[redacted]
Planning Manager
Biffa Waste Services
[redacted]@biffa.co.uk

FAO: Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited
Electronic Submission Only

13th October 2026

Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange ('OxSRFI') – Development Consent Order Summary of Written Representations by Biffa Waste Services (October 2026)

Biffa objects to the proposed loss of the Ardley In-Vessel Composting (IVC) facility, an established, permanently permitted waste facility specifically safeguarded under Policy W11 of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Core Strategy. The Applicant has not demonstrated that suitable, operationally available and geographically realistic replacement capacity exists for the specialist treatment currently provided at Ardley.

Reliance on Waste Data Interrogator throughput data does not demonstrate practical spare capacity at alternative facilities. Ardley received 32,539 tonnes in 2025 against an estimated practical capacity of approximately 35,000–40,000 tonnes per annum, demonstrating that it is already operating at a substantial proportion of its practical capacity. Similarly, expiry of Biffa's current lease in 2030 does not establish that the operational need for the facility will cease or that it would necessarily close absent OxSRFI.

Ardley provides specialist treatment for kerbside-collected biodegradable waste within a constrained regional and national treatment network. Its removal without equivalent replacement capacity would create a significant infrastructure gap, potentially increase waste transport distances and reduce circular-economy benefits. Biffa also relies on the NPPF agent-of-change principle, under which mitigation should address effects on new development rather than require removal of the established facility. Biffa therefore requests modifications or mitigation to ensure the continued availability of high-quality organics-treatment capacity.

Yours faithfully,

Biffa Waste Services Limited
Registered office: Coronation Road, Cressex,
High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP12 3TZ
Registered in England and Wales
Company No: 00946107



Planning Manager

Biffa.co.uk

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Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange ('OxSRFI') – Development Consent Order Written Representations by Biffa Waste Services (October 2026)

Biffa Waste Services ('Biffa') is the operator of the In-Vessel Composting ('IVC') facility situated at Ashgrove Farm, Ardley, Oxfordshire. In this capacity Biffa wish to formally lodge our objections to the proposed demolition of this strategically important facility as proposed within the revised OxSRFI scheme promoted by Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited ('ORL'). The proposed development of the OxSRFI is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project ('NSIP') to be considered under a Development Consent Order ('DCO') application (project reference TR050008). Biffa has previously submitted detailed representations for the Statutory Stage 2 Consultation (November 2025), and is participating in the examination process.

This representation seeks to re-provide our previous comments with further detail, and is being made because the Ardley IVC facility is a vital element of the waste management network, playing a key role in the sustainable recycling of kerbside-collected biodegradable organics wastes. The current proposals would involve the removal of the existing facility, and the lack of provision of replacement capacity will generate serious adverse impacts on essential waste management infrastructure, will undermine national and local waste policies, and will result in the displacement of kerbside collected green/food waste with no evidence of credible alternative treatment or replacement facility in place. Further detail is provided below.

Biffa's principal concern remains that removal of the facility would result in the loss of strategically important organic-waste treatment infrastructure without evidence that the material currently treated at Ardley can be accommodated sustainably elsewhere.

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1. Existing Ardley IVC Facility

Planning permission for the IVC facility was originally granted by Oxfordshire County Council on 26th November 2009 (reference 09/01312/CM, OCC reference MW.0197.09). A further Non-Material Amendment (NMA) application was granted on 29th September 2021 (OCC ref MW.0077/21). Both permissions apply to site operations.

The facility plays a key role in the processing of kerbside collected biodegradable organic wastes within Oxfordshire, providing a highly sustainable treatment solution to convert biodegradable wastes into a PAS-certified product utilised in the local area. By housing the process in-vessel the technology reduces odour and emissions and is in a highly sustainable location to reduce transport distances and associated emissions. The IVC facility provides a highly efficient, sustainable recycling solution entirely consistent with the aims of the waste hierarchy.

The facility is operating in full accordance with an Odour Management Plan, approved under details pursuant to condition 12 of planning permission 09/01312/CM and is fully regulated by the Environment Agency. Paragraph 7 of the National Planning for Waste ('NPPW') states that *"Waste planning authorities should work on the assumption that the relevant pollution control regime will be properly applied and enforced."*

An Odour Report completed by BWB Consulting (provided to Biffa in October 2024 but undertaken between September 2021 and October 2022 without consultation with Biffa), informed ORL to conclude that the facility would result in unacceptable odour effects on potential occupiers of the commercial units proposed.

However, the Odour Report itself demonstrates the very low level of instances of odour occurrences reported, and that these could not be directly attributed to the operation of the facility. The following extract from the Odour Report highlights the low level of odour complaints received that were potentially attributed to the facility:

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Table 6.1: Odour Complaint History provided by CDC

Year	Area of Complaint	Number of Complaints Received	Approximate Distance and location of Complaint from Site
2010	Ardley	4	1.9km north east
2011	Ardley	1	1.9km north east
	Middleton Stoney	3	2.1 km south
	Fewcott	2	2.3km north
2012	Middleton Stoney	1	2.1km south
2013	Ardley	7	1.9km north east
	Middleton Stoney	1	2.1km south
2014	Ardley	1	1.9km north east
	Middleton Stoney	1	2.1km south
2017	Ardley	2	1.9km north east
2019	Ardley	1	1.9km north east
2021	Middleton Stoney	1	2.1km south

It is also noted in paragraph 6.4 of the Odour Report that:

"*The EA advised that the odour complaints received may not relate entirely to the composting facility as there are other potential odour sources in the area including the Ardley Fields Household Waste Recycling Facility approximately 900m north east of the existing IVCF and the Ardley Energy Recovery Facility approximately 670m east.*"

Chapter 4: Air Quality and Odour of the draft ES stated, at Table 4.1, that the operation of the Ardley IVC will cease in 2030 due to the expiry of the lease, and that it will be decommissioned ahead of first occupation of the Proposed Development. The Ardley IVC operates under a permanent planning consent, and as such on the assumption that the Proposed Development was not a consideration it is incorrect to assume that the Ardley IVC would be decommissioned at the end of the current term of the lease, which would be the subject of further negotiation.

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The DCO submission version of the ES states, at Table 4.1, that the IVC is not being considered for replacement, and therefore no assessment is required in the ES. Table 4.1 erroneously states that there is a requirement to decommission once the lease expires. This is discussed below, however this assumption pre-judges the outcome of commercial discussions with the landlord and the site benefits from permanent planning permission. There are no indications that lease negotiations would not be successful.

There is a demonstrable need to retain the waste management capacity provided by the Ardley IVC facility. The facility supports local authorities' recycling performance, reduces greenhouse gas emissions by avoiding landfill/anaerobic disposal and contributes to the Circular Economy through the production of a soil improver and through the reuse of organics. The facility has been in operation for a long period successfully, and with minimal impact to the local community. It is entirely consistent with its agricultural location, providing direct access to markets for the end product and providing waste management capacity to support population growth in the region.

Consequently, the loss of this capacity will leave a significant gap in organic waste management for the County.

2. Lease Expiry Does Not Establish Loss of Need

The Applicant's assessment has assumed that operation of the Ardley IVC would cease in 2030 because Biffa's existing lease expires 2030, and consequently that the facility would be decommissioned prior to occupation of the Proposed Development.

Biffa accepts that the current lease expires on that date and carries no security of tenure under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. However, this is a commercial property position, not a waste-planning assessment.

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The facility benefits from permanent planning permission. Expiry of the present lease does not establish either:

- that the operational need for the facility disappears in 2030; or
- that the facility would necessarily cease operating in the absence of OxSRFI.

The consultation response already explained that, absent the Proposed Development, it is incorrect simply to assume that Ardley would be decommissioned at the end of the existing lease because future occupation would be the subject of further negotiation.

The capacity need and the property arrangements should therefore be considered separately.

3. Safeguarding and Policy W11

The Ardley IVC is specifically identified as a safeguarded waste-management site in Appendix 2 of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Core Strategy, as Site 014.

Biffa's earlier consultation response identified an important error in the Applicant's Draft Environmental Statement. Paragraph 13.4.22 initially stated that Ardley was not listed in Appendix 2 and used this as part of its reasoning for concluding that the site was no longer required for waste management. The facility is, in fact, listed. The Core Strategy remains part of the Development Plan.

Policy W11 safeguards waste-management sites and the Applicant has not, on the evidence available to Biffa, identified equivalent replacement capacity for the Ardley operation. The Core Strategy has been examined at Public Inquiry and been found sound by an Independent Planning Inspector. The policies of the Core Strategy are therefore material considerations in planning decisions. There has been no robust evidence provided to demonstrate that safeguarding waste capacity policies can be overridden. **All** permitted waste management capacity should be safeguarded, whether in excess of forecasted capacity changes or not, for future legislative changes, such as Simpler Recycling, that seek to increase the amount of material that is treated.

That point becomes particularly significant because the Applicant's capacity case relies heavily upon WDI throughput information which does not demonstrate spare treatment capacity in reality.

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5. Waste Data Interrogator Does Not Demonstrate Spare Capacity

This remains one of Biffa's principal concerns.

The Applicant has relied upon the Waste Data Interrogator in seeking to demonstrate that sufficient capacity would remain following the loss of Ardley. Biffa considers that this fundamentally misunderstands what the WDI dataset demonstrates.

The WDI records waste received at facilities. It does not identify their available or practical spare treatment capacity.

Accordingly, the throughput of another composting facility cannot simply be treated as evidence that it has unused capacity capable of receiving material displaced from Ardley.
The Draft ES referred to a figure of 198,849 tonnes in paragraph 13.4.26. Biffa has been unable to reproduce that figure from the Environment Agency's 2025 WDI dataset. Biffa's review records:

- 128,371 tonnes received at Oxfordshire composting sites; and
- 148,566 tonnes received at anaerobic digestion facilities.

The basis for the Applicant's 198,849-tonne figure should therefore be explained.
More fundamentally, even an accurate throughput figure would not demonstrate available capacity.

4. Permitted Capacity Versus Practical Capacity

Biffa's earlier consultation response identified that Ardley operates under a Standard Rules environmental permit allowing treatment of up to 75,000 tonnes per annum.

Biffa wishes to clarify the significance of this figure.

The figure of 75,000 tonnes is the regulatory permit limit. It should not be interpreted as the physical or practical treatment capacity of the installed Ardley facility.

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Biffa's operational assessment is that the existing infrastructure and processes provide practical capacity of approximately 35,000 to 40,000 tonnes per annum. Ardley received 32,539 tonnes **in** 2025, meaning the facility was operating at broadly 80 to 90% of its practical capacity.

The distinction is important because describing Ardley as a 75,000-tonne facility and comparing that number with current throughput could give a misleading impression that substantial unused capacity exists at the site.

Similarly, throughput figures for competing facilities should not be interpreted as evidence that they have capacity available to accept Ardley's existing material.

5. The Relevant Market Is Wider Than Oxfordshire

Biffa considers that an Oxfordshire-only assessment is too narrow. The consequences of losing Ardley extend materially beyond the administrative boundary of Oxfordshire.

This reflects the nature of specialist IVC infrastructure. Unlike conventional open-windrow composting, IVC facilities can treat particular biodegradable waste streams, including co-mingled food and garden waste, which cannot simply be redirected to every composting facility.

Biffa's review of named IVC facilities using the 2025 WDI indicates approximately 597,199 tonnes were received across the identified facilities. Ardley accounted for 32,539 tonnes, whilst Biffa's Ardley, Ufton and Etwall facilities together received 101,769 tonnes, or approximately 17% of that identified set. Biffa notes that this analysis is indicative because the WDI does not distinguish IVC from open-windrow composting and site classifications have therefore required separate consideration.

The issue is not simply whether nominal composting throughput elsewhere in Oxfordshire exceeds a modelled Oxfordshire requirement.

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The relevant question is whether suitable, operationally available and geographically realistic capacity exists to replace the specialist function currently undertaken by Ardley. The Applicant has not demonstrated that it does.

6. Increasing Strategic Need for IVC Capacity

The importance of retaining this capacity should also be considered against the development of national waste collection policy.

Biffa's original consultation response identified the relationship between Ardley and Simpler Recycling, implemented through the Environment Act 2021. These reforms increase the importance of infrastructure capable of treating separately collected biodegradable waste streams.

There is also a continuing requirement for IVC capacity where authorities operate co-mingled food and garden waste collections under relevant transitional arrangements.

Evidence available to Biffa demonstrates the wider pressure upon this specialist treatment market. For example, Greater Manchester Combined Authority generates approximately 200,000 tonnes per annum of mixed food and garden waste. Approximately 120,000 tonnes per annum sits within a 14-package framework expiring in 2029, with a further approximately 80,000 tonnes contracted to Suez to 2034.

Biffa's business evidence also identifies operational constraints within the wider market, including facility closures, facilities not constructed despite consent, operators being unable to accommodate awarded packages, and existing facilities being substantially committed.

There is also evidence of significant long-distance movement of suitable material. The 2025 WDI records 32,689 tonnes of Scottish food waste going to English composting facilities, of which 30,091 tonnes (92%) was received by Envar and Ryedale facilities.

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This reinforces Biffa's position that specialist organic-waste infrastructure must be considered as part of a regional and national network rather than solely against actual and forecasted capacity within one county.

7. Replacement Capacity Cannot Simply Be Assumed

The loss of an established IVC facility cannot reasonably be addressed by assuming that new capacity will emerge elsewhere.

Replacement IVC infrastructure requires, among other things, an appropriate site where a lease can be obtained and its limited environmental impacts can be adequately managed. However, it also needs to be considered in the context of the market for the output material which is used as an agricultural product once certification is achieved. It also needs planning permission, environmental permitting and development of the necessary physical infrastructure. No replacement facility is identified within the Applicant's assessment.

Consequently, Biffa considers that there is presently no evidential basis for concluding that Ardley's existing throughput could be accommodated by equivalent replacement capacity when the Applicant proposes its removal.

That position is especially important where the proposed closure date is linked to 2030 given the timescales for delivery of planning consents and infrastructure provision.

8. Odour and the Agent of Change Principle

The Applicant's consideration of potential odour effects from a hypothetical relocated facility does not answer Biffa's case for protecting the existing infrastructure.

The BWB Consulting Odour Report was undertaken between September 2021 and October 2022 without consultation with Biffa and subsequently provided to Biffa in October 2024. Biffa's consultation response identified that the recorded number of complaints was very small and that they could not all be directly attributed to the IVC as acknowledged in the odour report.

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The Environment Agency itself advised that complaints may not relate entirely to the composting facility, identifying the Ardley Fields Household Waste Recycling Facility approximately 900 metres away and the Ardley Energy Recovery Facility approximately **670 metres** away as other potential odour sources.

The Ardley facility operates pursuant to an approved Odour Management Plan and is subject to Environment Agency regulation.

Biffa also relies upon the agent of change principle in paragraph 200 of the NPPF. The NPPF position is that established businesses should not have unreasonable restrictions imposed upon them by subsequently introduced development and that, where necessary, the Applicant should provide suitable mitigation for its proposed development rather than requiring the established facility to be removed.

Accordingly, Biffa does not accept that the odour evidence establishes that the existing IVC operation is unacceptable.

9. Environmental and Waste-Management Consequences

The Ardley IVC contributes to the management of kerbside-collected biodegradable waste and provides an established treatment outlet supporting diversion of organic material from landfill and production of a soil improver.

Its loss therefore needs to be assessed not simply as the removal of one local facility but as the removal of operational specialist capacity from a constrained network.

Where suitable replacement capacity has not been identified, displacement also creates the potential for waste to travel further to obtain an appropriate treatment outlet.

Biffa therefore considers that the Applicant has not demonstrated that the loss of Ardley would have a negligible effect.

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10. Conclusion

The existing IVC facility at Ardley plays a vital role in the sustainable management of kerbside collected organic waste in Oxfordshire and the surrounding region. Its removal, without replacement, as part of the OxSRFI development would create a significant infrastructure gap, undermine waste policy, increase environmental impact, and reduce circular economy benefits, contrary to national and local planning policies.

Accordingly, I therefore urge the Examining Authority to insist the Applicant amend the DCO Application to include the modifications/mitigations requested above to ensure the continued availability of high-quality organics treatment capacity for the region.

I would be happy to provide further information if required.

Yours faithfully,



Planning Manager

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