

**Olivers Battery
Parish Appraisal
1999 - 2001**

Final Report

Dear Parishioner,

You will recall that, in the Autumn of 1999, Olivers Battery Parish Council distributed a survey questionnaire to 650 households in the Parish. We were delighted to receive 330 completed forms, a response rate of over 50%, which is excellent and means that we can form an accurate picture of your views on a range of important topics. Better than that, it also demonstrates a high degree of interest and involvement in the democratic process - a traditional aspect of life in Olivers Battery which I hope continues long into the future.

The survey was intended to provide an in-depth view of Olivers Battery's residents and their wants, needs and worries. We retained the services of Dr. Andrew Clegg of University College, Chichester for the design of the survey and for subsequent data capture and analysis. The resulting information is included within this report. We are also grateful to many of you who were kind enough to assist with the distribution and collection of questionnaires.

At the outset of this process there were a number of views on what a Parish Appraisal is for. Should it attempt to:

1. Act as a focus for community involvement and activities?
2. Evaluate the services provided by the Parish Council?
3. Identify issues and concerns which are important to residents?

We were fortunate in that our initial meetings inspired David Farmer to embark on writing his *Brief History of Olivers Battery*, providing a splendid example of what can be achieved towards the first objective. Other suggestions for community projects are welcome and will be considered for tangible support. As a result of our survey, we also have much better picture of *you*, the residents of Olivers Battery, in profiles of your age, occupation, family structure,

and length of residence¹. It's sufficient to say that you are long-lived and many of you have resided in the Parish for a long time. Of course, these are factors we must bear in mind when thinking about your wants and needs.

We also received much useful information relating to the second objective, a good deal of it indicating overall satisfaction with the Parish Council's actions. This is gratifying and important, because all Councils have a duty to ensure that they spend tax revenues wisely. All District Councils, together with Parish Councils having an annual income of over £100,000, have a formal duty to provide "Best Value" and to report annually on how they are achieving that. In Olivers Battery, we are responsible for an annual precept currently standing at £20,000 (or approximately £27 per year for a Band D property) which forms an element of your Council Tax payments. The services we provide include street lighting, bus shelters, car parking and recreation facilities. In addition we provide some support for the Community Association and for Olivers Battery Primary School. In those areas where you have indicated a gap between needs and provision, we have striven to respond. As an example, it was very rewarding to hear that Community News is highly rated as a source of information about the local community. We will continue to support this and welcome your feedback at any time.

In this report, however, we focus primarily on the third objective of the Appraisal. After a careful study of the survey data and associated comments, we identified a number of major concerns which you have expressed. The following pages list these issues and concerns, together with a discussion of each and an indication of what action is being taken.

¹Information about individuals was not requested and has not been stored on computer. This appraisal does not contain information subject to the Data Protection Acts.

We noted that full responses to many of these important issues lie beyond the immediate powers of Olivers Battery Parish Council. They fall within the responsibilities of Winchester District Council, Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Police Authority and other bodies. The most useful action which we can take is to represent your views to these tiers of local government and to other relevant bodies. We will continue to do this by working with our District Councillor, Brian Collin, and our County Councillor, Ann Bailey, who have assisted us on many subjects and contributed much to the activities reported here. We will also work with the relevant officers and committees, and forward copies of our appraisal findings to these bodies.

This is particularly relevant at a time when many of these bodies are developing their plans for the next few years. In 1999, Hampshire County Council published its finalised *Hampshire County Structure Plan 1996 - 2011*, and has a number of other plans in various stages of preparation. Hampshire Police Authority publishes an *Annual Policing Plan*. Perhaps most importantly for us, Winchester City Council published the results of its *Future of Winchester* consultation exercise in mid-2000, and in October 2001 published the review version of its *Winchester District Local Plan 2001 - 2006*. Our best opportunity to influence these plans occurs while they are being developed.

I do hope you will find this report a useful form of consultation. Please let me have your thoughts.

Geoff Sharman
Chairman
November 2001

Local Issues and Concerns

Seven major issues and concerns were identified:

1. Housing Development

Major housing development on the boundaries of Olivers Battery would be unwelcome and should not be permitted. Further development of Olivers Battery should be restricted to the level which has occurred over the past ten years, ie. development of single dwellings in controlled locations, plus conversion or extension of existing buildings.

2. Quality of the Environment

The quality of the built and landscape environment may be harmed by litter, vandalism, and dog fouling. Action should be taken to reduce the incidence of these and similar nuisances.

3. Access to Badger Farm Road

Vehicular and pedestrian access to Badger Farm Road is difficult, especially at certain times of day, and should be improved to reduce waiting times.

4. Road Safety in Olivers Battery

The safety of pedestrians and other road users within Olivers Battery is endangered by speeding and careless parking, especially at certain junctions and road bends. Action should be taken to reduce speeds and improve safety.

5. Crime, including Burglary

There is continuing concern over crime, especially house burglary, which occurs periodically, and a desire to reduce crime levels.

6. Bus Services

There is a significant minority of households which do not own a car. These residents are dependent on bus services, which are also used by a wider group. Services which were barely adequate in 1999 have deteriorated and are now inadequate.

7. Recreation Facilities

There is a general desire for improved social and recreational facilities, with a cafe or pub being the most frequently cited need.

Discussion of Issues and Concerns

For convenience, the discussion is presented in the same order as the issues above. Some parts are necessarily rather lengthy, in order to provide sufficient detail.

Issue 1. Housing Development

Most residents of Olivers Battery would be opposed to new housing development in the Parish. 88% of respondents specifically rejected it, while around 60% felt that the level of development over the last ten years had been about right. Many felt that, if development were to take place, it should be restricted to single dwellings in controlled locations - reflecting the pattern of the last few years. It's therefore important to understand what safeguards current planning policy provides.

After much debate, the Hampshire County Structure Plan 1996 - 2011 set the number of additional dwellings to be constructed at 130,300 for that period, of which 42,000 are to be built in 2001 - 2011. An additional 14,000 dwellings may be permitted during this latter period, but only if they are found to be needed according to Regional Planning Guidance.

Winchester District's share has been set at 5,100 new dwellings for the period 2001 - 2011, and the City Council has determined that all of these dwellings can be built on "brownfield" land within existing communities across the district. To achieve this, existing settlements have been put into three categories: those where most development will occur, those where small developments will be allowed, and those where very little development will be permitted. I'm glad to say that Olivers Battery falls within this latter group.

Winchester must plan for an additional 3000 new dwellings which fall in the "if needed" category. Of these, 2000 are designated for a

Major Development Area to be held in reserve north of Winchester. This area has recently been defined as falling within an “Area of Search” which is bounded by the A34, Andover Road, and the Winchester to Basingstoke main railway line: an area which includes Barton Farm.

These provisions have been incorporated into the recently published Winchester District Local Plan Review, together with proposals for “Local Gaps” which are intended to prevent certain settlements from merging. One of these is the Winchester - Compton Street gap, which lies immediately south of Olivers Battery. If ratified, these plans permit only very small scale development in Olivers Battery and, I believe, satisfy our concerns at least for the next five years.

Action: Support Winchester District Local Plan proposal for Winchester - Compton Street Local Gap. Continue to monitor plans, provide feedback, and alert residents to any concerns.

Issue 2: Quality of the Environment

hOlivers Battery residents place a high value on open views, footpaths, wildlife and other aspects of the countryside. Many would like to see further improvements in the signing and maintenance of footpaths, action to combat overgrowth, and maps or leaflets of local walks. At the same time, there is clear interest in the quality of the built environment, including the siting and design of housing and the maintenance of roads, verges and other open areas.

We have continued to invest in an improved environment, through projects such as the resurfaced Footpath 7 which runs along the field on the southern border of Olivers Battery, the Millenium Tree at Olivers Battery shops, and the Conservation Area at the Recreation Ground. We have received very positive comments about these developments and believe they are welcomed. Nevertheless, the threat to our environment is real.

Fly tipping of rubbish, outbreaks of vandalism where bus shelters have been smashed, and the uprooting and destruction of picnic tables in the Recreation Ground have highlighted the seriousness of

this problem. These incidents reduce amenity and have a negative effect on public morale. Our normal practice is to repair the effects of vandalism to avoid a cumulative degradation of the environment. Unfortunately, this imposes costs on the Parish which have risen year by year. The problem seems to be very difficult to tackle. Part of the solution may lie in technical measures such as stronger materials for bus shelters and heavier concrete foundations for picnic tables. However, one can't help feeling that these measures are not really solutions and may only displace the problem to somewhere else. Clearly, we must continue to invest in enhancing awareness of the environment as well as in the improvements themselves.

Action: Continue to maintain and improve the landscape and built environment. Work to understand the source of environmental problems and possible remedies.

Issue 3: Access to Badger Farm Road

In your comments, many of you expressed frustration with the traffic problems at the junction of Olivers Battery Road with Badger Farm Road. The usual complaint is long waiting times, especially when turning right into Badger Farm Road, but there are also concerns about safety. The exact nature of the problems experienced varies with the time of day. We recognise that past limited measures, including revised white lining and a built-out kerb, have not reduced waiting times and may have caused problems for some road users. However, we believe they have improved road safety overall: there has not been a single accident since they were introduced.

We are therefore pleased that Hampshire County Surveyor's Department now has the funding to undertake major junction improvements. You may have seen the recent exhibition in St Marks Church Hall showing a revised layout with electronically controlled "smart" traffic lights, which is proposed for the Olivers Battery Road/Badger Farm Road junction. I do hope you took the opportunity to contribute your comments. The Parish Council support the planned layout, with minor amendments which we have requested.

Badger Farm Parish Council have taken the view that traffic lights will cause an unacceptable slowing of traffic and resulting congestion. We acknowledge this concern but believe it can be resolved by the appropriate management of the traffic lights. One of the clear benefits of the plan would be to enable easier access into and out of Olivers Battery at peak periods: something which could be very important should emergency vehicles ever need to enter Olivers Battery at those times.

Action: Support Hampshire County Council's proposals for a revised junction layout.

Issue 4: Road Safety in Olivers Battery

You reported significant concerns with speeding and careless or illegal parking. In the past, serious road safety incidents in the parish have included one fatality and one near-fatality, both in Olivers Battery Road. Fortunately, there have been no serious incidents in recent years although there are continuing concerns. In trying to tackle these, our experience over a number of years has been that requests for a pedestrian crossing at Olivers Battery shops and for traffic calming measures in Olivers Battery Road have been refused. This is unlikely to change. However, single and double yellow-lines were installed in Olivers Battery Road from the shops to the Badger Farm Road junction, and in Austen Avenue near to Olivers Battery School, some years ago.

In Olivers Battery Road these lines had the effect of reducing careless parking, but at the same time increasing traffic speeds. One response to this was to re-instate a limited amount of parking by the Olivers Battery open space. This has had the effect of creating an obstacle which naturally slows traffic in that area. Another response was to obtain Planning Permission for parking on the Compton Way forecourt of the ColourWorld shop, thereby increasing the total parking available. Though these remedies are not universally loved, they do seem to have struck an acceptable balance between safety and convenience.

In Austen Avenue, yellow lines appear to have displaced careless parking from one area to another. There is still a significant safety problem at peak periods when children arrive at the school or are being collected. The size of the school carpark is now inadequate for the number of cars arriving and its design is probably somewhat inconvenient. A campaign to encourage families from Badger Farm to walk to school was successful for a time, while a very effective crossing patrol was in place on Badger Farm Road, at the Meadow Way roundabout. Unfortunately, that has now lapsed. The forthcoming, traffic light controlled crossing at the Olivers Battery Road/Badger Farm Road junction may help to encourage walking again.

Action: Support measures which encourage walking to Olivers Battery School. Continue to monitor safety concerns in Olivers Battery Road and at the School. Implement additional measures as/when appropriate.

Issue 5: Crime, Including Burglary and Vandalism

Olivers Battery falls under the Central Hampshire Division of Hampshire Police Authority and is patrolled from Winchester. The Parish is ranked as a “low crime” area, and Badger Farm, Olivers Battery and Stanmore are patrolled by a single beat officer. Nevertheless, any crime is one too many and even low levels of crime can give rise to a “fear factor” which affects peoples lives. Unfortunately, the detection level in Hampshire is only 32% for all categories of crime and only 15% for house burglary, so it is difficult to remedy its effects once a crime has occurred. Whenever crime occurs, please respond by reporting anything you have seen via the 999 emergency phone service and inform your neighbours, Neighbourhood Watch coordinator and other interested parties including the Parish Council.

The most significant concerns reported relate to house burglary, vandalism or graffiti, and vehicle crime. These tend to occur in waves associated with particular groups of offenders. January 1996 was a particularly bad month in Olivers Battery with six burglaries. August 2001 saw three bus shelters extensively vandalised in a

single night. We have consulted the local Police on this incident but still don't really know who is responsible: the age of the perpetrators, whether there is one group or a number, and whether they live within the parish or elsewhere. One might speculate that young people are involved but, without information, we can't even be sure about this. Another recent burglary where jewellery and valuables were stolen indicates that these problems can recur. Any information here would be extremely valuable and could help us to decide what to do next.

Crime prevention is, of course, equally as important as the investigation and detection of crime. 80% of house burglary is opportunistic, using rear window or door access and so may be prevented by appropriate security. The most useful measures are to:

- report suspicious incidents/behaviour
- secure your house via a locked side gate, window locks, double locked rear door, and possibly an alarm system
- remove all valuable from locked cars
- inform neighbours and/or Police when you are likely to be absent for a long period
- consider joining a Neighbourhood Watch group or forming one in your area

During 1996, a security leaflet produced by the Parish Council together with our District Councillor was circulated to all residents and appeared to have a marked effect in reducing subsequent burglary. Since 1995, the Parish Council has also taken advantage of Hampshire County Council's Community Safety Initiative to obtain 50% funding for a programme of upgrading street lighting. Under this scheme, the lights in eleven streets have already been upgraded with four streets remaining, which we plan to do.

We have also responded to vandalism by removing the shelter from our Recreation Ground, repairing bus shelters and replacing other equipment when damaged. We consult with Hampshire Police and Neighbourhood Watch periodically, on all these topics.

Action: Hold periodic reviews with Neighbourhood Watch coordinators and Police representatives. Complete improvements to street lighting and other physical measures for reducing crime. Monitor incidents and continue to study underlying causes of crime.

Issue 6: Bus Services

The majority of households in Olivers Battery own a car, with 44% of households owning two or more cars. However, there is a significant minority of around 10% of households which do not possess a car and therefore rely on bus services for essential travel beyond the Parish. In addition, there are a number of groups such as school children and commuters who use the buses at peak times. The daytime Service 2 is operated hourly on a commercial basis by Stagecoach Plc, while the evening Service 5 is operated half hourly on a subsidised basis with funding from Hampshire County Council.

When the Parish survey was conducted in 1999, there was moderate satisfaction with the quality of bus services. Since that time, routes have been changed, the frequency of services has been reduced and different vehicles have been substituted. We have heard frequent complaints about all these aspects of the service. It is now difficult to plan shopping trips to Winchester and visits to the Hospital in Romsey Road. Stagecoach have been unresponsive to complaints and other representations, suggesting that Service 2 is now very marginal. It's increasingly ironic that a better service is being provided during the evenings, at public expense but very little used, than during the daytime.

Recently, the Service 2 has been routed from Olivers Battery to Badger Farm Sainsbury's, returning to Olivers Battery before proceeding to Winchester. This has provided the long-desired link with our major local shopping area and is therefore welcome. However, it may have the effect of lengthening overall journey times to Winchester and seems to have contributed to an overall perception of this service as erratic and unreliable.

In the current situation, many bus users have little confidence in the service and have reverted to the car. Confidence-building measures

are very much needed. However, even the installation of the StopWatch information system, which might have helped, is years behind schedule and we anticipate little change in this situation. It's worth noting that the Winchester Dial-a-Ride service is available to the disabled of any age and offers considerable flexibility in the nature of the journey undertaken. This service is welcome, but unlikely to meet the needs of many of those within Olivers Battery who rely on bus services.

Action: In cooperation with District Councillors, continue liaison with Hampshire County Council and Stagecoach Plc. Press for better use of subsidy funds to improve frequency and reliability of service.

Issue 7: Recreation Facilities

Our survey showed significant interest in a range of potential recreational activities, including social facilities such as a cafe or pub, indoor and outdoor sporting facilities, senior citizens club and youth activities. It also showed moderate use (20 - 30% of respondents) of Winchester Recreation Centre and Olivers Battery Recreation Ground, with lower use (<10% of respondents) of Badger Farm Community Centre and South Winchester Golf Club.

The Parish Council has long invested in outdoor recreation and sporting facilities and will continue to do so. Improvements to the childrens play area at the Recreation Ground are being planned and we are considering what other provision may be needed. There are a number of possibilities such as hard surfaced sports areas, and some funding for these is available, but any proposals must be linked to an understanding of the needs of each group of potential users. We would like to see ideas from would be users to help us assess whether any particular idea is justified.

All residents of Olivers Battery have the right to use Badger Farm Community Centre, although it appears that few do so. In the past, social activities in Olivers Battery centred on St Marks Church Hall, with numerous groups ranging from childrens activities to senior citizens groups using this facility. Many of these appear to have declined and it is not clear whether the hall is fully utilised at

present. Given that both of these buildings are within reach, it would be hard to argue for increased investment in indoor recreation facilities. It may well be that organisation is needed, rather than facilities. Therefore, we have no proposals in this area at present.

It is also possible that a commercial facility, such as a pub, might be successful in Olivers Battery - though some would see this as a mixed blessing. However, with the very limited amount of space available, it's difficult to see how any new facility could be accommodated unless an existing building were converted.

Action: Continue to improve provision at Olivers Battery Recreation Ground. Study the need for indoor recreation and encourage greater use of existing facilities.