



SOUTHEY OWLERTON NEIGHBOURHOOD STRATEGIES
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**SUPPORTED BY SOUTHEY /
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Longley

“ Longley feels like the most self-contained of the neighbourhoods, the one with the clearest sense of its boundaries. It typifies the slopes and hollows character of the wider area with its feeling of shelter and seclusion. The scale and history of the Park and Dyke landscapes contrast with the domestic scale of the housing areas, which include the best example in the area of a formal garden city layout. The Four Greens is currently the only part of Southey Owlerton where green space and community buildings come together to form a neighbourhood centre.”

INTRODUCTION

LOCAL and Longley Hall Farm TARA became involved with the Southey Owlerton Neighbourhood Strategy process in April 2001. Since then they have been working with other local groups and key stakeholders to develop their strategy.

This document sets out the proposals agreed by the group to date. Feedback on these was sought at the SOAR Celebration Day and will be tested at other events to be held in Longley during the summer of 2002.

Although much work has previously been developed and delivered in Longley due to the energies of the two lead TARA's, the Neighbourhood Strategy process has helped to bring a number of ideas together at the neighbourhood scale. The next phase of work will consider how these initiatives can be implemented.

The Neighbourhood Strategies process is about improving quality of life. The reports in general focus on the physical regeneration of the neighbourhood because in most cases improving and/or developing buildings and open spaces is essential in improving the delivery of local services and activities. Physical changes, because they are visible, are also a key factor in promoting neighbourhood identity and improving the image of an area.



THE PROCESS SO FAR

At the early meetings between LOCAL and Longley Hall Farm TARA the groups recognised that each had achieved a lot independently over recent years and agreed on a number of initiatives that it would be beneficial to work on together:

1. Employment initiatives
2. Crime reduction
3. Housing
4. Longley Park
5. Shared delivery of local services
6. Improving the transport between the two estates

In particular they felt that Longley Park would be a focus around which the two communities could work together.

Despite sending out invitations to a number of individuals and groups within the neighbourhood, the early meetings were only attended by a small number of groups. This was felt to reflect the fact that a great deal of consultation had been carried out in the past and that considerable regeneration activity had been funded and delivered already.

The group hosted a walkabout of both estates for the Council officers and independent advisors in September to show them what had already happened and what issues still needed to be tackled. One issue that emerged on the walkabout was the untapped potential for larger stakeholders such as the Northern General Hospital and Yorkshire Water to get involved in the process and the neighbourhood. It was agreed to invite them to a workshop, held in December, to discuss future links.

At the December workshop the SOAR team presented questions that the officers and independent advisors had on the physical aspects of the estate following the walkabout. It was agreed to develop consultation materials based on these questions. It was also agreed that, because of the amount of consultation carried out in the past and the importance of Longley Park to local people, it would be useful to join forces with Friends of Longley Park and consult on the park and the wider neighbourhood together.



The Lark in the Park Event

The Longley neighbourhood group worked with the Friends of Longley Park to plan a joint event in Longley Park on 14 February 2002 – the Lark in the Park. A pink ice rink (last used by Posh and Becks for Brooklyn’s birthday party), brilliant sunshine and the half-term holiday combined to attract some 300 people to the event, with plenty of children and young people represented.

In order to “earn” a free go on the ice rink people were asked to take part in two out of four activities in the (heated!) marquee. They were:

- Mark where you live on the model and comment on trigger boards about physical aspects of the wider neighbourhood including a draft diagram(see Appendix)
- Mapping exercise of how people move around the estate and where the focal points are (see Appendix)
- Time line and photos/interviews to explore people’s personal journeys and memories of the estate
- Comments on the proposed masterplan for Longley Park
- Creative writing and local distinctiveness project focusing on the Park

The event was a great success and there was general consensus about the priorities for improvement.

All of the information from the event was presented back to the neighbourhood group in March. Local people went through the trigger boards and other information and agreed their conclusions and recommendations. These have been incorporated into the trigger boards and reflected on the diagram included in this report. Both will be tested further with the community at feedback events planned over the summer including the SOAR Celebration Day on 18 May 2002.



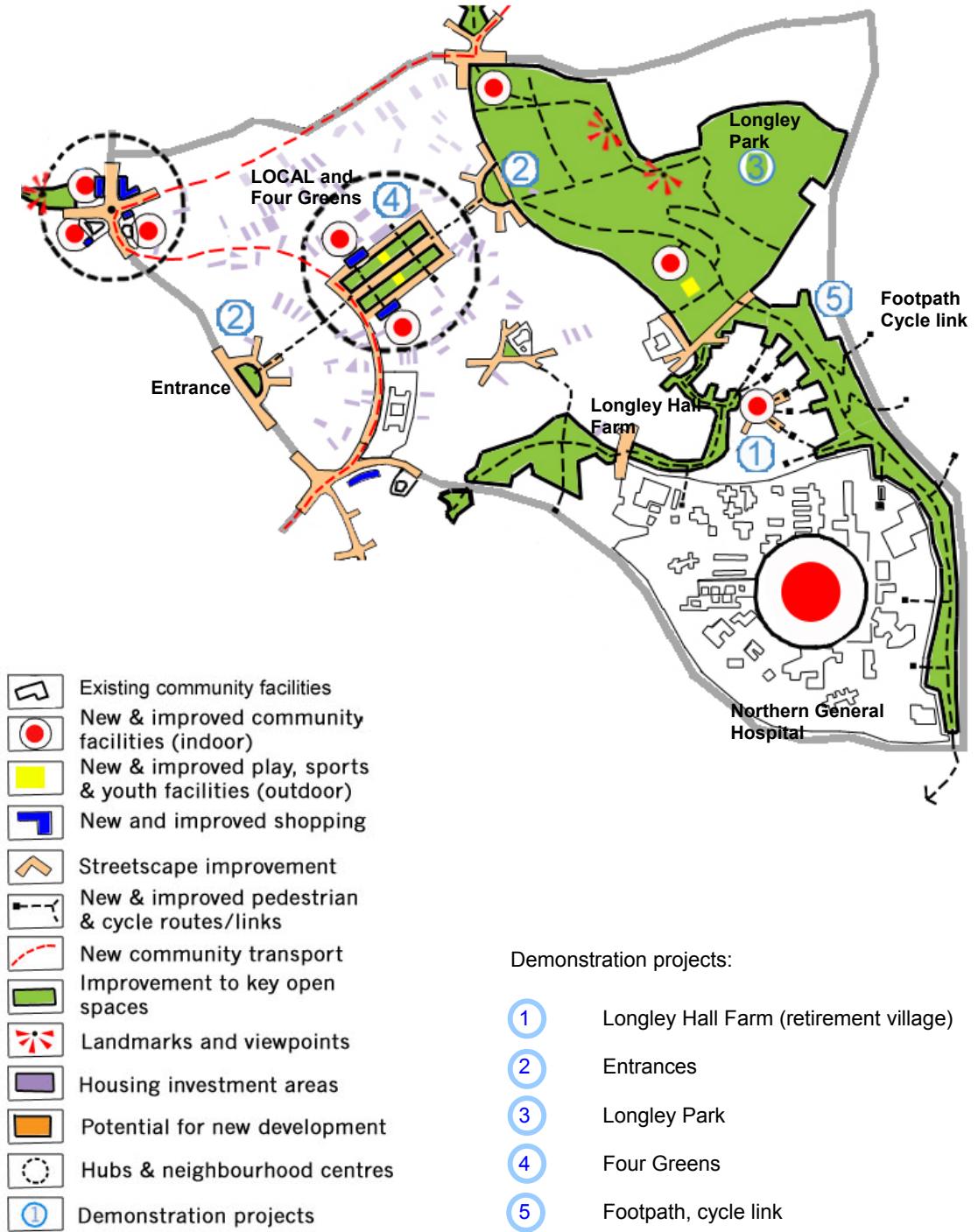
Trigger board explaining how Longley is a place attractive to all generations

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD STRATEGY FOR LONGLEY

Impressions of the place

General impressions about Longley that have emerged from conversations over the last few months are:

- The particular character of the two estates – the LOCAL area as somewhere for families and Longley Hall Farm as somewhere special for older people
- The importance of family and friends in the neighbourhood – although people have moved onto the estate from a variety of places and the role of the extended family is perhaps less crucial here than in other parts of Southey Owlerton, there is a strong sense that Longley is a good place to bring up children.
- Even when people have moved away from the estate they have fond memories of family experiences there and come back to visit, especially to the Park.
- There is a clear sense of the neighbourhood as a safe place to live; but also concerns that fear and crime are beginning to creep in from neighbouring areas and a strong desire to stop this happening, to hold this back.
- Linked to this is a clarity about the boundaries of the neighbourhood and the feeling of the two estates being quiet havens
- Longley Park has a very precious place in people's hearts – they have recent memories of family days out and of the uniqueness of the pool, experiences which they would like to reclaim. However there is also a sense of sadness about whether this could ever be recreated and if it were, how it could be protected and looked after. People feel the Park is somewhere safe for their children to go, because houses overlook it and because in some parts it can be accessed through gardens.
- The Park is a magnet for the area and people travel from across the city to come to it and have a day out, especially with children. The hill with its views and the woods are singled out as special places by lots of people, both old and young.
- The greenness of the estate with its mature trees and big open spaces
- An awareness of the potential of the Four Greens and the café at the heart of the neighbourhood and impatience that the proposals be carried out
- A strong feeling that Longley is different from the other neighbourhoods



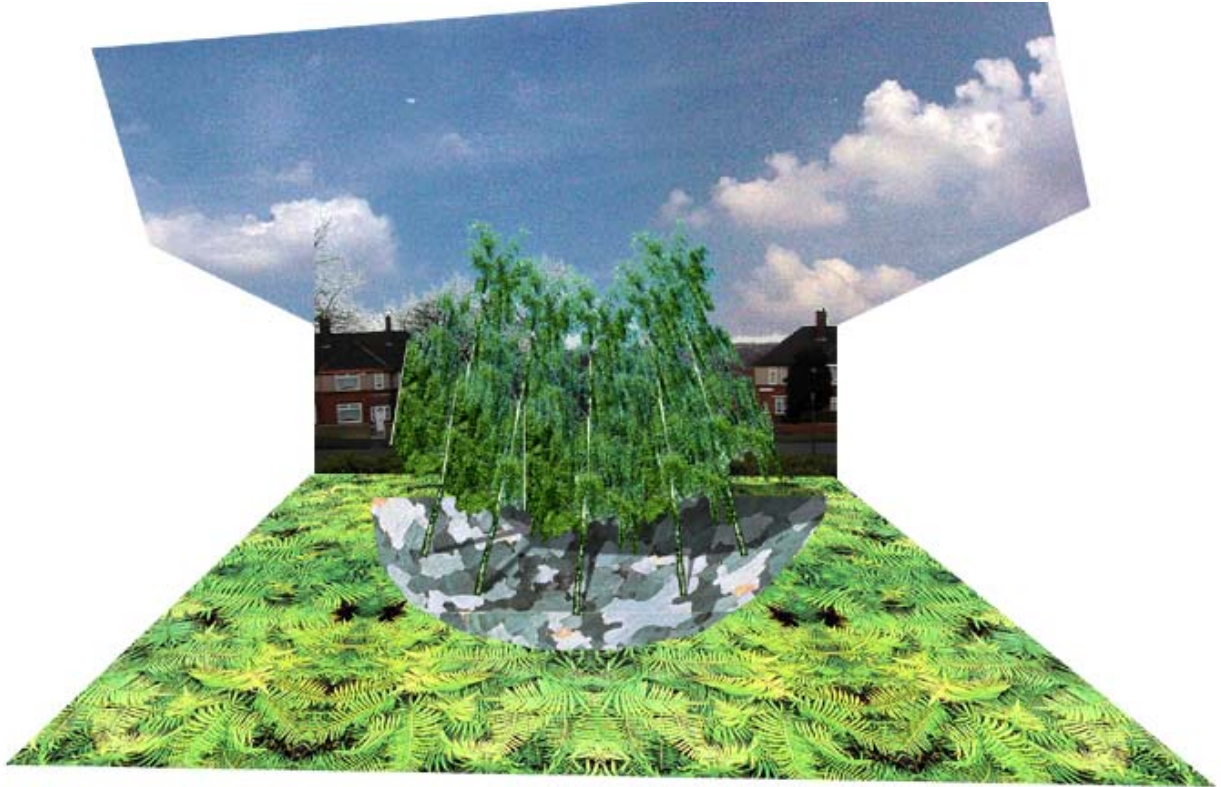
Neighbourhood Strategy Diagram for Longley

The diagram

Rather than trying to map all of the issues and activities the framework diagram for each of the six neighbourhoods in Southey Owlerton identifies priorities for action. Each of the six diagrams has a standard key or checklist so that when they are pieced together they will form a coherent framework.

What has emerged in terms of a physical plan for Longley is:

- The importance to the LOCAL estate of the two formal entrances (off Moonshine Lane and Crowder Avenue), the central road and the Four Greens as the centrepiece of the neighbourhood and the main way of being able to tell where you are. The relationship between the community facilities and the green space is unique in Southey Owlerton – elsewhere buildings back onto the open spaces whereas here they front onto the Greens.
- The need for a centrepiece to the Longley Hall Farm estate that would include some community facilities, as well as improvements to the streetscene and parking
- The need for investment in the Park that will build on its natural qualities but at the same time provide the right facilities in the right places
- The location of most shops and other facilities at one edge of the neighbourhood - Southey Magnet, Herries Road and Northern General (a city scale facility) – and the importance of large areas of green at the other edge of the neighbourhood – Longley Park, Bagley Dyke and the allotments.
- The role that better pedestrian routes can play in joining these facilities to the housing areas. Two sorts of route have been identified: a strategic green route that runs from the Hospital up Bagley Dyke through Longley Park and onto Parson Cross and Colley Parks; and more local streetscene routes linking the core of the two estates to the shops and green areas on either edge.
- How the location of new facilities on these routes can make sense of them, by giving people extra reasons to use the routes and experience the best and busiest parts of the neighbourhood
- How the Park, whilst forming an edge to the neighbourhood can also form a link with other housing areas around it like Firth Park
- The sustainability of most of the housing across the estate. This has been further secured by investment through the trickle transfer in partnership with South Yorkshire Housing Association. In addition there is scope for development of new sorts of housing such as bungalows.



**something people don't expect something specific to Longley neighbourhood
somewhere to sit and read information about the community something to do with Sheffield**

Trigger board exploring ideas for the entrances to Longley

Identity

The character of Longley has three elements:

- A clear sense of boundaries and seclusion
- The formal layout of the LOCAL estate typical of garden cities
- The nature woodlands and steep slopes of the Park and Dyke which contrast with the domestic scale of the housing areas

Although both estates have a distinct identity they have one key characteristic in common: clear boundaries and a sense of seclusion. On the walkabout we were struck by how quiet the neighbourhood seems. The LOCAL estate is sandwiched between Moonshine Lane and Herries Road to the south and Longley Park to the north. Longley Hall Farm has a single main entrance and is effectively a cul de sac tucked in a corner between the steep embankment of Bagley Dyke and the bulk of the Northern General Hospital.

In the LOCAL area the topography, mature landscape, the layout of the Four Greens and the two formal entrances combine to create a distinct identity, that typifies the aspirations of the garden city movement. The strongly defined entrances, the siting of the estate in the hollow and the quantity of mature and large trees create the sense of quiet and safety that people like so much and that makes the estate so attractive to families. By retaining and developing these features the estate can strengthen its identity.

For example, at present the layout of the northern entrance lacks a clear geometry and neither entrance signals that it is the way into the estate. In the consultation people talked frequently about wanting better signage of the estate. These entrances could be really effective “front doors” if some special landscape/sculpture/signage features marked them and this would increase the sense of privacy and seclusion of the area.

The Four Greens lie in the hollow at the heart of the estate, as if in the palm of its hand. LOCAL's store, café and community rooms along with other facilities around the Greens have reinforced the sense of this as the heart of the neighbourhood. The plans for new facilities on the Four Greens along with the closure of the road through them will add to this. Careful treatment of the physical relationship between the buildings and the Greens and bringing more life to the buildings and streets around them can make the whole area feel more like a hub.

The mature trees are a key part of the identity of the estate. However in parts where the roads are narrow, they can also make the area feel narrow and gloomy. A programme of planting, maintaining and replacing trees needs to start now so that this character is not lost. New trees should reflect the original species used - it is the height and scale of the trees that makes so much difference. In general higher levels of maintenance of the estate landscape would add greatly to its attractiveness.



Longley Park attracts people from all over the city

In Longley Hall Farm the feeling of an enclave is more pronounced, because there is only one main route through. Also the style of the estate (built in the 1970's) is different from neighbouring areas. The larger scale of the Dyke landscape and the hospital buildings adjacent to it increase the sense of intimacy in the estate. However it would be beneficial to give the estate a physical centre, to use big street trees to add some scale to the main road and to enrich the footpath links to the Dyke.

Longley Park itself has a very strong identity and as a result attracts people from all over the city. What sets it apart from other local parks is its history; its origin as a kind of hybrid between large gardens, parkland and countryside; the maturity and expansive scale of the landscape; and the feeling that it has been designed and planned for people to enjoy. The landform is also very special – there are fantastic, south-facing views from the high ground and you can see into it from most sides. This makes it feel both safe and shared. Just as the Four Greens feels like the heart of the estate, this heart-shaped park feels like the centre of this part of the city.

For both estates the location of larger facilities and open spaces on the edges of the neighbourhood rather than in the middle adds to their tranquillity, domestic scale and intimacy. However good links to these facilities is important - if the estate began to feel cut off from them it might feel isolated rather than secluded. Some of these links will be physical – footpaths, entrances, gates – but other links can be made through the identity, especially of the green landscape. In other words the points where the estates join both the green areas and the main roads need to express the special character of Longley.

The key to this identity may be to take the best of the Park/Dyke landscape to enhance the garden city feel of the older estate. The mature woodland and trees at Longley Park and the Dyke are echoed in the street tree planting in the LOCAL estate and add to the feeling of an established, stable neighbourhood. So the character of new facilities on the Park could also be echoed in the look of the Four Greens. And just as the overlooking of the Park by housing makes it feel safe for children, so the interface between the buildings around the Greens and the new spaces can add to the well looked after, family feel of the estate.



A consistent pattern of blossom trees, cycle and footpath with occasional bench seating and low level lighting bollards could connect all the parks and linear walkways.

Trigger board exploring what the strategic footpath route from the Hospital to Parson Cross Park could look like.

The Bigger Picture

In the main Neighbourhood Strategies report we describe a number of “big ideas” and development principles that together could establish a positive identity for the Southey Owlerton area. At the next stage of developing design briefs for individual projects, it will be important to reflect these ideas and principles.

The relevance of these ‘big ideas’ for Longley is as follows:

- A clear footpath link between the Park and the Four Greens and between the Park and Longley Hall Farm as well as a shared landscape character will help to join up the green spaces in the neighbourhood and give the sense of a green infrastructure to everyday life that could become a hallmark of this part of the city. This can have spin off benefits like bringing visitors to the Four Greens café or supporting an outpost café in the Park. (*Park city and Green arteries*)
- Creating a footpath/cycle route from the Hospital (or even the city centre), that runs up Bagley Dyke and through the Three Parks to the countryside beyond, will provide a real connection between the neighbourhood and the Hospital, but also a walk that could attract people from the rest of the city - especially given the reputation and quality of Longley Park. (*From city to country and back again*)
- This route, that starts in the mature woods of the Dyke and climbs up through the woods of the Park to the open grassy ridges with their spectacular views, will encompass the distinctive vegetation patterns of Southey Owlerton. Sculpture on the skyline in the Park will emphasise the quality of the views and the importance of the ridges in the area. (*Identity from landform and See and be seen*)

The demonstration projects can express the new identity for Southey Owlerton as well as the special character of the Longley neighbourhood:

- Any new housing or improvements to the existing properties should reflect the character of housing in a sheltered hollow, very different from the high ground and open views of other neighbourhoods. This means building on the traditional, close-knit, cosy feel of the neighbourhood; exploring warm, earthy brick and render colours; and using small front gardens, trellises and balconies to enhance the greenness. An emphasis on housing for the elderly will reflect the secluded, local feel of the neighbourhood.
- In particular opportunities should be taken, if they arise, to increase the density around the Four Greens by building taller terraces of buildings and including shops, community facilities and offices at ground floor level.
- New landscape proposals need to reflect the mature, tree-canopied character of the neighbourhood. Within the Park this will mean woodland clumps and specimen trees; within the estate this will mean large trees organised in formal avenues on the main roads and around the Four Greens. The entrances should combine the slopes and hollows character of the built and green environment.
- The strategic route through the parks explores the managed landscapes of the estates and alternates between the hilltop and slopes characters.



Longley Hall Farm Estate

PROJECTS THE COMMUNITY WOULD LIKE TO TAKE FORWARD

The priorities that local people have identified are set out below.

Work with the Housing Service to develop ideas around housing

Both TARA's have a long track record of being active in housing issues, although each has very different interests. LOCAL is primarily interested in exploring housing options and contributing to the debate on stock transfer and stock reduction. Trickle transfer of 150 properties to South Yorkshire Housing Association is well underway. They would like to explore the potential for environmental improvements or new development where houses can only be accessed by steep steps and ramps. They would also like to encourage the Housing Service to look at other options such as trickle transfer so that learning from Longley can be shared with other neighbourhoods.

Longley Hall Farm began as an elderly persons' estate. However a recent change in lettings policy, due to decreasing demand for the estate, means that potentially a single person over the age of 35 years could let an upper floor flat. Both the TARA and the Housing Service monitor this for possible problems with clashes of lifestyles. The TARA is therefore interested in re-instating the estate as one for older people and would like to explore the provision of sheltered housing and housing for visiting relatives. The housing stock has identified investment needs such as metal windows and poor insulation that the Housing Service is currently trying to address.

The TARA's would therefore like to work together with the Housing Service on providing and marketing the estates jointly by offering a mix of housing - family housing in the LOCAL area with a link to housing for elderly relatives on Longley Hall Farm (a kind of retirement village). The need for better facilities on Longley Hall Farm including off-road parking in the centre and a better link with Longley Hill are also issues. Some people wanted a direct link to the Northern General, although others are strongly opposed to this as it encourages outsiders to use the estate as a visitors' car park.

They would also like to work together with the Housing Service on tenancy agreements, support to vulnerable tenants, probationary tenancies etc. In addition they feel that crime will be reduced in the area by improving the quality of doors and windows and by removing overgrown shrubs on Longley Hall Farm.



bring the cafe outside down grade the roads open up the four greens add more colour

Trigger board exploring ideas for the Four Greens

Mark the entrances to Longley and the main road through the estate

The idea of having distinctive entrances to the estate is strongly supported locally. Although most people thought of signs, others mentioned art work, a poster advertising the facilities in the park, signs that flash at night, a map and a newsletter. As the two entrances are large semi-circles of grass, this suggests that an imaginative approach could be taken to combine landscaping, sculpture and signage to create something really special.

For the main road people suggested similar ideas as well as changing the colour of the road surface and making it clear that the Four Greens is for people not cars.

A series of sculptures is proposed in the Longley Park masterplan. It may be that an arts commission for the entrances and Four Greens could link to these and create a sculpture trail that would reinforce the footpath link between the Greens and the Park, as well as the shared Longley identity.

There is also a proposal to make Raisen Hall Road one-way, with traffic allowed into the estate but not out of it. This would avoid a dangerous junction with Moonshine Lane.

Improve the Park

The Friends of Longley Park have commissioned a landscape masterplan. This is documented in a separate report. The Park has emerged as a key project for both estates and an opportunity to strengthen the identity of the whole neighbourhood.

Implement the proposals for the Four Greens

LOCAL have commissioned a masterplan for the Four Greens and have secured funding for two of them. Linked to this is the proposal to change the Unitary Development Plan zoning of two of the Greens from housing to open space, to transfer the land to LOCAL and allow for the closure of the road between the Greens.

As well as the ideas for the Greens themselves, there was support for linking the café and other indoor facilities to the outdoor spaces by making better use of the pavements and streets between them and the Greens.

There was also support for linking the Greens to the Park – by improving the entrance off Crowder Avenue, by looking at the balance of facilities for children and young people on both sites, by giving them a shared visual identity and by linking the LOCAL café to catering in the Park.



LOCAL store and cafe

Create a footpath & cycle link to connect the Hospital to the Dyke and parks

People were enthusiastic about this idea. Some knew the route of old and others still walk it but not in new shoes! There was concern that safe crossing points were needed, especially at Southey Green Road to make the link to Parson Cross Park.

People remember how the Dyke used to flood and create a seasonal duck pond. They would like to ensure that Yorkshire Water allow for this to happen again, when the major works to the Dyke are carried out.

It is felt that this route could attract workers from the Hospital to visit the Park at lunchtimes and after work and that this would be one way of making a relationship with the Hospital and capturing some benefits for the neighbourhood.

Develop a positive relationship with the Northern General Hospital

The Hospital has been receptive to getting involved in the Neighbourhood Strategy process. It effectively turns its back on Longley and tends to see Firth Park as its neighbouring community. Staff have recognised that this needs to change and that it would be helpful to form a relationship with Longley too. The footpath route is seen as one practical way of linking the two and raising the profile of the Park with workers and visitors to the Hospital. However there may also be other initiatives to explore around employment and local services.

Improve the transport links between the two estates

The diagram shows the proposed community transport route. The group needs to discuss how this can make a link to Longley Hall Farm.

Develop a range of local services as part of the social economy of the neighbourhood

The physical proposals for the neighbourhood are focused on a few key sites. In other words large areas of the diagram are blank! What has become apparent through the consultation is the need for locally delivered services that will improve the quality of life throughout the two estates. The two TARA's have recognised that they can work together on these.

The list of possible shared services that have been discussed are:

- Youth club
- Lunch club
- Companions club
- Home helps
- Bowling club
- Shops – joint staffing and buying
- Housing advice
- Garden service and maintenance team
- Legal services
- GP services?
- Post Office?

LOCAL's track record in developing social enterprises will help to ensure that the development of these services will also address some of the training and employment needs in the neighbourhood.

NEXT STEPS

We believe that the priorities for the next twelve months in the Longley Neighbourhood Strategy process are:

1. Continue to talk to the Council about the housing issues

These are:

- The idea of using the principles behind the “retirement village” concept to further improve Longley Hall Farm
- To discuss options around stock transfer including the possibility of a Community Owned Housing Trust in Longley

2. Continue to talk to the Council about traffic issues

These are

- Possibility of making Raisen Hall Road one-way into the estate at the junction with Moonshine Lane
- Parking issues across the estates

3. Decide how the neighbourhood group will operate and be resourced during the implementation of the strategy

At present the neighbourhood group is an informal group of groups. Community elections to the SOAR Board and its theme groups will mean that up to seven neighbourhood representatives will need a defined group to belong to and report back to. A decision is needed about whether to formalise the neighbourhood group in some way.

In addition there is currently no dedicated worker to take forward the strategy. The group will need to decide what resource it needs – whether, for example, existing workers could pick this up or whether a new (part-time?) worker is needed – and how it will direct the work.

4. Develop local services

Northern Clusters is a project based in LOCAL that aims to develop the social economy in North Sheffield. There is clearly an opportunity to use this expertise to explore how to develop some of the services identified by the group.

It is also necessary for LOCAL to enter into discussions with the Council about the development of locally delivered services, especially around the environment and social care.

5. Raise funds to implement the masterplans for the Four Greens and Longley Park

Both projects will need significant capital funds. Capital funding is not readily available to these neighbourhoods at present. There is need to continue discussions with the Council concerning:

- Prioritising resources, both staff and capital funding/bids, to implement the masterplan for Longley Park
- Support for the implementation of the Four Greens masterplan including closure of the road between the Greens, changes to the Unitary Development Plan to zone all of the Greens as open space and transfer of the land to LOCAL

6. Develop a local identity project for the key bits of streetscene in the neighbourhood

The two entrances, the main road through the estate, the streets around the Greens and the key entrances to the Park all provide major opportunities to develop and promote a Longley identity. An arts based approach to this work could also be a fantastic opportunity to engage a range of age groups and people who are not already involved actively in the neighbourhood. It is suggested that funding is sought to commission artists and designers to work up proposals, using the local distinctiveness project from Longley Park as the starting point.

7. Explore the feasibility of the footpath route from the Hospital to Parson Cross Park

If this route is going to be strategic and attract people from across the city, it needs to be of a high quality and carefully designed. This will be a major project. In the first instance exploring the feasibility of building this route will be a good opportunity for people in the neighbourhood to engage and form a relationship with major stakeholders such as the Council, Yorkshire Water and the Northern General Hospital.

The group needs to work with the Council to help influence Yorkshire Water to ensure that their proposals for Bagley Dyke maximise the opportunities for a footpath link, landscape and wildlife value

8. Start talking to Northern General Hospital about links with the neighbourhood

The Hospital has given a positive response to the process so far and is obviously keen to foster links with Longley. It would be good to explore ways of taking this relationship forward through tangible projects such as consultation and displays within the Hospital, use of the exhibition space for the local identity project, the footpath link, housing links and possible employment ideas.

APPENDIX



Model showing the houses of people who came to the Lark in the Park Event



Mapping exercise at Lark in the Park Event showing how people move around the estate