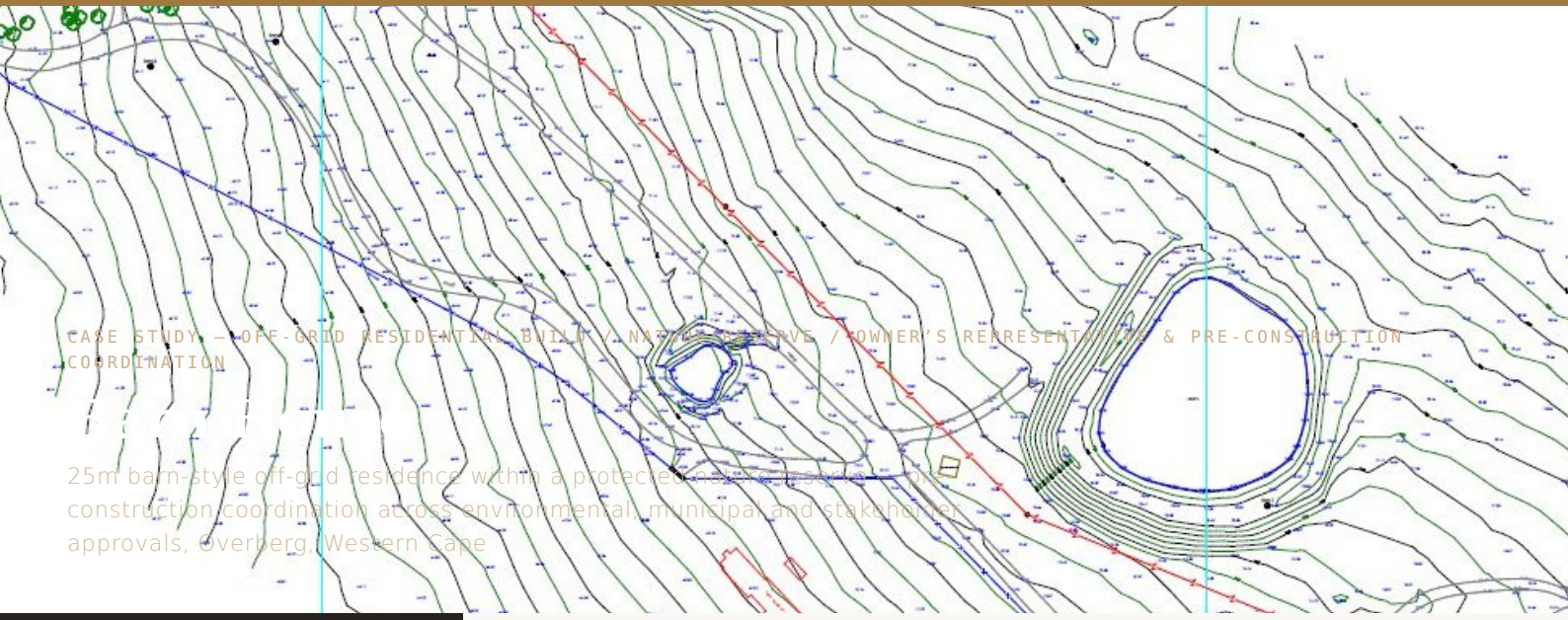


CASE STUDY — OFF-GRID RESIDENTIAL BUILD / NATURE RESERVE / OWNER'S REPRESENTATIVE & PRE-CONSTRUCTION COORDINATION

25m barn-style off-grid residence within a protected nature reserve — pre-construction coordination across environmental, municipal and stakeholder approvals, Overberg, Western Cape

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Location
Overberg, Western Cape

Duration
6-month engagement (pre-construction)

Sector
High-end off-grid residential

Role
Owner's Representative & Project Coordinator

Project Type
Owner-side project coordination

KEY METRICS

6 months
Pre-construction engagement through to contractor mobilisation

Nature reserve
Protected site requiring environmental and multi-authority approvals

7+ bodies
Municipal, environmental, conservancy, NHBRC and engineering stakeholders coordinated

On-schedule
April 2025 mobilisation forecast at outset — construction commenced on that date

Off-grid systems
Solar PV and water treatment scoped, budgeted and specified

Formalised PM
Structured reporting, programme tracking and project governance established

SITE CONTEXT

Council floor plan — 25m barn form with terrace, open living and two bedrooms

THE SITUATION

A high-end off-grid build in a sensitive, regulated environment

A private client commissioned a new-build off-grid residence within a protected nature reserve in the Overberg — a 25m barn-style home requiring environmental, municipal and stakeholder approvals before a single foundation could be dug. What appeared straightforward on paper was significantly more complex in practice. The site's environmental sensitivity required multiple layers of approval before any construction could begin. Regulatory bodies, neighbouring conservancies, engineering consultants, and local authorities all needed to be engaged and aligned in sequence. Without careful coordination through this pre-construction phase, the project risked costly delays and rework before a single foundation had been dug.

THE COORDINATION CHALLENGE

Interdependent approvals, multiple stakeholders, no room for sequencing errors

The greatest challenge was maintaining project momentum while navigating a sequence of interdependent regulatory and stakeholder requirements. Municipal approvals, environmental assessments, conservancy engagement, surveying, engineering sign-offs, and NHBRC compliance processes all had to progress in the right order. Stalling any one of them had downstream consequences for the others. Alongside the approval track, contractor procurement, utility system specification, client communication, and programme forecasting all had to proceed in parallel — without the benefit of a clear construction start date to anchor them.

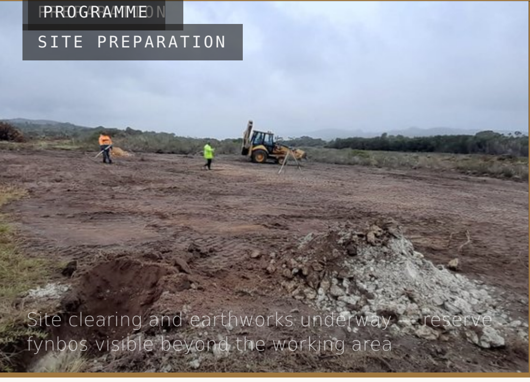
MY ROLE

Client representative across a complex pre-construction environment

I acted as the client's representative throughout the pre-construction phase, coordinating communication and decision-making between the client, architect, engineers, surveyors, municipal authorities, conservation stakeholders, specialist suppliers and the appointed building contractor. I managed project communications and reporting, established project management systems and artefacts, monitored programme risks and dependencies, supported council approval processes, and coordinated contractor appointment and mobilisation. I also scoped and budgeted both the solar PV and water treatment systems, and developed the programme forecast that ultimately proved accurate to within weeks.

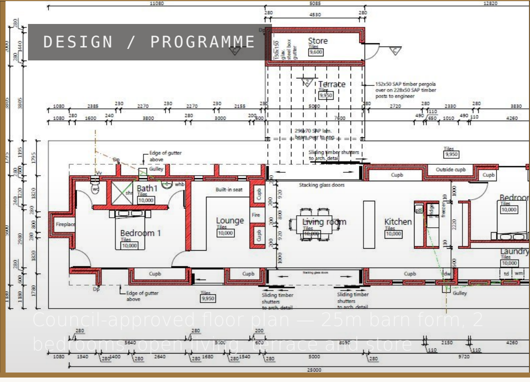
PROGRAMME

SITE PREPARATION



Site clearing and earthworks underway — reserve fynbos visible beyond the working area

DESIGN / PROGRAMME



Council-approved floor plan — 25m barn form, 2 bedrooms, open living, terrace and store

MOBILISATION

Contractor on site with plant — platform prepared and construction programme underway

SCOPE DELIVERED

Pre-construction coordination across approvals, procurement, systems and governance

- Municipal approval process
- Conservancy engagement
- Surveying coordination
- NHBRC process initiation
- Contractor procurement
- Solar PV specification & budget
- Site preparation oversight
- Project reporting structures
- Environmental approvals
- Neighbouring stakeholder liaison
- Engineering coordination
- Architect & consultant liaison
- Contractor mobilisation
- Water treatment specification
- Programme forecasting
- Client communication management

PROGRAMME ACCURACY

April 2025 mobilisation forecast — construction commenced on schedule

Early in the engagement, a construction commencement date of April 2025 was forecast based on a realistic assessment of the regulatory, stakeholder and approval requirements ahead. The forecast was initially viewed as conservative. In practice, construction commenced almost exactly on that date. This outcome reflects the value of disciplined programme management: understanding the full dependency chain, building in realistic lead times, and actively managing the approval sequence rather than assuming it would resolve itself.

Topographic survey — building footprint positioned within the reserve contours via engineering survey

OUTCOME

Concept to aligned, approved and mobilised — on programme

- ✓ All council and environmental approvals secured
- ✓ Stakeholder and conservancy engagement completed
- ✓ Professional team coordinated and aligned
- ✓ Building contractor appointed and mobilised
- ✓ Solar PV and water treatment systems scoped and budgeted
- ✓ NHBRC compliance process initiated
- ✓ Construction commenced April 2025 — as forecast

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Complex projects succeed or fail long before construction begins. The Barn House demonstrates the ability to navigate multi-authority approval environments, coordinate diverse professional teams, and maintain programme discipline through an extended pre-construction phase. Moving a project from concept through alignment, approvals and mobilisation — on time and on programme — is precisely the value an experienced owner's representative provides.