

PROPOSED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT: ERF 360 MCGREGOR



Figure 1: View along Buitekant Street with the vines of Erf 360 on the right and the Langeberg Mountains in the distance. A small residential township and school have been built in on the south east side of this road in recent years

PHASE ONE HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT CASE NO: 130530JW35E

Prepared in compliance with **Section 38(8)** of the National Heritage
Resources Act (No 25 of 1999)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The assessment that has been carried out indicates that the proposed housing development, related facilities and infrastructure will have an impact on the townscape of McGregor. Should the heritage related design indicators however act as a major informant of the formulation of the Site Development Plan this impact can be ameliorated and conservation objectives can be met.

1. BACKGROUND

Following various studies undertaken for the Langeberg Municipality a number of sites within the municipal area where affordable housing schemes could be developed were identified. Erf 360 McGregor was one of these and the Council resolved to acquire the property to accommodate families on the municipal housing waiting list and families living in an informal settlement established on the floodplain of the Hoekrivier.

In compliance with the provisions of the National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998) a Basic Assessment Report (BAR) for the proposed development is being prepared by EcoImpact environmental consultants. Various specialists have been appointed to conduct studies.

As the redevelopment of the property involves the rezoning of a site more than 10 000m² in extent, Aikman Associates: Heritage Management was appointed by EcoImpact to make application to the provincial heritage authority, Heritage Western Cape (HWC) in terms of section 38(8) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act No.25 of 1999) (NHR Act).

A Notification of Intent to Develop (NID) form was submitted by EcoImpact to HWC and on 5 June 2013 then issued their Interim Comment stating that a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) was required consisting of:

- A visual impact study including the comments of the McGregor Heritage Society and consultation with the communities, which investigates all heritage resources related matters including photographs of all existing structures on site as well as well as an indication of whether the site falls within or outside the urban edge.
- Sketch plans and layouts of the proposed housing units should be submitted to ascertain the architectural design and aesthetics of the proposed development which should not detract from the existing heritage resources.

2. METHODOLOGY

The programme consisting of the preparation of this Phase 1 HIA where heritage related indicators have been developed to inform the formulation of a Site development Plan for Erf 360, has involved meetings with the project team, members of McGregor Heritage Society, a site inspection and an analysis of aerial photographs, plans and other documentation. Some archival research was undertaken and use was made of relevant and easily available published and unpublished material.

A visual impact assessment (VIA) is being independently undertaken by UDA Western Cape Architects and Urban Designers and will form part of the HIA and environmental process.

Henry Aikman who undertook this study is an architect and accredited member of the Association of Professional Heritage Practitioners (APHP).

3. SITE AND SETTING

Erf 360 abuts Buitekant Street, which as the name suggests is the outer street of the original 1862 rectangular 8x4 grid of the village.



Figure 2: Erf 360 lies to the south east of the village of McGregor and abuts Buitekant Street. The dams seen in the bottom left hand corner provide potable and “leiwater” to the village



Figure 3: Olives are produced on the farm on the south western boundary of Erf 360. The floodplain of the Hoeksrivier forms the farm’s eastern boundary. A small township was established in the 1980s on the eastern side of Buitekant Street on a triangular portion of ground seen at the top right hand corner of the picture

There were only a few isolated dwellings on the village side of the southern end of Buitekant Street until as McGregor's popularity grew as a destination for second homes and as a quiet centre for retirement and lifestyle change. Some substantial dwellings have been erected over the last decade but the architects have all followed the McGregor Building Guidelines published in 2005 and all express the Cape vernacular tradition.¹



Figure 4: One of the older dwellings on Buitekant Street. Note the water furrow that still provides water for gardening and in this case vegetable growing



Figure 5: Dwelling on the corner of Buitekant and Tindall Street restored by the McGregor Heritage Society



Figure 6: One of the more substantial dwellings on Buitekant Street built in the last decade but following vernacular architectural traditions

¹ The Heritage of McGregor: A Unique Village: Some Building Guidelines. 2005. McGregor Heritage Society



Figure 7: Another dwelling built in the last decade



Figure 8: New dwelling on Buitekant Street



Figure 9: Die Byekorf Cresh sited on a triangular plot on the northern boundary of Erf 360 and lower side of Buitekant Street



Figure 10: Dwellings on Buitenkant Street with Hartzenberg Street on the right



Figure 11: View up Buitekant Street with Hartzenberg Street on the left and fairly dense residential development on the right



Figure 12: Hartzenberg Street provides access to a crescent of dwellings with a park at its centre

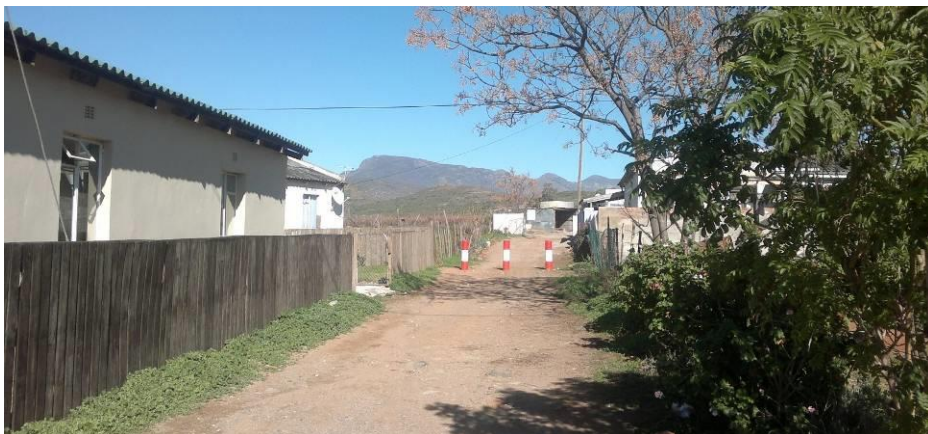


Figure 13: This lane terminates against the boundary of Erf 360

4. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Fransen states that the establishment of McGregor unlike many other Cape villages was not as a “kerkdorp” but as... “*an act of unadulterated speculation*”.² He suggests that with Robertson only 25km away there was really no need for a church when a new congregation was founded in the district in 1861. He maintains that it was apparently the prospect of a new road through the mountains from this area to Greyton and the prospect of business opportunities that led to its establishment. A grid of three by eight almost square blocks of about 25000m² was set out and sold to local farmers with the

² FRANSEN, H. 2006. Old Towns and Villages of the Cape. Jonathan Ball. Pg. 260

intention that this land could in due course be subdivided and sold off to people hoping to make a living in the soon to be bustling village. Although work commenced on the construction of the road, it was soon abandoned. He points out that unlike many Cape villages and towns no provision was made for a church and that when one was eventually built in 1901 it had to be accommodated on a corner of the central street in the village (now Voortrekker Street).

He puts forward that the abandonment of the McGregor to Greyton mountain pass probably led to the village being...*"the best preserved of all 19th Century gridiron towns in the Cape."*

Growth was extremely slow and even by 1990 when the aerial photograph shown in Figure 5 below was taken few dwellings had been erected except along the central street and at the eastern end of the village.



Figure 14: View up Voortrekker Street c1910. As can be seen most of the development had taken place in the centre of the village with isolated dwellings at the outer edges of its gridiron layout
Fransen



Figure 15: 1990 aerial view of McGregor. The dam on Erf 360 is clearly visible but there are few dwellings on Buitekant Street just over 20 years ago

From the mid 1980s McGregor's unique qualities came to be recognised and people started buying up old dilapidated cottages and renovating them as second holiday homes or as retirement homes. The village also attracted a number of artists and craftsmen who established studios there. Besides the renovation and extension of old dwellings a number of substantial new dwellings were erected. The village's economy is now squarely based on tourism with a number of guest houses, B&Bs, restaurants and art galleries. The 1862 gridiron layout however has remained intact except for a small triangular-shaped township that was laid out to the south east of Buitekant Street in the 1970s. This area also accommodates a school.

The village's population grew even though jobs other than seasonal ones in the agricultural sector were scarce. The tourism sector has however created some job opportunity. Like all Boland towns McGregor has a substantial informal settlement. This was established about 20 years to the east of Buitekant Street on low-lying land within the 1:100 year floodplain of the Hoekrivier.



Figure 16: McGregor's informal settlement at the north eastern end of Buitekant Street

5. STATUTORY FRAMEWORK CONTEXT

Erf 360 is now owned by the Langeberg Municipality however the former owner has the right to carry on viticulture on the property for two further seasons. The property is 17.41ha in extent. The following are of relevance;

5.1 Zoning Scheme

The subject property is currently zoned as Agriculture I in terms of the Schedule 8 Land Use Planning Ordinance (15 of 1985) (LUPO).

5.2 Spatial Development Framework 2010

The property is within the "Urban Edge" as determined in the May 2010 Spatial Development Framework for the Langeberg Municipality by town and regional planners BKS.

5.3 A Review of the Spatial Development for the Langeberg Municipality as it Impacts on McGregor

In response to this SDF the McGregor Heritage Society commissioned Prof. Dave Dewar and urban designer to review the SDF and to provide an alternative to proposals made by BKS. This study was then submitted to the municipality as part of the public participation process.

In the review its key finding was that the proposed development of the Krans Nature Reserve on the north western side of the village would have profoundly negative impacts on the visual integrity of the area and its ecological and archaeological significance. They also argued that its development would lead to a loss of a valuable recreational and educational amenity.

In their alternative to the SDF's proposals they argued that small agrarian settlements based on a system of small holdings should be established at various points within the municipal area. And rather than establishing an extensive new residential township in McGregor, a series of small scale interventions should be considered. Their proposals for Buitekant Street are illustrated below.



Figure 17: Portion of the Dewar & Louw diagram: The Potential Consolidation and Expansion of the Town of McGregor. On Erf 360 they show a combination of infill housing and what they refer to as agriculturally integrated villages or small holdings

This submission led to the abandonment of proposals for township development on the De Krans site but their broader proposals were not adopted by the municipality.

5.3 Western Cape Provincial Spatial Development Framework: Rural Land Use & Management Guidelines 2009

This policy document has at its core a set of principles that underpin the Western Cape's rural guidelines. These are:

- Sense of justice: - Meeting fundamental needs of rural communities, especially the poor - Restitution and redistribution of land and natural resources - Rights-based democratic governance - Participatory rural planning processes
- Sense of limits: - Incremental gains over time, working with what is available - Transition to renewable energy alternatives and energy efficiency - Zero waste via reuse of waste outputs as productive inputs - Connectivity along rural movement corridors, towards viable public transport - Sustainable construction materials and building methods - Sustainable use of water and other natural resources
- Sense of place: - Response to landscape context - Sensitivity to spiritual qualities of rural areas - Respect of rural settlement form - Integrated and safe rural communities
- Sense of history: - Valuing cultural diversity and rural community - Sensitivity to cultural landscapes - Response to rural settlement patterns and built vernacular
- Sense of craft: - Growing and broadening the rural economy, greater equity and fair trade - Farming security and sustainable food supplies - Adding value to agricultural products - Strengthening rural tourism (agri and nature based) - Rural livelihood skills development
- Sense of nature: - Maintaining functional eco-system services - Enhancing biodiversity and the preservation of natural habitats - Connecting ecological corridors and maintaining ecological buffers to mitigate against the impacts of climate change.

The policy advocates that to achieve integrated rural development and sustainable human settlements in the Western Cape, new housing development beyond the urban edge urgently needs to be curtailed. The provincial approach is to channel pressures for residential development to existing towns, villages and hamlets. It concludes that only in essential circumstances should new settlements of appropriate scale and compatibility be considered within the rural landscape.

5.4 NHR Act

HWC is a commenting agency in terms of section 38(8) of the NHR Act.

6. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The municipality intends developing a township to accommodate 350 RDP dwellings and 50 Gap dwellings as well as community facilities and play areas. Urban Dynamics Western Cape is to handle the Land Use Planning Ordinance procedures and detailed design.

7. THE LANDSCAPE

Erf 360 is part of a band of farms that slope gently from Buitekant Street towards the Hoekrivier. Erf 360 is used for the production of grapes and the farm on the south west boundary produces olives.



Figure 18: View from the entrance towards the farmstead seen on the right in a grove of trees.
The farm dam and cottage can also be seen



Figure 19: View from the farmstead towards Buitekant Street

8. STRUCTURES

Besides the farmstead there are two labourers' cottages on the farm, an earth dam, cement reservoir and pump house. While the core of the homestead may be older than 60 years it has been substantially remodelled and appears to have no heritage significance. It appears to have originally been a simple cottage that was sequentially lengthened and widened with lean-to additions to the front and rear. There are some outbuildings that are utilitarian related to the homestead that are simple and utilitarian in nature.

The labourers' cottages are simple vernacular rectangular structures, each with lean-to additions and external hearths and chimneys, a regional characteristic.



Figure 20: Side of the homestead showing the two gables and lean-to addition



Figure 21: Main façade showing the two gables and lean-to additions



Figure 22: Outbuilding to the homestead



Figure 23: Cottage on the southeast side of the dam



Figure 24: Cottage on the Buitekant Street side of the dam

10. HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage or cultural attributes of a property can for convenience be grouped into four main categories: aesthetic, historical, scientific and social. Significance for this site can be found in the aesthetic significance of the property's landscape setting and its historical significance. The village itself has a distinctive identity or "sense of place"³. This is derived from the enduring quality of its gridiron layout that despite incremental growth over more than 150 years remains intact. As stated above Fransen regards McGregor as being... "*the best preserved of all 19th Century gridiron towns in the Cape.*" Apart from some development that took place in the 1970s when development spilled out from the 8x4 grid on the north eastern side of Buitekant Street, which established a particularly bad precedent the village has been able to accommodate natural growth within its 19th Century framework. It is still bounded on the north east by the wilderness area of De Krans and on the south west by farmland of which Erf 360 forms part.

This gridiron settlement pattern and vernacular architecture is of great heritage significance. It is understood that the entire village is under consideration for proclamation as a Provincial Heritage Site by HWC. Clearly this resource must be protected.

11. HERITAGE RELATED DESIGN INDICATORS

The following heritage related design indicators for the redevelopment of Erf 360 are generated to protect the integrity of what is considered to be a heritage resource of great/Provincial significance: the historic townscape of McGregor.

11.1 Agricultural edge to Buitekant Street

Buitekant Street is as its name implies is the outer edge of the village and even today is characterised by low-density development. Besides a few large houses fairly recently erected there are a number of undeveloped parcels of

³ LYNCH, K. 1992. *Good City Form*: The MIT Press. London. Pg. 131. Lynch defines it as "it is the extent to which a person can recognise or recall a place as being distinct from other places--as having a vivid or unique or at least a particular character of its own."

land. Some of this land is even currently being used for subsistence vegetable cultivation taking advantage of water from the fully operational irrigation furrow.

It is proposed to retain this outer edge condition that an agricultural edge be created on the south west side of Buitekant Street. A band accommodating smallholdings and the existing dam should be developed. The dam that currently obtains water by pump from the river could be fed by the “leiwater” irrigation system. The existing farm track at the base of the dam provides a natural boundary to this zone. The two existing cottages should be retained as part of the agricultural edge. A windbreak of trees should be planted on the township edge of this zone.

11.2 Kerkstraat

Kerkstraat is a major cross street in the village and should be extended onto Erf 360. A public/community facility at the intersection of Kerk and Buitekant can create a “special place” in the village. This should be a gateway into the new residential area. With the agricultural edge and public/community facility at the intersection there is no need for the development of the remainder of the site to be aligned with the village’s historical grid.

11.3 House types

The village is characterised by a great variety of house types. The oldest form being the simple 3-bay cottage with a pitched thatch roof and external hearth and chimney. A later version has a simple parapet with a low-pitched roof of corrugated iron. Both these archetypes were often connected in pairs or as semi-detached dwellings. It will be important to create as much variety as possible as Erf 360 slopes down towards the river and the roofscape will be an important visual element. Even as has been recommended that only three house types are used variety can be achieved by the use of double pitch roofs, lean-to roofs with a simple parapet and by linking units as illustrated below. The McGregor Heritage Society requested that consideration be given to building external hearths. These could be a feature of corner sites and those in visually prominent positions.



Figure 25: Pair of houses in the village



Figure 26: Three linked dwelling

11.4 Tree planting

While the village is not characterised by avenues of trees as in Stellenbosch and other historic towns and villages, trees can play an important role in reducing the impact of high density residential development. It has been recommended that a gateway be created at the intersection of Kerkstraat and Buitekant Street with the siting there of a public/community facility. This public place should be heavily treed to create summer shade. It was also recommended that a windbreak of trees should be planted along the lower edge of the agricultural zone. Besides this tree planting groups of trees should be planted strategically to break up the homogeneity of the township layout.



Figure 27: Composite of indicators

12. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The McGregor Heritage Society is registered with HWC as a heritage body and was consulted as part of the section 38(8) NHR Act process. A meeting

was held with the Society and a draft of this report was submitted to them on 6 August 2013. The Society responded on 10 August 2013 in the email below:

Dear Mr Aikman, your phase one Heritage Impact Assessment Report was tabled at the last Heritage Society committee meeting. The feeling was that it was very positive and had several ideas with good potential.

The last thing this village needs is a collection of concrete boxes which would detract from both the prevailing character of the village, and the lifestyle of its planned inhabitants.

However, more detailed discussion can take place once the new Heritage committee is voted in at the AGM on August 22. Two of the people you met that morning: Tim Ratcliffe and myself, will not be available for re-election, but I'm sure the new committee will be able to work productively with you. I will let you know to whom future communications should be addressed. In the meantime, good luck with your endeavours. Sincerely, Marilyn Poole (Hon. Secretary).

The Society has therefore endorsed the findings of the Phase One HIA and further consultation will take place when the Site Development Plan is formulated by the design team in Phase Two of the process.

In addition a full public participation process is to be undertaken in line with the *Guideline for Public Participation for the EIA Process, September 2001* (DEA&DP, 2001).

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the design indicators as set out in Section 11 above should inform the formulation of the SDP for Erf 360.