

Seaham Garden Village Public Transport Strategy Planning Conditions Support

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1. SEAHAM GARDEN VILLAGE – PUBLIC TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Introduction

- 1.1 TPS Transport Consultants have been instructed to provide support for the discharge of several planning conditions associated with the outline planning application for the residential-led mixed-use development at Seaham Garden Village (SGV), originally submitted in March 2018 and approved in December 2018:
 - DM/18/00829/OUT Garden Village of up to 1500 dwellings, integrated community health and wellbeing village, commercial and leisure uses, business innovation hub, primary school, public open space, community allotments and associated infrastructure, including new pedestrian and vehicular access from A182.
- 1.2 This report relates specifically to Conditions 25 and 26 as presented within the associated Variations of Conditions application DM/22/00844/VOC, dated December 2022.

Conditions 25 and 26 – Public Transport Improvements

- 1.3 Condition 25 and Condition 26 are pre-occupation conditions requiring the submission of details of (1) the public transport infrastructure improvements, and (2) the proposed public transport network improvements, along with timeframes for delivery:
 - **25**. Prior to the occupation of any dwelling, details of the proposed public transport infrastructure improvement, including a timeframe for delivery must be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved scheme of improvements will thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved timetable.
 - **26.** Prior to the occupation of any dwelling, details of the proposed public transport network improvement, including a timeframe for delivery must be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved scheme of improvements will thereafter be completed in accordance with the approved timetable.
- 1.4 These conditions are clearly closely related and are addressed in parallel within this proposed Public Transport Strategy for the site.
- 1.5 Through discussions with Durham County Council and relevant local bus operators (Arriva North East and Go North East), this study has considered the need for, and practicalities of, an interim infrastructure solution prior to the implementation of a permanent solution.
- 1.6 The study has also undertaken a detailed review of the existing (as of January 2024) bus network in the immediate vicinity of SGV and associated service schedules with a view to defining and agreeing a longer-term plan and associated timeframes.

2. ORIGINAL POSITION AT TIME OF SUBMISSION (2018)

2.1 This section presents a brief recap of Durham County Council's Planning Committee report¹ from November 2018 with respect to elements pertaining to the provision of bus services to and through the SGV development. It then goes on to summarise the bus services available at the time of submission from existing bus stops in proximity to the proposed SGV site.

Committee Report (November 2018)

- 2.2 Specific to the local Public Transport infrastructure and bus services, the report outlined:
 - Para. 12: A new spine road through the proposed development site with regular bus services (at least 4 per hour in each direction) providing direct links to Seaham,
 Dalton Park and the wider area [this proposed level of service was based on the existing network available at the time – see Table 1, overleaf].
 - **Para. 116**: Existing bus services will be diverted through the village to provide 4 buses per hour to Seaham, Dalton Park and beyond to reduce car dependence and encourage links to the existing towns.
 - Para. 138: It is recognised that there are several bus services serving the A182, and
 the Council's Public Transport Team recognise the development would be likely to
 generate a commercial demand to divert these services to within the
 development, providing appropriate infrastructure is provided.
 - **Para. 140**: Overall, it is considered ... the frequency of the established bus service would give future residents alternative options to the private motor car to access services and amenities.

Bus Stops & Services

- 2.3 At the time of the November 2018 committee meeting, bus stops and services (Table 1) were identified in supporting documents (March 2018 Environmental Statement, Fore Consulting) as being of potential relevance and benefit to the future SGV development:
 - Stops to the east within Spectrum Business Park. Walking distance from the nearest site boundary approximately 900m.
 - Stops to the west located on B1432 Stockton Road, close to The Pemberton Arms.
 Walking distance from the nearest site boundary approximately 650m.

¹ https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s98416/Garden%20Village%20final.pdf

Table 1 – SGV Bus Services as of November 2018

Nearest Bus Stop to SGV	Service Number	Operator	Route	Approx. Daytime Service Frequency		
				Mon-Fri	Sat	Sun
Pemberton Arms B1432 Stockton Road	22	Arriva	Durham – Thornley – Wheatley Hill – Peterlee – Sunderland	30 minutes	30 minutes	60 minutes
	23	Arriva	Hartlepool – Peterlee – Sunderland	30 minutes	30 minutes	No service
Spectrum Business Park	202	GNE	Station Town – Peterlee – Dalton Park – Seaham	60 minutes	60 minutes	No service
	Х6	GNE	Sunderland – Seaham – Spectrum Business Park – Dalton Park – Peterlee – Blackhall – Hartlepool	60 minutes	60 minutes	No service
	X7	GNE	Sunderland – Seaham – Spectrum Business Park – Peterlee	60 minutes	60 minutes	No service
	X21	Arriva	Darlington – Newton Aycliffe – Sedgefield – Wingate – Peterlee – Seaham – Sunderland	60 minutes	60 minutes	60 minutes

- 2.4 Services 202, X6, X7 and X21 operated along the A182 corridor providing a collective frequency of approximately every 15 minutes (Monday-Saturday) to Seaham town centre, as noted in para. 12 of the Planning Committee report.
- 2.5 These services also provided regional connections to Sunderland, Peterlee, Darlington and Hartlepool, amongst other destinations.

3. CONDITION 25: SGV PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

- 3.1 This section presents the proposed public transport infrastructure improvements, including a timeframe for delivery, having also considered interim solutions whilst the main SGV construction and development progresses.
- 3.2 At the time of report compilation and submission, the A182 western roundabout and access was completed and fully operational. The complementary eastern roundabout works on the A182 are commencing later in 2024.

Consideration and Review of Interim Infrastructure Solutions

- 3.3 Discussions (via e-mail) were had with representatives of Durham County Council and both local public transport operators (Arriva and Go North East) to understand any potential opportunities and concerns relating to the provision of an interim solution to allow buses to serve SGV whilst the overall site development and occupations progress.
- 3.4 Two potential interim options were proposed for consideration:
 - 1. New (temporary) bus stops and laybys on the A182 mainline, to be situated in the vicinity of the western roundabout access but outwith the main SGV boundary;
 - 2. Cul-de-sac penetration of the emerging SGV development with temporary bus turning arrangements (no reverse turn);
- 3.5 Regarding option 1 the A182 forms part of the Major Road Network linking Seaham to the Strategic Road Network at the A19 near Dalton Park. It is a 60mph highway with a 2+1 carriageway layout from the A19 junction along the entire length running adjacent to the SGV site until its eastern access roundabout.
- 3.6 An existing segregated foot and cycle path runs in parallel along the northern side of the A182 but with no equivalent provision on the southern side.
- 3.7 As such, concerns were raised by all parties around the combined practicalities of a) identifying suitable locations and construction of temporary bus stops plus any associated laybys on the A182 mainline, b) provision of safe access routes with respect to highway speed limits, an absence of footpaths on the southern side and safe crossing arrangements, coupled with c) possible impacts on schedules and operational considerations for passenger service vehicles in needing to decelerate to serve stop locations on the A182

mainline and subsequent acceleration required to rejoin the main highway flows (NB. this would be subject to the actual location of bus stops/laybys in relation to the western roundabout and any potential decrease in average speed limits at these points as a result of traffic needing to negotiate the roundabout).

- 3.8 Furthermore, any proposed temporary bus stop(s) would need to be sited within a defined distance of the western roundabout access to be in close proximity to the main development, in order to provide a suitable bus option for the initial occupants of SGV.
- 3.9 Given the general disconnect between A182 locations and the wider SGV development site, plus total walking distances involved (including crossings of the A182) are highly likely to exceed a desired 400m threshold for the majority of dwellings within the initial phases, it is therefore proposed such an option would not be attractive, is unviable and thus not to be pursued.
- 3.10 Regarding option 2 for an interim cul-de-sac penetration of the site and provision of a temporary turning circle facility, it is noted provision of such facilities is not stipulated within the formal planning conditions but has been discussed and reviewed by the relevant developer parties.
- 3.11 The immediate concern resulting from these discussions would be health and safety issues in having a bus service(s) coming partly into site alongside ongoing construction vehicles and their movements.
- 3.12 Crucially, having reviewed the highway layout and phasing of the SGV development, there is no suitable location identified at which a bus turning circle could be readily accommodated within the first phases of the overall development.
- 3.13 From an operational perspective, the need for a bus service to divert off the A182 to serve a cul-de-sac leg in both directions, with associated turning movement, would add additional time into existing cycles which are already limited in terms of their layover capacity.
- 3.14 Finally, dwelling occupation rates aligned to the earlier phases of the SGV development would only generate a very limited patronage base to begin with and requires external funding support, for which there is no specific requirement within the \$106 conditions.
- 3.15 Therefore, this second interim option for cul-de-sac penetration is not deemed viable on various fronts and is also not to be pursued. In light of these conclusions, proposals for the delivery of a single-stage infrastructure solution are presented below.

SGV Public Transport Infrastructure Solution and Timeframes

- 3.16 Regarding timeframes for the main infrastructure works, there is no formal stipulation for any infrastructure nor bus service improvements to be implemented from first occupation.
- 3.17 The full Spine Road (including associated \$278 works) will form the primary link for serving SGV by bus, the final surfacing of which is aligned to delivery of the new SGV school.
- 3.18 DCC have requested the SGV school be available for use from the start of term time in September 2027, by which time the Spine Road and adjacent footpaths need to be completed to adoptable standards for safety reasons.
- 3.19 Therefore, based on this timeframe, all bus infrastructure across SGV is proposed to be agreed and installed **prior to the 500th occupation**.
- 3.20 After this date, there will be a complete, functional highway link for future buses to viably and safely serve the whole of SGV by diverting off the A182 between the east and west roundabouts.
- 3.21 Only those stops which serve occupied cells should be required to be installed and operational at the time. As remaining cells of SGV are developed and become occupied, further bus stops will then become operational and incorporated into future bus service provision. Dates for these changes will be notified to the relevant parties and agreed in-line with updating relevant service registration timeframes where applicable.
- 3.22 The final plan showing the complete Spine Road, access/egress from the A182 and proposed bus stops locations is shown in Appendix A.

Occupancy Forecasts - Implications for Commercial Bus Services

3.23 Given there is now a much reduced local bus network available to serve SGV (wider issues arising from this are discussed in the following section) and the well-documented pressures facing the local bus sector more generally, there needs to be a robust patronage base and better-known level of demand generated by the SGV development in order for the commercial bus operators to justify diverting services from (or extending) their existing routes into SGV.

- 3.24 Evidence presented on behalf of Transport for New Homes (2019)² indicated that prepandemic, completed standalone developments in the order of **1400no dwellings** ought to allow a bus service to become commercially viable, based on a 4000no population "rule of thumb" in urban contexts.
- 3.25 Most recently, during the Bus Centre of Excellence (BCoE) webinar "Planning for Buses in New Developments" (January 2024)³, it was indicated this total needed for commercial service viability has increased to be in the order of **1600no dwellings** and that '...one development running a bus service on its own is unlikely ever to be viable, it needs [a] combination [of developments or trip generators] on corridors'.
- 3.26 The primary assumption here is an increase in total dwellings to generate sufficient bus patronage is reflected in well-established changes to working from home and hybrid working practices, resulting in less bus demand per dwelling as a result.
- 3.27 SGV has planning permission for a maximum of 1500no dwellings to be completed (in phases) by 2034. Therefore, based on this latest evidence as presented at the BCoE event, it is likely to be a challenge for a fully commercially viable bus service to ever be delivered across SGV (under the current local bus sector circumstances), without identifying a supporting funding source and linked trip generation factors from other destinations.
- 3.28 Taking known historic patronage data for GNE's Q3 service and development/occupation rates at Newcastle Great Park (NGP) as a suitable local proxy within the North East region, pre-pandemic this was generating c.13 bus trips per residential dwelling per month, equivalent to c.0.43 trips per dwelling per day. The major destinations for NGP are Gosforth and Newcastle city centre, noted here for comparison purposes in terms of likely future demand generated from SGV to nearby trip destinations.
- 3.29 Exploration of the 2024 TRICS trip generation rate based on residential developments within the database of similar scale/nature to SGV (6no developments) returns a value of 0.201 bus trips per dwelling per day.
- 3.30 This aligns with outputs of a separate worked example provided by the TRICS consortium (2021)⁴ of 0.191 bus trips per dwelling per day for a 'residential development of approximately 300 dwellings, a neighbourhood centre to include community and retail uses,

² https://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/tfnh-nick-small-presentation.pdf

³ https://www.buscentreofexcellence.org.uk/pastevents/planning-for-buses-in-new-developments & https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sigDaS6DnFc

⁴ https://www.trics.org/img/trics%20dp%20guidance_web.pdf

- a primary school, public open space, play areas, a Riverside County Park and new footpath links. This site is situated on the edge of an existing town.' These general characteristics within the worked example align to those of the SGV development, albeit total number of dwellings upon final completion will be a factor of 5x greater.
- 3.31 Therefore, by taking the average of the NGP and TRICS trip rates to account for the various proxy options across both pre- and post-pandemic times, it is proposed a suitable estimator for the potential number of bus trips to be generated by SGV is in the order of 0.274 trips per dwelling per day.
- 3.32 Applying this to latest forecasted occupation rates, this gives an estimated daily and monthly patronage demand profile as shown in Table 2:

Table 2 – Initial Estimate of Bus Patronage Generated at SGV (2024-2034)

Year End	Forecasted Occupations	Estimated Daily Bus Demand @ 0.274 trips/dwelling	Estimated Monthly Bus Demand (30 days)
2024	74	20.28	608
2025	178	48.77	1,463
2026	342	93.71	2,811
2027	506	138.64	4,159
2028	779	213.45	6,403
2029	998	273.45	8,204
2030	1,189	325.79	9,774
2031	1,344	368.26	11,048
2032	1,420	389.08	11,672
2033	1,492	408.81	12,264
2034	1,500	411.00	12,330

3.33 Based on the 2018 Planning Committee Report and on the understanding SGV will necessitate a new bus service to be introduced (as explained in further detail in the following section), the assumption here is any new route would seek to link Seaham centre to SGV and another key destination, likely Dalton Park, in the first instance.

- 3.34 In doing so, this has potential to generate further patronage beyond that estimated from SGV in isolation, but with consideration needed for any patronage abstraction from existing routes serving similar trip origin:destination pairs.
- 3.35 It is therefore proposed to introduce triggers for exploring formal commencement of a dedicated bus service through SGV after the Spine Road is complete in its entirety to adoptable standards (2027) and prior to the 1400th occupation, aligning to the next DCC/Nexus timetable change date at the time. This would fall between 2031-2032 based on the current completion and occupancy forecasts.
- 3.36 Formal acceptance of this timeframe would enable continued discussions and liaison between all parties concerning suitable bus service options for SGV which could be implemented through other supporting arrangements, as set out in the following section of this report.

4. CONDITION 26: SGV PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

- 4.1 This section discusses the current situation and identified challenges with regards to proposed public transport service improvements to bring bus services into SGV.
- 4.2 Since the November 2018 Planning Committee report and recommendations for a desired level of bus service to/from and through SGV of four buses per hour (based on the network of services in operation at the time), impacts of the pandemic have resulted in the local bus sector going through a well-documented period of uncertainty including changes to routes and frequencies. This has resulted in a much-changed and reduced local network being in operation today, coupled with increased operational costs for the providers.
- 4.3 It should be reiterated at this juncture that based on the network of services available in 2018, no stipulation was included within the \$106 planning obligations for direct allocation of funding to secure and provide a brand new bus service. Therefore, this study has focussed upon what could potentially be delivered into \$GV through reviewing options with the respective operators regards their existing network of services as of January 2024.
- 4.4 Of those services identified as being operational in 2018, only GNE service X6 now operates along the A182 and directly past the SGV location, up to a half-hourly basis on Mondays-Saturdays only.
- 4.5 Arriva services 22/23 along the B1432 Stockton Road (Pemberton Arms) also continue but now operate on an hourly frequency as opposed to half-hourly in 2018.
- 4.6 Other services currently operating in the wider vicinity of SGV include:
 - GNE service 60 between Sunderland Ryhope Seaham (centre) Seaham
 Parkside which operates up to every 15 minutes Mondays-Saturdays and every 20 minutes on Sundays.
 - Gateshead Central Taxis service 71 (a DCC-Nexus supported route) which terminates/starts at Spectrum Business Park in the AM/PM peak periods on Mondays-Fridays only. At all other times (including all-day Saturday), this services operates hourly to/from Seaham (Castlereagh Aged Miners' Home). It has therefore been discounted as a potential option for SGV given the desired level of service and hours of operation, coupled with limited capacity in the timetable to extend beyond Spectrum Business Park without additional vehicles.
 - Arriva ED4 scholars service between Sunderland Seaham East Durham College, operating fast along the A182 after Seaham, providing a uni-directional journey

during term-times (on weekdays only) to East Durham College in the AM and from the college in the PM. Longer-term, diversion of the ED4 to accommodate future EDC students residing within the SGV may be advantageous, but is not an immediate focus nor priority here.

- 4.7 Additional GNE services at Dalton Park, approximately 1.5 miles to the west of the SGV site, include:
 - 61/A: Sunderland Dalton Park Murton Easington Lane Easington Peterlee
 - 65: Seaham New Seaham Dalton Park Murton Hetton Belmont Durham
 - X10: Newcastle Heworth Dalton Park Peterlee Stockton Middlesbrough

Operator Views & Initial Suggestions

4.8 Reflecting on the current situation, discussions were held with representatives from both Arriva and GNE to understand their level of interest in serving the future SGV development, options within their current network and other opportunities or limitations.

Arriva

- 4.9 E-mail dialogue was initially had with Richard McGowan and Andrew Scott, with a followup Teams call with Andrew Scott, picking up on previous correspondence as reported in the 2018 supporting documents.
- 4.10 This indicated whilst there is still potential interest from Arriva in serving SGV in the future, their current network across the Durham-Peterlee-Sunderland/Hartlepool corridors does not have requisite capacity nor flexibility to accommodate what would be a lengthy diversion to the existing routes.
- 4.11 Grade-separation of the A182 over the B1432 would require services 22/23 to operate from Dalton Park along the A182 to serve SGV and then onwards to Seaham before rejoining the existing route in/around Seaham Grange. This would add c.7 miles (one-way) to the overall route length and associated additional run time.
- 4.12 Further complexity is introduced due to the interworking of the 22/23 with service 24 in the East Durham area (the 'Peterlee Triangle') on an intricate and finely-balanced pattern. This is to ensure driver rotas start from and return to Durham within the legality of driving hours

- rules; this therefore poses a major limitation to introducing any substantial route and scheduling changes, as would be required here.
- 4.13 Separately it was noted service 22B operates as a standalone between Durham-Peterlee only, providing the in-fill trips on this particular leg with the wider 22/23/24 combined network. However, the 22B only operates from c.0800-c.1800 on an hourly basis, with a layover time of 10 minutes at Peterlee.
- 4.14 Extending the 22B to SGV is not viable within its current schedule and would require additional vehicles plus funding support. However, this could then impact the balance of the wider 22/23/24 service patterns without delivering the level of desired frequency nor offering connections beyond SGV to/from Seaham.
- 4.15 In conclusion, whilst service 22/23 cannot be feasibly diverted to serve SGV directly, it will still provide a secondary option as the wider development and pedestrian access routes progress, and will be promoted as such.

Go North East

- 4.16 Separate e-mail dialogue addressing the same SGV service requirements and opportunities was had with Dan Graham, followed up by a Teams call and face-to-face meetings in December 2023 January 2024 to discuss a range of possible options.
- 4.17 Based on the review of current services, the X6 had been flagged as the prime candidate for diverting into SGV, given it operates directly past the SGV site along the A182.
- 4.18 Regarding said diversion through the completed SGV Spine Road, it is estimated this would add 0.41mi/0.66km (one-way) to the overall route length versus going directly along the A182 as per the current route. This is based on A182 east-west SGV roundabouts being 0.60mi/0.97km direct and the estimated SGV Spine Road being 1.01mi/1.63km. The speed limit through SGV along the Spine Road would be less than that of the A182 and would have to be accounted for in the overall scheduling.
- 4.19 Given the X6 is a half-hourly service operating from c.0630-2100 from Mondays-Saturday only, it was also important to explore other options as presented at the start of this section.
- 4.20 The following services were highlighted by GNE as other potential candidates which could eventually serve SGV, subject to further review of the operational implications:
 - Service 60: Sunderland-Seaham (Parkside), operates up to every 15 minutes and runs within a mile of SGV at the A182 Dawdon roundabout.
 - Service 65: Durham-Seaham, currently terminates in Seaham centre.

- 4.21 Having reviewed the wider implications of estimated additional run time required to serve SGV in full (a minimum of 10 minutes), the following issues have been identified by GNE:
 - Service X6 operates to a complex cycle involving co-ordinated timings and
 interworking with other local buses at Peterlee, so has limited capacity in the
 timetable to accommodate additional route milage and bus stop dwell times. It
 is marketed as an express service thus GNE do not wish to impact this in case of
 any adverse impact on existing patronage.
 - Service 65 this interworks with service 20 in Durham. Any extension to the route after Seaham to SGV, incorporating proposed dwell times to serve stops across the full development, would take more than 10 minutes, meaning an extra bus would be required in the overall schedule cycle. This would then push the cycle over a 4.5 hour threshold, so would present issues with driver hours and requirements, thus any extension is not viewed as a viable option for SGV.
- 4.22 Therefore, the only remaining option is service 60 to Seaham (Parkside). It was initially suggested this could divert from the A182 Dawdon roundabout (Nose's Point) via SGV en route to/from the Parkside terminus.
- 4.23 There is currently 10 minutes' layover in the service 60 schedule at Sunderland (plus a further two or three minutes at Parkside), however to ensure operational reliability, the layover at Sunderland needs to be kept to an absolute minimum of five minutes. This therefore only allows the diversion into SGV to take no more than two or three minutes in each direction, which at c.3 miles is not operationally feasible.
- 4.24 An alternative arrangement was proposed which would be to split the current service 60 into A and B route variants, alternating between Parkside (60A) and SGV (60B) to provide a half-hourly service to each location. Early morning and late evening services could be combined to serve all locations on a single route but at a reduced frequency.
- 4.25 Given the impact this would have on the established demand from Parkside, reducing services from four buses per hour down to two buses per hour on this section was not viewed favourably. Also, given the as yet unknown patronage demand from SGV and implications of the forecasting exercise indicating SGV will not support a commercial service in isolation, it was felt this was not going to be a feasible commercial option without an identified commitment for funding to help support an initial period of operation and establish a baseline for future patronage forecasts.

Summary of Discussions with Operators

- 4.26 Having undertaken a detailed review of the current bus network, discussed associated timetables and operational implications on all relevant commercial and supported bus services in the immediate vicinity of SGV, there is **currently no viable bus service available** to serve SGV.
- 4.27 Both operators were keen to stress the range of challenges the bus sector has faced as a result of the pandemic and how the local network serving the SGV site has reduced significantly since the original 2018 proposals were submitted and approved.
- 4.28 There is an appreciation of the **eventual** demand for services that future phases of the SGV development could ultimately generate, coupled with an acknowledgement of the desire within the 2018 Planning Committee report to try and capture this demand from an early stage. However, it is reiterated here that expectations from 2018 were based purely on diversion of the existing and plentiful services available within the immediate vicinity of SGV, with no explicit mention of any requirement for the funding of new bus services.
- 4.29 Nevertheless, in these post-pandemic times and based on ongoing challenges facing the local bus sector, without a direct requirement for funding provision to support the introduction of a brand new bus service as would be required here it is appreciated that alternative options now need to be explored.
- 4.30 Based on the proposed completion date of the full Spine Road and adjacent footpaths to adoptable standards by September 2027, thus enabling bus services to theoretically commence at SGV from this date, it is recommended the developers (and/or their appointed representatives) commit to an ongoing dialogue with all relevant parties around any future changes to the local bus network which may then present an opportunity to serve SGV within a new or enhanced existing service option.
- 4.31 Regards a suitable timeframe, it is suggested to base meetings around the schedule of known timetable change dates, such that sufficient time can be allocated for understanding occupation forecasts and estimated patronage generation to build into future service scheduling.
- 4.32 Furthermore, discussions around securing external funding opportunities to help deliver a new bus service to SGV, such as those being (re)introduced with support via the current North East Bus Service Improvement Plan and/or the longer-term devolution proposals and associated transport powers plus funding arising from the reintroduction of a North East Mayoral Combined Authority, should be conducted between all parties.

Appendix A – SGV Movement & Access Route Plan

