

SOUTH KIRKBY AND MOORTHORPE COMMUNITY SURVEY



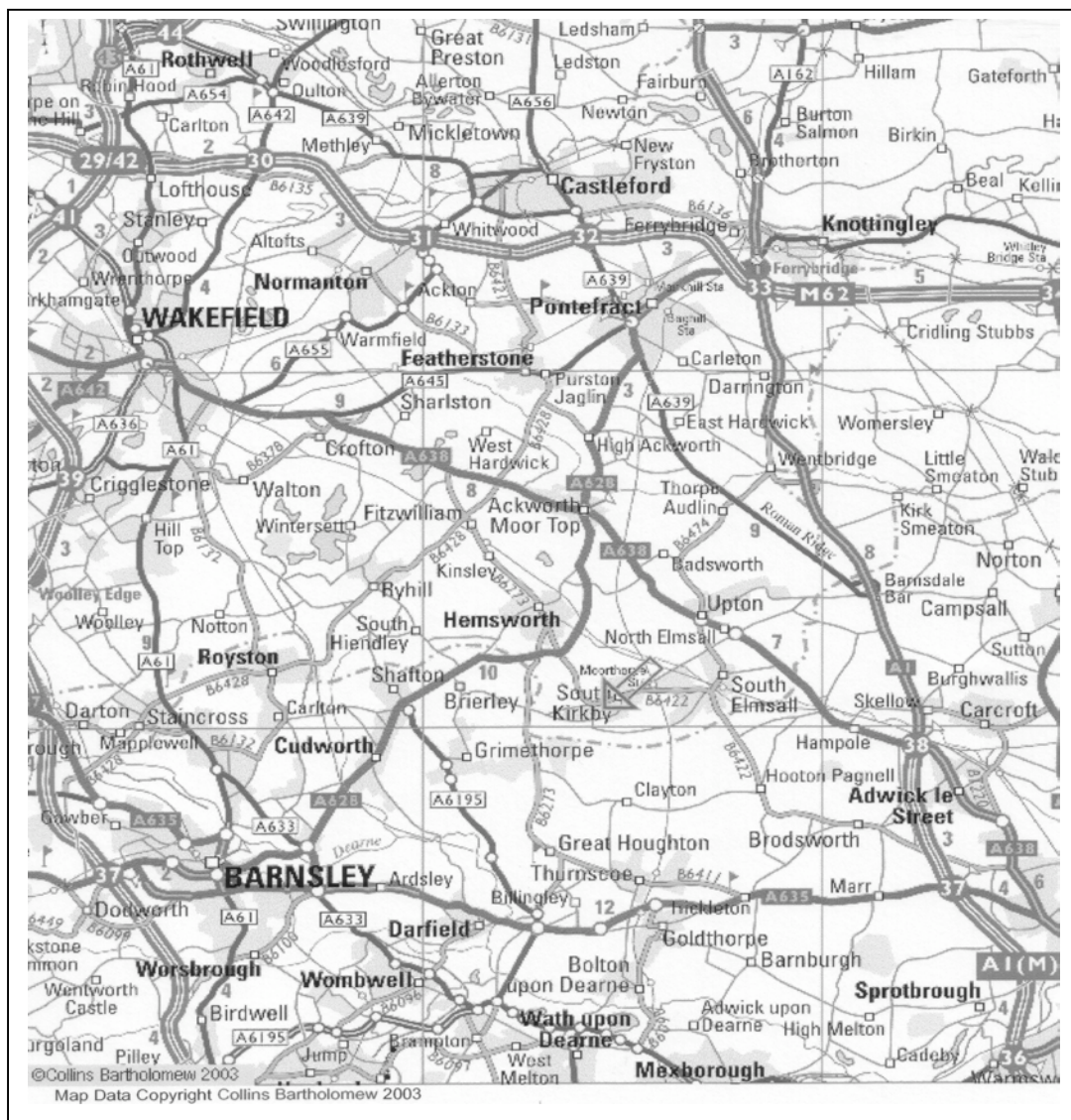
March 2005

South Kirkby and Moorthorpe

South Kirkby and Moorthorpe fall within the South Kirkby and South Elmsall ward. Prior to the ward review in 2004 both South Kirkby and South Elmsall were separate wards, since the review they have been combined into one ward known as Ward 14 within the Wakefield District.

Both South Kirkby and Moorthorpe are also supported by a Town Council, who are active in the villages and form part of the Steering Group involved in developing and undertaking the Community Audit.

Geographically, it is located about half way between Wakefield and Doncaster and nearby to the towns of Pontefract and Barnsley.



History and Industry

Both villages are mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, as settlements growing close by to North and South Elmsall. The villages remained small agricultural communities until the Industrial Revolution when the villages began to grow. However even in 1893, South Elmsall only had some 58 houses and corn milling was one of the main industries in the village.

The village began its change in the late 19th century; in 1866 the Doncaster to Wakefield Railway was completed and this meant that people could reach nearby towns more easily.

With the opening of Frickley Colliery in 1903 and neighbouring South Kirkby, which was the first deep mine to be sunk in 1876, the area led to the population growing rapidly. The villages spread until, today, South Elmsall, South Kirkby, Moorthorpe and Minsthorpe have no obvious visible boundaries between them and the villages appear more like a small country town.

The collieries provided the livelihood to the area and as pits flourished so too did the towns; estates were built, as were schools, services and other small businesses to sustain the pits and the growing population¹. However with the closure of the South Kirkby pit in 1988 and Frickley in 1993 the area has seen increased unemployment and social problems brought about in part by the demise of its main industry.

¹ Source: www.halinaking.co.uk

The demise of the coalmines in the late eighties and early nineties left an enormous vacuum for the people, where you had an industry that employed 75% of the local male population, suddenly there was none. There followed a period of severe social and economic deprivation with unemployment at twice the national average, coupled with low incomes and few opportunities. The reaction was for the community to close ranks and become very insular in their outlook, politicians were not to be trusted and still today there is a feeling of "nobody wants to know us" "nobody is doing anything".

The area today

Overall the area today has issues with health and health related disabilities, a higher than average number of incapacity claimants, lower than average educational attainment and basic skills needs in both literacy and numeracy. Unemployment is slightly higher than the average and long term unemployment is also higher than both Wakefield and the national average. In terms of crime, whilst some elements are reducing, theft of a vehicle and violent crime in the area are increasing.

To address this, the area is now being regenerated and has become 'home' to a number of warehouses and national distribution centres. Whilst employment has returned to the area there is still much to be done to address and invigorate the local area.

South Kirkby Community Project

Following an approach by the Chevin Housing Group, The Coalfields Regeneration Trust were minded to make a strategic intervention in the

area during 2003. This resulted in a partnership arrangement between **The Coalfields** Regeneration Trust as the funding body, Chevin Housing Group as the accountable body and employer, and South Kirkby & Moorthorpe Town Council providing an administrative base at The Grove, South Kirkby. The Partnership created the South Kirkby Community Project with the objective to provide an effective point of contact for and support to, voluntary and community organisations in South Kirkby & Moorthorpe.

The aims and objectives were to provide through the employment of a regeneration officer: an effective point of contact and support to voluntary and community organisations in South Kirkby & **Moorthorpe**; to identify social and economic regeneration projects; and to develop these projects by working with key agencies across the district and linking them with local strategies. Another key element was the provision of a small grants programme through which voluntary and community organisations, operating in or whose beneficiaries were in South Kirkby & Moorthorpe, could access a micro-grant up to £500. Access was by application to a grants panel comprised of members of the steering group. The total pot of money available was £10,000.

Success to date

The project has been very successful in supporting up to thirty voluntary and community organisations across the district and awarding twenty one micro-grants to groups which may otherwise have struggled to meet the needs they serve. The completion of the community survey caps the project's work when it reaches the end of its fixed term on 31st March

2005. However, because the survey has highlighted issues that need addressing across the district, the steering group have indicated their intention to stay in place and swell their ranks to initiate actions by becoming a constituted group and lobbying with the community to get things done.

Community Survey

The Community Survey, commissioned in 2004 by the South Kirkby Community Project and is the culmination of the project, was undertaken to determine the aspirations of the residents of South Kirkby & Moorthorpe.

Supported by JCF Ltd (Consultants) and Yorkshire Planning Aid, the survey has been conducted across the adult population by JCF Ltd and separately across the youth population by the youth themselves working with JCF Ltd., Yorkshire Planning Aid and the South Kirkby Community Project.

In total 289 members of the general public and just over 1,200 young people from Minsthorpe Community College have given their views and opinions about South Kirkby and Moorthorpe, also offering ways of addressing some of the issues and challenges highlighted.



Shephard's Gardens

The Findings

The survey with the general public has found:

- Over 80% of respondents like living in South Kirkby & Moorthorpe, the main reason being they feel central to other places.
- Environmental priorities for action were playing areas and pavements closely followed by roads and the recreation ground.
- Litter and collection of litter are a consistent issue within the survey.
- Health priorities are for the provision of a dentist and doctor's surgery
- Most support is for the provision of youth facilities and activities followed by recreation and leisure facilities, and improved library services.
- The actual use of drop-in centres, meeting rooms and law services were given a low priority status.
- Housing was not considered an issue.
- The principle proposal to reduce the number of unemployed was the provision of a training centre for unemployed people to learn a trade.

- Public Transport is not a major issue; however some respondents do have problems with infrequent services and reliability.

The Youth Survey

This compliments the findings from the general public survey and shows that issues that are pertinent to the adults are also a concern for young people. The findings from this survey show:

- The need for ICT in the community and its various uses.
- The need to replace and improve **those** provisions **that** are already available.
- The need to update and improve local transport networks
- The need for a safe place for young people in the area to socialise

Way Forward

The issues highlighted by both the community and the young people are not all easily solved and it is not the claim of **the** South Kirkby Community Project that a magic wand be waved to address these issues directly and immediately. However, through a mix of advocacy, lobbying for change, perseverance and that panacea for all ills "hard work" a difference can be made.

For the future of South Kirkby & Moorthorpe there is light at the end of the tunnel and although there may not be a lot of tangible evidence as yet, the future for this corner of Wakefield is looking bright with investment geared up for the coming years, with the two former coal mining **sites** being developed, the planned link road from the Hemsworth bypass to the AI and, at a local level, community groups starting to act

and bring in funding for local projects. Moorthorpe is the subject of a housing initiative, part of the "Green Corridor" project across South East Wakefield. All of these factors point to a brighter outlook for the populace of South Kirkby & Moorthorpe

From survey to action

An Action Plan has been produced. This is an embryonic document that will be developed as regeneration in the area starts to make a difference and some of the issues highlighted are addressed.

Key areas for action are:

- Protecting and enhancing the environment
- Maintaining and improving community safety
- Improving community facilities and services
- Raising aspirations and creating employment
- Creating a learning culture
- Improving access to services and jobs
- Improving lifestyles
- Improving health and social welfare



Rubbish and derelict ground



Moorthorpe Station car park



Disused pub next to the Moorthorpe Station

Comments from the general public, about the area, include:

- "South Kirkby & Moorthorpe are in the top ten of the most deprived areas of Great Britain. Who will provide the necessary resources to take us out of this position? i.e. lack of youth facilities, lack of the required educational standards that will be required when the South Kirkby Colliery site becomes available as an industrial park. What facilities will be made available to tackle the drugs problem? South Kirkby is sadly lacking in library facilities."
- "South Kirkby is just a suburb of South Elmsall yet we pay more rates than an equivalent property in South Elmsall."
- "The village dates back hundreds of years. Anything of historical value should be preserved and improved where possible. Land should be made available for industry, retail outlets and residential properties with low cost housing. Some leisure facilities for old as well as young should be provided."
- "I am proud to be a Yorkshireman and proud of my area but this area has lots of underlying problems which have to be addressed before anything can move forward in this area"

The community audit was undertaken by JCF limited. This summary document was written in partnership with Arnold Fenton, Development Worker for the South Kirkby & Moorthorpe Steering Group.