

PLANNING REF : 252782  
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 56 High Street  
: Reading, Berkshire  
: RG10 9AQ  
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Paul Jackman  
DATE SUBMITTED : 11/12/2025

COMMENTS:

Material planning considerations directly engaged by this proposal:

Highway safety & traffic

Old Bath Road is the main pedestrian and cycling route between Charvil and Twyford, used heavily by schoolchildren going to Charvil Piggott Primary and The Piggott secondary, as well as commuters to Twyford Station. The application itself anticipates at least 59 articulated tanker movements and 73 car/van movements each week (Monday-Friday), plus weekend traffic. This level of HGV traffic on a narrow, rural road with poor visibility, a bend near the site access, and existing problems with hazardous lorry parking at Denmark House is plainly incompatible with safe use by walkers and cyclists and creates a real risk of serious, even fatal, accidents.

Noise and impact on residential amenity

The proposed operating hours - 5am to 6pm, seven days a week, with tankers potentially arriving outside these hours - would cause a major and continuous increase in noise from engines, reversing alarms, loading/unloading and general depot activity. This would severely harm residents' ability to enjoy their homes, gardens and nearby public green spaces, especially in early mornings, evenings and weekends, contrary to policy CP3 and NPPF 185 on protecting residential amenity and the enjoyment of the countryside.

Nature conservation

The site is immediately adjacent to Charvil Country Park, Canberra Lake and other lakes supporting otters, deer, bats, amphibians, fish and rich bird and plant life. Storing nearly 1 million litres of diesel, kerosene and other hydrocarbons right on the edge of this habitat, in a known floodplain, creates an obvious and unacceptable risk of catastrophic pollution of the Old River Loddon, the lakes and downstream into the River Thames. A fuel spill during flooding would be impossible to contain and could cause long-term, potentially irreversible ecological damage. Claims of "biodiversity net gain" through limited planting cannot meaningfully offset this risk and are wholly inadequate in policy terms.

Government policy, flood risk and pollution control

The National Planning Policy Framework and related guidance require development to be directed away from areas at highest risk of flooding and to avoid unacceptable risks from pollution. Here, the council's own 2014 flood reports confirm the site has been underwater, and similar levels have occurred again in 2024. Approving a fuel depot in such a location would run directly counter to national policy aims on flood resilience, pollution prevention and climate adaptation, and would be extremely difficult to justify if

challenged.

#### Proposals in the Development Plan

Local plan policies on residential amenity, countryside protection, pollution and biodiversity, including CP3 and policies that mirror PPF 185, are clearly engaged. The intensity of industrial use, heavy-vehicle movements and environmental risk is fundamentally at odds with a site immediately next to a country park and large residential area. Granting permission would effectively signal that these policies can be set aside whenever a determined applicant pushes hard enough.

#### Previous planning decisions and site history

The council's post-2014 flood documentation, noting that the site was underwater, is a material planning consideration directly relevant to this proposal. So too is the recent history of the applicant operating a fuel distribution business from the site in December 2024 without a licence, with tankers turning across both carriageways near a bend and creating the very highway and safety impacts objectors now fear. This pattern of unauthorised operation and demonstrated impact is essential context for any reasonable assessment of risk and enforceability.

#### Parking, layout, density, design and character

The surrounding area already suffers from hazardous parking by articulated lorries associated with Denmark House, obstructing both road and pavement. The addition of a fuel depot would further increase HGV activity and parking pressure. The physical form of the proposal - large fuel tanks, extensive hardstanding, industrial lighting and constant tanker movements - represents a major intensification compared with the former service-station use and is entirely at odds with the semi-rural residential character of Old Bath Road and the adjoining country park.

#### General note

Any council that allowed this scheme to proceed would be advertising to the world that it has abandoned its most basic duties of care. To permit nearly a million litres of fuel to be stored on the edge of a known floodplain, immediately beside the Old River Loddon, Charvil Country Park and its lakes, is not a marginal judgement call - it is a reckless disregard for environmental protection and public safety. The council's own reports after the 2014 floods recorded this site underwater, and similar levels were seen again in 2024. In the era of accelerating climate change, to pretend that catastrophic contamination of rivers, lakes, soil and groundwater is an acceptable "managed risk" is the opposite of responsible planning. Any authority that knowingly chooses that path invites the conclusion that it is either shamefully indifferent to the landscape and wildlife it is meant to protect, or captured by the narrow interests of a single operator.

The human risks are just as stark. This proposal would embed a permanent fire, explosion and toxic fume hazard in the middle of a community of over a thousand homes, on the main walking and cycling route used daily by children and commuters between Charvil, Twyford and Twyford Station. It would add dozens of 44-tonne tanker

movements every week to Old Bath Road - a semi-rural road with poor visibility and a narrow footpath - in an area already struggling with hazardous HGV parking from Denmark House. Tankers have already been observed turning across both carriageways near a bend when the operator ran without a licence in December 2024. To wave through a full fuel depot on this record, and to ignore the clear lessons from incidents such as Bramley (contaminated water, underground explosion risk, fumes), would be to declare that safety, lawful operation and residents' amenity count for nothing. A council that gambles with these risks is not merely making an error; it is failing at the most fundamental duty to keep people safe in their own homes and on their own streets.

Approving this application would therefore be more than a planning misjudgement; it would be a permanent stain on the council's integrity and competence. It would show that policies on flood risk, biodiversity, highway safety, noise and residential amenity are meaningless words on paper, easily brushed aside for an industrial use that plainly belongs on a properly designed industrial estate, not in a village beside a wildlife park. Faced with this combination of flood risk, fuel-spill danger, heavy-vehicle traffic, harm to wildlife, degradation of a much-loved public park and the erosion of everyday quality of life, a diligent, honest and intelligent council has only one credible option: to refuse this application outright.