Public Participation document:

Buffeljagsbaai

Overstrand Heritage Landscape Group:
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Prepared for the

Overstrand Municipality

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Site Description:

This is a very small settlement, of less than 50 dwellings. The dwellings consist of a few wooden houses, a ‘dorp’ with a variety of structures including some RDP houses and an old wooden house made of shipwreck timber, a caravan park / campsite, church, and three groups of houses near the harbour. There was a 19th century fishing settlement in the area, and the Buffelsjag farm nearby dates to this period. There is evidence of a Khoisan midden alongside the harbour and it may have been used as a shellfish collection site much earlier than the 19th century.

Historical Background:

According to Petrus Groenewald, a resident born in the town, the development of a permanent community at Buffeljagsbaai can be traced back to two families, the Groenewalds and the Swams, who began to settle there permanently during the 1920s and 1930s and were soon joined by others, such as the Claasens family (Interview Petrus Groenewald 11.7.08 by Kirsten Thomson). James Walton suggests that Samuel Groenewald may have founded the permanent settlement there somewhat earlier, at the end of the nineteenth century (Walton 1995:52). The erf’s in the dorp are still primarily owned by Groenewalds (see current valuation roll for Overstrand Municipality). The current residents could not say why or when the place had been named but suggested the name as having existed some time before their forebears settled there permanently. Most of the Buffeljags families had earlier links to the area, as men regularly traveled down to the small sheltered natural harbour at Buffeljagsbaai from Elim (or other areas such as Hermanus) to fish and then return to sell their catch. Traveling down to the coast by donkey cart or by bicycle, they built themselves small makeshift shelters close to the water which later became permanent places of residence for their families once they had married (the women were usually also from Elim or sometimes, Bredasdrop (Interview Emily Swam 11.7.08 by Kirsten Thomson). Buffeljagsbaai’s historic links to Elim persist in other ways, with ‘Elmers’ (as they are called by the locals) still traveling down to fish at the harbour, returning to sell the catch to their communities, or camping there during their holidays or on weekends (Interview Emily Swam 11.7.08 by Kirsten Thomson).

The oldest house in the dorp is a small wooden thatched house made of shipwreck timbers. There is some uncertainty whether it was built by Samuel Groenewald in c.1900 or by Johannes Swam in c.1933; and it may have changed hands over time. A newspaper article dated 1963 reported that Johannes Swam and his wife built the house in c.1933. He had been working inland as a farm labourer at Elim, but regularly coming to the bay to fish and/or spend holiday weekends there. While working as a hired crewman on a local fishing boat, Johannes was able to collect enough driftwood and timber salvaged from ship-wrecks along the coast (in particular that of the Yugoslav freighter, Avala, which was wrecked at Quoin Point in 1939) to construct his own fishing boat and to build the wood and thatch cottage that is today still inhabited by some of his descendants (Cape Times 16.2.63 p10). Walton (1995:52-3), however, reports on the same house in 1995, then owned by Sophia Swam, but says it was formerly the home of Samuel Groenewald and dates from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Both versions of the story were reported to the researchers on their visit to the settlement in June 2008. The settlement developed very slowly between the 1930s and 1980s (Cape Times 16.2.63; Interview Petrus Groenewald 11.7.08 by Kirsten Thomson). A white family (the Nowers family) has also lived in Buffeljagsbaai (now in three groups of houses at the harbour) since the 1940s at least. The ‘Department van Bosbou’
(Department of Agriculture) began with reclamation of the dunes at Buffeljagsbaai in 1936 – there were at that time three white-owned houses and some houses owned by people classified at the time as coloured. Because of the reclamation, the Department of Bosbou attempted to remove people from state-owned ground at this time. There was much unhappiness and they decided to allow the people to stay (on the payment of 10c per family per month – R1.20 per year). The decision was also made not to allow any new people to have rights to stay there. Boat owners paid R2 each year to the ‘Afdeling Seevisserye’. Both the whites and the coloureds there made their living from the sea. Some coloureds also apparently collected seaweed and bamboo while others worked as labourers. A small single ‘factory’ was erected by McFarlane, but was then being hired out for the processing of seaweed (there were two buildings at the factory – a coloured family live in one and in the other, 4 single coloureds and two Africans).

In the early 1970s (when the Group Areas Board reported on the area) only 2 whites, Mnr. Willa Nower and his son were living on the state ground in the area. About 200 yards southeast of Buffeljagsbaai, there were apparently 7 ‘reed’ houses built by the coloured fishers (housing ten families with total 60 people) Alternative accommodation needed to be found for the three white families whose occupation of the area would be made illegal by the proclamation as a coloured group area (but they appear to have remained). Since 1966, members of the coloured community apparently used the beach at Celtbaai, a coastal area 1.6km long, in the northwestern part of the advertised ‘coloured’ area (see map). This area had apparently been provided for them after Die Dam (4.8km southeast of Buffeljagsbaai) had been declared whites only. The intention was to create a resort for coloured people coming from Elim mission station, Robertson, Montagu, Ashton, Bonnievale, Swellendam, Napier en Bredasdorp but this never formally materialized. The area from Shell Point on the western side of Celtbaai to the western side of the bay named Buffeljagsbaai, including a camping area there, was therefore designated as coloured and the current camping spot on the eastern side of Buffeljagsbaai could only be used by coloureds for the next three seasons (7.10.1966 Decision of the Minister concerning designation of beach areas for different racial groups).

‘For as long as the oldest people in our community can remember, we have been dependent on the sea for our existence,’ says Marco Boshoff, a resident of Buffeljags (Mail & Guardian 30.10.01). This way of life, and the practices that enable it, are perceived as being increasingly difficult to maintain with the imposition of fishing quotas, the removal and re-issuing of fishing permits to commercial fishermen in Buffeljags and the implementation of bans on the harvesting of some species, such as abalone. A poverty alleviation grant of R1.4 million from the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism’s Coastcare Project in 2000 coupled with an investment of the same amount from I&J’s corporate social development programme introduced some alternative income generating projects for the community aimed at reducing impoverishment and reliance on marine resources, especially poaching (Mail & Guardian 30.10.01). Some community members eagerly anticipate the potential job opportunities that the construction of a new nuclear power plant at Baviasanklip will create (Interview with Sophie Boshoff 11.7.08).

A small number of low-cost houses were built in Buffeljags in the late 1980s which increased the size of the settlement – the community grew from approximately 13 families in 1967 (Interview Petrus Groenewald 11.7.08 by Kirsten Thomson) to around 32 households in 2001 (Mail & Guardian 30.10.01) – but the lack of infrastructure, such as roads, the use of communal taps for household water, and a dearth of facilities like clinics, shops and schools persisted into the period after 1994. According to Petrus Groenewald, there was some outside interest in the late 1980s to build a holiday resort for whites at Buffeljagsbaai, which would have involved moving the coloured community there further up the dunes behind the campsite, but this never materialized (Interview Petrus Groenewald 11.7.08 by Kirsten Thomson).

**Heritage Significance:**

Buffeljagsbaai has historical significance, representing the historical continuity in seasonal use of the landscape for coastal shellfish and fish exploitation along this coast since at least 2000 years BP, linking the area to the inland area probably along the route of the current road to Viljoenshof. The continuity
of shell-fish exploitation and fishing activities on the site is evident in the range of settlements on the site: shell middens near the harbour, the family settlement next to the harbour, including a house which may date back to the 19th c and possible family links to the 19th century use of the harbour among residents of the current RDP settlement, and 20th c harbour equipment and other 20th century houses. It also has aesthetic value as a very small coastal settlement on a relatively barren coastal bay adjacent to Quoin Point nature reserve. This is quite unusual along the coast which is becoming rapidly settled from Gansbaai to Pearly Beach.

**Constraints/Vulnerabilities:**

Alien vegetation around the settlement needs to be better controlled as some of the area is still pristine.

Expansion of settlement could cause problems because there are few services and poor roads.

Minimal alternative economic opportunities and restrictions on legal marine resource harvesting encourages reliance on poaching.

The proposed Eskom pebble bed reactor at Bantamsklip near Pearly Beach could encourage rapid development, although it could also provide job opportunities for current residents.

**Proposed heritage conservation areas and special areas:**

**Heritage Management Recommendations:**

The heritage value of the area lies in its few historical remnants, its continued use as a fishing settlement and its relatively sparse and concentrated settlement compared to the large and expanding settlements of the other coastal towns. Needlework and other development projects have begun to fill the gap left by the implementation of fishing quotas, but poaching remains a problem and has to be addressed to ensure sustainability of the marine resources.

Without alternative economic activity being made available in the area the marine resources will be further depleted through poaching and the historical association with fishing will be lost. Without proper services the pristine nature of the site will also be affected.

Further development should be restricted in the Buffeljags area until such time as better services and economic opportunities are available for residents. Any development projects or service provision should be sensitively designed to take into account the historical development of the town and its rural quality, without encroaching any further on the coastline. Tourism is already coming to the town through horse trails, and perhaps these kinds of projects could be expanded. An oral history project could also be put in place to record historical continuity and community, and make links to tourism possibilities in Elim and other nearby towns.

**Sources:**

Avery G. (1976) A systematic investigation of open station shell midden sites along the southwestern Cape coast. Thesis, University of Cape Town

Benade B. Baardscheerders Bos: Pieke en Kronieke (Parow, 2006).


Overstrand SDF
VASSA, Cape Folk Architecture Exhibition Souvenir, Cape Town 2005
Walton J. Old Cape Farmsteads (Cape Town, 1989).

**Time line**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre 19th c</td>
<td>Periodic use of the coastal area by the Khoisan for shellfish collection (evidenced by the shell midden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 19(^{th}) c-1930s</td>
<td>Permanent settlement founded in area now known as the dorp, possibly on the site of an existing temporary settlement with makeshift shelters or matjieshuise. No title deeds for property until the 1990s (Walton 1995:52).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.1910-1940</td>
<td>Nowers family settles near the harbour.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Site name: Buffeljagsbaai House Type of resource: Building
Location: 3419 DA & DC: 34 45' 3.79“ S, 19 36' 29.83” E Garmin Legend Etrex
Erf/Farm: 340/7 Address: Buffeljagsbaai

Description:
Materials: Shipwreck timbers: Thatch
Associated landscape features:

Original use: Residential
Current use: Wooden cottage
Landscape type:
Design/Style:
Construction date: c1910-1930
Historical period in which constructed: Union
Theme: Shipwreck and salvage

Historical information:
Older wooden house, in the RDP settlement, reportedly first permanent house in the village. Made of shipwreck timbers and thatched, interior wallpapered with newsprint. Roof in poor condition.
Documented by Walton (1995:52-3) who says it was the home of Samuel Groenewald. The Cape Times (16.2.63) suggests it was built by Johannes Swam in c.1933.

Heritage Status:
Previous status under National Monuments Act:

Current status under National Heritage Resources Act: Older than 60 Approved grading: Suggested grading: 3A
Responsible heritage authority: HWC

Significance: Ability to demonstrate use of shipwreck flotsam for building activity.
Ability to demonstrate the role of Buffelsjags as a fishing village in the late 19th c.

Constraints and Opportunities: Ad hoc repairs; vulnerable to demolition as pressure from expansion of the surrounding houses

Heritage Management Recommendations:
Ongoing repair and maintenance
Formal protection in terms of zoning scheme regulations (Grade 3A)
- Conserve
- Remedial action to enhance significance
- Minimal intervention
- Interpretation
- HWC permit of approval required for any demolition, alteration or change in planning status

Proposed conservation/Special areas:

References/Sources:
Avery G. (1976) A systematic investigation of open station shell midden sites along the southwestern Cape coast. Thesis, University of Cape Town
Benade B. Baardscheerders Bos: Pietie en Kronieke (Parow, 2006).
Overstrand SDF
VASSA, Cape Folk Architecture Exhibition Souvenir, Cape Town 2005
Walton J. Old Cape Farmsteads (Cape Town, 1989).
Site name: Buffeljagsbaai House
Type of resource: Building
Location: 3419 DA & DC: 34 45' 7.95" S, 19 36' 31.21" E Garmin Legend Etrex
Erf/Farm: 340/18 or 19
Address: Buffeljagsbaai

Description:
Wooden house of fairly modern construction, illustrating older approach to house construction in the settlement prior to brick
Materials: Wood; iron
Associated landscape features:

Original use: Residential
Current use: Cottage
Landscape type:
Design/Style:
Construction date:
Historical period in which constructed: Democracy
Theme:

Historical information:

Heritage Status:
Previous status under National Monuments Act:

Current status under National Heritage Resources Act: Approved grading: Suggested grading: 3C
Responsible heritage authority: HWC

Significance: Representative of an ongoing tradition of reusing wood from wrecks as building material, despite the house being fairly modern.

Constraints and Opportunities:

Heritage Management Recommendations:
Ongoing repair and maintenance
Formal protection in terms of zoning scheme regulations (Grade 3C)

- Conserve wherever possible
- Retain historical fabric wherever possible (exterior only)
- Conserve and enhance contribution to overall character and streetscape (predominantly public/private interface)
- HWC permit of approval required for any demolition, alteration or change in planning status
- Demolition only to be considered if appropriate adaptive reuses cannot be established

Proposed conservation/Special areas:

References/Sources:
Avery G. (1976) A systematic investigation of open station shell midden sites along the southwestern Cape coast. Thesis, University of Cape Town
Benade B. Baardscheerders Bos: Pieke en Kronieke (Parow, 2006).
Overstrand SDF
VASSA, Cape Folk Architecture Exhibition Souvenir, Cape Town 2005
Walton J. Old Cape Farmsteads (Cape Town, 1989).
**Site name:** Buffeljagsbaai House  
**Type of resource:** Building  
**Location:** 3419 DA & DC: 34 44' 51.9'' S, 19 36' 14.7'' E Garmin Legend Etrex  
**Erf/Farm:** 340/  
**Address:** Buffeljagsbaai

**Description:**
2 Houses with outbuildings situated on the edge of the harbour.  
C1910 house aluminium windows - Outbuilding illustrates the tradition of corrugated iron and asbestos building in the village (Walton 1995)  
**Materials:** Brick; corrugated iron  
**Associated landscape features:** Spanish style house - possibly older than 60 years

**Historical information:**
2 Houses with outbuildings, Overstrand SDF (ref.85), on the edge of the harbour.  
Another dwelling on this property illustrates the tradition of corrugated iron and asbestos building in the village (Walton 1995)

**Heritage Status:**
**Previous status under National Monuments Act:**

**Current status under National Heritage Resources Act:** Older than 60  
**Approved grading:**  
**Suggested grading:** 3C  
**Responsible heritage authority:** HWC

**Significance:** Older house has ability to demonstrate the role of Buffelsjags as a fishing village during the e.20th century

**Constraints and Opportunities:** Vulnerable to flooding

**Heritage Management Recommendations:**  
Ongoing repair and maintenance  
Formal protection in terms of zoning scheme regulations (Grade 3C)
- Conserve wherever possible
- Retain historical fabric wherever possible (exterior only)
- Conserve and enhance contribution to overall character and streetscape (predominantly public/private interface)
- HWC permit of approval required for any demolition, alteration or change in planning status
- Demolition only to be considered if appropriate adaptive reuses cannot be established

Proposed conservation/Special areas:

References/Sources:
Avery G. (1976) A systematic investigation of open station shell midden sites along the southwestern Cape coast. Thesis, University of Cape Town
Benade B. Baardscheerders Bos: Pieke en Kronieke (Parow, 2006).
Overstrand SDF
VASSA, Cape Folk Architecture Exhibition Souvenir, Cape Town 2005
Walton J. Old Cape Farmsteads (Cape Town, 1989).
Site name: Buffeljagsbaai Harbour  
Type of resource: Harbour  
Location: 3419 DA & DC: 34° 44' 43.9'' S, 19° 36' 11.8'' E Garmin Legend Etrex  
Erf/Farm: 340/  
Address: Buffeljagsbaai  

Description:  
Some equipment remains at the harbour such as a metal winch and concrete structures.  
Harbour is still used.  
Materials:  
Associated landscape features:  

Original use: Harbour  
Current use:  
Landscape type:  
Design/Style:  
Construction date: 20th century  
Historical period in which constructed: Union  
Theme: Subsistence fishing  

Historical information:  

Heritage Status:  
Previous status under National Monuments Act:  

Current status under National Heritage Resources Act: Older than 60  
Approved grading:  
Suggested grading: 3C  
Responsible heritage authority: HWC  

Significance: Ability to demonstrate the role of Buffelsjags as a fishing harbour  

Constraints and Opportunities:  

Heritage Management Recommendations:  
Ongoing repair and maintenance  
Formal protection in terms of zoning scheme regulations (Grade 3C)  

- Conserve wherever possible  
- Retain historical fabric wherever possible (exterior only)  
- Conserve and enhance contribution to overall character and streetscape (predominantly public/private interface)
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Avery G. (1976) A systematic investigation of open station shell midden sites along the southwestern Cape coast. Thesis, University of Cape Town
Benade B. Baardscheerders Bos: Pieke en Kronieke (Parow, 2006).
VASSA, Cape Folk Architecture Exhibition Souvenir, Cape Town 2005
Walton J. Old Cape Farmsteads (Cape Town, 1989).
Site name: Buffeljagsbaai House  Type of resource: Building
Location: 3419 DA & DC: 34° 44' 43.9" S, 19° 36' 08.0" E Garmin Legend Etrex
Erf/Farm: 340/
Address: Buffeljagsbaai

Description:
Typical fisherman cottage style dwelling.
Materials: Brick; corrugated iron
Associated landscape features:

Original use: Residential
Current use: Cottage
Landscape type:
Design/Style:

Construction date: 1940s
Historical period in which constructed: Apartheid
Theme: Subsistence fishing

Historical information:
About 60 years old house of the Nouwens family. Flooded by sea in about 2002

Heritage Status:
Previous status under National Monuments Act:
Current status under National Heritage Resources Act: Older than 60
Approved grading: Suggested grading: 3C
Responsible heritage authority: HWC

Significance: Typical fisherman cottage style dwelling.
Ability to demonstrate the role of Buffeljags as a fishing village during the 20th century

Constraints and Opportunities: Vulnerable to flooding

Heritage Management Recommendations:
Ongoing repair and maintenance
Formal protection in terms of zoning scheme regulations (Grade 3C)

- Conserve wherever possible
- Retain historical fabric wherever possible (exterior only)
- Conserve and enhance contribution to overall character and streetscape (predominantly public/private interface)
- HWC permit of approval required for any demolition, alteration or change in planning status
- Demolition only to be considered if appropriate adaptive reuses cannot be established

Proposed conservation/Special areas:

References/Sources:
Avery G. (1976) A systematic investigation of open station shell midden sites along the southwestern Cape coast. Thesis, University of Cape Town
Benade B. Baardscheerders Bos: Pieke en Kronieke (Parow, 2006).
Overstrand SDF
VASSA, Cape Folk Architecture Exhibition Souvenir, Cape Town 2005
Walton J. Old Cape Farmsteads (Cape Town, 1989).
**Site name:** Buffeljagsbaai Cemetery  
**Type of resource:** Burial ground  
**Location:** 34 45’ 10.1” S, 19 36’ 43” E Garmin Legend Etrex  
**Erf/Farm:** 308/1  
**Address:** Buffeljagsbaai

**Description:**  
A few scattered graves in bushes behind settlement. No longer used for burials. One grave surrounded by cement decorated with perlemoen shells.  
**Materials:**  
**Associated landscape features:**

**Original use:** Burial ground  
**Current use:**  
**Landscape type:** Relic  
**Design/Style:**  
**Construction date:** Early half 20th century  
**Historical period in which constructed:** Union/Apartheid  
**Theme:** Mortuary practice

**Historical information:**

**Heritage Status:**  
Previous status under National Monuments Act:  
Current status under National Heritage Resources Act: Older than 60  
Approved grading:  
Suggested grading: 3C  
**Responsible heritage authority:** SAHRA

**Significance:** Social significance to the inhabitants

**Constraints and Opportunities:** Overgrown and unmentioned

**Heritage Management Recommendations:**  
National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999  
Burial Grounds and Graves: Section 36(3): No person may, without a permit issued by SAHRA (in this instance) -  
Section 36(3)(b): destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position or otherwise disturb any grave or burial ground older than 60 years which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority; or Section 36(3)(c): bring onto or use at a burial ground or grave referred to in paragraph (3)(b) above any excavation equipment, or any equipment which assists in the detection or recovery of metals.

**Proposed conservation/Special areas:**
References/Sources:
Site name: Buffeljagsbaai Church Type of resource: Building
Location: 3419 DA & DC: 34 44.856° S, 19 36.454° E Garmin Legend Etrex
Erf/Farm: 340/ Address: Buffeljagsbaai

Description:
Church, house and barn
Materials: Brick; Corrugated iron
Associated landscape features:

Original use: Church
Current use: Cottage
Landscape type:
Design/Style:
Construction date:
Historical period in which constructed:
Theme: Religion and community

Historical information:
Church used once per month when the dominee visits

Heritage Status:
Previous status under National Monuments Act:

Current status under National Heritage Resources Act: Older than 60
Approved grading: Suggested grading: 3C
Responsible heritage authority: HWC

Significance: Of social significance to the surrounding communities.

Constraints and Opportunities:

Heritage Management Recommendations:
Ongoing repair and maintenance
Formal protection in terms of zoning scheme regulations (Grade 3C)

- Conserve wherever possible
- Retain historical fabric wherever possible (exterior only)
- Conserve and enhance contribution to overall character and streetscape (predominantly public/private interface)
- HWC permit of approval required for any demolition, alteration or change in planning status
- Demolition only to be considered if appropriate adaptive reuses cannot be established

Proposed conservation/Special areas:

References/Sources: