

PLANNING REF: 252782

SUBMITTED BY: Mr and Mrs A Paskins

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 20 Pound Lane RG4 6XE

DATE SUBMITTED: 05.12.2025

COMMENTS:

We strongly and unequivocally object to this application.

The proposal to store over 837,000 litres of highly hazardous fuel on an unstable, flood-prone site directly beside a residential community and an ecologically sensitive country park is not merely unsuitable—it is dangerous, irresponsible, and fundamentally incompatible with this location.

1. Unsuitable Location, Flood Risk and Severe Environmental Harm

The site is on made, unstable ground in a known floodplain, with decades of documented seasonal flooding.

Placing a major fuel depot in such a high-risk location is an obvious recipe for environmental disaster.

Plans to discharge surface water and treated effluent into the River Loddon represent an unacceptable and avoidable threat to water quality and protected habitats.

Impact on Charvil Country Park:

Charvil Country Park spans 75 hectares of restored lakes, species-rich grassland, scrub, woodland, wetland, the Slade Brook, and the River Loddon.

It supports two nationally rare plants—the Loddon Lily and Loddon Pondweed—and is renowned for its diverse wintering wildfowl (including Smew) and an active heronry.

Any fuel spill, leakage, or runoff—even minor or gradual—would cause irreversible, long-term ecological damage to one of the most important natural assets in the lower Loddon Valley.

The applicant's reliance on heavy engineering solutions such as concrete retaining walls and gabions openly acknowledges that the ground conditions are unsuitable for hazardous industrial storage.

2. Severe Traffic and Highway Safety Impacts

The development would generate 132 vehicle movements per weekday, including 59 HGVs and 42-tonne articulated tankers.

These tankers would be forced into the oncoming carriageway on a bend, creating an unavoidable and dangerous conflict with everyday traffic.

Old Bath Road is already strained by existing commercial activity and offers narrow, vulnerable pedestrian and cyclist access.

Introducing a high-risk fuel distribution operation into this constrained road network would significantly increase the likelihood of serious accidents.

3. Inadequate and Misleading Biodiversity Mitigation

The claimed 14% biodiversity net gain—based on a token number of trees and shrubs—is wholly inadequate and does not withstand any ecological scrutiny.

It is not credible to claim a biodiversity gain while placing an industrial fuel depot beside a legally protected wildlife corridor that hosts rare species and complex wetland ecosystems.

This proposal would result in a net loss, not a gain, to biodiversity.

4. Incompatibility with Local Character and Community Wellbeing

Sonning, Charvil, and Twyford are residential communities built around green spaces, river landscapes, and family-friendly amenities.

A fuel depot of this scale would cause permanent and irreversible harm to the character, safety, and enjoyment of the area—including Charvil Country Park, one of the most valued community assets in the borough.

The applicant's unauthorised operation in January 2025, continuing even after enforcement intervention, raises serious concerns about compliance, responsibility, and future behaviour.

Conclusion

This proposal presents unacceptable and avoidable risks to environmental safety, public safety, and the local community. It is entirely incompatible with the flood-plain setting, the ecological importance of Charvil Country Park, and the constraints of the surrounding road network.

Children in this community grow up learning to respect and protect nature because of through their walks and educational sessions with scouts, guides, Forrest school in this area. If we cannot prioritise the irreplaceable natural heritage of this area over a commercial fuel operation, we set a deeply troubling precedent for the legacy we leave to the next generation.

I urge Wokingham Borough Council to refuse this application in full.