



SOUTHEY OWLERTON NEIGHBOURHOOD STRATEGIES

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**SUPPORTED BY SOUTHEY /
OWLERTON AREA PANEL**



Southey

“ Southey is like a microcosm of the wider estate: its naturalistic open edges and magnificent woods reflect both the grassy ridge character and the slopes and hollow character that are typical of the wider area. Also the contrast between the urban focus at the Magnet roundabout and the countryside feel of the open spaces is a theme running through the rest of the estate. Of all the neighbourhoods Southey has the most intriguing views, with the twists and turns in the landform creating surprise vistas and changing aspects at every site.”

INTRODUCTION

Southey and District Action Group (SADAG) became involved with the Neighbourhood Strategy process in April 2001. Shortly after this Objective 1 Priority 4 declared the area a Pioneer Community (with Shirecliffe). This has released European funds, matched with Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funding, to provide workers and support to an umbrella group in each of the two neighbourhoods. SADAG will be the umbrella group in Southey.

The Neighbourhood Strategy process has been developed sequentially in the first five neighbourhoods that form the core housing estate in Southey Owlerton. Of these, work in Southey started most recently. This report therefore sets out the progress and ideas to date; these will require further development and consultation over the next few months. In addition no detailed work has yet been done on housing demand and turnover issues in the area.

The issue of neighbourhood boundaries has arisen in Southey, as parts of the area wanted to work with Parson Cross Community Development Forum and part of what we call Parson Cross wanted to work with SADAG, because they feel their links are with the Southey Green parish, schools, shops and transport. We have kept to our neighbourhood boundaries on the maps (which are defined by major topographical features) but encouraged groups to choose the neighbourhood group that they work with. This has caused continuing discussions within the two groups and they have decided to work together in the overlapping areas.

Although the Southey Neighbourhood Strategy is in its early days, we should like to thank all involved for their enthusiasm and support to date and look forward to developing the ideas with them over the next few months.



The Model showing the houses of people who came to the Southey Shout Event
Southey Shout Event

THE PROCESS SO FAR

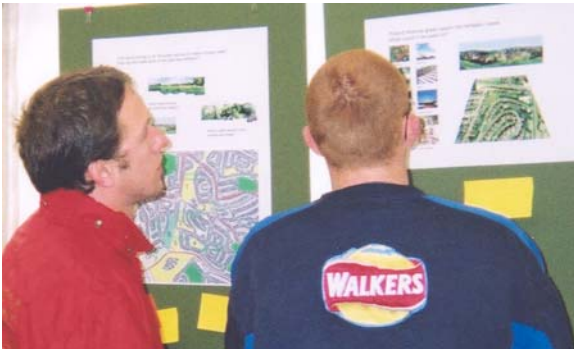
At the first meeting in April 2001 to discuss the Neighbourhood Strategies process local groups and workers agreed on the key issues facing the area:

1. The future of the housing
2. Development of shopping, community and health facilities at the Magnet site and roundabout area
3. Facilities for young people linked to reducing crime and nuisance
4. The environment, both the open spaces and the look of the streets
5. Road safety especially near the roundabout and transport

SADAG had been meeting bi-monthly with support from a worker employed by North East Sheffield Trust (NEST) through a European and SRB funded project and continued to do so. The group had also previously done some work under NEST's Grassroots Action Planning process to identify the key issues facing the neighbourhood. This work was taken on board within the new process. In addition the Sheffield Wildlife Trust are actively working with local people to develop ideas for some of the green spaces in the area.

SADAG took the Council officers and independent advisors involved in the Neighbourhood Strategies process on a walkabout of Southey on a gloriously sunny day in October 2001. We started at the roundabout/Magnet area and explored the sheltered and sunny green spaces below the Magnet and along the edge at Maggie Fields before dropping down into the wooded valley by Cookson Park.

The model of the area was finished early in 2002 and this allowed the group to consider the issues from the walkabout and their previous work and to plan how best to consult on them. It was agreed that, as some consultation had already been done over a number of months, it would be best to test some specific ideas rather than start with a blank sheet.



SADAG worked with the Neighbourhood Strategies team on an event for 28 April 2002 – the Southey Shout – held in a marquee on Cookson Park. The activities in the tent included:

- Mark where you live on the model and comment on trigger boards about physical aspects of the wider neighbourhood (see below)
- Collage exercise to develop ideas for the Southey/Magnet roundabout (see below)
- Mapping exercise to highlight problems of road safety and parts of the estate that feel unsafe for other reasons
- Photos/interviews to explore people's ideas for youth and community facilities on the estate
- Comments on the Wildlife Trust's proposals for Cookson Park

The weather was both windy and wet on the day – this helped drive people into the tent but in the end the pub proved a greater attraction. However, although the numbers were modest (50 people signed in) the comments and feedback were extremely useful. The displays were used to gather more feedback at the SOAR Celebration Day on 18 May 2002 and will be put up in the Library at the roundabout for further consultation over the summer.

The information from the Southey Shout and the Celebration Day was fed back to SADAG who agreed on the recommendations and conclusions that have formed the basis for the proposals in this report.

It is important to point out that no detailed work has been undertaken to date on the housing demand and turnover issues. This work is likely to follow next winter, so the diagram remains incomplete for the time being. However, the Housing Service has indicated that, in the meantime, it is happy to continue to take on board specific housing concerns that the group has and will actively contribute to the neighbourhood strategy process.



The green spaces, views and woods give a sense of countryside to parts of the neighbourhood

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD STRATEGY FOR SOUTHEY

Impressions of the place






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

- The housing areas have a quiet, backwater feel that is in contrast to the busy hub at the Magnet roundabout. The green spaces, views and woods give a sense of countryside almost, to parts of the neighbourhood.
- Busy main roads through and around the area cause problems for people walking across the neighbourhood; the quieter residential streets, although less dangerous in terms of traffic, feel unsafe partly because they are so quiet
- There is a real lack of community facilities in the neighbourhood especially for children and young people - who hang around in groups and add to the feeling of the area being unsafe
- Although some of the local groups have been meeting for some time, others are new; in general there is a feeling of the neighbourhood coming to life in terms of community involvement.
- Groups have been held back by lack of resources and meeting space. SADAG is desperate for an office base from which they can recruit more local people, provide good information and have a visible presence in the neighbourhood
- Recent community work has started to bridge the gap between old and young people in the neighbourhood and this is seen as very positive, especially in reducing the fear of crime
- The neighbourhood has fuzzy boundaries, perhaps an indication that its identity and confidence is still developing
- The dynamism and enthusiasm of local activists is a positive force to harness for the future



-  Existing community facilities
-  New & improved community facilities (indoor)
-  New & improved play, sports & youth facilities (outdoor)
-  New and improved shopping
-  Streetscape improvement
-  New & improved pedestrian & cycle routes/links
-  New community transport
-  Improvement to key open spaces
-  Landmarks and viewpoints
-  Housing investment areas
-  Potential for new development
-  Hubs & neighbourhood centres
-  Demonstration projects

Demonstration projects:

-  Magnet roundabout and hub
-  Cookson Park
-  Maggie Fields
-  Herries Rd Junction
-  Ridge route

Neighbourhood Strategy Diagram for Southey

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 identified 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 Southey is the need to:

- Develop facilities at the two main roundabouts (Magnet and Ritz)
- Tackle road and community safety issues
- Link up the open spaces and provide facilities, especially for children and young people
- Carry out detailed work on the housing

Southey Magnet roundabout, although right on the edge of the neighbourhood, is without doubt the focal point for **community facilities**. The roundabout has a commanding site at the crest of a hill with long views to the west and so is both a physical and social focus for the area. At present it is extremely run down and sad looking – the Magnet site is derelict, the shops lack investment and the landscaping is poor. The roundabout collage exercise at the Southey Shout showed graphically how people see the future of this area: a vibrant, colourful urban experience with a landmark community building, improved shops, new road crossings, sculpture and high quality, formal landscaping.

The Ritz roundabout at the bottom of the hill is another potential focus, although the future of the Ritz building itself is uncertain.

The safety audits at the event highlighted where **road and community safety** improvements are needed. These focus on the Magnet roundabout, Wordsworth Avenue, Herries Road and access to schools for road safety and the diagram shows a number of locations for streetscape improvements. Community safety issues are concentrated around footpaths through open spaces and gennels. Some of these can be improved through better lighting and trimming bushes. Improving the footpath network by bringing more facilities into the open spaces will tackle others.

Young people in particular focused on the need for **facilities in the open spaces**. The diagram shows how a sequence of green sites can be linked throughout the neighbourhood. Young people highlight Cookson Park in the valley bottom, as it has some minimal facilities already. It needs to be linked to the ridge sites to east and west, especially to Maggie Fields and the sheltered, sunny sites below the Magnet site. Recreation facilities are proposed on these three sites, to draw people in and make sense of the footpath links through the neighbourhood as well as making them safer. This will also bring people to the best viewpoints, which are a key feature of the neighbourhood's identity (see below).

As we have said above detailed work on the **Council housing** in the area needs to follow. This will allow us to complete the diagram by showing areas of possible housing investment and potential new development (if any are defined).



People see the future of the Magnet roundabout as a vibrant urban place

Identity

Southey's physical identity is based on three key elements: its landform and views; the contrast between the "urban" focus at the Magnet roundabout and the "countryside" feel of its open spaces; and the garden city character of the housing areas.

The landform is particularly distinctive. The valley rises up from the River Don past the Oxspring ponds and along Wordsworth Avenue, with Cookson Park settled in the valley bottom. Either side of the valley the ground rises steeply to an edge: to the west to the viewpoint at the back of Binstead Crescent and to the east to a series of viewpoints – Donovan Road, Pollard Avenue, Maggie Fields and the Magnet. The connections between these are not obvious at present: linking up the green spaces and providing footpath links between the viewpoints will help highlight this aspect of the neighbourhood.

The views themselves are extraordinary. Although interesting views is a feature of almost every neighbourhood in Southey Owlerton, this is especially true in Southey. Here the twists and turns in the landform create surprise vistas and changing aspects at every site. Again the proposed footpath and open space network will make these a key feature of the neighbourhood.

Nowhere in Southey Owlerton is there more contrast between the urban and countryside characters of the estate than between the Magnet roundabout and the rural qualities of the open spaces in Southey. Although the roundabout is depressingly run-down and incomplete in terms of urban form, it is interesting how everyone in the collage workshop envisaged it as an impressive, formal urban space.

The open spaces are completely different. Magnificent woods survive from an earlier landscape on the lower valley slopes in the south of the neighbourhood; the edge sites are natural, open grasslands with pockets of scrub and panoramic views. The sites feel natural partly because they lack facilities. But even Cookson Park which has seen some improvements has a surprisingly naturalistic character.

The third strand of its identity is of a garden city estate, built as a piece that did not plan for car ownership at the level that we have today. The large gardens and small pieces of green within the housing areas have the potential to provide a pleasant setting. However in many places lack of maintenance, too few street trees and inadequate parking arrangements instead contribute to the poor image and unsafe feel of the neighbourhood.



The edge sites are open and grassy

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 and 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 for the ‘big ideas’ for Southey is as follows:

- Using the proposed footpath network and new facilities to link the green spaces both to each other and to the Magnet roundabout will help create a green backcloth to everyday life that could become a hallmark of this part of the city. (*Park city and Green arteries*)
- New features at the viewpoints and ridges – especially where these are visible from beyond the neighbourhood such as the Magnet roundabout and Maggie Fields – also need to celebrate the view and make Southey visible to the outside world. These might be new buildings, planting, lighting or artworks. (*See and be seen*)
- The footpath route that runs from the edge of Parkwood Springs in the south along the valley and up into Maggie Fields is part of a longer ridge route that could connect the city centre to the countryside. Similarly the spur that goes to the back of Binstead Crescent and across Halifax Road is part of a longer ridge route from the city centre via Parkwood Springs to Foxhill Back Edge. (*From city to country and back again*)
- These routes travel through landscapes that are distinctive within Southey Owlerton and a key part of the identity of the wider area – the wooded banks of the steep lower valley slopes and the open grassy ridges with panoramic views over the city and countryside. It is therefore important to retain and enhance these vegetation patterns when developing new landscape proposals. (*Identity from land form*)

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

- There is the potential on the hilltop at the Magnet roundabout to develop denser, mixed-use buildings that will provide a range of facilities, make the area more of a landmark and create a vibrant focus for the neighbourhood. This will enhance the contrast with the quieter more residential parts.
- New facilities and features on the open grassy edge at Maggie Fields should push up into the sky making the most of the views, the sun and the wind. By contrast at Cookson Park and the Herries Rd entrance the main character would be of sheltered woodland in a hollow.



Trigger board exploring a possible community hub at the Magnet roundabout

PROJECTS THE COMMUNITY WOULD LIKE TO TAKE FORWARD

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

We need resources for our community groups

SADAG is now being supported as the umbrella organisation for Southey under the Pioneer Community project and is currently recruiting a development worker to help it fulfil this role. However an office base, community meeting space and an information point are desperately needed to allow local groups to move forward. The preferred location for this is the Magnet roundabout, as this is the focus for the neighbourhood. The Library and Southey Training and Resource Centre may offer some temporary solutions but a longer-term base needs to be developed, starting now.

We want to realise the potential of the Magnet roundabout as the centre of the neighbourhood

These are the facilities that local people have identified could and should be at the roundabout:

- better shops including fresh fruit/vegetables and a butcher
- base for local/community enterprises
- a community centre with office & meeting spaces
- youth drop-in
- play area for children
- crèche/childcare
- information point and a bigger library
- a bigger training/IT centre
- safer road crossings
- better public transport
- bins and recycling facilities
- smart new landscaping of the roundabout and streets around it

The Magnet site offers the potential for a new mixed-use development which, coupled with improvements to the shops, could radically alter the roundabout area. It has also been suggested that organisations such as Sheffield REBUILD and even SOAR may wish to get involved in the development of this site, as part of their plans to secure an asset base. However both the Magnet and the shops are privately owned.

A feasibility study to explore the options for this area has already been suggested. Because of the strategic value of this site, any redevelopment will require the highest quality of physical design.

As well as providing for practical needs in the neighbourhood any developments at this site would be a highly visible sign that things are changing and getting better. The site therefore also has a symbolic role in the regeneration of the neighbourhood.

What would you like to see in this space?



viewing point



wild flowers



stairs



water feature



seatings



public art



toddler play



youth play



The Ritz building has potential

People have talked about redeveloping the Ritz building as a community centre. The owner of the site is currently seeking planning permission for residential use on this site. It is not clear whether he wishes to convert the cinema or redevelop it. It is suggested that some initial discussion are held with him, with a view to including the site within the Magnet feasibility.

We need to provide things for young people to do on the open spaces

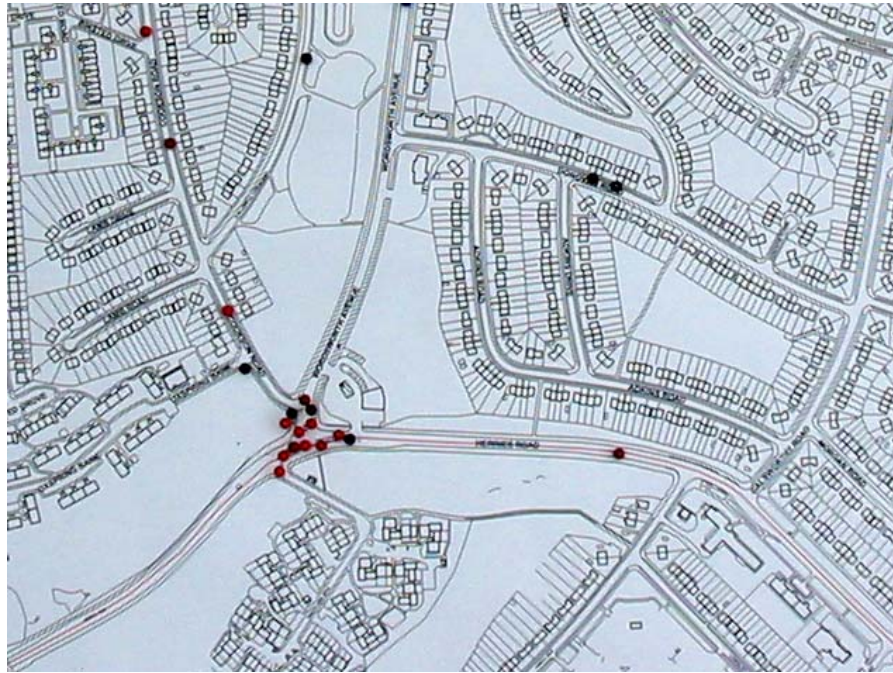
One overwhelming conclusion from the consultation to date is the need for play and sports facilities for all ages, but especially for children and young people. Southey has a number of sites to choose from and the comments so far have suggested different kinds of facilities for different sites. This is unusual as in most areas people propose the full list of facilities for every site. This suggests that the sites have different qualities and are suitable for different uses. The suggestions are:

- Cookson Park for youth facilities including the existing play area (improved), a multi-sports area, rollerblading, climbing feature and an upgraded skate park.
- Maggie Fields for a youth club and play area
- Slopes below the Magnet for a crèche and play area; also one suggestion for a community garden centre
- Pollard Avenue for wild life and a viewing point
- Donovan Road Community Garden for play and picnics

Young people consulted also wanted more grassy areas and cleaner sites and equipment. Adults were interested in organised sports & play activity for young people and a youth club.

We could make some interesting walks through the area

Linked to the idea of improving the open spaces is the idea of developing a footpath network across them. People suggested a nature trail, sculpture trail, dog walk, adventure type play and banning motorbikes. As well as linking in to longer routes with other neighbourhoods, there seems to be some scope for developing a series of walks within the neighbourhood.



The junction between Herries Road and Wordsworth Avenue is unsafe and makes a poor entrance to the Estate

Make the roads safer!

Southey is bounded by two busy roads – Herries Road and Halifax Road – and also has a lot of traffic on Wordsworth Avenue, which runs through the valley. The junction between Herries Road and Wordsworth Avenue is singled out as the most dangerous road crossing, but other places also cause problems: the junction of Halifax Road and Southey Green Road; Wordsworth Avenue which links the two areas of housing either side of Cookson Park; the roads around the Magnet roundabout; and the approaches to Southey Green School.

Where the neighbourhood meets the main roads on its boundaries crossings need a careful review. Wordsworth Avenue is a problem because its function is both that of a residential road and that of a through road linking to Parson Cross and providing a short-cut to the city centre. Road humps have been put in to slow traffic down but better crossing points are also needed between the houses and Cookson Park.

Make the neighbourhood feel safer too

Generally people highlighted as areas where they feel unsafe in the neighbourhood alleyways & gennels between houses and footpaths across the open spaces. Other sites such as the Magnet & Wordsworth Drive shops (where young people hang out) and Herries Road where no houses front onto it (below Penrith Road) were also singled out. People also find it frightening at the backs of public buildings, near empty houses and at the former Texaco garage site.

People suggested that ways of tackling these issues were to improve street lighting, cut down overhanging bushes and reduce the number of vacant houses. They also recognised that providing things for young people to do in the neighbourhood was a key aspect of making it feel safer.

Something needs to be done with the petrol station site

This site is not only important to Southey but also provides an entrance to the wider area, as it is the first development you see after you pass under the railway viaduct on Herries Road. People miss the local convenience shop that closed when the garage shut down. They also suggested that this might be the site for a market or a café linked to the Park.

Again this site is privately owned. It is suggested that the feasibility proposed for the Magnet area could also perhaps consider this site.



A feasibility is needed to explore the Magnet roundabout opportunities

NEXT STEPS

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

1. Continue to consult on the proposals in the Neighbourhood Strategy

There has been limited consultation to date, as the process is still in its early days. SADAG already has plans to display the consultation materials from the Southey Shout in Southey Library for ongoing comment and at other events over the summer. This work will also form the start of a mini Community Action Plan for Southey under the Pioneer Community project.

2. Talk to the Council about the key issues it can influence

These are:

- Possible Investment in and sustainability of the Council housing
- Road and community safety issues
- Discussions with private landowners over key sites such as the Magnet, Ritz and former Texaco site

3. Identify existing SRB funded projects that can help with the projects listed above

SADAG and other local groups are already working with projects such as Community Chest, North Sheffield Wild Web and the Community Safety environmental improvements. There may also be scope for projects like Northern Clusters to help with the building feasibility and for Urban Lynks to get young people engaged.

4. Commission a feasibility study for the key development sites

SADAG has already identified the need for a feasibility study for the shops and vacant land around the Magnet roundabout. It is suggested that the scope of this study is extended to include other key privately owned sites such as the Ritz building and the former Texaco site and to assess the potential of all of them for community and mixed use. If Rebuild and SOAR are interested in being part of the redevelopment, they need to be engaged now before the brief is drawn up and should contribute to the costs of the study! It is suggested that SADAG invite them to a meeting to see how to take this forward.

5. Engage young people in plans for the open spaces

Some consultation has already started on these through the Wildlife Trust's work. However the open spaces are a key opportunity to engage young people positively in plans for the neighbourhoods. It is suggested that SADAG approach Urban Lynks for help and/or fund their own youth project through the Pioneer Community programme. Using creative tools, such as the video recently done with Eventus, will be essential to grab young people's attention and energies.

Cookson Park is the first site being brought forward for significant improvement. This is a key site for the neighbourhood and needs a high quality design solution to maximise its potential as a focus for people of all ages, an entrance to the neighbourhood and an opportunity to showcase the natural qualities of the area.

6. Do something at the Magnet roundabout!

Developing plans for the Magnet roundabout is a long-term project that will take several years to come to fruition. In the meantime, because the roundabout is so visible and important in the neighbourhood it would be great to carry out some improvements, such as to the roundabout or the streetscape around it. It is suggested that funding is identified (through the existing Pioneer Community project?) to commission artists and designers to work up proposals for a small early project.

7. Start developing the Southey walks

It is suggested that SADAG work with the Sheffield Partnership for Lifelong Learning (SPELL) in Southey Owlerton to set up a group that could explore the history and natural history of the area as a basis for developing the idea of trails and walks in Southey. The group could also commission artists and writers to develop a leaflet and objects along the trails that explain their value to local people.