

Compiled by the Planning Projects,  
Environment Initiatives and International Teams  
at Brighton & Hove City Council

INTERREG IVB Lively Cities Project  
**Ann Street / Providence Place Gardens**  
**Common Room site assessment report**

February 2013

**Printing advice:**

*For optimum results, this document should be printed back to back. This is because information provided in the even pages has been designed to be complemented by that contained in the odd pages.*



## About this report

**This report provides an overview of the community response to 'The Common Room' - a pilot project aimed at improving and transforming the Ann Street and Providence Place area, close to the London Road shopping centre in Brighton.**

**Its aim is to assess the success (or otherwise) of the physical elements and activities that comprised the Common Room pilot and – in the light of this assessment – to make recommendations for the future implementation of any permanent changes in the project area.**

The Common Room, conceived and implemented by Plan Projects and Luis Trevino Architects, was the winning entry to a competition commissioned by Brighton & Hove City Council. This work is part of the INTERREG IVB-assisted 'Lively Cities' (LICI) programme - a four-year project aimed at strengthening communities by reclaiming public space for public use.

The lead partner for the project is the Belgian-based AMCV. The partner authorities participating in the project (along with Brighton & Hove) are Aberdeen (Scotland), Lille (France), Eindhoven (the Netherlands) and Tournai, La Louvière and Liege (all in Belgium). Academic institutions observing the project as part of their research include Åbo Akademi University in Finland, Univeristé du Luxembourg, Wageningen University in the Netherlands and North West University in South Africa).

The Brighton & Hove pilot took place for a two-week period between 1 and 14 October 2012. During this time a team of volunteer fieldworkers collected qualitative and quantitative data on how the area was being used, along with people's responses to the physical changes and new activities that had been introduced.

This report includes the views of 279 people who live, work, passed through and/or spent time in the area during the two-week pilot as well as the observations by volunteers of 606 people spending time in the area.

The results of the data are set out in this report and compared with data collected in the area before the transformation (as presented in an earlier 2011 Consultation and Site Assessment Report). Comparison of the data sets will help the council to assess the relative success of the various components of the Common Room and set priorities for a permanent transformation of the area.

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*Aerial view of the project area e during the Common Room pilot.*

## 1. Headlines & recommendations

This is a summary of the findings of quantitative and qualitative data collected prior to (2011) and during the (2012) two-week temporary transformation of the Ann Street and Providence Place Gardens area of Brighton into the Common Room.

For detailed information please refer to the report.

### What does the data collected say about the changes put in place as part of the Common Room when compared to that collected one year earlier?

A comparison of data from the 2011 and 2012 surveys suggest how successful (or not) changes implemented as part of the Common Room were in addressing user concerns and suggestions for improving the area.



### 2011

Anti-social behaviour in general and street drinking in particular was a concern for many users and viewed by some as a deterrent to using the area.

One of the most popular suggestions for improving the area was the provision of more seating and tables.

### 2012

There was a noticeable increase in the use of the park (Providence Place Gardens) as people made use of the facilities and activities introduced as part of the Common Room.

A wider range of activities was evident across the project area as a whole, including people making use of the bottom end of Ann Street and park terraced steps as places to rest and linger, due to the changed nature of the space and seating opportunities provided.



2012



2011

### 2011

When asked which aspects of the area they liked most users cited the role of the park as an open, green, public space that provides a quiet respite from the busy area around it. However, most considered the area to feel insufficiently welcome for them to spend time in it.



2011

### 2012

People visited the project area more often and stayed for longer periods of time, with a larger proportion present throughout the day and even into the evening when uplighting was provided beneath the trees in the park.

A more diversified age range of people using the project area with a far higher percentage of young adults, teens/children and seniors.



2012



2012



### High priority Seating, removal of fence and introduction of steps

These were the most popular changes and as such it is recommended that they be secured as the first phase in any permanent transformation of the project area. Particular care will need to be afforded to the following details:

#### Seating

- the quantity and location of fixed seating;
- movable seating is best avoided as it requires daily management and can result in territorial behaviour by some users;

#### Steps

- ensuring that the design and materials of permanent steps are carefully tailored to encourage and provide access and egress to and from the park, provide comfortable but robust informal seating – whilst deterring 'misuse' (e.g. skateboarding);
- considering and agreeing viable and fair options for residents, blue badge holders and delivery vehicles arising from any parking bays removed from or relocated within the project area; and
- allowing for accessibility across the site.



Moderate to high priority

### Art wall and facilities for food trading

Particular care will need to be afforded to the following details:

#### Art wall

- the nature, design and extent of the art wall, whether it be for temporary or long-term designs, its role in contributing to a potential wider graffiti strategy in the locality and the co-operation and involvement (as appropriate) of affected landowners and local residents;

#### Food trading

- provision of power supply, water point and possibly other facilities on site to enable more flexible use of the project area and to support food trading; and if and how licensing arrangements/income derived from any on-site trading might support and contribute to the ongoing operation of the Common Room (e.g. assisting in place management and maintenance).





**Moderate priority**

**Restrict access of large vehicles and provision of 'shared surface' approach to carriageways in project area, provision of events, tree lighting (and external lighting of church) Ann Street 'pocket' square**

Particular care will need to be afforded to the following details:

**Large vehicle restriction**

- providing for necessary access while limiting circulation and size of vehicles;

**Shared surface**

- agreeing the extent and nature of any shared surface treatment;

**Events and lighting**

- providing a temporary or permanent table tennis facility in the park and working in partnership with residents and Sussex Police to manage hours of play;
- implementing after school play on a consistent basis and applying for play street status for Providence Place in partnership with St. Bartholomew's School;
- lighting trees, park sculpture and church façade in partnership with St Bartholomew's Church; and

**Ann Street 'pocket' square**

- incorporating parking for delivery vehicles and disabled parking into the design of the 'square'.



### Lower priority Wi-Fi

It is possible that the free wi-fi may be more successful in drawing people into the area in the long term once proposed high priority measures have been put in place (i.e. steps and fixed seating). Its presence was not particularly well highlighted until the second week of the pilot and may well have been needed to be tested over a longer period than the two weeks in October 2012. At the time of writing the wi-fi remains available in the area (currently until Sep 2013) although the absence of any seating since the end of the pilot is not conducive in encouraging its use.

Nevertheless, it has the potential to add to the total 'offer' of the Common Room and draw an increased and wider range of users into the area. It is important in the process of implementing wi-fi to work with local partners to raise awareness and make best use of the service currently in place until September 2013.

### Unsuccessful Common Room change Performance area

This was considered to be the only unsuccessful element of the Common Room scheme as it was not used for its intended purpose – i.e. for impromptu performances. In the context of after school playtime it posed a potential risk insofar as some children considered it an extension of the park and a play attraction, running across the road between the stage and the park during those times. It should, however, also be noted that the road tended to be used as a shared surface for cars and pedestrians during the course of the pilot and that both drivers and pedestrians were observed to co-exist harmoniously and observe due caution for each other.

For the reason that the stage was at no time used for its intended purpose it is recommended that an alternative use be identified of for this sub area, including options for using replacement on-street parking and/or delivery bays.



## 2. The Lively Cities Competition



Aerial view of Ann Street / Providence Place Gardens area off the east side of the London Road shopping area. The LICI Competition project area encompassed the spaces indicated in white letters.



2011 Consultation and site assessment report (one of the supporting documents for the LICI Competition).

In January 2012, Brighton & Hove City Council advertised a €50,000 commission for a two week pilot project to improve the street and small park in front of St. Bartholomew's Church in Brighton (Ann Street/Providence Place Gardens) hereafter referred to as the 'project area'.

Submitted proposals were required to respond to the needs, desires and priorities of the community as identified in the *2011 Consultation and site assessment report*. This document contained qualitative and quantitative data collected in respect of residents, users and visitors in the project area. It provided a snapshot of how the area was used and people's aspirations for transforming it into a safe and successful public space.

Thirty eight submissions were received, five of which were shortlisted in March 2012 by a Selection Panel comprising a range of council officers and local stakeholders.

An Invitation to Tender (ITT) was then issued asking the shortlisted applicants to develop detailed proposals that would form a public exhibition. Public feedback from the exhibition was identified as one of the four selection criteria to be considered in determining the winning entry.

The public exhibition took place on advertised dates during May 2012 at St Bartholomew's Church, City College and Providence Place Gardens – all within or around the project area - with public feedback forms being provided at exhibition venues, as well as on the council's website (where the exhibition panels could be viewed online).

**In late May, the Selection Panel chose 'The Common Room', conceived by Plan Projects in collaboration with Luis Trevino Architects, as the winning proposal.**

From July to September the winners worked closely with local stakeholders, council officers and various other partners to deliver the two-week transformation of the project area for testing.

The Common Room pilot project took place between 1 and 14 October 2012.

**During the two-week test, volunteer fieldworkers working with the council used a range of assessment tools to gauge responses from people within and around the project area to the temporary changes. The result of their work is detailed in this report.**



*Above: selection panel meeting.*

*Below: LIC1 Competition public exhibition in Providence Place Gardens*



## 3. The Common Room

### 3.1 Content

The 'Common Room' provided a series of physical and environmental changes, some significant, some less significant in scale. These changes were aimed at preserving the tranquillity of the space, while creating opportunities for performance and social interaction. Actions underlying the realisation of the Common Room included:

#### Physical and environmental changes

- Removal of street parking on Providence Place and bottom end of Ann Street.
- Removal of all park railings and construction of wooden terraced steps providing both informal seating and a direct physical link to the park down the length of Providence Place.
- Fixed and movable seating within the park.
- Games equipment in the park.
- A stage area on the south eastern corner of Providence Place Gardens, within view of the park and the terraced steps, to allow for impromptu performances.
- Lighting of the park trees after dark.
- Closure of the bottom end of Ann Street to traffic and provision of artificial grass, picnic tables and fixed seating to create a 'pocket' public square
- A ban on heavy goods vehicles from entering Ann Street or Providence Place

#### Community Engagement

- **Providence Place Forum** (formed as an extension of the stakeholder group established in 2011 to support the LICl project) comprising representatives of the various communities within and around the project area to help shape the events programme.
- **Digital and Events Sub-Groups** with representatives of the local creative industries were formed to achieve innovative use of information technology and organise events in the space.
- **Council Officer Group** - provided a wide range of officer expertise to ensure the smooth running of traffic management and assist in other areas where the council has an influence or responsibility related to securing the success of the project.
- **City College** - Nearby City College (further education institution) was contracted to build the terraced steps, providing a valuable on-site training opportunity for its construction students.

#### Street Art commission

- Creation of an art wall on the east side of the park with work commissioned in partnership with local art organisations.

#### Digital infrastructure

- 'Big capacity' free Wi-Fi service allowing multiple users of devices to operate digital devices in the project area.

#### Event programming

- Activities allowing for social interactions (street food trading, al fresco eating/ drinking); play and sports (adaptable space for table tennis, dance, children's play); and solo activities (walking the dog, eating/drinking, sunbathing). See programme on page 11 for further information.
- Site manager and assistant to coordinate and facilitate actions.



in partnership with  
luis treviño architects



Providence Place Forum meeting. (August 2012).



Construction of terraced steps by City College students from Carpentry Department (September 2012).

city college    brighton and hove



Above: some of the partners brought in by Plan Projects and Luis Trevino Architects that supported in various capacities the realisation of the Common Room project.



Map of physical and environmental improvements delivered.

**Ann Street 'pocket' public square**

-  Removal of street parking, closure of dead-end street and introduction of Astroturf (fake grass) to create new 'pocket' public square
-  Introduction of fixed picnic tables
-  Introduction of fixed and movable benches

**Providence Place**

**Providence Place** Ban on heavy goods vehicles from entering Providence Place and St Peter's Street.

 Stage area within view of the park and the terraced steps to allow for impromptu performances and art wall (commission won by artist Sam Skinner).

**Providence Place Gardens (park)**

-  Removal of street parking on Providence Place and all park railings and construction of wooden terraced steps providing informal seating and physical link from park down to Providence Place
-  Introduction of fixed benches and movable deck chairs
-  Introduction of table tennis and other games equipment
-  After-school playtime
-  Lighting of trees after dark
-  Café van (1-5 Oct only)
-  BBQ (10 and 12 Oct only)
-  Piano (5 Oct only)

## Transforming Ann Street and Providence Place into the Common Room



Bottom of Ann Street prior to (above) and during the Common Room pilot when it was transformed into 'pocket' public square (below).



Providence Place Gardens prior to (above) and during the Common Room pilot when railings surrounding park were removed (below)





Top to bottom (1-5): sequence showing removal of fence at the southern end of the park.

Top to bottom (1-5): sequence showing removal of fence and construction of steps between park and Providence Place.

## Programme of events

Week 1		Monday 1 Oct	Tuesday 2 Oct	Wednesday 3 Oct	Thursday 4 Oct	Friday 5 Oct	Saturday 6 Oct	Sunday 7 Oct
All day		Table tennis 11.00-21.00	Table tennis 11.00-21.00	Table tennis 11.00-21.00	Table tennis 11.00-21.00	Table tennis 11.00-21.00	Table tennis 11.00-21.00	Table tennis 11.00-21.00
Afternoon/ Evening		Alfresco dining (creperie van) 13.00-20.00	Alfresco dining (creperie van) 13.00-20.00	Alfresco dining (creperie van) 13.00-20.00	Alfresco dining (creperie van) 13.00-20.00	Piano 13.00-16.00		
		After school playtime 15.00-17.00	After school playtime 15.00-17.00	After school playtime 15.00-17.00	After school playtime 15.00-17.00	After school playtime 15.00-17.00	After school playtime 15.00-17.00	After school playtime 15.00-17.00
		Illumination of trees 18.30-21.00	Illumination of trees 18.30-21.00	Illumination of trees 18.30-21.00		Illumination of trees 18.30-21.00	Illumination of trees 18.30-21.00	
Week 2		Monday 8 Oct	Tuesday 9 Oct	Wednesday 10 Oct	Thursday 11 Oct	Friday 12 Oct	Saturday 13 Oct	Sunday 14 Oct
All day		Table tennis 11.00-21.00	Table tennis 11.00-21.00	Table tennis 11.00-21.00	Table tennis 11.00-21.00	Table tennis 11.00-21.00	Table tennis 11.00-21.00	Table tennis 11.00-21.00
Morning						Yoga 09.00-11.00		
Afternoon/ Evening			Digital surgery 13.00-20.00	Alfresco dining (ethnic food stand) 13.00-20.00		Alfresco dining (ethnic food stand) 13.00-20.00	Toy hacking 14.00-17.00	
		After school playtime 15.00-17.00	After school playtime 15.00-17.00	After school playtime 15.00-17.00	After school playtime 15.00-17.00	After school playtime 15.00-17.00	After school playtime 15.00-17.00	After school playtime 15.00-17.00
				Park rangers (Biosphere stall) 15.00-17.00				
				Digital event 18.00-20.00				
		Illumination of trees 18.30-21.00		Illumination of trees 18.30-21.00		Illumination of trees 18.30-21.00	Illumination of trees 18.30-21.00	

## Common Room in use



Steps used for informal seating and sunbathing (above) and encouraging and enabling free movement from Providence Place to park (right).



### Common Room in use



Environmental improvements and the programme of events created opportunities for better access and flexible use of the park by various age groups, enabling a range of activities to take place, such as yoga (above left), after-school play above and left), piano playing (far left), table tennis (below left). Spontaneous events observed included Brazilian dance practice and fashion student photo shoot (below middle and right)



'Pocket' public square introduced at the bottom of Ann Street with picnic tables and benches for free usage, including users of the free Wi-Fi service and the coffee shop in the corner with London Road (left). Socialising, eating/drinking and/or taking a break from shopping in London Road (far left). 'Toy hacking' event (left).



Improvised use of performance area by skateboarders (below left).

Night time tree lighting (below centre) and flexible seating (below right) showed potential for the park to be used at different times for different purposes.





**Introduce seating, remove fence and introduce steps**

Priority level **high**

**Prioritise provision of fixed seating.**

**Explore options for replacement of resident parking in and/or near project area.**

**Improve accessibility across site, in particular for disabled users.**

**Secure more regular Police officer presence.**

**3.2. Outcomes and recommendations**

The next steps in the Lively Cities project are to identify successful aspects of the Common Room and to set priorities for a permanent transformation of the area. This part of the report provides a brief overview of the pilot project's outcomes and recommends which elements should be taken forward (and how these should be prioritised to ensure that any available funding brings forward the key elements at the earliest opportunity in the implementation process).

The graph on the left indicates priority levels identified for implementation following an analysis of findings from the various survey tools detailed in parts 4 and 5 of this report. An overview of each of the components on this graph is provided below.

**Seating, removal of fence and introduction of steps (removal of parking bays)**

- Identified as 'high priority' improvements for any permanent transformation, given that these topped the list of most liked improvements across all user groups (see 5.1).
- These elements are integral in inviting people into the park - to use it as a place to spend time or simply as a through route - and provide the basis for a wide range of events, activities, social interactions and opportunities for rest (see 5.4 and Events below). They were perceived to have opened up the area, changing its overall 'feel', removing previous disincentives to use the park.
- More relevantly, these elements seem to have successfully addressed two of the top user suggestions in the 2011 survey: more seating and better landscaping (see Appendix C, *2011 Consultation and site assessment report*).
- Fixed seating seems to have been more used than movable seating. Solutions for robust and secure permanent seating will be needed, as during the pilot a number of benches and even a picnic table were stolen overnight. If movable seating was considered desirable as a future option, management of storage, set up and take down facilities would need to be arranged (see 5.9). Such operational requirements would obviously entail a long term financial commitment.
- The introduction of steps along Providence Place necessitated the removal of resident parking bays. Although identified as one of the possible reasons for reduced noise levels identified in the area (see 5.5), only one in three respondents liked the removal of the parking bays and concerns were raised by some over the loss of disabled parking spaces in the area. Hence, it is important to explore options for incorporating parking bays into a revised design for the area and/or providing replacement bays nearby.
- Budget restrictions limited options for increased accessibility across the site. Such opportunities, in particular for disabled users, should be explored.
- Police visits during the two week pilot were virtually absent. There is a need to work in partnership with Sussex Police to secure more regular pass-bys.

## Art wall

- Identified as a 'moderate-to-high priority' improvement for any permanent transformation, given that it featured high in the most liked list (see 5.1) – although a few people preferred the graffiti that was temporarily covered over by the Common Room design. The art wall attracted some initial graffiti tagging at the start of the two weeks, although was largely left alone afterwards. The use of the art wall for cinema projections was initially planned for the pilot but abandoned due to a lack of a power source on site. A flexible approach to commissioning future art work for the wall could be an option.
- The provision of a power source could be useful to enable for wider use of the wall (e.g. for lighting and/or projections) in consultation with the local community, in particular residents.
- Negotiations with the landowner/tenant of the art wall building regarding long-term use of the wall will be necessary.

## Café / food trading

- Identified as a 'moderate-to-high priority' improvement for any permanent transformation given that it proved popular with more than half of the people surveyed (see 5.1).
- However, the mobile café provider (creperie van) who signed up for the full two weeks of the pilot pulled out before the end of the first week due to less than expected revenue. For two days during the second week of the pilot a local resident set up a barbeque stall selling West Indian style chicken, which proved more successful.
- The pilot suggests there is no need for a fixed facility for food trading. Flexibility to accommodate different food trades that complement the wider offer of food outlets in the London Road and Fenchurch Walk areas (and to service events taking place in the project area) is the way forward.
- It would be useful to consider providing water supply point on site to support food trading when needed.

## Restricting access of large vehicles

- Identified as a 'moderate priority' improvement for any permanent transformation given that it proved popular with all people surveyed, in particular residents. This was also identified as one of the possible reasons for reduced noise levels registered in the area during the pilot (see 5.3 soundscaping).
- It would be important to consider options for limiting circulation of large vehicles in the area during particular hours, taking into consideration the need for delivery vehicles to service businesses in the area.

## Events

- Identified as a 'moderate priority' improvement any permanent transformation given their role in 'animating' the project area and showcasing its potential as a community resource.
- The range of events delivered via the programme detailed in page 11 of this document successfully showcased a range of activities that could take place in the project area as a result of the Common Room's more open, accessible and flexible physical layout.



### Implement art wall

Priority level **moderate to high**

Explore **options for: temporary and long-term use for the art wall** with landowner and local residents.

Consider **option for provision of power point on site** to enable for more flexible use of the wall as a resource.



### Provide facilities for food trading

Priority level **moderate to high**

Provide **facilities to support food trading** in the project area should be priority for any permanent transformation.

Consider **option for provision of water supply on site** to support food trading.



### Restrict access of large vehicles

Priority level **moderate**

Explore **options for limiting circulation** while considering need for delivery vehicle access.



### Progress with programme of events

Priority level **moderate**

Explore options for providing **temporary or permanent table tennis facility** on site working in partnership with residents to limit play time.

Explore **option for implementing afterschool play on a consistent basis and applying for play street status for Providence Place** in partnership with St. Bartholomew's School.



### Implement tree and St Bartholomew's Church lighting

Priority level **moderate**

Explore **options for lighting trees and St Bart's Church façade** in partnership with church.

- In addition to the programmed events, a number of spontaneous (or 'unofficial') events were observed during the pilot such as fashion students undertaking an evening photo shoot and a dance troupe (based close to the site) practicing in the park – both on the same evening.
- Of the events programmed the table tennis proved to be extremely popular, becoming a focal point for social interaction (see 5.2 behaviour mapping) to the extent that people were observed playing it in the rain. The two tables were particularly well used by City College students, providing a welcome addition to the popular but oversubscribed facility available inside the college itself. Residents appeared to enjoy this facility also, although some expressed concern with noise issues resulting from nighttime playing taking place. One resident who was particularly complementary about the changes (and wanted to see the table tennis retained if possible) expressed their willingness to put out and collect pads and balls at certain times as a means of both servicing the facility and reducing the risk of disturbance. The provision of a permanent or seasonal table tennis facility is highly recommended. With the help of the local community it may be possible to establish a code of conduct and play times limits.
- After school play was very popular with pupils and parents of St Bartholomew's School, particularly on sunny days. This was the time when the park seemed at its liveliest, with outdoor play and people socialising - and/or minding children - taking over the southern half of the park. Opportunities should be explored for providing such an after school play facility on a consistent basis, working in partnership with the school and the council's Playbus scheme. Options should be considered for designating the streets immediately adjacent to the park as a 'play street' during certain hours to enable temporary road closures and appropriate safety arrangements for children participating in the after school playtime.

### Tree and church lighting

- Identified as a 'moderate priority' improvement for any permanent transformation given that this could help improve safety conditions for users of the area after dark.
- Lighting of St. Bartholomew's Church's façade was initially considered but proved not to be possible during the pilot due a lack of a reliable power source. As the church is considered a valued asset among users surveyed in 2011 (see Appendix C, *2011 Consultation and site assessment report*) it would be important to consider options for providing a high quality lighting scheme of this Grade I listed building on a long-term basis, while agreeing on appropriate hours of lighting as part of wider amenity and energy efficiency considerations.
- Facilities for lighting the trees in the park should be provided and options for lighting the church façade from the park should be explored in partnership with the church.
- As the example of the student photoshoot revealed, there is good potential to light up the wooden sculpture on the southern end of the park (see page 12 and 5.9)

### Ann Street 'pocket' square and removal of parking bays

- Identified as a 'moderate priority' improvement for any permanent transformation, given that it extends the offer of seating facilities in the area, in particular along London Road where such facilities are absent.
- During the implementation of the pilot, some businesses expressed concern over the loss of parking space for their delivery vehicles as a result of the experiment. The design of the square was adjusted and 'no-parking' cones provided so that parking spaces for delivery vehicles near the crossing with Providence Place could be tested.
- The test proved successful and it is recommended that flexible design options be considered for any implementation of the 'square', incorporating provision of short-term parking for delivery vehicles, along with seating facilities.
- Concern was also raised by a number of respondents regarding the loss of the disabled parking bays to seating. It is important to explore options for incorporating these parking bays into a revised design for the area and/or providing replacement bays nearby. One option would be to increase on street blue badge spaces on London Road (at the expense of more general paid spaces).

#### Wi-Fi

- Identified as a low priority improvement for any permanent transformation, given that the service delivered as part of the Common Room will be in place until September 2013 and the council is currently considering rolling out a citywide wi-fi service.
- It is recommended that the council work with partners in the city to ensure that the Common Room benefits from any citywide service.

#### Performance area

- Identified as lowest priority level, given that although many respondents liked it (see 5.1), evidence arising from the behaviour mapping (see 5.3) and general on site observations indicated no (intended) activities taking place in this area, making this the least successful Common Room component.
- This area was not taken up by spontaneous performers as hoped (other than some noisy drunken revellry by street drinkers during the hours of darkness -according to anecdotal evidence from the site manager and their assistant). During daylight hours the stage was used only rarely and not for its intended use, but by children as spillover playspace from the busy park during afterschool play and (on one occasion) by skateboarders.
- Any spontaneous performances that were observed took place not on the dedicated stage but in the park itself.

#### Other

- Building on discussions undertaken during the 2011 consultation (see Consultation and site assessment report in Appendix C), it is recommended that further work is undertaken with the local community, street drinking support organisations such as Equinox and Sussex Police to agree a code of conduct for street drinkers and ensure a level of Police presence in the area.
- Supporting suggestions for improvement expressed in the 2011 survey, it is recommended that some floral planting to Providence Place Gardens be explored.



### Implement Ann Street 'pocket' square (and removal of disabled parking bays)

Priority level **moderate**

Explore **options for incorporating parking for delivery vehicles** into the design of the square.

Explore **options for replacement of disabled parking** in and/or near project area.



### Make best use of Wi-Fi service available

Priority level **low**

Work with local partners to **raise awareness and make best use of Wi-Fi service in place until September 2013.**



### Remove unsuccessful performance area from long-term plans.

Explore **options for alternative use of performance stage area including use as replacement parking for bays lost elsewhere on the project site.**



Work with **street drinking community and other partners to establish code of conduct** for the area.

Introduce **floral planting** to the park.

## 4. Assessment strategy



Volunteer training took place in late September 2012.

In order to gauge responses to the changes associated with the Common Room, a range of site assessment techniques were used to gather data. These data collection techniques are outlined below.

Detailed findings for each data set and how these compare with the findings of the *2011 Consultation and site assessment report* are available in section 5 of this document. In order to provide a framework for comparison, the range of techniques used in the 2011 and 2012 fieldwork are broadly the same.

Except for the Soundscape assessment, the techniques and proforma used to gather data were adapted from the Placemaking for Creating Lively Cities Training Manual (created by Project for Public Spaces – a New York based organisation that has considerable international experience and expertise on placemaking projects).

The data was collected on selected dates and times between 1 and 14 October 2012 by volunteer fieldworkers recruited, trained and supervised by the council. The graph on the left indicates dates, times and techniques used. These were organised within the human and financial resources available.

In addition to the above, an online questionnaire was advertised and made available on the council website during the two-week pilot. Data was also gathered from parents and pupils of the nearby St Bartholomew's Primary School in November 2012 after the pilot project had ended.

Posters and an A-board were placed at various locations around and within the project site, inviting people to visit and give feedback on the Common Room - either online or on site.

Blank copies of the proforma used in the site assessment are provided for information in Appendix A.

The information gathered has helped the council assess the more and less successful aspects of the pilot project and set priorities for long-term implementation.

	08.30-09.30	10.30-11.30	13.00-14.00	15.00-16.00	17.00-18.00
Tue 2 Oct	Parking audit	People in the space			
Wed 3 Oct	Counting	Soundscaping			
Thu 4 Oct	Behaviour mapping	Origin-Destination			
Fri 5 Oct	Behaviour mapping	Origin-Destination	Local businesses		
Sat 6 Oct	People in the space	Counting			
Mon 8 Oct	Parking audit	People in the space			
Wed 10 Oct	Behaviour mapping	Origin-Destination	Residents		
Fri 12 Oct	Behaviour mapping	Counting			
Sat 13 Oct	Soundscaping	Parking audit			

Graph indicating data collection by date, technique and time slots when fieldwork was carried out.

The site assessment techniques used are set out below:

### Behaviour mapping

- Also known as activity mapping, this exercise involves observing and recording the activities and behaviours of people who are spending time within the project area.

### Counting

- This systematic method of gathering numerical data provides basic information on the number of people passing through the project area at different times of the day.
- This information has been consolidated by data gathered via an “Eco-counter” placed adjacent to the pavement in front of St Bartholomew’s Church, providing time series data on pedestrian movements on the north side of Ann Street from 26 September - 17 November 2012.

### Local businesses and

### People in the space questionnaires

- People in the project area - along with those who work in the vicinity - are asked a consistent set of questions regarding how they use the project area and their views on the piloted changes.

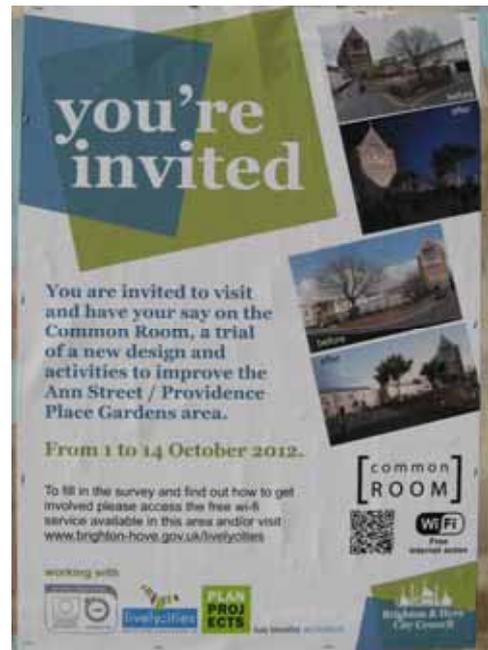
### Origin-Destination and

### Parking audits

- A questionnaire to obtain data from people passing through – and vehicle drivers parking in - the area, on where they are going to and coming from.
- This helps to provide a fuller picture of the various reasons why people are coming to or moving through the area, and gives an idea of the extent of the wider catchment area.

### Resident questionnaire

- This provides information on the views of residents living beside or in close proximity to the project area.
- It was used to identify resident responses to the changes made to the area
- A door to door questionnaire was conducted on 10 October 2012 with residents who were at home. Questionnaires with postage paid envelopes were posted to those not available for interview on that day.



Posters and A-board provided information about and invited people to provide feedback on the Common Room were placed in various locations across the site.



Volunteers carrying out fieldwork (counting above; origin-destination survey below).





Online questionnaire



Time lapse recording (activity taking place along Providence Place and park).

## Soundscaping audit

- An assessment of the quality of ambient noise within the project area and consideration of how this might be changed to present an improved acoustic environment. Recommendations on features, activities and landscaping can be made using this technique.
- The assessment is based on guided “soundwalks” along a pre-established route.
- The technique was developed by Brighton & Hove City Council Environment Improvement Team with the advice and support from the Noise Abatement Society and the Eurocities Noise Working Group.

Additional exercises used to seek views on the pilot project are listed below:

### Online questionnaire

- This was advertised through various media and made available on the council’s website for anyone to complete.
- It sought a similar range of data as the on-site questionnaire, including information on respondent profile (e.g. age, group, gender and home location).

### St Bartholomew’s Primary School survey

- St. Bartholomew’s Primary School (located adjacent to the project area) gathered responses on the pilot project from its pupils and their parents.
- Parents responded to a structured questionnaire in the school’s weekly newsletter, while pupils responded to a ‘hands up’ survey led by school staff.

### Time lapse photography (pedestrian tracking)

- This provides visual information on the activities and movements of pedestrians and vehicles and can give an interesting and sometimes surprising picture of how the area is used over different times of the day.
- It can help to identify the routes people take through the project area, defining which paths through a place are most heavily used and for understanding how people cross a space.
- Recordings were made at different times and locations between 1 and 14 October.

- In order to allow comparison with recordings taken in 2011, the camera was placed in the same location, recording movement between 16.00, 05/10/2012 and 04.00 06/10/2012. Further recordings were taken other locations within the project area .

### Feedback from site managers

- Two informal interviews were undertaken with the Common Room site manager and their assistant regarding their roles and to document their experience and views on the project. This information was particularly valuable as they were present on site for a great deal of the two weeks and were able to give useful feedback on a variety of issues.

### Wi-Fi service statistics

- Data collected from the Wi-Fi service provider that gives an overview of the usage of the free Wi-Fi service made available during the two-week pilot.
- The free Wi-Fi service will continue to be available in the area until September 2013.



Site managers assisting with after school play time (above) and providing information to the public about the project (below)



Common Room Wi-Fi survey form posted on the council's website. A link to this survey is provided for users on the Wi-Fi landing page. Providing feedback via this form is not mandatory for people using the service on site.

## 5. Summary of findings

Number of respondents that:



Seating (Providence Place Gardens area)



Removal of fence



Introduction of steps



Art wall



Café



Restricting access of large vehicles



Wi-fi



Seating (Ann Street 'pocket' square)



Tree lighting



Performance area



Events



Removal of parking bays



*How many respondents liked and did not like (all surveyed that expressed an opinion).*

This section of the report provides an overview of responses to the changes put in place the Common Room pilot between 1 and 14 October 2012.

This data is compared with that collected in 2011 as detailed in the 'Consultation and site assessment report.' The objective is to:

- provide information on how the various elements of the pilot project changed perceptions and usage of the area;
- identify the relative success (or otherwise) of these elements; and
- help inform decisions and priorities to guide long-term changes to the project area.

The section provides an overview of combined data sets, as well as data arising from specific surveys, including:

- What people said about the changes;
- Overall changes in usage of the park; and
- Results of the counting, behaviour mapping, soundscaping, St Bartholomew's School and Wi-Fi surveys and time-lapse photography.

Copies of fieldwork forms and a detailed breakdown of the data are included in the Appendices.

### 5.1. What people say/think about the changes

The graph on the left combines responses from 279 people interviewed via the residents, local businesses, origin-destination, parking and people in the space questionnaires/audits.

Respondents were asked to choose from a list of improvements which they liked or did not like. Of the those who expressed their preference:

- The most popular improvement was the introduction of seating (tables and chairs), in particular in Providence Place Gardens.
- One in three of the respondents also liked the removal of fences, introduction of steps between the park and Providence Place and the art wall.
- One in two respondents liked the café, wi-fi service and restricting access of large vehicles, events, tree lighting and Ann Street 'pocket' public square.
- Less than one in two respondents liked the removal of the parking bays with some raising concern over adverse impact on disabled bay users, residents and delivery vehicles.

Please note that the transcripts highlighted next provide an overall flavour or the range of comments received, both positive and negative. They do not represent the balance of comments received.

## What people said ...

### Changes in general



**'Opens up the space, makes it more useable.'**

**'Really nice idea, like all of it.'**

**'Changes should be permanent. Should have a nicer surface treatment to Ann Street that links park to Church.'**

**'...everything is good, can't criticise...'**

**'Much nicer, friendly.'**



**'The concept, the materials used, ... all miserably inappropriate to the area. The overall effect is silly, sad and shoddy.'**

**'This is odd. Not sure what it is for. ... Better in another place not here given it is a problematic area.'**

### Seating



**'Ann Street square ... good to sit outside café, better than parking.'**

**'... nice seating areas.'**



**'More permanent seating (needed) that can't be stolen.'**

### Removal of fence / introduction of steps



**'...better than before'.**

**'...deters street drinkers'.**

**'Really like [it] and the introduction of the steps. Somewhere to eat lunch now. ... Hope they don't put the railings back as it's just a big dog's toilet.'**

**'Without the fence, it's easy to walk up, and people can seat on the stairs.'**



**'Didn't feel removal of fence was necessary...'**

### Removal of parking bays/ restricting access of large vehicles



**'Plenty of parking elsewhere.'**

**'Restricting lorries and parking bays a good idea.'**



**'Don't like loss of parking as used to use this regularly.'**

**'Lots of disabled spaces have been lost in the area already.... Need to think about the cumulative effect.'**

**'The loss of residents' parking is not justified by this sorry exercise.'**

### Other



**'Events good for bringing community together'**

**'...Table tennis good idea. Hopefully will discourage street drinkers.'**

**'Free Wi-Fi very good idea.'**

**'Art wall helps stop tagging.'**



*Café (creperie van).*



*Table tennis.*



*Steps.*

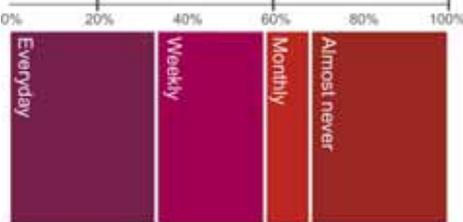


*Art wall and performance area*



*Events: Park Rangers Biosphere stall*

2011 survey



2012 survey

Frequency of visit

5.2. Frequency, length, reason for visit and visitor profile

Frequency of visit

- More people visiting everyday, and – as a proportion - fewer visiting less than monthly, suggesting the improvements were making people come more often.

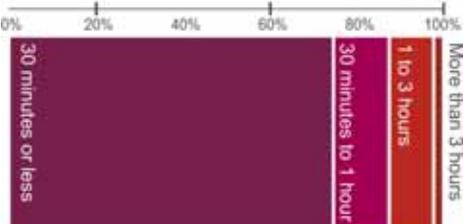
Length of visit

- More people visiting for longer periods of time than just 30 minutes or less, suggesting that the improvements were making people stay for longer.

What the area is used for

- With regard to total people within the project area, a greater proportion were engaging in a range of activities on site, other than using it as a mere short cut between other destinations.
- The ‘other’ category in this graph includes a range of activities such as attending an event, reading, people watching, walking the dog, sun bathing and picking up/dropping off children from school.

2011 survey



2012 survey

Length of visit

What people said...



‘I don't live here but I think it looks nice!’

‘Peaceful, looks chilled, positive atmosphere and nice changes.’

‘Usually avoided area (before changes). Better without fencing [because] of dogs. Wi-Fi nice in summer. Art wall not very colourful. Like the Citroen van. Like Ann Street Square ....’

‘Well done - hope you succeed. As an owner of an apartment in [nearby], and a dog owner, apart from the green belt in Providence Place opposite St Bartholomew's Church there is no other place to take a dog for a walk & natural relief.’



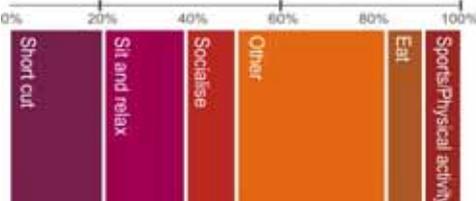
‘While I am delighted that this garden and the adjacent area is the topic of discussion for improvement, I must raise the issue of disabled parking as I am a disabled driver requiring access to shops within a short distance of Ann Street.’



‘A lot of money is being spent. It's a waste of money.’

‘Shabby. Waste of energy.’

2011 survey



2012 survey

What the area is used for.

### Age

- The overall average age increased, with a greater proportion from older age groups using the park. This could be for a number of reasons - e.g. the availability of seating and because the area felt safer due to the changes and the numbers and range of people using the area.

### Origin / Destination

This comprises data on pedestrians passing through the area and drivers parking within the area.

- An increased proportion of people moving through the project area appeared to be travelling to nearby destinations such as Brighton Station, Sainsbury's, the Level and City College, rather than other more distant locations. The proportionate increase in journeys between these local destinations suggests that a greater proportion of people using facilities in the local vicinity were choosing to use a route through the project area.
- It appears that following the changes people chose to pass through the area considerably more often.

### What people said ...



**'Please keep [the changes].'**

**'I have never used Providence Place before the changes and myself and my neighbours love it. Please keep it. You have reclaimed the areas for us from the drug addicts and drunks. My son wants to play there every day now and the school children love playing on the stage even in the rain.'**

**'Like the stairs, but there should be more protection for little children from the cars passing through.'**  
**'More weekend and evening events (needed)- for the local community.'**

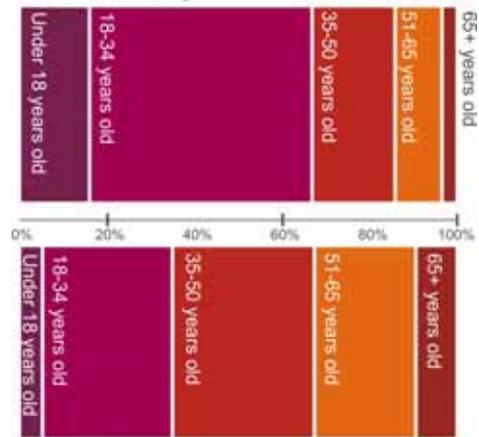
**'I have noticed that since the changes there is greater diversity of people using the area. As a result I feel much more comfortable using the area. Well done!'**

**'No winos, but maybe this is just temporary?'**



**'...Preferred the fence. Have felt that nothing has changed.'**

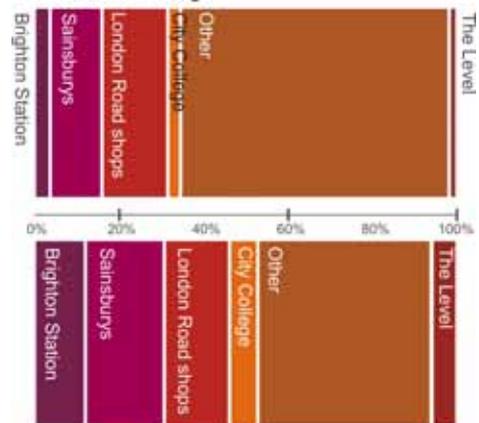
2011 survey



2012 survey

Age

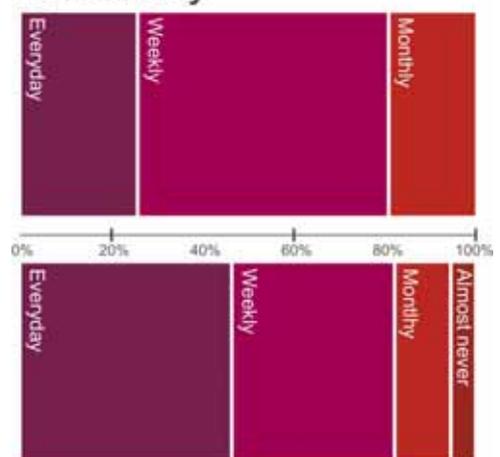
2011 survey



2012 survey

Origin-Destination

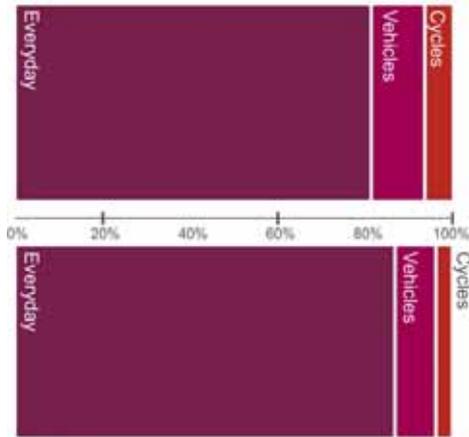
2011 survey



2012 survey

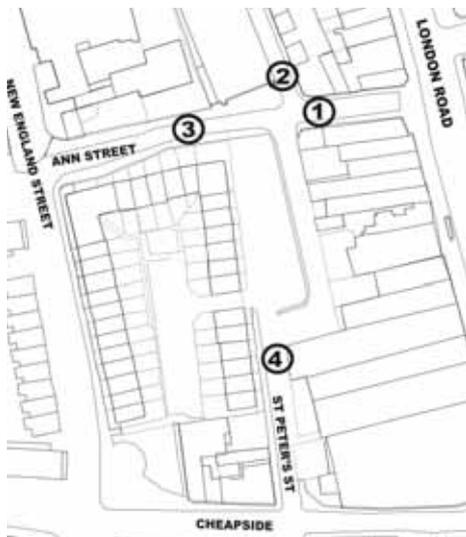
Origin-Destination: frequency of visit

2011 survey



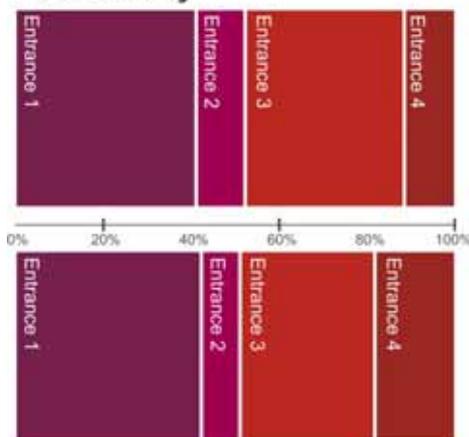
2012 survey

Counting: proportion of users by traffic type.



Map of entrances 1-4.

2011 survey



2012 survey

Pedestrian flow by entrance.

5.3. Counting

In order to compare like with like, data relating to the 2012 Common Room project is drawn from that collected during the dry, sunny days of the two week pilot. This is because all data in the 2011 survey was gathered during such weather conditions, whereas a number of days during the pilot project were extremely wet and windy. Inevitably, on such days the park was little used (as would be the case in any park or public open space).

Additionally, data collected in 2012 between 17.00 and 18.00 was also discarded for comparison purposes - as this time slot was not included in – and therefore not comparable with - the 2011 survey. It should be noted, however, that on good days the Common Room attracted a fair degree of evening usage, aided by the presence of lighting within the park for the two week pilot.

As the graph on the left above indicates, during the 2012 pilot the area continued to accommodate significantly more pedestrian than vehicular traffic, as had been the case in 2011.

As a proportion of the total movements through the area, pedestrians became even more dominant with an increase from 82% to 87%, whilst the proportion of vehicular and cycle traffic decreased, suggesting that the area may have become more attractive as a pedestrian route.

The graph on the left indicates a proportionate increase in pedestrians entering the project area from the south via St Peters Street (entrance 4). This could be due to an increase in City College students being attracted to the space by the table tennis facilities (the college is south of the site close to 'entrance 4' on the map). Some students indicated that although a table tennis table is provided at City College, this tends to be oversubscribed.

In that sense, the two table tennis tables provided in the park (along with free bats and balls) could have helped meet some of the existing demand from City College students, as well as providing a novel and accessible attraction to many of them. This was certainly the perception arising from observations and informal interviews undertaken on site.

Pedestrian flows along Ann Street remained consistently high, with findings of the 2012 survey indicating that on average per day more than 4,000 people move up and down Ann Street between 08.30 and 16.00.

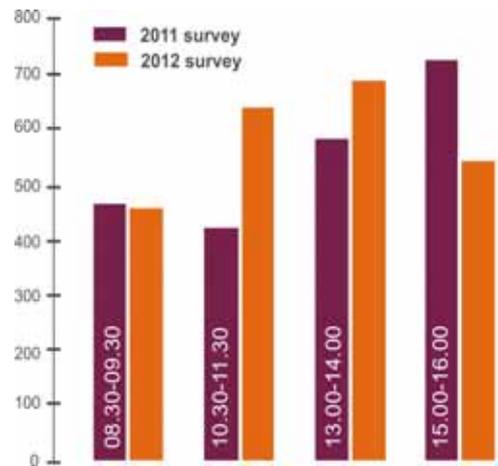
As the graph on the right indicates it appears as though for 10.30 and 13.00 time slots there were increased flows of pedestrians in 2012, but then later in the day there appear to be fewer pedestrian movements than in 2011. This may be because the 15.00-16.00 slot accorded with the start of 'after school play' in the park area (one of the activities introduced by the Common Room pilot) when the park was at its busiest. Therefore, by providing activities encouraging children and their parents to stay in the project area, one would expect a commensurate reduction in pedestrian movements out of the park area during this time slot.

With regard to vehicular traffic, it appears that there were reduced numbers of vehicles in the project area at all recorded time slots (i.e. 08.30, 10.30, 13.00 and 15.00). This suggests that the ban on HGV movements, together with the removal of on street parking on Providence Place and the bottom of Ann Street may well have been factors in reducing traffic movements in the project area.

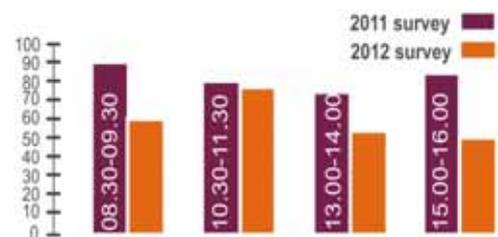
The graphs on the right reflect data registered by an 'eco counter' recording pedestrian movements on the north side of Ann Street adjacent to St Bartholomew's Church during the 2011 and 2012 surveys. The graph presents data collected for the second week of the Common Room pilot (8-14 October 2012) against a typical week (pre-October half-term week 17-23 October 2011 and 22-28 October 2012).

As it suggests, variations in average pedestrian flows over 24-hour periods for weekdays and weekends have remained consistent with flows building up after 06.00 and slowing down after 21.00.

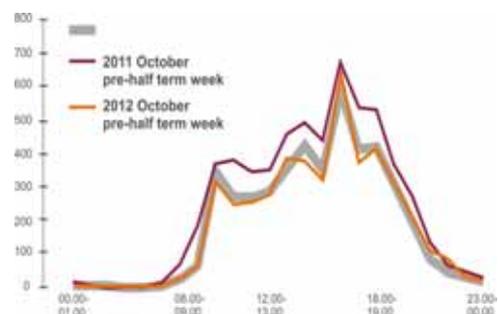
It appears, however, that on weekdays there are fewer pedestrians walking down that side of Ann Street whether the Common Room was in place or not. For weekends it appears that the opposite is the case with much more activity in 2012. It also seems that there may have been slightly more activity in the middle of the day when the Common Room was present.



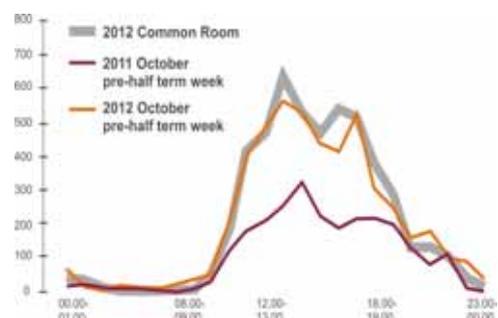
Average pedestrian flow per time slot.



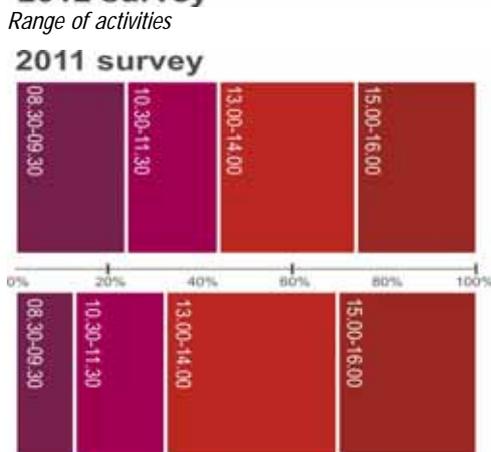
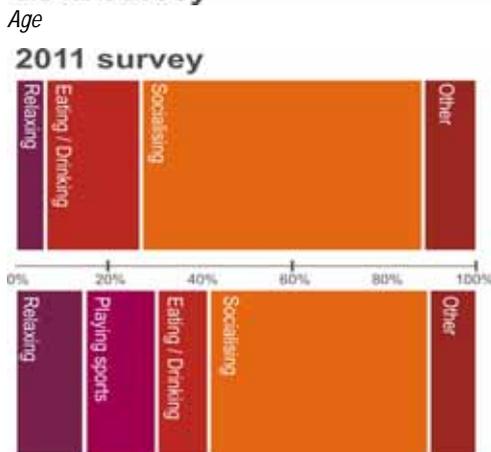
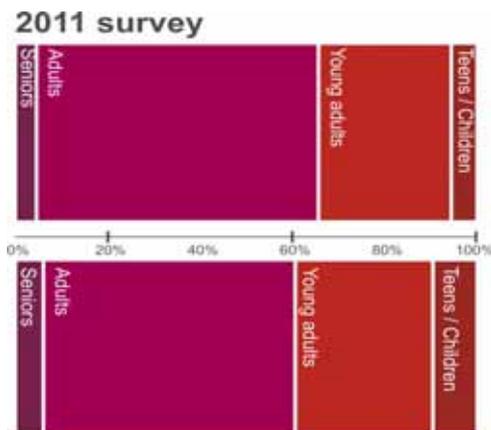
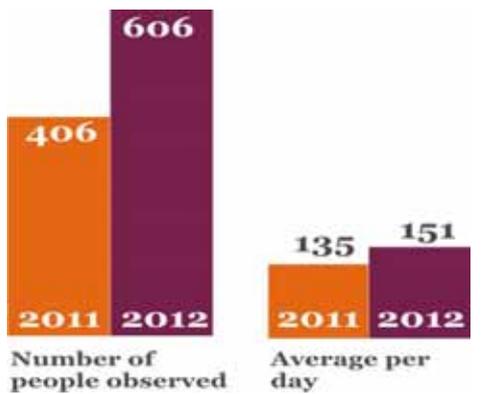
Average vehicular traffic per time slot.



Average pedestrian flow during weekdays



Average pedestrian flow during weekend



Time of visit

### 5.4. Behaviour mapping

Observers used data sheets to record the behaviour of people that spent time in the area (as opposed to those just passing through the area). Observations were made over one-hour periods.

As the table and graphs on the left show, a **comparison between results of sunny days during the 2011 and 2012 surveys** indicate that during the 2012 Common Room (CR) pilot:

- More people were observed spending time in the project area;
- Socialising in groups (33%) and eating/drinking (10%) remained the most widely observed activities;
- a wider range of activities were observed as a result of provision of sports facilities such as ping pong that were not available in 2011 (13%) and quiet relaxation (11%); and
- When offered the option, users preferred sitting on the benches and steps rather than on the grass.

**When data for all weather is considered changes were also identified** in the spatial distribution of activities observed in 2011 and during the 2012 pilot. These are detailed in the next pages by a series of maps containing an overall summary of activities observed.

These maps show the concentration of people as a proportion of total numbers observed performing an activity or series of activities specified in particular areas between 08.30 and 18.00. The darker the colour the greater the proportion of people performing the activity(ies) within a particular area.

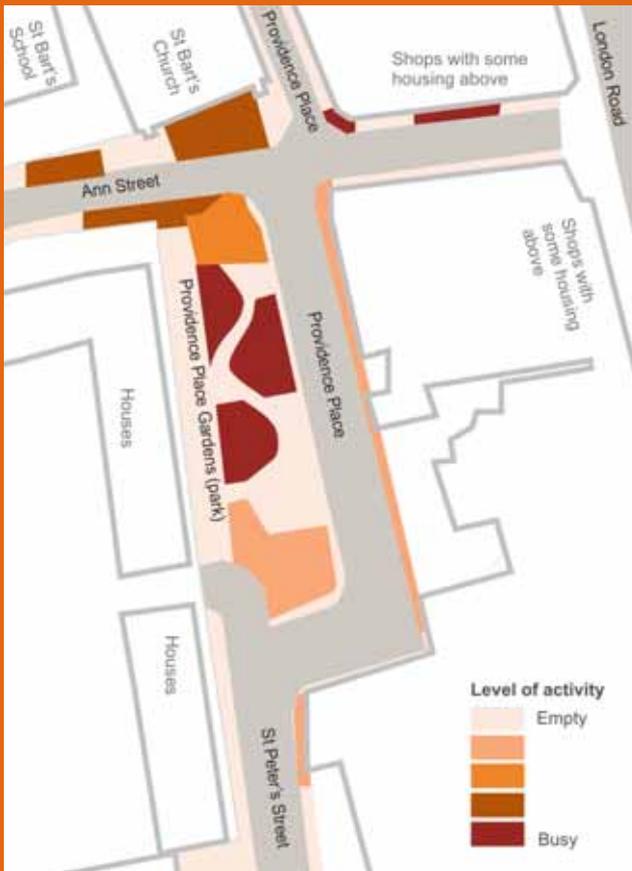
Overall, in 2012 activities were more evenly spread across the area with people taking over more of the space and less empty areas being noted.

With regard to socialising in groups, concentration of activity moved to the bottom of Ann Street where picnic tables were on offer, to the southern end of the park where the table tennis tables along with benches were provided and to the north eastern corner of the park where the terraced steps provided the most convenient and visible form of seating to many pedestrians along Ann Street.

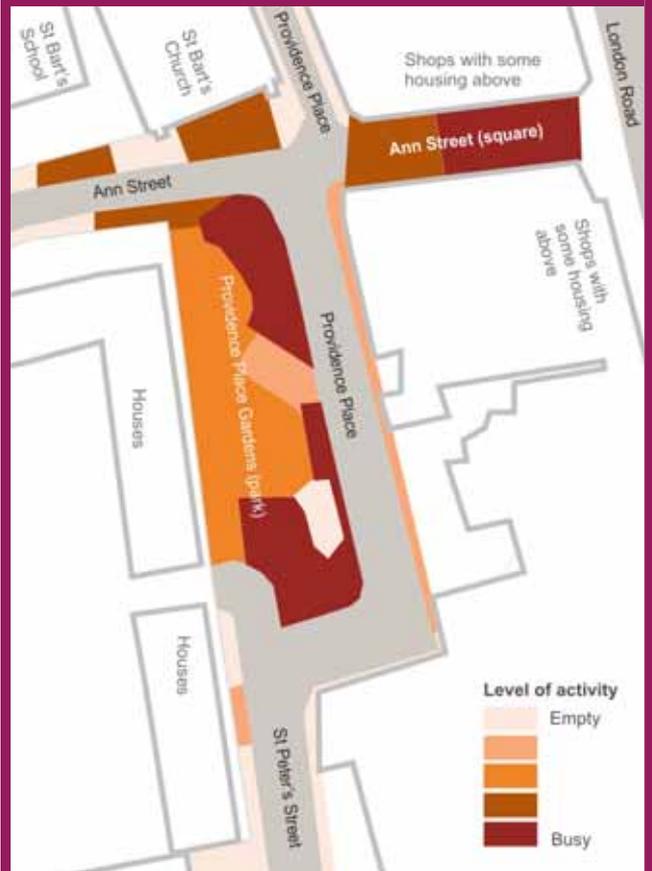
See Appendices for detailed fieldwork form and data set.

### All activities

2011 survey

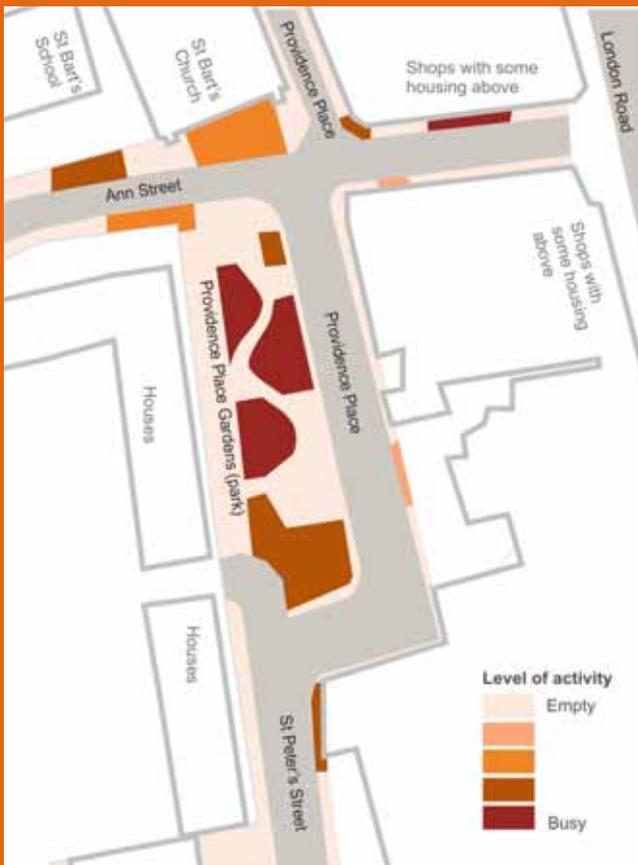


2012 survey

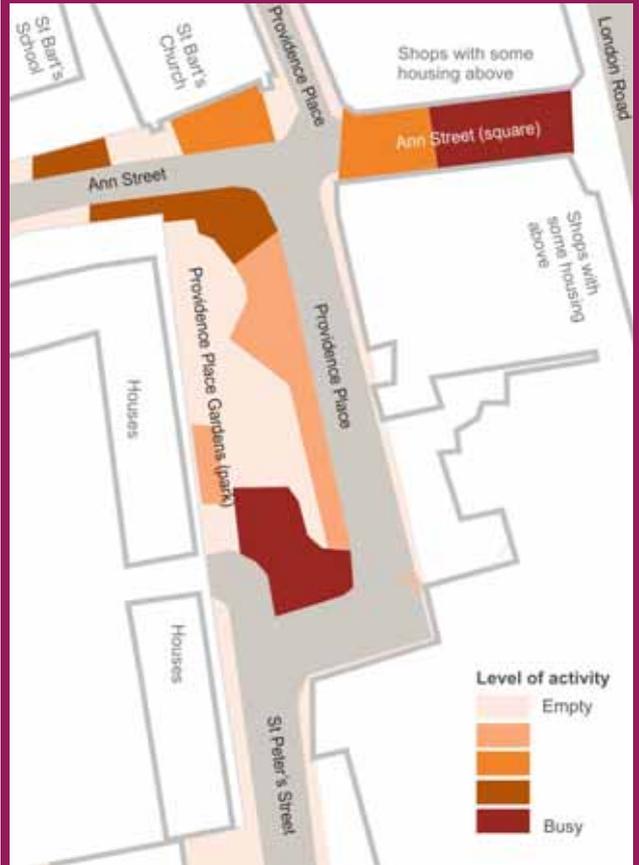


## Socialising

2011 survey



2012 survey



2011 survey



2012 survey





Sound walks

- 1: Ann Street/Providence Place/Cheapside Junction/Providence Park
- 2: Ann Street, St Peters St, Provence Place, Providence Gardens (park)

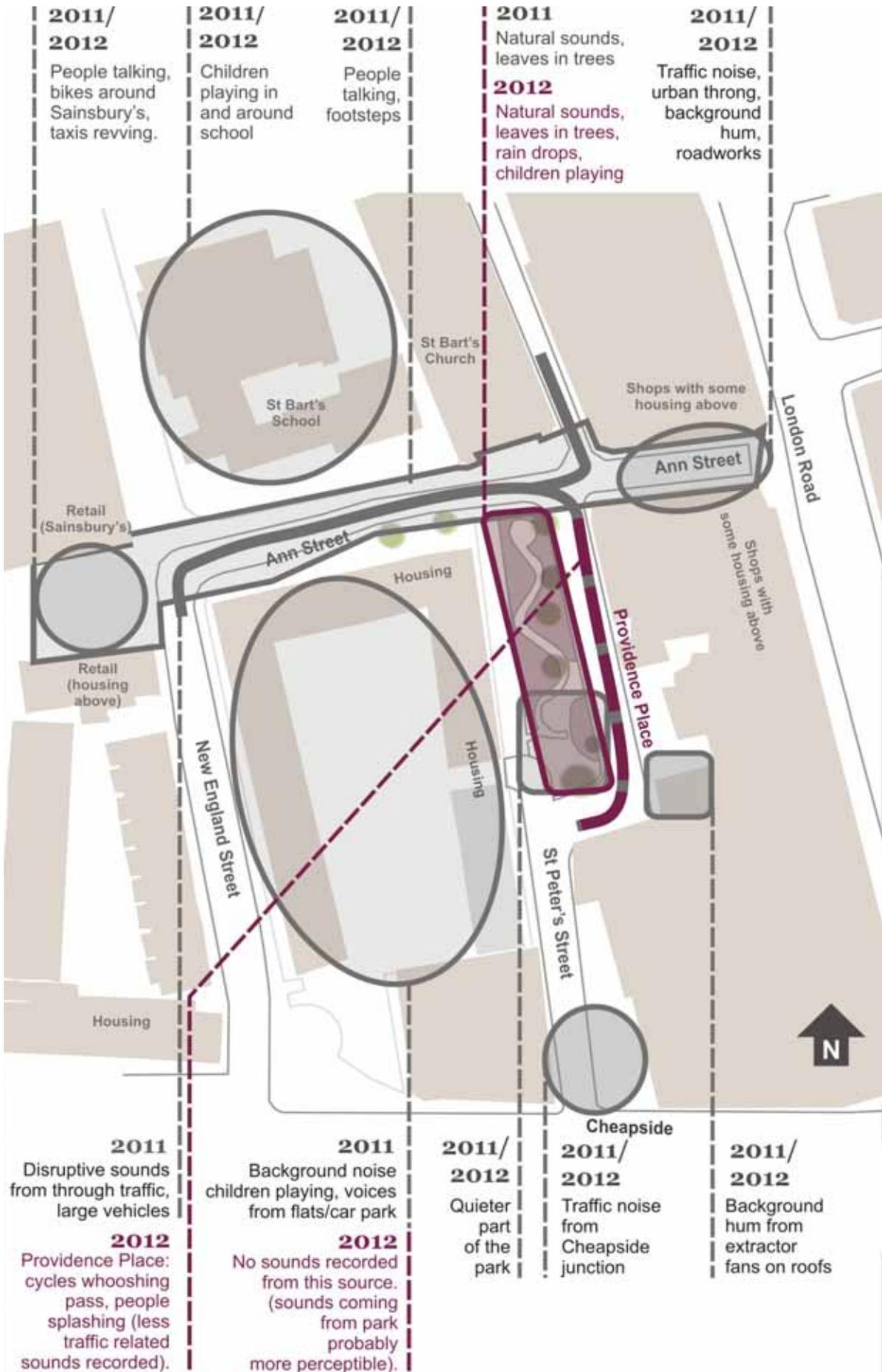
## 5.5. Soundscaping

An in 2011, two pre-established routes were used by volunteers to record the sounds of the project area during the 2012 Common Room pilot.

Considering the responses from surveys carried on in 2011 and 2012 and the key differences between each study period, the following themes emerge:

- The reduction in motor vehicles in the area following the introduction of weight restrictions and suspension of parking had a significant positive impact on reducing noise levels. Whereas the 2011 study focussed strongly on vehicle noise as a problem, the 2012 study accorded this far less prominence.
- Partly as a result of the reduced vehicle noise - and partly because the intervention encouraged greater levels of activity within the park - the 2012 study noted greater levels of human activity sound, and this was appreciated as a positive feature, indicating the success of stimulating greater levels of activity within the site.
- The 2011 study recommended exploration of the use of 'natural' sounds, such as birdsong, running water to offset the hum of the air-conditioning and traffic noise from nearby streets.
- Although this topic was not explicitly explored in the 2012 study, comments around the impact of such background noise and a relative absence of sound within the park suggest that consideration of this kind of intervention to develop a positive soundscape may be of value in enhancing the ambience and amenity of the site in the future.

The map on the next page, illustrates the findings of the 2012 survey set against the 2011 survey. It identifies the most significant sound sources and highlights the areas affected by the changes brought about as part of the Common Room (marked in dark pink).





*Time lapse recording registering movement of people into the church end of the park following removal of fence and introduction of steps along Providence Place.*

## 5.6. Time lapse photography (pedestrian tracking)

Recordings were made at two locations within the project site.

*Location 1: northern corner of the park where the cycle lane meets Ann Street*

- Twelve-hour recordings (4pm-4am) were made at this location in 2011 and 2012 for comparison.
- In 2011 the weather was dry whereas in 2012 it was rainy and windy overnight.
- In 2011, during daylight hours, the high footfall in the areas around the fenced park stood in sharp contrast to the small amount of people passing through or staying in the area.
- In 2012 recordings reveal a more diverse and free pattern of movement through the space.
- After dark recordings in 2011 showed some people in the space whereas none were noticed in 2012 – most probably due to bad weather conditions.

*Location 2: Providence Place performance area*

- Daytime recordings were made on 9 October 2012.
- These reveal pedestrians moving freely across the park; shared use of Providence Place by pedestrians, cyclists, drivers and delivery vehicles doing deliveries; use of the steps and benches for occasional seating, socialising and use of the Wi-Fi service; and the popularity of table tennis.

*Location 3: in front of St Bartholomew's Church*

- Daytime recordings were made on 9 October 2012.
- These show people moving more freely across the park, the impact of temporary food trading and how tree lighting was set up.

Recordings suggest that Common Room improvements opened up the space, making it a more dynamic, attractive and lively place to be in than previously recorded. A variety of users are seen sharing the space, including those moving through Providence Place.

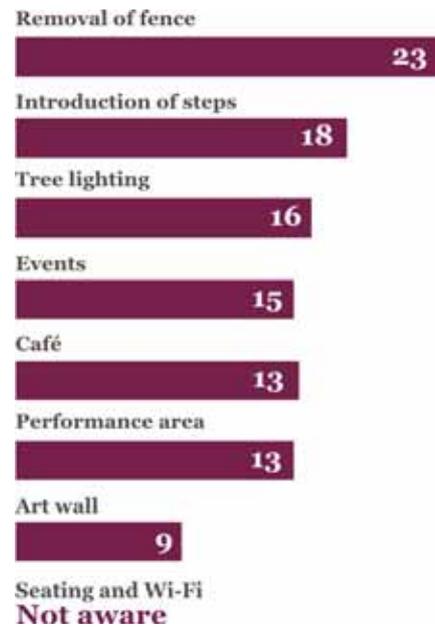
To view the time-lapse recordings please visit [www.facebook.com/livelycitiesbrighton](http://www.facebook.com/livelycitiesbrighton).

## 5.7. St Bartholomew's School survey

*Pupils*

A 'hands-up' survey was carried out by school staff with Year 5 and Year 6 children. These are the two oldest classes in the school (9-11 year olds).

The pupils were very positive about the temporary changes with 30 children (over 50% of those asked) saying they had noticed Common Room changes. The graph on the right shows their responses to the question of which of a list of changes (as listed in the other surveys used) they had liked.



*Changes St Bartholomew's School pupils liked.*

### Parents

A total of 11 parents responded to the questionnaire sent out by the school with their weekly newsletter in early December 2012. Out of those, 7 said they had visited the area prior to and during the two-week Common Room trial. There is strong indication that the area became a more attractive place for these parents.

Prior to the two-week Common Room trial the majority of these parents (86%) said they had almost never visited the area. During the trial half of them said they had visited almost everyday for short periods of time (30 minutes or less) to relax, socialise or mind children while they played.

### 5.8. Wi-fi

Between 1 October to 29 November 2012, Metranet (Wi-Fi service provider) recorded:

- 112 unique connections;
- 18 clients have returned once;
- 11 clients have returned 2 to 5 times; and
- 16 clients have returned more than 5 times.

An online questionnaire asking for feedback regarding the quality of the service has been linked from the Common Room Wi-Fi landing page via a hyperlink.

To make it easier for users to access the questionnaire, they are allowed to access it without the need for a log in. However, filling in a questionnaire has not been made compulsory and that may be the reason for why no feedback has been received so far.

The service will be in place for one year (starting October 2012) and the council will continue to monitor progress and aim to increase awareness of the continued service in the area.

Given the poor response, however, efforts will be made to get future users to provide feedback.

### 5.9. Feedback from site managers

The two site managers engaged to manage the Common Room during the two-week pilot provided feedback on all aspects of the project. Their feedback, summarised below, is particularly valuable as they were on site for long hours of the day and experienced and witnessed all aspects of the pilot.





**In your opinion, what were the main successes?**

**👍 'Probably the removal of the fence ...it just became a nicer space ... the most feedback we got back from public ... they preferred it without the fence ... [the steps and seating] invited people to sit and relax ... [and were used for] cutting across the [park] ...'**



A more detailed account of their interview is provided in Appendix B.

### **Seating, removal of fence and introduction of steps (Providence Place Gardens)**

- Very positive improvements as these were thought to have opened up the space, made it more pleasant, encouraged people to come and relax - in particular when it was sunny or dry - and encouraged movement through the space.
- Fixed seating (benches and steps) worked well, but mobile seating (deck chairs) less so as people often did not use them. Those who did were observed to be 'territorial' in their usage e.g. using them to dominate their group table tennis activities at certain times, or for communal 'street' drinking. These chairs also required significant management (putting them out and storage).
- Most people that talked with the site managers (community and passers by) approved of the removal of the fence, but some local residents did not like this because in their view this – along with the seats - invited drinkers back into the space.
- No major dangerous incidents were observed in relation to these physical changes except during playtime when children, attracted to the stage across Providence Place, ran from the park to the stage. Parents were very concerned about this and site managers worked to minimise risk during after school playtime.
- No major conflict was observed arising from park users and cyclists in the adjacent cycle lane except for one reported by a user in which a woman's dog who liked to 'chase wheels' was involved.
- With regard to dogs no major incident was observed. Unlike the pre-pilot situation when the fence was in place, most dog owners seemed to look after their dogs reasonably well and, but for a couple of instances, no additional action to remove dogs and/or dog mess was required.
- People were very happy with and supportive of the fact that City College students had built the steps.

### **Ann Street 'pocket' square**

- A positive improvement that encouraged people to sit and relax and provided an additional space for temporary events such as the toy-hacking workshop.
- People welcomed the tables being placed near London Road, remarking that there was nowhere else to sit along main shopping street.
- Cyclists going through the square did not seem to mind tables and no significant incident was observed, probably because cyclists are used to sharing that space with other users already.

- At the commencement of the pilot some shop owners whose delivery vehicles parked regularly at the bottom of Ann Street were very concerned that deliveries would not be able to take place when the artificial grass was laid out. Space had been near the crossing with Providence Place but some vehicles needed to get further into the square. Temporary access was arranged but this resulted in some damage to the fake grass. By the end of the second week various vehicles increasingly were parking in the space allocated at the top of the square.



After school play time was 'my favourite time of the day ... the space was being used' so well ... brilliant!

### Café / Food trading

- The creperie van was great, particularly at night, but was not really suited to the customer base of the area and they withdrew within the first week.
- St Bartholomew's Church complained about smell from the van interfering with the incense inside the building.
- An unexpected replacement was negotiated by the managers with a local resident who trades in West Indian street food. This appeared to be far more popular and was approached by a wider range of people.



### Events

- The managers thought the best two events were by far were after school playtime and table tennis. More detailed comments on these are provided next.
- They were disappointed, however, that more different types of events were not tested during the pilot.



#### After school play

- This was when they found the park to be at its liveliest.
- Children seemed to love it.
- Playbus (week 1) and Same Sky (week 2) who oversaw this activity were very effective.
- The Playbus team was organised, used the space well and provided a wide range of activities. For the team the opportunity to use the park was welcome as the space they used in The Level was closed for refurbishment.
- The park was swept daily before the play activity to make sure any dog mess or other hazards were cleared before children came in.
- The performance area proved to be a potentially dangerous feature during this event (see Performance area below) as it encouraged children to consider it an extension of the play area.



#### Table tennis

- This was the facility most constantly used over the two-week pilot no matter what the weather was like.





**👍 Table tennis 'was the best ... [and a] constant thing ... no matter what the weather. There was umbrella [table tennis] going on quite frequently ... people balancing umbrellas and coats [to play in the rain].'**



- A significant number and range of people, in particular students and street drinkers, used this facility. One resident and her son who used it said it was the first time her son ever played in the park since moving to the area. No major conflict was noted between the various user groups who seemed to negotiate use of the facility well. However, some 'territorial' behaviour by street drinkers was observed during days when the weather was not sunny or dry.
- The presence of street drinkers using the table tennis might have been influenced by the fact that existing facilities at The Level (a nearby large park) were shut down for refurbishment.
- At the beginning of the pilot bats and balls were left out on the table, but following complaints of people playing it overnight and causing disturbance for residents the bats and balls were collected at the end of the day.
- However, by the end of the first week all 20 sets held by the managers had been discreetly taken. Users then tended to bring their own bats and balls.
- Children were sometime noted misusing the bats, banging the table with these.

#### Yoga

- This took place only once and although it got a good response, it was found that the park can be too busy and concrete surface too hard to provide the most appropriate, comfortable environment for this type of exercise.

#### Tree and church lighting

- Due to a lack of a power point on site movable rechargeable lights were used to illuminate the trees. These were weather dependent and managers brought them out when it was not raining.
- The site managers reported that users passing by the space at night said the lights made the space look nicer and feel safer.
- City College students staged an impromptu phot shoot with the lighting around the the 'arc' sculpture at the southern end of the park creating a interesting effect on that area of the park.
- Without any lights on it St Bartholomew's Church disappeared in the nightscape as focus was placed on other elements of the park while the church remained in the dark.

## Performance area

- The managers liked this idea but location at the southern end of Providence Place was not ideal.
- Managers did not see it being once used for its intended purpose over the two-week pilot.
- Skateboarders used it in one instance as a ramp for tricks, while children used it for free play, in particular during after school playtime. The latter caused concern among parents and place managers as children tended to run across the road to reach and play on it.
- At one point, managers noticed it was being used as a storage space for toys and food and where rubbish would be concentrated.
- In other instances, it would be used by street drinkers at night. They would stomp on it and be quite noisy sparking a number of complaints.

## Police presence

- During the two-week pilot, two Police officers visited the site and approached the managers once.
- They thought this was insufficient police presence and would have liked to have had more support from them, in particular regarding a couple of incidents involving groups of street drinkers. Regular pass-bys and confiscation of alcohol by the Police could have difused the situation in both cases.
- Police presence would be important in particular in bad weather days when there are fewer people in the park and during night hours.

## Place management

- During the pilot, the place managers were involved in a range of activities from providing information about the pilot and managing expectations from users, shop owners and visitors to setting up/taking down the movable elements of the Common Room (lights, deck chairs, table tennis pads and balls, no-stop parking cones) and supporting events (after school playtime, yoga) and food providers.
- More information could have been provided/been made available to users prior to the two-week pilot - in particular regarding the changes themselves and the testing process.

When asked if a dedicated place manager would be needed in the future to manage the space, their assessment was that should the movable elements be worked into more permanent features, management would be required only when events take place to make sure the area remains clean, disturbance to residents is avoided, traffic is managed and so on.

**In your opinion, what were the less successful elements?**



**The place did not [seem] to benefit that much from deck chairs ... [benches and steps more used]... and were another thing to have to look after ... Some [aggravation] as people got sometimes territorial ... [in particular on a] rainy day.**





**'[Performance area was not used ... dangerous ... without it there would be less reason for children to run across the road [during school play time] ...**

**... [also underneath used one time] as storage space ... [and another] by skateboarders.'**



**'Once [during the two-week pilot]... two officers walked past and introduced themselves to us. ... Not many hairy situations experienced but it would have been good to ... know there was someone else to deal with in awkward situations. ... All that would be needed is for the Police to have walked by every now and then and confiscate alcohol.'**

- In their view the project area could be used as a venue for particular events that are in keeping with its character and users (e.g. for Brighton Festival and other local and city-wide events).

### Summary of aspects to consider for long-term implementation

- Provide seating at good height in the park and Providence Place edge for older people to use comfortably (as that provided in the Ann Street park corner) with steps provided at particular points.
- Seating is more important than tables if a priority needs is established for future implementation.
- When designing seating avoid 'enclosures', in particular around the southern end of the park, to discourage territorial behaviour.
- Improve the design of steps where these meet Providence Place to minimise risk of conflicts between park users and passing traffic.
- Incorporate railings on to the steps to improve accessibility.
- Accommodate some parking for delivery vehicles servicing shops and the disabled into the design of 'pocket' square (near the crossing with Providence Place) as well as fixed seating and space for temporary events.
- Light up St Bartholomew's Church and 'arc' sculpture as well as trees.
- Consider providing just one fixed table tennis facility in the park (as opposed to two tables tested in the pilot) whereby users bring their own bats and balls.
- Make sure Police presence is more regular to ensure potential tension between user groups can be reduced by reducing the length of stay and consumption of alcohol by street drinkers in the area.
- Ensure that appropriate event management resources are put in place for any events in the area.
- Explore opportunities for a suitable food trade to service the site, including the local food trader that participated in the pilot.
- Should another temporary transformation be pursued in the future, it would be important to have a bigger push for promotion pre-launch and information about the project on site from the start.
- Introduce floral planting into the park to bring in a bit of colour and introduce some pleasant smells.
- Facilitate introduction of temporary uses at the rear of London Road buildings facing the Providence Place/Elder Place corridor in order to create active frontages and support the wider regeneration of the area.

## 6. Implementation plan

The findings of this report have informed the implementation plan detailed below.

This plan seeks to consolidate the successful aspects of the Common Room by providing a set of priorities for investment that can help deliver long-term improvements to the area.

It is designed to help attract and secure funding as well as steer the use of such funding as and when it becomes available. It will be regularly assessed and monitored.

Project	Details	Partners	Funding mechanisms	Timescale
<b>Community engagement</b>	Consolidate Providence Place Forum as the main stakeholder group to support project implementation throughout 2013 and 2014. Engage other stakeholder groups such as the London Road Local Action Team (LAT) keeping them informed of project progress.	Local residents, businesses, St Bartholomew's Church and School, Council	INTERREG IVB	Short to long term
<b>Environmental improvement implementation plan</b>	Design/Plan of area that consolidates the vision for the project area and provides a coherent but flexible framework able to accommodate investments as and when these become available.	Council	Council, INTERREG IVB	Short term
<b>Seating, removal of fence and introduction of steps</b>	Secure funding for implementation, commission detailed design and implement improvements.	Council, developers	Local Transport Plan, Section 106, INTERREG IVB	Short to medium term (to be secured incrementally)
<b>Art wall</b>	Agree with local communities, land owners and art organisations for use of wall(s). Establish programme of events.	Stakeholders, landowners, arts organisations, council	INTERREG IVB and art sector partners	Short to medium term
<b>Facilities for food trading</b>	Establish market potential and local needs and build those into environmental improvement plan. Secure funding to implement improvements. Could be source of future income or assistance to help support any management or maintenance	Council	INTERREG IVB	Medium to long term
<b>Events: table tennis</b>	Secure funding for and install permanent facility.	Council	Sport England	Short term
<b>Events: after-school play</b>	Establish programme of outdoor play events for school children (frequency, responsibilities, delivery) Consider option for applying for Play Street status for Providence Place to extend play area and tackle safety issues.	Council, St Bartholomew's School	Council, INTERREG IVB	Short term Medium to long term
<b>Tree and church lighting</b>	Negotiate with St Bartholomew's Church conditions for lighting up building facade Secure funding for introduction of tree lighting in park area.	Council, St Bartholomew's Church Council	Council, INTERREG IVB, Section 106	Medium term
<b>Vehicle movements, Shared space and Ann Street 'pocket' square</b>	Secure funding for introduction of shared spaces and 'pocket' square with seating facilities and access for delivery vehicles and disabled parking.	Council, developers	Local Transport Plan Section 106, INTERREG IVB	Medium t to long term (to be secured incrementally)
<b>Meanwhile use</b>	Facilitate and support introduction of temporary uses at the rear of London Road buildings facing the Providence Place/Elder Place corridor in order to create active frontages and encourage the wider regeneration of the area.	Council, developers, landowners	Council, Portas Fund	Medium to long term



Thanks everyone who helped to bring the Common Room to life!

