



NICK HELME BOTANICAL SURVEYS

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Pri.Sci.Nat # 400045/08

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Eco Impact Legal Consulting (Pty) Ltd

Claremont

ATT: Nicolaas Hanekom

Dear Nicolaas

Botanical Statement: Impact of housing development on Site H, Swellendam.

My baseline Botanical Assessment of this site was completed in November 2017, but did not include a detailed impact assessment of any site development proposal, as no development layouts had been provided to me for assessment at that stage. This botanical statement thus follows on from my 2017 baseline assessment and specifically address the concerns noted by CapeNature regarding the lack of a specialist impact assessment and mitigation recommendations for this site. For purposes of this assessment it is assume that the development layout for a portion of Site H is as shown in Figure 1, and it is noted that the development layout covers some 27.0ha, and that the extent of site H as assessed by myself in November 2017 was larger, at about 45ha.

The southern quarter of site H is mapped as a CBA (but is excluded from development), whilst the rest – including the whole development area – is mapped as an ESA by Pence (2017). As noted in the baseline assessment the entire proposed development area is deemed to be of Low botanical sensitivity, as it was all previously cultivated, and although it has lain fallow for quite some time the indigenous species diversity is still relatively low (less than 15% of what would have been present in the area prior to cultivation). All indigenous species noted are common and widespread species typically found in disturbed or partly disturbed areas, and no plant Species of Conservation Concern or special habitats were recorded.

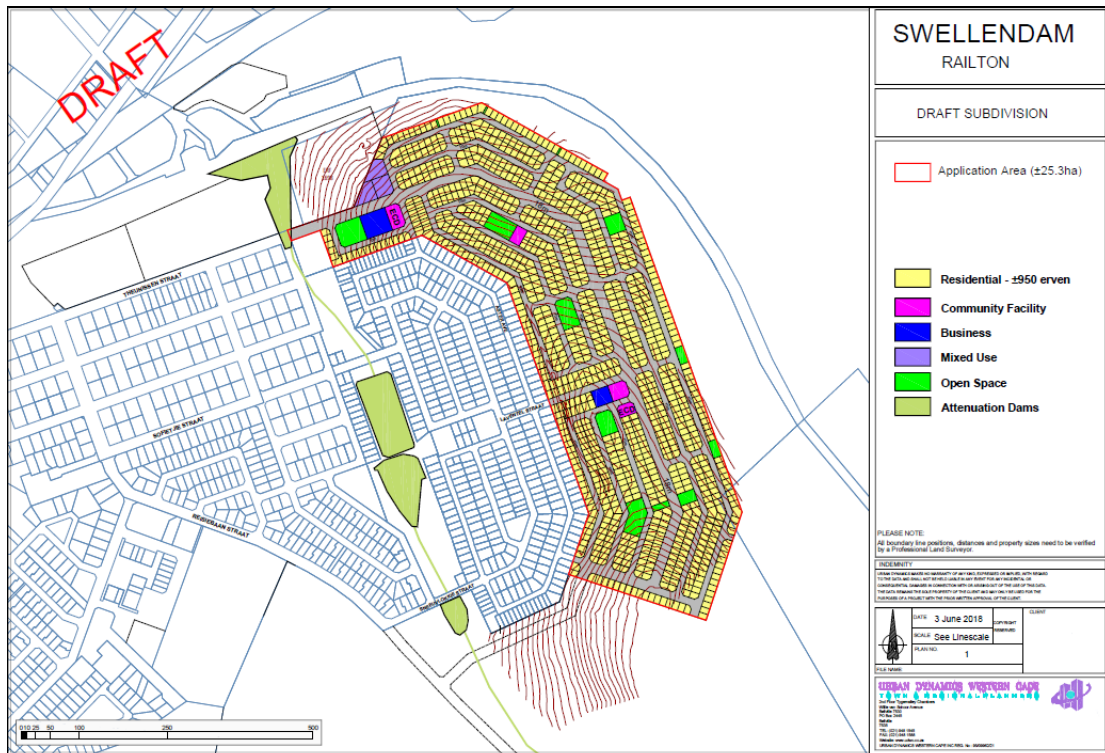


Figure 1: Proposed development layout for portion of Site H, as assessed.

	Proposed development of 27ha on Site H
Extent	Local (site)
Duration	Permanent
Intensity	High
Probability	Definite
Confidence	High
Significance before mitigation	Low negative
Significance after mitigation	Low negative
Cumulative impact after mitigation	Low negative
Nature of Cumulative impact	Habitat fragmentation and loss of current ecological connectivity across site; loss of ESA
Degree to which impact can be reversed	Not reversible
Degree to which impact may cause irreplaceable loss of resources	Possible but likelihood very low
Degree to which impact can be mitigated	Cannot and does not need to be mitigated

Table 1: Impact table for combined construction and operational phase botanical impacts of the proposed development of Site H. The actual impact will be loss of all vegetation currently on site

As all vegetation currently on site will be lost the intensity of the loss of vegetation on site will be high, and at the site scale, and loss will be permanent.

However, because the vegetation on site is of low diversity and low sensitivity the overall significance of the loss of the vegetation on site is **Low negative**, before and after mitigation.

The development area is adjacent to existing development and is therefore well situated in terms of development and conservation planning, as loss of ecological connectivity and habitat fragmentation is thus minimised. The development area does not serve as an important ecological corridor between priority patches of remnant habitat.

There is essentially no mitigation that can be undertaken, and given the low significance no specific mitigation is required, other than simply fencing off the development area from the southern area mapped as a CBA prior to and during all construction.

The cumulative significance of the loss of the vegetation in the study area is Low negative, as although the area is fairly large the vegetation on site is all secondary (post cultivation) and contributes very little to achievement of national conservation targets for this vegetation type, and no mapped CBAs or plant Species of Conservation Concern will be lost.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Helme', written over a horizontal line.

Nick Helme