

PLANNING REF: 252782

SUBMITTED BY: Ben Jennings

PROPERTY ADDRESS:

DATE SUBMITTED: 06.12.2025

COMMENTS:

I am writing to strongly oppose the planning application 252782 submitted by Speedy Fuels to use this site of Former Prince Bros / Grove Service Station Old Bath Road Charvil RG10 9QJ as a fuel storage depot.

It is difficult to imagine a less suitable location for such a facility. The proposal appears to ignore every common-sense requirement for safe fuel storage and instead selects a site that maximises environmental risk, public danger, and disruption to local residents.

1. Proximity to the River Loddon

The proposed depot sits directly beside the River Loddon. According to the plans, the company intends to use the river as an overflow point and to discharge “treated” wastewater into it. This poses a clear hazard to the river ecosystem. Any discharge—treated or not—can cause significant harm to the fish, wildlife, and habitats that depend on this waterway.

In addition, this area is well known for severe flooding. After prolonged rainfall, the river level often rises several feet above its banks. It is not difficult to imagine what could happen if a site storing 850,000 litres of fuel were to flood. The environmental consequences would be catastrophic.

2. Serious road safety concerns

The access road to the site is already a pinch point and hazardous at the best of times. The application proposes around 150 lorry movements per day, over 50 of which would be HGVs. These vehicles would be entering and exiting on a near-blind bend, and HGVs leaving the site would need to swing out across both lanes. Introducing this many large vehicles—especially ones carrying highly flammable fuel—is an accident waiting to happen.

Comparisons to the Buncefield explosion are not exaggerations; they highlight the potential consequences of a fuel-related incident. Unlike Buncefield, however, this site is surrounded by densely populated residential areas. The result of a serious accident here could be devastating.

3. Impact on the adjacent nature reserve

Behind the site lies a lake designated as a nature reserve, into which Wokingham Council has invested approximately £150,000 to create a new natural reedbed and increase biodiversity. A fuel depot next door fundamentally undermines this investment and the purpose of the reserve.

Before planning was even applied for, residents reported strong petrol smells around the lake area, which is unacceptable in a protected wildlife environment. A fuel leak—whether small or large—would cause immediate and long-lasting harm to the fish, plants, and animals that rely on this habitat.

4. Concerns about planning integrity

Given the environmental sensitivity, flood risk, road dangers, and proximity to residential areas, it is difficult to understand how this site could be considered appropriate for fuel storage under any responsible planning framework. Approving this application would raise serious questions about the integrity and judgement of the planning process.