

Issues & Response Table: George Village Ridge S24G

1. Provide a summary of the issues raised by I&APs and an indication of the manner in which the issues raised were incorporated, or the reasons for not being incorporated or addressed. Note that POPIA prohibits the publishing and distribution of private (contact) information – originals submitted to the Department.	
COMMENT	RESPONSE
<b>HERITAGE WESTERN CAPE, 04/04/2022</b>	
Comment submitted in 2018 that no further studies are required for the proposed mixed use development of Erven 21028 & 21029. Comment has not changed.	Noted.
<b>CAPE NATURE, 21/06/2022</b>	
Environmental Control Officer (ECO) must monitor construction and operational phases to ensure recommended mitigation measures of specialist studies are implemented and that sensitive areas and no-go areas are treated as such.	Noted. Power Construction appointed Cape EAPrac to act as ECO for the duration of the time that the site is shutdown (whilst the investigative processes are underway). Confluent Consulting (the aquatic specialist) is also appointed to monitor the wetland and riparian corridor rehabilitation status. Alien clearing activities is ongoing whilst the site is closed. An ECO will also be appointed for the remainder of the duration of the construction period which will be on-hold until such time as the Section 24G application process is completed.
Waste generated must be stored onsite until it is removed to a registered facility.	Noted and implemented as such.
CapeNature agrees with the mitigation measures proposed by the various specialists which must be implemented.	Noted. The site plan has been updated to reflect all the relevant specialist recommendations including buffering the wetland and riparian buffer, vegetating the ecological corridor, relocating overhead lighting to reduce visual night glare around the central wetland.
Further loss of biodiversity must be prevented by implementing the management recommendations for conservation and open space areas.	Noted. The revised layout accommodates the recommendations made to biodiversity, conservation and open space management.
CapeNature supports the ecological link between the wetland and the river. A restoration plan must be compiled for the corridor between the wetland the river.	The ecological corridor will be vegetated with on-site input from the aquatic specialist once the channel has been completed (to verify slope and soil type for optimal restoration).
The wetland must be protected, its conservation is supported.	Noted. Zoned Open Space III / Conservation status. George Municipality will own and management ito the biodiversity agreement and the George Adopt-a-Spot will be initiated for the open space areas in collaboration with private entities who has knowledge and experience in monitoring. The Adopt-a-Spot will aim to ensure skills transfer and environmental training of the Municipal Parks teams responsible for open space management for a minimum period of three years to

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	ensure that long-term maintenance of these features are assured under appropriate management.
Alien Plant species management plan must be compiled and must form part of the Environmental Management Plan.	Noted. The environmental management plan contains recommendations on invasive alien management on the study site. The riparian corridor, central wetland and stormwater attenuation will be managed under a formal Adopt-a-Spot agreement with the George Municipality. The terms for Adopt-a-Spot is reflected in the Section 24G report.
Suitable indigenous vegetation must be used during rehabilitation of all open space areas.	Noted.
The Applicant is reminded that flooding events can change watercourses within a short period of time and it must be mitigated. Construction must be done during the drier periods of the year.	Construction will be implemented according to a construction programme and to avoid the site being vacant for extended time periods, therefore it is not feasible to avoid construction during wetter months. The contractor must however ensure compliance with the EMP which addresses potential issues pertaining to stormwater management and flooding under ECO supervision.
Topsoil must be stored separately and should not be contaminated.	Topsoil across the site was removed when construction commenced. It has been stockpiled and will be reused across the site area where deemed necessary. Invasive alien species are being controlled on the property with intermittent clearing intervals under supervision of the ECO and aquatic specialist.
Stabilising of cleared areas must be done to prevent erosion.	The necessary stabilisation has been done during the period when the site has been mothballed. Erosion control measures will continue to be checked whilst the site is vacant and also when construction commence once more. Additional erosion and stormwater measures are being implemented with input and monitoring of the aquatic specialist and ECO.
Areas susceptible to erosion must be protected by installing the necessary temporary structures.	Noted. Also see above comment.
Strictly adhere to stormwater management controls to avoid negative impacts on erosion.	Noted. Detailed stormwater management plan compiled by engineer in consultation with the aquatic specialist. Construction phase stormwater management will be monitored by ECO.

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<p>Search and rescue of plants must allow for a nursery until such time as they can be replanted</p>	<p>The site was cleared of vegetation when construction commenced. No search and rescue was undertaken at the time. Search and rescue is however recommended prior to when construction will commence if the development is authorised in areas where natural vegetation reoccurred during the time period the site has been mothballed. Should permits be required CapeNature will be approached by the ECO.</p>
<p>Construction activities must remain outside of the 19m buffer zone and heavy machinery must remain outside the watercourse and their buffers.</p>	<p>Noted. The areas/buffers have been clearly demarcated and will be identified as areas where no access is permitted either for vehicles or workers during the construction period, unless they are needed to conduct erosion control/alien clearing.</p>
<p>The site must be conserved as a Biodiversity Agreement.</p>	<p>Noted. The process for a biodiversity agreement commenced in June 2022. Adopt-a-Spot process will commence once approvals are in place due to the process needing to be followed with the Municipality on this process.</p> <p>The Adopt-a-Spot initiative will be a collaboration between George Municipality, CapeNature and Private Partners for a minimum period of three (3) years during which time invasive alien vegetation clearing, erosion control, amphibian health monitoring, environmental education and awareness and skills transfer and training for the Municipal Parks &amp; Recreational Directorate will be critical to ensure appropriate, informed management of the open space areas once the Adopt-a-Spot Initiative comes to an end or is extended beyond three years.</p>
<p><b>Mrs Charmaine Nunns (resident), undated</b></p>	
<p>The wetland area must be fenced to ensure that domestic animals and people do not access this sensitive area.</p>	<p>The wetland is currently demarcated, but will be fenced inclusive of the recommended 19m buffer around the feature. It will remain a no-go area for the duration of construction. The central wetland will also be fenced in the operational phase to restrict pedestrian/domestic animals from accessing the site unauthorised into the future. Monitoring of the open space areas inclusive of the central flat wetland will be undertaken ito of a Stewardship Agreement between the George Municipality and CapeNature, as well as with additional monitoring and assistance under the Municipal Adopt-a-Spot initiative.</p>

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<p>How will littering into the wetland from the group housing be monitored?</p>	<p>The wetland will be fenced and not accessible to people/residents. Litter is therefore unlikely to find its way into the wetland. The area will be part of a CapeNature / George Municipality Biodiversity Agreement. Furthermore stormwater design is such that runoff is not directed to this wetland because good quality water is important for the health of the frog species. As such the normal litter that gets transported with stormwater will also not end up in the wetland. The wetland will be part of an Adopt-a-Spot programme whereby it will be managed and monitored by the aquatic specialist in cooperation with the Municipality for long-term invasive alien clearing, species monitoring and littering. Cleaning out of any litter will be part of the roles &amp; responsibilities under the Adopt-a-Spot Initiative for the duration of the contract whereafter the George Municipality (after three years of training) will take over maintenance and management of the site.</p>
<p>It will be great if residents from Die Bult/King George Park can have access to enjoy the enclosed wetland with regards to a walkway around the wetland and some benches. The plan allows only access for residents of The Village Ridge.</p>	<p>The Village Ridge development is not a fenced development, as such it is open to the general public and residents from the greater area will have access to the wetland if they want to walk there or view the site i.e. sit at a bench next to it (albeit not within the fenced area since this will be a no-go area). The revised site plan makes specific provision for an open park-like area in proximity to the wetland that residents and visitors like will have access to.</p>
<p>How can we be assured that none of the residents will be able to access the wetlands areas.</p>	<p>The central wetland will be permanently fenced (locked) to prevent unauthorised access. Access will be restricted for purposes of monitoring, cleaning and research purposes only by means of a locked gate. Only Municipal officials responsible for cleaning and maintenance, as well as the members of the Adopt-a-Spot Initiative will have access to the fenced central flat wetland area. This is specifically to prevent unauthorised access by pedestrians/domestic animals that can impact negatively on the sensitive habitat.</p>

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<p>How will access to Camphersdrift wetland be secured?</p>	<p>Camphersdrift is part of a greater municipal open space system which is accessible to the general public where access routes are provided. Roads through this development are open to the public and pedestrians can also walk to the Camphersdrift wetland corridor. The Camphersdrift corridor is not accessible with walkways all the way and care must be taken not to create informal walkways into this sensitive area. The buffer area along the Camphersdrift wetland that falls within the study site will be rehabilitated and potentially including the provision for an artificial attenuation pond in the position where the old car park is adjacent to the Camphersdrift wetland as an additional measure of responsible access to the Camphersdrift wetland corridor. Signage will also be displayed along the corridor to inform hikers/visitors of the sensitive habitat.</p>
<p>The old parking area will become a no-man's land which will attract vagrants who will enter the corridors and put the whole wetlands in jeopardy of foot traffic.</p>	<p>It is proposed that this area be converted to an artificial stormwater detention wetland/pond to prevent silt runoff from the greater Die Bult stormwater runoff, entering Camphersdrift and reduce the velocity of stormwater entering the Camphersdrift wetland corridor to avoid unwanted erosion. This feature is not on the George Village Ridge site, but negotiations with the Municipality is ongoing to convert the old car park area to an artificial stormwater pond which has the potential to reduce vagrants visiting and making use of it for illicit practices.</p>
<p>The shop/business is proposed too close to the wetland and can cause pollution. Who will take responsibility? Also this will attract unwanted people which will cause a security risk for the neighbourhood.</p>	<p>All development around the wetland is setback by the recommended 19m buffer area specifically to protect the wetland (the retail will not encroach into this area). The function of this buffer area is to create sufficient space between the habitat and development to avoid direct and reduce indirect impacts. The same applies to the commercial/business sites as these are also outside of the 19m buffer area. Retail site will be sold as an individual erf with business rights and whoever buys it will erect and manage the facility with own security. The facility will be for the benefit of residents and other parties and it is not clear what 'unwanted' people is being referred to. If it implies beggars or vagrants loitering around, it must be noted that residents will also self-regulate the area as it is as much a nuisance to them to have unwanted elements at their homes, as it is for the greater residential Die Bult area.</p>
<p>There appears to be too few parking spaces which will cause congestion in the streets and the public open space areas will be taken over by parked vehicles.</p>	<p>Parking ration has been approved by the Municipality as part of the preliminary land use planning discussions. The site parking complies with Municipal requirements for on-street parking. Parking for units are also dedicated off-street</p>

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	<p>on each erf. Commercial will have its own parking on-street within the development area. The sensitive public open space areas within the development will be fenced which will prohibit any parking on these open areas.</p>
<p>Where would a removal truck for erf 1 or 88 stop?</p>	<p>The layout complies with the municipal minimum turning circles requirements that allows larger vehicles to access the area safely. The Municipality may not approve the final site plan if it is not adhering to minimum standards, especially for a municipal service such as refuse removal.</p>
<p>Will the bridge be able to take heavy loads such as refuse removal trucks or moving trucks?</p>	<p>Bridge final design will be designed to accommodate heavy loads. The bridge will have culverts that don't have cement bottom or have cement covered with natural substrate to allow and improve faunal movement underneath the bridge.</p>
<p>Can Power Construction Adopt the Wetland Area as part of the Municipality's Adopt-a-Spot initiative? As per their website 'Power connects people by building bridges, roads, airports and townships. We enhance lives by building schools, homes and medical facilities. We create recreational platforms by building film studios, luxury golf estates and shopping centres'. But nowhere do they state anything with regards to sustaining our environment, preserving areas?</p>	<p>Consultation with CapeNature and the George Municipality regarding long-term management confirmed that the central wetland will be subject to a Biodiversity Agreement and the new Adopt-a-Spot programme for a minimum period of three (3) years. Power Construction will not be the entity implementing the Adopt-a-Spot as the internal open spaces will be transferred to the George Municipality once rehabilitated. The aquatic and environmental specialists will form part of the Adopt-a-Spot Initiative for the initial phases of operation (minimum three years) to ensure that the wetland habitat is restored and maintained appropriately until such time as it established and local community environmental awareness has been created to ensure long-term conservation outcomes.</p> <p>Landscaping/rehabilitation of open space areas must be completed prior to handover of the services/opens space areas to the George Municipality and through the Adopt-a-Spot initiative the George Municipal Parks directorate responsible for maintenance of open space areas will receive training and environmental education to help ensure continued improvement and maintenance of these sensitive environmental features into the future. Furthermore auditing requirements (of the open space areas) will be built into the approvals that will also help to ensure long-term compliance and protection of these features.</p>

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<b>George Sustainability Forum, 09/06/2022</b>	
We are in support of the amendments (layout/development) but continue to have concerns that the necessary checks and balances could have failed.	It is acknowledged that oversights in preceding processes resulted in the need for the Section 24G and WULA processes. Community watchdogs played a significant role in ensuring that due process is followed albeit in hind-sight. The outcome of the S24G and WULA processes have achieved conservation goals despite the unfortunate damages caused initially when the site was cleared. Cooperation between the local Municipality and Provincial Environmental Affairs and Water Affairs is improving and should close the gaps whereby a repeat of a similar oversights could be avoided. The best monitoring mechanism is still community members and residents who raise concern when activities take place that may require the involvement of Authorities at a higher level.
This type of higher density development in George is necessary and the resultant delays could easily have been avoided.	Noted. Due process is being followed to ensure that a repeat of the initial application process with oversights does not happen again. Unfortunately the process takes time to complete and the resulting delay in providing affordable housing of this nature is regrettable.
Why did the initial EIA not trigger the wetlands?	No EIA was undertaken at the time (2018) given that the Department of Environmental Affairs, in response to an Applicability Checklist, confirmed that there was no requirement for an EIA. It appears that the conclusion was incorrect and seemingly based on a lack of clear and detailed information contained in the Clarification Application submitted to the Department, that resulted in decision-making that was not accurate.
Who undertook the EIA?	Unfortunately no EIA was undertaken at the time when the planning application process was undertaken (2018). EnviroQuest (an environmental firm) compiled and submitted an Applicability Checklist to the DEADP in 2018. Based on the information contained in the Applicability Checklist, the DEADP concluded that no listed activities were triggered.
Why did the DEADP allow the authorisation (missing the wetland trigger)?	Information about the wetland was included in the Applicability Checklist documentation although it was submitted that 'formal classification' of said feature had to (still) be done. The S24G investigation determined that the EAP who completed and submitted the Clarification Application the DEADP could have been clearer on the presence of a wetland to the specific point of whether or not it may trigger an environmental process. It also appeared that the DEADP in their review of the Applicability Checklist could have made further enquiries to clarify

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	the presence of a wetland and to what extent the development would have impacted thereon.
Who authorised the development in DEADP.	No environmental authorisation was issued and as such no environmental authorisation was issued.
How could the Mayor over-ride the request for further detailed investigations by the rate payers association?	This S24G application process is a retrospective investigation of environmental conditions and as a result it is not possible for us to reflect on decisions taken in terms of a separate (planning) application by different consultants. Philip Theron who is the Urban Planning on the planning process is in a better position to address questions on the 2018 planning application process.
Who authorised the development within the George municipality?	Various directorates within the Municipality considers and authorises a land use planning application, It is our understanding that it (the final decision) therefor is not an individual who takes the decision on his/her own. Such a decision is informed through inputs from various internal directorates. FormaPlan Town Planners were responsible for the planning application and can provide more detailed information on the planning process and outcomes.
What further checks and balances could the Municipality have set in place to prevent that this transgression does not happen again.	The Municipality has a dedicated environmental directorate now who assist Town Planner with development applications to determine applicability and ensure compliance. At the time of the 2018 planning application said directorate was more planning orientated and to our knowledge the Municipality did not have an environmental person employed in the same position as there is today. Developments of this nature located in proximity to sensitive ecosystems and especially open space areas such as Camphersdrift must be identified by the Municipality as needing consultation with DEADP, CapeNature and BGCMA to obtain their comment prior to Municipal approvals.
What was the cost of the total S24G process? Ratepayers has the right to know the cost for not getting the EIA process right the first time.	We submit that the cost of the environmental investigations is not public information. The cost for the process has not been carried by the Municipality or any other public organ of state. Power Construction in their capacity as the Applicant (which is a private company) has been responsible for all of the costs associated with the retrospective applications. They will also be responsible for paying the Administrative Fine to the Environmental Authorities, as well as for all costs associated with landscaping and rehabilitation of the sensitive environmental features identified in the site until such time as the open space areas is transferred to the George Municipality.



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<b>GARDEN ROUTE DAM ACTION GROUP, 03/06/2022</b>	
Pity that the freshwater ecological aspects of the site were made to fit into a development with perceived rights. Without an EA and WULA there were no development rights.	<p>The site was approved for Group Housing after it was rezoned from Institutional As part of Die Bult school site originally when the greater Die Bult development was established. When the site was rezoned to Group Housing previously the DEADP confirmed that said rezoning did not trigger the ECA legislation at the time of rezoning.</p> <p>The subsequent application for further rezoning was therefore done from the basis of primary rights being for Group Housing.</p> <p>The freshwater ecological assessment determined the (now) no-go area, as well as a buffer area which was not defined by the development proposals previously. The development proposal proposed as part of the S24G had to adopt the no-go and buffer areas which the Applicant must rehabilitate to the satisfaction of the Authorities should the development be authorised.</p>
GARDAG is satisfied that qualified freshwater ecologists and other specialists were consulted to address the conservation of freshwater resources on the affected properties.	Noted. The freshwater specialist will remain involved in the continued monitoring and rehabilitation of the central wetland flat and riparian corridor as part of the Adopt-a-Spot initiative for minimum period of three years to ensure sufficient environmental awareness and training of both residents and Municipal Officials responsible for long-term maintenance of these sensitive environmental features.
GARDAG agrees with the methods proposed to protect the freshwater habitats.	Noted.
The recommendation by specialist that the wetland must not be lit up (prevent night pollution) and that it should be fenced are supported.	The aquatic specialist, in consultation with the electrical engineers, determined the most optimal location for external street lights in proximity to the areas surrounding the wetland to limit potential external night pollution on the sensitive habitat. No lights are provided inside the no-go buffer area or the wetland itself in support of a low-lighting habitat. It must be noted that surrounding residential areas already introduce lighting in the form of street lights and house lighting. The proposed development of the site as such is not introducing a completely new impact, but mitigating it through appropriate placing and stipulating low level bollard lighting is deemed acceptable.
<b>HIGHLANDS/KING GEORGE PARK RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION, undated</b>	
Public meeting was convened by the ratepayers on 26 May 2022 (attendance register provided). Comment from this meeting is incorporated into submission.	Noted. Record of private meeting reflected.

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<p>Strongly support the recognition of the wetlands and that it be protected by a durable fence preferably nylar-for-medium also called beta fencing.</p>	<p>Temporary demarcation remains in place for the duration of construction whilst permanent fencing recommendations by aquatic specialist to keep people and domestic animals out and indigenous fauna safe, will be implemented and kept in place for the duration of the construction period.</p> <p>A permanent fence around these features, will be similar to clearvu fencing and will be installed as part of the civil contract to ensure that it is in place prior to any occupation.</p> <p>The Applicant will be responsible for installing the fence and for all the prescribed rehabilitation/landscaping of the identified sensitive features to the satisfaction of the competent authorities.</p> <p>Monitoring of the rehabilitated areas will be under the George Adopt-a-Spot Initiative for a minimum period of three (3) years to help with skills transfer and environmental awareness training of residents and the George Municipal Parks &amp; Recreational Directorate who will ultimately become owners and be responsible for long-term management of the open space areas.</p>
<p>The corridor must be fenced in as well with security lights around the wetlands and the corridor.</p>	<p>The corridor will be demarcated and revegetated to help it function as an ecological corridor and keep out people/domestic animals. Lighting along the corridor must be done very sensitively to ensure that movement of animals and amphibia is not hampered as many of these animals prefer movement during the cool of night and excessive lighting can jeopardise their natural movement patterns.</p>
<p>Reasonable access for members of the public to the wetlands must be ensured.</p>	<p>The development is not a gated development and is accessible in a similar fashion as the rest of the surrounding residential areas i.e. with vehicles/on foot.</p> <p>It must be noted however that no visitors/residents will be permitted to enter the fenced area surrounding the central wetland flat. This is particularly planned so as to limit long-term impacts on this sensitive feature and habitat for frogs. Places to sit i.e. benches will be provided for residents and visitors alike who may be interested in the wetland but these will be outside of the controlled fenced off central wetland flat. Only municipal officials responsible for maintenance, research and members of the Adopt-a-Spot initiative will have access to the central wetland flat through a locked gate system.</p>
<p>Benches at the periphery of the wetland for the public to enjoy the natural beauty of this feature is of utmost importance.</p>	<p>The landscaping of the area surrounding the central wetland will most definitely take into account places for people to sit in the adjoining open space park area, as</p>

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	well as awareness signs and postage about the wetland and important frog species. The priority for the area however is for funding on rehabilitation/landscaping/fencing and monitoring to restore the features.
Visible security to ensure the safety and protection of fauna and flora inside the wetlands will be an added precautionary measure.	The central wetland will be permanently fenced to prevent human and domestic animal impact.
Insufficient parking space is provided for visitors. This was also raised as a point in our previous appeal.	<p>The development is considered a normal township development albeit higher density. Large public parking areas do not form part of normal residential developments as visitors are mostly associated with somebody visiting a friend/family member in which case parking takes place at a house. On street parking is provided for the retails centre and onsite (off street) parking is provided for residential units.</p> <p>The George Municipality cannot approve of a site plan that does not adhere to their minimum traffic/parking standards as per the Zoning Scheme Regulations. Once the environmental processes are complete, a further planning process must be followed still during which time the Municipality will check for further compliance requirements not related to the environmental fields per se.</p>
Unused remnant of the road along the boundary of the school will become a gathering place for vagrants and criminals if not totally removed.	Discussions are underway with the George Municipality for this area (old parking lot) to be transformed to an artificial stormwater pond/wetland to catch silt and prevent unwanted erosion from stormwater runoff from the greater Die Bult area and the development from entering the Camphersdrift system. Currently it is an open area with no controls hence vagrants can congregate there, but the proposed conversion to an artificial wetland will make it an inaccessible/unusable space for such unwanted activities. It must be noted that this parking area is off-site from the George Village Ridge study area and remains the responsibility of the George Municipality.
Increase in traffic volumes, as highlighted in our previous appeal, will increase noise levels, traffic congestion at the various intersections and will inhibit pedestrian traffic with so many residents walking around with their children and dogs.	The TIA (2020) that informed the original application reflects the reduced numbers of units for this development. The engineers confirmed that the level of service from existing traffic <i>congestion</i> will not be exacerbated by this development since many residents will rely on the Go George Buss service instead of using private vehicles. It is acknowledged however that through traffic volumes will <i>increase</i> as more people will make sure of the road network in the area. Cognisance is also taken of the subsequent introduction of the Go-George public transport system

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	<p>that will serve this development area as a way of alleviating the use of private vehicles.</p> <p>It must be noted that prior to this application being approved by the Municipality in 2018/2019 the site had primary zoning rights for Group Housing which implies that an increase in traffic was always going to result for development of the property since it was originally set aside as part of the greater Die Bult development.</p>
<p>Continuous sewage blockages in the area which the Municipality does not attend to or resolved over the years will be exacerbated and will negatively impact on the Camphersdrift wetland.</p>	<p>The Civil Engineers (Zutari) has confirmed that the existing municipal sewage system is not over capacity, but there is a need for improvement maintenance to address blockages that stems from higher-up locations in the system.</p> <p>The proposed development will not push the sewage system beyond its capacity and as such no bulk upgrades are required to the sewage infrastructure. But it is acknowledged that continued maintenance is a Municipal function and reporting of blockages is an important communal function. It is a concern that the existing municipal bulk sewer line runs along the Camphersdrift wetland system already. Blockages resulting in overflows at manholes situated along the river poses a threat to the sensitive habitat along this corridor. Although this line does not require any upgrading (capacity is sufficient), the Municipality is obliged to restore blockages within a reasonable time and to clean up any spills that may be detrimental to the environment.</p>
<p>Remains concerned about the validity and relevance of the TIA and EIA which was done for this application.</p>	<p>Prior to this S24G and WULA there was no EIA done. The 2018/2019 development application was decided upon based only on a Planning Application.</p> <p>The TIA done as part of said planning application was revisited and the engineers confirmed that the revised layout (accommodating the central wetland flat and riparian corridor) reflects on a reduced number of units which will result overall traffic volumes. Noted also is the subsequent coming online of the Go-George public transport system. The municipality is mandated to consider and approve the technical studies including the TIA when the final site development plan (as amended through the S24G/WULA process) must be resubmitted to the Municipality for approval.</p>