MEADOW IN MY GARDEN

Community Interest Company

Westwood Community Hub Proposal

This proposal relates to the building at the edge of Westwood park that has been empty now for several years. We would like to propose a space that could be shared between groups such as Westwood Biodiversity Group, and used for nature education and meetings. We are particularly keen to develop a community garden as an opportunity for skill sharing, across all ages and abilities, with events such as guided foraging walks, nature-based craft activities and forest school sessions.

To introduce ourselves, we run 'Meadow in my Garden,' a not-for-profit CIC in its 12th year of operation. Now based in Freshford and working all over Wiltshire and the South West, we help to create flourishing spaces within towns and villages. We have recently been looking for premises to create a local community hub with the potential to develop a thriving community garden.

The way we work is in collaboration with local groups that have a focus on nature and the outdoors, such as churches, schools and gardening clubs. We specialise in biodiversity and growing flowers for pollinators, bringing together volunteers to get actively involved in all kinds of projects, from composting and growing vegetables to building bee habitats and planting hedgerows. For examples of our work in the community see https://meadowinmygarden.co.uk/pages/gallery

We propose to launch the "Hub" by May 2025. We would aim to build on interest and activities over time, including the following;

- Coordinating and facilitating a community garden, accessible and welcoming to all members of the community (with facilities for tea/refreshments).
- Ongoing close collaboration with Westwood Parish Council and Westwood Biodiversity Group as key stakeholders in the project.
- Initial design and structuring of an evolving garden, maximising the space for an inclusive growing area for flowers, fruit and vegetables and aiming to maximise biodiversity.
- Storage of gardening equipment and seeds and craft materials.
- Breathing new life into the building, creating a beautiful, inclusive and welcoming space, inspired by and directly relating to the garden, the park, and the wider community and natural environment.
- Inviting different groups within Westwood to contribute their ideas, in order to be responsive to the needs of the local community.
- A welcoming space for activities organised by any local groups such as Westwood Biodiversity Group and Nature Chain (see https://www.naturechain.co.uk/)
- Organising seasonal nature-based family art workshops.
- Sharing our personal library of nature books; inviting people to come in to read and research in the light and airy conservatory.
- Sharing our expertise on all aspects of flower meadow creation, methodology and management (on a free and informal basis).
- Inviting in experts and enthusiasts to lead sessions, such as understanding soils, compost making, wildlife/birdsong identification, using herbs and foraging.
- Regular attendance at the hub to engage with visitors on a drop-in basis as well as scheduled activities and events.

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About Paul & Loulou

Meadow in my Garden was started by Paul Jupp, following a long career in the horticultural industry, having led the UK division of garden tool company, Wolf-Garten for many years as Managing Director, until its acquisition by the U.S. Owned MTD Company in 2010.

Loulou Brouard joined the company at the beginning of 2021, having worked in graphic design and in education as a teaching assistant, craft teacher and forest school leader.

We met on a permaculture design course in early 2020 before the pandemic. We share a love of nature, gardening, community and social justice. This August we'll be getting married in Westwood.

Meadow in my Garden - Company Operation and Activities

Meadow in my Garden is a community interest company, born out of a growing awareness and interest in the state of nature in the context of a nature (and climate) emergency.

Our mission is to galvanise public engagement and action in the drive to reverse the decline in nature across the UK. Invertebrates are a cornerstone of the wider ecosystem and so our focus is to help restore habitat and forage opportunities to benefit insect biodiversity. Through the sale of seeds and giving talks, Meadow in my Garden generates a modest income which enables us to work on projects that are important to us.

Meadow In My Garden is currently run from our home in Freshford. Our day to day office activities include general admin for community projects as well as packing parcels of seeds to send to gardeners and to other community projects (via Westwood Post Office). In order to maximise our time at the Westwood Hub, it is likely that we would need to carry out some of these tasks while we are there.

There are two main income streams, predominantly from the sale of our flower meadow seeds: a) revenue generated via the company's website www.meadowinmygarden.co.uk – c£40k per annum and b) sales made at garden shows and other events – c£50k per annum.

Other activities include talks and workshops, with some professional consultancy projects in the South-West Se https://meadowinmygarden.co.uk/pages/events-2025

Recent community projects include leading the GWR sponsored "Big Bulb Plant"
We are actively involved in local groups including Nature Chain https://www.naturechain.co.uk/, Friends of Freshford, Freshford community Farm group https://www.freshfordfarm.org/ and the station gardening team.

A general description of the company's activities and impact is made and submitted annually, together with stakeholder consultation details within the CIC 34 documentation required by Companies House.

THE HUB - development in stages

STAGE 1 - Parish Council

Make the hub habitable and attractive
Remove unwanted furniture and fittings
Paint the walls (volunteer help?)

Line conservatory roof with insulation
Paint conservatory walls
Low bookshelf against wall (below noticeboard)
Wifi

Cut back garden overgrowth
Remove rubber play surface.
Gravel for patio area?
Remove areas of paving slabs
Remove tyres and raised bed frames
Demolish play house
Move garden shed
(to prevent climbing access to hub roof).
Remove unwanted sections of fencing.

Produce signage (in collaboration with MimG)

STAGE 2 - Parish Council

Insulate walls, floor and ceiling (incl. RSJ)
(Remove kitchen units and reinstate to enable insulation work)
Repaint walls and ceiling
Replace small toilet with adult size toilet
Add outside sink and potting bench
Replace garage with workshop building.
Add medium/large shed for garden tools.

STAGE 3 - Parish Council

Remodel toilets to include one with outdoor access
Upgrade flooring throughout
Add outdoor shelter (wooden frame with roof)
Clad outside of hub building with wood
Install a green roof
Remodel kitchen (and possibly enlarge)

STAGE 1 - Meadow in my Garden

Explore storage options nearby (Kennet)
Use entrance lobby as lockable everyday store.

Connect with existing community groups.
Invite feedback and collaboration.
Advertise gardening club weekly sessions to gauge interest.
Publicity and Launch (May?)

Produce signage (in collaboration with PC)
Create attractive garden entrance and patio area
Create flower beds and sow with seed in spring
Create flower areas in the wider park
Create vibrant and welcoming space (centred, initially around conservatory) but extending to use of the whole building.

Offer timetabled drop in sessions, some of which will include informal activities.
Be available at the hub 3 regular days a week (except during annual holiday)
Provide tea, coffee and snacks
Noticeboard (in conservatory) with upcoming events and local news etc
Organise a series of monthly events/talks/activities through summer/autumn 2025
(for example: making seed balls, spring sowing in the park, dawn chorus walk, summer picnic in the park, composting talk/demonstration, making a bee habitat, autumn celebration with hot soup and fire pit in the garden).

STAGE 2 - Meadow in my Garden

Maintain and develop garden to include edibles.
Ongoing gardening club, drop-in sessions and regular events/activities.
Increase hub usage and repetoire of activities.
(forest school, craft workshops, woodwork etc)

STAGE 3 - Meadow in my Garden

Ongoing gardening club, drop-in sessions and regular events/activities.
Develop garden, adding a greenhouse and planting fruit trees.