Environmental Impact Assessment for the
Mount Road Social Housing Project
BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Aug 2010

INTRODUCTION

Notice is given in terms of Regulation 54 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2010 (GN No. R543) under Chapter 5 of the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998) as amended, of the intent of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality to submit an application for environmental authorization to the Provincial Department of Economic Development and Environmental Affairs (DEDEA) for the planned development of rental social housing on three erven in Mount Croix, Port Elizabeth.

In terms of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations (2010), an application of this nature requires that a Basic (Environmental) Assessment be undertaken. Arcus GIBB have been commissioned by the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM), on behalf of Imizi Housing Association, to undertake this Basic Assessment.

PROJECT MOTIVATION

The National ‘Breaking New Ground’ Policy of 2004 highlighted the need to achieve a "non-racial integrated society through the development of sustainable settlements and quality housing”. The subsequent National Social Housing Policy (2005) and the Social Housing Act (2009), now provide a legislative framework which seeks to pursue this social, economic, racial and spatial integration of South African society through specifically the provision of affordable rental accommodation.

Such accommodation is to be limited to ‘Restructuring Areas’ which typically have good access to work opportunities, good access to transport corridors, and amenities. The Mount Croix area has been identified as one of six Restructuring Zone in the Metro.

Three erven within the Mount Croix area have been identified and are considered suitable for the development of Rental Social Housing because they are currently vacant and form part of a number of open spaces in the area.

PROJECT DETAILS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Location and Zoning

The erven are located in two clusters (see Figure 1) immediately north and north-east of Erica Girl’s Primary School in Mount Croix. The following erven are proposed:

- 1995: Zoned Public Open Space (POS). The site is bordered by Knowles, Turvey and Hazelhurst streets.
- 3217: Zoned Transportation 1 and is bordered by the Knowles and Hazelhurst streets.
- 518: Zoned POS and is bordered by Eastbourne, Kent, Wilkinson and Knowles streets.

The combined area of the three erven is 3.07 hectares. It is proposed that all three sites would be rezoned to Residential 3.

Development Plan

The proposed site development plan (see Figure 2) adheres to Residential 3 sub-zone F planning parameters as defined by the NMBM for Social Housing Developments. Key proposal features include:

- 502 medium-density apartments (234 units on erf 518, and 268 on erven 1995 and 3217 combined).
- Apartments would be clustered in three blocks which would vary between 3 and 4 storeys in height. Apartments would range in size from 28m² (studio) to 58m² (2 bedrooms).
- Overall coverage on the site would be 30%.
- Parking of 1 bay per 3 units is proposed.
- Access to the development would be limited to Turvey Street (2 access points) and Knowles Street (1 access point).

Rentals and Qualifying Tenants

The construction and management of social housing units is government subsidised, allowing the requested rentals to be below private market values. All units will be for rental only, and available to only those earning between R1500 and R7500 per household. Tenants can expect to pay rent ranging from approximately R510 pm (for the smallest apartments) to R2,050 pm (for the two bedroom apartments).
Management

All aspects of operational management of the scheme, including tenant screening, lease agreements and rental collection will be managed by the Imizi Housing Association. Imizi was established in 2003 as a Social Housing Institute (SHI), a non-profit Section 21 company whose core business is to develop and manage rental housing units for the benefit of NMBM residents who are income-earning and who qualify for the government social housing subsidy.

PROGRESS TO DATE

The NMBM have in principle approved the site as appropriate for Social Rental Housing. The Imizi Housing Association was awarded the project in 2008. The rezoning process has commenced, but will only be finalised should this EIA process result in authorisation.

THE NEED FOR AN EIA: LISTED ACTIVITIES

The National Environmental Management Act, No. 107 of 1998 (NEMA), prescribes that an EIA process must be followed to evaluate the impact of certain activities that are deemed to have a potentially negative effect on the environment. According to the provisions of the NEMA, all environmental investigations must comply with the minimum requirements of the act as set out in section 23(2) of NEMA. These minimum requirements include predicting and evaluating the actual and potential impacts on the environment; giving due consideration of all impacts that could have an effect on the environment; and ensuring adequate public participation.

Section 24(2)(a) of NEMA states that the Minister, or MEC, may identify activities which may not be commenced without prior authorisation from the Minister or MEC. The latest EIA Regulations, which came into effect on 02 August 2010, lists these activities. These “listed activities” are of two types; those that require Basic Assessments (BA) and those that require full EIAs.

The proposed development will include activities listed under GN 544 i.e. which require a Basic Assessment. These include:

Government Notice R 544, 24: The transformation of land bigger than 1000 square meters in size, to residential, retail, commercial, industrial or institutional use, where at the time of the coming into effect of this Schedule such land was zoned open space, conservation or has an equivalent zoning

There are no activities proposed that would trigger the need for a full EIA.

THE BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The diagram below presents the process flow for this Basic Assessment.

The following key tasks are proposed for the BA proposed:

- Public Participation Process (PPP): All Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) are requested to register with GIBB. This is discussed further under the PPP heading below.
- Investigations: Specialist investigations to be undertaken as part of this BA include a Transport Impact Assessment (TIA), Heritage Assessment (HIA), Social Impact Assessment (SIA), and Geological Assessment.
- Public meeting: A meeting will be held once the specialist studies are close to completion or completed. All registered I&APs will be notified of such.
- Basic Assessment Report (draft): This will be made available for public review (40 days) and will include an Issues and Response report. All registered I&APs will be notified of such.
- Final Report: The final report will be compiled and submitted to Department of Economic Development and Environmental Affairs for their adjudication.
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS AND HOW TO REGISTER AS AN I&AP

The EIA Regulations specify that a public participation process must be conducted as an integral part of the EIA. The following activities are proposed for this BA:

- Placing notice boards at the proposed sites.
- Advertising the process in a local newspaper.
- Giving written notice to:
  - the landowners and occupiers of the site
  - owners and occupiers of land adjacent to the site
  - the municipal councillor of the affected ward;
  - the municipality which has jurisdiction in the area; and
  - organs of state which have jurisdiction in respect of any aspect of the activity.

The key objective of the public participation is to provide I&APs with an opportunity to flag issues, and provide comment on the proposed activity. Issues of concern and suggestions raised by I&APs will be recorded and responded to in the draft Basic Assessment.

DETAILS OF EAP CONDUCTING THE EIA

Arcus GIBB (Pty) Ltd. is a multi-disciplinary engineering and environmental consultancy company whose Environmental Services sector comprises 51 individuals of which 45 are Environmental Assessment Practitioners.

The environmental division has undertaken over 100 Environmental Impact Assessments for development projects within South Africa. Arcus GIBB has a comprehensive ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management System in place.

The project team includes:

Dr Norbert Klages (Senior Environmental Scientist)
A Professional Natural Scientist with more than 30 years of experience, Norbert’s key experience includes environmental impact and biodiversity assessments in the coastal areas of the Eastern Cape. Norbert supervises the day to day workings of the project and team, and will provide technical input for this project.

Walter Fyvie (Senior Environmental Scientist)
A Professional Natural Scientist with 9 years experience in environmental consulting focusing on EIA, and has undertaken numerous assessments locally and abroad. Walter will be responsible for project management and technical input.

Inge Schovell (Junior Environmental Scientist)
Inge is trained in nature conservationist with experience in EIA and public participation. Inge will manage the public participation process.

YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO GET INVOLVED

Should you wish to express your views regarding this proposed development, please feel free to register as an Interested & Affected Party (I&AP) and send us your written comments. The names of all registered I&APs, together with the comments received will be incorporated into the Basic Assessment report submitted to DEDEA. Registered I&APs will be kept informed of future developments in the EIA process.

Please note that the I&AP registration and comment period will run from 10 Aug – 21 Sep 2010. Should you wish to register please submit your name, contact information (address, telephone number, e-mail address, postal address) and written comments to Inge (see details below) before the end date. A comments form is supplied at the back end of this notice for your convenience, but feel free to add extra pages if needed. Email submissions are preferred, but posted comments will be accepted.

Ms Inge Schovell
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Tel: (041) 392 7500; Fax: 041 363 9300
Email: ischovell@gibb.co.za
Figure 1: Erven 1995, 3217, and 518 proposed for the development of the Mount Road Social Housing Project.
Figure 2: Proposed Site Development Plan for the Mount Road Social Housing Project.
Figure 3: Proposed Typical Elevations of the Mount Road Social Housing Project.
## I&AP details

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## Comments

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