

Report from Suzi on her discussion with John Lambert at the Swafield meeting December 7th

I met John Lambert and the project manager (whose name I didn't catch) yesterday and discussed a number of points, outlined below with my thoughts relating to each.

As we have previously been told, mains sewerage is coming to B whether residents like it or not. This assertion was questioned by some people at the event. I don't know how set in stone it is and I suspect we would need legal advice if we wanted to challenge it further.

AW are prepared to provide a series of 'mock-ups' to show the current views and how they would be with the structure in place. That may be helpful to a degree but my understanding is that Carolyn and Sybil are more concerned with the traffic using the proposed access track and the effect this would have on their enjoyment of their gardens.

The current site (behind Sybil and Carolyn's properties) is AW's preferred option. Jane Alston has offered the plot between G A and the terraced houses but they do not want to use it as it is higher than the plot behind the houses. Their position on this is firm and they clearly don't want to budge. I asked whether siting it next to the road was possible as this would mean that it was less visible from the houses and would eliminate traffic behind Sybil and Carolyn's (I haven't checked with Sybil but have spoken to Carolyn and she would be happy with this site). AW stated that the land next to the road is 4m higher than that in the corner and that the proposed site was the most appropriate. My feeling is that, if everyone agrees to the pumping station being located next to the road (where the access to the track would have been), then we need to push as hard as we can for it to be situated there if it is technically possible to do so. I'm sure it's more expensive and less convenient for AW, hence their reluctance to consider it, but if we dig our collective heels in then we are not without some bargaining power. They are, I assume, keen to avoid a compulsory purchase order and are seeking to get this thing through by consent.

Another possible site is on the common, again subject to residents' views. As discussed previously, 'common land' does not mean that the land is owned in common but just means there may be 'commoners' rights' over it. It can be privately owned or owned by a public body such as a council or other agency. I am waiting for a response from the District Council to find out who owns the land (someone who's lived in B for longer than we have may even be able to answer that question). Assuming ownership can be established, there seems to be no reason why AW couldn't approach them as a landowner, in the same way that they have with Jane. I stress that I'm only mooting the idea of the common as I have no idea how it would affect views etc. of those living along Common Road. It may, of course, prove to be unsuitable.

With regards to noise, John Lambert has previously stated that the pumping station will be silent. I think that we should request that this expectation, either of silence or a specified decibel level, is written into any planning consent so that, if the pumping station turns out to make a residual noise, we can hold AW to whatever we have agreed as an acceptable level of noise. Likewise, he has indicated that there will be very little traffic - we may want to ask Planning whether this can be written into any consent (although I suspect it will be harder to get this written in as there will always be the caveat that they may need to access the site for repairs, as well as for ordinary scheduled maintenance).

As an aside, I spoke to the chap at Acorns who valued Carolyn's and advised her about the potential impact. His view is that our property will only be de-valued if there is any noise or if the structure (including any additional trees planted to disguise it) interferes with our view of the church and fields behind the houses. I assume the same would be true of your house.