

PLANNING REF : 252782
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Weavers Way
:
: RG10 9GX
SUBMITTED BY : Sarah Swan
DATE SUBMITTED : 08/12/2025

COMMENTS:

I wish to object to planning application 252782 for the proposed fuel storage and distribution depot at the former Prince Brothers service station on Old Bath Road, Charvil.

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 a wildlife reserve and recreational area. Noise, lighting, fumes and industrial activity would erode the tranquillity and natural character of the park, discouraging visitors, anglers and local families. Claims of biodiversity "net gain" via planting a handful of trees and shrubs are wholly inadequate compared to the ecological risk created by storing nearly 1 million litres of fuel on the edge of a nature reserve. This will in no way mitigate the environmental risks highlighted.

2. Industrial-Scale Fuel Storage in a Residential Zone

- The site would house 711 tonnes of fuel, including kerosene, diesel, gas oil, heating oil, and hybrid vegetable oil. This is an industrial facility masquerading as a local business.
- The proximity to homes, schools, and the River Loddon nature reserve makes this a clear threat to public safety and environmental integrity.

3. Serious environment contamination and 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, including water reaching the site boundary.

- The site sits on ground with known instability, and is prone to flooding with a high water table.
- The proposal includes a surface water and treated sewage outfall pipe running directly into the River Loddon. This is a nature reserve, not an industrial drain.
- Any fuel leakage or runoff inevitable over time will contaminate the river and adjoining lakes, with devastating ecological consequences. Storing diesel, kerosene and other hydrocarbons in 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

If a spill or tank failure occurred during flooding, containment

would be impossible. Fuel would spread rapidly through saturated ground and watercourses, causing long-term, potentially irreversible ecological damage.

Given climate change and the increasing frequency and intensity of flooding, the risk cannot be considered manageable or worth taking.

4. Public health and safety risks

Publicised cases of fuel leaks from storage tanks (most notably Bramley, Surrey) have demonstrated the public health risks and resulting consequences, including but not limited to contaminated water, underground explosion risk and fumes, all of which negatively impacted life for residents and local businesses. These risks would be ever present with fuel storage depot operations and not ones which should be taken in a residential and nature reserve environment such as Charvil and Twyford.

Fire and explosion risk

Large volumes of diesel and kerosene pose a constant fire and toxic fume hazard to nearby homes and park users.

Industrial fires involving fuel often require evacuations and expose residents to hazardous smoke.

Site access and operational safety

The wider area already struggles with heavy vehicles from Denmark House, where articulated lorries are frequently parked hazardously both on the road and pavement.

Introducing more HGVs exacerbates existing road obstructions and safety issues.

Tankers turning across both carriageways, as was observed when Speedy Fuels were operating in December 2024, in close proximity to the bend raises serious risk of collision.

5. Highway safety, traffic generation and unsuitable road infrastructure

This proposal greatly intensifies traffic on Old Bath Road with poor visibility and a narrow footpath.

Key concerns include:

Volume of tanker and vehicle movements

Estimated weekly movements include:

59 x 44-tonne articulated tankers (Mon-Fri)

73 x cars/vans (Mon-Fri)

Additional movements at weekends

This is wholly incompatible with a semi-rural residential road used by walkers, cyclists, commuters and schoolchildren. In addition, the road infrastructure is not built for this volume of HGV movements and it is highly likely the road will suffer increased and faster degradation as a result, despite recent resurfacing.

Road safety impacts - dangerous traffic impact on Old Bath Road

Old Bath Road is the main pedestrian and cycling route from Charvil to Twyford and Twyford Station.

Children cross Old Bath Road when walking or cycling to school - from the north of the village to Charvil Piggott Primary, and

secondary school students travelling from the south of Charvil to the Piggott secondary school.

There is a substantial risk with the already high footfall and usage of the road, with increased industrial usage, very unfortunately, fatal accidents are likely to occur.

- The turning radius required for these vehicles forces them into opposite carriageway, directly into oncoming traffic exiting a bend. This is not hypothetical, it is visible in site photos and the road is already compromised by parked delivery vehicles at the adjacent tyre depot, creating a choke point and collision risk.

- This route is used daily by children, pedestrians, and commuters and the risk of serious accidents is unavoidable.

6. Noise, operating hours and impact on residential amenity

The proposed operating hours (from 5am to 6pm, seven days a week, with tankers potentially arriving outside these hours) represent a major intensification of movements and activity.

This disrupts early mornings, evenings and weekends, harming residents' ability to enjoy their homes, gardens and nearby public green spaces.

7. Inappropriate land use, plus failure to justify need and incompatibility with local character and planning ethics

A fuel depot is an industrial operation and entirely unsuitable for a site so close to a large residential area with over 1000 homes, a nature reserve and public recreation areas.

The proposal represents a major shift from the previous service-station use, with more intensive operations and heavier vehicle movements.

The applicant has not demonstrated that this is the right location or that safer, more appropriate industrial sites are unavailable.

The applicant previously operated on the site in December 2024, without a licence, creating potential harm and demonstrating the possible impact should full operations commence.

- Twyford and Charvil are residential communities, not industrial corridors. This development would permanently alter the character and safety of the area.

8. Misleading Biodiversity Claims and Structural Risks

- The developers claim a 14% biodiversity gain based on planting six trees and some shrubs. This is a cynical attempt to meet planning guidelines with token gestures.

- To address ground instability, they propose surrounding the site with concrete block retaining walls and limestone-filled gabions, a clear admission of the site's unsuitability.

This proposal poses clear, present and unacceptable risks to the environment, public health, highway safety, environmental health, residential amenity and community wellbeing. The scale of fuel storage and fuel spill danger, the volume and weight of heavy vehicle movements, plus the harm to Charvil Country Park and the surrounding residential area, makes this development entirely inappropriate and unsuitable for the location.

I urge and request the planning committee to refuse this planning

application 252782 in the interests of public safety, environmental protection and long-term sustainability.