

NETWORK RAIL INQUIRY NOTE 8

AP BURLTON/NFU EVIDENCE ON BIOSECURITY

1. In her evidence in respect of biosecurity issues relating to the Burlton objections to the proposed diversionary route at C4 (No. 20), Louise Staples (NFU) referred to Defra guidance relating to biosecurity for poultry. At one point in her evidence, Miss Staples suggested that the Defra guidance prohibited new footpaths close to poultry sheds. NR does not consider that to be correct.
2. The guidance concerned is understood to be “Biosecurity and preventing welfare impacts in poultry and captive birds: Advice for all poultry keepers”, last updated on 13 September 2017.¹
3. The guidance makes no specific reference to footpaths or rights of way. At page 3 it refers to the pathways for the spread of disease as including “contamination of vehicles, equipment, clothing and footwear which are moved between and within farms”, which might conceivably relate to footpath users where they come into contact with poultry. However, the “general biosecurity measures” on pp 4-5 do not make any reference to public rights of way in proximity to poultry sheds or pens. The second bullet point states

“Strictly limit and control access to poultry flocks. If possible, the site should be fenced with a controlled entry point. You should restrict the number of visitors and their vehicles, and keep them as far away as possible from poultry buildings and pastures. You should keep a record of all visitors.”
4. Users of the proposed footpath would not be “visitors” who obtain access to the poultry flocks. The turkey shed should have existing controls over entry. Those will not be interfered with by the proposals. There is no reference to restricting access to the land in proximity to poultry sheds. There is no evidence before the Inquiry of any biosecurity risk arising from people walking *near* to poultry farms. If necessary, as Mr Smith explained, additional fencing could be provided to ensure that users do not trespass into the turkey shed.
5. If the turkey farming operations changed, there may be a need to take account of the public right of way proposed, to ensure that controls over access to the poultry were maintained. This might necessitate diverting the footpath, depending on the nature of any changes (the details of which are not known). The same considerations would apply: access to the poultry must be secured, but there is no specified “stand-off” distance nor any indication of a need to avoid poultry farming in proximity to public rights of way.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644205/captive-birds-biosecurity-170913.pdf