

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW OPUWO AERODROME AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE IN OPUWO, KUNENE REGION

AUGUST 2023



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT



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1 Purpose of this Background Information Document

In line with Regulation 21(2) of the Environmental Management Act, (Act No. 7 of 2007) (EMA), this Background Information Document (BID) is distributed to pre-identified Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) as part of the public consultation process for this Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

The purpose of this BID is to:

- provide you as a registered I&AP with the necessary information concerning the intended project and the EIA to be conducted; and
- to provide for the opportunity to register as an I&AP and to obtain your input/ concerns regarding this project as explained in this BID.

2 The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

An EIA is conducted to ensure that an activity such as the relocation of the Opuwo Aerodrome has a minimal possible impact on the immediate natural as well as social environment during its entire 'lifecycle' (i.e. during design, construction, operation, maintenance, and demolition).

The EIA process being followed is done as prescribed by the EIA Regulations (GN. No. 30 of 2012) promulgated under Section 56 of the EMA.

The purpose of this EIA is:

- to support the goals of environmental protection and sustainable development;
- to integrate environmental protection and economic decisions at the earliest stages of planning an activity;
- to predict environmental, social, economic, and cultural consequences of a proposed activity and to assess plans to mitigate any adverse impacts resulting from the proposed activity, and
- **to provide for the involvement of the public and the relevant authorities in review of the proposed activities.**

The long-term objectives of an EIA are to protect human health and safety; to avoid irreversible changes and serious damage to the environment; safeguard valued resources, natural areas and ecosystem components; and to enhance the social aspects of the proposal.

3 Introduction to the proposed project

The Department of Works, Ministry of Works and Transport intends to relocate the existing Opuwo Aerodrome to an alternative location. The site that has been identified for the New Opuwo Aerodrome is located approximately 22.1 km by road from the town of Opuwo which is located within the Kunene Region (Figure 1: Locality Map).

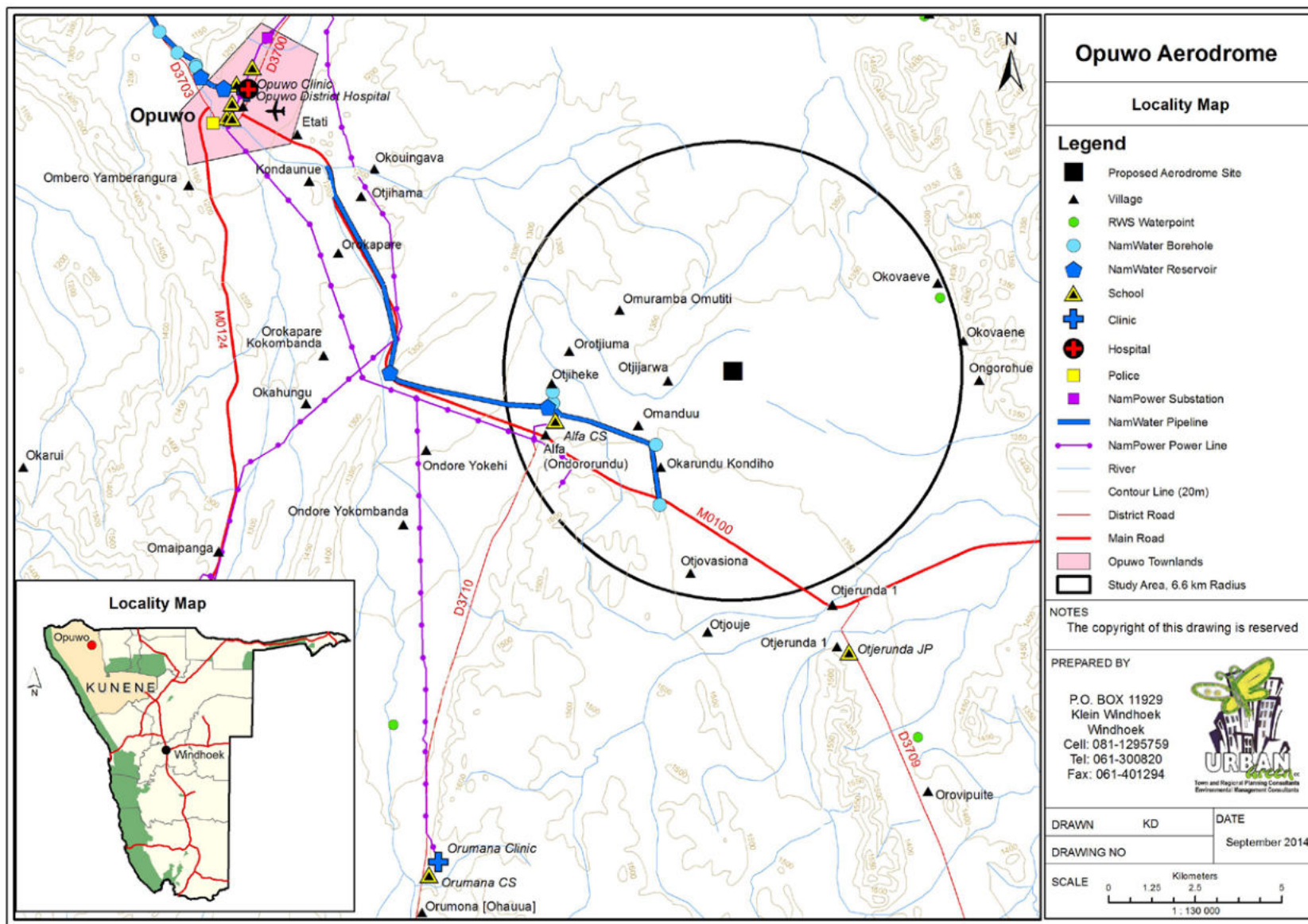


Figure 1: Locality Map

The proposed development would also include activities that are listed as *'listed activities requiring environmental clearance'* as per the List of Activities Requiring an Environmental Clearance Certificate from the Environmental Commissioner (GN. No. 29 of 2012), promulgated under Section 27(2) of the EMA.

Urban Green cc has been appointed as an independent environmental assessment practitioner to apply for an Environmental Clearance Certificate and conduct the necessary study as per the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (GN. No. 30 of 2012), promulgated under Section 56 of the EMA.

4 Background

The Opuwo Aerodrome is a state owned aerodrome situated within the Opuwo Townlands and the aerodrome is located immediately east of the formal town of Opuwo. As the custodian of the aerodrome, the Department of Transport has realised the need for the relocation of the Opuwo Aerodrome to the alternative site due to increasing safety and security concerns in the current location. The security fence of the existing aerodrome has been vandalised; which has resulted in the free movement of locals and livestock within the premises.

The decision of the Cabinet in 1997 was that the Opuwo Aerodrome should form part of a National Aerodrome Network. The proposed network consists of three aerodrome classes: **Class A Aerodromes** having infrastructure capable of handling large aircraft and a relative high volume of domestic and international traffic; **Class B Aerodromes** capable of handling aircraft used on domestic commuter services and regional flights and **Class C Aerodromes** providing basic access by air. At the time of the decision, the Opuwo Aerodrome was categorized as a Class C Aerodrome.

The recommendations of the feasibility study that has been undertaken by the project proponent (the Ministry of Works and Transport) will be taken into consideration in the on-going environmental assessment process and planning phase of the project.

5 Need for the project

As stated above, the need for the relocation of the Aerodrome was triggered by the increasing level of safety and security concerns in the existing Aerodrome. The Minister of Works has, in the past, tried to maintain the acceptable level of security on site by undertaking the following:

- the installation of a 1.2 m high razor mesh perimeter fence;
- blading of the runway;
- bush clearing;
- construction of an apron; and
- installation of a wind direction indicator circle.

The effect of the above undertakings was short-lived as the security fence has been cut in many places providing uncontrolled access to the Aerodrome. There is presently no control over access

to the Aerodrome and motor vehicles, people and cattle move onto and across the Aerodrome and runway at free will. Broken bottles and other unwanted objects are found on the aerodrome site.

It is therefore very important to relocate the site to the more secure site where access will be adequately controlled and maintained. The costs of fence maintenance will be significantly reduced in the new site. The feasibility study has confirmed the suitability of the site for the proposed new Opuwo Aerodrome.

In addition to the above, the existing Aerodrome is preventing the expansion of the town towards suitable developable area to the east. The relocation of the Aerodrome will, therefore, also allow the eastward development of the Opuwo town.

6 Scope of Project

The feasibility report has highlighted the structures and infrastructure that will be constructed as part of the proposed Aerodrome. The proposed project included the construction of the following structures and infrastructure:

- Guard house with ablution facilities, water and electricity;
- Gravel access road;
- Covered veranda and rest rooms for the passengers and crew;
- Fuel storage and handling facility;
- Water, electricity and telecommunications;
- Drainage structures;
- Fencing;
- Runway marking and signage; and
- Road signs.

The existing Aerodrome will be decommissioned and the land on which it is located will be handed over to the local authority subsequent to its rehabilitation.

7 Project Description

7.1 Locality

The site is located in Opuwo, approximately 5km east of the Alpha Village and 4km from the bitumen surfaced Main Road between Omakange to the east and Opuwo to the west (Figure 1: Locality Map). The centre of the runway is at the approximate coordinates 18° 07' 42,5" S and 13° 58' 26,5" E.

7.2 Land Use and Ownership

The site is currently vacant. The site is located on a plateau east of the Alpha Village, approximately 4km from site. The property on which the site is located is owned by the Communal Land Board.

7.3 Sites Natural Characteristics

There are small watercourses occurring within the site, next to the location of the runway.

7.4 Design Specifications

The design of the Aerodrome is governed by the requirements and recommendations given by the International Civil Aviation Organisation to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, Volume 1 Aerodrome Design and Operations.

There will be construction of the single gravel runway optimally orientated with a centrally located short taxiway to an apron. The last 200 m at both ends of the gravel runway as well as the turning pads are to be provided with a bitumen seal. It is proposed that a portion of the apron be paved using interlocking paving blocks.

The project will include the construction of an 8.0m wide and 4.1km long gravel access road which will be connecting the Aerodrome to the Main Road 100. The other structures will be constructed as per the specifications recommended by the Architect and Engineering Reports.

Since there is no water pipeline in the area from which the Aerodrome can connect; a borehole will be drilled on site to provide water services to the Aerodrome. Another option would be to pump water from Opuwo, which is a distance of approximately 7 km and a height difference of about 200 m.

8 Public Participation

In line with Regulation 21 of the EMA public consultation is required. As an identified I&AP, you are hereby informed of the intended activity and encouraged to register as an I&AP and to provide Urban Green cc with your comments/ concerns/ feedback on the proposed project.

Comments/ concerns/ feedback can be provided by way of the following means:

- Fax your comments/concerns/opinion to the office of Urban Green cc (061 – 401 294); or
- E-mail your comments/concerns/opinion to Urban Green cc (urbangreen@iway.na).

It is requested that your comments/concerns/input should reach the office of Urban Green cc not later than 27 September 2023.

Please note: Only comments submitted in writing will receive responses and be included in the Scoping Report. I&APs may call for clarification of details but direct comments must be written or emailed to Brand van Zyl of Urban Green cc.

Registered I&APs will be kept informed throughout the EIA process and will be given opportunity for input during the Environmental Impact Assessment process as per Regulation 23 of the EIA Regulations and under Part IX of the EMA.