



History

The seeds of the community garden began to germinate in 2007, when Julie Stokes, of the Town and Bridge Project, thought an open green space where people could gather to learn how to garden and grow food, while exercising, socialising and having fun in the great outdoors, would fit in well with the aims of her project.

She formed a steering committee drawn from council, schools, community groups, business reps, plot holders, allotment groups, the horticulture and gardening fraternity, environmentalists and wildlife experts. They worked together to make the seeds of Julie's idea grow into a bid to the Big Lottery Fund's People's Millions Awards.

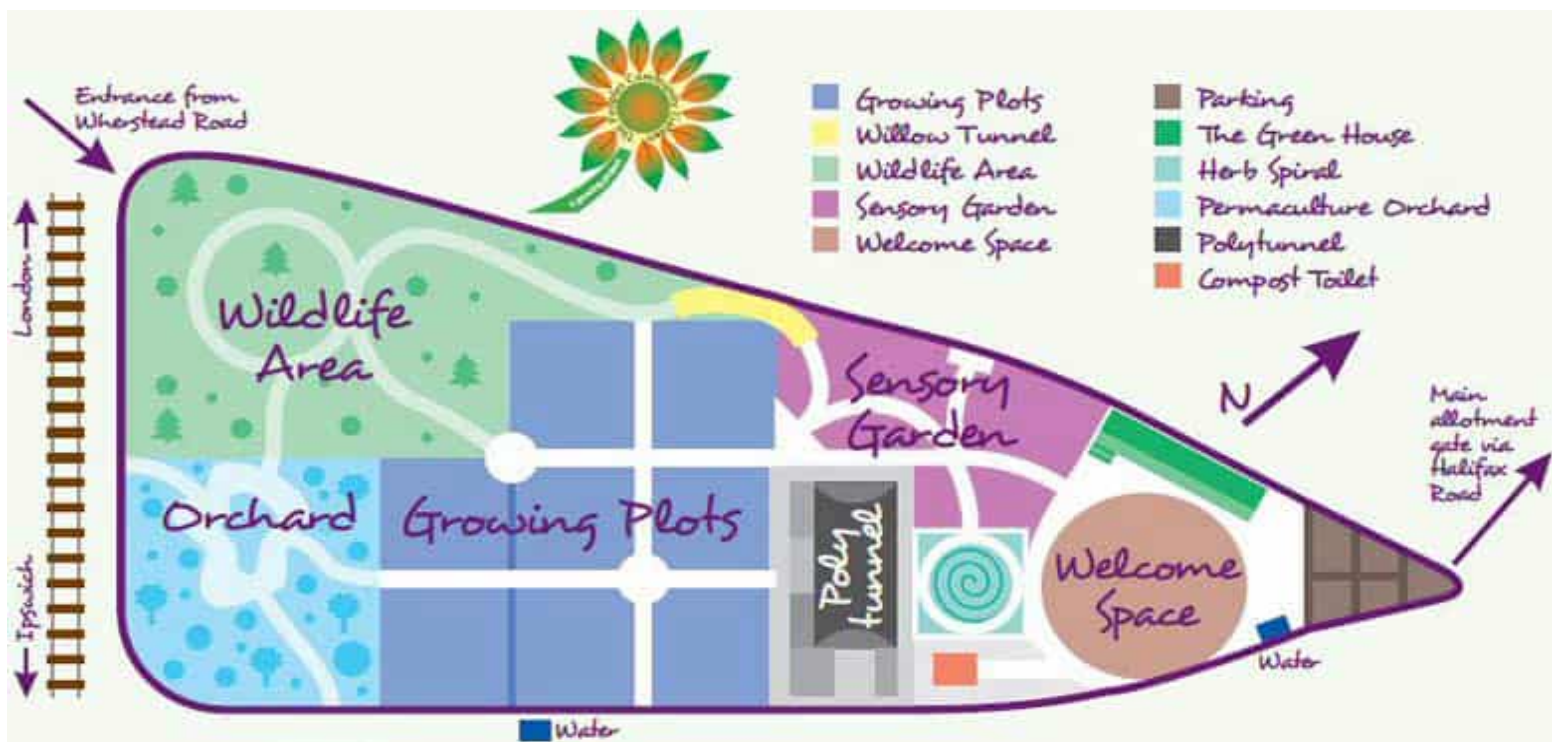
Rallying the local community behind them, The People's Community Garden was put to the vote on Anglia TV. To the huge delight of those who had worked so hard to get it, the project won a Big Lottery Fund People's Millions Award of £82,000 in November 2007. Three part-time members of staff were appointed in March 2008, charged with the task of building the garden on an abandoned corner of Maidenhall Allotments and getting the local and wider community involved. The time span for the money to be spent was one year.

Today, the garden is a thriving site with around 50 volunteers joining in the work each week. Volunteers may be local people with a passion for outdoor work or a desire to help other people. Many different groups use the site, including The Papworth Trust, Lapwing, Phoenix, family carers 'Time for You' project, Karibu African Women's Support Group, Bangladeshi Befriending group, Vinolved volunteers, Ipswich Blind Society, SNAP project, in addition to local schools and colleges. We also run accredited horticulture and enterprise courses, in partnership with the Workers Educational Association, in addition to workshops and specialist courses on topics including willow weaving, herb gardening, permaculture. Our very own brand of "green exercise" is Garden HOE, now entering its third year. This is about exercising at your own pace, in a fun informal group, using simple techniques that can easily be repeated at home.

We are proud to say that The People's Community Garden has become a showcase in the region, with council, allotment and community groups coming along to view the site and get ideas and inspiration for their own projects in the making. We have had interest from as far away as the north coast of Scotland and hosted visitors from an allotment group in Japan!

Map of the Garden

The garden has areas for vegetable plots, a wildlife garden, an orchard, a herb circle and sensory garden, and a poly-tunnel for tender plants and propagation. Other facilities include an undercover meeting space, skills teaching space, toilets and tool-washing facilities, and room to park your car or bike.



The areas of the garden have been designated, with a Welcome Space, Herb Circle, Sensory Garden, Allotment Plots, Permaculture Orchard and Wildlife Area. There's a polytunnel for propagation and tender crops have been put up, while a willow tunnel literally weaves its way between the growing areas and the wilder parts of the garden.

The think tank of the project is "The Green House", a converted cargo container, where volunteers put up their feet for a cuppa and staff draw up the rota and plan what to plant next. Courses and workshops on Basic Gardening Skills, specialist horticultural topics, crafts - such as flower arranging, basket making and card making - literacy, numeracy and IT run here when the weather is not good enough to sit on the patio outside.

Beds for disabled gardening have been built around the Welcome Space, and the project has specialist equipment so disabled people can get the most out of their sessions at the site.

The project is leading the way on locally sourced fertiliser with its own compost toilet. Other plot holders on the site can benefit from the project's facilities, with a £5 Key for Life.