

Development Management
Wokingham Borough Council

Our ref: WA/2025/132220/01-L01
Your ref: 250959

Sent by email

Date: 28 May 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

Full application for demolition of two existing buildings and a garage and the change of use from service station to a fuel oil storage and distribution facility including the recladding of the existing building, installation of 8 no. fuel oil storage tanks, refurbishment of hardstanding, car parking and associated works

Former Prince Bros Service Station, Old Bath Road, Reading, RG10 9QJ

Thank you for consulting us on the above application which we received on 8 May 2025. We have reviewed the documents on the planning portal and have the following comments to make:

Environment Agency position

We **object** to the development proposed as part of this planning application due to the likely effect this will have on local ecology and habitats. Insufficient details of mitigation or compensation measures have been submitted to address any identified risks. We therefore recommend that planning permission is refused.

Reasons

The proposed may have a detrimental effect on the species/populations of Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) and their habitats along the Old River Lodden. The application does not include adequate information about the measures proposed to protect the Great crested newt in this location.

The ecological appraisal provided suggests mitigation measures to protect these species during the construction phase of these works, which have not been adopted into the construction plans.

This objection is supported by paragraphs 187 and 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which recognise that the planning system should conserve and enhance the environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or as a last resort compensated for, planning permission should be refused. Opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged.

England's Biodiversity strategy identifies priority species also listed as being of 'principal' importance under section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. Local planning authorities have responsibilities under NERC to have regard to those species in their

The fashion industry accounts for 10% of global carbon emissions (aviation accounts for 2%!). By increasing the lifespan of our clothes by just 9 months of active use, we can reduce their carbon, water and waste footprints by around 20-30% [Source: The Sustainable(ish) Living Guide, by Jen Gale]. You can reduce your carbon footprint by swapping and shopping preloved instead of buying new.

decision-making because of their duty to conserve Biodiversity (s40)

In this instance, the proposed development may have a detrimental impact on a priority species that we have a role in protecting. The application does not include any information about the measures proposed to ensure that Great crested newts are protected in this location. In particular the application fails to incorporate the mitigation measures suggested in their Ecological Appraisal into their construction plans.

Overcoming our objection

It may be possible to overcome this objection by submitting:

- details of how the Great crested newt is to be protected during construction works

The design, construction, mitigation and compensation measures should be based on a survey which is carried out at an appropriate time of year by a suitably experienced surveyor using recognised survey methodology.

Risk of offence

The applicant could be liable to criminal prosecution under the:

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000)
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for European Protected Species

Due to the potential presence of bats and reptiles flagged in the applicant's ecological appraisal. The document provides mitigation measures which the applicant has failed to adopt in their construction plans.

The submitted Landscape Appraisal similarly provides mitigation measures relating to the current landscape, which potentially provides habitat for protected species. It states that the applicant should prepare a Landscape Layout document as part of their planning application, which should include the mitigation measures identified. The applicant has failed to do this.

Hazardous Substances

We note the applicant has declared in the application documents that the proposal does not involve the use or storage of Hazardous Substances. This is incorrect as petroleum products and alternative fuels are Hazardous Substances under both CoMAH and the Hazardous Substance Consent Regulations.

If the hazardous substances to be used/stored had been correctly identified, this would have already triggered further questions about the type/quantity involved.

We would then assess whether this site falls under the COMAH regulations, and you would then review whether a hazardous substance consent is required. Without knowing what quantity of fuel will be stored, we are unable to comment further on this application.

We recommend that further information is requested from the applicant. Please be aware that we wish to be re-consulted on this planning application once the required information has been submitted. Please also note that our subsequent advice may concern other important environmental issues.

If you are minded to approve the application contrary to our objection, please contact us to explain why material considerations outweigh our objection. This will allow us to make further representations.

Please note that our comments are based on the details available to us at the time of writing. If any subsequent changes are made to the application, please reconsult us.

Should you have any queries regarding this response, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Waterman-Gay
Sustainable Places Planning Advisor

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