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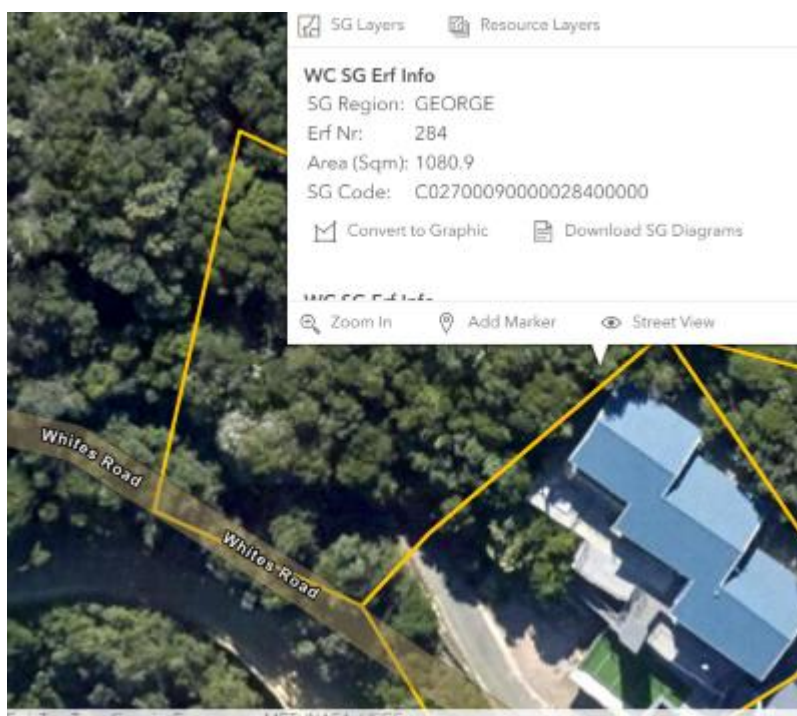
## **ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENT**

Permit application in terms of the Outeniqua Sensitive Coastal Area Extension (OSCAE) Regulations under Section 21 (1) of the Environmental Conservation Act (73 of 1989):

EARTHWORKS AND CLEARING OF VEGETATION ON ERF 284 WHITES ROAD, WILDERNESS.  
(Mr Wiets Botes).

### BACKGROUND AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

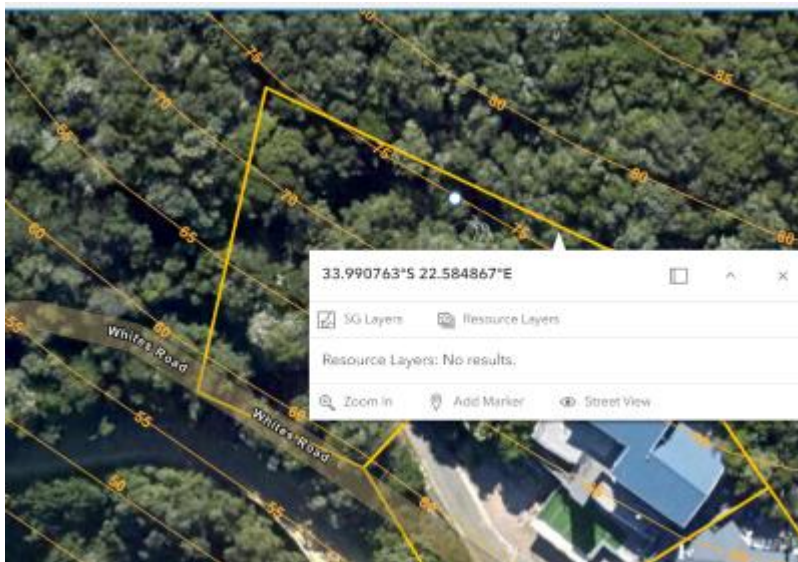
Erf 284 is situated above Whites Road in Wilderness 'village' and is 'next door' to the Botes house on Erf 283 for which an application was previously applied this application involves a small guest cottage to be built as a wooden structure of 75m<sup>2</sup> on 'poles' with a suspended open deck of 61m<sup>2</sup> built in an area of pristine forest and accessed by a wooden board-walk from the road below. Other than for the planting of pole supports earthworks will be limited to a small area on the northern side of the house to reduce the height of the building platform. Herewith is a site locality image:



## 2. ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENT

The vegetation on the site was described as 'Forest' (now 'critically endangered granitic fynbos' which is inaccurate) with respect to CBA's however the footprint size is in any case well below 300m<sup>2</sup> which could trigger a NEMA application. A site inspection indicates that the site is steep with some natural more level areas and consists entirely of pristine forest. The construction of a small house on a raised platform in the forest is an environmentally-sensitive approach, while access will also be given from a landscaped board-walk following the natural contours.

The contours are shown on the following image and on the site development plan (SDP). The Site Development Plan give a fuller and more accurate analysis.



Geologically the area is classed as being situated in the 'Cape Granite Suite' --- soils are thus 'gritty' and the presence of weathered granite is obvious along the road cutting and more rock is possible below the soil surface.

Images of the present vegetation on the construction site are as follows:

View of road from above



## Vegetation on site



### 3 DEVELOPMENT

The Site Development Plan showing details of the house as well as Sections are appended hereto as 'Attachments':

As shown the house is restricted to a single bedroom and 'open plan' kitchen and living room. With the lack of level ground, the 'living area' will mainly be on a wooden deck 61m<sup>2</sup> in size nestled amongst the trees.

Also shown is a small parking area for one vehicle on the south side of the road (which intrudes on erf 284 and gives access to a single residence at the *cul de sac* further up the road). This will involve substantial retaining-structures in the underlying forest and is from the environmental (and cost implications) highly undesirable. Alternatives are being negotiated with the Municipality's Planning Department.

### 4. ENVIROMENTAL IMPACT

#### Removal of vegetation

Sensitive vegetation will have to be removed from the footprint of the house and for the construction of the deck and boardwalk stairs. If this is restricted to what is really necessary impact could be comparatively insignificant. Ground covers and low trees should be retained where possible under the deck as well, especially where the deck is high above the ground. All disturbance could be restricted to under structures so that the normal working area around the footprint will not be necessary.

#### Earthworks

The only earthworks that will be necessary are for the planting of pole supports for the board-walk, house and deck and for the small area under the upper portion of the house (to reduce its height) and small utility paved area of 19m<sup>2</sup> above (behind) the house.

Provided the excavated earth is contained and not allowed to spill-over into natural areas, impact could be minimal.

#### Visual Impact

The wooden structure in the forest, raised at a high level will have minimal visual impact from below and be hardly visible from distant view points.

#### Light pollution

Light pollution must be guarded against.

#### Fencing

No fencing is envisaged

## 4. GENERAL

The property obviously has development rights and the proposed 'low key development' would appear to be the most environmentally-acceptable approach to exercising those rights. Never-the-less the conservation-value and sensitivity of the site is fully appreciated and it is very important that construction is undertaken responsibly. In this regard:

- A Forestry License for the removal of protected trees and 'natural forest' in both the board-walk access and in the house footprint must be obtained.
- Access to the construction site must be restricted to the board-walk access (that must be installed in advance with the least possible impact on the forest);
- No heavy machinery should be allowed on the property: i.e. all excavation must be undertaken by hand;
- Building material must be taken up by hand in premanufactured units where possible;
- The stabilising affect if the vegetation on the steep slopes must be fully recognized. And although vegetation removal will need to take place under the footprint of the house this should be by sawing-off trees at surface level and earth-movement (except on the highest point of the house) must be kept to the minimum
- Excavated soil must be retained under the footprint of the house using retaining structures under the platform to prevent it from sliding.