

PLANNING REF : 252782
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 66 East Park Farm Drive Charvil
: Reading
: RG109US
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Mark Hyland
DATE SUBMITTED : 08/12/2025

COMMENTS:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to formally and very strongly object to the above planning application for the proposed fuel storage and distribution depot at the former Prince Brothers service station on Old Bath Road, Charvil. I am totally opposed to this development and firmly believe it represents a serious and unacceptable risk to the local environment, the community and public safety.

1. Unacceptable Proximity to the Old River Loddon, Charvil Country Park and the Lakes

The site is immediately adjacent to Charvil Country Park, a highly valued public green space supporting otters, deer, bats, amphibians, fish and extensive aquatic, bird and plant life. The proposal is fundamentally incompatible with the park's purpose as both a wildlife reserve and a major recreational area for local residents.

Noise, artificial lighting, fumes and constant industrial activity would significantly erode the tranquillity and natural character of the park, discouraging visitors, walkers, anglers and families. Claims of biodiversity "net gain" through limited planting are wholly inadequate when set against the extreme ecological risks created by the storage of nearly one million litres of fuel beside a protected nature reserve.

I walk my dog daily around the lakes and meadows of the country park and regularly observe wildlife in and around the affected area. There is a swan's nest used each year in the reeds next to the site. I have personally seen otters crossing the path between the site and the lakes on several occasions, and herons also nest in this area. Even at present, unpleasant smells sometimes emanate from the site, spoiling what is an important daily period of relaxation and wellbeing. This proposal would permanently and significantly damage this vital community resource.

2. Serious Pollution and Flood-Risk Concerns - High Likelihood of Catastrophic Environmental Damage

The site lies within a known floodplain and is regularly affected by significant flood events. Recent winters have seen repeated flooding with water reaching the site boundary. Wokingham Borough Council reports following the 2014 floods confirmed that the site was underwater, with anecdotal reports of internal flooding. Similar water levels were again observed in 2024.

The storage of diesel, kerosene and other hydrocarbons at this location presents an unacceptable contamination risk to:

- The Old River Loddon
- Canberra Lake and the country park lakes
- The River Thames downstream
- Local soil and groundwater

In the event of a spill, tank failure or flood-related incident, containment would be virtually impossible. Fuel would spread rapidly through saturated ground and connected watercourses, causing long-term and potentially irreversible ecological damage. Given the clear impact of climate change and increasing flood frequency, this risk cannot reasonably be considered manageable.

3. Public Health and Safety Risks

Well-documented incidents such as the Bramley fuel leak in Surrey clearly demonstrate the severe public health risks associated with fuel storage, including contaminated water, underground explosion risks and toxic fumes. These incidents had devastating effects on residents and local businesses. Such ever-present risks should not be introduced to a densely populated area such as Charvil and neighbouring Twyford.

Fire and Explosion Risk

Large volumes of diesel and kerosene pose a continuous fire and toxic fume hazard to nearby homes, park users and passers-by. Industrial fires involving fuel often require large-scale emergency responses, evacuations and expose communities to hazardous smoke.

Site Access and Operational Safety

The wider area already struggles with heavy vehicle movements associated with Denmark House, where articulated lorries are frequently parked hazardously on both the road and pavements. Introducing additional HGV traffic will significantly worsen existing safety issues.

When Speedy Fuels operated from the site in December 2024, tankers were observed turning across both carriageways near the bend in Old Bath Road, creating highly dangerous conditions and a serious risk of collision.

4. Highway Safety, Traffic Generation and Unsuitable Road Infrastructure

This proposal represents a substantial intensification of traffic on Old Bath Road, which already suffers from poor visibility, narrow pavements and heavy usage by pedestrians and cyclists.

Estimated weekly vehicle movements include:

- 59 x 44-tonne articulated tankers (Monday-Friday)
- 73 x cars and vans (Monday-Friday)
- Additional weekend movements

This level of industrial traffic is wholly incompatible with a semi-rural residential road used daily by walkers, cyclists, commuters and schoolchildren. The road infrastructure is not built for this volume of HGV movements and would inevitably suffer accelerated deterioration, despite recent resurfacing.

Old Bath Road is the main pedestrian and cycling route between Charvil and Twyford and to Twyford Station. Children regularly cross this road when travelling between different parts of the village to attend both Charvil Piggott Primary School and The Piggott secondary school. The introduction of high volumes of dangerous industrial traffic creates an unacceptable risk of serious and potentially fatal accidents.

There are already significant problems with lorry movements and parking associated with the adjacent tyre warehouse, which have caused, and nearly caused, several accidents. Old Bath Road is already a busy and narrow road without further heavy vehicle loads being added.

5. Noise, Operating Hours and Impact on Residential Amenity

The proposed operating hours from 5am to 6pm, seven days a week, with the potential for tanker arrivals outside these hours, represent a major intensification of activity. This would result in early morning, evening and weekend disturbance that would significantly harm residents' ability to enjoy their homes, gardens and nearby public green spaces.

This level of noise and disturbance is clearly contrary to policy CP3 and paragraph 185 of the NPPF due to the harm it would cause to residential amenity and the enjoyment of the surrounding countryside.

6. Inappropriate Land Use and Failure to Justify Need

A fuel storage and distribution depot is an industrial operation entirely unsuitable for a site in such close proximity to a large residential area with over 1,000 homes, a nature reserve and important public recreational facilities.

The proposal represents a major and unacceptable intensification of the former service station use, with increased industrial activity and significantly heavier vehicle movements. The applicant has failed to demonstrate that this is an appropriate location for such a hazardous use or that more suitable industrial sites are unavailable.

It should also be noted that the applicant previously operated on this site in December 2024 without the appropriate licence, demonstrating both the potential impact of the operation and a disregard for regulatory controls.

Conclusion

This proposal poses wholly unacceptable risks to the environment, public health, highway safety and residential amenity. The combination of severe flood risk, potential fuel spills, heavy vehicle traffic, fire and explosion dangers, and the irreversible harm to Charvil Country Park makes this development entirely inappropriate for this location.

I respectfully but firmly request that planning application 252782 be refused in the strongest possible terms in the interests of public safety, environmental protection and the long-term sustainability of the community. This proposal simply does not fit within the character, safety or environmental sensitivity of the area.

Yours faithfully,

Mark Hyland