

Design Explanation

The client (Lincolnshire County Council) brief was for a stimulating garden for a new respite centre built for adults with learning difficulties. The requirement was to provide a stimulating and safe garden, which was:

- fully accessible to wheelchair users,
- provided screening from neighbouring houses;
- provided opportunities for service users to grow and maintain plants;
- provided interest all year round;
- provided a sheltered area outside;
- provide seating;
- provided a barbeque area.

The clients were presented with four design concepts, which were discussed by the service users and their families. The final choice of design was made by the service users.

The design is based on the five senses, sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste and uses different zones within the garden to offer experiences in each sense. A work area has been provided, screened from the main garden through fencing, which incorporated a shed and a greenhouse. The planting is all contained in hexagonal shaped beds, at differing heights, which will facilitate wheelchair based plant maintenance.

One bed features tactile planting, offering different textures; one has strongly coloured plants which will provide bright planting displays throughout the year. The visual element is reinforced at night through the use of a light sculpture which has different coloured LEDs changing in sequence and a water feature with flowing water. One other bed has planting which are strongly scented, to provide olfactory stimulation. The hearing part of the garden is based on the use of outdoor musical instruments and wind chimes and the taste garden is provided through the barbeque area, augmented by herbs planted nearby. Height within the garden is provided through the gazebo roof and pergolas which link different “senses” together.

Note: in the implementation of the design budgetary constraints (which were not clear at the design stage) have meant that some features, such as the pergolas and water feature) have been delayed.