

Cape Peninsula National Park

**A SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN
FOR THE WASH HOUSE PRECINCT
OF DEER PARK**

(February 2004)

D R A F T



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PREPARED FOR:



South African National Parks / Cape Peninsula National Park

COMPILED BY:

Orion Planning, a consortium consisting of:
MLH Architects & Planners, OvP Landscape Architects, and Ninham Shand

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Orion Planning is a consortium of consultants who were appointed by the South African National Parks (SANParks) in 2002 to prepare a 'development framework' for the Signal Hill, Kloof Nek and Tafelberg Road component of the Cape Peninsula National Park. The rationale for undertaking this planning exercise was to help realise the recreational and tourism potential of this important part of the National Park. This strategic planning exercise, which included a comprehensive public participation and consultation process, resulted in the compilation of the Signal Hill, Kloof Nek and Tafelberg Road Development Framework (September 2003). See Section 3.3, below.

The Development Framework (September 2003) was considered by the City of Cape Town's Good Hope Sub-Council on the 13th November 2003, and then by the Planning & Environment Portfolio Committee on the 5th February 2004, where the Councillors recommended that the Development Framework be endorsed by Council as a guide to preparing more detailed plans for the upgrading of the various visitor nodes within the study area.

The Development Framework identified the Deer Park - Platteklip Precinct as having significant potential to become a 'local gateway' to the lower slopes of Table Mountain and beyond; to be a unique wilderness-urban amenity; and the opportunity to restore and reuse a number of culturally-significant buildings.

1.2 Brief and rational for preparing the Wash House Site Development Plan

In a letter dated the 15th October 2003, SANParks extended the Orion Planning brief, with the instruction to undertake detailed planning for the Wash House Precinct of Deer Park.

The study area includes the upper and lower wash houses, the cottages on the Old Platteklip Mill site, and immediate surrounds - as indicated on Figure 1.

The brief called for a Site Development Plan (SDP) to be prepared in order to *'allow the site to be upgraded and improved in a manner that will ensure proper utilisation of this unique area'*. Further, the brief required that cognisance be taken of the cultural significance of the precinct as outlined in the study undertaken by Le Grange and Baumann (2000). The rationale for the SDP is to allow for, and facilitate the use of, the upper wash house as the initial departure point for the planned 5-day

Hoerikwaggo hiking trail in the Cape Peninsula National Park - accommodation is to be provided for 20 hikers. In addition, SANParks intends entering into an agreement with Hostelling International whereby the current Youth Hostel in The Glen is to be relocated to a part of the upper wash house.

Specifically, the Orion Planning brief required the SDP to address the following aspects:

- *'Access to the site and the potential for a formal access point that could be gated.*
- *General land use designation of open areas such as the gardens and lawns and terraces.*
- *Traffic circulation and parking on the site, separating public parking from trail hikers and youth hostel parking.*
- *Landscape rehabilitation and upgrading to include especially proposals for hard landscaping such as walls, paved areas and water reticulation structures'.*

Co-operation with Lucien le Grange, the architect responsible for the restoration and renovation of the upper wash house building for accommodation, was also required.

1.3 Orion Planning

For this component of the Orion Planning brief, the following three firms have provided input:

- **MLH Architects and Planners** were responsible for the town planning aspects of the SDP, the compilation of the report, as well as project management and client liaison.
- **OvP Landscape Associates** provided the urban design and landscape input to the SDP, and prepared the SDP for presentation purposes.
- **Ninham Shand** were responsible for traffic planning and traffic engineering input, as well as the public participation process.

1.4 Structure of the report

Section 1 of the report outlined the background to the study, and the brief and rationale for preparing the SDP. The Orion Planning consortium responsible for the study was also introduced.

Section 2 provides the locational context of Deer Park within the Cape Peninsula National Park and the City, and includes information regarding the surrounding land uses, and current vehicular and pedestrian access to Deer Park.

Section 3 outlines the planning context, with reference to the Van Riebeeck Park Planning Study - Phase 1: Analysis (2000), the Conservation Development Framework (2001), and the Signal Hill, Kloof Nek and Tafelberg Road Development Framework (September 2003).

Section 4 describes the Site Development Plan with reference to the rationale for preparing the plan, the study area (i.e. the upper wash house, the lower wash house, the cottages on the Old Platteklip Mill site, and surrounds), vehicular access and parking, pedestrian access and movement, gateway treatment, signage and interpretation, and landscaping and landscape restoration.

Section 5 maps the process forward to implementation, and Section 6 is a list of references.

2. Locational context

Deer Park is situated within the borders of the Cape Peninsula National Park, on the interface with the City's residential suburbs of Oranjezicht and Vredehoek. See Figure 1.

Deer Park serves a number of important functions including a recreational amenity and informal 'gateway' to the lower slopes of Table Mountain for the residents of the central city and immediately surrounding suburbs. The use of Deer Park by the wider metropolitan community is currently restricted due to a number of factors, including limited facilities and the lack of a public transport service.

Vehicular access to Deer Park occurs via two main routes. Access to the eastern part of the park - the picnic area - is by way of Upper Buitekant, Highlands Avenue and Deer Park Drive West. The picnic site has parking for 30 to 50 vehicles. Access to the western part of the park - which includes the wash houses - is via Upper Buitekant, Highlands Avenue, Homeleigh Avenue and Sidmouth Road. Informal parking occurs in the vicinity of the wash houses, and formal parking exists within the sports fields precinct immediately to the north.

Informal pedestrian access occurs along footpaths off Homeleigh Road, Bridle Road, Rocklands Avenue, and others.

The wash house precinct is surrounded by residential dwellings, Bridle Road and a piece of public open space to the west; public open space and sports fields to the north, and the remainder of Deer Park to the east and south (See Figure 1).

The public open space to the west of the wash house precinct is registered in the name of the City of Cape Town, as is the public open space and sports fields to the north. The sports fields, associated clubhouse and part of the parking area is leased by the City to the United Hebrew Schools.

3. Planning context

Three planning studies that have been prepared over the past few years have particular relevance, and provide the basis on which the current development proposals are formulated, viz. the Van Riebeeck Planning Study – Phase 1: Analysis (2000), the Conservation Development Framework (2001), and the Signal Hill, Kloof Nek and Signal Hill Development Framework (2003). Each of these reports is briefly reviewed.

3.1 Van Riebeeck Park Planning Study - Phase 1: Analysis (2000)

This report, prepared by Le Grange and Baumann, is a comprehensive analysis of Van Riebeeck Park (now referred to as Deer Park), and identifies important cultural historic attributes as well as opportunities and constraints inherent in the park and its environs.

Le Grange and Baumann (2000:41) undertook an initial assessment of significance of Deer Park, and concluded that the park is significant for a number of reasons, viz:

- *'Its role as a secondary gateway to Table Mountain;*
- *A special 'landscape of water' in terms of its historical role within the development of Cape Town and in terms of its potential as a place that could commemorate this history; and*
- *The Metropolitan and City Bowl role as a public park and amenity for neighbouring and local visitors as well as for domestic and foreign tourists'.*

The Van Riebeeck Park Planning Study provided a basis on which the conservation and development proposals for the area were formulated by Orion Planning within the Signal Hill, Kloof Nek and Tafelberg Road Development Framework planning process.

3.2 Conservation Development Framework (2001)

The aim of the Conservation Development Framework (or CDF) was to set out a clear spatial framework to guide and co-ordinate conservation and development activities in and around the recently established Cape Peninsula National Park. The CDF (2001) built on previous studies that addressed the issue of how to reconcile the multi-purpose use of the National Park.

The CDF (2001) identified 'gateways' to and 'visitor nodes' within the National Park. It noted that many of the gateways and visitor nodes lacked visitor facilities and amenities, and were, in some cases, unsafe.

Deer Park was classified as a '*mixed use leisure*' site, which typically have the following roles, facilities, and management guidelines:

- Roles: '*Serve variety of purposes (e.g. recreation, leisure, transit, education, refreshments, accommodation, etc.). Varies in scale depending on context*'.
- Facilities: '*Ablutions, parking, food & beverages, craft outlets, accommodation, interpretative facilities, education facilities, recreation facilities, etc*'.
- Guidelines: '*Focus effort on enhancing visitor experience by rehabilitating & upgrading degraded sites that are easily accessible. Optimise potential in accordance with ecological & heritage specifications (e.g. preserve sense of place)*'.

The CDF (2001:44) described the priority for implementation of the management guidelines for Deer Park as being '*high*'.

3.3 Signal Hill, Kloof Nek and Tafelberg Road Development Framework (2003)

The Signal Hill, Kloof Nek and Tafelberg Road Development Framework (2003), the rationale for which was outlined in Section 1, concluded that Deer Park is not fulfilling its full potential in providing a quality recreational experience and amenity to the City's residents. The general park landscape, while having vast potential, has a neglected feel, with invasive alien vegetation out-competing indigenous species. Much of the cultural heritage of the site, including historically-significant buildings and structures are neglected and are in some instances falling into disrepair. No cultural interpretation is provided. Further, the Development Framework (2003) noted that, as a consequence of there being no permanent presence in the park and the over-grown nature of the vegetation, security has become an increasing concern to users of the park and the surrounding community.

The Development Framework (2003) concluded that the 'do-nothing' option is entirely unacceptable, and that, until such time as a more permanent presence in Deer Park becomes a reality, the issue of safety will not be resolved, and a valuable amenity and visitor resource would remain underutilised.

The Development Framework (2003) stated that the locational, cultural and environmental assets inherent in Deer Park, together with a number of concerns (as outlined above) provides SANParks with both challenges and opportunities. The Development Framework (2003) reiterated the previous two study's proposals that Deer Park be developed as a 'gateway' to provide safe and efficient access to the various footpaths and management tracks on the lower slopes of Table Mountain and beyond. It was anticipated that this gateway would be orientated towards the adjacent community, the wider metropolitan population and the more adventurous tourist.

Further, the Development Framework (2003) pointed to the opportunities of restoring and reusing a number of the buildings on the site, including the wash houses, cottages and Crow's Nest. Uses that were identified that could be considered included: environmental education / interpretation, museum, guesthouse / backpackers accommodation, and a tea room.

It is these proposals that have been developed further, and built on, in the current Site Development Planning process, and are detailed and discussed in the Section 4, below.

4. Site Development Plan

This section of the report introduces the Wash House Precinct Site Development Plan, as depicted on Figure 2. At the outset, the rationale for preparing the SDP, as discussed in Section 1, is reiterated. The study area is defined, together with the existing elements of the site. The important components of the SDP are then discussed – with particular reference to the various interventions that are proposed, including: vehicular access and parking, pedestrian access and movement, the significance of a ‘celebrated entrance’, signage and interpretation, and landscaping and landscape restoration.

4.1 Rationale

The purpose of the Site Development Plan (SDP) is to allow SANParks to plan and implement a phased upgrade of the wash house precinct of Deer Park. The first phase of this process is the restoration of the upper wash house, which is to be used as the initial departure point for the 5-day Hoerikwaggo hiking trail through the Cape Peninsula National Park. Accommodation is to be provided for 20 hikers. SANParks intends entering into an agreement with Hostelling International for the management of the upper wash house as a youth hostel. As part of this first phase, it is proposed that SANParks formalise parking for the public, allowing easy access to the hiking trails and management tracks that are accessed from this precinct. General landscape restoration, foot path upgrading, landscaping and signage also forms part of this phase of the development.

The SDP has also taken cognisance of future phases including the restoration of the lower wash house and cottages on the Old Platteklip Mill site, so as to ensure that the uses are compatible, and that the entire precinct works as a whole. Uses that could be considered for the lower wash house include an environmental centre or interpretation, cultural / historic museum and/or tearoom; while the cottages could be used for accommodation, environmental education or Park management purposes. Details of these future phases have yet to be finalised, and are to be the subject of future planning and discussions between SANParks and interested and affected parties.

4.2 Study area

The study area, which is indicated on Figure 1, can be divided into a number of zones, that is, the upper wash house, the lower wash house, and the cottages on the Old Platteklip Mill site. These structures have varying degrees of historical and cultural significance, and have been thoroughly evaluated by Le Grange and Baumann (2000).

In addition to these structures, an asphalt access road from the intersection of Sidmouth Avenue and Serpentine Road provides access to the wash houses and cottages. Further, a disturbed levelled area, previously used as a maintenance yard and parking area for fire trucks, is situated to the immediate west of the upper wash house and Platteklip Stream.

The general landscape of the precinct is one of neglect, with building rubble and litter having accumulated over the years. Invasive alien vegetation has grown unchecked throughout the precinct, and has clogged the river course. Further, a number of large pine and gums trees have died, and are a serious safety risk.

It should be noted that this study area does not include the current picnic site area, that is accessed off Deer Park Drive West, which is to be the subject of a separate study and upgrade programme.

4.3 Vehicular access and parking

Vehicular access to the wash house precinct is to continue to be off the eastern leg of the Sidmouth Avenue - Serpentine Road intersection (which also provides access to the sports fields). A minor upgrade of this intersection is proposed, with the addition of a stop street on the north-bound lane of Serpentine Road, and a small realignment of the access road (over Erf 2665) – subject to endorsement by the City's roads branch. No changes to the alignment of Sidmouth Avenue or Serpentine Road is anticipated. Access to the sports fields remain unaffected. This intervention will result in the intersection being safer than at present.

Appropriate SANParks-type signage is to be provided at this intersection.

The access road to the wash houses and cottages is to remain on its current alignment and cross-section, with the addition of hard grass edges of $\pm 0.6\text{m}$ on either side of the road.

A celebrated entrance is to be provided at the threshold into the Deer Park (See Section 4.5 and Figure 2).

A parking area is to be provided for the public in the area that has previously been levelled, to the west of the upper wash house and Platteklip Stream. Provision is being made for approximately 26 cars, 3 mini-bus embayments and 2 bus embayments. It is proposed that the circulation areas be asphalt, while the parking area is to be hard grass. Intensive tree planting and landscaping is to be implemented (See Section 4.7, below).

A further 25 bays are being provided for hikers undertaking the Hoerikwaggo hiking trail within the immediate vicinity of the upper wash house precinct.

The SDP indicates that approximately 10 bays could be provided in the immediate vicinity of the lower wash house precinct – subject to future detailed planning.

Further, should the future uses within the wash house precinct require it, additional parking could be provided on the City land, off the access road to the sports fields, and / or the parking area associated with the sports fields – by arrangement and negotiation with the City.

4.4 Pedestrian access and movement

A number of walkers and hikers currently access the park via the wash house precinct, while the majority access the park from the parking area at the picnic area on the eastern side of Deer Park. In addition, many local residents take access along footpaths off Homeleigh, Sidmouth and Deer Park Drive West Roads and Rocklands Avenue, amongst others. It is recognised that local residents will continue to access Deer Park from the surrounding streets.

It is proposed that the wash house precinct should become the formal entrance to the trails and management tracks for the wider metropolitan community. Further, it is proposed that a formal pedestrian link be created between the CBD and Deer Park, via the City's public open spaces, pedestrian malls, and places of historic and cultural significance. This pedestrian flow would be picked up from the intersection of Gorge and Homeleigh Roads, and guided on a formal pathway of reinforced laterite with stone edging towards the Platteklip Stream, and onwards to the entrance of Deer Park. Appropriate signage will be required, and the opportunity exists to plant an avenue of trees along this path. This link, which is over City land, will need to be supported by the City. On entering Deer Park, the nature of the path will change to a boardwalk, which will follow the Platteklip Stream, past the lower and upper wash houses.

As part of a future phase, it is suggested that an information point could be implemented in the small stone building at the entrance to the lower wash house precinct – where maps, information etc. could be obtained.

From the wash house precinct, walkers will be able to follow the boardwalk and pathway system that SANParks are currently constructing as part of the Hoerikwaggo hiking trail. It is anticipated that this

route may become a popular way of ascending Table Mountain via Platteklip Gorge. Appropriate levels of signage and interpretation is to be provided (See Section 4.6, below).

4.5 Gateway treatment

A low-key celebrated entrance to Deer Park (and the Cape Peninsula National Park) is planned, and is to consist of low stone walls, a cattle-grate crossing over a non-perennial stream, together with a gate and / or boom (See Figure 2). This entrance is to serve the dual purpose of providing definition of the National Park in the form of a sense of entry, and to control vehicular access – in a similar way to the entrance gate to Rhodes Memorial on the Groote Schuur Estate. However, pedestrian access to the precinct would not be restricted.

4.6 Signage and interpretation

There is currently no formal signage or interpretation within the wash house precinct. Three levels of signage is envisaged: guiding signage, footpath signage, and information / interpretation signage.

Currently, there is no street signage to guide visitors to Deer Park. It is recommended that guidance signage be provided, in the form of standard tourism signs (i.e. white lettering on brown background) which should include the SANParks logo and the name 'Deer Park'. This signage is required to be placed along the preferred access route commencing at the off-ramps from Jutland Avenue (M3) to Upper Buitekant, into Highlands, Fitzherbert Road, Homeleigh and Sidmouth Avenue. Return signs should also be erected. SANParks will be required to make application to the relevant roads authority in this regard.

Currently, little or no signage exists to guide walkers along paths and to the various sites of historic, cultural or religious significance, or to the trails and management tracks on the lower slopes of Table Mountain. SANParks should consider providing this signage, following a review and possible rationalisation of the extensive path system.

There is significant opportunity to provide information / interpretative signage at a number of sites of interest within the precinct, including the wash houses and Old Platteklip Mill site, as well as within the greater Deer Park (viz. filterbeds, kramats, De Grendel ruins and wall). It is anticipated that much of the information required for the signboards is available (see for example Le Grange and Baumann, 2000), and that SANParks would need to commission a specialist to prepare the text and artwork.

Both foot path and interpretative signage is to follow the standard Cape Peninsula National Park signage manual.

4.7 Landscaping and landscape restoration

To achieve an acceptable level of environmental quality for the Deer Park precinct, soft landscape works shall be integral to all new construction and restoration works.

Landscaping actions are to be sympathetic to the inherent natural, scenic and cultural historic character of Deer Park and are focussed on enhancing and strengthening the 'sense of place' through planting, surface treatments and park furnishing.

Planting:

- A planting programme is to be initiated to regenerate the indigenous ravine forest character. Invasive alien vegetation is to be eradicated and the removal of inappropriate trees is to occur over time; in tandem with replacement planting from a palette of suitable species (See Figure 2).
- Particular emphasis will be placed on restoring the Platteklip Stream's character as an ecological link between the mountain and City.
- Non-invasive alien trees and planting patterns that are complimentary to the historic ambience associated with the buildings are to be protected.
- Slope stabilisation and erosion control will be through the application of soft engineering methods, allowing for maximum vegetation cover.

Surfacing:

- Paving for roads and parking is to be kept to a minimum. Asphalt roadways are to be rolled with crushed sandstone. Road lay-bys and parking to be in 'hard grass' or reinforced laterite.
- Pedestrian pathways are to be in reinforced laterite with sandstone edgings.
- A timber boardwalk with view decks is to follow the Platteklip Stream.

Furnishing:

To further enhance the visual experience of Deer Park, furniture elements (bollards, benches, waste bins, light standards and signage) are to be designed as an overall theme. A consistent and sympathetic language of materials, colours and graphics are to be used for these items. Both footpath and interpretative signage is to follow the Cape Peninsula National Park signage manual.

5. Way Forward

Subsequent to the public information sharing meeting scheduled for the 24th February 2004, the Wash House Precinct Site Development Plan may be revised, taking cognisance of comments received from the members of the public and interested and affected parties.

The SDP will then be presented and discussed at the Cape Peninsula National Park Planning Steering Committee, a forum consisting of representatives from the CPNP, the City of Cape Town, the Provincial Administration of the Western Cape, Department of Public Works, Heritage Western Cape and the South African Heritage Resource Agency.

The SDP will then be submitted to the National Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) for assessment and endorsement in accordance with the Regulations (GN No. R.1182) promulgated in terms of the Environment Conservation Act (Act 73 of 1989).

If required, the SDP may be presented to the Cape Peninsula National Park Forum.

Prior to any work being carried out on the Sidmouth Avenue - Serpentine Road intersection access road, the City's roads branch will be approached for their endorsement of the engineering design.

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25 February 2004

6. References

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