

LATCHMORE STREAM FILLING AND REALIGNMENT PROJECT SITE VISIT 12TH FEBRUARY 2009

I was unable to attend the original site visit due to ill health. Sue arranged with Pat that she should attend to represent the "agricultural" interest. I have now had the opportunity of inspecting the proposals with Sarah Oakley. The following is a list of the main plans and my recommendations which Pat has amended and approves.

A – C Some realignment of the stream, on the south side of the existing at the east end and then on the north. No objections in principle, but subject to an adequate (and maintained) reinstated passage at A, including crossings of the new stream, the line of the old one, and the wet areas on each side.

C. It should be a condition of the above work that the ford on the side drain at C should be properly reinstated, including the approaches.

D – E. This is a major stream realignment to the south. I have grave reservations about it and recommend that it should not be approved at present. The problem is that the old channel (which is to be opened up) is at a much higher level than the present one and also much higher than the degraded lawn to the north. The latter would have nowhere to drain unless the new course is excavated to an impossible depth. Moreover, the water level in the revised channel would be several feet above the present level, putting further areas of lawn adjoining at risk. Before any approval is given, the FC must provide detailed plans and levels showing how drainage to the north is to be accommodated and the depth of the new course and the intended water level there in relation to the existing water level. In addition they must show how are they are to deal with the existing choked drains on the flood plain there. I can see no alternative but to retain some flow in the existing stream course, so as to carry off the water from the growing swamp on the north. They must also give assurances as to the future maintenance of the drainage to the north and any side drains to the new course.

E – F This is a further realignment, but here the levels are less problem. Subject to protection and future maintenance of the outflow of the drain to H, I recommend no objection.

Latchmore generally. This valley and is perhaps the most important in the Forest in landscape terms, made famous through the drawings and paintings of Heywood Sumner. While some thorn scrub and willow should be removed, I recommend that no character trees or shrubs should be taken. I don't think that such work is intended, but it needs recording. It is also important that no stagnant pools be left in the stream filling and related engineering work. The capacity of the new stream channel must be sufficient to carry all normal flows.

G –H A deep drain to be filled where not vegetated. I recommend approval, subject to no filling coming above one foot from the surface and a firm undertaking that it will be maintained in future.

H Maintain crossing and remove 2 iron posts. Recommend approval.

North of H Bog restoration with heather bales. Recommend no objection

Nature of stream filling. FC proposes to throw into the old course various tree trunks. These will decay over time. Once decay commences, the fill will settle. Recommend that we require an assurance that any subsidence will be made good, however far into the future it occurs. It seems to me a shortsighted and wrong policy to fill with materials which will settle in this manner.

A few minor additional works on side drains need no comment. The mature Scots pine against Alderhill will be removed. The mature trees here will be retained.

AHP 11th February.

