The wrong place for a 32,000-hen commercial egg factory unit

Briefing for Ochiltree Community Council and local ward councillors · Planning application 26/0511/PP, land north of Palmerston Barn, Station Road

Comments close Monday 23 November 2026 | **Agenda & key facts**

> **"We can't do anything about seagulls flying into our village, but we can choose not to put a 32,000-hen commercial egg factory unit here and risk disrupting every farm and business for 3 km in every direction."**
>
> Ochiltree residents, November 2026

1 What is proposed, and where

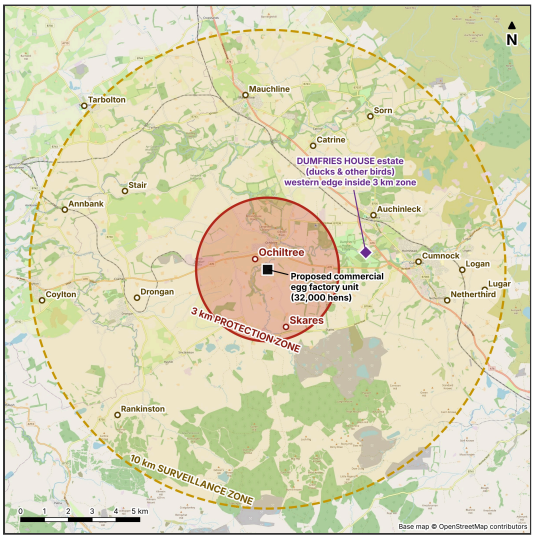
32,000	800 m	120-150 m
free-range hens	from Ochiltree	from the nearest homes

- A 122.6 m long shed with ridge extract fans, feed silos and hardstanding, in open fields above the Burnock Water.
- The nearest homes are **downwind** in the prevailing south-westerly wind.
- The applicant's odour model only predicts 2.54 at the nearest house (limit 3.0).

2 What has just happened at Biggar

- **2 November 2026:** H5N1 bird flu confirmed at a poultry premises near Biggar (Scottish Government ref. AIV 2026/22).
- A **3 km Protection Zone** and **10 km Surveillance Zone** were declared the same day, and are still in force.
- Inside them, by law, birds, eggs and manure can only move under licence and game birds can't be released.
- **10 November 2026:** a Scotland-wide Avian Influenza Prevention Zone was declared. The risk in wild birds is rated **high**.

3 What the same thing would mean here



All of Ochiltree and Skares would be inside the 3 km Protection Zone, with the primary school, the Hub and every farm in between.

- Every keeper of poultry or captive birds, from commercial units to a few garden hens, would have to house their birds, keep records and expect inspection.
- No moving birds, eggs, carcases, litter or manure on or off any holding with birds without a licence. Farm-gate egg sales stop.
- No releasing game birds, no bird shows or sales, and licences needed to move animals off holdings that keep birds.
- The 10 km zone takes in Auchinleck, Catrine, Drongan, Cumnock, Stair, Mauchline, Sorn, Netherthird, Logan, Rankinston, Annbank, Lugar and Coylton.
- **Dumfries House estate:** its western edge would be **inside the 3 km Protection Zone**, and the house, about 4 km east, inside the 10 km zone. Its ducks and other birds would come under Protection Zone rules, with no bird shows or gatherings, at one of Ayrshire's best-known heritage estates and visitor attractions.
- Restrictions typically last a month or more, longer if there are further cases.

Proximity matters: wild birds come and go, but the siting of a permanent biohazard source is a choice.

4 ☣ A BIOHAZARD, not just “agricultural”

The applicant's Planning Statement calls this development “agricultural” **39 times**. Across all 25 application documents, **bird flu, avian influenza and bioaerosols are not mentioned once**, and biosecurity only 3 times.

- **Airborne biohazard:** bioaerosols, Poultry Dust and ammonia, blown over Ochiltree, **the school and the Hub** on southerly winds.
- **Disease biohazard:** H5N1 bird flu is a notifiable disease. One confirmed case triggers emergency zones.
- **Waste biohazard:** roughly 1,800 tonnes of manure a year, dirty water and dead birds to store and remove.

Published evidence on human health

- A Dutch study of 2,426 adults in an intensive livestock area linked pneumonia with living **within 1 km of a poultry farm** (odds ratio 1.7 in one analysis; Freidl et al., *PLOS ONE* 2017).
- Ammonia from livestock farms was linked to **poorer lung function** in people living nearby (Borlée et al., 2017).
- The evidence is still developing, which is why a **biohazard and bioaerosol health assessment** should be required. None has been submitted.
- UKHSA rates the bird flu risk to the general public as very low; human cases come from close contact with infected birds or contaminated places.

5 Other planning problems with this site

- **Burnock Water:** about 30-50 m from a protected trout burn. The applicant's own report rates the risk as high before mitigation.
- **Earthworks:** about 18,500 m³ each of cut and fill on a steep slope, probably into rock.
- **Siting:** mid-field in a Local Landscape Area, about 300 m from the existing farm steading. The council's own pre-application advice criticised this.
- **Roads:** the passing places and visibility splays the council asked for are not shown.
- **Better sites exist** near the steading, with no neighbouring houses within 400 m.

What the Scottish Government's own documents say

When bird flu is confirmed, the Scottish Government's own declarations set a **3 km Protection Zone** and a **10 km Surveillance Zone** around the premises, as at Biggar on 2 November 2026 (AIV 2026/22). That is the Government's own measure of the area at highest biosecurity risk.

This commercial egg factory unit would be about 800 m from Ochiltree: the whole village is well inside that 3 km biohazard zone.

The zones apply once an outbreak is confirmed. There is no separate set-back rule for new units, which is why where this one goes matters now.

6 What we are asking for

- **Community Council:** lodge a formal objection before **23 November**, setting out the risk to Ochiltree and the farms around it.
- **Councillors:** ask for the application to be decided by the Planning Committee, not by an officer under delegated powers.
- Ask the council to require a **biohazard (Poultry Dust and bioaerosol) assessment** before any decision.
- Ask the council to re-consult **SEPA**, and consult **NatureScot**, the **Ayrshire Rivers Trust** and the **River Ayr Fishery Board**.
- Ask the council to require the applicant to **assess alternative sites** further from homes, the village and the burn.
- Encourage every affected household and farm to write their **own** objection.

Sources: Freidl G.S. et al. (2017) Livestock-associated risk factors for pneumonia in an area of intensive animal farming in the Netherlands, PLOS ONE 12(3) e0174796; Borlée F. et al. (2017), via Ceccarelli & Smit, Eos 98 (2017); UKHSA blog 19 Nov 2025; Planning application 26/0511/PP documents (Planning Statement, Odour Report by AS Modelling & Data 14 Jul 2026, Hydrological Assessment, Site Sections, Construction Management Plan, Environmental Health response 3 Nov 2026, pre-application advice 26/0006/PAA); gov.scot: Avian flu near Biggar AIV 2026/22 (2 Nov 2026), Avian influenza outbreaks and Prevention Zone pages (10 Nov 2026); APHA Interactive Avian Influenza Disease Map (11 Nov 2026). Zones shown around the Palmerston site are illustrative of what would be declared if bird flu were confirmed there; real zones are set by the Scottish Government. Distances approximate. Map © OpenStreetMap contributors.