

PLANNING REF : 252782
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 3
: Foxes walk Charvil, Reading, Berkshire
: RG10 9TX
SUBMITTED BY : Miss Kathryn Simmons
DATE SUBMITTED : 09/12/2025

COMMENTS:

OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 252782 - Proposed Fuel Storage and Distribution Depot, Former Prince Brothers Service Station, Old Bath Road, Charvil

I wish to lodge a formal objection to planning application 252782 for the proposed fuel storage and distribution depot at the former Prince Brothers service station on Old Bath Road, Charvil. The proposal presents profound and unacceptable risks to the environment, public safety, local infrastructure and community wellbeing.

1. Proximity to Charvil Country Park, the Old River Loddon and the local ecosystem

The proposed depot lies immediately adjacent to Charvil Country Park, one of the most important and cherished green spaces in the area. The park supports a rich and sensitive ecosystem, including otters, deer, bats, amphibians, fish, extensive wetland birds, and diverse plant life.

A development involving the storage and distribution of close to one million litres of fuel is wholly incompatible with the purpose of the country park as a wildlife reserve and community recreational area.

Key concerns include:

- Industrial noise, lighting, fumes and constant operational activity would severely erode the tranquillity and natural character of the park.
- Wildlife behaviour and habitat stability would be negatively impacted, particularly for species that rely on low-disturbance environments.
- Claims of "biodiversity net gain" through the planting of a small number of trees and shrubs are entirely inadequate given the scale of ecological risk. No amount of landscaping can mitigate the consequences of a potential fuel spill adjacent to a sensitive nature reserve.

Protecting the natural environment is a fundamental responsibility, and this proposal places an irreplaceable wildlife habitat under unnecessary threat.

2. Severe pollution and flood-risk concerns

The site lies within a well-documented floodplain and has a long history of flooding. Notably:

- WBC reports confirm the site was underwater during the 2014 floods. - Similar flood levels were again observed in 2024, with water reaching or exceeding the site boundary.

Storing large volumes of diesel, kerosene and other hydrocarbons in this location is an unacceptable contamination risk to:

- The Old River Loddon
- Canberra Lake and the wider Charvil Country Park lake system
- The River Thames
- Local soils and groundwater

In the event of flooding, containment measures would fail. Fuel would travel rapidly through saturated ground and waterways, causing long-term, possibly irreversible ecological damage.

Given the increasing frequency and severity of flooding due to climate change, the risk is neither manageable nor justifiable.

3. Public health and safety

Fuel leaks at other UK sites, such as Bramley (Surrey), have demonstrated the significant health, safety and environmental consequences of underground fuel contamination, including toxic vapours, groundwater pollution and explosion risk.

A depot of this scale would place residents and park visitors under constant risk.

Fire and explosion hazard

- Storing nearly a million litres of fuel in close proximity to homes and a popular public park represents a substantial and ongoing fire risk.

- Industrial fuel fires often require evacuations and expose communities to hazardous smoke and pollutants.

Operational safety

- The area already struggles with unsafe heavy-goods vehicle activity linked to nearby premises, with articulated lorries regularly blocking pavements and roadways.

- Additional tanker movements, especially those turning across both carriageways near a bend (as observed during Speedy Fuels' unlicensed operations in December 2024), significantly increase the risk of collisions.

4. Highway safety and unsuitable local road infrastructure

Old Bath Road is a narrow semi-rural road with limited visibility and a heavily used footpath. It is a primary route for pedestrians and cyclists travelling between Charvil, Twyford and Twyford Station. The proposal would add:

- 59 articulated tanker movements per week (Mon-Fri)
- 73 car/van movements per week (Mon-Fri)

- Additional weekend traffic

This level of industrial traffic is entirely unsuitable for a road used daily by walkers, cyclists, families and schoolchildren.

Children from both sides of Charvil must cross Old Bath Road to reach Charvil Piggott Primary and The Piggott secondary school.

Increasing HGV traffic in these conditions poses an unacceptable risk of serious or even fatal accidents.

The road infrastructure is not designed for sustained HGV use, and recent resurfacing will deteriorate rapidly under depot conditions.

5. Noise, operating hours and impact on residential amenity

The proposed operating hours 5am to 6pm, seven days a week, with potential tanker arrivals outside these hours would significantly intensify activity compared with historic site use.

Consequences include:

- Disturbance during early mornings, evenings and weekends
- Diminished enjoyment of homes, gardens and the adjacent country park
- Noise impacts contrary to Policy CP3 and NPPF 185, which seek to protect residential amenity and countryside character

6. Inappropriate land use and lack of demonstrated need

A fuel storage and distribution depot is an industrial facility and

wholly unsuitable for a site positioned:

- Adjacent to a nature reserve
- On the edge of a large residential community of over 1,000 homes

- Within metres of public recreational areas

The proposed operation represents a major intensification compared with the former service station use.

The applicant has not demonstrated that this is the appropriate location, nor that safer, properly industrial sites have been fully considered.

Furthermore, the applicant's unlicensed operations in December 2024 showed clear evidence of the disruption and hazard posed by full fuel-depot activity.

Conclusion

This proposal poses unacceptable risks to:

- The environment
- Public health and safety
- Wildlife and the integrity of Charvil Country Park
- Highway safety and vulnerable road users
- Residential amenity and quality of life

The cumulative risks from flooding, potential fuel contamination, increased HGV traffic, fire hazards, and ecological damage make the proposed development entirely inappropriate for this sensitive and highly valued location.

I therefore respectfully request that planning application 252782 be refused in order to safeguard public safety, protect the local environment and wildlife, and preserve the long-term sustainability and character of Charvil.