includes, a mixed-use of education, businesses, and residential units.

Portion 28 of Farm No. 468 is adjacent to the Lynedoch Township and is zoned "agriculture" in the Stellenbosch Zoning Map. Apart from a very small patch of indigenous vegetation (rocky outcrop which is unsuitable for agriculture) on the Western corner of the property and two open patches along the southern property border (unsuitable for agriculture), the whole property has been transformed for agriculture (vineyards and pastures). The vegetation on site is mapped as Swartland Granite Renosterveld (critical endangered ecosystem), however 99% of the property and adjacent properties has been transformed for agriculture and contains no natural vegetation. A small portion of the property is indicated as a Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA) however this is where the farmhouse is located. This CBA was mapped incorrectly as it contains no natural vegetation.

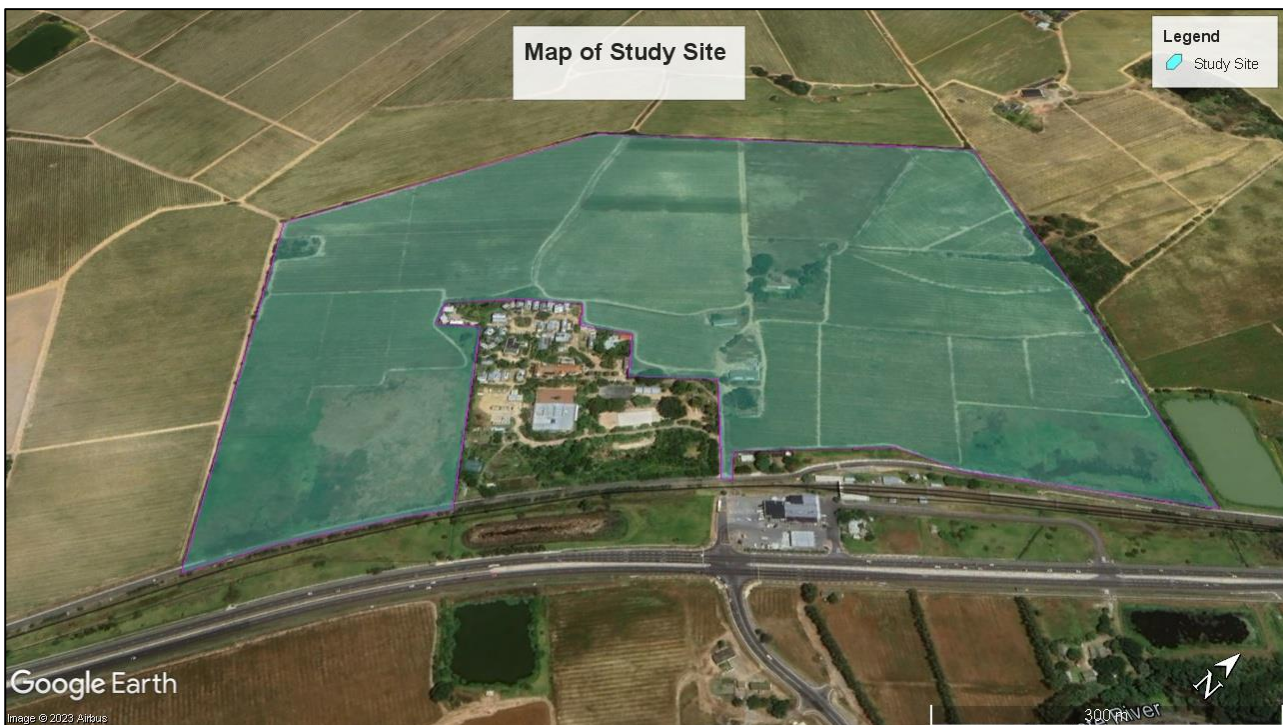


Figure 1: Satellite Image of the Study Site dated 9 July 2021, taken from Google Earth.

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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 the NEMA, when applying for Environmental Authorisation" ("the Protocols") (Government Notice No. 320 as published in Government Gazette No. 43110 on 20 March 2020) apply to the proposed development. This SSV Report has been compiled in line with these Protocols and will be attached to the Basic Assessment Report (BAR).

This SSV Report addresses the findings of the Screening Tool Report (Appended hereto), generated from the National Web-Based Environmental Screening Tool, and motivates the various specialist studies identified to be conducted. It also discusses whether the specialist studies forming part of this project are required to comply with the above Protocol.

## FINDINGS

The Screening Tool Report revealed that the proposed development site has a very high sensitivity from an Agricultural, Aquatic Biodiversity and Terrestrial Biodiversity Theme perspective, a high sensitivity from an Animal and Civil Aviation Theme perspective, a medium sensitivity from Defence and Palaeontology Theme perspective and a low sensitivity from an Archaeological and Cultural Heritage, and Plant Species Theme perspective.

Please see the discussion below on whether the findings of the site visit agree with or dispute the findings of the Screening Tool Report.

### *Agriculture Theme (Very High Sensitivity):*

Agrees with the findings of the Screening Tool Report. The site is located within the Cape Winelands Region, an area known globally for its wine exports. The land capability (viticulture) is indicated as Very High across most of the property. The current productivity potential of the farm and the potential impact of the proposed development on surrounding agriculture activities are currently unknown. An Agricultural Impact Assessment is proposed.

### *Animal Species Theme (High sensitivity):*

Disagrees with the findings of the Screening Tool Report. The list of species indicated, are very unlikely to occur or be impacted by the proposed development. The rating should be low sensitivity. The bird *Hydroprogne caspia* (Caspian Tern, "Reusesterretjie") is common along the coast of the region and generally prefers sheltered bays, estuaries, and large inland water bodies (Hockey et al. 2005). It is highly unlikely that this species will be present in this transformed agricultural landscape. The bird *Pelecanus onocrotalus* (Great White Pelican) inhabit estuaries, lagoons, coastal bays, shallow lakes, and floodplain pans where they feed on fish. They are known to be nomadic, moving vast distances in response to environmental conditions (Kemper et al. 2007). It is highly unlikely that they would be present in this transformed agricultural landscape. The Beetle *Pachysoma Aesculapius* has a distribution from Cape Town to the mouth of the Olifants River. The Southern Populations (Somerset West, Cape Flats, Salt River) are possibly now extinct as the most recent collection was in 1987. The species prefer firm sand on coastal hummocks, riverbanks, and vegetated dunes (Harrison et al. 2003). It is highly unlikely this species would be found in a transformed agricultural landscape. The Katydid *Conocephalus peringueyi* (Peringuey's Meadow Katydid) are found at high altitudes of the mountains within the Fynbos region and have only been recorded at six locations (Uvarov 1928). It is highly unlikely that this species will be found in a transformed agricultural landscape at a low elevation. The grasshopper *Bullacris obliqua* (Bladder Grasshopper) has a fragmented distribution across the fynbos region, which consist of several very small sub-populations that is unlikely to be connected to each other due to flight-less females. The shrub *Eriocephalus africanus* (wild rosemary) is the only confirmed

host plant of this species (Dirsh 1965). It is highly unlikely that this species will be found in a transformed agricultural landscape that does not contain its host plant species. The grasshopper *Aneuryphymus montanus* (Yellow-winged Agile Grasshopper) are known from six localities in the Cape Fynbos region. This species is associated with fynbos vegetation and prefer south-facing slopes of evergreen Sclerophyll (woody plant with small leathery leaves) at rocky foothills (Brown 1960). This species is highly unlikely to be found at an east-facing slope within a transformed agricultural landscape. The extent of the distribution of the beetle *Frankenbergerius opacus* is unknown as only one sample has been recorded (Stellenbosch in 1949). Species from the genus *Frankenbergerius* have however only been found in areas which contain dense vegetation in association with litter and decomposing plant matter. Several records imply a close association with mushrooms (Frolov & Scholtz 2005). Due to its rarity and known habitat, it is highly unlikely that this species will be found in a transformed agricultural landscape.

No animals were observed during the site visit or reported by the farm workers. Due to the transformed landscape it's safe to assume that the site is unlikely to contain species that are sensitive to the transformation of habitat/ development. If animal species were to be found on-site, it would be very likely that they are adapted to changes in the environment, and therefore would be resilient to the transformation of habitat/ development.

*Aquatic Biodiversity Theme (Very High sensitivity):*

Disagrees with the findings of the Screening Tool Report. The reason for the high sensitivity rating is because the site is located within a Strategic Water Source area. The proposed development would however have no impact on water resources within the area. The impact rating should be negligible as no water resources/ watercourses/ wetlands/ estuaries were observed during the site visit.

*Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Theme (Low sensitivity):*

Agrees with the findings of the Screening Tool Report. The Site is not located close to any graded Heritage sites. No Archaeological findings are expected to be found at the site. The site is however listed as located along a scenic route and in a sensitive landscape character area in the Stellenbosch Municipality Heritage Survey.

*Civil Aviation Theme (High sensitivity):*

Disagrees with the findings of the Screening Tool Report. The proposed development will not have any impact of civil aviation as it won't contain any high structures. The impact rating should be negligible.

*Defence Theme (Medium sensitivity):*

Disagrees with the findings of the Screening Tool Report. The site is not located close to any site or strategic infrastructure that potentially poses a threat to national security. The proposed development will have no impact on national defence. The impact rating should be negligible.

*Palaeontology Theme (Medium sensitivity):*

Disagrees with the finding of the Screening Tool Report. The screening tool report indicates that the site has a medium sensitivity for palaeontological features, meaning that the site might contain paleontological features. The site however borders the township of Lynedoch, where several excavations were done during the construction of buildings and other infrastructure. No palaeontological features were recorded during past excavations. It can therefore be established that if the area contained palaeontological features, it would have been found already. A low sensitivity would be a more realistic impact rating.

*Plant Species Theme (low sensitivity):*

Agrees with the findings of the Screening Tool Report. Although Swartland Granite Renosterveld vegetation is indicated, the site has been heavily transformed by Agriculture activities and practically no natural vegetation remains (very small rocky outcrop). The proposed development will have no impact on indigenous vegetation in the vicinity of the study site.

*Terrestrial Biodiversity Theme (very high sensitivity):*

Disagrees with the findings of the Screening Tool Report. The reason for the high sensitivity is because the site contains a Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA), is an Ecological Support Area (ESA), is Critically endangered ecosystem and within a Strategic Water Source Area. As mentioned earlier, the area indicated as a CBA is where the farmhouse is located (no natural vegetation). The data used for the mapping must either be outdated or applied incorrectly. As there are effectively no natural vegetation remaining on the site and it is surrounded by cultivated fields, the site provides very little ecological support. This description is therefore outdated. As mentioned above, the proposed development will not have any impact on the water sources in the area. The description of a strategic water source area is therefore not applicable. The area is indicated to contain Swartland Granite Renosterveld, which is a critically endangered ecosystem. We know however that this is a relic description, as effectively no natural vegetation remains on site and immediate surroundings due the landscape being transformed for agricultural activities. The description of a critically endangered ecosystem is therefore not applicable. Since the reasons for the high sensitivity of the Terrestrial Biodiversity Theme are not an accurate description of the current state of the biodiversity on site, the impact rating should be updated to low sensitivity.

## **DISCUSSION**

Based on the findings of the sensitivities that were assessed, the Screening Tool Report recommends the following ten specialist assessments:

1. Agricultural Impact Assessment
2. Landscape/ Visual Impact Assessment
3. Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment
4. Palaeontology Impact Assessment
5. Terrestrial Biodiversity Impacts Assessment
6. Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment
7. Hydrological Assessment
8. Socio-Economic Assessment
9. Plant Species Assessment
10. Animal Species Assessment

Based on the desktop analysis and ground-truthing (site sensitivity verification) of the findings of Screening Tool Report, the following specialist studies are recommended and should be appended to the BAR:

1. Agriculture Impact Assessment
2. Landscape/ Visual Impact Assessment
3. Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment
4. Socio-Economic Assessment

In addition to the above-mentioned recommended specialist studies, A Traffic Impact Assessment (UDS Africa) and a Civil Engineering Services Report (UDS Africa) will be prepared by the project's

engineering team, which will be appended to the BAR. There are a few possible impacts that have been identified and assessed by the EAP and will be included in the BAR for the project.

Other than the recommend specialist studies and the impacts identified and assessed by the EAP, the other specialist studies suggested by the Screening Tool Report are not considered to be required for this study. As per the EIA Regulations, a motivation is outlined below:

<b>Specialist Investigation:</b>	<b>Recommended: Y/N</b>	<b>Explanation:</b>
Agricultural Impact Assessment	Yes	As discussed, the site has an apparent very high sensitivity for Agricultural Land Capability. An application will also need to be submitted at the Department of Agriculture as the proposed development triggers one in terms of the relevant Agriculture Legislation. An Agricultural Impact Assessment would need to be submitted along with the application.
Landscape/ Visual Impact Assessment	Yes	An application will need to be submitted at Heritage Western Cape (HWC) as the proposed development triggers one in terms of the relevant Heritage Legislation. A Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) would need to be submitted along with the application.
Archaeological/ Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment	Yes	An application will need to be submitted at Heritage Western Cape (HWC) as the proposed development triggers one in terms of the relevant Heritage Legislation. A Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment would need to be submitted along with the application.
Palaeontology Impact Assessment	No	As discussed, there are no Palaeontological features expected to be found on the site (low sensitivity). Unless HWC specifically requests one, a Palaeontology Impact Assessment won't be required.
Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment	No	As discussed, effectively no natural vegetation remains on the site and the immediate surrounding area. The proposed development is expected to have very little impact on the Terrestrial Biodiversity of the area (low sensitivity). A Terrestrial Impact Assessment won't be required.
Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment	No	As discussed, no water resources/ watercourses/ wetlands/ estuaries were observed during the site visit. The proposed development is expected to have no impact on the Aquatic Biodiversity of the area (should be negligible). An Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment won't be required.
Hydrological Assessment	No	As discussed, no water resources/ watercourses/ wetlands/ estuaries were observed during the site visit. The proposed development is expected to have very little impact on the Hydrology of the area (low sensitivity). A Hydrological Assessment won't be required.
Socio-Economic Assessment	Yes	The transition of land use type from Agricultural to residential and urban uses is expected to have an opportunity cost and could have a socio-economic impact. A Socio-Economic Impact Report would be required to address the needs and desirability of the

		proposed development.
Plant Species Assessment	No	The Screening Tool Report and the ground truthing reveal that the site has a low sensitivity for the plant species theme, as effectively no natural vegetation remains on site. A Plant Species Assessment won't be required.
Animal Species Assessment	No	As discussed, the sensitive species listed in the Screening Tool Report are not expected to be found at the study site (low sensitivity). The habitat of the listed species does not match the current habitat state of the study site. An animal species assessment would not be required.

The specialist studies undertaken for this project are required to comply with either the above protocols or with the requirements of Appendix 6 of NEMA EIA Regulations of 2014 (as amended). However, it is understood that this does not apply to the Traffic Impact Assessment and the Civil Engineering Services Report.

This SSV will be appended to the Basic Assessment Report for the aforementioned project.

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