



Place Standard Piloting Report

**Belville Community Garden
Greenock, Inverclyde**





CHANGING MINDS • CHANGING LIVES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Place Standard tool

The Place Standard tool has been developed by the Scottish Government, NHS Health Scotland and Architecture and Design Scotland, to help assess and support the delivery of high quality places. It provides a simple framework to structure conversations about place, its physical elements (for example, buildings, spaces, and transport links) combined with its social aspects (for example, whether people feel they have a say in decision making).

In May 2015, the Carnegie UK Trust (CUKT) and Architecture and Design Scotland agreed to work in partnership to test out the Place Standard tool with three of the Scottish winners of the Carnegie Prize for Design and Wellbeing (community groups which have successfully delivered a public space improvement project) to assess their local area, as part of the tool's testing and piloting phase. Blake Stevenson was commissioned to carry out the piloting exercise in three of the prize-winning areas.

Planning the Place Standard pilot

We made contact with Belville Community Garden, following the initial approach by the Carnegie UK Trust, and liaised with Belville Community Garden Officer, Janet Colston, who contacted volunteers to participate in the pilot event and arranged refreshments for the day.

The garden is in the Belville community of Greenock on the site of now demolished high storey flats. The project is overseen by River Clyde Homes, in partnership with Inverclyde Community Development Trust. It is in the early stages of its delivery phase and in the process of establishing a range of community and educational initiatives with local people and groups.

The original intention was to invite the young men who had helped to make the garden along with some of the workers and volunteers attached to the development. This did not happen but a total of six people connected to the project, with varying degrees of local knowledge, took part.

The materials from the initial Auchencairn pilot were adapted for Belville with only very minor changes. The materials included:

- a one-page information sheet to distribute to participants, which summarised the information given in the official introduction to the tool;
- a number of laminated A4 copies of the themes with an additional comment box and the spider diagram with pens and stickers to mark these;
- an short verbal introduction, delivered by a Blake Stevenson Consultant; and
- laminated A3 versions of the tool spider diagram (a pictorial representation of the results) to enable group discussion over a larger, more visible, format.



The pilot workshop

The pilot was conducted on Tuesday 18 August, 10.30am – 2.00pm. Six people participated during the whole session with only one participant (a community representative) withdrawing due to another engagement.

All of the participants had an involvement with the garden in some capacity.

They included the Garden Officer, members of the management committee, workers carrying out educational activities with children and other user groups. A healthy home-made lunch was made by a local person running her own business.

We started the pilot by presenting a short verbal introduction based on the information on the tool's introductory pages. Within this introduction we clarified: that the tool could be used by individuals or groups (depending on preference); that participants should identify the place that was to be tested; and that we were keen to receive feedback about the structure and validity of the tool itself.

We discussed an approach which the group agreed to. Two groups of three were tasked with looking at:

- the garden as it is now (which we called the 'new' group); and
- a second group which thought about the space before the garden was developed (which we called the 'old' group).

Participants were given the opportunity to raise questions. No questions were raised and those involved seemed comfortable with the task.

The two groups wandered around the garden, starting at different ends. The facilitator dropped in on both groups to answer any queries but few clarifications were required.



As the groups moved around the garden they stopped for discussion and used sticky dots to score each question from one to seven. In some instances they used the space, built into the tool, for taking notes. This was well used.

One issue which was raised during this stage was the relevance of the questions to 'non-community' members. Some participants felt they could not answer a number questions, for example, around 'Influence and sense of control' because they did not live in the community. This point was raised by a worker who had, in fact, lived in Greenock for most of his life and had a good knowledge of the wider community.

It became apparent that the Place Standard tool was promoting a good level of conversation in both groups. This made progress though the 14 domains within the toolkit quite slow, with one group getting halfway through by the time lunch arrived (around midday) and the other around two-thirds of the way.

Over lunch we discussed people's perceptions of the Place Standard tool and how they had found using it. We then concluded by plotting the responses onto the A3 spider diagram and comparing the results between the two groups – 'old' and 'new'.

It was after 2pm by this stage. One participant had left (for a pre-arranged appointment) and so there wasn't enough time to review the results in as much detail as would have been liked.

Analysis of the Place Standard tool

Our analysis is subdivided into the following sections:

- **Content**, which considers whether the tool includes the correct topics and issues;
- **Function**, which discusses how easy the tool is to use;
- **Use**, which focuses on the ideas and outcomes generated by participants while using the tool.



The Place Standard tool

Content

The Place Standard tool is very comprehensive. There was only one issue which people felt might have been incorporated to greater effect. This was the way in which a place was viewed by those not living in it or not using it – its ‘reputation’. This was felt to be an important issue (especially for a place such as Bellville where the garden is addressing negative images of a community or addressing rivalries between areas). Reputation is an important factor in how well a place is used.

The issue is covered, to an extent, under ‘Identity and Belonging’. It is possible, however, that a more explicit focus is required.

One challenge was the number of themes to consider. The groups took quite a long time out of their work and volunteering to take part. Some of the discussions tended to be repetitive as agendas crossed over the longer the discussions went on. The opportunities for groups to come together and do this are limited. Consideration should be given to reducing the potential for duplication and shortening the Place Standard tool.

The spider chart was used after the walkabout stage. Participants sat at a table and plotted,

initially, the scores for the garden as it was perceived in the past. This was then overlaid with the responses for the garden as it is now.

Time was running short and the scope for discussion, which would have been of value, was limited.

This would reinforce the need to shorten and streamline the tool so that these, more reflective conversations, can take place.

Another challenge which emerged during the walkabout was that the participants’ scope changed from question to question. Sometimes they were discussing the garden itself while at other times they were thinking about the broader community. The question of ‘Work and local economy’, for example, provoked discussion about the economy in Greenock rather than in Bellville or regarding the role of the garden in addressing some of the challenges face by local residents.

The tendency to shift focus from the immediate garden to the area beyond could cause difficulties in terms of the scoring. In terms of ‘Streets and spaces’, for example, participant conversation moved between the quality of surfaces within the garden to that of pavements in Greenock generally, with very different views of each.

Identity and belonging

How people feel about their place and the connection they have to it is hugely important. Culture, history, buildings, landmarks and community activities can all contribute to how an area is viewed both by residents and others. Good places should maximise their positive aspects, have a positive identity, and foster a sense of belonging that is shared by the whole community.

Think about:

- » The quality of the place and the quality of life of residents – these can be major factors in determining whether a local identity is positive
- » The local character and personality that makes this place different to other places
- » The heritage and history of an area – the identity of a place may have existed for decades, or even centuries
- » The presence of social networks – feeling connected to people within a community can have a big impact on a sense of belonging to a place
- » The presence of an active and involved community – community groups and activities can encourage friendships and connections which help to build a positive identity in a place
- » Inclusion – a sense of belonging is a personal thing, but good places should have a welcoming and inclusive community

Now ask:

'In my place, is there a positive identity and do I feel I belong?'

Rate your answer on the scale, circling the number that fits best:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all there is a lot of room for improvement Very much so there is little room for improvement

Briefly explain why you rated your answer the way you did, and note the main changes (if any) that you would like to see:

The community should be encouraged to take responsibility for the Garden. Schools & community organisations need to be actively involved and consulted. We need to generate a better sense of personal responsibility & ownership of community facilities like the Garden.

Now transfer your rating to the compass and move onto the next theme.

This might have been reduced with a stronger emphasis and agreement on defining the place considered during the introduction but there was a natural tendency to change spatial focus depending on the question. This resulted in a lack of clarity at times.

Function

The Place Standard tool proved very easy to use. Participants commented upon the clarity of language and colourful nature of the content.

The wording was clear and the scoring system was concise and felt, by most, to add value. One participant felt that it detracted from discussion but most were positive about the scoring aspect.

Despite spending over three hours on the exercise, there was insufficient time to explore the function

of the spider diagram. However, participants liked the capacity to reflect on change from the garden as it had been to how it was now, in the present day. The spider diagram helped to reinforce the general sense of improvement.

One issue identified by some participants, however, was the amount of wording involved, particularly in terms of the prompts. This was felt to be off-putting although no one identified any specific prompts they wanted excluded – it was the volume rather than the wording which was felt to pose problems.

Another point which arose when using the tool was the nature of the wording and the community focus of some questions. Several participants did not feel they, as workers or volunteers from out with the local community, could comment on some questions, for example, “in my place is there a positive identity and do I feel I belong?”.

The above point could be addressed differently in a ‘professional only’ group with some of the 14 place domains being excluded but in a mixed group this was more difficult. It tended to result in some people responding and others feeling guilty about expressing opinions or simply that they could give no valid opinion. More guidance on this might be required.

Use

Using the tool was a very positive experience for those involved. There were many examples of those involved looking at the garden in new ways and thinking about solutions and fresh approaches.

Discussion of the community garden was generally very positive. Some examples of the tool provoking discussions around improvement include:

Natural Space:

- “More seating should be encouraged to encourage older people to frequent the facility and enjoy the views and plants”.

Facilities and Amenities:

- “Fairly good. Limited toilet facilities. Would like to see composting toilets installed”.

Moving Around:

- “Overall the area is well surfaced and well lit. There is a lot of space for walkers. The Belville Community Garden connects John Street and Belville Street, it creates a link to shops and parks. Room for improvements include better facilities and access for cyclists”.

Play and Recreation:

- “Belville Street traffic is a bit of a barrier. A crossing would help”.
- “Not enough space and facilities for play and recreation. The presence of children playing outdoors, playing ball games isn’t always welcomed or supported by the community”.
- “Access to the garden for younger children could be improved by a safe crossing point on Belville Street”.

Streets and Spaces:

- “Beautiful church next to garden is burned out and hazardous. It could make a great community centre”.

Identity and Belonging:

- “The community should be encouraged to take responsibility for the garden. Schools and community organisations need to be actively involved and consulted. We need to generate a better sense of personal responsibility and ownership of community facilities like the garden”.

Social Interaction:

- “The garden shall be an intergenerational project. If the garden is to be sustainable it must encourage youngsters and older people to use the facility and contribute ideas for the benefit of the whole community”.

The participants were keen to see the results of the exercise. They felt that it could help them with future direction and associated funding bids. They did not feel that the tool was sufficient on its own for this purpose but supported by other evaluation evidence and materials.

The participants felt that the tool would be particularly useful in terms of:

- developing new and potential place projects; and
- evaluating the effectiveness of existing places.

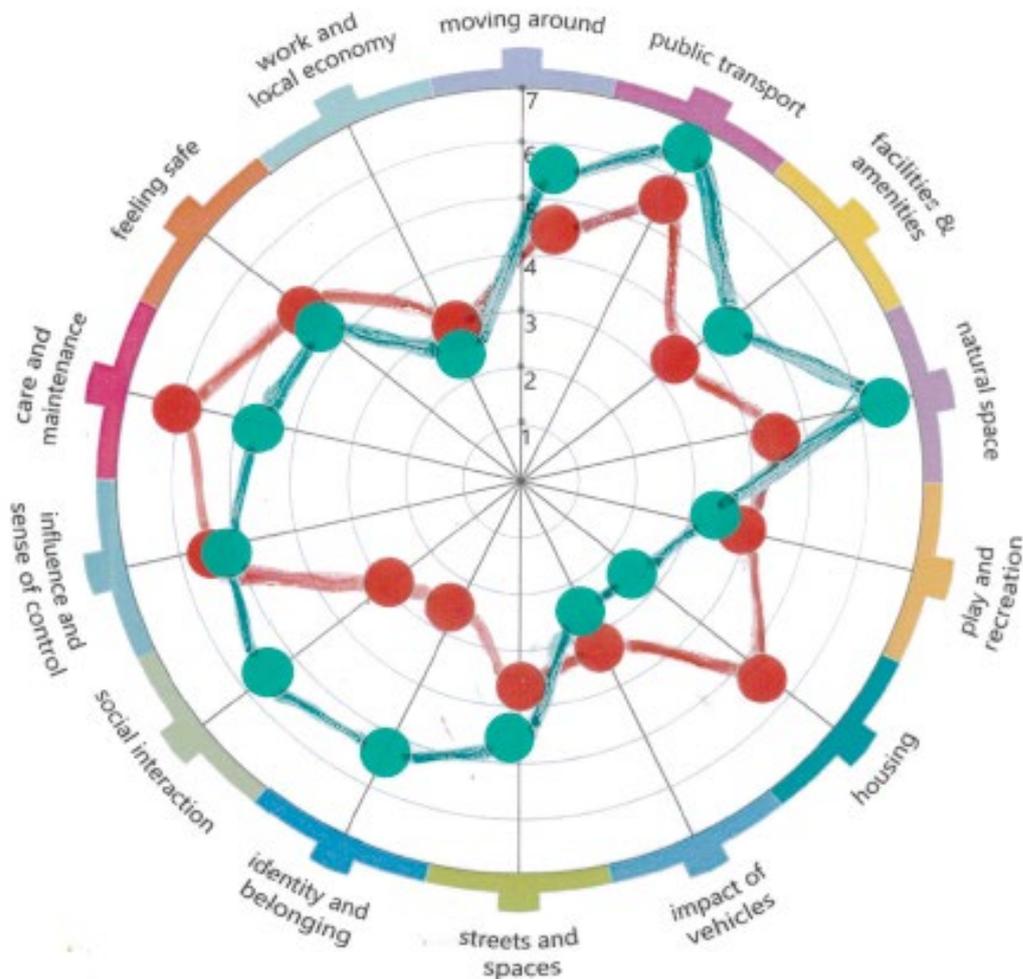
They were also keen to see the tool shortened, simplified and made accessible for children and people with learning difficulties. The prospect of an online version, available on tablet or smartphone, was welcomed.

APPENDIX 1: TOOL DIAGRAMS

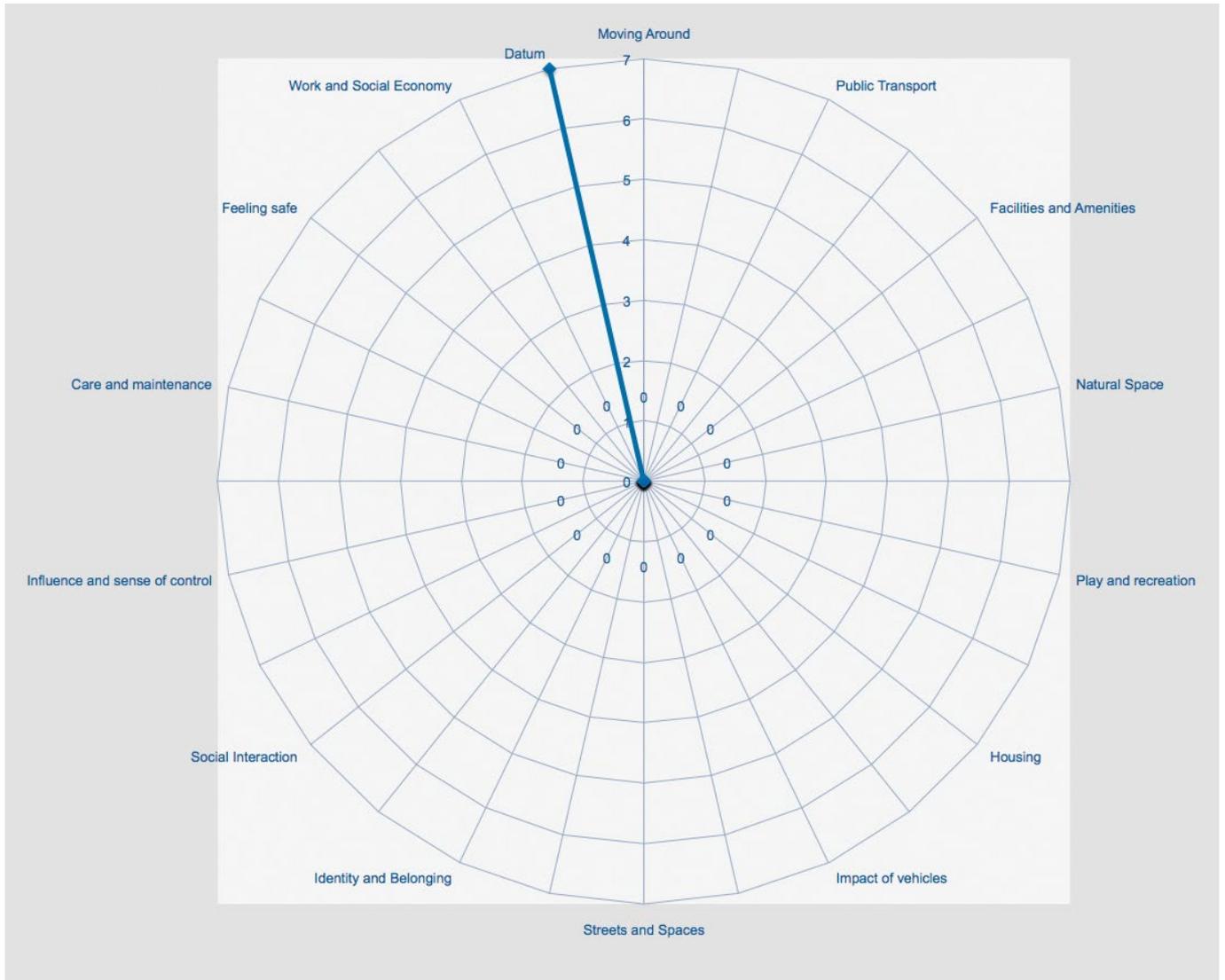
APPENDIX 1.1: Belville Community Garden

The red sticky dots and lines represent the analysis of the 'old' group thinking about Belville Community Garden space before it was developed while the green represents the 'new' group thinking about it as it is today.

Theme	Question: <i>In my place...</i>
Moving around	can I easily walk and cycle around using good quality routes?
Public transport	does public transport meet my needs?
Facilities and amenities	do facilities and amenities meet my needs?
Natural space	can I regularly experience good quality natural space?
Play and recreation	do I have access to a range of spaces and opportunities for play and recreation?
Housing	does housing meet my needs and contribute to a positive environment for the whole community?
Impact of vehicles	can I get on with my daily activities without impact from traffic and parked cars?
Streets and spaces	do buildings, streets and public spaces make getting around easy and enjoyable?
Identity and belonging	is there a positive identity and do I feel I belong?
Social interaction	do I have access to a range of spaces and opportunities to meet people?
Influence and sense of control	do I feel able to participate in decisions and help change things for the better?
Care and maintenance	are buildings and spaces well cared for?
Feeling safe	do I feel safe?
Work and local economy	is there an active local economy and opportunity to access good quality work?



APPENDIX 1.2: The draft Place Standard tool



The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913.

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