

Our Ref: HM / CAPE TOWN METROPOLITAN / SEA POINT / ERF 1424
Case No: HWC24020910EJV0218
Enquiries: Emily-Jane Vowles
E-mail: Emily.Vowles@westerncape.gov.za
Tel: 021 829 3324



Katie Smuts / Mike Scurr

RESPONSE TO HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT: DECISION
In terms of Section 38(4) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) and the Western Cape
Provincial Gazette 6061, Notice 298 of 2003

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT: PROPOSED SUBDIVISION AND RESIDENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT OF ERF 1424, TAFELBERG/ELLERSLIE SCHOOL, 353 MAIN ROAD, SEA POINT, SUBMITTED IN TERMS OF SECTION 38(1) OF THE NATIONAL HERITAGE RESOURCES ACT (ACT 25 OF 1999)

The matter above has reference.

This matter was discussed at the Impact Assessment Committee (IACom) meeting held on 17 June 2026.

RECORD OF DECISION:

The Committee resolved to approve the S38(4) HIA, prepared by Rennie Scurr Adendorff, dated 11 June 2026, as having met the provisions of Section 38(3) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act No 25 of 1999) (NHRA) with the following conditions:

General Conditions

1. The subdivision is approved
2. The demolition of Wynyard Mansions, Music Rooms, and Garage as per the Site Development Plan (Zutari, 2026c) is approved.
3. The massing, height and layout as per the Updated Concept Report (Zutari, 2026c) is approved.
4. The Design Guidelines (Zutari, 2026d) are endorsed.
5. The DSD portion/ school must adhere to the overall guidelines and indicators contained in the Updated HIA. Future alternative social/public uses of the school site must ensure appropriate adaptive reuse that respects the spatial and material integrity of the Ellerslie/Tafelberg structure. This must be addressed upon submission of a separate S.27 application. The DSD must seek to programme that part of the site to be a positive and integrated component of the whole and, importantly, to engage proactively with Conservation Bodies and I&APs around this matter.
6. Further developed drawings must be submitted to HWC to confirm adherence to the social housing programme and general design indicators and guidelines.
7. Detail design development in accordance with the architectural, heritage and urban design recommendations accompanied by an overall visual impact assessment of the developed design must be submitted to HWC for approval.
8. A Heritage Agreement must be entered into between HWC and WCG within 6 months of the date of this decision in order to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the school building and property until the development of that portion of site is affected.
9. The heritage criteria, guidelines and development controls pertaining to the site layout and informants are to be adhered to in the future repurposing of the historic school building portion of the site
10. An interpretation strategy in response to the findings and recommendations of the Socio-Historical Study must be submitted to HWC for approval upon submission of the detail design development.

Archaeological Conditions

1. Initial inspection of foundation trenches must be undertaken when these are opened during construction phase.
2. Initial monitoring of works in the area of the old Ellerslie Road alignment must be conducted, and if cobbles are located there, these must be retained and reused elsewhere on site.
3. Any future redevelopment of the DSD portion must follow relevant archaeological processes.
4. If any human remains or significant archaeological materials are encountered during construction work all work in that area must be halted, and the area cordoned off until HWC has been notified, and an appropriate course of action can be determined. This may include mitigation through excavation.
5. No PIA is recommended, but a fossil finds protocol must be provided.

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Socio-Historical Conditions

1. Presently, the plan under consideration is for mixed-use development on the eastern portion of the site, incorporating social housing, affordable housing and market-related housing, as well as retail. This plan is still under development and current HIA processes relate only to site enablement. While development at this scale would impact on the character of the school grounds, there is great potential for such development to support the associational, intangible heritage qualities of the site.
2. Besides the highly visible link to contemporary spatial justice struggles, there is clear precedent for affordable housing on the site. Although Wynyard Mansions is small, its story acts as a microcosm for many of the struggles still faced by working people in Sea Point. It provided a crucial foothold for vulnerable individuals and families in the city and enabled crucial access to jobs and urban facilities. The proposal to develop affordable and social housing is strongly supported from an intangible heritage perspective in this regard. If it is feasible from a development and usage perspective to retain part of the physical fabric of Wynyard Mansions as the physical manifestation of this history, this would be appropriate and supported. Design for future development must be mindful that Wynyard Mansions holds a deep connection to housing struggles in Sea Point and its links to everyday stories of urban survival in Cape Town. However, this must not form a blockage to the realization and reflection of the site's associations with affordable housing and spatial justice. If the design and feasibility scoping processes do not support the retention of the block or parts thereof, consideration must be given to reflecting its memory through other creative means: this could include use of the footprint, design aesthetics, naming, or some form of publicly visible interpretation, exhibition or historical storytelling.
3. The sense of the property as a community anchor, supporting individuals' and families' interconnection between neighbourhood, home, and community, is one of the most central associations with the site. Any development must be oriented towards acting as an integrated and inclusive community anchor. Affordable housing is a key lever for this kind of community integration, enabling people to live where they work and where their children go to school – echoing the experiences of the Ellerslie alumnae who had the privilege of going home for a quick lunch, participating in school extramurals, and having parental support for school activities and fundraisers. The proposal to develop social and affordable housing on the site is therefore entirely in keeping with the community-oriented social history of the site. In practice, this means development must be focused not only on housing alone but also on the creation of community facilities and points of connection, with the potential to counter some of the fragmentation experienced by residents in recent years. There are many possibilities for achieving this: for example, active and well-programmed community centres, citizens' advice bureaux, a focus on businesses in the retail portion which support day-to-day needs, safe spaces for children, and well-designed spaces for community gatherings.
4. The educational history of the site is highly significant, but this does not necessarily mean that the site requires literal reinterpretation as a school. This aspect of its heritage can be broadly interpreted to include facilities and housing design that are genuinely supportive of family life and healthy psycho-social development. This could include elements such as a creche, safe play spaces for children, and social amenities suitable for families. This is especially important in a context where most new developments do not cater for families with children. The development of affordable housing on the site also opens the possibility for children currently attending schools in Sea Point to live close to school, shifting the current dynamic where children leave home early in the morning to travel into the city on public transport. This would represent a revival to historical dynamics of interlinkage between schools and the residential community of Sea Point. While this HIA process does not include the school building itself, it is worth noting here that the older portions of the building, including the interiors, are highly significant from a socio-historical perspective. A more detailed heritage study on the school building itself will be necessary when decisions are finalized about its future use.
5. The site's multiple connections to gendered histories could also find expression in its future development. These links are visible in the site's connections to women's education, the high concentration of women who found homes at Wynyard Mansions, and the women who have led housing struggles in Sea Point for decades. It would be appropriate to honour this history through a gender-sensitive approach to design in future development, including considerations given to public space design; safety and visibility considerations in the design of entrances and walkways; and – as noted above – design which supports safety and thriving for children and families.

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6. As a rich, multilayered site that speaks to so many aspects of Sea Point's history, it would be appropriate to include an interpretive element in the site's development which tells some of these stories. Besides the historical narrative of the schools, it is also important to have a public reflection of histories which are in danger of being forgotten, including those of Rainbow Housing and of Wynyard Mansions. These stories are also intrinsically connected to contemporary housing activism in Sea Point and the impact this activism has had on Cape Town at large. Possibilities for such interpretation could include a small public exhibition, well-designed mural art, and/or naming practices for future buildings on site.

The following considerations pertain to the Ellerslie Building forecourt specifically:

7. **Public Land:** The forecourt is not intended for private development or ownership, regardless of the level of public access made possible or not by DSD's future plans for the site. The retention of public ownership is in keeping with the social history findings around the site as a community resource. It would be advisable to make this provision explicit for future management planning.
8. **Contingent Access:** Usage of the former school building has determined the level of public access to the garden, and it is likely that this linked determination will continue in future.
9. **Heritage Values and Sense of Place:** The school forecourt acted as a social and recreational space for the school, and a green space more widely, fostering a sense of place and a green 'pause' in the urban landscape, even if only visually. The continuation of these historic meanings and values, and their extension to the surrounding community, must be supported as far as is practically possible.
10. **Continuum of Possibilities:** Meaningful efforts must be made to ensure some form of public access to the garden in line with the site's historical social meanings and significance. This must comprise visual accessibility from the housing and mixed-use development portion at a minimum, but could extend to managed access, in line with DSD's practical needs for the former school building.

It would be advisable for the spatial framework to propose a continuum of possibilities for the forecourt, to account for different levels of access and permeability in line with DSD's potential uses of the school building. These would provide a guideline for establishing appropriate levels of public access once the future of the school building is clearer. The guiding principle must be to allow for as much public access as possible, within the constraints of DSD's requirements.

Architectural and Townscape Conditions

1. The historic, C19th solid stone wall and central pier and fence walling section on main Road must be documented. Design options must be explored to retain (at minimum) representative sections of each wall in an integrated and interpretive manner with the line and form of the overall wall reflected in paving lines, where any sections are removed to facilitate positive street interface, so that the original fine-grained layout is remembered on site. This must be part of the street and landscaping interface condition.
2. The detail, grain, materiality, punctured nature of opening and form of the buildings must be modulated to respond to the varying conditions around the site. The Architecture must be fine-grained and contextually responsive and not be self-referential.
3. The internal interface conditions must be detailed to respond to the school/ DSD building and green open area.
4. The building design must engage positively with the adjacent school buildings and not present blank or service facades towards the historic school buildings.
5. The detail design must enhance visual and physical cohesiveness and connectivity with the school building.
6. Internal security provisions/ fencing must be detailed in a subtle manner with the over-riding concern being to visually retain the cohesiveness of the PHS site.
7. The future development considerations of the DSD portion of the site must recognise and incorporate the heritage design indicators and framework set out in this report.
8. The Concept Design Report and Design Guidelines Report (Zutari 2026c and 2026d) must remain the design determinants for the future design development.
9. DocomomoSA must be afforded the earliest opportunity to access Wynyard Mansions to record and document the building for public record at least 14-days prior to the commencement of demolition.
10. The detail design stage must consider whether any portion of Wynyard Mansions, for example the street bridge as entrance, could potentially be incorporated into the design. This must be contributory to memory and interpretation and/or place-making and not simply a gesture.

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Visual Impact Conditions

1. **Materiality:** All external material and finish specifications, including the building façade materiality and all ground-level hard landscaping, must be of high quality and non-reflective to reduce glare and visual intrusion.
2. **Landscape Architecture:** A comprehensive landscape master plan, prepared by a SACLAP registered professional, is essential and must be implemented and monitored. This plan is the primary mitigation tool and must prioritise visual screening through the planting of medium to large calibre trees along sensitive boundaries (especially along sensitive heritage interfaces such as The Glen, Herbert Road, Heathfield Road and Milner Road). All retaining structures must be stepped, articulated, and heavily planted to avoid monolithic 'terraforce' walls while appropriate terracing must be employed to manage considered level changes, create accessible and usable open spaces and mitigate the need for excessive retaining structures. The building must include integrated planters on balconies and setback terrace to allow for cascading vegetation on the façade. Vertical greening through the installation of stainless-steel cable or mesh trellis systems must be considered. Additionally, the implementation of green roofs on all flat roof surfaces and podiums in accordance with the site enablement urban design and landscape guidelines is recommended. Careful consideration must be given to the levels of the courtyards and green roofs to ensure sufficient planting depth is achieved. (ZUTARI; 2026d)
3. **Building Articulation and Interface:** Further articulation of the building's mass through façade modulation to achieve a fine grain texture, upper-level setbacks and roofline variation are recommended during the detailed design stages to reduce the buildings' perceived scale and bulk and to avoid monolithic built form. This is particularly relevant to the Portion 2 and 3 sites where the current proposal introduces a significant contrast to the adjacent low-rise heritage dwellings and noticeably changes the character and sense of place of the street. As such, the massing of buildings needs to consider views, sunlight, the relationship with streets and spaces, landmarking and be respective of the contextual building grain and mass. The way the development interfaces with the streets, public spaces and neighbouring properties, is crucial to ensure a strong contextual fit and maintaining the integrity of the area. Interface considerations must therefore conform to the site enablement Design Guidelines Report. (ZUTARI; 2026d)
4. **Construction:** A pre-construction condition audit must be conducted on all adjacent heritage structures, particularly on the DSD portion of the Erf 1424 site. Standard, but rigorous, site management for dust, noise, and visual screening of site camps is mandatory. An arborist must provide an arboricultural report or method statement detailing a Tree Protection Plan (TPP) that must be adhered to during the construction phase to ensure the protected trees survival.
5. **Setbacks:** Increasing of the building setback from the site boundary along sensitive residential heritage interfaces such as The Glen, Herbert Road, Heathfield Road and parts of Milner Road as identified within the Heritage Informants to allow for substantial softening and visual screening of the site edge through the planting of medium to large calibre ground level trees and landscaped areas while maintaining the pedestrian sidewalk routes.

The approval contained in this decision is valid for 5 years from the date of this decision. This period may be extended on good reason being shown and at the discretion of HWC, provided that application for extension must be made prior to the effluxion of the 5-year period.

NOTE:

- This decision is subject to an **appeal period of 14 working days**. Kindly note that the appeal period is calculated from the date indicated on the HWC date stamp, which is the date the appeal is sent, and not the date of signature
- Appeals to HWC are to be submitted via www.sahris.org.za
- The applicant is required to inform any party who has expressed a bona fide interest in any heritage-related aspect of this record of decision. The appeal period shall be taken from the date above. It should be noted that for an appeal to be deemed valid it must refer to the decision, it must be submitted by the due date, and it must set out the grounds of the appeal. Appeals must be addressed to the official named above and it is the responsibility of the appellant to confirm that the appeal has been received within the appeal period.
- **Work may NOT be initiated during this 14-day appeal period.**
- If any archaeological material or evidence of burials are discovered during earth-moving activities all works must be stopped and Heritage Western Cape must be notified immediately.
- This approval does not exonerate the applicant from obtaining any necessary approval from any other applicable statutory authority

Waseefa Dhansay
Assistant Director: Professional Services

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