

1st October 2026

Dear Ian Aston

I am writing to you with reference to: Witcombe Farm Footpath Modification
ROW/3354782

Nothing has materially changed since the previous application was rejected in 2009.

This remains a very busy Equestrian Livery Yard Establishment accommodating upward of 22 horses and ponies. There is constant movement of equines throughout the day crossing the proposed footpath route to go to the arenas, between both yards and access the mounting block.

There are significant risks with this footpath proposal; Security, Fire, Safety and Animal Welfare. Health & Safety to livery owners & their children, Horses, ponies and livestock and walkers. Increased potential for theft with 24 hr possibility of access through the yards and fire from hay straw & shavings storage.

Horses are unpredictable animals that are easily frightened triggering their natural flight and fight response. There are well documented risks regarding loose animals where gates are left open and loose dogs frightening and chasing horses

BBC News April 2026: A former Badminton Horse Trials competitor has had to put down her "brilliant" horse after three gates were left open, allowing the animal to escape and suffer serious injuries.

The British Horse Society (BHS) says that in 2019 alone, there were 168 cases involving dogs including three horse fatalities, 45 horses injured and 43 humans.
The BHS have the following information available on their website including:

Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Act 2025

Makes it an offence for a person to knowingly or unknowingly allow a dog to worry horses and other livestock, on any agricultural land. Allowing a dog to worry a horse would involve someone letting their dog attack or chase your horse in a way that may reasonably be expected to cause injury or suffering

Section 3 Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (Updated 2014)

For equestrians, a dog being dangerously out of control could include any occasion where they cause fear or apprehension to you, or might injure you. If the dog does injure you, then the offence becomes aggravated.

I have over 50 years of experience within the equine industry and hold a Level 5 coaching qualification. I am also an Assessor for both the British Horse Society and the Pony Club, organisations whose core principles are centred on safety, welfare, and the highest standards of horsemanship. These roles require strict adherence to health and safety legislation, which, as a professional operating in these capacities, I follow rigorously at all times.

I was the yard Manager a Great Witcombe Stables for a number of years looking after Cheltenham Ladies College Horses and ponies, after which my sons ponies were kept there. It is currently a lovely, very safe establishment for horses, ponies and children with Health and Safety rules in place, positioned at the end of a driveway where only the owners, liveries and fishermen can access

In my professional opinion I believe diverting the footpath will lead to the very probable safety scenarios I have mentioned above.

Yours Sincerely

Heather McLain BHSI