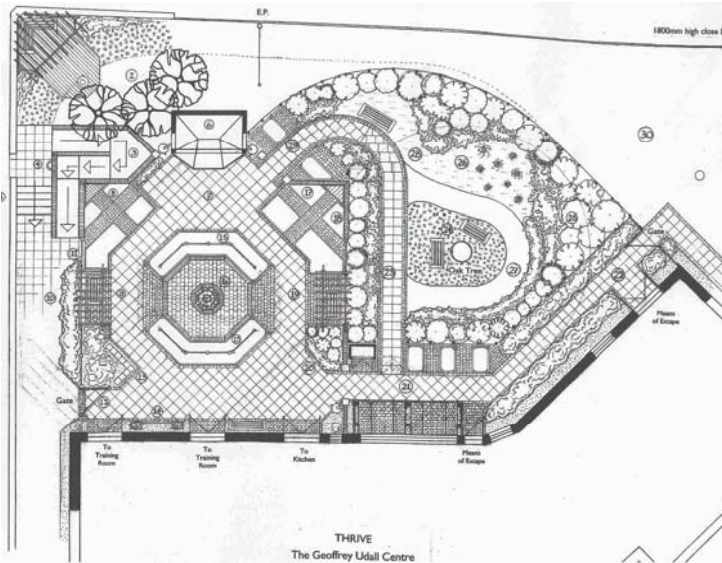


Thrive Secret Garden, Beech Hill, Reading *Therapeutic garden completed July 2007*



Thrive, a horticultural therapy charity, invited me to design a therapeutic and sensory garden for two distinct garden users: older people with cognitive impairment (i.e. memory loss) and young people with behavioural problems.

The garden was to be built in a flat, uninviting space along the northern elevation of the main office building. The principal challenge was to convert the open space into an enclosed garden that would provide a range of therapeutic and educational activities for the garden users. Secondly, the garden was to be a show piece for Thrive's work and needed to be an attractive and easily maintainable space.

I extended lines from the building and created a square shape, that linked to the building exits. An octagonal theme developed, spreading out from the central water feature, the two beds framing this feature and the shapes of the perimeter beds. The paving was angled at 45 degrees to add dynamism to the space and a unifying pattern. A beautiful cedar summerhouse at the opposite boundary helps to create an enclosed, intimate space and extends its functionality. A simple treatment to the area near the ancient Oak tree and a potting up area under an existing canopy completed the design.



Above left: Princess Alexandra opening the 'Secret Garden', with Nicola Carruthers from Thrive
Above right: The 'Living Wall' is a set of gabion mesh cubes filled with different materials and will become home to insects, bees and other wildlife in the garden.
Right: The central water feature and summerhouse beyond, framing the garden and creating an enclosed atmosphere within the space..