



30 July 2024

**SCREENING TOOL - SITE SENSITIVITY VERIFICATION REPORT: UNAUTHORIZED POULTRY REARING FACILITY ON THE REMAINDER OF FARM GROOTVLEI NO. 225, CALEDON**

**1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

This report aims to verify the site sensitivity for the Remainder (RE) of Farm 225 Grootvlei, Caledon. The farm is located approximately 15 kilometres northeast of Caledon and approximately 3 kilometres north of the N2 with access via a dirt road. The property is a working farm and is approximately 311,15ha in size. The development of the existing poultry rearing facility (Figure 1) took place onsite prior to the applicant obtaining the necessary Environmental Authorisation (EA). The applicant, Bapchix Pty (Ltd), therefore intends on applying for a retrospective EA to legalise the existing chicken pens by means of a Section 24G application process. The existing facilities consist of ten (10) chicken houses that accommodate a maximum of 16 000 chickens per house. Each house is approximately 1200 m<sup>2</sup> in extent with free range pasture located at the side of each house (Figure 2).

The information contained in this report was ground truthed by means of a site visit that was conducted on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 2023 by Paul Slabbert (EAPASA: 2019/1036) and Olivia Brunings (SACNASP: 154065)

**Access** - Access to the property is existing. At the time of development, internal unpaved roads provided access to the development footprint, and these access ways remain in place. Additionally, new internal unpaved access roads have been developed between the chicken houses.

**Electricity** – Electricity to the chicken houses is supplied by Eskom via existing infrastructure. Electricity supply is currently supplemented via generators.

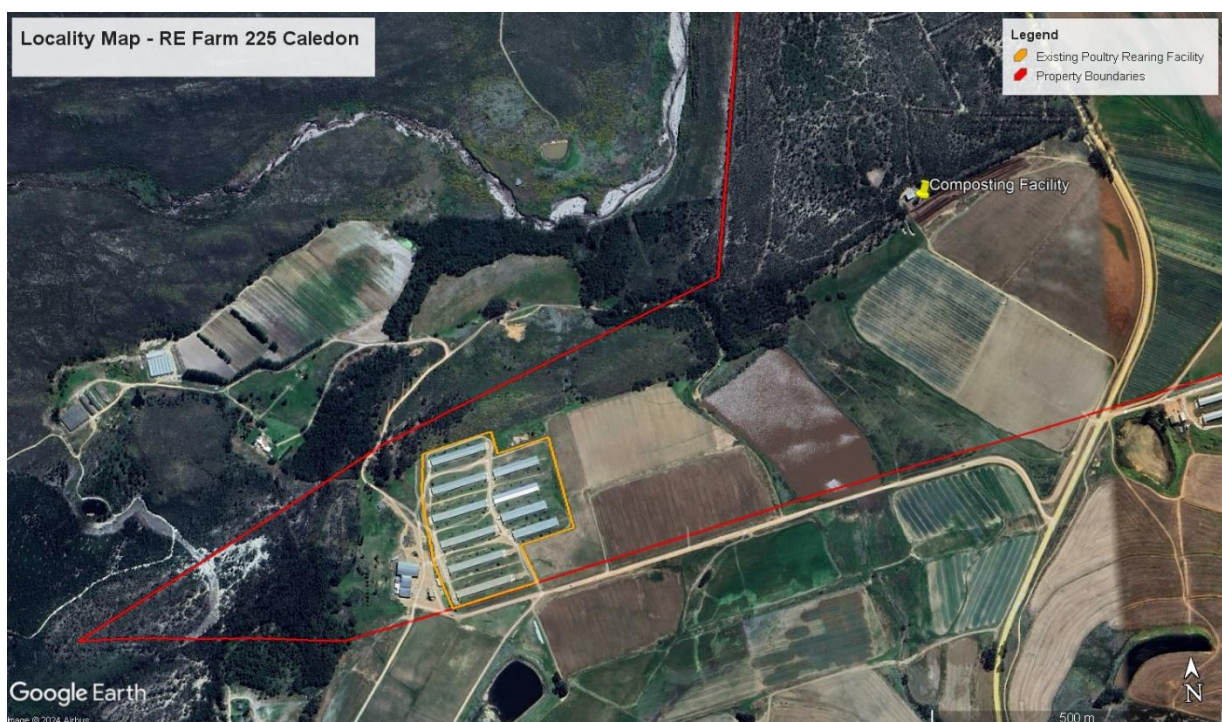
**Sewage** – The sewage system at the chicken houses is in the form of septic tanks, as no wastewater treatment works is located nearby.

**Mortality** – Non-infectious mortalities are disposed of via the registered onsite composting facility. The Applicant confirmed that the mortality rate ranges between 2 to 4% and that there is sufficient composting capacity on the farm to accommodate the expected mortalities.

**Manure** will be managed by directing a portion into the registered onsite composting facility as per the current operation. The remainder will be used directly in the agricultural industry. High-pressure wash water will be used to clean the chicken houses, with any residual water lost through evaporation.

**Water** – Water is available onsite.

**Domestic waste** – Biodegradable materials will be composted within the onsite composting facility, plastic containers will be recycled, and the remainder of the waste will be buried in a demarcated camped off area as per the current operation. Given the size of the area in use (<50m<sup>2</sup>) the volume of waste disposed of (<500kg per month) and the location of the disposal site, this activity does not trigger the NEMA or NEM:WA.



**Figure 1: Locality Map – Existing poultry rearing facility on RE Farm 225, Caledon**



**Figure 2: SDP of existing poultry rearing facility on RE Farm 225, Caledon**

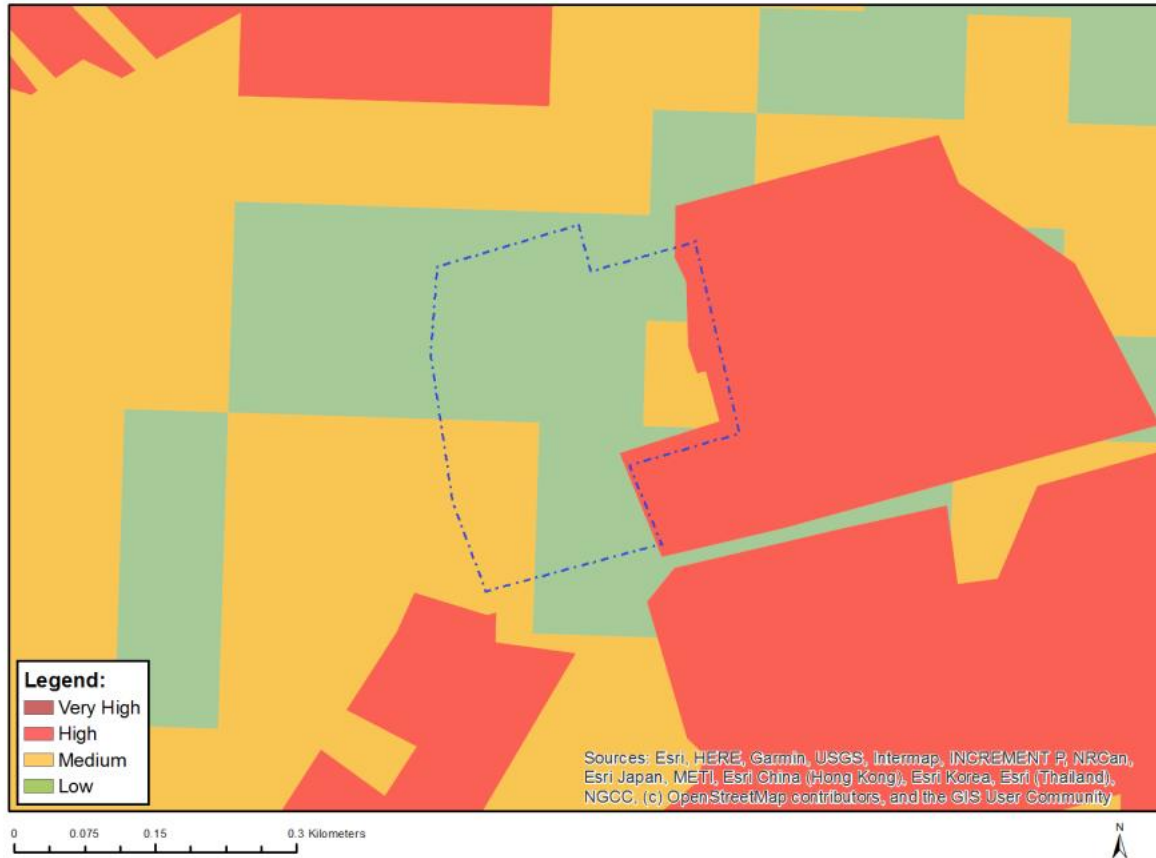
## 2. EIA TOOLKIT REPORT RESULTS

The Site Screening report was based on the placement of the development footprint within the farm boundaries. It should therefore be noted that while certain areas may have a lower sensitivity rating than indicated overall, the DEA screening tool automatically reverts to the highest sensitivity for the block area drawn. The Screening Tool Report assigned the following sensitivity ratings to the development footprint.

### 2.1. Agriculture Theme (High Sensitivity)

The report generated for the exiting development footprint indicated that the majority of the development footprint is classified as having a 'low' and 'medium' agricultural sensitivity with two peripheral areas along the east of the development footprint classified as having a 'high' Sensitivity (**See Figure 3**). The DEA screening tool automatically reverts to the highest sensitivity. The report therefore flags the development footprint as High Sensitivity due to the perimeter areas that border agricultural fields which are listed as follows:

- 'Annual Crop Cultivation / Planted Pastures Rotation; Land capability; 01. Very low/02. Very low/03. Low-Very low/04. Low-Very low/05. Low'
- 'Annual Crop Cultivation / Planted Pastures Rotation; Land capability; 06. Low-Moderate/07. Low-Moderate/08. Moderate'



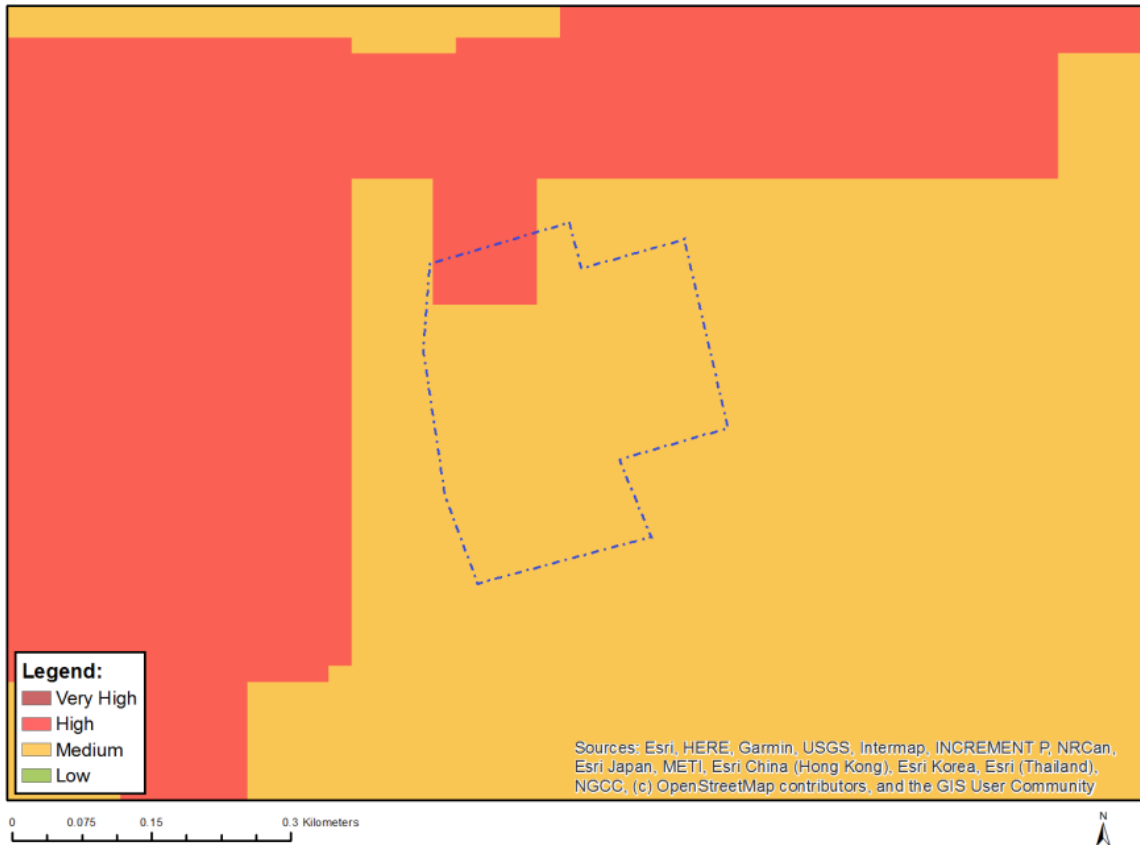
**Figure 3: Agricultural Sensitivity. Location of the development footprint shown as blue dotted line.**

The proposed activity is in line with the current permissible land use (Agriculture with consent use for intensive feed farming) and the development has complimented the agricultural productivity on the farm, therefore having a high positive impact on the operation. Given that the development has contributed to agriculture on site and in the region, it is the opinion of the EAP that no further input will be required from an agricultural specialist.

The Department of Agriculture will be included as a commenting authority.

## **2.2. Animal Species Theme (High Sensitivity)**

The majority of the development footprint is identified as having a 'medium' animal species sensitivity due to the following: '*Insecta-Aloeides caledoni*; *Insecta-Aloeides egerides*; *Invertebrate-Aneuryphymus montanus*'. A portion of the development footprint is identified as having a 'high' animal species sensitivity for *Aves-Circus maurus* (Black Harrier) **(See Figure 4)**.



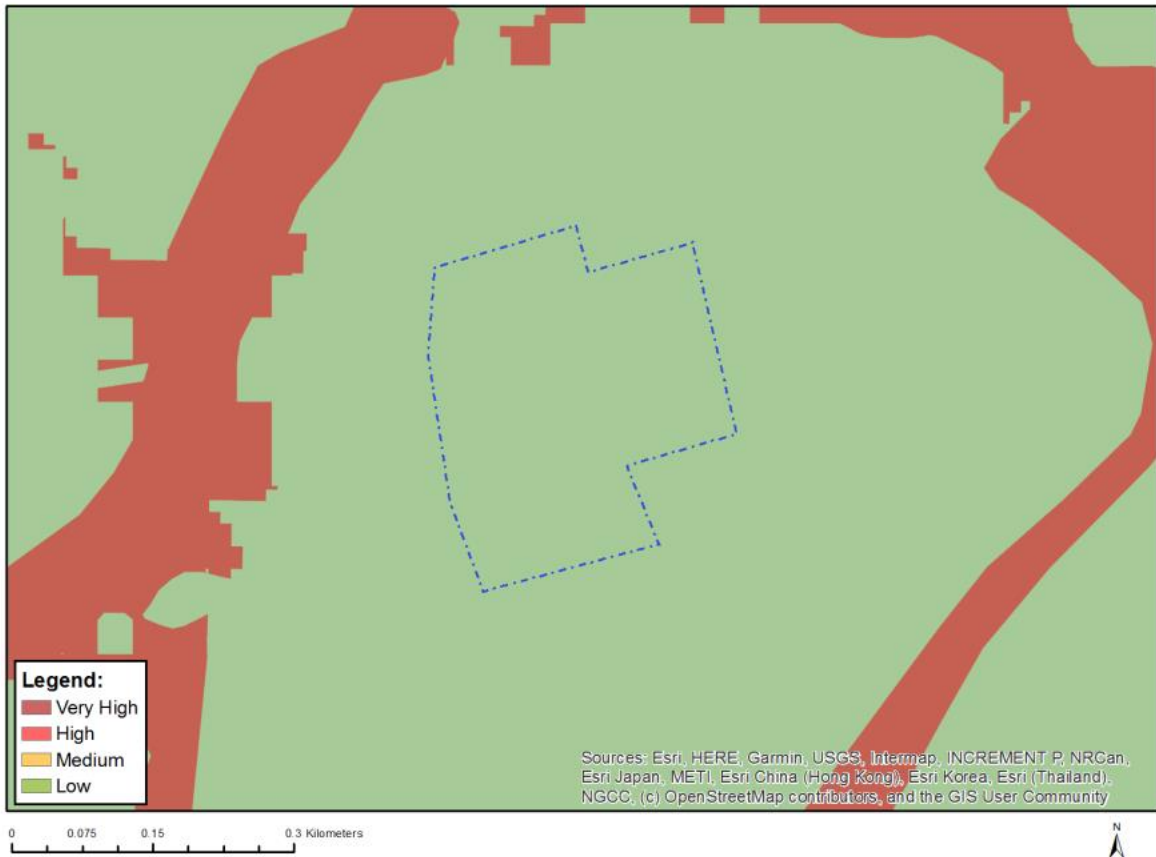
**Figure 4: Animal Species Sensitivity. Location of the development footprint shown as blue dotted line.**

Terrestrial Fauna Specialist input will not be required. The development took place on existing agricultural fields. Considering proof on aerial photography, it is highly unlikely that natural vegetation was present within the development footprint prior to construction of the chicken houses and thus it is improbable that the faunal species listed would have been present on the development site.

### **2.3. Aquatic Biodiversity Theme (Low Sensitivity)**

The Aquatic Biodiversity theme is identified and mapped as 'low' sensitivity within the development footprint (**See Figure 5**). No aquatic features occur within the development footprint and the development footprint is located more than 150 m from surrounding drainage lines and associated wetlands. The low sensitivity rating is therefore accurate, and no further specialist assessment is required in terms of NEMA.

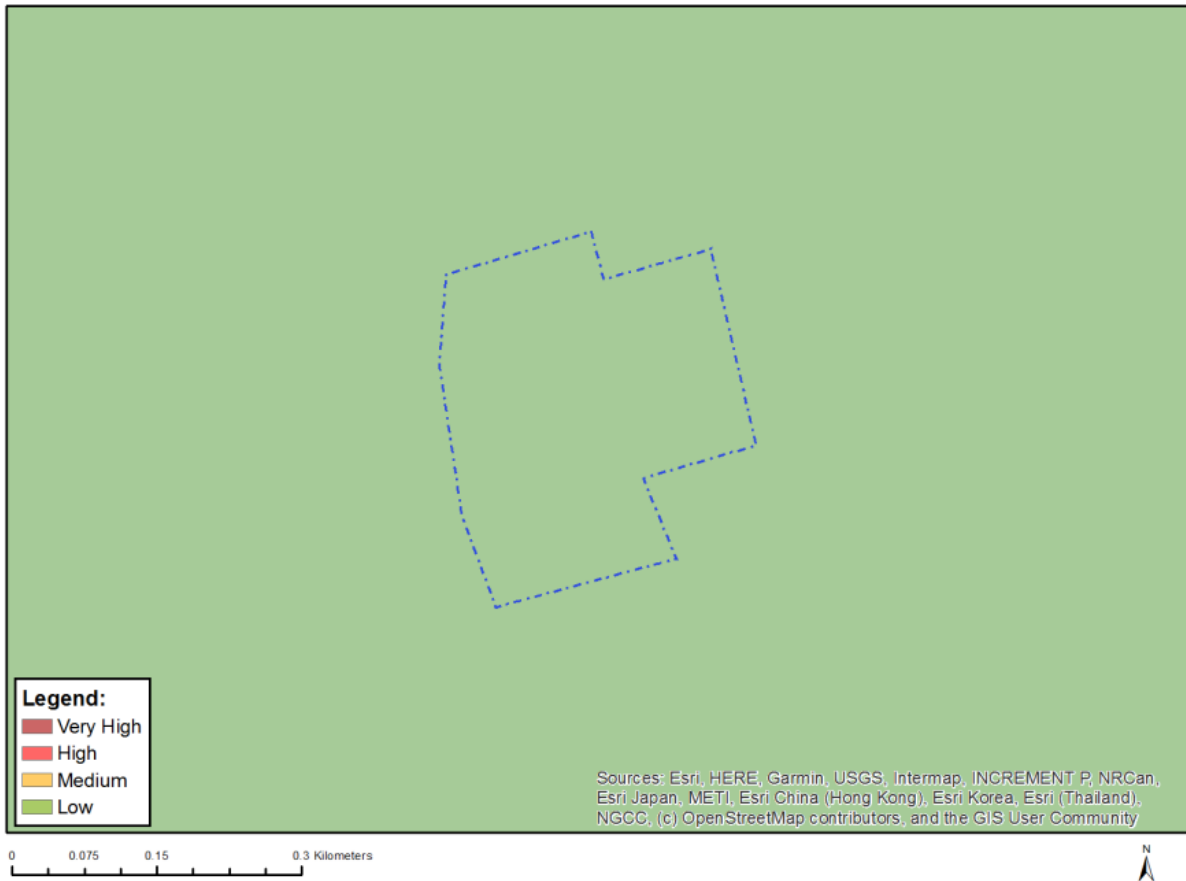
It should however be noted that development within the 500m regulated area from a wetland which will trigger the National Water Act and a risk assessment matrix compiled by an aquatic specialist will likely be required to confirm Water Use Authorisation application requirements.



**Figure 5: Aquatic Biodiversity Sensitivity. Location of the development footprint shown as blue dotted line.**

**2.4. Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Theme (Low Sensitivity)**

This theme is identified and mapped as 'low' (See Figure 6). A NID and screener has confirmed this and has been submitted to HWC for comment. Comment received from HWC confirmed that no Heritage resources are likely to occur on site and that no further studies will be required. A chance fossil finds procedure will however be implemented onsite.



**Figure 6: Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Sensitivity. Location of the development footprint shown as blue dotted line.**

## 2.5. Civil Aviation Theme (High Sensitivity)

This theme is identified as 'high' due to the following: 'Within 8 km of other civil aviation aerodrome' (See Figure 7).

The Caledon informal airfield is located approximately 2.5 km South of Caledon and 18 km from the development footprint. A private airstrip is also located approximately 2 km southwest of Caledon and 15 km from the development footprint. Both airfields are not regularly used and only used for small privately owned planes. The airfields are far from the site and not visible from the development footprint. Due to the distance of the proposed development from the airfield and seeing that no tall structures or any aviation activities that could interfere with the operation of these airfields are proposed; no impacts on the airfield are anticipated. No triggers for this theme were noted within an 8km radius. The EAP is therefore of the opinion that the sensitivity rating for this theme should be decreased to 'low'. Due consideration has been given to the potential impact of the proposed development on civil aviation and it is

determined that the proposed development will have an insignificant impact on civil aviation. No specialist input will be required.



**Figure 7: Civil Aviation Sensitivity. Location of the development footprint shown as blue dotted line.**

## 2.6. Defence Theme (Low Sensitivity)

A 'low' sensitivity has been assigned to the development footprint (**See Figure 8**). Due to the nature of the development, it is determined that it has an insignificant impact on Defence. No specialist input will be required.

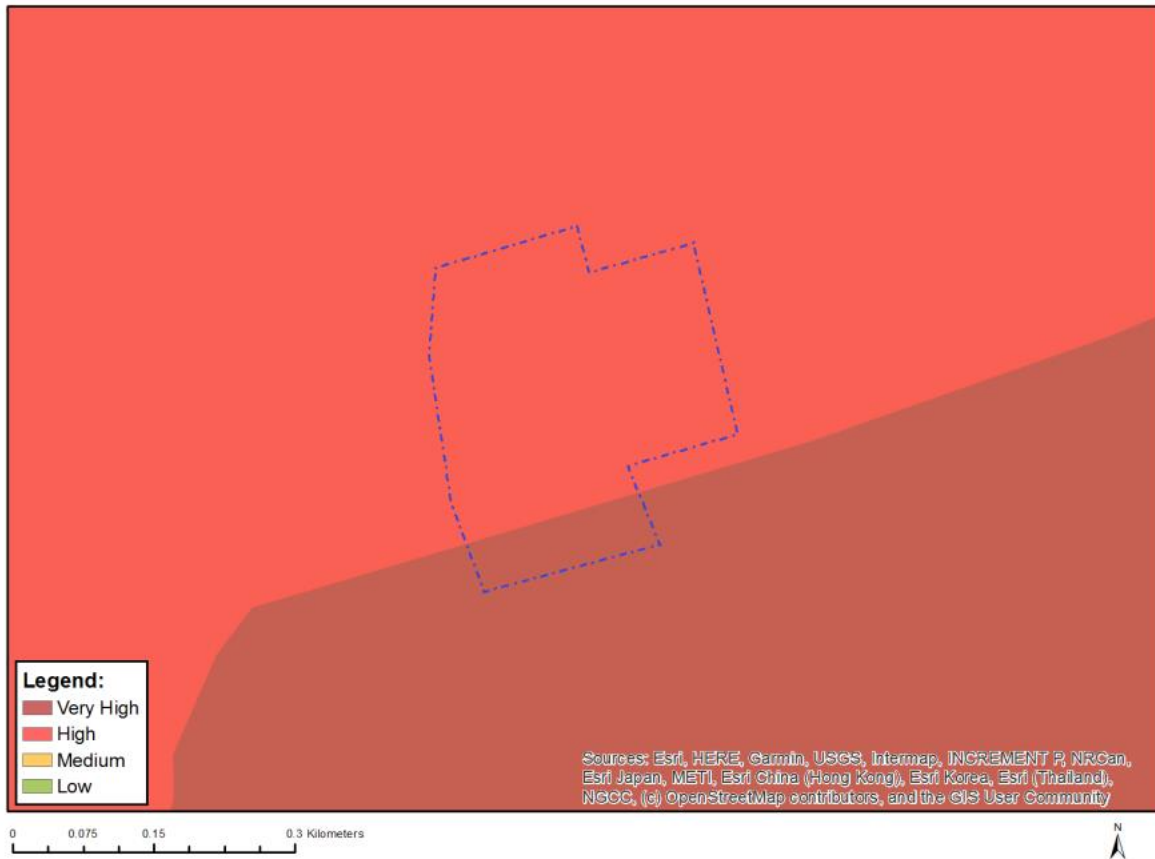




**Figure 8: Defence Sensitivity. Location of the development footprint shown as blue dotted line.**

### **2.7. Palaeontology Theme (Very High Sensitivity)**

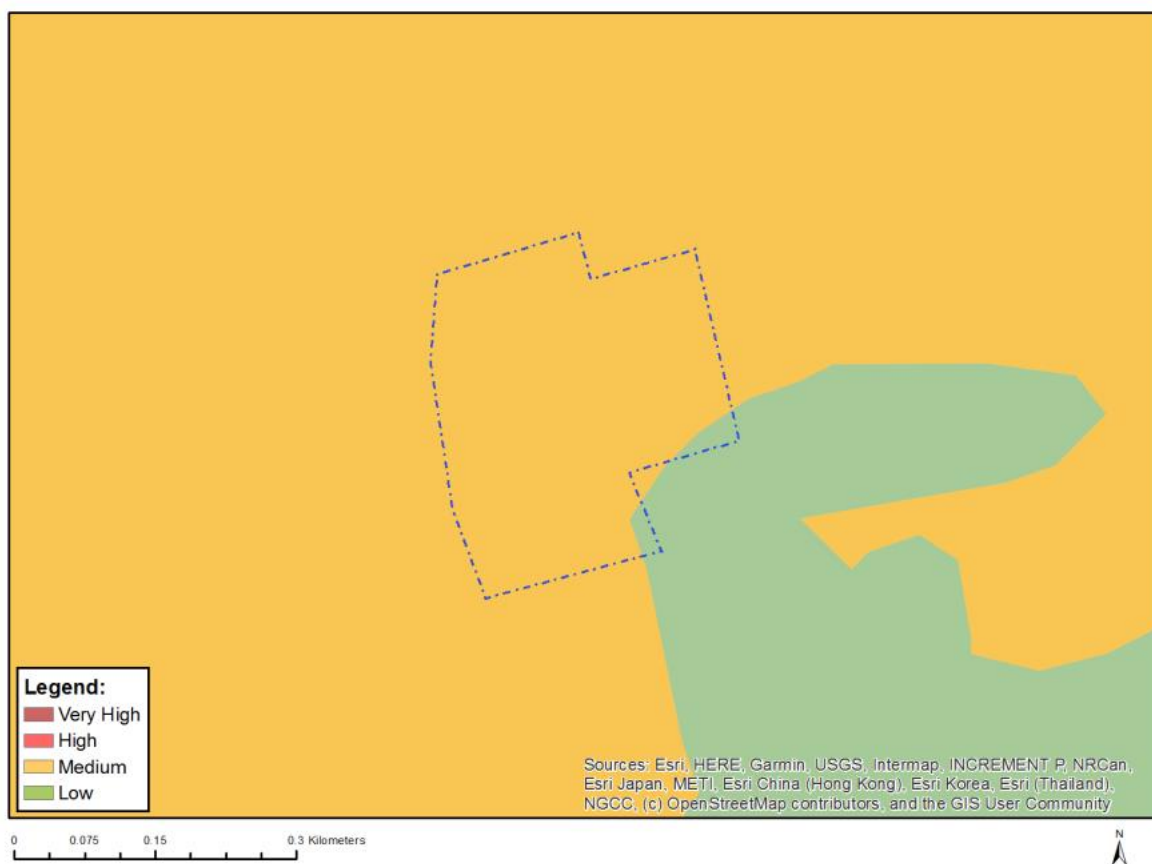
A 'very high' sensitivity has been assigned to the southern outcrop of the development footprint due to '*Features with a Very High paleontological sensitivity*' and a 'high' sensitivity has been assigned to the remainder of the development footprint due to '*Features with a High paleontological sensitivity*' (**See Figure 9**) A Specialist Heritage screener was completed for input at an early stage considering the site was used for agricultural purposes prior to the development of the chicken houses. The screener confirmed that it is unlikely that the development will have a significant impact on heritage resources, provided that the recommended Fossil Finds Procedure is implemented. A NID was submitted to HWC. Comment received from HWC confirmed that no Heritage resources are likely to occur on site and that no further studies will be required.



**Figure 9: Planetology Sensitivity. Location of the development footprint shown as blue dotted line.**

## **2.8. Plant Species Theme (Medium Sensitivity)**

This theme is identified as 'medium' sensitivity and mapped as 'medium' sensitivity with two patches of 'low' sensitivity identified in the southeast of the development footprint (**See Figure 10**). Terrestrial Flora Specialist input will not be required. The development took place on existing agricultural fields as per aerial photography proof. No natural vegetation would have occurred within the development footprint and prior to the development, thus it is improbable that the flora species listed in the screening tool would have been present on the development site. The sensitivity was therefore low at the time of development.



**Figure 10: Plant Species Sensitivity. Location of the development footprint shown as blue dotted line.**

## **2.9. Terrestrial Biodiversity Theme (Very High Sensitivity)**

A 'very high' sensitivity has been assigned to the development footprint (**See Figure 11**) due to:

- *'Endangered ecosystem - Overberg Sandstone Fynbos'*
- *'Critically Endangered ecosystem -Western Ruens Shale Renosterveld'*

Terrestrial Flora Specialist input will not be required. The development took place on existing disturbed agricultural land previously used for grain cultivation as per aerial photography proof. No natural vegetation would have occurred within the development footprint and thus it is improbable that the Terrestrial Biodiversity mapped in the screening tool would have been present on the development site. The onsite sensitivity was therefore low at the time of development considering it was already cultivated.



**Figure 11: Terrestrial Biodiversity Sensitivity. Location of the development footprint shown as blue dotted line.**

### **3. SPECIALIST STUDIES IDENTIFIED**

The following Specialist Studies were identified as part of the Screening Tool Reports:

#### **1. Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment**

The land use of the property and surrounding area is primarily Agricultural in nature. The existing structures are visually identical to the authorised structures on farm no. 226 which borders the proposed development site (farm no. 225) to the south. The authorised chicken houses on farm no. 226 are located immediately south of the development site's southern boundary.

The existing structures on farm no. 225 are not visually intrusive. Primary view corridor is from the gravel road that leads off the N2 and provides access to the property (Photo 1). This road cuts across the farm and ultimately leads to Greyton but it is not regularly used. The existing visual impact of the chicken houses is very low. No Landscape/ Visual Impact Assessment will be required.



*Photo 1: View from the gravel road used to access the farm. The location of existing chicken houses is indicated by the yellow dashed line.*

## **2. Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment**

A Notification of Intent to Develop Screener report was submitted to Heritage WC for comment by a specialist. Comment received from HWC confirmed that no Heritage resources are likely to occur on site and that no further studies will be required. A chance fossil finds procedure will however be implemented onsite.

## **3. Palaeontology Impact Assessment**

A Notification of Intent to Develop Screener report was submitted to Heritage WC for comment by a specialist. Comment received from HWC confirmed that no Heritage resources are likely to occur on site and that no further studies will be required. A chance fossil finds procedure will however be implemented onsite.

## **4. Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment**

The EAP is of the opinion that Terrestrial Biodiversity Specialist input will not be required based on the following: i) The chicken houses were constructed on existing agricultural fields; ii) No natural vegetation was present on the development footprint at the time when the chicken houses were developed, it is improbable that the Terrestrial Biodiversity mapped in the screening tool would have been present at development site.

## **5. Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment**

No aquatic features occur within the development footprint of the chicken houses. The development footprint and the proposed development footprint are located more than 32m from the nearest watercourses. No further specialist assessment is required in terms of NEMA. However, the development area is located within the 500m regulated proximity from desktop indicated wetlands and could thus trigger the National Water Act. A risk assessment matrix compiled by an aquatic specialist will likely be required to confirm Water Use Authorisation application requirements.

## **6. Hydrology Assessment**

No hydrological features will be impacted on by the proposed development. The development footprint is located more than 32m from the nearest watercourse. No further specialist assessment is required in terms of NEMA. However, the development area is located within the 500m regulated proximity from desktop indicated wetlands and will thus trigger the National Water Act. A risk assessment matrix compiled by an aquatic specialist will likely be required to confirm Water Use Authorisation application requirements.

## **7. Traffic Impact Assessment**

The existing access to the farm and existing internal access roads will be used. The development of the chicken houses would likely have increased the number of vehicles entering and exiting the farm to a limited degree compared to the prior operational activities on the property. However, given the surrounding land use and the fact that access to the development area is direct and existing, the traffic impact is low. No further specialist studies will be required.

## **8. Socio-Economic Assessment**

Theewaterskloof Municipality is the largest local authority in the Overberg District with an area of approximately 3231km<sup>2</sup> and houses 13 wards, with the City of Cape Town located on its western boundary and sharing the eastern coastline with the Overberg Municipality. It is the most populous municipality in the Overberg district with 42% of the total district population. Theewaterskloof Municipality can be categorised as a rural area with open spaces and farming activities as it is clear from the land and areas occupied by agriculture, small holdings, and other land uses.

The farm is surrounded by agricultural functions on three sides and the associated socio-economic environment. The farming community in the area is a mix of landowners, management, and labour. The farm borders an undeveloped mountainous area to the east

that is currently significantly impacted by alien invasive trees. The landowner is actively involved in operations to clear these trees and restore natural systems in this mountainous area.

No potential negative socio-economic impacts are anticipated for the development of the chicken farm. On the contrary, the chicken farm provides socio-economic benefits for the region in terms of job creation and food security. The intention is facilitating production of free-range chickens in response to the growing market need for free range chicken.

No specialist input will be required.

#### **9. Ambient Air Quality Impact Assessment**

There will be no impacts on ambient air quality and the Air Quality Act does not apply. No specialist input will be required.

#### **10. Plant Species Assessment**

Terrestrial Flora Specialist input will not be required. The chicken houses were constructed on existing agricultural fields. No natural vegetation occurred within the development footprint of the chicken houses prior to development. It is improbable that the Terrestrial Biodiversity mapped in the screening tool would have been present within the development footprint.

#### **11. Animal Species Assessment**

Terrestrial Fauna Specialist input will not be required. The chicken houses were constructed on existing agricultural fields. No natural vegetation occurred within the development footprint of the chicken prior to development. It is improbable that the Terrestrial Biodiversity mapped in the screening tool would have been present within the development footprint.

#### **Conclusion**

No further specialist studies will be required in terms of NEMA.