

Natures Valley Building Regulations and Guidelines

(Updated November 2021)

Introduction

Natures Valley is unique in that it is surrounded by sections of the Garden Route National Park containing many indigenous trees and plants as well as animals and birds. The Valley itself shares these with the National Park and the NVRA has a Contractual Agreement with Sanparks and Bitou Municipality to apply the same rules concerning the protection of vegetation and flora and fauna.

It is surely a priority for each property owner to maintain and improve the environmental integrity of Nature's Valley wherever possible. When a house is built or alterations are considered, the conservation of the natural environment of indigenous forest, estuary, fynbos and dune vegetation should be a prime consideration and every possible effort should be made to minimise any impact on the sensitive ecology of the village. In addition to the built structure itself, care should be taken at planning stage to identify intrusive elements that could influence the surrounding environment. This type of sympathetic approach and the planting of indigenous trees, shrubs, climbers and plants, will play an important role in maintaining the unique character of our Valley. It is also very important to identify and remove alien vegetation wherever possible.

You bought a property in Nature's valley because of its beautiful natural environment, unique unspoilt character, and relaxed atmosphere. Your co-operation will play an important role in helping to maintain the environmental integrity of the Valley and it would be appreciated if you would acquaint your architect and contractor with these guidelines before the start of the design process and work on site.

Acts and Regulations

The following acts and regulations are, amongst others, applicable to building in Nature's Valley:

1. Before any deforestation is undertaken or an erf may be cleared for building, the owner must obtain a permit in order to comply with the Outeniqua Sensitive Coastal Areas Act (**OSCA**), with respect to fynbos and/or the National Forests Act (**NFA**) with respect to protected indigenous trees.
 - The Bitou Municipality Town Planning Department is responsible for issuing the **OSCA** permit (Senior Town-planner 044 501 3000).
 - A permit to comply with the **NFA** must be obtained from the Area Manager: Indigenous Forest Management, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry in Knysna (Ms. Cobri Vermeulen or Mr. Jeffrey Sass, 044-302-6900).
The Natures Valley Trust has an arrangement with the Dept of Forestry to assist in the inspections and approval process. Application forms and advice can be obtained from the Natures ValleyTrust (Tel. 044 531 6820).

2. Natures Valley is part of Bitou Municipality; however, the Bitou Building Regulations together with the Title Deeds applicable to NV properties must be considered in determining the regulations which apply in Natures Valley. The most onerous regulation is applicable.
3. The municipality requires that all building plans be submitted to the NVRA for consideration prior to submission to the municipality, to ensure compliance with the Title Deeds. Three copies of the plans are required: Two for the municipality, and one for the NVRA records. The NVRA services are free and aimed at assisting you and your co-operation in curbing illegal building operations would be appreciated.
4. In accordance with the Title Deeds, virtually all erven in the residential area are zoned single residential (Residential 1). This means that only one dwelling unit with normal outbuildings may be erected on a property, and the following further restrictions apply:
 - Maximum height of dwelling 8,5m above natural ground level, with single storey outbuildings.
 - Maximum coverage of dwelling with outbuildings included is 50% of the property area.
 - Building lines are: 6,3m from the street facing site boundary and 3,15m from the s boundary at the sides and back of property.

5. Sewage Disposal

Regarding sewage disposal: Natures Valley does not have a municipal reticulation system so sewage must either be retained in a conservancy tank, which is periodically pumped out and transported out of the Valley, or processed using a septic tank connected to a soak-away. The latter solution is only allowed subject to a certified percolation test to determine whether the soak-away will function effectively on the particular site, and failing this, a conservancy tank is compulsory. In the case of houses which are being extended or altered, this test is also required to allow continued use of an existing septic tank system. (NB. The agreement with Bitou Municipality regarding the continued use of septic tanks is under review by the municipality and the need to install a conservancy tank may become obligatory).

Guidelines

The observance of the following guidelines by new and existing owners will play an important role in maintaining the environmental integrity of Nature's Valley:

1. All construction should blend with the natural environment as far as possible, by using building materials, finishes and earth colours such as wood or naturally coloured bricks, sand colour for plastered walls and an environmentally sensitive colour for roofs.
2. Avoid fencing as far as possible so that wildlife can continue to roam freely throughout the Valley. If fencing is necessary; limit the extent and impact on the environment by using suitable materials like wood. A gap of at least 200mm at the bottom of all fences will reduce the restriction on movement of small mammals and birds. Avoid security type wire fencing or pre-cast concrete and brick walls, plastered or un-plastered. Fencing on street front must be handled with great circumspection preferably set back and hidden by indigenous vegetation.
3. Take care that security and other outside lights provide sensitive lighting that will not disturb neighbours or wildlife. Street lights are not installed in NV for this reason.
4. Limit the impact of an unsightly driveway by using a sympathetic material like "grasbeton" (grass-block) paving or bricks and avoid, if possible, a formal driveway that extends right to the edge of the road.
5. Please take the privacy and view of your neighbours into consideration when planning to build or to alter an existing building.

6. **Baboons.** Please be aware that Natures Valley is frequented by baboon troops who are resident in the adjoining forest. Baboons are opportunistic and will invade homes where they can get easy access to food. In planning your home, please make provision for security bars over opening windows (clear polycarbonate security bars, spaced 60mm apart are a good option) as well as sliding screens over doors onto patios or even front and back doors. These provisions will enable you to enjoy the atmosphere of Natures Valley without the risk of being invaded. Baboons are not aggressive but can cause a serious mess if they gain access to your home.

Building Sites

1. The builder or painting contractor is responsible for adequate and neat toilet facilities on the building site (one toilet per 16 workers). The public toilets are not available to builders.
2. At most, two security guards may remain on the building site after working hours.
3. A refundable "pavement deposit" is payable to the municipality by the owner if the sidewalk is to be used for storing building material.
4. On completion, please ensure that the building site is fully rehabilitated and that all rubble has been removed.
5. Refer to the Building Contractor Protocols contained in **Annexure A**

Annexure A

Building Contractor Protocols

1. Introduction

When houses are built, extended or repair work is undertaken there are certain rules and norms which need to be followed regarding building regulations, handling of equipment and materials, consideration for residents in Natures Valley and environmental issues specific to the village. The NVRA speaks on behalf of the majority of owners, and we therefore respectfully request your kind co-operation in this regard.

2. Building plans.

It should be noted that building without approved building plans is illegal, and both the owner and contractor can be charged with an offence.

It is incumbent on contractors to ensure they have valid approved plans before commencing any work.

3. Commencement of Projects.

The owner will be asked to inform Bitou when construction is to commence but we also ask you respectfully to inform the NV Superintendent, Marco Barnado, by phone or email giving your name or company name and contact details as well as the erf number concerned. (Marco's contact details can be obtained from the NVRA Office Manager on 044 531 6699).

4. Site Preparation.

A building site may not be cleared as is normal in most urban areas, and specific rules must be followed regarding restrictions on the removal or pruning of existing trees. Part of the plan approval process requires the issuing of an OSCA Permit by the municipality and an NFA Permit by the Dept of Forestry. (See Para 1 above). Even indigenous trees planted by owners many years ago are subject to these restrictions.

Obviously, when establishing a construction site, it is expected that the construction area will be clearly demarcated as is required by law for safety reasons. We also expect that all contractors

are fully aware of the various safety rules which apply and respectfully ask them to adhere to them.

Contractors are also reminded that temporary toilets are compulsory on any site unless arrangements have been made with owners for employees to use existing toilets on the property.

5. Building Operations.

All building operations tend to be noisy and as this is unavoidable, we ask contractors to strictly follow the building hours allowed by law to allow the residents peace and quiet outside normal working hours and during weekends.

We also request that the storage of building materials on the pavements be restricted to a minimum, noting that no materials may be placed on the paved road surfaces. Sand, aggregate, bricks, and other materials should be moved to within the property boundaries as soon as possible.

When it is deemed essential to use pavement space e.g., a container for storage, we ask that the contractor obtain the necessary permits from the Municipality and also obtain permission from neighboring property owners.

We would like to ask main contractors to help in avoiding damage to pavement areas including plants on neighboring properties when delivering materials. Also, suppliers delivering materials as well as sub-contractors should be reminded of the 40 km/hr. speed limit in Natures Valley. It is also necessary to bring to their attention the presence of pedestrians in the streets as there are no pavements on which to walk.

Out of consideration for residents we ask contractors to encourage their employees to spend tea and lunchbreaks on the construction property and not on neighboring pavements and properties.

6. Conclusion.

We greatly appreciate the co-operation of owners and contractors regarding the various protocols outlined above. Please feel free to contact our chairperson or Office Manager if clarification or advice is required.

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