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## **Green Shoots – A Plan for Oliver's Battery**

*Something's stirring up in Oliver's Battery, and it's not just the snowdrops appearing ahead of all the other green shoots of Spring.*

Groups of up to ten people have been seen, similar in age and appearance, silent and purposeful, separately approaching particular houses around the area, then leaving a couple of hours later together - relaxed, laughing and convivial. And later on from those houses, awkwardly loaded into the backs of cars, a large black metal structure, fixed to flapping white sheets of paper, is transferred round the corner to yet another house to await yet another group of silent, purposeful people. What on earth can be going on???

Well, it's nothing strange, sinister nor unlawful, it's just the **Focus Group Discussions** for the Oliver's Battery Community Plan – the very first consultation exercise taking place in the run up to the public Launch Meeting of the Plan in April. And the large black metal structure? The flip chart stand, flip charts attached, moving from one venue to another!

These **Discussion Groups** are drawn from particular 'life stages' in the community. This is why each group appears of similar age and appearance. We invited a group of those with families with younger children, a group of older people with no dependent children, a group of those with families of older children and a group of people who have come to live in the Battery more recently, since the last census in 2011.

During their two hour meeting, the groups were led by a professional market researcher, and an observer wrote findings and comments on the flip charts. (And served the teas and coffees!). Participants were asked firstly about their experiences of living in Oliver's Battery. Then they were asked about both the positive and negative things about living here and about how things have changed, for better or for worse. In pairs, they were then asked to discuss in detail what changes they would make to improve a particular weakness that needed dealing with. These ideas were shared with the whole group, trends noted and priorities established.

Overall, the groups were asked to think about transport, roads, communications, and housing, aspects of community such as open spaces, facilities, landscape and community activities and the wider environment, including 'green' ideas. Finally, people were asked to identify the key things to have come out of the discussion and the main recommendations that would be made from their group.



The findings from all the groups, analysed by our market researcher, will be presented to the public at the **Launch Meeting** for the Plan on the memorable day of **Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2015** (No April Fools here!!) **at 7.00 pm at Oliver's Battery Primary School**, together with similar investigations from primary and secondary school residents. It should be an interesting and thought provoking evening. It leads off the major **Discussion and Consultation Phase** in the creation of the Plan, immediately after the Easter holidays. There will be meetings at different times of day and on different days of the week, for everyone in the community to come along and have their say.

So please, ***put Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 7.00 pm at the Primary School in your diaries*** and come along to find out what our representative sample of residents say about life in Oliver's Battery and their hopes for the future. And, after Easter, watch out for dates for you to come along and add your own opinions to the discussion. Looking forward to seeing you!! ***If you want to find out more about the Oliver's Battery Community Plan, or want to get involved in any way, please contact: Cllr Constance Leach on [constance@leach154.plus.com](mailto:constance@leach154.plus.com).***