

SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE RESOURCES AGENCY

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANS

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Note: It is acknowledged that it is sometimes considered that there is a difference between a Conservation Plan (CP) and a Conservation Management Plan (CMP). One could argue that a CMP deals in more detail with a strategy to implement policies in the CP. However I have regarded a CMP as the essential document which incorporates policies and strategies for implementing them; and Section 47 of the National Heritage Resources Act, No 25, of 1999 (NHRA) refers to Conservation Management Plans.

Section 47 of the National Heritage Resources Act, No 25, of 1999, entitled **General policy** states that:

- (1) SAHRA and a provincial heritage resources authority -
 - (a) must, within three years after the commencement of this Act, adopt statements of general policy for the management of all heritage resources owned or controlled by it or vested in it; and
 - (b) may from time to time amend such statements so that they are adapted to changing circumstances or in accordance with increased knowledge, and
 - (c) must review any such statement within 10 years after its adoption.
- (2) Each heritage resources authority must adopt for any place which is protected in terms of this Act and is owned or controlled by it or vested in it, a plan for the management of such place in accordance with the best environmental, heritage conservation, scientific and educational principles that can reasonably be applied taking into account the location, size and nature of the place and the resources of the authority concerned, and may from time to time review any such plan.
- (3) A conservation management plan may at the discretion of the heritage resources authority concerned and for a period not exceeding 10 years, be operated either solely by the heritage resources authority or in conjunction with an environmental or tourism authority or under contractual arrangements, on such terms and conditions as the heritage resources authority may determine.
- (4) Regulations by the heritage resources authority concerned must provide for a process whereby, prior to the adoption or amendment of any statement of general policy or any conservation management plan, the public and interested organisations are notified of the availability of a draft statement or plan for inspection, and comment is invited and considered by the heritage resources authority concerned.
- (5) A heritage resources authority may not act in any manner inconsistent with any statement of general policy or conservation management plan.
- (6) All current statements of general policy and conservation management plans adopted by a heritage resources authority must be available for public inspection on request.

Definition

The statement of significance is the basis for a Conservation Management Plan. It is based on documentary, oral and physical evidence.

A Conservation Management Plan is a document which focuses on the significance of a place, and the development of policies to enable that significance to be retained in its future management, use and development. Its strength is directly related to the amount of support it has from the community and decision-makers, like the provincial and local authorities and will be used to guide and inform these decision makers and to guide developers. Its effectiveness is dependent on support from the stakeholders. A strategy for implementing the plan and a procedure for monitoring is included. Ensuring the economic development of the area is an integral part of the work. A procedure for impact assessment of any development proposals or any intervention must be included.

Its purpose is to help to identify and assess the attributes which make a place valuable to us and to our society. An understanding of it is therefore basic to any planning process.

A clear understanding of the nature and level of the significance of a place will suggest constraints on future action and introduce flexibility by identifying areas which can be adapted or developed with greater freedom.

Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA)

If development or any other intervention on a site or precinct is proposed, an essential part of the conservation planning process is the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA). This will enable the assessment of the impact of change or new work or any development on the heritage value of the site.

An HIA is an effective conservation tool for establishing whether the impact is acceptable; weighing up the positive and negative impacts; and identifying any mitigation strategies which might minimise any potential negative impact that alterations or new development could have on the heritage value of the precinct.

Purpose of a Conservation Management Plan

The purpose of a conservation management plan is to:

1. develop a shared understanding of the valued qualities of a site and its context;
2. provide a framework to assess the impact of changes to the site and its context;
3. identify threats;
4. provide a basis to enhance visitor experience of the site and its context;
5. provide a basis for developing proposals for any new scheme for the site and its context;
6. inform necessary stabilization, repair, restoration or maintenance of the site;
7. inform the day to day management of the site;
8. integrate the conservation and development objectives for the site and its context;
9. integrate conservation into the provincial and local planning processes;
10. integrate cultural and environmental issues;
11. establish a procedure for impact assessment (HIA) of any development proposals or any intervention;
12. establish a procedure for monitoring;
13. provide for job creation and employment opportunities for the community and ensure the economic development of the area;
14. develop a budget for work;
15. integrate a business plan into the process; and
16. plan for mitigation of any adverse effects of development

The objective of any heritage project to bring alive its legacy by linking its oral, documentary and physical evidence and identifying and understanding those places, events, traditions and values which shaped this legacy, planning for their conservation and building on the historical role of the heritage precinct, while ensuring its economic development.

The management of the conservation of these sites should be planned so as to contribute to conservation and development; being highly sensitive to the impact of visitor access and providing for and managing physical access to them; ensuring the sensitive use of existing buildings, spaces and settings within the precinct; and planning for mitigating the effects of new development on the sense of place, ensuring that the design, location, scale, form and materials of new structures and features respect the heritage value of the precinct.

Conservation is done by searching for and making the sites, and the understanding of their value, publicly accessible; placing the sites within the broader cultural and natural landscape; facilitating deeper definition and interpretation of their significance. This is to be achieved within a framework of economic, social and cultural upliftment of the residents of these precincts, villages, towns, etc.

The setting up of a framework for the integration of the conservation management plan into existing conceptual frameworks and proposals and development plans is essential, as is identifying and consulting the community members and the role players and stakeholders involved, and planning for these consultative meetings.

Multidisciplinary Team

The Conservation Management Planning team should comprise as many disciplines as is feasible and should ideally include an historian, a community historian, an oral historian, an architect, archaeologist, palaeontologist, planner, collections/objects manager or curator, an ecologist.

Gathering Evidence

An understanding of the cultural significance of the heritage site is informed by an investigation of the documentary, oral, living or intangible heritage and physical information on the site within its broader context. None can be neglected as each corroborates and complements the other. It is ideal to carry out an initial site examination with a plan or map in order to become familiar with the place. Having done this, the interpretation of documentary and oral, living or intangible evidence will be easier.

Documentary information

Archival and published maps and records; correspondence, reports and institutions consulted in this research are found in archives (state, national or individual), libraries, collections, graphic material such as sketches and

watercolours; and from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, photography becomes an important source; aerial photographs, maps, plans and surveys for settlement, subdivision and planning.

Physical evidence

The fabric of a place is often the most accurate document of its history. A field survey is conducted to record the visible physical qualities of the place. Information is recorded on maps and survey sheets, which are included in the survey as appendices. The existing fabric is examined in detail and its story interpreted in the light of documentary and oral and intangible information.

Archaeological and palaeontological evidence

Archaeological and palaeontological surveys will be essential aspects of the work. A reasonable understanding of the development and uses of the place will emerge.

Oral, living and intangible heritage evidence

Oral history records people's spoken words and stories about memories of past experiences. These oral stories and traditions are usually recorded through interviews, but they can be recorded from conversations or performances. The central motivation for using oral, living or intangible evidence is to help to transform site conservation into a more people-orientated practice. Recording the stories told through oral histories, traditions and performances is significant for conservation work because they help us to identify sites of historical and cultural significance, record people's uses of the site and record people's understandings of the site.

The associational links and values - social, cultural, religious, political, historical, spiritual and non spiritual values – that the material heritage has gives it intangible significance for the *practising communities* and *imagined communities*.

The term, *practising communities*, is used in reference to groups of people who still continue practising or observing their cultures, traditions, knowledge systems, and other aspects of intangible heritage in relation to a site or object.

The concept, *imagined communities*, is utilised in reference to people who no longer live together because of political or other reasons. It also could refer to those who view themselves as the living descendants of, or are connected in some way to those who lived there before.

Maps, Plans and Surveys

Most places have had surveys and maps made at various times in their history. These may include initial settlement, drainage and sewerage, subdivision, planning or alterations to title. Sometimes actual survey material, on which one can plot new features, is available from municipalities, provincial authorities or survey departments..

Photographs or sketches provide essential aids to understanding the place when interpreting the evidence.

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SITES

A. Nature of Significance

The following broad criteria for assessing significance have been borrowed and adapted from the Burra Charter, Australia ICOMOS, the Athens Charter, The Venice Charter, and the Nara Document on Authenticity, with a more precise categorisation of these criteria developed, which is based on James Kerr's guidelines for assessing sites.

Historic value: A place has historic value because it has influenced, or been influenced by an historic figure or group, event, phase or activity. The significance of a place will be greater where evidence of the association or event survives *in situ*, or where the setting is substantially intact, than where it has been changed or evidence does not survive.

Historical or Social value: The historical or social value embraces the qualities for which the place has become a focus of spiritual, educational, political, economic, national or other cultural sentiment to a majority or minority group. **Historical Value:** A place has historical value because it relates to the past. It is not associated with a particular figure, event, phase or activity.

Aesthetic value: Aesthetic value includes aspects of sensory perception, which include scale, form, colour, texture

and material of the fabric; the smells and sounds associated with the place and its use. It could be an important example of a style or period; have fine details/ workmanship; or be the work of a major architect or builder. Scientific value: The scientific or research value of a place will depend on the importance of the data involved, on its rarity, quality or representativeness of industrial/technical/engineering achievement; new/rare/experimental building techniques for the time; archaeological/palaeontological/geological; and on the degree to which the place may contribute to further substantial information.

Environmental value: The place may be a landmark in, contribute to the character of a town, city or village, street or square or be part of an important group of sites or buildings.

A more precise categorisation of these criteria has been developed which is based on James Kerr's guidelines for assessing sites in *Conservation Plans for Historic(al) Places, National Trust, Sidney, 1996*.

1. Ability to demonstrate

The nature of the significance can be understood by asking the question: does the place and its components provide physical evidence which demonstrates:

philosophies or customs;
designs, functions, techniques, processes, styles;
uses and associations with events or people.

Examples could be

- * landscape
- * rural way of life
- * education
- * community customs & beliefs

2. Associational links without surviving evidence

Where evidence of association survives, it is included in the "ability to demonstrate" criterion above. There are, however, associational links which are not attested to by any surviving evidence. Places have associational significance for a variety of reasons, for example, the association may include incidents relating to a political activity, a ceremony, a school boycott or a massacre.

3. Formal or aesthetic qualities

These refer to places which have considerable unity in scale, form, materials, textures, colour, space and relationship. It also refers to places which have a relationship between its parts and the setting which reinforces the quality of both. The relationship of a place to its setting is important. Think of the contribution a place can make to the hills and mountains surrounding a site.

A combination of factors

Investigation seldom reveals places that are significant for only one of the three criteria. Two or three aspects of significance are usually involved.

B. Level of Significance

The level of significance (high, medium and low) of a place or the components of a place can be assessed in terms of the following criteria:

In terms of the ability to demonstrate the assessment is concerned with whether it is:

1. Early
2. Seminal
3. Intact
4. Representative
5. Rare
6. Climatic

In terms of the level of significance, associational links depend on the:

1. Level of importance of the associated event or person to the locality or to the nation
2. Level of intimacy and duration of association
3. Extent to which evidence of the association survives, either in physical evidence at the place, or as evidence of the impact of the place on persons, literature and events.
4. Intactness of evocative quality of the place and its setting relative to the period of the association.

Assessment of the level of significance of the formal or aesthetic qualities of a place is more difficult than the other categories. However, the following simple questions can be asked:

1. What degree of unity has the place in its scale, form, materials, texture and colour?
2. What degree has the place of relationship between its parts and the setting which reinforces the quality of both?
3. What degree are contrasting elements intrusive and disruptive or agreeably surprising?

CONSERVATION POLICY

The primary purpose of a Conservation Management Plan is to establish policies which will guide the future care and development of a place. The secondary purpose is devoted to the development of policies and strategies for their implementation. Policies arise from a preliminary understanding of the significance and vulnerability of the site. These policies are intended to guide development proposals. Policy is determined by stakeholders and applied by SAHRA.

The major elements are the need to:

- retain or reveal significance
- identify feasible and compatible uses
- identify threats
- meet statutory requirements: local, provincial and national
- integrate into the planning processes
- establish management

Policies include:

1. General policies that set out:
 - the philosophical approach for the retention, reinforcement or revelation of significant fabric, form, spaces, character, qualities and, occasionally, meanings;
 - feasible, compatible and appropriate uses for the site.
2. Policies that control development by guiding changes to the place that are feasible and compatible with the retention of significance
3. Policies that guide the renewal of materials or retard their deterioration through maintenance, repair, reconstruction, consolidation, the removal of damaging work and the commencement of proper processes for protection
4. Policies that reinforce significant aspects of the setting, including relationships between the spaces, the landscape, vistas, the siting and design of new elements

The general assumption behind these policies is that any new development should broadly:

- X conserve, retain or recover the cultural interest of a place, respect the existing fabric and ensure the least possible intervention. It should not distort the evidence revealed in the fabric.
- X not disfigure valuable historical fabric and be compatible with the existing character and scale of the surroundings.
- X not affect enjoyment or appreciation of a place and its setting
- X ensure that only traditional construction techniques and materials are used to maintain or repair historical buildings
- X note that an understanding of the nature of the material of any building is essential for its effective conservation

Documents consulted

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