

PLANNING REF: 252782

SUBMITTED BY: Cyndy Gray

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 63 The Hawthorns, Charvil, Reading, Berkshire, RG10 9TS

DATE SUBMITTED: 05.12.2025

COMMENTS:

I would like 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 for the following reasons;

1. Unacceptable proximity to the Old River Loddon, Charvil Country Park and the lakes

The site sits right next to Charvil Country Park – a green space that so many of us use and value. It's home to otters, deer, bats, amphibians, fish and a huge variety of birds and plant life. We walk around the lakes regularly and when Speedy Fuels started to use the site last winter, the smell of fumes was very unpleasant.

Putting an industrial fuel depot here is completely at odds with what the park is meant to be: a peaceful, natural place for wildlife and for the community to enjoy. The noise, lighting, fumes and day-to-day activity would chip away at the tranquillity that makes the park special, and I fear it would deter walkers, families and anglers alike.

The claim of "biodiversity net gain" through planting a few trees and shrubs does not come close to compensating for the ecological risk of storing almost a million litres of fuel on the edge of a nature reserve.

2. Pollution and flood-risk concerns: a real possibility of severe environmental damage

This site is in a known floodplain and regularly sees significant flooding. In recent years, including 2014 and again in 2024, floodwaters reached or entered the site.

Storing diesel, kerosene and other fuels in a location that floods is extraordinarily risky. If a spill or tank failure were to occur during high water, nothing would prevent contamination spreading into:

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

Once fuel enters saturated ground or moving water, the damage would be long-lasting and likely irreversible. With the increasing severity of flooding due to climate change, I do not believe this is a risk that can be managed or justified.

3. Public health and safety risks

Well-documented fuel leaks elsewhere, including the incident in Bramley, Surrey, show just how serious the consequences can be: contaminated water, explosion risks, fumes and long-term disruption to residents and local businesses. These dangers would exist here every day.

Fire and explosion risk:

Large quantities of diesel and kerosene so close to homes and a popular public green space pose a constant hazard. Fuel-related fires or accidents often require evacuations and produce toxic smoke.

Site access and operational safety:

The area already struggles with heavy vehicles from Denmark House. Articulated lorries regularly park on pavements and the road itself, creating blind spots and obstructions. Adding more HGVs will only increase the danger.

When Speedy Fuels briefly operated from the site in December 2024, tankers were seen turning across both carriageways right by the bend — an obvious collision risk.

4. Highway safety, traffic levels and unsuitable road infrastructure

This proposal would significantly increase the number of heavy vehicles on Old Bath Road, which already has limited visibility and a narrow footpath.

The predicted weekly movements include:

- **59 articulated tankers (Mon–Fri)**
- **73 cars/vans (Mon–Fri)**
- **Additional weekend movements**

This level of industrial traffic is completely inappropriate for what is essentially a semi-rural residential road used daily by walkers, cyclists, commuters and schoolchildren. The road surface has only recently been repaired and will degrade far more quickly under this intensity of HGV use.

Safety for pedestrians and schoolchildren:

Old Bath Road is the main walking and cycling route between Charvil and Twyford, including routes to Twyford Station. Children also cross the road on their way to Charvil Piggott Primary and The Piggott Secondary School. Increasing industrial traffic here makes serious — even fatal — accidents far more likely.

The road already struggles with the very large lorries delivering to the neighbouring business, which frequently block the carriageway and create dangerous choke points. This proposal would make an already risky situation significantly worse.

5. Noise, operating hours and impact on residential life

The proposed opening hours — from 5am to 6pm, seven days a week, with tankers potentially arriving outside these times — represent a major increase in activity.

This would disrupt early mornings, evenings and weekends, directly affecting residents' ability to enjoy their homes, gardens and nearby green spaces. The expanded noise levels conflict with policy CP3 and NPPF 185, which aim to protect residential and countryside amenity.

A fuel depot is a heavy industrial use and completely unsuitable in an area surrounded by over a thousand homes, a nature reserve and recreational green space.

This is far more intensive than the previous service-station use and introduces a level of risk and disruption that simply does not belong in a residential village.

The applicant has not demonstrated why this site is appropriate, nor why alternative industrial sites — designed for this purpose — are not being used instead. Their unauthorised operation on the site in December 2024 already showed the sort of disruption and risk the community could face.

In summary, this proposal presents unacceptable risks to the environment, public health, highway safety and the quality of life of local residents. The combination of flood risk, fuel spill danger, increased HGV traffic and harm to Charvil Country Park makes this the wrong development in the wrong place.

I therefore respectfully request that planning application 252782 be refused in the interests of public safety, environmental protection and long-term sustainability.