R4 billion redevelopment plan for River Club

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John Harvey
The operator of the River Club, one of the southern suburbs’ most well-known leisure hubs, is proposing a R4 billion redevelopment of the site for residential and commercial use, among other purposes.

The Liesbeek Leisure Properties Trust, which owns most of the land on which the current conference facilities and golf course are located in Observatory, plans to redevelop five hectares of the site, while the remaining 10 hectares will be landscaped and rehabilitated for recreational use or for service infrastructure such as roads and parking.

The golf course will not be affected during this process.

SRK Consulting has been appointed by the trust to undertake the Scoping and Environmental Impact Assessment in support of applications for Environmental Authorisation (EA), Heritage Approval and Water Use Authorisation, and the draft scoping report is currently available for public comment.

“The proponent (trust) proposes to develop the site for commercial gain, taking cognisance of the constraints imposed by the receiving environment,” said SRK Consulting senior environmental management consultant, Matthew Law.

Among the key elements of the project are:

An aerial view of proposed development at the River Club.
* Buildings for commercial, retail and residential use;

* Parking;

* Recreation and leisure facilities, comprising foot and cycle paths, and other facilities;

* Open space;

* Waste management facilities, collection, sorting, temporary storage and collection areas;

* Water supply infrastructure, supplying potable water to buildings through serviced pipeline connections;

* Electrical infrastructure, for the supply of electricity to the development;

* Stormwater infrastructure, for the management of stormwater runoff into the Liesbeek and Black rivers;

* Surface water enhancements, comprising infrastructure for the enhancement and management of surface water flows adjacent to the site (for example weirs);

* Sewerage including temporary effluent containment tanks; and

* Roads, comprising surfaced access and internal roads, traffic management infrastructure (such as traffic circles) and bridges (over the Liesbeek and Black rivers).

According to the draft scoping report, the first phase of the development was projected to commence in early 2018.

Residential units would consist of studio/one-bedroom and two-bedroom units while it is envisaged that retail tenants would vary. While preference would be given to sports and the lifestyle sector, tenants could also include a hotel group as well as places of education, such as a creche. The report also includes employment opportunities that would occur as a result of the project.

During the construction phase, anticipated to be 42 months, 2 000 people would be employed, while development phase would involve 150 people.

As part of landscaping and rehabilitation activities, setbacks at the interface with natural watercourses will be provided and natural water flow may be restored to the original course of the Liesbeek River west of the site. The Liesbeek Canal will be retained and may be partially rehabilitated to mimic a natural watercourse.

In terms of the natural environment, the report says the area is defined by environmental features such as the surrounding river courses and mature trees, and it regularly floods in the wet season.
Furthermore, the site is unique in Cape Town with its position between the original course of the Liesbeek River and Liesbeek River canal.

Consequently, it was recommended that the nearby bird sanctuary should be respected through “meaningful public space adjacent to it and by setting buildings back from that edge, and that watercourses should be rehabilitated.

“Do not create blank edges around the development; and be cognisant of the convergence of the two rivers (Liesbeek and Black rivers) as one of the most significant informants of the history of this part of Cape Town,” the report says.

Mr Law said it should be noted that this was an early stage of assessment, and many of these details could “or are even likely” to change.

The Friends of the Liesbeek group was unable to comment at the time of going to press.