

Review of sections of Oxford's waterways

**A report by City Development and others into
the suitability of potential mooring sites put
forward by B.O.A.T.**



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Background

Towards the end of 2012, UMBEG (the Unlawfully Moored Boat Enforcement Group) 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.

Experts included:

- Planning – Development Management;
- Biodiversity/ ecology – these impacts were considered in terms of flora/ fauna and in terms of potential improvements that could be made
- Landscaping;
- Tress;
- Heritage;
- Archaeology;
- Planning Policy;
- City Council Environmental Development
- Environment Agency
- UMBEG

The Local Plan policy on Residential Moorings has been updated through the Sites and Housing Plan Policy HP8 – Homes for Boat Dwellers. This policy sets out the City Council's position for new residential moorings. The policy has been through an independent examination. The Sites and Housing Plan is to be adopted at full council in February.

Policy HP8:

Homes for Boat Dwellers

Planning permission will only be granted for new residential moorings on Oxford's waterways where:

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

Assessment

Table 1 sets out the sections of the river that were reviewed by the panel of experts.

It is worth noting before examining the table below that the City Council is supportive of applications for residential moorings in suitable locations. It is also important to make clear that the City Council needs to balance visitor moorings which are suitable for the main river Thames and residential moorings, which are not. Short-stay visitor moorings have an important role to play in promoting tourism in the city.

Table 1: suggested river stretches put forward by B.O.A.T. and summary comments from City Council experts, UMBEG, EA and others.

| | Section of the river | Summary comments |
|----|---------------------------------------|--|
| 13 | Hinksey Stream north of Abingdon Road | This stretch of bank is a potential habitat for water voles. As such ecological surveys would be required. Given the trees, a risk assessment would be required. The stretch is off the main channel and is worth further investigation however there are potential access issues at high water given the low bridge. Further work required. |
| 14 | Hinskey Stream south of Abingdon Road | This stretch of bank is a potential habitat for water voles. As such ecological surveys would be required. Given the trees, a risk assessment would be required. The stretch is off the main channel and is worth further investigation however there are potential access issues at high water given the low bridge. Further work required. |
| 15 | Bulstake Stream at Osney Mead | This stretch of bank is off the main river channel and is of some ecological value. Accessing would be possible from the industrial estate however there are concerns about the depth of the channel – some dredging may be required. There were also concerns raised about the integrity of the bank in its current form to support moorings. Further study would be required. |
| 16 | Castle Mill Stream | This stretch of bank is off the Main River Thames however there is the potential for water voles so an ecological survey would be required. It is likely that significant dredging (and removal of debris) would need to be completed as the stretch is currently shallow. Both banks are in an overgrown/ natural condition. Increased activity could undermine the integrity of the banks. In order to maintain a navigable channel significant works would be required. This is due to siltation. Vegetation management would also be needed. It is worth noting that Boats cannot be moored in close proximity to the existing weirs. Finally there is restricted headroom below the footbridge to the south of the site which could cause issues in high water. Further studies and work would be required to move this site forward. |

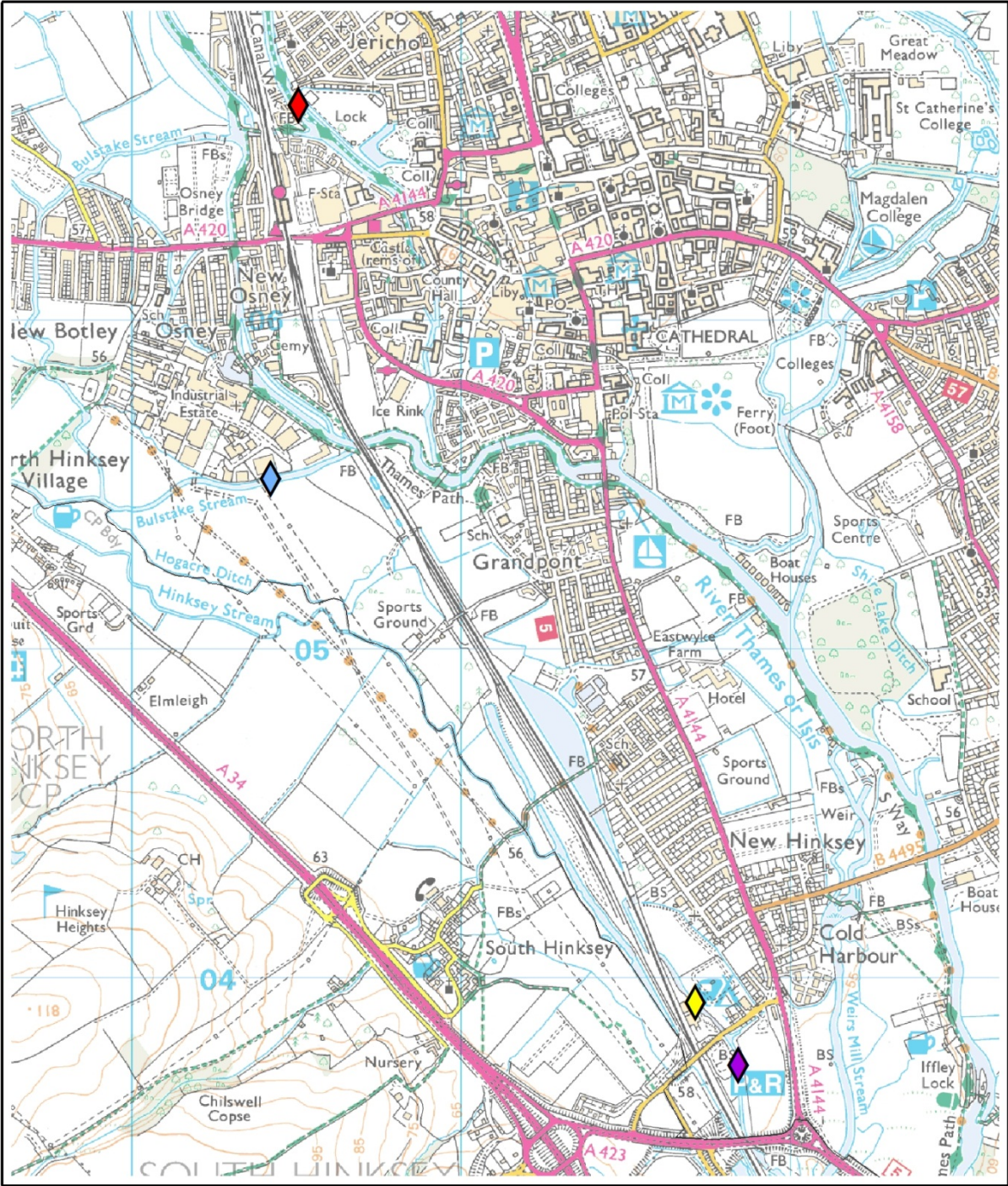
Conclusions

The majority of the sites suggested were not suitable for residential moorings. Those that have the potential to accommodate moorings are listed above. These 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.

It is also worth stating that in order to moor a boat on someone's land, you must first ensure that you have the permission of the person/ organization who owns the land in order to do so. Failure to secure permission the landowner's permission may result in enforcement action.

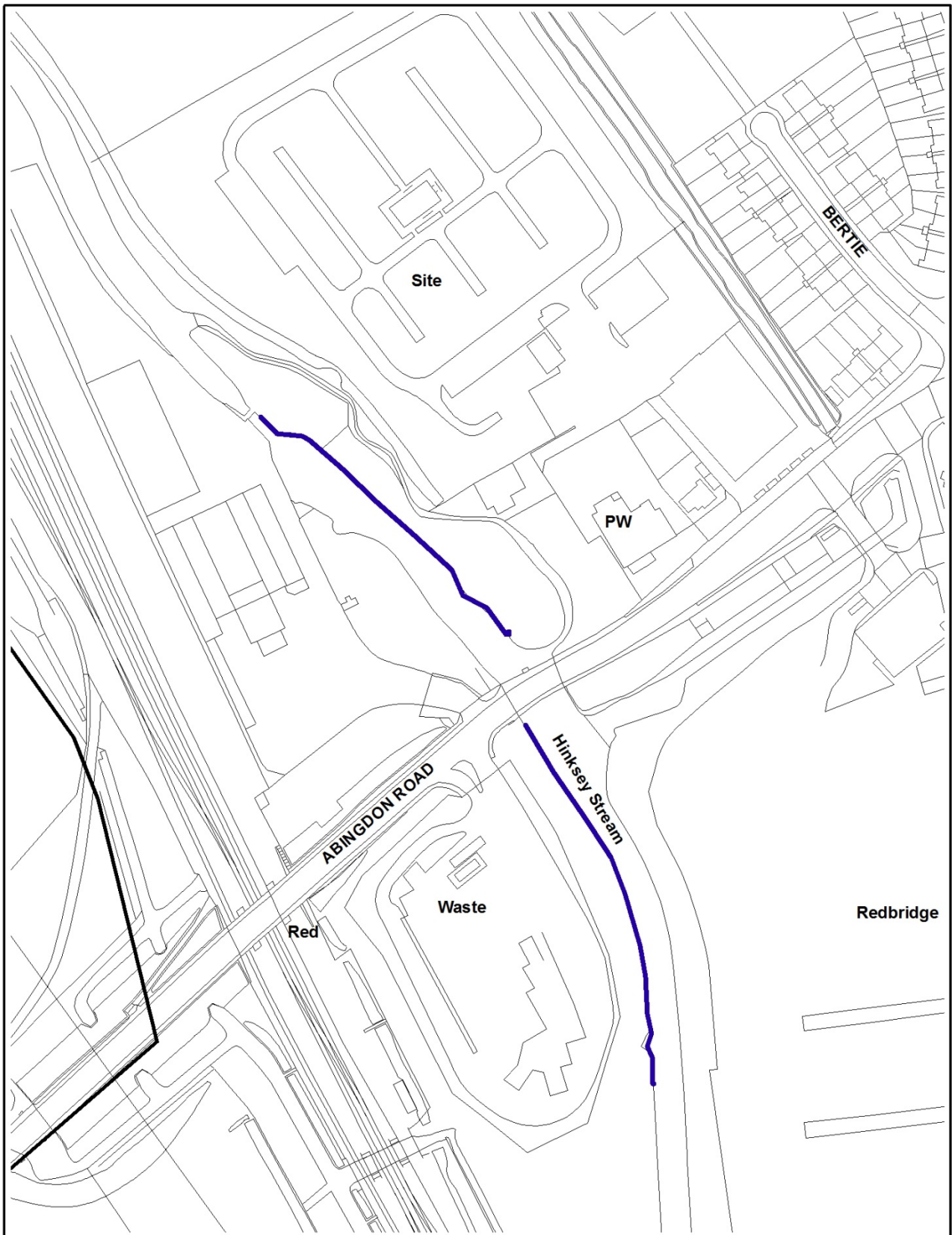
The map (overleaf) shows the locations of the sites put forward by BOAT. It is worth noting that these sites have not been put forward (at this stage) by the landowners and they require planning permission in order to be used as for residential moorings.

Map showing broad locations of BOAT suggestions for potential mooring sites within Oxford

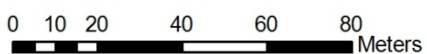


Potential Residential Moorings

- ◆ Castle Mill Stream
- ◆ Bullstake Stream
- ◆ Hinksey Stream North of Abingdon Road
- ◆ Hinksey Stream South of Abingdon Road



Potential Mooring sites on the Hinksey Stream



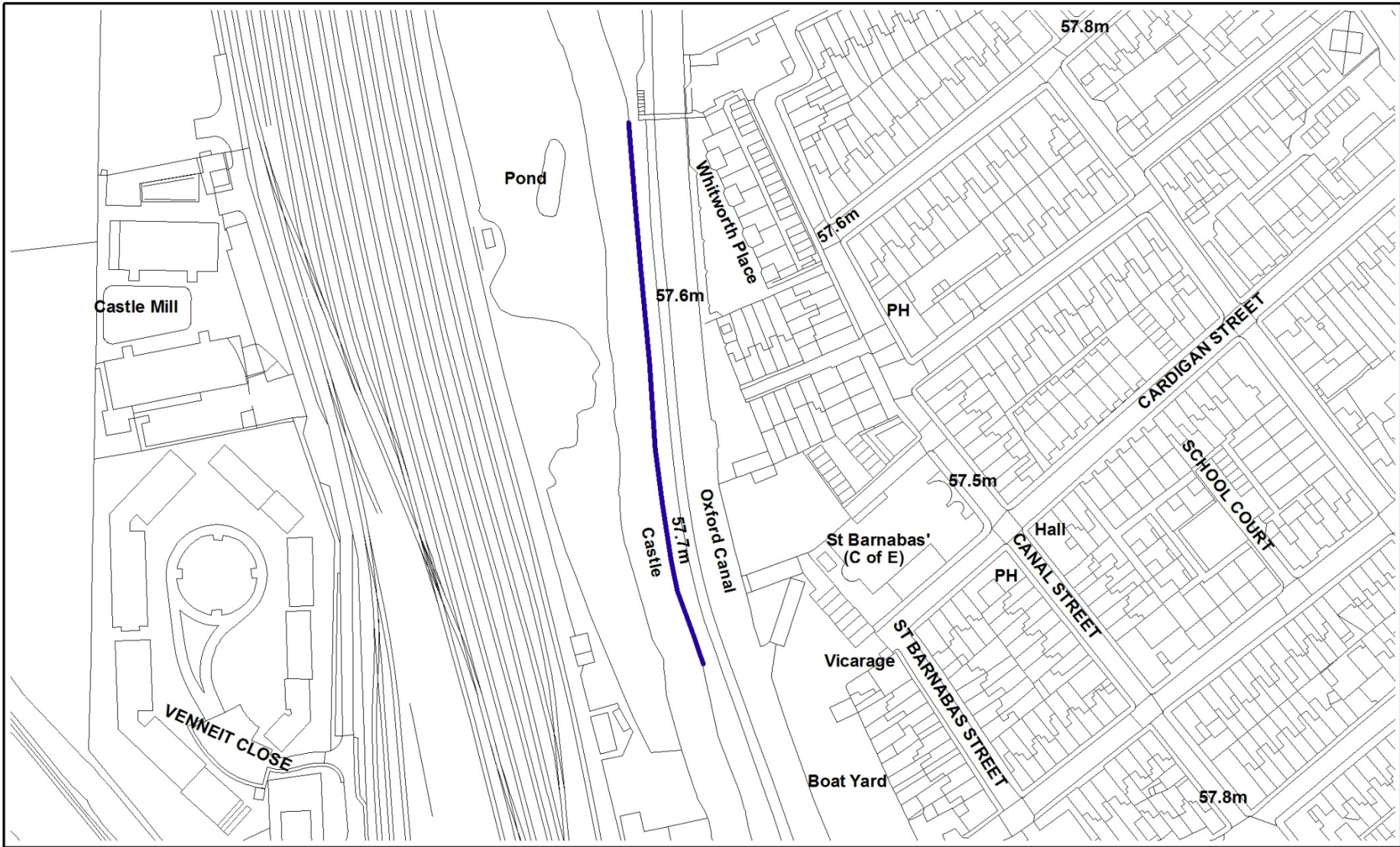
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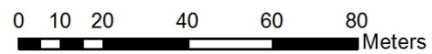
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Potential Mooring sites on the Castle Mill Stream

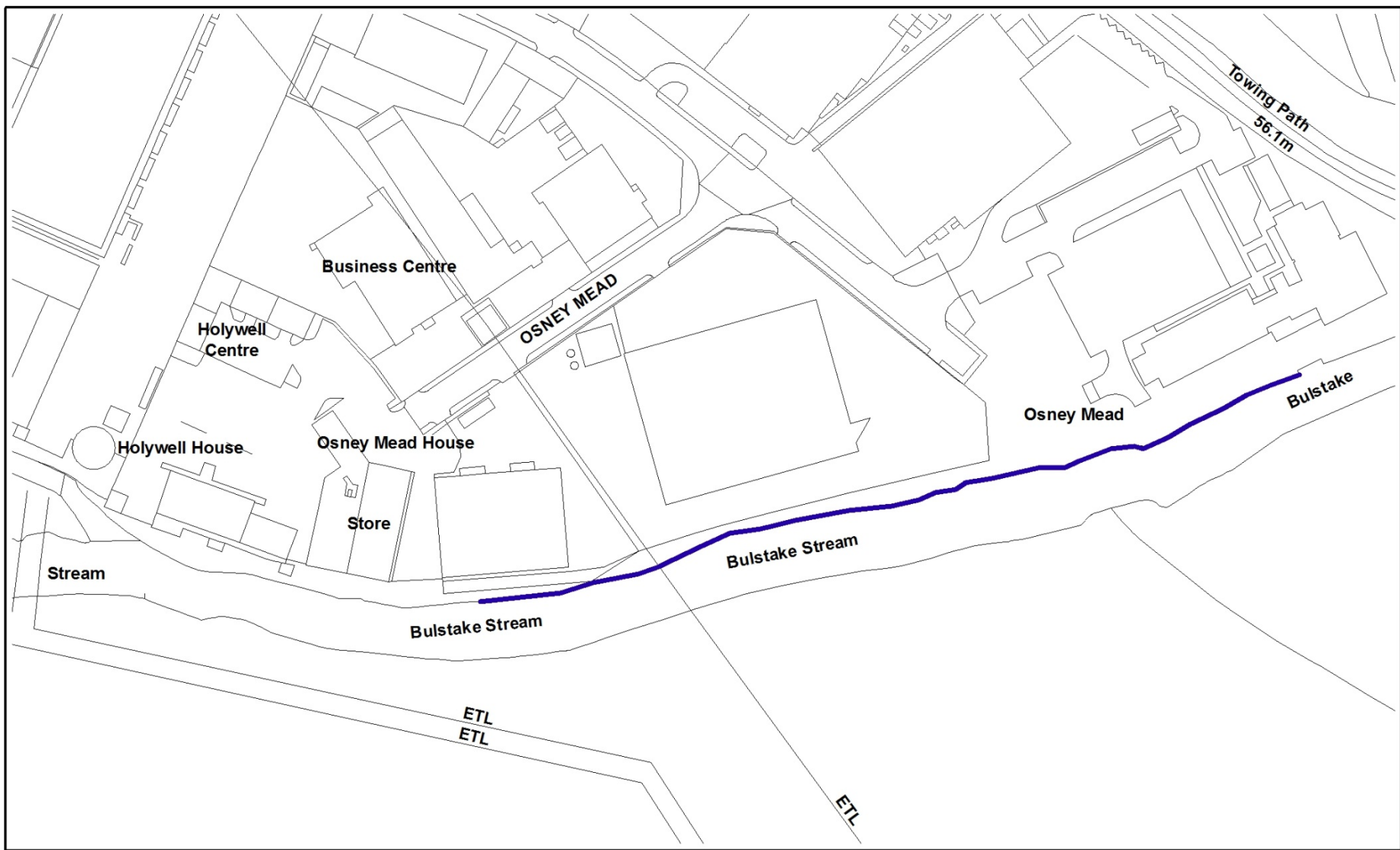


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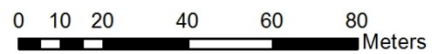
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Potential Mooring sites on the Bulstake Stream



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A City Development Report for UMBEG (Unlawfully Moored Boat Enforcement Group)

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