

St Mark's: a Future Community Centre for Oliver's Battery



Dear Resident,

In 2013, we asked for your views on whether St Mark's Church should be re-built as a multi-purpose community centre for Oliver's Battery and adjacent areas. Of almost 200 replies, 90% said they would use a new centre and over 45% said they would be willing to make charitable donations towards it.

In January 2014, we formed a Project Group which aims to create the new building. We have developed a detailed specification and design concept, which we showed at the Oliver's Battery Fete on 7th June. On that occasion, well over 100 people gave their signatures in support and we received endorsements from the Mayor of Winchester, Steve Brine MP, and local councillors.

This leaflet is intended to tell you more about our proposals and to ask for *your* support. If a majority of residents are in favour, we'll set up a new charity to run the project. That will enable us to attract Gift Aid on donations and seek grants from funding bodies including local councils.

I do hope you will agree that this is what Oliver's Battery needs now and in the future. Our underlying aim is to ensure the future of existing community groups and stimulate the formation of many new groups. Please cut out and return the reply slip, or send an e-mail, and include your suggestions or comments. We look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,

Geoff Sharman
Chairman, St Mark's Project Group

Why do we Need a New Building?

In 1925, almost 90 years ago, residents of Oliver's Battery clubbed together and paid £10 for a wooden hut which was erected beside the Ancient Monument open space. There weren't very many of them, but they wanted a village hall and a church: one building had to serve as both. After use by the army during the Second World War the hut was in a bad condition, and a new building was needed. In 1956, residents and the church together raised £4000 to erect a prefabricated concrete building. Fifty eight years later, it too is showing its age with a leaky roof, inadequate insulation, outdated facilities, and there is a danger that it may become unusable.

Over the years, St Mark's has played host to a wide range of community activities from Brownies to elderly people's clubs, from disco dancing to patchwork quilting and community history discussions, from Women's Institute meetings to village fetes, and from Parish Council meetings to Church services. In any chosen week, you could attend a yoga class, find advice on continuing to live at home, sing in a choir, or enjoy ballroom dancing. Without these activities, Oliver's Battery would be just another dormitory suburb rather than the village community we know.

Residents of Oliver's Battery have the option to use Badger Farm Community Centre, and many do, but that centre is already fairly fully utilised. Discussions with their committee indicate that more space is needed, which a new hall could provide, and there may be opportunities for collaboration over booking arrangements. Some external hires would generate useful additional revenue.

The Project Group wants to secure the future of existing user groups, and encourage the formation of many new groups, by creating a building which is suitable for an increased number and range of community activities. It's especially important to provide for the needs of the very young and those older residents who are isolated or unable to travel far from home. The multi-purpose approach has worked well over many years and is in keeping with the spirit of the times where, as in the past, we need to maximise the value of our communal assets.

How Can it be Done?

St Luke's Parochial Church Council, which owns the land and building, has stated its wish to continue holding church services in Oliver's Battery and its intention that the land should continue to be used for community purposes. It proposes to achieve this by leasing the site to an independent charity at a nominal rent. That is equivalent to making a generous gift, because we could not afford to purchase another site.

The Project Group plans to set up a new charity to construct and manage the building. This would be governed by UK Charity Law, as administered by the Charity Commission, and would be required to demonstrate that it is providing a public benefit for the whole community, which must not be restricted to any particular group, religious or otherwise. It would be run by locally elected trustees and would be able to attract Gift Aid on donations.

The charity would develop a detailed design for the new building, which is expected to cost in the region of £600,000, and a fund raising programme to pay for its construction. This will include seeking pledges from local residents, running fund raising events, and securing grants from local authorities such as Oliver's Battery Parish Council, Winchester City Council, Hampshire County Council, and from other grant giving bodies. We will be asking everyone to give generously.

We've set ourselves a target of five years to complete the project. There's no doubt that will be challenging, but it will also be really worthwhile. As people of good will, we have a unique opportunity to create something which will benefit ourselves, our families, and others into the future. Let's seize that opportunity!

How Would the Building Work?

We envisage a two storey building which makes the best use of this unique but small site. The ground floor would include a large hall seating 120 people in theatre style, together with a modern kitchen, toilets, office and storage, plus a lift and stairs giving access to the upper floor. The first floor would provide a meeting room seating 40 people theatre style, with additional toilets and storage, plus an area which can be opened for use during church services.



The overall design would be highly sustainable, using high quality insulation, low energy lighting and renewable energy sources, plus a glassed stairwell and roof lights to provide light into the building. Glass doors on the north side would provide access to the Oliver's Battery Ancient Monument open space during community events, and there would be four additional parking spaces. The emphasis is on flexible operation for a wide range of purposes, with capacity similar to that at Littleton Millennium Memorial Hall.

This leaflet includes sketches of an exterior design concept which is intended to create the feeling of a modern community centre fit for the 21st Century. It would become the primary public building in Oliver's Battery, and complement its superb location next to the Oliver's Battery open space by providing access to it and views over it.

Although these sketches have been prepared by local professional architects, this is not a final design and there are many options for the appearance, materials and finish. Your comments are welcome.



What Happens Next?

At this stage, we are simply asking whether you support the principle of creating a new building: one created **by** the people of Oliver's Battery **for** the people of Oliver's Battery. If we receive sufficient support, we'll go ahead with the project as described. To achieve our fundraising goals, we need to show that a majority of the households in Oliver's Battery are in favour.

PLEASE SHOW YOUR HOUSEHOLD'S SUPPORT BY CUTTING OUT, COMPLETING AND RETURNING THE REPLY SLIP BELOW - EVEN IF YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY INDICATED YOUR SUPPORT.

Alternatively, please e-mail your reply to: geoffrey.sharman@btinternet.com

12 Olivers Battery Gardens SO22 4HF Telephone: 01962 867961

We Support the Project to Rebuild St Mark's

Name _____

Address _____

E-Mail _____

Telephone _____

Signature _____

Your Comments _____

Please return to: 12 Olivers Battery Gardens SO22 4HF