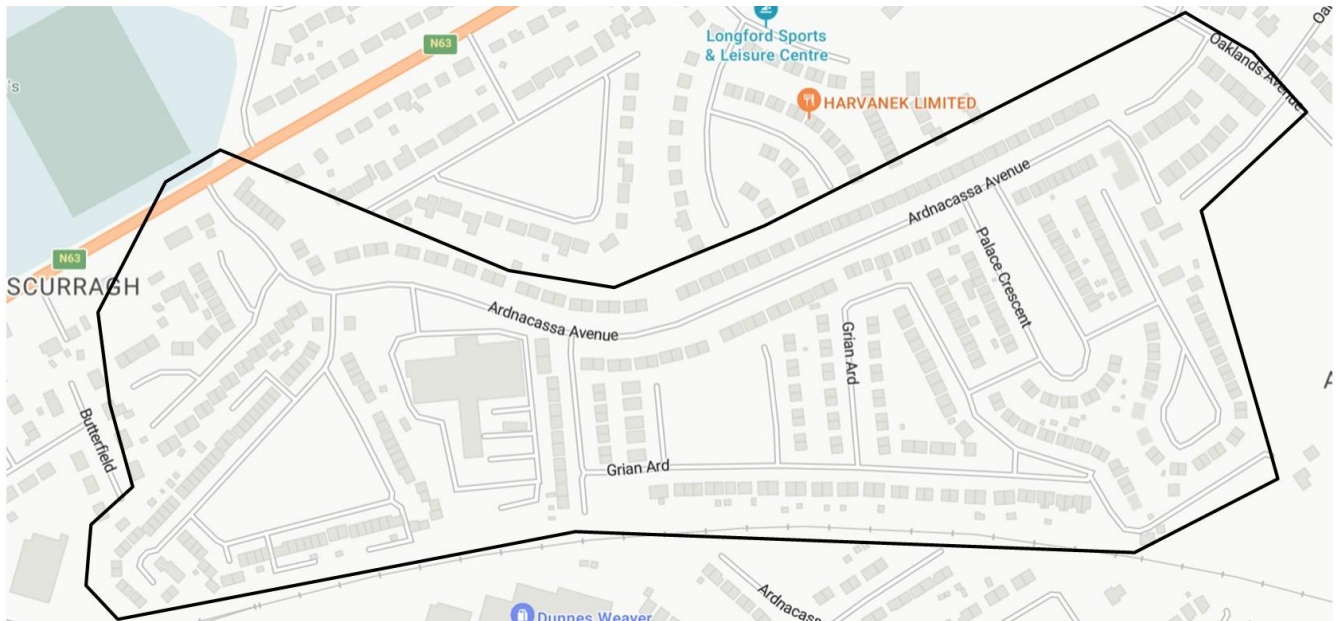


Place Standard Tool Exercise Report

Ardnacassa Area

3rd April 2025



‘Place’ can have an enormous influence on the quality of our lives and our impact on our environment.



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Executive Summary

In April 2025, Longford County Council and partner agencies piloted the Place Standard Tool (PST) in the Ardnacassa area to better understand local experiences of place and identify priority areas for community improvement. The PST enables residents to assess where they live across 14 key themes, covering both the physical environment and social factors that shape quality of life.

Engagement activities included an online survey, two drop-in clinics, a focus group with children, and an in-person workshop and walkabout involving 21 residents and service providers. The workshop brought together stakeholders including Longford Women's Link, Longford Community Resources, An Garda Síochána, and Longford County Council. A total of 44 individuals participated across all engagement methods.

Feedback highlighted strengths such as existing childcare services, helpful neighbours, and a positive community spirit in parts of the estate. However, consistent concerns were raised in relation to litter, lack of organised play facilities, limited awareness of services, poor signage, and underused green spaces. 'Play and Recreation' emerged as the lowest-scoring theme across all feedback.

A series of priority actions have been identified to respond to community needs, including the establishment of street-level resident groups, development of a community garden, improved signage, expanded use of the Community House, and a focus on promoting safety and social connection. These actions will be progressed in collaboration with residents and service providers, supported where possible by local and national funding schemes.

The PST process has demonstrated a strong appetite among residents to be heard and to play an active role in shaping their neighbourhood. The next phase will focus on building trust, delivering visible improvements, and empowering the community to take a more active role in local decision-making

What is the Place Standard Tool

The Place Standard tool provides a simple framework to structure conversations about place. Using 14 thematic headings and a scoring scale of 1 to 7; it allows you to think about the physical elements of a place (for example its buildings, spaces, and transport links) as well as the social aspects (for example whether people feel they have a say in decision making) and identify what is working well, and what needs improving to help improve residents quality of life.

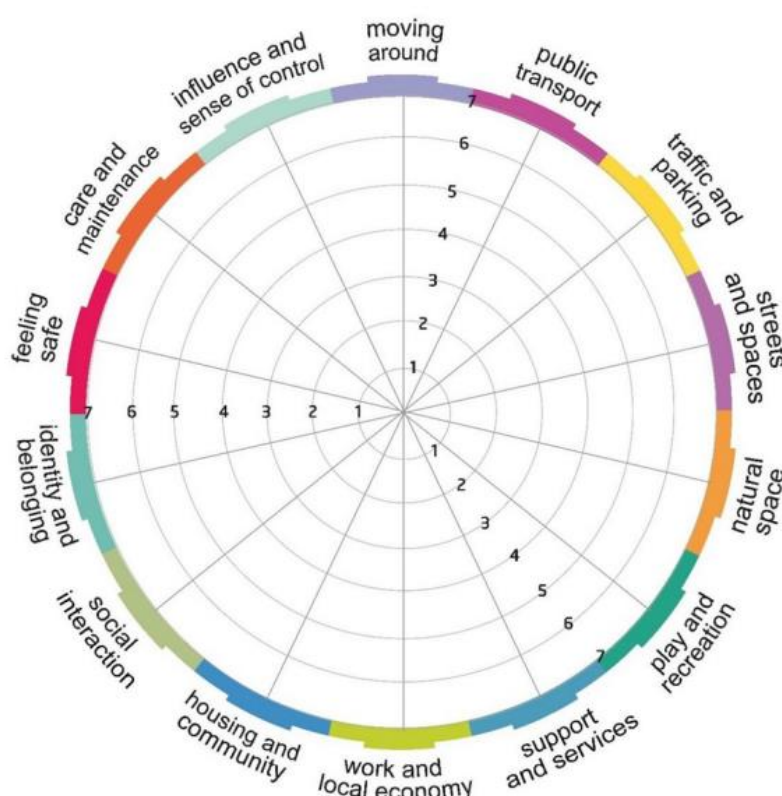


Figure 1: The Place Standard Tool themes and plot map.

How It Works

The Place Standard tool consists of 14 key themes, covering both physical and social aspects of a place. Each theme is scored on a scale from 1 to 7—where 1 indicates poor conditions and 7 represents excellent conditions. These themes include:

1. **Moving Around:** Ease of walking and cycling.

2. **Public Transport:** Availability and reliability of transport services.
3. **Traffic & Parking:** Traffic congestion, road safety, and parking availability.
4. **Streets & Spaces:** Quality and accessibility of streets, squares, and public spaces
5. **Natural Space:** Access to parks, beaches, and green areas.
6. **Play & Recreation:** Availability of play areas and recreational activities.
7. **Facilities & Services :** Access to essential services like shops, healthcare, and community centres
8. **Work & Local Economy:** Employment and business opportunities.
9. **Housing & Community:** Quality, affordability, and suitability of housing.
10. **Social Interaction:** Opportunities for meeting and engaging with others.
11. **Identity & Belonging:** Community pride, culture, and heritage.
12. **Feeling Safe:** Perceptions of safety during the day and night.
13. **Care & Maintenance:** Cleanliness, upkeep, and maintenance of the area.
14. **Influence & Sense of Control:** Opportunities for residents to have a say in decisions affecting their community.

Why Use the Place Standard?

The Place Standard was developed in Scotland and is widely used in the UK. Healthy Ireland is in the process of developing a specific version to be used in Ireland, to try and create healthier, more sustainable, and well-connected communities. Longford Community Safety Partnership is engaged in a pilot with Public Health Scotland and Safer Communities Network Scotland to expand the tool to focus more specifically on Community Safety. The tool allows different sizes and types of places to be assessed. This can include whole towns or neighbourhoods in urban or rural locations. The tool can be used to assess existing places as well as places that are still being planned.

The benefits of using the tool include:

- Encouraging community engagement and participation by allowing residents to share their experiences and concerns.
- Identifying priority areas for improvement in urban planning and development.
- Helps local governments and organisations make informed decisions based on public feedback.
- Provides a visual representation of community needs using a spider diagram, which maps out scores for each theme.

Ardnacassa Area PST Exercise and Results:

The Ardnacassa area has been chosen to roll out this tool on a pilot basis to allow Longford County Council and other agencies to direct resources according to priority of need.

The Ardnacassa area including:

- Oakvale,
- Springlawn,
- Ardnacassa Avenue,
- Palace Crescent,
- Grian Ard,
- Palace Drive,
- Ardeevan,
- Cluain Ard
- & Ardnacassa Avenue

were surveyed using the Place Standard Tool in April 2025. Ardnacassa area is on the fringe of Longford Town just off the Ballinalee road and is densely populated. The area was built in phases in the late 1990's and early 2000's. The area consists of around 450 residential houses and is host to a wide range of community facilities such as a convenience shop, Longford Women's Link and Catkins Early years' service, Spring Lawn Childcare, Local Shop, Ardnacassa Community House at 4 Palace Crescent and the Department of Social Protection Office building.

To get feedback and to complete the PST methodology, a number of approaches were employed:

Method	Audience	Numbers participated
Online survey: open for 2 weeks	Adults resident in the area	8
Children Focus group with Homework Club facilitated by Catkins on the Move	Primary school aged children from the area	7
Drop In Clinic 2 nd April 2025	Adults in the area	8
In person Workshop 3 rd April	Adults including residents and workers	21

Note: The online survey received 8 respondents however due to a glitch in the system only one of the 8 responses could be utilised.

There was a lot of feedback received and there were similarities across all responses. The Place Standard Scoring Matrix for Ardnacassa was completed at the in person workshop, and shows that 11 of the thematic areas have lots of room for improvement. The theme with the lowest score is Play and Recreation.

Place Standard

	Moving Around	Public transport	Traffic & Parking	Streets & Spaces	Natural Space	Play & recreation	Facilities & services	Work & Local Economy	Housing & Community	Social Interaction	Identity & Belonging	Feeling Safe	Care & Maintenance	Influence & Sense of control
Group 1	4.0	1.0	5.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	2.0	5.0	4.0	2.0	1.0
Group 2	3.5	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	5.0	6.0	4.0	4.0	1.5	1.0	1.0	3.0
Group 3	3.5	1.0	3.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	3.5	3.0	3.0	1.5	1.0	2.0
Group 4	4.0	1.0	3.5	4.0	4.0	2.0	4.0	5.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	4.0	3.0
Group 5	2.0	1.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	5.0	2.0
COMBINED	3.4	1.2	3.5	2.2	2.6	1.8	4.8	5.4	4.1	2.8	2.9	2.1	2.6	2.2

Little room for Improvement

Lots Room for Improvement

The next sections will outline the feedback received from each and the priority actions developed at the workshop, which reflects all feedback received.

Feedback per theme

The comments listed below under each theme are direct quotes form participants in the online survey, drop in clinics and workshops. Images were taken during the walk around held on 12 April 2025:

1. Moving Around

- My immediate neighbourhood is good but there is often dogs incessant barking.
- There are often obstacles on footpath, barriers or routes are not suitable.
- A walkway at the wall near Longford Womens link at the end of Ardnacassa Avenue is needed to allow walking to St Eimear's National School.
- A lot of rubbish in my area especially around a picnic seat that is on the edge of the roadway. I think that seat where it's positioned causes groups of young people to congregate. It's just not fair on the houses directly across from there.
- No through road prevents drivers using estate as shortcut.
- Walking or driving are the main ways to get around as there is limited public transport.
- There is need for regular street clean up incentive.
- Lots of obstructions on the footpaths, kids toys, bicycles rubbish. Clean them and keep them clean.



2. Public Transport

- Transport options are limited mostly I would have to go into the town centre.
- Traffic is not an issue but limited parking is.
- The school bus does a regular pick up in the area but it is just for certain children. Taxi's would be the main source of public transport.
- The e scooters are a danger I think. They travel so fast near pedestrians and coming round a bend or corner it would be very easy to hurt someone walking

3. Traffic & Parking

- Ongoing concerns over parking on footpaths and double parking.
- Lots of double parking, Garda support needed to keep an eye on it.
- Some speed bumps slow the traffic but they are spaces too far apart.
- More ramps are needed, metal ones and more parking spaces.

4. Streets & Spaces

- The entrance to the Ardnacassa area is welcoming and clean however deeper into the estate it becomes more untidy.
- We had a drainage issue in my area awhile back but it has been sorted now.
- More pedestrian crossing's needed.
- Green spaces are not often used due to litter or uneven surface.
- Some benches in the area however rarely used and not enough for awareness.

- Clean up the footpaths, they are always covered in litter.



5. Natural Space

- While there are plenty of green spaces in the area there is not a lot happening with them. There is a need for community activities on the green however the dogs in these green spaces can be of putting.
- We have some lovely trees in the area that unfortunately have been broken down. Residents group is needed in the area and education with the young people re protecting our green spaces.
- Natural spaces could be better, need for grass to be mowed at Palace Crescent.
- The green spaces are a biodiversity desert. There is no reason to visit or play in these spaces.
 - More litter picking needed, there was a resident's group before but there was poor interest.



1 Area identified for potential community garden or allotments (Ardnacassa Avenue)

6. Play & Recreation

- The children play on the road a lot, it is important but organised play is needed.
- A playground is needed, there are a lot of children in this area.
- The greens are there for children to play but are not being used enough.
- More targeted education should be organised with the young people.
- There is need for a specific play area for children. The would love a playground.
- Total lack of facilities for children. Green areas are not suitable, a playground is needed. Education around play and the environment.
- Goal posts in Grian ard would be good and the green is more flat there.



2:Area with Playground markings in an area that was previously a through-road. Not ideal but closed off from traffic

7. Facilities & Services

- There are lots of facilities in the area but lack of awareness of the services available. This is the first time I have been to the community house, I never know when it is open. More group activities needed in the area.
- Homework club is going well at Ardnacassa Community House but more services are needed for that age group. Courses like woodwork and sewing would be welcomed in the community house.
- The shop is handy, I use it regularly but it's not cheap. More benches to sit at would be nice.
- Publicise the existence of services and longer opening hours for public.

- The facilities are good but not enough is run in them, homework club is only one hour a week and the children need more support than that. The community house needs to be open all the time, knitting and beauty courses would be good to see.

8. Work & Local Economy

- Economy is not fully transparent, there is a lack of awareness of the opportunities available.
- More ongoing support through courses, beauty and knitting, there seems to be the space to run it but nothing happening.
- There would be space to have a social enterprise in the area but nothing is happening. Need for a FAS scheme or something to maintain the green verges.

9. Housing & Community

- There is a mix of nationalities and cultures living in this area. Nobody talks to each other
- Limited amount of vacant homes.
- Skip needed to do a clean up.
- Derelict houses are always present, they seem to take a long time to be ever used again, they run down the look of the area.



3: Photographs of boarded, derelict and damaged properties 12 April 2025

10. Social Interaction

- Day trips to the zoo or a dog show worked well in the past. Certain groups won't mix, not for everyone.
- A gardening group would be good but it would need a strong fence around it. There are not a lot of opportunities for social interaction in this area.
- Some people have positive relationships with neighbours, others don't. The community events that have been taken place have been positive.
- I'd be interested in a book club.

11. Identity & Belonging

- All my neighbours are good people, I do like it here.
- Longford has been given a bad name but there are good people living here.
- Ongoing community groups in the area is needed to change the perspective.
- I am proud to be from Grian Ard.
- The derelict houses in the area provide for a sense of detachment. Often overcome with rubbish.
- The area has a bad name but the people here are good. We need to show the good things about this area.



12. Feeling Safe

- It's okay but sometimes people ask for money.
- There is no support for children later in the evening, this leads to anti-social behaviour and more support is needed.
- There are some concerning stories, I would like to have neighbourhood watch set up here.
- Some people fear wandering dogs, large presence in the area and no sense of responsibility by the owners. Dogs seem uncared for and not valued by their owners. Regular barking in some parts of the area.
- When the children are entertained there is a better feeling of safety. Some residents do a great job on the litter pick. Litter is a big reason Ardnacassa has a bad name. Cameras are needed in dumping hotspots.

13. Care & Maintenance

- Overall not bad, there are some litter picking going on a residents group or neighbourhood watch would be good.

- A scheme to clean up the area is needed, engaging the children and teaching them about cleaning up their area.
- Group is needed in the area, some are doing great work but support is needed.
- I would be interested in a residents group if I was not on my own.
- No clean up since last September, there is no bin outside the shop. A clean up day for the children with prizes might be an incentive.



4: Examples of typical littering found across the area

14. Influence & Sense of Control

- I haven't felt like I had a say in the area up until now but it is nice to be asked.
- It is good to ask people but more regular, a second entrance for this estate would be positive.
- A community group is needed to push to get the road sweeper in this area. They come but not regular enough and cars are often parked in the way. Is a public bin possible in the area?

Additional comments:

- Need for a family resource centre in the area.
- A cheap food scheme from the community house would be welcomed by residents.
- Community training from the centre, nails, makeup, beauty courses and woodwork courses for the men.

Workshop Discussion

On 12th April, a walk around and workshop was arranged for residents and service providers in the area. There was 21 participants including local residents, the community warden, community gardaí, community workers from Longford Community Resources and Longford Womens Link and staff from Longford County Council. Divided into 5 smaller groups, each group walked around the entire area, taking notes and photographs, and filling in the PST workbook (this covers the 14 thematic headings and provides prompt

questions to evoke discussion). Following this, the group reconvened to hold a discussion which included the feedback from the other methods and to score each theme. Below outlines the main points and suggested actions:

- It was highlighted from numerous respondents that a residents association is needed, while some felt the area may not yet be ready for this type of structure. Residents Associations or groups could be formed within the smaller streets or areas within the greater Ardnacassa area or even a Men's Shed or DIY group could be formed to maintain or care for some parts of the area.
- There is huge opportunity for greenery in the area which was seen to some as a 'biodiversity desert'. There is potential to create a community garden group to increase the biodiversity, the overall look and the social interaction in the area.
- There is a need for improved social interaction in the area. Some residents were aware of the community facilities in the area (such as the Community House, Longford Womens Link, the Attic House) however lack regularity regarding open hours meant residents did not engage with some of the services available to them
- . Except for the bin service some felt the road sweeper and grass cutting lacked regularity. It was noted that Longford County Council does provide grass cutting at Palace Crescent as a good will gesture, but there is no formal or informal maintenance or upkeep of shared green spaces by residents. There is a lack of understanding or knowledge around whose role it is to maintain shared areas and a lack of appetite for a residents group. Some areas (such as Ardeevan) may be open to street level residents activity to maintain shared areas. As the Palace Crescent green area is so large, it is not manageable for a local group and it hoped Longford County Council can continue to maintain this on a bi-weekly basis over the summer
- The signage in the area is poor and needs an upgrade, it was felt that this would add a strong sense of identity to the area. This includes street name signage, estate name signage, children at play signs etc Involve residents in improving the signage in the area would bring a sense of pride and belonging back to the area.
- The grants available for residents' groups were discussed and it was felt a better awareness of what's available is needed with all residents. However it was acknowledged that there is a lack of community cohesion which does impinge the formation of community groups. Engagement and support work is needed to mobilise the community

- There is space for a polytunnel in a concrete wall enclosure on Ardnacassa avenue. It was identified as a potential area for a community garden or allotment
- It was also noted that some grants are available such as Town and Village funding however they would need the support of our elected representatives. The blank walls and electricity boxes being painted by residents would brighten up the area.
- Block paving replacing some green verges was viewed as more suitable. This is because the verges are not well maintained in lots of areas, and due to lack of parking, a lot cars park on verges, creating subsidence. A number of green verges are used for dumping



5: Example of block verges vs. green verges

- Opening the wall at the end of Ardnacassa Avenue on the Women's Link side would bring improved pedestrian access. Residents are keen to allow more direct walking routes to access services along and off the Ballinalee road, for example St Eimear's National School. Ideally vehicular access would be preferred but at least pedestrian access would be a start. It was felt the more sealed off the Ardnacassa area is the worse it is perceived to be, opening additional routes would benefit the area and those living in it.
- There is a high population of young people and young families in the area. The age groups are children under 10; Children aged 11-15 and young adults 15 +. There is an urgent need for specific services targeting those under 10 and more activities for young people in the area would be beneficial.
- The women's group that meets in the Community House in Palace Crescent has provided the opportunity to 'get to know your neighbour'. Although more services like this are needed and regular opening hours of the community house are needed to build a sense of trust and service to the area. The empowering communities' workers are in the community house on 4 mornings a week however community were not aware. A community employment scheme opportunity will be opening shortly

in the area through Longford Women's link. Increased social interaction within the community would also help the poor perception of the area.

- The high level of criminality in the area contributes to the poor perception although the survey involved positive interactions with residents.
- Residents were not aware of the "See Something Say Something" initiative and better awareness about this campaign is needed while there is also potential for a neighbourhood watch alert service in the area. Potentially permanent signage in the area about these type of services would increase the feeling of being safe while also reducing the criminality.
- There is an absence of pride of place in the area, as the estate is currently young and additional resources are needed now. Previously the Springlawn area was seen as difficult however with a more aging population there now some aspects have improved. The examples of some support services such as childcare and the community house there benefited the area and those resident in it.
- The goal posts on the green in Palace Crescent were seen as very positive during the summer of 2024. This small addition to the area was well received however highlights the need of a dedicated play area for the children in the area.
- The absence of a Family Resource Centre in the area highlights this need for support for the residents.
- While there has been part 8 planning permission granted to an improved plan for Palace Crescent Green no funding has been identified yet.
- The short-term goals of getting the grass cut and having regular litter picks was important to those in attendance. The social clubs in the area needed better awareness among the residents, it was felt that flyer drops, and corrie board signage was most suitable to get the word out.
- In the medium term a resident's group was needed to be established to maintain the area. This would need to be driven by local people but supported by the services working in the area.
- The long term goal of a dedicated play area for children and better awareness of community services was important.

Priority Actions for the Ardnacassa Area

1. **Establish street-level resident groups** (e.g. by cul-de-sac or zone) to encourage local ownership, supported by community workers and Longford County Council.
2. **Develop a community garden or allotment** on the identified site at Ardnacassa Avenue, in partnership with residents and local services.

3. **Improve awareness of local services and activities** through flyer drops, estate signage, and community noticeboards.
4. **Pilot weekly drop-in sessions at the Community House** to increase engagement and trust among residents.
5. **Organise two community clean-up events each year**, with prizes or incentives for children and support from local services.
6. **Upgrade and improve local signage**, including estate names, street signs, and “children at play” signs, with resident input.
7. **Progress the development of a designated children’s play area**, complete final design, costing and funding applications.
8. **Launch a local awareness campaign** on the “See Something, Say Something” initiative and explore setting up a Neighbourhood Watch group.

Conclusion:

The Place Standard Tool pilot in Ardnacassa has provided a valuable, community-led insight into the lived experience of this neighbourhood. Through a mix of surveys, workshops and walkabouts, local voices have helped identify both the assets of the area and the barriers to wellbeing, safety, and community participation.

What has emerged is a clear desire among residents for change, not just in terms of physical infrastructure like signage or green spaces, but also in how people connect, participate, and take pride in where they live. The strong emphasis on the need for children’s facilities, better communication, and safety supports underscores the importance of targeted, sustained investment.

This report outlines eight priority actions, rooted in community feedback and designed to be both achievable and impactful. These actions will form the basis of follow-up work, including deeper engagement with residents, identification of funding opportunities, and collaboration with local agencies to ensure coordinated delivery.

The success of this initiative depends on continued partnership, consistent communication, and visible outcomes. With support, Ardnacassa can build on its strengths and become a more connected, safe, and welcoming place for all who live there.