Oxford Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment

Final Report
July 2018

RRR Consultancy Ltd
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Executive Summary

Introduction

S1. In February 2018 Oxford City Council commissioned *RRR Consultancy Ltd* to undertake a Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment (BDANA) for the Local Authority’s Local Plan Period of 2016 to 2036 within the administrative area of the City Council¹. The results will be used as an evidence base for policy development in housing and planning and to inform the allocation of resources.

S2. The need for Local Housing Authorities to consider the needs of people residing in houseboats is determined by the Housing and Planning Act (2016) and the March 2016 DCLG draft guidance on periodically reviewing the housing needs for caravans and houseboats.

S3. The purpose of this assessment is to quantify the accommodation and housing related support needs of boat dwellers in the Oxford administrative area between 2016 and 2036. This is in terms of both permanent residential and temporary moorings for boat dwellers. The results will be used to inform the allocation of resources and as an evidence base for policy development in housing and planning.

S4. To achieve the study aims, the research drew on several data sources: a review of secondary information; extensive consultation with key stakeholders including housing and planning officers, boat yard owners and managers, the National Bargee Travellers Association; and face-to-face surveys of boat dwellers. These provided an extensive range of quantitative and qualitative data enabling a robust and reliable assessment of accommodation needs.

Policy context

S5. The requirement to assess the accommodation needs of boat dwellers follows the introduction, in the Housing and Planning Act 2016, of a requirement to consider the needs of people residing on places on inland waterways where houseboats can be moored. In March 2016 DCLG published its draft guidance to local housing authorities on the periodical review of housing needs for caravans and houseboats.

S6. However, the term ‘houseboat’ is not defined by DCLG guidance. As such, the accommodation needs determined by this assessment uses a broader definition which defines boat dwelling as vessels capable of navigation and is used as the main residence but may occasionally go cruising and return to base.

¹ Although the needs assessment took place in 2018, the needs figures are determined from 2016 to 2036 to accord with the Council’s Local Plan.
S7. Oxford City Council’s local planning policies outline the criteria by which the location of new boat moorings should be determined. It is apparent that they consider it important to consider a range of factors including the necessity for adequate services and the potential impact on the environment. However, it is likely that any revised local policy will need to reflect the findings of this BDANA. The Council has previously (2012) undertaken an assessment of potential new mooring places in Oxford although the report concluded that the four potential sites are constrained in some way.

S8. The Environment Agency and Canal and River Trust play an important role in managing the waterways running through Oxford. The Agency requires boats to be registered or licenced if the owner wants to keep or use it on inland waterways, such as rivers and canals. It also operates a number of short-term (usually 24-hour) moorings along the Thames. The Trust provides guidance on ‘waterway proofing’ planning policies as well as guidance on boaters without a home mooring. Many of the findings discussed throughout this report relate to how key agencies and organisations such as Oxford City Council, the Environment Agency, and the Canal & Riverside Trust can help improve the conditions of boat dwellers in Oxford.

Analysis of Secondary Data

S9. The government does not collect data on the number of boat dwellers or moorings within the study area. As such, a range of secondary data regarding the number of authorised and unauthorised moorings located within the City Council’s administrative boundaries was analysed. It is apparent that there are different estimates regarding the number of moorings dependent on source.

S10. According to Oxford City Council data there are 52 places on Oxford’s waterways where both authorised (regulated) and unauthorised (unregulated) moorings take place with the largest number (20 mooring places) located in south Oxford. However, the Council’s data only records the number of mooring places rather than actual number of moorings. Also, a large proportion of the mooring places identified by the Council either contained no actual moorings or were unregulated mooring places.

S11. The Canal and River Trust (CRT) and Environment Agency (EA) manage both permanent authorised moorings along the Oxford Canal as well as a number of 48-hour moorings for temporary use. However, most CRT visitor moorings are relaxed to a maximum of 14 days November to March. National Bargee Traveller Association (NBTA) data indicates that there are around 77 regulated and unregulated moorings located on Oxford’s waterways. They record the moorings by type with just under half located along a towpath.

S12. According to the results of the boat dwellers’ survey undertaken as part of this project, there are a total of 89 moorings on Oxford’s waterways with planning permission for permanent residency. This includes around 70 moorings located on the Oxford Canal and 19 on the River Thames. However, there are also around 200 non-residential moorings located within the study area, and a number of unauthorised (or unregulated) moorings.
S13. Consultations with key stakeholders offered important insights into the main issues regarding boat dwellers residing on Oxford’s waterways. It was apparent that there were some contrasting and differing opinions from different stakeholders. There was general agreement that there is a lack of space and suitable locations for moorings on Oxford’s waterways. The demand for increased moorings at least partly derives from some boat dwellers being unable to find affordable housing within city. The increase in visitor boats during the summer months leads to increased demand for mooring spaces. Stakeholders showed concern regarding the poor condition of some boats and a general lack of maintenance facilities.

S14. It was generally acknowledged by stakeholders that, to varying extents, unauthorised moorings take place on Oxford waterways, within and around the city. Key locations for unauthorised moorings cited by stakeholders included Folly Bridge, Swinford, Kennington, Christchurch Meadow, Iffley Meadows, and the Castle Mill Stream. Alternatively, it was suggested that some unauthorised moorings actually take place on land that is unregistered and occur due to increasing restrictions on places to moor on Oxford’s waterways.

S15. There was general agreement that there is a lack of suitable places for new moorings in Oxford. The Environment Agency consider the main river more suitable for visitor moorings than residential moorings. Alternative sites for new moorings put forward are generally outside the city and included developing the gravel lakes situated to the north of Oxford. Similarly, the man-made lake just north of the A34 could be accessed via Duke’s Cut to service boaters commuting into the city. Another suggestion was that the Long Bridges area may possibly be suitable for moorings.

S16. Stakeholders acknowledged barriers to developing new moorings in Oxford including few landowners being interested in applying for planning permission or incurring the costs of establishing a fully serviced mooring.

S17. It was apparent from some stakeholders that the relationship between some boat dwellers and neighbouring communities can sometimes be tense. A minority of boat dwellers residing on unauthorised moorings had committed anti-social behaviour, although this was sometimes due to the ‘chaotic’ lifestyles of some boat dwellers. Importantly, it was noted that such behaviour is committed by a small number of boat dwellers and that many are professionals such as academics or skilled workers such as plumbers and painters.

S18. There is a general lack of access to services. According to stakeholders, a lack of affordable housing in Oxford means that homeless people or people mental health or substance misuse issues are more likely to seek alternative accommodation on Oxford’s waterways. The conditions of boats such boat dwellers are residing on is frequently very poor and unfit for human habitation. The location of such boats means that occupiers are less likely to access help and support services. That there needs to be a single agency determining the support needs of boat dwellers was one suggested solution. Boat dwellers may find it difficult to register with a GP or to find employment when they have to frequently move.
Boat dwellers’ consultation

S19. A range of methods were used to gain insight into the number and accommodation needs of people residing permanently on boats in Oxford including surveys undertaken with boat dwelling households. For many boat dwellers the motivation for residing on a boat is the alternative lifestyle it provides, as a means to reside closer to nature, and the community spirit which pervades the boat dwelling community.

S20. It was apparent that some households reside on boats due to a lack of affordable alternatives. A small number of boat dwellers in Oxford consist of people who are long-term unemployed, ex-offenders, have substance misuse issues, experience mental health issues, or are ex-military. They often reside on non-navigable boats in very poor condition that may have been abandoned by previous owners. It is apparent that many of these boat dwellers may be better accommodated in affordable housing but may require help and support to do so.

S21. Although some permanent moorings have water and electricity hookups most do not (most share water facilities and have no access to electricity). Human and household waste disposal facilities are generally limited and can be difficult to access. It is also apparent that the poor condition of some banks on Oxford’s waterways make it difficult for boat dwellers to safely moor. Boat dwellers without an official address may find it difficult to access services such as local GPs.

S22. There was agreement amongst boat dwellers that there is a need for more transit and permanent moorings on Oxford’s waterways. In particular, they stated that there is a lack of affordable moorings on Oxford’s waterways, a factor which leads to unauthorised moorings. Whilst recognising that there may be limited space to provide new moorings, boat dwellers suggested the need for greater flexibility regarding the terms and conditions associated with existing moorings.

S23. One key issue is the lack of maintenance facilities on Oxford’s waterways. Since the closure of the Jericho Boat Yard in 2006, boat dwellers have had to access maintenance facilities outside the city. However, at least one current marina is considering apply for planning permission to increase the number of permanent resident moorings, and to provide maintenance facilities.

Accommodation need

S24. Accommodation need for the study area was assessed using analysis of primary and secondary data. The accommodation needs calculation steps are based on a model in accordance with both previous and current Practice Guidance issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It contains seven basic components, five assessing need and two assessing supply, which are applied to each sub-group, based on secondary data.
S25. Table S.1 summarises number of permanent residential moorings, required over the period 2016-36. It shows that a further 41 permanent residential moorings are needed over twenty years throughout the study area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Period</th>
<th>No.</th>
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<tr>
<td>2016-2021</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021-2026</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026-2031</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2031-2036</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
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Source: Oxford BDANA 2018

S26. In relation to transit provision, there is a need for relevant agencies to consider more flexibility in relation to temporary moorings, particularly during winter months, and to consider increasing the number of temporary moorings.

Conclusions

S27. The policy process that follows on from this research will need to consider how the identified needs relating to boat dwellers can be supported through the planning process. The study also highlighted a number of issues relating to the management and condition of provisions.

S28. Finally, this report primarily recommends that the commissioning council works jointly with EA and CRT and other relevant service providers where appropriate to address boat dwellers’ accommodation needs. The other recommendations are as follows:

**New mooring places and sites**

- For Oxford City Council to revisit the 4 potential mooring sites identified by the 2012 report. Also, to consider the potential for new moorings at the gravel lakes situated to the north of Oxford. Similarly, the man-made lake just north of the A34 could be accessed via Duke’s Cut and service boaters commuting into the city.

- Relevant agencies to contact the three Oxford Marina owners to discuss the possibility of some leisure berths being granted planning permission for permanent residential moorings.

- For agencies to consider adopting the CRT’s principles in the planning and design of new moorings.

- Develop criteria and processes for determining the suitability of boat dwellers’ residential moorings for including in emerging/future Local Plans.

- Agencies to review opportunities for the expansion of current provision where suitable and appropriate.
• Agencies could consider helping to meet the needs of households unable to afford to own a mooring or the rental costs of existing moorings by renting or leasing small parcels of local authority owned land to them and assisting with planning applications and mooring development.

• To consider alternative funding mechanisms such as: acquisition funds; loans for private mooring provision through Community Development Financial Institutions; and joint ventures with members of the boating community.

• To determine whether some of the accommodation needs of boat dwellers can be met by affordable or supported housing.

**Mooring services and facilities**

• For the CRT to consider increasing the number of 14-day moorings, for greater flexibility in relation to 48-hour moorings, and extending temporary mooring periods during the winter months. Also, for the CRT to consider changing signage reminding boat dwellers of the need to vacate temporary moorings after a certain period.

• Ensure all mooring areas have access to facilities such as toilet and household waste disposal provisions. If possible, all authorised moorings (residential and visitors moorings) should have access to electric and water hook-up points, and for residential moorings to have individual access and a secure post-box.

• Review of mooring charges to see how affordable moorings could be made more available (including a review of the application process for moorings in high demand areas to make it more accessible and affordable).

• To consider enabling the public to access the Environment Agency maintenance yard. Also, to assist the marinas to develop further maintenance facilities.

• For residential moorings to be designated a postal address, so they can register with local services and the electoral register at their residential address and not have to use an alternative address.

**Health and safety**

• For agencies to work collectively to ensure the health and safety of boat dwellers including ensuring all boats have working fire extinguishers, carbon monoxide monitors and smoke detectors. Also, all areas adjacent to moorings to have nearby lifebuoys.

• Agencies collaborate to address the health and social care needs of boat dwellers, particularly those with mental health and substance misuse issues.

• Ensure all authorised moorings have secure and visible mooring rings, safe banks with secure access on and off boats, and that the waterways close to the banks are safe and deep enough for boats to moor.
• For emergency services to be made fully aware of the location and best access routes to residential and temporary moorings.

• For relevant agencies to collaborate with the Oxford Water Safety Group to ensure health and safety is maintained on Oxford’s waterways. Also, to consider co-opting boat dwellers onto the Group

**Communication and cooperation**

• Formalise communication processes between relevant housing, planning and enforcement officers etc. in both the study area and neighbouring local authorities.

• For relevant agencies to work with the Environment Agency and River Thames Alliance Moorings Group to ensure a consistent approach to moorings enforcement across the river.

• For agencies to develop a holistic vision for their work on boat dwelling services and facilities, and to embed it in Community and Homelessness Strategies, Local Plans and planning and reporting obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

• Provide regular training and workshop sessions with local authority and service provider employees (and elected members) to help them to further understand the key issues facing the boat dwelling communities.

• Better sharing of information between agencies which deal with the boat dwelling community.

• The population size and demographics of the boating community groups can change rapidly. As such, their accommodation needs should be reviewed every 5 to 7 years.
1. Introduction

Study context

1.1 In February 2018 Oxford City Council commissioned RRR Consultancy Ltd to undertake a Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment (BDANA) for the Local Authority’s Local Plan Period of 2016 to 2036 within the administrative area of the City Council. The results will be used as an evidence base for policy development in housing and planning and to inform the allocation of resources.

1.2 The requirement to assess the accommodation needs of boat dwellers follows the introduction, in the Housing and Planning Act 2016, of a requirement to consider the needs of people residing on places on inland waterways where houseboats can be moored. Also, in March 2016 DCLG published its draft guidance to local housing authorities on the periodical review of housing needs for caravans and houseboats.

Methodological context

1.3 To achieve the study aims, the research drew on a number of data sources including:

- Review of secondary information: a review of national and local planning policies and analysis of secondary data.
- Extensive consultation of key stakeholders including housing and planning officers, boat yard owners and managers, and the National Bargee Travellers Association, by an online survey, telephone and face-to-face interviews, and boat yard visits.
- Extensive face-to-face surveys of boat dwellers covering a range of issues related to accommodation and service needs.

1.4 The above provided an extensive range of quantitative and qualitative data enabling a robust and reliable assessment of accommodation needs.

Geographical context

1.5 Figure 1.1 shows the extent of waterways within the Oxford City Council administrative boundary.

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2 Although the needs assessment took place in 2018, the needs figures are determined from 2016 to 2036 to accord with the Council’s Local Plan.
3 s124 Housing and Planning Act 2016 (c. 22) p.58
Figure 1.1 Main waterways in Oxford
Oxford profile

1.6 According to the Core Strategy 2026\textsuperscript{4}, Oxford is a compact city with a unique and world-renowned built heritage. The estimated population of Oxford in 2016 was 155,300 people (NOMIS, 2018). Oxford has over 1,500 listed buildings and the 16 conservation areas cover 17.3\% of the total area of the city. Oxford is centrally located in England, with easy access to international airports, the railway network, and the M40 motorway. The city is a major centre for education, healthcare, bioscience, IT, publishing and the motor industry. The city has a high level of in-commuting, with around half its workforce living outside its boundary with relatively little out-commuting. Average wages within the city are relatively high at £648 per week compared with an average of £552 per week in the UK. However, the city contains areas of social deprivation with 10 Super Output Areas within the most 20\% most deprived areas in England\textsuperscript{5}.

1.7 The city contains a total area of about 46 sq km with parts of the urban area very densely developed. Some 27\% of Oxford is in the Green Belt, with much of this land being flood plain. Oxford’s waterways are a fundamental part of Oxford’s character, landscape and setting. Spaces along waterways are attractive areas for recreation and also popular routes for walking and cycling, as well as often having value as flood plain and wildlife corridors. Along all of Oxford’s waterways, new development that preserves these functions and in particular that enhances the recreational value, transport value and setting of these areas is to be encouraged. In and near to the city centre particularly, there is great potential to enhance areas around the waterways in a way that boosts its attractiveness\textsuperscript{6}.

Definition Context

1.8 The Housing and Planning Act 2016 requires Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) to consider the needs of people residing on places on inland waterways where houseboats can be moored. However, the term ‘houseboat’ is not defined by DCLG guidance. It is common to adopt the widely-adopted VAT definition which defines a houseboat as being a floating decked structure which is designed or adapted for use solely as a place of permanent habitation, and which does not have the means of, and which is not capable of being readily adapted for, self-propulsion (VAT Notice 701/20, December 2013). However, we are aware that there may be boat dwellers who are licensed to permanently reside on other types of boats. As such, this needs assessment covers all households residing permanently on any type of boat. Because it is moorings that the Local Plans can allocate land for, as well as using the VAT definition of ‘houseboat’, we also adopt a definition which was first used by the Broads Authority who define boat dwelling as:

\textsuperscript{4} Oxford Core Strategy 2026 adopted March 2011
\textsuperscript{5} ibid
\textsuperscript{6} Oxford Local Plan 2036 – Preferred Options 2017
“one where someone lives aboard a vessel (which is capable of navigation), that the vessel is used as the main residence and where that vessel is moored in one location for more than 28 days in a year. The vessel may occasionally/periodically go cruising and return to base”.

Summary

1.9 The need for Local Housing Authorities to consider the needs of people residing in houseboats is determined by the Housing and Planning Act (2016) and the March 2016 DCLG draft guidance on periodically reviewing the housing needs for caravans and houseboats.

1.10 The purpose of this assessment is to quantify the accommodation and housing related support needs of boat dwellers in the Oxford administrative area between 2018 and 2036. This is in terms of both permanent residential and temporary moorings for boat dwellers. The results will be used to inform the allocation of resources and as an evidence base for policy development in housing and planning.

1.11 To achieve the study aims, the research drew on several data sources: a review of secondary information; extensive consultation with key stakeholders including housing and planning officers, boat yard owners and managers, and the National Bargee Travellers Association; and face-to-face surveys of boat dwellers. These provided an extensive range of quantitative and qualitative data enabling a robust and reliable assessment of accommodation needs.
2. Policy context

Introduction

2.1 To assess the current state of play, existing documents have been examined to determine what reference is made to boat dwellers' issues. The intention is to highlight areas of effective practice in the study area, and examine the extent to which authorities are currently addressing the issue. Furthermore, understanding the current position will be important in the development of future strategies intended to meet accommodation need and housing related support need among boat dwellers.

National Policies

Housing and Planning Act 2016

2.2 The Housing and Planning Act gained Royal Assent on 12 May 2016. Section 124 of the Act states that:

“In the case of a local housing authority in England, the duty under subsection (1) includes a duty to consider the needs of people residing in or resorting to their district with respect to the provision of –
(a) sites on which caravans can be stationed, or
(b) places on inland waterways where houseboats can be moored”.

2.3 Importantly, according to correspondence between RRR Consultancy Ltd and DCLG (27 October 2016), DCLG stated that it is for local housing authorities to determine how to assess and understand the accommodation needs of people who reside in or resort to the area with respect to the provision of caravan sites or houseboats. This means that there is no “standard” methodology that can be followed i.e. it is for each authority to prepare (and justify) an appropriate methodology.

DCLG Draft Guidance on Housing Needs (Caravans and Houseboats) (March 2016)

2.4 In March 2016 DCLG published its draft guidance to local housing authorities on the periodical review of housing needs for caravans and houseboats. It states that when considering the need for caravans and houseboats local authorities will need to include the needs of a variety of residents in differing circumstances, for example:

- Caravan and houseboat dwelling households:
  - who have no authorised site anywhere on which to reside
  - whose existing site accommodation is overcrowded or unsuitable, but who are unable to obtain larger or more suitable accommodation
who contain suppressed households who are unable to set up separate family units and
who are unable to access a place on an authorised site, or obtain or afford land to develop on.

- Bricks and mortar dwelling households:
  - Whose existing accommodation is overcrowded or unsuitable ('unsuitable' in this context can include unsuitability by virtue of a person's cultural preference not to live in bricks-and-mortar accommodation).

2.5 The DCLG draft guidance recognises that the needs of those residing in caravans and houseboats may differ from the rest of the population because of:

- their nomadic or semi-nomadic pattern of life
- their preference for caravan and houseboat-dwelling
- movement between bricks-and-mortar housing and caravans or houseboats
- their presence on unauthorised encampments or developments.

2.6 Also, it suggests that as mobility between areas may have implications for carrying out an assessment, local authorities will need to consider:

- co-operating across boundaries both in carrying out assessments and delivering solutions
- the timing of the accommodation needs assessment
- different data sources

2.7 The Guidance remains in draft form at the time of this BDANA, and so does not carry the same status as other guidance and legislation. It is unclear when – if at all – this guidance will lose its "draft" status. Nonetheless, it is of some value for those preparing accommodation needs assessments.

Local Planning Policies

Sites and Housing Development Plan Document Proposed Submission February 2012

2.8 The development plan acknowledges the extent to which legally moored residential boats and their dwellers contribute to the cultural diversity of Oxford. It states that much of the boat-dwelling community relies on the existence of residential moorings, which are defined as having planning permission for long-term mooring in a fixed location, and for occupation as a household’s sole or main residence. The development plan supports in principle the creation of new residential moorings in appropriate off-river basins, although it states that there is limited mooring space suitable for permanent moorings in Oxford and a need to balance permanent residential moorings with short-stay visitor moorings, which have an important role in promoting tourism in the city. It also suggests that the Inland Navigation
Authorities may consider that it is appropriate for residential moorings to be located outside of off-channel basins and that such moorings must not conflict with the Environment Agency’s operational requirements or be on the main Thames river channel. Car-free residential moorings on a modest scale will be considered favourably, provided there are no major residential parking congestion issues within the vicinity to which the development may contribute.

2.9 Policy HP8 of the development plan states that planning permission for new residential moorings on Oxford’s waterways will be granted where:

- if located on the main river Thames they are provided in off-channel basins, and
- if located on the Oxford Canal or other waterways they do not interfere with navigational safety, or operational requirements, and
- there is adequate servicing including disposal facilities for sewage and rubbish, and
- any car parking provision complies with the standards for residential development set out in Policy HP15, and
- there is adequate access for emergency services, and
- there will be no significant adverse effect on the amenity, biodiversity or heritage interest of the waterway or surrounding land.

Oxford City Council, Review of Sections of Oxford Waterway 2012

2.10 Towards the end of 2012 the Unlawfully Moored Boat Enforcement Group (UMBEG) received a list of sections of the Oxford’s waterways forward by BOAT. UMBEG asked the City Council’s Planning Department (and others) to review the list to look for their potential suitability for residential moorings. The review involved a wide-range of experts from the City Council and other agencies including the Environment Agency.

2.11 The report concluded that the following sites had potential for new moorings:

- Hinksey Stream north of Abingdon Road
- Hinskley Stream south of Abingdon Road
- Bulstake Stream at Osney Mead
- Castle Mill Stream

2.12 However, the report noted that the above sites are all constrained in some way would need to overcome issues such as dredging, ecological surveys, and maintenance and management of trees if they were to be brought forward.
Waterways agencies and organisations

Environment Agency

2.13 The Environment Agency is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. It is responsible for the management of the River Thames, River Cherwell and other river channels that join their main courses. The Agency requires boats to be registered or licenced if the owner wants to keep or use it on inland waterways, such as rivers and canals. It also operates a number of short-term (usually 24-hour) moorings along the Thames. Some sites require the user to pay a fee, either for mooring at any time, or after an initial free period.

2.14 According to the Agency\(^7\) two of its priorities are to enforce the registration of boats using inland waterways and enforcing conditions regarding the use of 24-hour moorings. It states that large public landowners are beginning to take effective moorings enforcement action along the Thames. This is causing boat owners without permanent moorings to move to shorter sections of riverbank where the landownership may be in doubt, or regulation of moorings less obvious. To reduce the impact of boats simply migrating to neighbouring landowners the Agency are working with member landowners through the River Thames Alliance Moorings Group, to ensure a consistent approach to moorings enforcement across the river.

Canal & River Trust

2.15 The Canal & River Trust replaced British Waterways in July 2012. The Trust is a registered charity whose main aim is to protect over 2,000 miles of waterways in England and Wales. The Trust only own around 4% of the land adjacent to the waterways and therefore regard influencing developments on this land as essential to develop and protect the places that local communities value and to create. They suggest that there is a need to ‘waterway proof’ planning policy at different spatial levels in order to help unlock the economic, environmental and social benefits offered by the waterways and to secure long-term sustainability.

2.16 The Trust’s principles for planning and design include:

- Individual waterways and water spaces need to be viewed as an integral part of a wider network, and not in isolation.
- Water should not be treated as just a setting or backdrop for development but as a space and leisure and commercial resource in its own right. The ‘added value’ of the water space needs to be fully explored.

\(^7\) Environment Agency, River Thames Operational Annual Report 2015-2016
• Waterways themselves should be the starting point for consideration of the development and use of the water and waterside land – look from the water outwards, as well as from the land to the water.
• A waterway’s towing path and its environs should form an integral part of the public realm in terms of both design and management.
• It is important that the siting, configuration and orientation of buildings optimise views of the water, generate natural surveillance of water space, and encourage and improve access to, along and from the water.
• New waterside development needs to be considered holistically with the opportunities for water-based development, use and enhancement.
• Improve the appearance of the site from the towing path and from the water
• It should be recognised that appropriate boundary treatment and access issues are often different for the towing path side and the offside.

2.17 The Trust also provides guidance on boaters without a home mooring. It states that if a boat is licensed without a home mooring it must move on a regular basis. Unless a shorter time is specified by notice the boat must not stay in the same place for more than 14 days (or such longer period as is reasonable in the circumstances). As such, subject to stops of permitted duration, those using a boat licensed for continuous cruising must genuinely be moving, in passage or in transit throughout the period of the licence. Importantly, the Trust states that shuttling backwards and forwards along a small part of the network does not meet the legal requirement for navigation throughout the period of the licence8.

The National Bargee Travellers Association (NBTA)

2.18 The NBTA is a volunteer organisation formed in 2009 that campaigns and provides advice for itinerant boat dwellers on Britain’s inland and coastal waterways. This includes anyone whose home is a boat and who does not have a permanent mooring for their boat with planning permission for residential use. The NBTA seeks to represent the interests of all live aboard boat dwellers (“Bargee Travellers”) in respect of:

• pursuing the lifestyle
• upholding minority demographic rights
• lobbying at both central government and local government levels
• defending the legal rights of members
• assisting (as far as possible) with marine emergencies and
• engagement with the local community

2.19 The NBTA is active within the study area and has been involved in a number of local campaigns regarding boat dwellers residing on Oxford’s waterways.

8 Canal & River Trust, Guidance for Boaters Without a Home Mooring (no date)
Summary

2.20 The requirement to assess the accommodation needs of boat dwellers follows the introduction, in the Housing and Planning Act 2016, of a requirement to consider the needs of people residing on places on inland waterways where houseboats can be moored. In March 2016 DCLG published its draft guidance to local housing authorities on the periodical review of housing needs for caravans and houseboats.

2.21 Oxford City Council’s local planning policies outline the criteria by which the location of new boat moorings should be determined. It is apparent that they consider it important to consider a range of factors including the necessity for adequate services and the potential impact on the environment. However, it is likely that any revised local policy will need to reflect the findings of this BDANA. The Council has previously (2012) undertaken an assessment of potential new mooring places in Oxford although the report concluded that the four potential sites are constrained in some way.

2.22 The Environment Agency and Canal & River Trust play an important role in managing the waterways running through Oxford. The Agency requires boats to be registered or licenced if the owner wants to keep or use it on inland waterways, such as rivers and canals. It also operates a number of short-term (usually 24-hour) moorings along the Thames. The Trust provides guidance on ‘waterway proofing’ planning policies as well as guidance on boaters without a home mooring. Many of the findings discussed throughout this report relate to how key agencies and organisations such as Oxford City Council, the Environment Agency, and the Canal & River Trust can help improve the conditions of boat dwellers in Oxford.
3. Analysis of secondary data

Introduction

3.1 This chapter examines data regarding the boat dweller population and number of moorings within the Oxford City Council administrative boundary. Unlike Gypsies and Travellers, the government does not collect data on the number of boat dwellers or moorings within the study area. However, using a range of sources e.g. data deriving from Oxford City Council, the Valuation Office Agency (VOA), the Canal & River Trust, the National Bargee Travellers Association (NBTA), Environment Agency (EA), and boat dwellers’ survey data, it is possible to determine boat dweller population levels and number of moorings.

Valuation Office Agency data

3.2 According to Valuation Office Agency (VOA) data there were only 20 houseboats registered to pay Council Tax within the Oxford City Council administrative boundary on 31 March 2016. However, it is likely that this number only reflects those boats which meet the VAT Notice 701/20, December 2013 definition of a houseboat i.e. a floating decked structure which is designed or adapted for use solely as a place of permanent habitation, and which does not have the means of, and which is not capable of being readily adapted for, self-propulsion. As such, it is likely that the VOA figure greatly underestimates the actual number of boat dwellers and moorings within the city boundary.

Oxford City Council data

3.3 Oxford City Council data on the number and types of mooring places located within its administrative boundary identifies 52 potential mooring places along the river and canal which are primarily regulated (moorings with planning permission), unregulated (moorings without planning permission), or without moorings (places where unregulated moorings have previously occurred but not during the latest survey). In total, there are 20 regulated and unregulated mooring places within the South Oxford area of the city, 18 places within the North Oxford and Jericho area, and 13 places within the West Oxford, Osney and city centre area of the city.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1 Mooring places in Oxford</th>
<th>Moorings (no.)</th>
<th>Mooring (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Oxford</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Oxford and Jericho</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Oxford, Osney and city centre</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Oxford City Council 2018

9 The term ‘mooring place’ refers to locations along the river and canal which may contain one or more regulated or unregulated moorings.
3.4 However, almost half (46%) of all mooring places alongside the river and canal had no regulated moorings whilst just under a third (31%) were unregulated moorings. In contrast, there are 6 (12%) places with 48-hour moorings (allowing cruisers to moor for a maximum of 48 hours), and only 2 (4%) places with regulated moorings. There are also 2 mooring places (4%) whose status is unclear, 1 (2%) residents only mooring, and 1 (2%) private mooring. The Council also identified 5 of the 52 mooring places as unauthorised mooring ‘hot spots’ (where unregulated moorings are most likely to occur).

Table 3.2 Mooring site by type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mooring sites (no.)</th>
<th>Mooring sites (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No mooring</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregulated</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 hours mooring</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status unclear</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents only mooring</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Mooring</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Oxford City Council 2018

Canal and River Trust data

3.5 The Canal and River Trust (CRT) administer moorings on the Oxford Canal within the study area (whilst the Environment Agency administers moorings on the River Thames). They collect data on the number of constant cruisers and boats with permanent moorings. The latest CRT assessment of boats within the study area states that there are 18 continuous cruisers (including 2 boats located on a mooring awaiting confirmation), and 84 boats with permanent moorings (although they state that the mooring is not necessarily located in Oxford i.e. they could be visiting).

3.6 The CRT administer mooring zones in Oxford (see Figure 3.1). This includes moorings which can only be accessed for a maximum of 48 hours, moorings which can be accessed for a maximum of 7 days, service moorings, Agenda 21/long-term/private moorings, and areas in which mooring is not allowed. Boat dwellers are allowed to stay in the area for a maximum of 7 days during a single visit or a maximum of 14 days during a calendar month. However, all visitor moorings are relaxed to a maximum of 14 days November to March (except those marked in blue on Figure 3.1 below).
Figure 3.1 Mooring zones in Oxford

Source: Canal and River Trust
National Bargee Traveller Association (NBTA) data

3.7 The National Bargee Traveller Association (NBTA) also collect data on both regulated and unregulated moorings within Oxford City Council’s administrative area. They suggest that there is a total of 77 separate locations with moorings on Oxford’s waterways including 54 locations on the River Thames and 23 locations on the Oxford canal. Table 3.3 shows the number of Oxford moorings by location. It records 12 distinct locations with the largest number of moorings located in Jericho (14), followed by Wolvercote (9), Iffley main river (9), and Osney (7). However, some of the locations are in poor condition, located in conservation areas, or identified as potential rather than actual locations for moorings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.3 Regulated and unregulated mooring locations in Oxford</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jericho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolvercote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iffley Main River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summertown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medley Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folly Bridge Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iffley Weir Stream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godstow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandpont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donnington Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Meadow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NBTA 2018

3.8 The NBTA also determine mooring locations in terms of whether they are located on a towpath, offside (located opposite a towpath), or offline (one away from the main line of the canal e.g. a marina). Table 3.4 shows that almost half (45%) of mooring locations are located adjacent to a towpath, around a third (31%) offside (opposite) a towpath, and around a quarter (23%) offline (off the main canal).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.4 Regulated and unregulated moorings by type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towpath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NBTA 2018
**Moorings alongside the Oxford Canal**

3.9 In total, there are around 70 residential moorings situated alongside the Oxford Canal with planning permission in 4 separate locations. Three locations are managed by CRT (Hythe Bridge and two Agenda 21 moorings), whilst a fourth is privately owned and managed by Aristotle House.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.5 Permanent residential moorings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hythe Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aristotle House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OBDAA 2018

3.10 **Other moorings on the Oxford canal:** In addition to the moorings listed above, there are a number of private moorings located at the end of gardens on the offside section of the Oxford Canal. There also are a number of 48-hour moorings managed by the Canal and River Trust which are available for boats temporarily residing on Oxford’s waterways. These are used by constant cruisers during the winter months when the River Thames is liable to flood. The College Cruisers hire boat company which has 9 boats is also situated on the Oxford Canal.

**Moorings alongside the River Thames**

3.11 In total, there are 19 residential moorings with planning permission for permanent residency situated alongside the River Thames. Almost all moorings alongside the River Thames are located in two private locations with one location containing 14 (74%) moorings, and the second 4 (21%) moorings. Also, one mooring (5%) with planning permission for permanent residency is located at Bossoms Marina.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.6 Permanent residential moorings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bossmans Marina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BDANA 2018

3.12 **Other moorings on the river:** The River Thames also has a number of private moorings located at the ends of gardens and 48-hour moorings which are available for boats temporarily residing on Oxford’s waterways. There are also hire boat companies and boat clubs (including private clubs, and clubs linked to the university, local schools and colleges). Three marinas (Osney Marina, Osney Mill Marina, and Bossoms Marina) accommodate over 200 non-residential boats.
3.13 There is a long-term residential mooring without planning permission located on an island on the River Thames accommodating 4 boats have been moored for a number of years. The families residing on the boats are seeking planning permission to permanently reside at the location.

3.14 Sections of the river are used as permanent moorings by people who have ‘fallen under the radar’. Some boats moored at places such the Jericho and Castle Mill Stream and the Folly Bridge Area are in poor condition and unable to navigate the waterways but are occupied people who would otherwise be homeless.

3.15 Similar to the Oxford Canal, there are a number of constant cruisers who use temporary and unauthorised moorings along the River Thames. Key areas include:

- Jericho and Castle Mill Stream
- Iffley Main River
- Medley Bridge
- Folly Bridge Area
- Iffley Weir Stream
- Godstow
- Donnington Bridge
- Port Meadow

Boat dwellers survey data

3.16 As part of the process to determine the accommodation needs of boat dwellers, RRR Consultancy undertook extensive surveys of boat dwellers residing on both the River Thames and Oxford canal. As such, the number of moorings, boats and families residing on Oxford’s waterways during the survey period (April to May 2018) was confirmed (see Chapter 5). The survey suggests that there are around 89 authorised permanent moorings on Oxford’s waterways with the largest number located at the two Agenda 21 locations. As stated above, there are also around 200 non-residential moorings located within the city’s administrative boundary, as well as 48-hour moorings and a number of unauthorised (or ‘unregulated’) moorings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.7 Boat survey – authorised moorings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda 21 Summertown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda 21 Wolvercote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Thames</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hythe Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aristotle House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BDANA 2018
3. Analysis of secondary data

Summary

3.17 Unlike Gypsies and Travellers, the government does not collect data on the number of boat dwellers or moorings within the study area. As such, this chapter has examined a range of secondary data regarding the number of authorised and unauthorised moorings located within the City Council’s administrative boundaries. It is apparent that there are different estimates in the number of moorings dependent on source. The VOA’s record of only 20 houseboats registered to pay Council Tax within the Oxford City Council administrative boundary on 31 March 2016 most likely underestimated the actual number of households permanently residing on boats in the study area.

3.18 According to Oxford City Council data there are 52 places on Oxford’s waterways where both authorised (regulated) and unauthorised (unregulated) moorings take place with the largest number (20 mooring places) located in south Oxford. However, the Council’s data only records the number of mooring places rather than actual number of moorings. Also, a large proportion of the mooring places identified by the Council either contained no actual moorings (46%) or were unregulated mooring places (31%).

3.19 The Canal and River Trust manage both permanent authorised moorings along the Oxford Canal as well as a number of 48-hour moorings for temporary use. However, most CRT visitor moorings are relaxed to a maximum of 14 days November to March. National Bargee Traveller Association (NBTA) data indicates that there are around 77 regulated and unregulated moorings located on Oxford’s waterways. They record the moorings by type with just under half located along a towpath.

3.20 According to the results of the boat dwellers survey undertaken as part of this project, there are a total of 89 moorings on Oxford’s waterways with planning permission for permanent residency. This includes around 70 moorings located on the Oxford Canal and 19 on the River Thames. However, there are also around 200 non-residential moorings located within the study area, and a number of unauthorised (or unregulated) moorings.
4. Stakeholder consultation

Introduction

4.1 Consultations with a range of stakeholders were conducted between March 2018 and May 2018 including an online survey, and face-to-face and telephone discussions. Stakeholders included Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, the Oxford Preservation Trust, the Environment Agency, the Canal and River Trust, the National Bargee Travellers Association, Network Rail, University of Oxford, Jericho Wharf Trust, Rewley Park Management Company, Fire and Rescue Service, Oxfordshire Police, Inland Waterways Association, Waterways Moorings, and boatyard and marina owners and managers.

4.2 Boat dwellers were consulted through the household surveys and not as part of the stakeholder consultation discussed in this chapter, but in the following chapters. The aim of the consultation was to obtain both an overall perspective on issues facing boat dwellers, and an understanding of local issues specific to the study area.

4.3 Themes raised through the consultations included: the main issues facing boat dwellers; the main barriers to delivering new mooring places; suitable places for new moorings; preferred type of mooring management; traveling patterns and transit mooring needs; the relationship between local boat dwellers and the settled community; and access to health, education and other services. This chapter presents brief summaries of the consultation and highlights the main points that were raised.

Boat Dwellers’ Accommodation Needs

4.4 There was general agreement by stakeholders that there is a lack of space and suitable locations for long-term moorings at a price that boat dwellers are either prepared or can afford to pay. According to stakeholders, a key factor driving demand for boat dwelling is a lack of affordable housing within the city. Boat dwelling is regarded as a cheap alternative to residing in housing in Oxford. It was suggested that some boat dwellers experience very complex health issues such as substance misuse issues which excludes them from some housing solutions or hostels. It was acknowledged that this demand, combined with increased leisure boating by tourists, means that there is a lack of moorings, particularly during the summer months. One stakeholder stated that the riverside properties by the Thames that they own are affected by unauthorised mooring, although they also own a vacant mooring, so the problem is a lack of moorings for boat dwellers rather than boat owners. Another stakeholder spoke about how some boat owners are supplementing incomes by renting out boats as a bed and breakfast provision (particularly boats located at the end of private gardens or boats located at temporary moorings).

4.5 Alternatively, it was suggested that throughout the Thames Valley there is around 20% unused capacity in existing marinas, although this may be because some marinas are
in the ‘wrong place’ or unaffordable to many boat owners. Another reason may be that some boat dwellers may be unlikely or unwilling to pay mooring fees or Council Tax.

4.6 A second key issue is a lack of maintenance facilities and poorly maintained moorings. Some boats are dilapidated and unfit for human habitation. There are maintenance needs including repairs, maintenance and pump-outs: “there are way too few of these and this has a direct impact on […] using a boat as accommodation throughout the year”. One stakeholder stated that there is a severe restriction of services and mooring sites including toilet waste disposal, rubbish disposal, and access to potable water. Between Osney and Iffley where there is no means to secure a boat (i.e. soft ground for stakes, or mooring rings or bollards to tie to), the moorings are unusable. It was noted that as services for boaters are located in Eynsham and Abingdon it can take a significant amount of travelling time for boat dwellers to dispose of grey water etc. One stakeholder stated that there is a significant requirement for existing mooring sites to be maintained and improved.

4.7 According to stakeholders, most maintenance provision available to boat dwellers residing in the study area is located outside the city boundary. Some maintenance facilities are located as a far away as a day’s boat journey. The three marinas on the River Thames provide limited maintenance and provision, but primarily for boats already moored at the marinas. There are also maintenance facilities at the Environment Agency (EA) yard, but this is only used for the EA boats and only on a limited basis. Representatives of Osney Marina stated that they are considering developing a visitors’ section offering services such as boat maintenance, refuse and toilet waste disposal, a pump-out service, car parking, and other amenities for people residing on boats and leisure cruisers.

4.8 Stakeholders spoke about the need for better maintenance of both the Oxford Canal and River Thames. The poor condition of some canal and river banks in Oxford mean that some moorings cannot be accessed. The condition of the banks and the shallow depth of the water are particularly difficult for older boats to access as they require deeper water. Some stakeholders spoke about the need to protect and conserve areas adjacent to the banks, whilst others stated that it is more important to maintain moorings.

4.9 It was suggested that “Oxford is quite unique” due to its many waterways being owned and managed by different land owners. Some stakeholders commented on the need for clarification of ownership and management. There also needs to be clarity of rules and regulations regarding dealing with unauthorised moorings and better collaborative working:

There needs to be better monitoring and enforcement – it is all well and good in having rules, but not if not enforced and monitored fairly. It just allows the few to spoil it for the rest.

Locations of new moorings

4.10 There was general agreement that there is a lack of suitable places for new moorings in Oxford. It was noted that a 2012 Oxford City Council study of potential mooring sites within
Oxford’s boundary was only able to recommend four sites for further investigation and each site was heavily constrained e.g. requiring dredging or bank improvements in order to make the sites suitable. Due to issues such as environmental impact, flooding and other factors, only one site within the city was identified as having any potential (Long Bridges, near Donnington Bridge), although this may have environmental impact.

4.11 The Environment Agency consider the main river suitable for visitor moorings but not for residential moorings. According to one stakeholder, the Environment Agency policy combined with a lack of access for emergency vehicles means that they have resisted converting tourist moorings along the main river to residential moorings.

4.12 It was suggested by one stakeholder that the Oxford canal is an ideal location because of the controlled water flows and relative ease of access along the towpath to service mooring places. They stated that, in contrast, high and often unpredictable flow patterns on the river Thames makes it a more problematic area for mooring in the winter. During the past two winters boats have had to be pulled away from moorings and have become stuck under bridges. However, it was also suggested that to develop new permanent moorings Oxford canal would first have to be excavated.

4.13 Alternative sites for new moorings included developing the gravel lakes situated to the north of Oxford. Similarly, the man-made lake just north of the A34 could be accessed via Duke’s Cut and service boaters commuting into the city. New permanent moorings will need access to local services for water, litter and waste although it is possible to make arrangements with marinas for these services. A final suggestion was that the Long Bridge area may possibly be suitable for moorings. Any assessment of site for new moorings should consider the impact on infrastructure owned by Network Rail in relation to fencing, lighting, environmental issues, encroachment, and access to the railway.

4.14 Some stakeholders stated that there is a need for a multi-agency approach to issues regarding boat dwellers. Agencies need to urgently address issues such as social exclusion and a lack of affordable housing – factors which lead to increasing demand for boat dwelling: “lots of those on boats could and should be housed properly – even in mobile homes”. Also, it was suggested that key agencies such as Oxford City Council, the Environment Agency, and the Canal and River Trust should liaise in order to determine potential new moorings. The Oxford Water Safety Group\(^{10}\) which provides advice on preventing accidents and drownings on Oxford’s waterways was cited by stakeholders as a good example of multi-agency working.

\(^{10}\) The Oxford Water Safety Group is chaired by Oxford City Council and includes Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Police, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, and the Environment Agency.
4. Stakeholder consultation

Barriers to new moorings

4.15 According to stakeholders there are several barriers to new moorings including that few landowners are interested in applying for planning permission or incurring the costs of establishing a fully serviced mooring and access to roads and parking. Moorings are expensive to construct and maintain which could lead to high mooring fees. Planning limitations were also noted e.g. that the Environment Agency will only permit new residential moorings in side channels and basins rather than the main river. It was suggested that there are very few such places within the city where it would be possible to create such side channel marinas:

Even with the few options which may be viable, there would be significant environmental impact and considerable cost involved in creating the marinas, as dredging, strengthening of banks, environmental mitigation work and installation of facilities (water, waste disposal etc) would all be required.

4.16 One stakeholder stated that they believe there have been no applications to create any new mooring sites in Oxford, either publicly or privately owned, since prior to 2001. Another barrier is the negative stereotyping of boat dwellers who commit anti-social behaviour. This could be addressed by educating people to better understand those who live alternative lifestyles.

Management of new moorings

4.17 There were few responses to this issue. It was noted that existing mooring sites in Oxford are primarily owned by Oxford City Council, the Canal and Rivers Trust, the Environment Agency, and various Oxford University colleges (as riparian owners), as well as a small number of private landowners. It was suggested that it is highly unlikely the majority of boat owners in the city could afford or would be willing to pay for private marina fees. It is therefore likely that this would have to be approached in terms of affordable housing, with local authorities effectively subsidising the project (at least in terms of accepting the cost of creating the marinas in the first place). Only one stakeholder stated that new moorings should be privately managed whilst another stated:

I don't think any boat dweller would care who owns them. What matters is whether they are made available and either free or at reasonable rates to those who need them, being particularly the continuous cruisers and permanent boat dwellers.

4.18 Except one, all moorings located at the three marinas in Oxford are used by tourists and constant cruisers. Marina owners spoke about how the high costs associated with changing existing moorings to a permanent residential status deterred them from doing so. Bossmans Marina stated that they used to have residential moorings in the 1970s, but these proved to not cost-effective and “a lot of hard work”. All three marina owners stated that they regularly receive requests for residential moorings. Osney Mill Marina stated that they receive around 5 requests a week, and 40 out of the 46 applicants to Osney Marina would prefer residential moorings. The marinas are considering changing some moorings to permanent residential status.
Travelling patterns and unauthorised moorings

4.19 It was suggested that there is no ‘typical’ boat dweller and that travelling patterns may vary. One reason is because the two main Oxford waterways are managed by separate navigation authorities. Also, many of the boats are incapable of navigation. Stakeholders estimated that at least 50% and possibly more of boat dwellers residing on the Oxford waterways do not travel. Boat dwellers consist of those who reside permanently on the waterways, those who winter on the waterways (but travel during the summer), or cruise through the waterways. It was noted that continuous cruisers need access to short-term moorings for longer periods of time, particularly during winter months.

4.20 Most stakeholders acknowledged that to varying extents unauthorised moorings take place on Oxford’s waterways. A common reason cited for the increase in unauthorised moorings is because moorings in the city are full with “many more boats moored just outside the city”. However, one stakeholder questioned whether the concept of “illegal” moorings is appropriate. They stated that key agencies have all restricted or removed existing mooring sites without public consultation in Oxford in recent years, all of which were previously used by boat-dwellers. This has led to boat dwellers being forced to moor at higher-profile and more publicly visible sites such as opposite Christchurch Meadow, Iffley Meadows, and the Castle Mill Stream.

4.21 There were varying views as to whether the number of unauthorised moorings had increased or decreased over recent years. One stakeholder stated that unauthorised moorings are increasing as more old cabin cruisers come onto the market and much mooring is uncontrolled e.g. south of Folly Bridge. It was suggested that the presence of semi-permanent boaters mooring Folly Bridge prevent visitors mooring.

4.22 A stakeholder stated that they experienced a significant increase in unauthorised moorings at Thames-side properties. Boats moor alongside each other at permanent moorings in Oxford and moor unauthorised by fields in Swinford and Kennington. The increase in moorings at Swinford and Kennington coincided with Oxford City Council’s proposed Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for waterways when some boat owners moved up and downstream into Vale of the White Horse district council areas.

4.23 Another explanation for the increase in the number of unauthorised meetings is that some boaters have identified unregistered banks on which to moor and are unaware that most of the land was acquired before land registration became mandatory. Owners such as the Council and Canal and River Trust have now registered these banks. In a few cases such as south of Folly Bridge and the Long Bridges ownerships have been difficult to trace.

4.24 One stakeholder stated that, as a small organisation, dealing with unauthorised moorings took a significant amount of time and resources. They have used an enforcement agency to reduce the number of boats at unauthorised moorings. They also experience some vandalising of signs which outline mooring restrictions. It was noted that Oxford City Council has recently started to control the unauthorised moorings from Port Meadow down to the Botley Road and this action has greatly improved public enjoyment of the towpath and Thames Walk.
4.25 An alternative perspective was offered by a stakeholder who stated that unauthorised moorings occur where the landowner has specifically removed their permission to moor. There are a number of mooring locations where the landowner is unknown. They stated that all continuous cruisers have a common law right to navigate the Thames and the right to moor for a reasonable amount of time, unless the land owner removes consent. As such, this is perceived as unauthorised mooring when there is a right to moor.

4.26 It was suggested that one issue is the challenge of implementing temporary mooring on the Thames where the land is unregistered. Many boat dwellers live aboard due to the cost of housing. There is also a significant number of homeless people sleeping on boats in the city, who would be sleeping on the streets if restrictions were tightened: “they tend to be living in fairly squalid conditions and in some cases their behaviour causes a problem to other boaters and the surrounding communities”.

4.27 According to one stakeholder, the University has managed the banks of the Thames from Godstow to Eynsham (south bank) for over a decade. The management of moorings became a necessity for the University when evicted boat dwellers from the city moored further upstream before moving back to sites within the city. They stated that the University’s experience has shown that the majority of boat dwellers simply want an affordable place to moor.

4.28 Another stakeholder stated that they had noticed a decrease in unauthorised moorings on University land following implementation of a ticketing policy. A stakeholder from Network Rail stated that the company has allowed long-term mooring on its land at the Sheepwash Channel and the Castle Mill Stream. This has led to issues with the local community.

Transit moorings

4.29 Stakeholders commented on the need for temporary moorings on Oxford’s waterways. It was noted that a small number of temporary visitor moorings are already provided by the City Council, Environment Agency, and the Canal and River Trust. However, there is a great demand for additional temporary visitor moorings, particularly close to the city centre for leisure boaters wanting to visit Oxford. A stakeholder suggested that an increase in the number of 14-day moorings would be very useful in discouraging unauthorised moorings.

4.30 Suggested locations for new transit moorings included Folly Bridge which would benefit from 24- and 48-hour moorings. It was noted that the land is at Folly Bridge is unregistered although some colleges own the land bordering on the tow patch. Other locations for new transit moorings included near to Osney Bridge which offers access to shops and services on the Botley Road and central Oxford, and also to the train station. Moorings below Folly Bridge provide important access to the south of the city and particularly the colleges and High Street. Moorings around Aristotle Lane and Jericho allow access to the shops in Jericho, close to the city centre. Moorings in Wolvercote and Godstow provide access to shops and services in Wolvercote. However, one stakeholder stated that as most banks of the Thames are already being utilised by holiday boaters using temporary moorings, it would be difficult to find more sites although temporary moorings do not generally cause a significant problem to landowners.
Community relations

4.31 Stakeholders discussed the relationship between boat dwellers and the local community. It was acknowledged by most stakeholders that there can be tensions between the two communities. A minority of boat dwellers residing on unauthorised moorings had committed anti-social behaviour, although this was sometimes due to the ‘chaotic’ lifestyles of some boat dwellers, especially those residing at Castle Mill Stream.

4.32 According to one stakeholder, when boats moor illegally they receive complaints from local walkers about the behaviour and/or language of boat users. They also receive complaints from anglers unable to cast safely and sometimes need to clear up rubbish when illegally moored boats finally move on. However, one stakeholder stated that the residential moorings in Hythe Bridge Arm at the southern end of the canal have never caused any issues.

4.33 Also, it was suggested that boat dwellers are part of the local community and that many are professionals such as academics, educators, engineers, programmers, painters, plumbers, researchers, innovators, fundraisers and administrators. However, they suggested that issues seem to arise where individual boat-dwellers are not known to residents, and generalisations are made based on predetermined beliefs about those who choose to live aboard boats. They stated that prejudice against boat dwellers and a misunderstanding of the community leads to much of the alleged tension between Oxford boat dwellers and neighbours residing in housing.

4.34 There were few comments regarding how relations between boat dwellers and the local communities could be improved. One was that some boat dwellers need to remember that they are moored in a residential area. Other comments included that there are only ever neighbourhood issues when resources are restricted, and that tensions will be resolved when the issues of unauthorised moorings and some boats being in very poor condition are resolved. Also, according to one stakeholder problems stem from the City Council having limited contact with the boating communities, so if complaints are made by residents no attempt is made to investigate the issue.

4.35 Stakeholders spoke about how providing electricity to moorings would help address some issues as boat dwellers would be less likely to use noisy generators or polluting fuels. One stakeholder stated that they have to manage tensions between boat dwellers and the housed community and that not addressing the need for a better electricity supply or winter moorings would increase conflict.

4.36 Stakeholders commented on tensions between boat dwellers residing on permanent moorings, those residing on unauthorised moorings, local leisure cruisers, boating tourists, homeless boat dwellers, and the settled community. It was suggested that a lack of available and well-maintained moorings is adding to such tensions.

Access to services

4.37 Stakeholders suggested that some boat dwellers (mainly those occupying boats in very poor condition) experience mental health or substance misuse issues. The poor condition of such boats impacts on physical or mental health. Given the ‘hidden’ nature of such boat dwellers
means that they are unlikely to receive requisite help and support. It was suggested that there does not appear to be a single agency which supports boat dwellers. Another suggestion was that constant cruisers require more help and facilities.

4.38 Fire safety including poor access to come moorings was considered an important issue. It was noted that in recent years four boats in the local area had been burnt out causing one death. Poor access to moorings by all services was regarded as problematic. Following demands from boat dwellers, Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service are planning to distribute carbon monoxide monitors to boat owners.

4.39 It was suggested that many issues faced by local boat-dwellers are recurring across the country e.g. without a permanent address, GP registration is complex and arduous. Also, it is difficult to keep a full-time job whilst living on a boat without a mooring, having to move the vessel, at best, every 14 days, and in extreme cases such as Oxford every 24 or 48 hours. The stakeholder noted that the provision of moorings within Oxford are almost entirely 48 hour maximum, and that the longest stay allowed in any one place is for 7 days (Frenchay Road Bridge visitor moorings). This results in a high necessity for self-employment or part-time work within the itinerant boating communities, who then must dedicate a large proportion of their time to boat-moving.

4.40 The Canal and River Trust (CRT) stated that in recent years they have received an increasing number of calls for help and support by boat dwellers regarding issues relating to age, health, or disability e.g. the need for adaptations.

4.41 Other issues included: no publicly accessible provision of drinking water, rubbish or sewage disposal anywhere on the River Thames between Eynsham and Abingdon; poor wheelchair access to Oxford’s waterways; restricted road access to towpaths leading to poor safety and security; restrictions on the use of electricity generators; limited access to telephone lines, broadband internet, and postal deliveries; a lack of supply deliveries e.g. diesel fuel, petrol, coal and gas – on the river Thames; and the need for better maintenance of waterways to improve navigation and safety.

Summary

4.42 The consultations with key stakeholders offered important insights into the main issues regarding boat dwellers residing on Oxford’s waterways. It was apparent that there were some contrasting and differing opinions from different stakeholders. There was general agreement that there is a lack of space and suitable locations for new mooring places on Oxford’s waterways. The demand for increased moorings at least partly derives for some boat dwellers being unable to find affordable housing within city. The increase in tourist boats means that there is increased demand for mooring spaces during the summer months. Stakeholders showed concern regarding the poor condition of some boats and a general lack of maintenance facilities.

4.43 According to some stakeholders, there has been an increase in unauthorised moorings in recent years (although one stakeholder questioned the concept of ‘illegal moorings’). It is apparent that boat dwellers display no ‘typical’ travelling patterns. It was generally
acknowledged by stakeholders that, to varying extents, unauthorised moorings take place on Oxford waterways. One reason cited for an increase in unauthorised moorings is that there has been an increase of old cabin cruisers on Oxford’s waters. Key locations for unauthorised moorings cited by stakeholders included Folly Bridge, Swinford, Kennington, Christchurch Meadow, Iffley Meadows, and the Castle Mill Stream. Alternatively, it was suggested that some unauthorised moorings actually take place on land that is unregistered, and they take place due to increasing restrictions on places to moor on Oxford’s waterways.

4.44 There was general agreement that there is a lack of suitable places for new mooring sites in Oxford. The Environment Agency consider the main river more suitable for visitor moorings than residential moorings. Alternative sites for new moorings included developing the gravel lakes situated to the north of Oxford. Similarly, the man-made lake just north of the A34 could be accessed via Duke’s Cut and service boaters commuting into the city. Another suggestion was that the Long Bridge area may possibly be suitable for moorings. According to stakeholders, there may be a need for more transit moorings in Oxford, especially at Folly Bridge. Stakeholders acknowledged barriers to developing new moorings in Oxford including few landowners being interested in applying for planning permission or incurring the costs of establishing a fully serviced mooring.

4.45 It was apparent from some stakeholders that the relationship between some boat dwellers and neighbouring communities can sometimes be tense. A minority of boat dwellers residing on unauthorised moorings had committed anti-social behaviour, although this was sometimes due to the ‘chaotic’ lifestyles of some boat dwellers. Importantly, it was noted that such behaviour is committed by a small number of boat dwellers and that many are professionals such as academics or skilled workers such as plumbers and painters.

4.46 There is a general lack of access to services. According to stakeholders, a lack of affordable housing in Oxford means that homeless people or people mental health or substance misuse issues are more likely to seek alternative accommodation on Oxford’s waterways. The conditions of boats such boat dwellers are residing on frequently very poor and unfit for human habitation. The location of such boats means that occupiers are less likely to access help and support services. The suggestion that that there needs to be a single agency determining the support needs of boat dwellers was one solution to the issue. Finally, it was suggested that boat dwellers can find it difficult to register with a GP or to find employment when they have to frequently move.
5. Boat dwellers Consultation

Introduction

5.1 This chapter considers the accommodation needs of boat dwellers. Unlike Gypsies and Travellers, boat dwellers are not considered to be an ethnic minority and, as such, are not protected by the Equality Act 2010. However, recent Government guidance (March 2016) and paragraph 124 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 indicates that local authorities must consider the accommodation needs of boat dwelling householders. In response to this requirement consultation with boat dwelling households and key stakeholders was undertaken by RRR Consultancy Ltd between April and May 2018.

Methods

5.2 A range of methods were used to gain insight into the number and accommodation needs of people living permanently on boats in Oxford. Consultation was carried out with owners and managers of the three marinas, representatives of the boating communities across Oxford, and other key stakeholders.

5.3 An important component of the consultation was surveys undertaken with boat dwelling households residing on boats on the Oxford Canal, River Thames, private moorings, and marinas within the administrative boundaries of Oxford City Council. These took place during April and May 2018 and were undertaken either face-to-face or over the telephone. The surveys helped to gain insight into people’s experiences and reasons for residing on boats in Oxford and their accommodation needs. The surveys also helped to confirm the number of moorings and boats located in Oxford.

Accommodation Provision and Characteristics

5.4 There is an absence of data regarding the number of households residing on boats within the study area. However, consultation with boat dwellers, boat yard owners and managers, and other stakeholders enabled an estimate of the number of boat dwellers to be determined. It was determined that there are 70 permanent residential moorings with planning permission on the Oxford Canal and 19 on the River Thames. There are a further 4 boats residing on tolerated unauthorised moorings. There are also three registered marinas on Oxford’s waterways containing over 200 leisure moorings (some accommodating constant cruisers). Around 100 constant cruisers and unauthorised moored boaters reside permanently within the study area. Due to their unauthorised status most constant cruisers and boat dwellers residing on unauthorised moorings regularly move around the area. There are several stretches of unregulated waterways in Oxford where ownership is unclear. These locations are often used for unauthorised moorings.

5.5 There are 89 boat dwelling households residing on moorings with permanent planning permission and 4 households residing on unauthorised but tolerated moorings:
• 70 households rent moorings from the Canal and River Trust (CRT) including:
  - 16 at the Hythe Bridge moorings
  - 51 at Agenda 21 moorings
  - 3 at the Aristotle House community project
• 19 on private moorings on the River Thames
• 4 on unauthorised moorings (land owned by Oxford City Council) awaiting planning consent

Moorings alongside the Oxford Canal

5.6 In total, there are around 70 residential moorings situated alongside the Oxford Canal with planning permission in 3 separate locations:

- Hythe Bridge
- Agenda 21
- Aristotle House

5.7 **Hythe Bridge**: consists of 16 permanent moorings located on a public toll path – each mooring with its own post box, electricity and water hook-up. The moorings share facilities for the disposal of rubbish and a building which contains cleaning facilities such as a sink. The boats are occupied by single people (8 persons) and couples (16 persons) with no children. Boat occupants are aged between 30s to 70s.

5.8 **Agenda 21**: is the name given to the rural residential mooring site alongside the Oxford Canal towpath, situated approximately three miles north of Oxford city centre. They are named after the international commitment to local communities and the environment made in Rio in 1992. Residents are committed to a sustainable and low impact lifestyle. Moorings are located at Summertown and Wolvercote. It is estimated that the 2 locations consist of around 51 permanent moorings. However, it is not possible to determine the actual number of moorings as the number available depends on the length of boats occupying them i.e. longer boats means fewer opportunities to moor.

5.9 Mooring rings and drinking water points are along the length of the site. Refuse disposal is available next to Perrys Lift Bridge 234, on the off-side. Elsan disposal facilities can be found opposite the refuse disposal on the towpath side of the canal. The boats at both Agenda 21 mooring places are occupied by a combination of singles (mainly men) and couples including some with children. Some of the single men are fathers who are separated from partners. The age of adult boat dwellers ranged from 30s to 80s. During the time of the survey (April to May 2018) there were 26 boats moored at the Summertown Agenda 21 mooring place. They were occupied by 16 singles and 10 couples (some children were present although they were visiting). The second Agenda 21 mooring place located at Wolvercote had 25 boats at the time of the survey consisting of 10 singles, 14 couples without children, and one couple with 2 children.
5.10 **Aristotle House**: is a community development charity which manages 3 permanent moorings. The moorings and services are provided by a community centre which is in the process of being redeveloped. There is limited public access to the mooring place. In 2016 Oxford City Council approved planning permission for the existing building to be demolished and replaced by a four-storey block of flats. However, there is now consideration for the building to be converted to a creative community hub. The boats situated on the Aristotle moorings are occupied by 3 single people aged in their 20s and 30s.

5.11 **Other moorings on the Oxford canal**: Apart from the moorings described above, there are a number of private moorings located at the ends of gardens on the offside section of the canal. There also are a number of 48-hour moorings managed by the Canal and River Trust which are available for boats temporarily residing on Oxford’s waterways. These are also used by constant cruisers during the winter months when the River Thames is liable to flood. The College Cruisers hire boat company which has 9 boats is also situated on the Oxford Canal. Some of the moorings at the ends of gardens are reported to be for the occupants of the houses leisure use and in some cases rented out for B&B provision.

**Moorings alongside the River Thames**

5.12 In total, there are around 19 residential moorings with planning permission situated alongside the River Thames at 3 locations:

- Donnington Bridge
- Walton Bridge Moorings
- Bossoms Marina

5.13 **Private moorings**: There are 2 private mooring places. One has 14 moorings and each mooring has individual access to electricity and water hook-ups, along with a small piece of the embankment, which some have set out as small garden areas as an approach to the boats. The moorings share facilities for collecting mail i.e. a single post box, and share toilet waste and rubbish collection facilities. The boats are occupied by approximately 20 people combined of single people, and couples (one with a young child). Some of the men have children who reside in houses rather than on boats.

5.14 The second private mooring place consists of 4 moorings with planning permission to accommodate 6 boats. There are three households with approximately 8 people consisting of one single man and couples (including one with children). The occupants have a registered postal address (including its own postcode and secure postal system). The moorings do not have electricity hook-up points, so the boat dwellers use alternative means such as electricity generators and solar panels. There are no rubbish collections from the moorings and each

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11 See planning application 16/01789/FUL: Demolition of Aristotle House, Aristotle Lane, Oxford, OX2 6TR
household is responsible for disposing of refuse. The boat dwellers have access to chemical toilets.

5.15 **Bossmans Marina**: consists of 120 walkway berths located at a side channel at Fiddler’s Island located less than a mile from the centre of Oxford. The berths are serviced by Bossmans Boatyard. However, only one berth has planning permission as a permanent residence. The remaining berths are used to accommodate leisure boats. The one mooring with planning permission for permanent residency dates back to a pre-1970s period when many of the moorings were permanently occupied by boat dwellers.

5.16 **Long-term residential moorings without planning permission**: There is a small island located close to Donnington Bridge where 4 boats have been moored for a number of years. The families residing on the boats are seeking planning permission to permanently reside at the island. Public access to the island is limited and there are no services, including no postal address, although the families are self-sufficient. They get water from a nearby house – which involves planning and time. The residents consist of 3 couples with children and one single person totalling 16 adults and children. The households would like to improve facilities and amenities, but unable to do so until they have planning permission to reside on the island. The island belongs to Oxford City Council and is currently being rented for a small amount by the owner of a neighbouring house. The 4 households have set up a cooperative amongst themselves. They have a joint bank account and agree on the day-to-day running of the island. The families jointly undertake maintenance tasks including maintaining a wooden walkway to ensure access to the island when flooding occurs.

5.17 **Non-residential and unauthorised moorings**: There are a number of boats residing on non-residential and unauthorised moorings located along the River Thames including:

- **Jericho and Castle Mill Stream area**: private moorings located at the end of gardens consisting of approximately 20 unauthorised long-term moorings. The majority of the boats are occupied by homeless people. Some boats are in very poor condition whilst others are in such a poor condition that they have been abandoned. Some boats are occupied by owners who are trying to make them habitable and navigable. There are some boats located and the ends of residential gardens.

- **Folly Bridge**: there are around 25 boats on unauthorised moorings at this location. Some boats are constant cruisers whilst others are occupied by homeless people. Folly Bridge is a popular location for summer tourists who require mooring and boat dwellers requiring winter mooring.

- **Donnington Bridge area**: consists of a combination of tourists and constant cruisers using temporary, tolerated and unauthorised moorings along towpaths and offside.

- **Godstow area**: consists of a combination of tourists and constant cruisers using temporary and unauthorised moorings along towpaths and offside.

- **Osney Mill and Osney Marinas**: were initially one marina which became two. Osney Mill Marina is situated a few minutes’ walk away from the city centre and railway station. It consists of around 40 boats with access to water, electricity, Elsan disposal,
Boat dwellers Consultation

5. Boat dwellers Consultation

toilets and secure parking (currently occupied by 35 boats). Osney Marina consists of approximately 100 non-residential berths with access to electricity, toilets, showers, slipway, and light engineering services (currently occupied by 76 boats).

- **Bossoms Marina**: as stated above, this is also non-residential consisting of 120 berths of which only one has planning permission for permanent residential mooring. There is limited public access to it except from the Port Meadow side of the marina. According to stakeholders consulted as part of this project, the marina used to have many more permanent residents. However, it was deemed that maintaining amenities and facilities for permanent residents, and meeting licensing criteria, became too expensive. As such, the marina is now mainly used by non-residential boat dwellers.

**Characteristics of those living on boats**

5.18 Boat dwellers residing on Oxford’s waterways cited a wide range of reasons as to why they prefer to reside on a boat. Whilst many of the boat dwellers consulted permanently reside on boats due to a desire to live an “alternative” lifestyle, some stated that they do so due to a lack of affordable alternatives. They stated that the high cost of buying or renting housing in Oxford makes boat dwelling an affordable alternative. However, it was also suggested that there is a lack of affordable moorings on Oxford’s waterways. Reasons given as to why people may want to reside permanently on a boat included:

- An attractive alternative lifestyle
- Lack of affordable alternatives
- Offers freedom to roam
- Enjoy living amongst nature
- A quiet way of life
- Enjoy living alone
- Cheaper alternative for students
- Separated from partner and unable to afford a house
- Due to homelessness
- Safer than living on the streets
- Tied with job

5.19 The Oxford boat dwellers derive from a broad range of social backgrounds with a similarly wide range of professions, skills and interests. This included professionals such as academics, doctors, musicians, and computer specialists, as well as skilled people such as boat builders and mechanics. Some boat dwellers permanently live and work within Oxford, particularly those with permanent moorings and constant cruisers. Boat dwellers may remain in Oxford for certain months of the year and then travel (usually during the summer months). This is particularly the case for boat dwellers who reside at the Oxford marinas, or on temporary or unauthorised moorings. A number of boat dwellers have permanent residency elsewhere but work in Oxford and reside on a boat only during the working week. Alternatively, some boat dwellers only access boats in Oxford for leisure purposes at weekends and during holidays. Some Oxford boat dwellers are retired. Some were already
residing on a boat when they worked in Oxford and decided to remain after retirement. Other retirees had decided to reside on a boat in Oxford for financial reasons after retirement.

5.20 A small number of boat dwellers in Oxford consist of people who are long-term unemployed, ex-offenders, have substance misuse issues, experience mental health issues, or are ex-military. They often reside on non-navigable boats in very poor condition that may have been abandoned by previous owners. According to stakeholders, it is mainly a lack of alternative housing provision that leads to people residing on boats in such poor condition. They stated that the problem is exacerbated by a lack of affordable housing in Oxford and limited support for people with mental health or substance misuse issues. For various reasons, some boat dwellers stated that they prefer to reside 'below the radar i.e. for agencies to not know where they are residing.

5.21 Most people residing on boats in Oxford boats are single people, closely followed by couples. There are very few households with children. Some boat dwellers are fathers whose children reside in houses with the mother. Only a few Oxford boat dwelling households residing on safe moorings have children residing with them. One Oxford boat dweller stated that they used to reside full-time on a boat, but since having children they now partly reside in a house. This is mainly due to health concerns regarding the poor air conditions around the mooring. They stated that they intend to continue to wholly reside on a boat once the children become adults and if the air quality around the mooring improves. Two further couples stated that they used to reside full-time on a boat until they had children. One couple stated that they had moved out of the local area for work, and when returned were unable to afford local housing. Another parent stated that having a permanent mooring in a child-friendly community enabled them to reside on a boat with children.

Access to services and amenities

5.22 Some boat dwellers consulted stated that they reside on boats due to a lack of affordable housing in Oxford. Also, they stated that the reason for the large number of constant cruisers and boats using unauthorised moorings is due to the costs of accessing regulated, authorised moorings. The costs associated with accessing regulated moorings means that they are more likely to access unregulated moorings with few services or amenities. There was some criticism of the Canal & River Trust’s approach to auctioning moorings in areas of high demand such as Oxford. Boat dwellers stated that this meant that moorings were sometimes allocated to buyers from outside the local area who could afford the relatively high auction prices.

5.23 Although residing on a boat was regarded as an affordable option, some boat dwellers stated that it could be a complex process. This was particularly stated by boat dwellers without access to a permanent mooring. They spoke about the ‘hidden costs’ associated with residing on a boat including the time and money required to undertake regular boat maintenance. Accessing basic services such as water, electricity and waste disposal can be more complex for boat dwellers. Some boat dwellers access water using a shared tap located some
distance from the mooring. Similarly, waste disposal facilities may be located away from the mooring. Boat dwellers without electrical hookups tend to rely on generators or solar power.

5.24 Boat dwellers commented on how many of those permanently residing on boats are not registered with a local doctor, whilst some have health-related problems including mental health or substance misuse issues. Some boat dwellers that have ‘fallen through the net’ and reside on boats because they have been unable to access affordable housing or space at a hostel. Some boat dwellers have minimal access to facilities and healthcare. This is because they tend to move around with no fixed address. It was suggested that boat dwellers would benefit from being able to register a permanent address.

5.25 Limited access to services can also apply to boat dwellers residing on permanent moorings with the exception of those located at Hythe Bridge and on some private moorings. Some boat dwellers residing in Oxford (including on permanent registered moorings) are unable to register for health services or the electoral register because they lack a postal address. Those boat dwellers that are registered may use a family or friend’s address (occasionally outside the Oxford area). Boat dwellers owning a business with premises often use it as the official address. Some boat dwellers stated that even when though residing at a permanent mooring in Oxford, they had to declare themselves homeless in order to be placed on the electoral register.

5.26 Some boat dwellers considered the rules and conditions regarding moorings as restrictive e.g. where boats can temporarily moor or the length of time they can moor. It was suggested that there should more concern for the health and safety of boat dwellers. There has recently been a number of incidents relating to fires and community monoxide poisoning which led some boat dwellers to call for boats to be provided with fire extinguishers, and smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Access to water and electricity hookups would mean that boat dwellers would not have to use dangerous alternatives such as fuel powered generators. It was suggested that agencies such as Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, the Canal and River Trust, and the Environment Agency should work together to ensure that the support needs of boat dwellers in the local area are met.

5.27 Some boat dwellers living ‘under the radar’ due to substance misuse issues or being homeless are residing on boats in very poor condition. Whilst it was acknowledged that they may require specialist support, it was suggested that this should be offered in a flexible and unobtrusive manner. Boat dwellers stated that in some cases it may be more appropriate to allocate people in need of support to housing, whilst those who prefer to reside on a boat should receive appropriate support.

5.28 Boat dwellers agreed that there is need for more permanent moorings in the area, especially affordable moorings. Some boat dwellers stated that the cost of some moorings prevented people from accessing them. The poor condition of some moorings meant that there were fewer accessible permanent and temporary moorings in the area. The long-term
unauthorised moorings are due to lack of moorings and some boat dwellers wanting to remain ‘under the radar’.

5.29 It was also noted that the anti-social behavior associated with some boat dwellers residing on unauthorised moorings was leading to a poor reputation and discrimination of the general boat dwelling community. However, it was also suggested that boat dwellers are less likely to be discriminated against compared with other traveller groups. This is because many are middle class professionals who have previously resided in housing. A common issue cited by boat dwellers was that even those residing on permanent moorings may find it difficult to have items delivered or to have services visit due to a lack of an official address.

**Travelling patterns**

5.30 Similar to tourists, constant cruisers frequently travel around the local waterways but do so throughout the whole year. Boat dwellers regarded the travelling patterns as being mainly determined by an absence of permanent moorings i.e. they moor where they can. Some boats occupied by permanent residents are stationary whilst others frequently travel around the waterways.

5.31 Some permanent boat dwellers are located on long-term, unauthorised, moorings. Alternatively, they may have moored adjacent to privately owned land and are tolerated by the land owners. Such boats tend to remain at the mooring for longer periods.

5.32 Boat dwellers residing on permanent moorings travel less often. Most stated that the main reason for travelling to access maintenance services. Some boat dwellers stated it is too expensive to travel, whilst others stated that they travel when they can, but not as often as they would like. Boat dwellers located at moorings that are not clearly demarcated stated that they are less likely to move for fear of losing the mooring.

5.33 Oxford attracts many visitors who use the city’s waterways. During the consultation period (April to May 2018) a total of 20 visiting boat dwellers were consulted including 10 travelling on the Oxford Canal and 10 on the River Thames. 10 of the visitors reside on boats outside Oxford (of which 4 have permanent moorings), whilst the remaining 10 were constant cruisers. 8 of the visitors were specifically visiting Oxford whilst the remaining 12 were passing through on their way to another location. The visitors commented on what makes a good or bad boating experience. They stated that parts the River Thames and most of the Oxford Canal are very shallow close to the river banks making it difficult to moor. Some visitors travel by both boat and car. They stated that there is a lack of parking close to moorings which made it more difficult for them to visit Oxford city centre. The Oxford Canal offers better access to the city centre compared to the River Thames but is narrow in places and lacks turning points. They stated that an ideal mooring place would have electric and water hookups, and facilities to dispose of toilet and household waste.

5.34 Boat dwellers commented on the experience of being moved on. They suggested that it would be helpful if the waterways agencies were more flexible in their approach to conditions
regarding temporary moorings. They appreciated that unauthorised moorings can cause obstructions and enforcement action may be necessary. However, it was suggested that the extent of harm caused by an unauthorised mooring should be assessed before enforcement action is undertaken. The importance of communicating with the owners of moorings was emphasised. One boat dweller stated that they had been given additional time to moor by the Canal & River Trust for health reasons.

Attitudes towards accommodation need

5.35 Most of the boat dwellers consulted stated that there is a need for more transit and permanent moorings on Oxford’s waterways. Also, they stated that some existing moorings on both the canal and river are inaccessible due to soft banks or a lack of mooring rings or pins. It was suggested that some of the need for additional moorings in Oxford could be met by improving the condition of existing moorings and being more flexible in terms of length of stay allowed. This would involve increasing the depth of water in some places, removing obstructions such as fallen trees and large rocks, improving the stability of banks, and providing facilities such as electricity and water hookups, and human and household waste disposal facilities. Other suggestions included ensuring that moorings are accessible to people with disabilities, improving lighting, and ensure that there is good access to the emergency services and ensure that they are aware of the best access points.

5.36 A key issue mentioned by boat dwellers was a lack of affordable facilities for boat maintenance in Oxford. According to one boat dweller:

In order to maintain boats on the waterways boat owners are faced with a decision – either travel to a boatyard (the nearest being Eynsham on the river or Enslow on the canal) or carry out required works on the public footpaths of the Oxford waterways, with all the associated risks of working remotely from emergency access and the potential inconvenience and danger to the public.

5.37 Boat dwellers spoke about the impact of the closure of the Jericho boat yard. The yard had previously been used for boat maintenance but was closed in 2006. There have been several plans to redevelop the yard, but none have yet been implemented. There are boat yards located on Oxford’s waterways which offer maintenance facilities although all are restricted. For example, the three Oxford marinas have maintenance facilities that are only available to residents of the marina. Similarly, the Environment Agency own Osney Dry Dock which was granted planning permission in 2014 to be used by the public although it is only used for their own maintenance needs. Some boats cannot access maintenance yards due to height and width restrictions.

5.38 One of the Oxford marinas is considering providing permanent residential moorings. It is also considering providing a maintenance yard and visitors mooring – with a café and other

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13 See Oxford City Council Planning Decision 14/00697/FUL dated 9 May 2014.
facilities for visitors. They spoke of considering applying for planning permission to change the status of some leisure moorings to permanent moorings. The managers of all three Oxford marinas stated that they regularly receive requests for permanent moorings. One marina has a waiting list of 46 applicants for a mooring of which 40 would prefer a permanent residential mooring. A second marina stated that they receive at least 5 calls a week from people seeking permanent residential moorings.

5.39 The marina owners stated that providing permanent residential moorings would require an increase in mooring fees. The costs involved in providing services and facilities and meeting planning conditions mean that marina owners are generally reluctant to apply for planning permission to change the status of moorings from leisure to permanent residential. They also regard the planning processes involved in such a change of status as complex. It was suggested that a simpler planning application and monitoring process would be helpful. It was also suggested that some boat dwellers who reside permanently on leisure berths may be reluctant to become 'regularised'.

5.40 There is no evidence of overcrowding on any of the boats permanently occupied within the study area. Although some boats have limited space that they are occupied by small households and are unlikely to be overcrowded. According to the boat dweller survey, corroborated by stakeholders, only a small number of households contain children. Households with children did not state there is any future needs as they were unsure if their children would want to continue to reside on boats when they are older. As one boat dweller stated:

We are not like other traveller groups such as Gypsies and Travellers where generation after generation live in caravans. Most boaters have lived in houses and it is not a cultural tradition to live on boats.

5.41 Through evidence collected as part of this consultation it is estimated that there are around 100 unauthorised moorings and constant cruisers within the study area. According to stakeholders not all those residing on unauthorised moorings require permanent residency. Stakeholders stated that between 20 to 50 constant cruisers have need for permanent accommodation in the study area with the remainder preferring to remain transient. It was suggested that there should be more flexibility in relation to the amount of time that constant cruisers can spend at temporary moorings, especially for those boat dwellers who work locally during the summer months. They stated that there is also a need for long-term winter moorings. It was also suggested that some boat dwellers residing on unauthorised moorings in Oxford could have their accommodation needs addressed through affordable or supported housing.

Summary

5.42 The consultations with boat dwellers offered important insights into the main issues regarding boat dwellers residing on Oxford’s waterways. A range of methods were used to gain insight
into the number and accommodation needs of people residing permanently on boats in Oxford including surveys undertaken with boat dwelling households. It is apparent from the survey that the boat dwelling community is not homogeneous but consists of a wide range of people from many different backgrounds including professionals and skilled artisans.

5.43 For many boat dwellers the motivation for residing on a boat is the alternative lifestyle it provides, as a means to reside closer to nature, and the community spirit which pervades the boat dwelling community. There were few children recorded as residing on boats – possibly due to the difficulties involved in maintaining an education for those boat dwellers without a permanent base, absence of a registered address, and for health and safety issues. Those with young children were primarily on permanent moorings located in remote enclosed areas. Some boat dwelling parents reside on a boat whilst their children reside in a house with their estranged partner.

5.44 It was apparent that some households reside on boats is due to a lack of affordable alternatives. A small number of boat dwellers in Oxford consist of people who are long-term unemployed, ex-offenders, have substance misuse issues, experience mental health issues, or are ex-military. They often reside on non-navigable boats in very poor condition that may have been abandoned by previous owners. Many of these boat dwellers may be better accommodated in affordable housing but may require help and support to do so.

5.45 Although some permanent moorings have water and electricity hookups most do not (most share water facilities and have no access to electricity). Human and household waste disposal facilities are generally limited and can be difficult to access. It is also apparent that the poor condition of some banks on Oxford's waterways make it difficult for boat dwellers to safely moor. It was apparent that boat dwellers without an official address find it difficult to access services such as local GPs (including some boat dwellers located on permanent residential moorings). In order to access services some boat dwellers have to resort to using family or friends’ addresses. There is a need for relevant agencies to collaborate in order to determine the health and support needs of boat dwellers.

5.46 There was agreement amongst boat dwellers that there is a need for more transit and permanent moorings on Oxford's waterways. In particular, they stated that there is a lack of affordable moorings on Oxford’s waterways, a factor which leads to unauthorised moorings. Whilst recognising that there may be limited space to provide new moorings, boat dwellers suggested the need for greater flexibility regarding the terms and conditions associated with existing moorings. One key issue is the lack of maintenance facilities on Oxford’s waterways. Since the closure of the Jericho Boat Yard in 2006, boat dwellers have had to access maintenance facilities outside the city. However, at least one current marina is considering apply for planning permission to increase the number of permanent resident moorings, and to provide maintenance facilities. The following chapter assesses the accommodation needs of boat dwellers on Oxford’s waterways.
6. The accommodation needs of boat dwellers

Introduction

6.1 Given that the requirement to determine the accommodation needs of boat dwellers was only recently introduced by the DCLG Draft Guidance on Housing Needs (Caravans and Houseboats) (March 2016), there is no established method to determine need. As such, the need for permanent residential moorings in the study area is assessed according to DCLG (2007) guidance and supplemented by data provided by the local authorities and consultation with stakeholders (in particular the boat dwellers). Whilst this guidance relates specifically to assessing needs for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, elements of it are considered appropriate for assessing needs for boat dwellers. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that the accommodation needs of boat dwellers may reflect a ‘lifestyle’ choice or a lack of alternative bricks and mortar accommodation. Table 6.1 summarises the permanent residential accommodation needs of boat dwellers for the period 2018-2023.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.1 Estimate of the need for Permanent Residential Moorings 2018-2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Current identified permanent residential moorings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current residential supply</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Number of unused residential moorings available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Number of existing permanent residential moorings expected to become vacant through mortality 2016-2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Number of household units on permanent residential moorings expected to leave the study area in next 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Number of residential units on permanent residential moorings expected to move into housing in next 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Permanent residential moorings planned to be built or to be brought back into use 2016-2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Less permanent residential moorings with temporary planning permission (occupied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Supply</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current residential need: Moorings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Residential units (permanent residential moorings) seeking permanent residential moorings in the area, 2016-2021, excluding those already counted as moving due to overcrowding in step 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Estimated residential units on temporary moorings requiring permanent residential moorings in the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Estimated residential units on unauthorised moorings/constant cruisers requiring permanent residential moorings in the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Residential units identified on unauthorised tolerated moorings requiring residential permanent residential moorings in the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) Residential units currently overcrowded on permanent residential moorings seeking residential permanent residential moorings in the area, excluding those containing an emerging residential unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) New residential units expected to arrive from elsewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) New residential unit formations expected to arise from within existing family units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) New residential units on waiting lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Need</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance of Need and Supply</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Additional Permanent Residential Moorings Requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annualised Additional Permanent Residential Moorings Requirement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. The accommodation needs of boat dwellers

Requirement for permanent residential moorings 2016-2021

6.2 Determining the accommodation needs of boat dwellers uses the same process as determining the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers (although population sizes are much smaller). The following sections show the steps of the boat dwellers accommodation needs calculations.

Supply of moorings 2016-2021

Step 1: Current permanent occupied residential moorings
6.3 Based on information obtained through this study there are currently a total of 89 occupied authorised permanent residential moorings in the study area.

Step 2: Number of unused permanent residential moorings available
6.4 According to the survey data there is 1 vacant permanent authorised residential mooring in the study area.

Step 3: Number of existing moorings expected to become vacant due to mortality 2016-2021
6.5 This is calculated using mortality rates as applied in conventional Housing Needs Assessments leading to a supply of 2 moorings.

Step 4: Number of household units on permanent residential moorings expressing a desire to leave the study area
6.6 None of the boat dwellers residing on permanent residential moorings stated that they intend to permanently leave the study area in the next 5 years.

Step 5: Number of household units on permanent residential moorings expressing a desire to live in housing
6.7 This was determined by survey data. It was assumed that all those currently living on boats planning to move into houses in the next five years (step 5), or preferring to move into houses from an overcrowded mooring (step 11), would be able to do so. A supply of 0 moorings were expected from this source.

Step 6: Permanent residential moorings planned to be built or brought back into use, 2016-2021
6.8 This is determined by local authority data. There are 0 new moorings expected to be built or brought back into use during the period 2016-2021.

Step 7: Residential moorings with temporary planning permission
6.9 This is determined by local authority data. It is assumed people living on moorings whose planning permission expires within the period 2016-2021 will still require accommodation within the study area. There are currently no occupied moorings with temporary planning permission located in the study area.
Need for permanent residential moorings 2016-2021

**Step 8: Residential units on permanent residential moorings seeking permanent residential moorings in the study area 2016-2021**

6.10 Guidance suggests that those moving from mooring to mooring should be included in the need section. Based on survey data it is estimated that no boat dwellers currently residing on an authorised permanent mooring are seeking to move within the study area.

6.11 This category of need overlaps with those moving due to overcrowding, counted in step 12, and so any residential units which are both overcrowded and seeking accommodation are deducted from this total. This generates a total need of 0 moorings in the study area.

**Step 9: Residential units on temporary moorings seeking permanent residential moorings in the area**

6.12 The accommodation needs of households residing on temporary moorings but requiring permanent moorings is considered by this step. There are currently no households residing on temporary moorings with a need for permanent moorings in Oxford.

**Step 10: Residential units on unauthorised moorings/constant cruisers seeking permanent residential moorings in the area**

6.13 Guidance (DCLG 2007) indicates that it should be considered whether alternative accommodation is required for households living on unauthorised moorings. It is possible that some of those residing on boats at unauthorised moorings could have their accommodation needs addressed by affordable housing (bricks and mortar) accommodation, and the agencies in the study area should work together to consider this alternative accommodation for people in need. However, from consultation with boat yard managers / owners and boat dwellers, it is estimated that there is a need for 40 moorings arising from households either residing on unauthorised moorings or constantly cruising around the local area.

**Step 11: Residential units on unauthorised tolerated developments seeking permanent residential moorings in the area**

6.14 The guidance indicates that the accommodation needs of households living on unauthorised moorings for which planning permission is not expected must be considered. A need of 4 moorings currently arises from households residing on tolerated unauthorised moorings.

**Step 12: Residential units on overcrowded permanent residential moorings seeking residential moorings in the area**

6.15 Guidance indicates that those on overcrowded moorings should be provided with moorings of an adequate size. Households which also contain a newly formed residential unit that has not yet left are excluded. This is because it is assumed that once the extra unit leaves (included in the need figures in step 13) their accommodation will no longer be overcrowded. The surveys suggest that there is a need for 0 moorings in the study area to resolve overcrowding over the period 2016-2021.
6. The accommodation needs of boat dwellers

Step 13: New residential units expected to arrive from elsewhere
6.16 In the absence of any data derivable from secondary sources on the moving intentions of those outside the study area, it is assumed that the inflow of boat dwellers into the area will be equivalent to the outflow i.e. net 0 moorings over the period 2016-21 (based on 0%).

Step 14: New residential unit formations expected to arise from within existing household units on permanent residential moorings
6.17 It is determined that this will result in the formation of no new households requiring residential moorings during 2016-2021.

Step 15: New residential units on a boat yard waiting list
6.18 From consultation with boat yard owners and managers, there are at least 40 households on a waiting list for permanent residential moorings at one marina in the study area. However, it is likely that these figures constitute demand rather than need. Also, it is likely that the households requiring permanent accommodation are on more than one waiting list leading to double counting. As such, it is assumed that there is no accommodation need deriving from waiting lists.

Requirements for residential moorings 2021-2036
6.19 The assessment estimates the future permanent residential moorings provision for the period 2021-2026. That few boat dwelling households contain children means that the average annual household growth rate is low at 0.31% (equating to 1.6% over a five-year period). Future 5-year period mortality rates are projected to be the same as those for 2021-2026. Movement into and out of the study area is also assumed to continue at the 2016-2021 rate (0%). Table 6.2 shows that there is no future need for permanent residential moorings for the period 2021-2026.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.2 Estimate of the need for permanent residential moorings 2021-2026</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residential Moorings as at 2021</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Estimated permanent residential moorings occupied by boat dwellers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supply of permanent residential moorings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Plots expected to become vacant due to mortality 2021-2026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Number of residential units on permanent residential moorings expected to move out of the study area 2021-2026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Need for permanent residential moorings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Residential units moving into the study area (100% of outflow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Newly forming residential units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Need</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total additional permanent residential moorings requirement, 2021-2026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annualised additional permanent residential moorings requirement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

Table 6.3 summarises the number of permanent residential moorings, required over the period 2016-36. It shows that a further 41 permanent residential moorings are needed over twenty years throughout the study area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016-2021</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021-2026</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026-2031</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2031-2036</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Oxford BDANA 2018
7. Conclusions on the evidence

Introduction

7.1 This final chapter draws conclusions from the evidence. It then makes a series of recommendations relating to meeting the identified need for moorings, site management and facilities, and recording and monitoring processes. The recommendations throughout this chapter are put forward by RRR Consultancy for the authority to consider in accordance with respective policies and constraints.

7.2 The chapter begins by presenting an overview of the policy changes, followed by review of the needs and facilitating the needs of needs and facilitating of needs for boat dwellers. It then concludes with key recommendations.

Policy Changes

7.3 In March 2016 the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published its draft guidance to local housing authorities on the periodical review of housing needs for caravans and houseboats. It states that when considering the need for caravans and houseboats local authorities will need to include the needs of a variety of residents in differing circumstances including, for example caravan and houseboat dwelling households and households residing in bricks and mortar dwelling households.

7.4 The Housing and Planning Act 2016 requires Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) to consider the needs of people residing on places on inland waterways where houseboats can be moored. However, the term ‘houseboat’ is not defined by DCLG guidance. As such, the accommodation needs determined by this assessment uses a broader definition first used by the Broads Authority who define boat dwelling as vessels capable of navigation and is used as the main residence but may occasionally go cruising and return to base.

7.5 Importantly, according to correspondence between RRR Consultancy Ltd and DCLG (27 October 2016), the DCLG stated that it is for local housing authorities to assess and understand the accommodation needs of people who reside in or resort to the area with respect to the provision of caravan sites or houseboats. This means that there is no “standard” methodology that can be followed i.e. it is for each authority to prepare (and justify) an appropriate methodology.

New accommodation provision

7.6 Due to the transient characteristic of boat dwellers it is not possible to identify with certainty all existing households residing on boats in the study area. However, the assessment has provided an estimation of need and identified the general circumstances of boat dwellers requiring permanent residential moorings. The accommodation need in Oxford derives mainly from boat dwellers residing on unauthorised (‘unregulated’) moorings, tolerated unauthorised moorings, and constant cruisers who require accommodation in the local area.
7.7 Table 7.1 summarises the number of permanent residential moorings, required over the period 2016-36. It shows that a further 41 permanent residential moorings are needed over twenty years throughout the study area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.1 Permanent residential moorings need</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2016-2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021-2026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026-2031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2031-2036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Oxford BDANA 2018

Facilitating new provision

7.8 A key issue remains the facilitation of new authorised residential moorings. This assessment recognises that some of the accommodation need could be addressed through affordable or supported housing. It is important to recognise that as well as those who choose to reside on boats, there are those who reside on boats not out of choice, including those who would otherwise be living on the streets or sofa surfing. Given the choice, most of these boat dwellers would choose to live in housing. It is important to note that some of the boat dwellers with substance misuse or mental health issues require not only housing, but help and support to enable them to reside in housing.

7.9 Some accommodation need can be addressed by granting planning permission for new residential moorings e.g. increasing the number of moorings at the Agenda 21 locations. Need could also be met by granting planning permission to boat dwellers residing on unauthorised moorings. For example, authorisation of the unauthorised moorings located on some of the side waters of the River Thames (such as in the Castle Mill Stream area), and the 4 moorings located at the tolerated unauthorised moorings on the island. As the moorings would be occupied by current occupants who are primarily self-sufficient, legitimating such moorings would require minimal, if any, further costs. The council could then rent or lease the site to the current occupants.

7.10 It is recommended that Oxford City Council, the Canal and River Trust (CRT), and the Environment Agency (EA) contact households who have previously displayed an interest in developing a new mooring but have not progressed to the planning application stage e.g. the four households residing on the island near Donnington Bridge. Also, it may be useful for relevant agencies to contact the three Oxford Marina owners to discuss the possibility of some leisure berths being granted planning permission for permanent residential moorings.

7.11 Similarly, Oxford City Council, CRT, and EA could collaborate to determine which existing temporary moorings along the Oxford's waterways could be used for permanent moorings or long-term winter moorings. There is also a need for agencies to address waterways
maintenance and repair issues such as dredging, clearing overhanging trees, and repairing banks in disrepair. Doing so will facilitate the full and safe use of existing mooring provision.

7.12 For example, the main part of the River Thames is used during the summer months mainly by tourists. Some temporary moorings close to the city centre are currently occupied by abandoned boats (some occupied by homeless people), and unauthorised moorings. It is suggested that these moorings are provided with electric and water hook-up points (which limit noise and Co2 pollution). They could then be used by tourists in the summer and available as winter moorings to local residential boat dwellers during the winter.

The location of new provision

7.13 Ongoing monitoring of mooring provision and vacant provisions should be undertaken by the local authorities alongside discussions with boat dwellers to ensure that any additional need that may arise is identified. The precise location (along with services and facilities) should, however, be drawn up in consultation with boat dwellers and other stakeholders to ensure any additional provision meets their needs, is in appropriate locations, and is deliverable.

7.14 Ensuring that new moorings are located in a safe environment is important although the impact of land costs on determining feasibility must also be considered. The settled community neighbouring the moorings should also be involved in the consultation from an early stage. There may be scope for expanding existing moorings, authorisation of unauthorised moorings, and change of status to some of the moorings at the marinas to meet some accommodation need.

7.15 When identifying and revising current and future moorings, it is important to consider the impact on landscape and biodiversity of new moorings. In particular, new moorings should not adversely impact on the character or appearance of the surrounding area, protected species, priority habitats, or designated wildlife sites.

7.16 As noted in Chapter 2, in 2012 Oxford City Council concluded that the following sites had potential for new moorings:

- Hinksey Stream north of Abingdon Road
- Hinskey Stream south of Abingdon Road
- Bulstake Stream at Osney Mead
- Castle Mill Stream

7.17 However, the report noted that the above sites are all constrained in some way and would need to overcome issues such as dredging, ecological surveys, and maintenance and management of trees if they were to be brought forward.

7.18 One possible site for new moorings included the gravel lakes situated to the north of Oxford. Similarly, the man-made lake just north of the A34 could be accessed via Duke’s Cut and service boaters commuting into the city.

7.19 In terms of identifying broad locations for new permanent moorings, there are a number of factors which could be considered including:
Costs
• How do land costs impact on feasibility i.e. is it affordable?
• Implementation of services – is it possible for the new moorings to connect to nearby mains services e.g. electricity and water?

Social
• Does the proposed location of the new provision lie within a reasonable distance of school catchment areas?
• Sustainability – is the proposed location close to existing bus routes?
• Proximity of social and leisure services – is the proposed location close to leisure facilities such as sports centres, cinemas etc. or welfare services such as health and social services etc.

Availability
• Who owns the land and are they willing to sell / rent?
• Is access easy or will easements across other land be needed both for residents and services/utilities?
• Are utilities close enough to service the provision at realistic prices?

Deliverability
• Does the proposed location meet existing general planning policy in terms of residential use, for example in relation to flooding and the historic environment?
• Can/will the owner sell / lease the land easily and quickly?
• Can utilities be connected to the proposed provision?

7.20 As stated in Chapter 2, the CRT also recommend principles for planning and design on waterways such as considering individual waterways and water spaces viewed as an integral part of a wider network, and not in isolation. These principles should be considered by any agency designing new moorings or waterside facilities.

Temporary stopping provision

7.21 It is recommended that the current temporary moorings are made available for longer periods out of season. It is also recommended that these provisions are upgraded. This includes ensuring easy access to the bank and clear and secure facilities to which to secure the boats, electric and water hook-ups, toilet and household waste facilities, access to parking within walking distance, and ensuring that the emergency services can access moorings.

Summary

7.22 The policy process that follows on from this research will also need to consider how the identified needs relating to boat dwellers can be supported through the planning process. The study also highlighted a number of issues relating to the management and condition of provisions.
Finally, this report primarily recommends that the commissioning council works jointly with EA and CRT and other relevant service providers where appropriate to address boat dwellers’ accommodation needs. The other recommendations are as follows:

New mooring places and sites

- For Oxford City Council to revisit the 4 potential mooring sites identified by the 2012 report. Also, to consider the potential for new moorings at the gravel lakes situated to the north of Oxford. Similarly, the man-made lake just north of the A34 could be accessed via Duke’s Cut and service boaters commuting into the city.

- Relevant agencies to contact the three Oxford Marina owners to discuss the possibility of some leisure berths being granted planning permission for permanent residential moorings.

- For agencies to consider adopting the CRT’s principles in the planning and design of new moorings.

- Develop criteria and processes for determining the suitability of boat dwellers’ residential moorings for including in emerging/future Local Plans.

- Agencies to review opportunities for the expansion of current provision where suitable and appropriate.

- Agencies could consider helping to meet the needs of households unable to afford to own a mooring or the rental costs of existing moorings by renting or leasing small parcels of local authority owned land to them and assisting with planning applications and mooring development.

- To consider alternative funding mechanisms such as: acquisition funds; loans for private mooring provision through Community Development Financial Institutions; and joint ventures with members of the boating community.

- To determine whether some of the accommodation needs of boat dwellers can be met by affordable or supported housing.

Mooring services and facilities

- For the CRT to consider increasing the number of 14-day moorings, for greater flexibility in relation to 48-hour moorings, and extending temporary mooring periods during the winter months. Also, for the CRT to consider changing signage reminding boat dwellers of the need to vacate temporary moorings after a certain period.

- Ensure all mooring areas have access to facilities such as toilet and household waste disposal provisions. If possible, all authorised moorings (residential and visitors moorings) should have access to electric and water hook-up points, and for residential moorings to have individual access and a secure post-box.
• Review of mooring charges to see how affordable moorings could be made more available (including a review of the application process for moorings in high demand areas to make it more accessible and affordable).

• To consider enabling the public to access the Environment Agency maintenance yard. Also, to assist the marinas to develop further maintenance facilities.

• For residential moorings to be designated a postal address, so they can register with local services and the electoral register at their residential address and not have to use an alternative address.

Health and safety

• For agencies to work collectively to ensure the health and safety of boat dwellers including ensuring all boats have working fire extinguishers, carbon monoxide monitors and smoke detectors. Also, all areas adjacent to moorings to have nearby lifebuoys.

• Agencies collaborate to address the health and social care needs of boat dwellers, particularly those with mental health and substance misuse issues.

• Ensure all authorised moorings have secure and visible mooring rings, safe banks with secure access on and off boats, and that the waterways close to the banks are safe and deep enough for boats to moor.

• For emergency services to be made fully aware of the location and best access routes to residential and temporary moorings.

• For relevant agencies to collaborate with the Oxford Water Safety Group to ensure health and safety is maintained on Oxford’s waterways. Also, to consider co-opting boat dwellers onto the Group

Communication and cooperation

• Formalise communication processes between relevant housing, planning and enforcement officers etc. in both the study area and neighbouring local authorities.

• For relevant agencies to work with the Environment Agency and River Thames Alliance Moorings Group to ensure a consistent approach to moorings enforcement across the river.

• For agencies to develop a holistic vision for their work on boat dwelling services and facilities, and to embed it in Community and Homelessness Strategies, Local Plans and planning and reporting obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

• Provide regular training and workshop sessions with local authority and service provider employees (and elected members) to help them to further understand the key issues facing the boat dwelling communities.
• Better sharing of information between agencies which deal with the boat dwelling community.

• The population size and demographics of the boating community groups can change rapidly. As such, their accommodation needs should be reviewed every 5 to 7 years.
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