

PLANNING REF : 252782
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 5 Northbury Lane
: Ruscombe, Reading, Berkshire
: RG10 9LQ
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Richard Stephen Miles
DATE SUBMITTED : 02/12/2025

COMMENTS:

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to you as an angler who fishes both the Canberra and Orrel lakes within the Charvil Country Park ('The Park'), a dog walker who regularly uses The Park, and as a resident of Ruscombe Parish (~3-miles from The Park), to Object to Planning Application 252782, for the former Prince Brothers / Grove Service Station Site (here-in referred to as 'The Site') to be used as a fuel storage and distribution centre.

I cannot understand how it has already been permitted to install very large and heavy fuel storage tanks, weighing several hundred tonnes, on The Site, which also sees heavy lorries full of fuel both entering and exiting, when it is understood, there was a planning application to build houses on the same Site, which was refused due to unstable ground. So how does a fuel depot located on 'unstable ground' now become acceptable?

Whilst there was no evidence of any bunding, berms or sumps on the first Planning Application it was noted that a bund wall is now detailed on the Proposed Site Plan. However, the adequacy of the (350mm) bund wall is questionable when there shall be more than 800,000 litres of hydrocarbons stored on The Site.

It was also noted that it was proposed to discharge surface water / rainwater run-off, which shall also likely contain hydrocarbons from inadvertent spillages, together treated sewage, into The River Loddon (which feeds into The River Thames) via an outfall pipe that would cross The Country Park (and the angler's car park access). From an environmental viewpoint this has the appearance of being unacceptable. If a spillage were to occur, a tank ruptured or indeed sabotaged then the escaping hydrocarbons would be catastrophic for the river system(s) and the local wildlife of all kinds. In addition, as the ground at The Site is porous and unstable any spillage, whilst creating an immediate threat would also soak into the ground and thus over months/years would continue to leak out and create a long-standing pollution issue.

I am deeply concerned that there is an environmental catastrophe waiting to happen. The proposed operating centre will be a significant risk to the local environment, nature, and use of the adjacent land. Fuel spillages, fuel storage tank failures, valve failures, rainwater run-off carrying hydrocarbons, will all make for an adverse environmental impact on the surrounding land and waterways.

Whilst The Site is several hundred yards from any housing it is surrounded by nature reserves. To the North is Charvil Meadows (maintained as an open meadow/wetland area) and to the East, South

and West is Charvil Country Park. Charvil Country Park has several old gravel pits which have either become fishing lakes for residents of Charvil or, via an angling syndicate, for anglers outside of the area. The carp fishery is very well regarded and carefully maintained,

with two other lakes reserved for nature: one of them housing a long-standing heronry. All this is bordered on the Eastern side by the River Loddon, which then flows directly into the River Thames.

In this respect:

- Has The Application (by M/s Speedy Fuels) or indeed Wokingham Borough Council considered the requirements and potential liabilities under The Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations that aim to mitigate major accidents involving dangerous substances, ensuring for the safety of people and the environment?

The COMAH Regulations are designed to protect the public and the environment from the risks associated with major accidents involving dangerous substances, such as chemicals, fuels, and explosives. They require operators of establishments that handle significant quantities of substances to take necessary measures to prevent accidents and limit their consequences.

Considering further on the surrounding environment, adjoining the Southern edge of The Site is the northern shore of Canberra lake (the primary fishing lake) containing carp to over 40lb. As a Bailiff and official representative for the Charvil Fishing Society (Tenant), we have an incredibly significant investment in the lakes in terms of fish stock worth many thousands of pounds. The North shore consists of a reed bed which was installed to increase the sites biodiversity, and funded via an EU grant, and during this year Wokingham Countryside Service expanding this reed bed with the removal of trees to create an open reed friendly area where the reed bed can expand into and further enhance the biodiversity within and around the lake.

On matters wildlife there are also the resident Muntjac deer, various bat species, otters, foxes, rabbits, moles, snakes, and rodents, all of which depend upon The Country Park areas for their home and food source and with the increased noise and (security) light pollution from The Site then this will do nothing to encourage them to stay around or breed.

In addition to the increased noise and light pollution, is the ever-pervading smell that now comes from the fuel depot across the car park, and this cannot be healthy for any of the country park users.

The entrance/exit from the anglers' car park shares the same service road to the main road as the proposed fuel distribution centre and the fuel trucks entering/exiting the depot, which is also close to a dangerous bend, will create additional danger to the public at large, and our Fishing Society members. Some additional road usage safety (risk) points are as follows:

- The A 3032 Old Bath Road is not suitable for HGV's let alone

articulated tankers. When the drone photograph taken in January 2025 showing an articulated tanker leaving The Site, the vehicle had to make the exit turn entering the far side of the road and facing the oncoming (east bound) traffic. Given the number of truck movements contemplated then this is a dangerous accident waiting to happen.

- The A3032 is now essentially a residential road, which is nowhere near the calibre of the A4. What if there was a fire on The Site; the Fire Service would find it extremely difficult getting the level of resources needed into the area to control a situation, with more than 800,000 litres of hydrocarbons on the premises.
- This simply is not a suitable well considered Site for a fuel storage and distribution operation.

The fuel storage and distribution depot is fundamentally incompatible with the natural, recreational and ecological character of the area. The introduction of heavy vehicles, increased risk to pedestrians and road users, noise, and the accompanying industrial infrastructure would sharply contrast with an environment currently used for leisure, angling, and wildlife appreciation.

Accordingly, for all the foregoing reasons, I implore The Council to put a stop to this Planning Application before something avoidable happens to either a member of the public, a park user or to our very precious environment and the wildlife.

Yours faithfully,

Richard S. Miles