

Wokingham Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment

Final Report
December 2019

RRR Consultancy Ltd



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Executive Summary

Introduction

- S1. In June 2019 Wokingham Borough Council commissioned *RRR Consultancy Ltd* to undertake a Boat Dwellers Accommodation Assessment (BDAA) for the local authority's Local Plan period of 2019 to 2036. The results will inform policy development in housing and planning and to inform the allocation of resources within the borough.
- 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). DCLG draft guidance on periodically reviewing the housing needs for caravans and houseboats was published March 2016. It provides advice on how to consider the needs of people residing in caravans or houseboats where they differ from those of the settled community.
- S3. The purpose of this assessment is to quantify the accommodation and housing related support needs of boat dwellers in the Wokingham Borough Council administrative area between 2019 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 In March 2016 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (as it was then called) published draft guidance to local housing authorities on the periodical review of housing needs for caravans and houseboats.
- S6. The term 'houseboat' is not defined by DCLG guidance. According to the HM Revenues and Customs:

"A houseboat is defined for the purposes of VAT as being a floating decked structure which:

- is designed or adapted for use solely as a place of permanent habitation

- does not have the means of, and which is not capable of being readily adapted for, self-propulsion” (HMRC VAT Notice 701/20, December 2013).
- S7. However, 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. Following consultation (see Chapter 3), this BDAA adopts the National Bargee Travellers Association’s (NBTA) definition, which defines a boat dweller as:
- “Someone who lives aboard a vessel (which may or may not be capable of navigation), that the vessel is used as the main or only residence and where that vessel is either (i) moored in one location for more than 28 days in a year (but may occasionally or periodically leave its mooring); or (ii) has no permanent mooring and navigates in accordance with the statutes appropriate to the navigation such as inter alia s.17(3)(c)(ii) of the British Waterways Act 1995 or s.79 of the Thames Conservancy Act 1932”.
- S8. The above NBTA definition is the most comprehensive available and that which most accurately encompasses the range views expressed through the stakeholder consultation.
- S9. The Environment Agency and Canal and River Trust play an important role in managing the waterways running through Wokingham Borough. 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 Wokingham Borough Council, the Environment Agency, and the Canal & Riverside Trust can help improve the conditions of boat dwellers in Wokingham Borough.

Stakeholder Consultation

- S10. Consultations with key stakeholders offered important insights into the main issues regarding boat dwellers residing on Wokingham’s waterways (the Thames). This was undertaken using a variety of methods, including internet based surveys and a focus group. 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 Wokingham’s waterways and beyond in neighbouring local authorities.
- S11. Stakeholders suggested a range of reasons why boat dwellers decide to reside on boats including lifestyle choice, a lack of affordable or alternative housing, and cultural reasons.
- S12. A majority of stakeholders considered that there is a lack of suitable facilities along local and neighbouring waterways. There is a lack of access to toilet pumps and waste disposal facilities in the borough and neighbouring waterways which are essential to ensure that the waterways are kept clean. Stakeholders noted that there is also a need for better access to

clean drinking water, electricity, storage for fuels such as wood and coal, laundry facilities, car and bike parking, and broadband.

- S13. Locations suitable for the development of new moorings on the River Thames mentioned by stakeholders included Kennetmouth, Sonning, Wargrave, and Remenham. Also, there may be disused gravel pits which could form the basis of new marinas e.g. at Charvil Country Park. The NBTA expressed an aspiration to develop a mooring marina and maintenance yard with tourist attractions along the Thames within Wokingham Borough and close to the border with Oxfordshire and Reading. This would be near Kennet Mouth.
- S14. Barriers to new moorings cited by stakeholders included difficulties in obtaining planning permission as much of the land alongside the River Thames is located in the Metropolitan Green Belt, and a lack of local planning policies regarding moorings. Environmental barriers to new moorings include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).
- S15. It was apparent from some stakeholders that the relationship between some boat dwellers and neighbouring communities can sometimes be tense. Stakeholders highlighted a lack of knowledge about boat dwellers amongst the general public and service providers, including local authorities and the subsequent need for better awareness and insight into why people live on boats, their way of live and their needs. It was suggested that the provision of transit moorings with longer permission for temporary use i.e. beyond 14 days, would help improve community relations.

Boat dwellers' consultation

- S16. The consultations with boat dwellers offered important insights into the main issues regarding boat dwellers residing on the local waterways. A range of methods were used to gain insight into the number and accommodation needs of people residing permanently on boats in the area 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.
- S17. It was determined that there are no permanent residential moorings on the River Thames within Wokingham Borough. In addition, there are no boat dwellers requiring permanent accommodation moored on other sections of waterways within Wokingham Borough. However, there are sections along the River Thames where boat dwellers regularly moor for short- and long-term periods. The moorings are unauthorised but are usually tolerated by landowners as there are few alternatives and do not obstruct moorings used by leisure boaters. In some cases, private landowners offer short- and long-term tolerated moorings for a fee .
- S18. Due to their unauthorised status most constant cruisers and boat dwellers reside on unauthorised moorings regularly and move around the local area. There was agreement

amongst boat dwellers that there is a need for more transit and permanent moorings on the local waterways. In particular, they stated that there is a lack of affordable moorings, 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 the local waterways

Accommodation need

- S19. 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)¹. It contains seven basic components, five assessing need and two assessing supply, which are applied to each sub-group, based on secondary data.
- S20. Table S.1 summarises number of permanent residential moorings required over the period 2019-36. It shows that a further 9 permanent residential moorings are needed over the period throughout the Borough.

Table S.1 Permanent residential moorings need	
	No.
2019-2024	9
2024-2029	0
2029-2036	0
Total	9

Source: Wokingham BDAA 2019

- S21. 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

- S22. 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

¹ DCLG Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments, October 2007 located at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7838/accommneedsassessments.pdf

- Relevant agencies to contact the marina owners and managers in Wokingham Borough to discuss the possibility of some leisure berths being granted planning permission for permanent residential moorings.
- The Council should liaise with the NBTA to determine the potential of a maintenance and mooring yard. Also, to explore possible cross-boundary, duty to cooperate processes with neighbouring authorities to help NBTA develop potential plans (near Kennet Mouth).
- Develop criteria and processes for determining the suitability of boat dwellers' residential moorings for including in emerging/future Local Plans.
- 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

- 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.
- To work with other agencies, including the EA, in order to review the enforcement processes that are in operation. In particular, to review the methods used by a private company to manage moorings along the Thames.

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 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 June 2019 Wokingham Borough Council commissioned *RRR Consultancy Ltd* to undertake a Boat Dwellers Accommodation Assessment (BDAA) for the local authority's Local Plan period of 2019 to 2036.
- 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 moored². 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

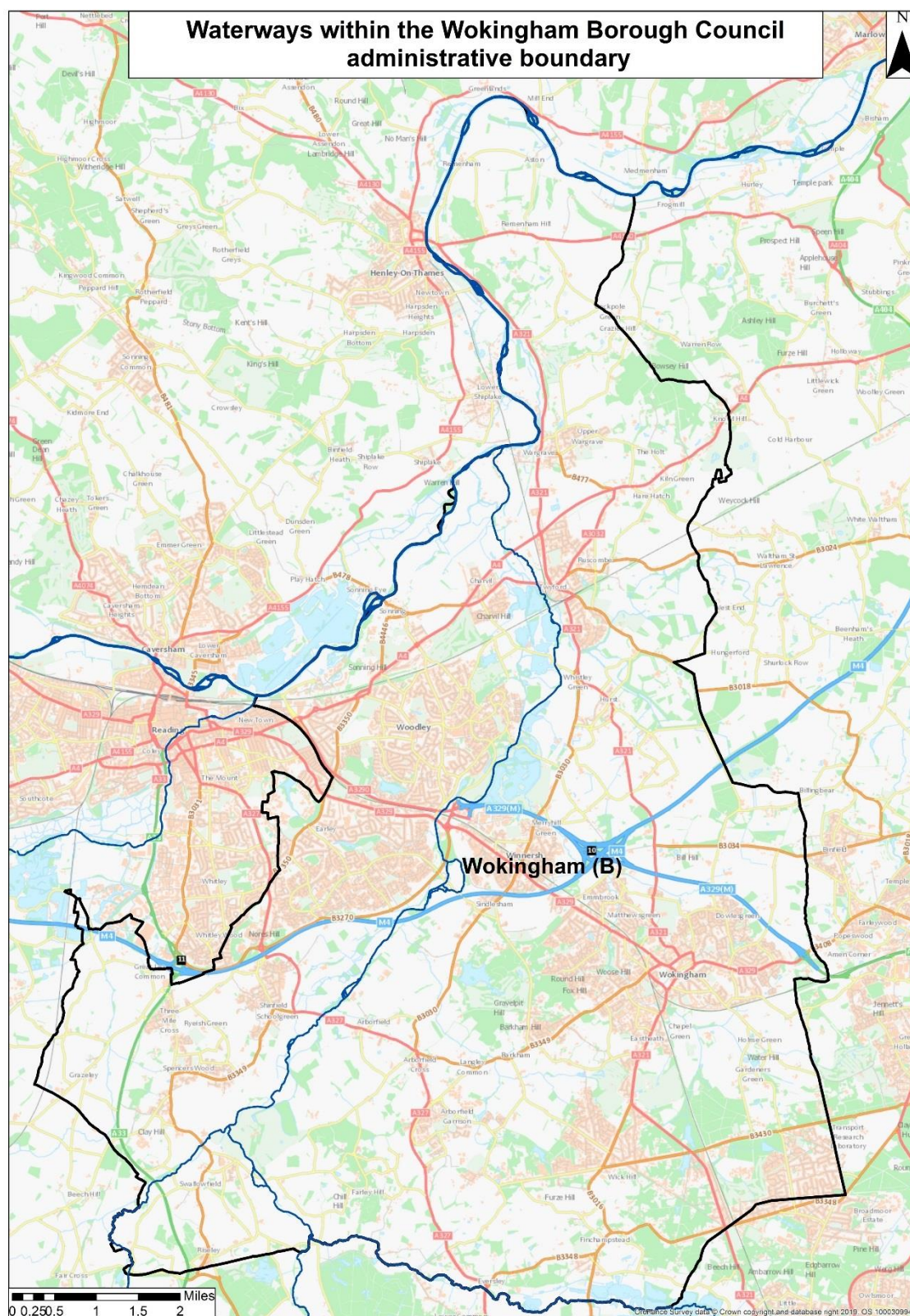
- 1.3 To achieve the study aims, the research drew on a number of data sources including:
- Review of secondary information: a review of national and local planning policies and analysis of secondary data.
 - Extensive consultation of key stakeholders including housing and planning officers, boat yard 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 Wokingham Borough Council administrative boundary.

² s124 Housing and Planning Act 2016 (c. 22) p.58

Figure 1.1 Waterways within the Wokingham Borough Council Administrative Boundary



Source: Wokingham Borough Council 2019

Wokingham Borough profile

- 1.6 Wokingham Borough is located within the west of Berkshire. It has good access to London and the key airports of Heathrow and Gatwick, and is part of the M4 corridor. It contains parts of London's Metropolitan Green Belt that surrounds London, with approximately 16% of the Borough designated as Green Belt. A number of rivers flow through Wokingham Borough, including the River Thames and River Loddon, meaning some areas are prone to flooding. Other environmental and human constraints which restrict land for residential development in the Borough include ancient woodland and gas pipelines.
- 1.7 Wokingham Borough adjoins the Boroughs of Wycombe to the North; Windsor & Maidenhead and Bracknell Forest to the east; Hart and Basingstoke & Deane to the south and south west respectively; and West Berkshire, Reading and South Oxfordshire to the west. The highly valuable natural environment, wildlife, biodiversity and heritage assets of the Borough all contribute to the Borough's attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit.
- 1.8 The estimated 2019 population of the Borough is 167,200³. Wokingham, the administrative centre, is an old market town which retains its character but only houses one fifth of the Borough's population. Two fifths of the Borough's population live in the areas of Woodley and Earley which adjoin the Borough of Reading. The remainder of the population live in smaller settlements which are separated by areas of countryside.
- 1.9 The Borough accommodates a stretch of the M4 motorway that connects London and South Wales and the A329M that connects to Bracknell and Greater Reading. Railway links from Reading to London Paddington and London Waterloo run through the borough, as well as the North Downs line, connecting the borough to Gatwick airport. Further improvements are already planned to increase connectivity. This includes Crossrail (the Elizabeth Line) which is a key piece of government funded infrastructure which will increase rail capacity between Reading/Heathrow, through central London and on to Shenfield/Abbey Wood, including the new proposed development at Old Oak Common to the west of London Paddington. Twyford is one of the stations where Crossrail will stop⁴.

Definition Context

- 1.10 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. The term 'houseboat' is not defined by DCLG guidance. According to the HM Revenues and Customs:

³ ONS 2016-based population projections, May 2018.

⁴ Wokingham Borough Council 'Issues and Options Consultation Document' (August 2016) pp.8-9.

“A houseboat is defined for the purposes of VAT as being a floating decked structure which:

- is designed or adapted for use solely as a place of permanent habitation
- does not have the means of, and which is not capable of being readily adapted for, self-propulsion” (HMRC VAT Notice 701/20, December 2013).

- 1.11 It is important to note that the above definition refers to a type of boat dwelling rather than households who reside on boats. Also, there may be boat dwellers who are licensed to permanently reside on other types of boats. Initially, the BDAA used a definition which is broader than the above as developed by the Broads Authority as part of the Norfolk Caravans and Houseboats Accommodation Needs Assessment (ANA) undertaken by *RRR Consultancy Ltd* in 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”.

- 1.12 However, following stakeholder consultation (see Chapter 3), this BDAA adopts the National Barge Travellers Association’s (NBTA) definition who define a boat dweller as:

“Someone who lives aboard a vessel (which may or may not be capable of navigation), that the vessel is used as the main or only residence and where that vessel is either (i) moored in one location for more than 28 days in a year (but may occasionally or periodically leave its mooring); or (ii) has no permanent mooring and navigates in accordance with the statutes appropriate to the navigation such as *inter alia* s.17(3)(c)(ii) of the British Waterways Act 1995 or s.79 of the Thames Conservancy Act 1932”.

- 1.13 The NBTA definition is the most comprehensive available and that which most accurately encompasses the range of views expressed through the stakeholder consultation.

Summary

- 1.14 The need for Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) to consider the needs of people residing in houseboats is determined by the Housing and Planning Act (2016). In March 2016 the published draft guidance on periodically reviewing the housing needs for caravans and houseboats. It provides advice on how to consider the needs of people residing in caravans or houseboats where they differ from those of the settled community.
- 1.15 The purpose of this assessment is to quantify the accommodation and housing related support needs of boat dwellers in the Wokingham Borough Council administrative area between 2019 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.

- 1.16 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 (NBTA); 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 position, 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 local 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 legislation and guidance

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 Furthermore, 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 BDAA, 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.

Waterways agencies and organisations

Environment Agency

2.8 The Environment Agency (EA) 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 and other river channels that join their main courses. The EA requires boats to be registered or licenced if the owner wishes to keep or use their boat 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.

- 2.9 According to the EA⁵ 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 EA 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

- 2.10 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 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.
- 2.11 The Trust's principles for planning and design as set out in its 'What your local waterway can do for your community' (2017) document include⁶:
- 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.
 - 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

⁵ Environment Agency, River Thames Operational Annual Report 2015-2016

⁶ Canal & River Trust, (2017), 'What your local waterway can do for your community' p.10

- It should be recognised that appropriate boundary treatment and access issues are often different for the towing path side and the offside.

2.12 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). This accords with S.17 of the British Waterways Act 1995⁷. 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 Barge Travellers Association (NBTA)

2.13 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

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

Boat dweller accommodation assessments

2.15 There have been two relevant studies relating to boat dwellers residing on waterways that pass through Wokingham borough i.e. the Thames. The boat dwellers' accommodation assessment undertaken on behalf of Oxford City Council in 2018 identified a need for a further 41 permanent residential moorings over twenty years throughout the study area. In relation to transit provision, the BDAA recommended that 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. However, stakeholders acknowledged that there are barriers to developing new moorings in Oxford

⁷ British Waterways Act 1995 located at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukla/1995/1/enacted>

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

including few landowners being interested in applying for planning permission or incurring the costs of establishing a fully serviced mooring.

- 2.16 The Reading Borough Council Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showperson and Houseboat Dweller Accommodation Assessment 2017 identified a need for no more additional moorings along the River Thames within the Borough's administrative boundaries. However, through stakeholder consultation it did recognise that boat dwellers residing in the local area would prefer better services and facilities along the river.

Summary

- 2.17 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.
- 2.18 The Environment Agency and Canal & River Trust play an important role in managing the waterways running through Wokingham Borough. 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 Wokingham Borough Council, the Environment Agency, and the Canal & River Trust can help improve the conditions of boat dwellers in Wokingham Borough.

3. Stakeholder consultation

Introduction

- 3.1 Consultations with a range of stakeholders were conducted between July 2019 and August 2019 including an online survey, a focus group, and face-to-face and telephone discussions. Stakeholders included: Wokingham Borough Council, Reading Borough Council, Hart District Council, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council, Arborfield & Newland Parish Council, Ruscombe Parish Council, the National Bargee Travellers Association, Environment Agency, and the Wokingham Waterside Centre.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.

Defining Boat Dwellers

- 3.4 The Wokingham Boat Dwellers' Accommodation Assessment initially defined boat dwellers as:

“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”.
- 3.5 Stakeholders (both at the focus group and through the online surveys) commented on how boats and boat dwellers are defined, including the extent to which they agreed with the above statement. Some spoke about their own experiences and others cited government and NBTA guidance. About half of those consulted stated that they agreed with the statement, whilst the other half suggested amendments.
- 3.6 General comments from stakeholders suggesting amendments were that whilst there is no agreed definition, the above definition may be too narrow. For example, one stakeholder suggested removing the 28 days in a year criterion, whilst another suggested removing the

ability to navigate criterion. A stakeholder from a neighbouring authority stated that their planning documents recognise 4 types of boat dwellers:

1. people who reside permanently at a residential mooring with the boat as their only residence.
2. recreational or leisure boaters who have a 'bricks and mortar' dwelling and stay on their boat occasionally as they travel waterways for pleasure purposes.
3. people who have a 'bricks and mortar' dwelling but stay on a boat for part of the week, e.g. to access employment opportunities or avoid a long commute to work.
4. boater dwellers who constantly move between moorings and do not own a bricks and mortar dwelling⁹.

3.7 The above is useful as it summarises the types of people who may permanently or temporarily reside on a boat for different reasons. However, there remains a need for a single definition which summarises boat dwellers whose accommodation needs should be assessed.

3.8 A stakeholder from the National Bargee Travellers Association (NBTA) offered an alternative definition to the one above:

“Someone who lives aboard a vessel (which may or may not be capable of navigation), that the vessel is used as the main or only residence and where that vessel is either (i) moored in one location for more than 28 days in a year (but may occasionally or periodically leave its mooring); or (ii) has no permanent mooring and navigates in accordance with the statutes appropriate to the navigation such as inter alia s.17(3)(c)(ii) of the British Waterways Act 1995 or s.79 of the Thames Conservancy Act 1932”.

3.9 Considering the above this report recommends adoption of the NBTA definition.

3.10 The NBTA also distinguish between 'Bargee Travellers' and 'boat dwellers'. The NBTA considers the former to be people whose main or only home is a boat without year-round access to a permanent mooring/ 'Boat dwellers' are considered by the NBTA to be people whose main or only home is a boat and who have year-round access to a permanent mooring, whether or not that mooring has planning consent for residential use.

3.11 Further, it was suggested that a person who uses their boat for recreation and whose main home is bricks and mortar, or who owns or rents their own bricks and mortar home, should not be classed as a boat dweller, regardless of the amount of time each year that they spend on their boat. That person should be classed as a 'leisure boater', because they are

⁹ Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Traveller Local Plan Issues and Options Paper, January 2019
https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/201041/traveller_local_plan/1404/traveller_local_plan_issues_and_options

not in need of a place to moor their home whether temporarily in transit or permanently. However, leisure boaters may need to access services and facilities along rivers and canals whilst residing on boats.

Boat Dwellers' Accommodation Needs

3.12 The discussion highlighted the importance of those living and those travelling and touring on boats to all be included. Stakeholders were asked the main reasons why people choose to reside on boats. Key reasons were: lifestyle choice, a lack of affordable or alternative housing, local connections, to be outdoors, to be mobile, for cultural reasons, and to escape mainstream society. Stakeholders commented on the main issues facing boat dwellers. A stakeholder from a neighbouring authority stated that key issues in their local area are:

- limited information and guidance on boat dwellers
- determining which boat dwellers require accommodation
- the spatial distribution of houseboat moorings
- flooding and safety issues
- the design of moorings and marinas.

3.13 One stakeholder stated that they initially chose to reside on a boat because they were unable to afford a house or flat. They borrowed money to buy the boat but was able to sell it for a profit after improvements. They appreciated the sense of community fostered by the boat dwelling community and stated that this way of life may suit people who may not want to reside in one place or require a semi-permanent residence.

3.14 Another stakeholder from a neighbouring authority stated that a lack of suitable moorings meant that boat dwellers frequently overstay on 24-hour moorings. It was generally agreed that there is a lack of suitable facilities along local and neighbouring waterways. Some facilities are only available for a fee. There is a lack of access to toilet pumps and waste disposal facilities which are essential to ensure that the waterways are kept clean. Stakeholders noted that there is also a need for better access to clean drinking water, electricity, storage for fuels such as wood and coal, laundry facilities, car and bike parking, and broadband. It was noted that moorings need to be more accessible to shops and local transport facilities. According to one stakeholder, a key issue is persecution of boat dwellers by riparians¹⁰ or their agents either for commercial reasons, reasons of prejudice, or policy.

¹⁰ A person who owns land on the bank of a natural watercourse or body of water.

Barriers to new moorings

- 3.15 Stakeholders cited a number of barriers in relation to delivering new moorings. It was suggested that a key barrier is difficulty obtaining planning permission as much of the land alongside the River Thames is located in the Green Belt. Most land adjacent to waterways are not owned by the local authorities so it may be difficult to gain planning permission for new moorings due to the land not being available. It was noted that a lack of local planning policies regarding the provision of new moorings can hinder progress. There may be resistance to new moorings from recreational mooring agencies such as the River Thames Alliance or commercial recreational marina operators. Also, it was suggested that the Environment Agency, which has responsibility for flood risk mitigation, usually opposes new moorings alongside the River Thames.
- 3.16 There may be landowner opposition to new moorings due to the look and suitability of the boats that people currently reside in, and there may be difficulty in accessing the land adjacent to where boats moor. Rubbish accumulating in areas where boats moor can lead to environmental issues and expense for the landowner. According to some stakeholders, issues relating to boat dwellers such as dangerous boats causing hazards, badly maintained boats, or refuse left by illegally moored boats can lead to negative public opinions about boat dwellers.
- 3.17 Environmental barriers to new moorings could include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Physical constraints could include pylons, pipeline markers, and trees. It was noted that the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that marinas are 'water compatible development' which may be suitable in Flood Zone 3b (the functional floodplain). Currently none of the marinas in Wokingham Borough have any provision for permanent moorings. In addition, leisure boaters frequently regard moorings and the cost of maintenance at marinas as expensive.

Location and management of new moorings

- 3.18 Stakeholders mentioned only a few locations they believe are suitable for new moorings in the local authority area. Specific areas suitable for the development of new moorings included Kennetmouth, Sonning, Wargrave, and Remenham. More general suggestions were that there may be disused gravel pits which could form the basis of new marinas. There may also be suitable land adjacent to the Kennet or Thames. These could be screened by trees or landscaped bunds. Linear mooring along waterways could be reserved for visitor boats. Stakeholders agreed that there are not many suitable locations and that this is a key barrier to the provision of permanent authorised moorings in the area.
- 3.19 In relation to whether any new moorings should be owned and managed by the local authority, privately, or a combination of both, stakeholders agreed that a combination of both may be necessary. It was acknowledged that charging for good mooring facilities and services may prove to be difficult for boat dwellers on low incomes. As such, there may be a need for affordable moorings which could be managed by a housing association. It was

suggested that the return on capital investment and revenue costs prevent investment in new moorings at present.

- 3.20 The NBTA commented on potential for land that was once used as a maintenance yard to be redeveloped as a combined marina and maintenance yard. The NBTA stated that they have aspirations to develop a mooring marina and maintenance yard with tourist attractions along the Thames within Wokingham Borough and close to the border with Oxfordshire and Reading (near Kennet Mouth). This land is primarily owned by Wokingham Borough Council and there are currently some boat dwellers permanently moored. This development is regarded as promoting cross-boundary and collaborative working between the NBTA and local authorities. The proposed yard could address all of the identified accommodation need in Wokingham Borough and the need for maintenance and support needs of boat dwellers and tourists in Wokingham and surrounding areas.
- 3.21 The Environment Agency (EA) manages the waterways in Wokingham Borough (primarily the Thames as the other waterways such as the canal are not navigable or do not have permanent boat dwellers). Stakeholders regard the Environment Agency as having a more flexible approach to managing the Thames compared to the Canal & River Trust (CRT) which manages the canals and other waterways in neighbouring authorities (particularly out of season times). The EA do not charge for the moorings, but allow limited periods for people to moor. (More limited in tourist season). There are a limited number of moorings for temporary use, which are shared by both permanent and leisure boat dwellers. People with permits to navigate the Thames (purchased and issued by the Canal and River Trust) enable people to moor along EA and CRT temporary moorings.
- 3.22 Some boat dwellers moor at places where land ownership is unclear. A lack of available and clearly marked out places where people can mooring has led to some landowners charging for mooring spaces. For example, an owner of some land along the Thames within Wokingham Borough is using some to rent out mooring spaces to boat dwellers on a temporary basis. The stretch of embankment is large enough to accommodate around 12 boats. He charges £10 a night for mooring. There are no facilities such as hook-up rings, places to dispose of rubbish or waste, or water facilities (apart from a nearby hotel). However, there is sufficient space to moor and boat dwellers will not be moved on as long as payment is made. The NBTA regard this policy as contravening boat dwellers' right to travel and moor. However, as discussed in the Chapter 4, boat dwellers were willing to pay the £10 mooring fee.

Travelling patterns and unauthorised moorings

- 3.23 It was suggested that there is no 'typical' boat dweller and that travelling patterns may vary. Different agencies manage different parts of the waterways. For example, it was noted that the River Kennet is managed by the Canal & River Trust (CRT), whilst the River Thames is managed by the Environment Agency (EA). Wokingham Borough Council's western boundary includes the River Kennet.

- 3.24 Whilst boat dwellers may be licensed to navigate either the CRT or EA waterways, a combined license is available which enables boat dwellers to navigate both. It is also possible to purchase transit licences from the EA to transit from the Oxford Canal (CRT) down the Thames to Reading and onto the Kennet (CRT) which takes approximately 2 days. A transit licence allows transit from the Grand Union Canal in London (CRT), up the Thames (EA) and onto the Kennet (CRT). Also, some boat-dwellers routinely travel along the Thames from 'upstream' towards London and vice versa.
- 3.25 According to a neighbouring local authority, a key issue is a lack of suitable bank space owned by the Council which is remote enough from housing to avoid potential issues with anti-social behaviour. They spoke of having taken enforcement action against illegally moored boats in the past 2 years resulting on some boats moving across the boundary to Wokingham.
- 3.26 This was confirmed by a stakeholder representing the NBTA. It was noted that on the River Thames the Public Right of Navigation ('PRN') (s.79 TCA 32) codifies a right to moor for a reasonable time without constraint, whilst on CRT water s.17(3)(c)(ii) of the British Waterways Act 1995 gives a right to moor on the towpath for 14 days in any one place. The attempt to enforce moorings can also cause anxiety within the boat dwelling community.
- 3.27 In response, most stakeholders stated that there is no need for the provision of transit or temporary moorings in the local area. However, one stakeholder noted that each riparian local authority should provide a considerable number of residential 'transit moorings' for boat-dweller use. It is noted that the NBTA is currently developing a 'Best Practice' guide for transit moorings.

Community relations

- 3.28 Stakeholders discussed the relationship between boat dwellers and households residing in bricks and mortar accommodation. It was acknowledged that there can be tensions between the two communities. According to one stakeholder, a minority of boat dwellers residing on unauthorised moorings had been accused of anti-social behaviour prompting a large number of complaints. In contrast, a stakeholder stated that the relationship between boat dwellers and the settled community is generally good and pedestrians on the towpath value the presence of boaters because it makes them feel safe.
- 3.29 Stakeholders spoke about how enforcement action taken against boat dwellers is exacerbating issues between boat dwellers and service providers. For example, the issues that vulnerable boat dwellers experience are exacerbated when boats are confiscated by bailiffs due to unpaid trespassing fines. The status of one mooring site in Reading Borough is currently under review as ownership of the land is disputed. Stakeholders also commented on differing approaches to boat dwellers by different authorities. Wokingham Borough Council was regarded as being supportive and sympathetic towards boat dwellers and other traveller groups.
- 3.30 It was noted that some landowners employ private companies to manage privately owned moorings i.e. which types of boats can moor and for how long. One company is placing notices along the River Thames outlining its regulations. Most of the notices are placed on

privately owned land, but some are being placed on land which may be owned by the Council. Stakeholders from Wokingham Borough Council stated that they are aware of the Council using a private company to enforce mooring occupancy on stretches of private land on its waterways, although they are aware that the Environment Agency manages waterways along the River Thames.

- 3.31 It was suggested that the provision of transit moorings with longer permission for temporary use i.e. beyond 14 days, would help improve community relations. It was noted that there is a lack of public provision for boat dwellers in Reading. One stakeholder stated that whilst this may be an issue for Reading Borough Council, it may result in boat dwellers moving into the Wokingham Borough Council area. Also, it was stated that in the 1970s there was a boat yard located at the east side of Kennet Mouth which became a park when the Thames and Kennet Marina opened. According to the NBTA, in 2010 Wokingham Borough Council gave permission to the NBTA develop the site as a community boatyard with moorings and facilities but the project never materialised. The council and the NBTA have spoken of possible renewed discussions regarding this proposed development, and how this could address the needs identified in this assessment as part of the development.

Health and education

- 3.32 There were few stakeholder comments in relation to whether local boat dwellers experience specific health or education issues. However, it was suggested that a number of boat dwellers in Reading have reported mental health issues. The NBTA stated that they issue guidance on accessing health and registering with a GP; accessing mainstream education; accessing social services support; and accessing welfare benefits. They cited an example of Bath and North East Somerset Council which works closely with the charity 'Julian House'. The charity signposts boat dwellers to support organisations and agencies and could be used as a model for local authorities and third sector agencies.
- 3.33 Absence of secure and permanent moorings were regarded by stakeholders as limiting boat dwellers' access to services. Not having a postal address adversely impacts on access to employment, registering with GP, education and training, and access to benefits. Some boat dwellers are able to resolve the issue by having post sent to family or friends, or local pubs, whilst other boat dwellers may be registered as living in a house elsewhere (often in a different authority area). However, as one stakeholder stated, these alternative methods do not help people access all services they require.

Summary

- 3.34 Consultations with key stakeholders offered important insights into the main issues regarding boat dwellers residing on Wokingham Borough'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 Wokingham's waterways.
- 3.35 After consultation with stakeholders, it was decided to adopt the NBTA definition of boat dwellers. It was agreed that there may be many reasons why boat dwellers decide to reside

on boats including lifestyle choice, a lack of affordable or alternative housing, and cultural reasons.

- 3.36 It was generally agreed that there is a lack of suitable facilities along local and neighbouring waterways. There is a lack of access to toilet pumps and waste disposal facilities which are essential to ensure that the waterways are kept clean. Stakeholders noted that there is also a need for better access to clean drinking water, electricity, storage for fuels such as wood and coal, laundry facilities, car and bike parking, and broadband.
- 3.37 Locations suitable for the development of new moorings mentioned by stakeholders included Kennetmouth, Sonning, Wargrave, and Remenham. Also, there may be disused gravel pits which could form the basis of new marinas. There is a plan to develop a mooring marina and maintenance yard with tourist attractions along the Thames within Wokingham Borough and close to the border with Oxfordshire and Reading
- 3.38 Barriers to new moorings cited by stakeholders included difficulties in obtaining planning permission as much of the land alongside the River Thames is located in the Green Belt, and a lack of local planning policies regarding moorings. Environmental barriers to new moorings include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).
- 3.39 It was apparent from some stakeholders that the relationship between some boat dwellers and neighbouring communities can sometimes be tense. Stakeholders expressed lack of knowledge about boat dwellers amongst the general public and service providers, including local authorities and the subsequent need for better awareness and insight into why people live on boats, their way of live and their needs. It was suggested that the provision of transit moorings with longer permission for temporary use i.e. beyond 14 days, would help improve community relations.

4. Consultation with boat dwellers

Introduction

- 4.1 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, 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 households. In response to this requirement consultation with boat dwelling households and key stakeholders was undertaken by *RRR Consultancy Ltd* between August and October 2019.

Methods

- 4.2 A range of methods were used to gain insight into the number and accommodation needs of people residing permanently on boats in Wokingham Borough. The consultation focused on the Thames. A primarily qualitative approach was adopted, but with sufficient quantitative data to quantify the level of need.
- 4.3 An important component of the consultation was undertaken with boat dwelling households residing on boats within the administrative boundary of Wokingham Borough Council. This included boat dwellers who permanently reside within the Borough, transiting boat dwellers and leisure cruisers.
- 4.4 The consultation was undertaken between August and October 2019, and were undertaken either face-to-face or over the telephone. The surveys helped gain insight into people's experiences and reasons for residing on boats in Wokingham Borough and their accommodation needs. The consultation helped to confirm the number of moorings and boats located in Wokingham.
- 4.5 It is important to note that this consultation focuses on the Wokingham section of the Thames, whilst other studies have taken into account the needs in the neighboring authorities (see Chapter 3). This consultation included:
- 1 household living in a house with a boat moored at end of the property's garden
 - 5 boat related businesses along the Thames (including boat clubs and marinas)
 - 20 boat dwellers (5 with permanent moorings elsewhere and 15 constant cruisers within the local area)
 - 4 leisure cruisers.

Accommodation Provision and Characteristics

- 4.6 There is an absence of data regarding the number of households residing on boats within the Borough. However, consultation with boat dwellers, boat yard owners and managers,

the EA and other stakeholders enabled an estimate of the number of boat dwellers to be determined. It was determined that there are no permanent residential moorings on the River Thames within Wokingham Borough.

- 4.7 There are several stretches of unregulated waterways where ownership is unclear. These locations are often used for unauthorised moorings. Waterways in the Borough (such as those on the Thames) are managed by the Environment Agency (EA). There are places that people can moor on a temporary basis but no permanent moorings. The Thames is the only navigable waterway in the borough. Outside the tourist season i.e. the summer months, the EA are flexible as to how long boat dwellers can stay at temporary moorings. However, during the tourist season, the EA move boats on if they stay longer than agreed. Only one boat dweller is registered on the local authority council tax records. However, from consultation with the resident, the boat is at the bottom of the garden and not used as permanent accommodation.
- 4.8 There are sections along the River Thames where boat dwellers regularly moor for short- and long-term periods. The moorings are unauthorised but are usually tolerated by landowners as there are few alternatives and they are not obstructing moorings used by leisure boaters. Some private properties offer short- and long-term moorings either for a fee or for free. There are three key sections of the waterways within Wokingham that boat dwellers with accommodation need regularly moor, and a further two which are less frequently used. These locations are used by boat dwellers as they are regarded as safe and secure, both in terms of ability to moor up and for accessing services on land.
- 4.9 Boat yards and marinas may contain moorings used for storage and short-term use. However, there are no permanent moorings located on any of the yards within Wokingham Borough. There are permanent moorings on the Oxfordshire and Reading section of the river. some of whom occasionally moor at the Wokingham side (and vice versa).
- 4.10 There are no known households living on boats along waterways other than the Thames within the Wokingham jurisdiction except boats moored at the end of their own gardens. These boats tend to be non-navigable due to the low width and depth, and obstacles, on this waterway.

Characteristics of boat dwellers

- 4.11 Boat dwellers residing on Wokingham Borough'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 Wokingham makes boat dwelling an affordable alternative. However, it was also suggested that there is a lack of affordable moorings on Wokingham'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
- Separated from partner and unable to afford a house
- Due to homelessness
- Safer than living on the streets
- Escape mainstream life
- Health reasons as better on boat than in house
- Tried it once and never looked back
- Need to be able to move around for work

4.12 Leisure cruisers spoke about residing on boats for holidays, to take a break from mainstream life, as a means of getting back to nature, and being able to travel to different places.

4.13 The boat dwellers derived from a broad range of social backgrounds with a similarly wide range of professions, skills and interests. This included professionals such as academics, doctors, care workers, retail workers, musicians, computer specialists, consultants, as well as skilled people such as boat builders and mechanics.

4.14 Boat dwellers were in full-time employment, part time employment, self-employed, retired, or unemployed. In relation to boat dwellers who permanently reside on boats, 15 reside within the local area (referred to as constant cruisers) whilst 5 have permanent residency elsewhere.

4.15 70% of boat dwellers in the Borough are single people, with some couples. There are very few households with children. Some boat dwellers are fathers whose children reside in houses with the mother. One household had children residing with them, but had no need for a permanent mooring.

4.16 In relation to those with permanent moorings elsewhere, 2 were single occupants and 2 were couples and one had a child. All of the leisure cruisers were occupied by 2 or more people (including 1 occupied by a group of friends, and 3 by couples)

Access to services and amenities

4.17 About a third of boat dwellers stated that they reside on boats due to a lack of affordable housing. 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.

- 4.18 Although residing on a boat was regarded as an affordable option, 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.
- 4.19 Some boat dwellers considered the rules and conditions regarding moorings as restrictive e.g. restrictions on 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. Access to water and electricity hookups would mean that boat dwellers would not have to use dangerous alternatives such as fuel powered generators.
- 4.20 All 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, including in neighboring authorities, prevented people from accessing them. Boat dwellers spoke of how there is a growing number of signs (as discussed in Chapter 3), along the Thames by a private company that is working on behalf of riparian landowners which outline mooring rules and penalties.

Travelling patterns

- 4.21 Similar to tourists, constant cruisers frequently travel around the local waterways but do so throughout the whole year. Boat dwellers regarded travelling patterns as being mainly determined by an absence of permanent moorings i.e. they moor where they can. Some boats are occupied by permanent residents are primarily stationary whilst others frequently travel around the waterways.
- 4.22 About half of the 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 moorings for longer periods. Some boat dwellers stated it can be too expensive to travel, whilst others stated that they travel when they can but not as often as they would like. As good moorings are considered to be limited in the area, some boat dwellers commented on fear of leaving their current mooring in case it became occupied by others while they were away. Consequently, they travelled less than they would like to.
- 4.23 The River Thames attracts many visitors. The visitors commented on what makes a good or bad boating experience. They stated that an ideal mooring place would have electric and

water hookups, and facilities to dispose of toilet and household waste. Those living on boats commented on the need of a safe and secure mooring, a place they could feel safe, hookup rings, access to places to dispose of waste and rubbish (including pump out and recycling facilities), and access to fresh water. Some commented on need for access to postal service, but most commented that they had alternative means of addressing this, but did prefer their own postal service.

Attitudes towards accommodation need

- 4.24 All of those consulted stated that there is a need for more transit and permanent moorings within the Borough. 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.
- 4.25 A key issue mentioned by boat dwellers was a lack of affordable facilities for boat maintenance in Wokingham and surrounding area. They spoke of the high costs of maintenance in the area, having to travel distances for maintenance. They acknowledged that there are some services at local marinas, but are mainly service tourers rather than to boat dwellers or constant cruisers. Boat dwellers agreed that there is an urgent need for maintenance support for boaters in the local area. Some spoke of the need for a local service and some commented on the need for a mobile maintenance service. One had heard that NBTA had plans to provide this, along with permanent moorings and other provisions, and stated that this is urgently needed in the local area and felt confident it would be available to all if provided by NBTA.
- 4.26 There is no evidence of overcrowding on any of the boats permanently occupied within the Borough. According to the boat dweller survey, corroborated by stakeholders, only a small number of households using the waterways in Wokingham area contain children. Households with children did not state there is any future need in the area as they were unsure if their children would want to continue to reside on boats when they are older.
- 4.27 Through evidence collected as part of this consultation it is estimated that there are around 30 unauthorised moorings and constant cruisers within the study area. According to stakeholders not all those residing on unauthorised moorings require permanent residency. This was supported by the boat dwellers who took part in the consultation.
- 4.28 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 could have their accommodation needs addressed through affordable or supported housing.

- 4.29 The cost of licensing boats was an issue for some boat dwellers although it was agreed that licensing is necessary for them to use the waterways. It was noted that some boats on the local waterways are not licensed. This includes boats in a poor state of disrepair that are not fit for use. They may be because the occupants are unable to afford repairs or experience mental health and/or alcohol and substance misuses.

Summary

- 4.30 The consultations with boat dwellers and leisure cruisers offered important insights into the main issues regarding boat dwellers residing on the local waterways. A range of methods was used to gain insight into the number and accommodation needs of people residing permanently on boats in the area 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.
- 4.31 It was determined that there are no permanent residential moorings on the River Thames within Wokingham Borough. There are also no boat dwellers requiring permanent accommodation moored on other sections of waterways within Wokingham Borough. However, there are sections along the River Thames where boat dwellers regularly moor for short- and long-term periods. The moorings are unauthorised but are usually tolerated by landowners as there are few alternatives and do not obstruct moorings used by leisure boaters. Some private properties offer short- and long-term moorings either for a fee or for free.
- 4.32 Due to their unauthorised status most constant cruisers and boat dwellers reside on unauthorised moorings regularly and move around the local area. There was agreement amongst boat dwellers and leisure cruisers that there is a need for more transit and permanent moorings on the local waterways. In particular, they stated that there is a lack of affordable moorings, 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 the local waterways.

5. The accommodation needs of boat dwellers

Introduction

- 5.1 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). It is also in accordance with NBTAs guidance. Table 5.1 summarises the permanent residential accommodation needs of boat dwellers for the period 2019-2024.

Table 5.1 Estimate of the need for Permanent Residential Moorings 2019-2024	
1) Current identified permanent residential moorings	0
<i>Current residential supply</i>	
2) Number of unused residential moorings available	0
3) Number of existing permanent residential moorings expected to become vacant through mortality	0
4) Number of household units on permanent residential moorings expected to leave the study area in next 5 years	0
5) Number of residential units on permanent residential moorings expected to move into housing in next 5 years	0
6) Permanent residential moorings planned to be built or to be brought back into use	0
7) Less permanent residential moorings with temporary planning permission (occupied)	0
Total Supply	0
<i>Current residential need: Moorings</i>	
8) Residential units seeking permanent residential moorings in the area, excluding those already counted as moving due to overcrowding in step 12	0
9) Estimated residential units on temporary moorings requiring permanent residential moorings in the area	0
10) Estimated residential units on unauthorised moorings/constant cruisers requiring permanent residential moorings in the area	9
11) Residential units identified on unauthorised tolerated moorings requiring permanent residential moorings in the area	0
12) Residential units currently overcrowded on permanent residential moorings seeking permanent residential moorings in the area, excluding those containing an emerging residential unit	0
13) New residential units expected to arrive from elsewhere	0
14) New residential unit formations expected to arise from within existing family units	0
15) New residential units on waiting lists	0
Total Need	9
<i>Balance of Need and Supply</i>	
Total Additional Permanent Residential Moorings Requirement	9
Annualised Additional Permanent Residential Moorings Requirement	2

Wokingham Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment, 2019

Requirement for permanent residential moorings 2019-2024

- 5.2 Determining the accommodation needs of boat dwellers uses the same process as determining the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The following sections show the steps of the boat dwellers accommodation needs calculations.

Supply of moorings 2019-2024

Step 1: Current permanent occupied residential moorings

- 5.3 Based on information obtained through this study there are currently a total of 0 occupied authorised permanent residential moorings in the study area.

Step 2: Number of unused permanent residential moorings available

- 5.4 According to the survey data there is 0 vacant permanent authorised residential moorings in the study area.

Step 3: Number of existing moorings expected to become vacant due to mortality 2019-2024

- 5.5 This is calculated using mortality rates as applied in conventional Housing Needs Assessments leading to a supply of 0 moorings. This usually consists of apply a percentage rate e.g. 2% to determine vacancies on authorised moorings due to mortality. However, given that there are currently no authorised moorings in Wokingham, the value is nil.

Step 4: Number of household units on permanent residential moorings expressing a desire to leave the study area

- 5.6 There are 0 occupied authorised permanent residential moorings in the study area, therefore no boat dwellers residing on permanent residential moorings stated that they intend to permanently leave the study area, and thereby vacate a mooring, in the next 5 years.

Step 5: Number of household units on permanent residential moorings expressing a desire to live in housing

- 5.7 This was determined by survey data. It is assumed that anyone currently living on boats planning to move into houses in the next five years (step 5), and thereby vacate a mooring, 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

- 5.8 This is determined by local authority data. As there are no planning permissions or pending applications for moorings in the area, there are 0 new moorings expected to be built or brought back into use during this period.

Step 7: Residential moorings with temporary planning permission

- 5.9 This is determined by local authority data. There are currently no occupied moorings with temporary planning permission located in the study area.

Need for permanent residential moorings 2019-2024

Step 8: Residential units on permanent residential moorings seeking permanent residential moorings in the study area

- 5.10 Guidance suggests that those moving from authorised mooring to authorised mooring should be included in the needs section. As there are no authorised, permanent moorings in the study area, boat dwellers are only moving from unauthorised moorings to unauthorised moorings. As such, in relation to step 8, there are no boat dwellers on authorised moorings seeking to move within the study area.
- 5.11 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

- 5.12 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.

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

- 5.13 Guidance (DCLG 2007) indicates that it should be considered whether alternative accommodation is required for households residing on unauthorised moorings. Through evidence collected as part of this consultation it is estimated that there are around 30 unauthorised moorings and constant cruisers within the study area. According to stakeholders and boat dwellers not all those residing on unauthorised moorings require permanent residency. 9 boat dwellers consulted have evidence of need. This results in a total need for 9 moorings arising from households either residing on unauthorised moorings or constantly cruising around the local area.

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

- 5.14 This is where land is owned by the boat dweller or by someone who has given consent for the boat dweller to reside at that location, but the land does not have planning permission. A need of 0 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

- 5.15 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 this period

Step 13: New residential units expected to arrive from elsewhere

- 5.16 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 this period (based on 0%). However, there are moorings in Reading (as discussed in previous chapters) at risk of leading to at least 10 boat dwellers being moved out of the area. This need might impact on need in neighboring authorities including Wokingham.

Step 14: New residential unit formations expected to arise from within existing household units on permanent residential moorings

- 5.17 It is determined that this will result in the formation of no new households requiring residential moorings during this period.

Step 15: New residential units on a boat yard waiting list

- 5.18 From consultation with boat yard owners and managers, there are 0 households on a waiting list for permanent residential moorings at marinas in the study area. As such, it is assumed that there is no accommodation need deriving from waiting lists.

Requirements for residential moorings 2024-2036

- 5.19 The assessment estimates the future permanent residential moorings provision for the period 2024-2036. There are no known boat dwelling households in the area with need containing children`. This means that the average annual household growth rate is 0%. There is therefore no need based on household growth.

Table 5.2 Estimate of the need for permanent residential moorings 2024-2029	
Residential Moorings as at 2024	
1) Estimated permanent residential moorings occupied by boat dwellers	9
Supply of permanent residential moorings	
2) Plots expected to become vacant due to mortality	0
3) Number of residential units on permanent residential moorings expected to move out of the study area	0
Total Supply	0
Need for permanent residential moorings	
4) Residential units moving into the study area (100% of outflow)	0
5) Newly forming residential units	0
Total Need	0
Additional Need	
Total additional permanent residential moorings requirement	0
Annualised additional permanent residential moorings requirement	0

Wokingham Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment, 2019

Table 5.3 Estimate of the need for permanent residential moorings 2029-2036	
Residential Moorings as at 2029	
1) Estimated permanent residential moorings occupied by boat dwellers	9
Supply of permanent residential moorings	
2) Plots expected to become vacant due to mortality	0
3) Number of residential units on permanent residential moorings expected to move out of the study area	0
Total Supply	0
Need for permanent residential moorings	
4) Residential units moving into the study area (100% of outflow)	0
5) Newly forming residential units	0
Total Need	0
Additional Need	
Total additional permanent residential moorings requirement	0
Annualised additional permanent residential moorings requirement	0

Wokingham Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment, 2019

Summary

5.20 Table 5.4 summarises the number of permanent residential moorings, required over the period 2019-36. It shows that a further 9 permanent residential moorings are needed between 2019 and 2036 in the Borough.

Table 5.4 Permanent residential moorings need 2019-2036	
	No.
2019-2024	9
2024-2029	0
2029-2036	0
Total	9

Wokingham Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment, 2019

6. Conclusions on the evidence

Introduction

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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

- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 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 definition developed by the NBTA in response to stakeholder consultation:
- “Someone who lives aboard a vessel (which may or may not be capable of navigation), that the vessel is used as the main or only residence and where that vessel is either (i) moored in one location for more than 28 days in a year (but may occasionally or periodically leave its mooring); or (ii) has no permanent mooring and navigates in accordance with the statutes appropriate to the navigation such as inter alia s.17(3)(c)(ii) of the British Waterways Act 1995 or s.79 of the Thames Conservancy Act 1932”.
- 6.5 The NBTA definition is the most comprehensive available and that which most accurately encompasses the range views expressed through the stakeholder consultation.
- 6.6 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

- 6.7 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 Wokingham Borough derives mainly from boat dwellers residing on unauthorised ('unregulated') moorings, tolerated unauthorised moorings, and constant cruisers who require accommodation in the local area.
- 6.8 Table 6.1 summarises the number of permanent residential moorings, required over the period 2019-36. It shows that a further 9 permanent residential moorings are needed over seventeen years throughout the study area.

Table 6.1 Permanent residential moorings need	
	No.
2019-2024	9
2024-2029	0
2029-2036	0
Total	9

Source: Wokingham BDAA 2019

Facilitating new provision

- 6.9 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'. 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.
- 6.10 Most, if not all of the need can be addressed by granting planning permission and working with NBTA to explore the potential for delivering a maintenance and mooring yard near Kennet Mouth. This could not only address the accommodation need in the area, but also have the potential to address the other needs that people on boats in the area expressed (including maintenance issues, access to facilities and accessible support).
- 6.11 Similarly, Wokingham Borough Council, CRT, and EA could collaborate to determine which existing temporary moorings along the Wokingham'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.
- 6.12 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

- 6.13 The precise location (along with services and facilities) should 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.
- 6.14 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.
- 6.15 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.
- 6.16 As discussed in previous chapters, NBTA have identified land through the stakeholder consultation exercise that they would like to develop a permanent mooring yard and maintenance yard. The proposed location of this yard (near Kennet Mouth) may provide a location to address a range of needs.
- 6.17 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 utilities/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 / lease?
- 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?

Temporary stopping provision

- 6.18 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 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

- 6.19 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.
- 6.20 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

- Relevant agencies to contact the marina owners and managers in Wokingham Borough to discuss the possibility of some leisure berths being granted planning permission for permanent residential moorings.
- The Council should liaise with the NBTA to determine the potential of the proposed maintenance and mooring yard (near Kennet Mouth). Also, to explore possible cross-boundary, duty to cooperate processes with neighbouring authorities to help NBTA develop this aspiration.
- Develop criteria and processes for determining the suitability of boat dwellers' residential moorings for including in emerging/future Local Plans.
- 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

- 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.
- To work with other agencies, including the EA, in order to review the enforcement processes that are in operation. In particular, consider opportunities to review the methods used by a private company to manage moorings along the Thames.

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 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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Glossary

Bargee traveller: people whose main or only home is a boat without year-round access to a permanent mooring.

Boat dweller: defined by the National Barge Travellers Association (NBTA) and adopted by this BDAA as:

“Someone who lives aboard a vessel (which may or may not be capable of navigation), that the vessel is used as the main or only residence and where that vessel is either (i) moored in one location for more than 28 days in a year (but may occasionally or periodically leave its mooring); or (ii) has no permanent mooring and navigates in accordance with the statutes appropriate to the navigation such as inter alia s.17(3)(c)(ii) of the British Waterways Act 1995 or s.79 of the Thames Conservancy Act 1932”.

Boat Dweller Accommodation Assessment (BDAA): a document which assesses the accommodation needs of boat dwellers.

Canal & River Trust (CRT): replaced British Waterways in July 2012. It is a registered charity whose main aim is to protect over 2,000 miles of waterways in England and Wales.

Constant cruiser: a boat dweller whose permanent residence is a boat but has no permanent mooring i.e. they constantly cruise. They may temporarily use transit moorings but such stays are usually limited to between 24 hours and 14 days.

DCLG Draft Guidance on Housing Needs (Caravans and Houseboats) (March 2016): provides advice on how to consider the needs of people residing in caravans or houseboats where they differ from those of the settled community.

Environment Agency: 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 and other river channels that join their main courses.

Houseboat: commonly defined by the HMRC VAT Notice 701/20, December 2013 as being a floating decked structure which:

- is designed or adapted for use solely as a place of permanent habitation
- does not have the means of, and which is not capable of being readily adapted for, self-propulsion” (HMRC VAT Notice 701/20, December 2013).

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.

Leisure cruiser: someone who cruises the waterways for recreational purposes and does not permanently reside on a boat.

Mooring: a place beside a canal or river used to moor boats. Some moorings have facilities such as electricity hook up points or space for storage. They can be used for temporary (transit) mooring or permanent mooring. ‘Authorised’ moorings have planning permission whereas ‘unauthorised’ do not.

National Bargee Travellers Association (NBTA): a volunteer organisation formed in 2009 that campaigns and provides advice for itinerant boat dwellers on Britain’s inland and coastal waterways.

Riparian: a person who owns land on the bank of a natural watercourse or body of water.

Transit mooring: a mooring used for a short period of time – usually between 24 hours and 14 days. Transit moorings are managed by a range of private and public organisations including the Environment Agency (EA) and Canal and River Trust (CRT).