



**RHS Britain in Bloom
UK Finals Marking Sheet 2023**

Name of entry: Redbourn in Bloom	Judging Date: 2 nd August 2023
Category: Small Town	Judges: Ruth Growney and Lesley Jelleyman

Horticultural Achievement (40%)	Gold
Environmental Responsibility (30%)	Silver Gilt
Community Participation (30%)	Gold
Overall	Gold

Introduction and Overall Impression

A well-presented portfolio complimented the extensive and informative tour of Redbourn guided by Meirion Anderson and Pat Schofield.

Redbourn in Bloom played to its strengths, and the judges were met on the tour by numerous members of the community involved in making Redbourn a charming and attractive place in which to work, live and visit.

It is evident that Redbourn in Bloom plays a large part in shaping the future of the town through its close working partnerships.

The overall impression is of a town embracing its past and its history but with its eyes firmly on the future. Redbourn in Bloom is facing the challenges of a changing climate coupled with an aging demographic head on and is actively looking to transform itself into a town which as stated in their portfolio “creates an environment for the children, adults, and wildlife of our village which is fit for the future”.

Many congratulations to the entire community on achieving a very well-deserved GOLD award in the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals 2023.

SECTION A – Horticulture

Areas of achievement

- All flower beds observed were extremely well maintained and plants looked happy and healthy.
- Soil improvement will be carried out on an annual rolling program for 1/3 of the beds at a time, with old and exhausted soil removed and new added.
- Good photographic evidence of spring planting.
- This year volunteers have been encouraged to adopt a flower bed to encourage ownership by the community and increase civic pride.

- Planters, hanging baskets and floral displays are changed twice a year for winter and summer.
- The group are gradually introducing more perennials and shrubs into the floral displays; changing to a more sustainable approach to planting.
- New Forge Place Sheltered Housing Scheme offered a colourful oasis with many attractive front gardens, containers, and pots planted by the residents around the landscaped communal grounds.
- The large gateway planters certainly declared Redbourn as a floral village. The Sunshine Gateway stepped planters had been built by Redbourn in Bloom volunteers and were planted with an attractive mix of colourful shrubs and perennials.
- Many well-kept and attractive gardens, businesses, and frontages with baskets and tubs, were observed on the tour. Notably the front gardens at 100 and 102 High Street, The Hollybush Pub, together with the front gardens of Church End Cottages, although a high standard was observed generally throughout the town.

Considerations for development

- The majority of the floral displays are changed twice a year. Moving forward perhaps consider changing to more drought tolerant, sustainable planting schemes to attract pollinators and increase biodiversity. In their current form they are a large undertaking in terms of maintenance and watering by volunteers.
- More coverage is desirable in general on the hanging baskets. Perhaps a different choice of plants would provide more trail to cover the base of the basket and improve their appearance.
- Although the trees in planters at the fire station are currently not showing signs of distress, the judges would suggest removing and relocating the trees to a permanent location in the ground whilst they are still relatively small.
- The Nickey Line Gateway entrance bed would benefit from the introduction of more structure and a more sustainable planting scheme to increase the biodiversity and attract pollinators.
- Chequer Lane Corner – the judges would suggest either removing the small raised bed in this location altogether or enlarging the bed considerably as the current impact is minimal due to the size of surrounding location. Perhaps consider this in other areas of the town where there are small planters/beds in large areas of grass.

SECTION B – Environment

Areas of achievement

- The group showed a very good awareness of climate change, environmental issues, and the need to adapt. They are looking to introduce more sustainable planting and are looking at different ways of managing the natural environment.
- Plants are locally sourced, and the town's floral displays are peat free.
- The judges visited Tassell Hall which is the town's largest allotment site with 39 plots. The site contained lots of ponds for wildlife, areas designed specifically for hedgehogs, a laid hedge, and a community orchard containing Hertfordshire heritage varieties. Plot holders are encouraged to donate excess produce to the food bank.
- There is a community polytunnel. The site receives free alpaca manure from a local farm which is then available to anyone.
- Regular litter picks take place.

- Redbourn Parish and the County Council are responsible for verge and green space maintenance which was generally good throughout the tour.
- There is a waiting list for allotments with 100% occupancy currently.
- There is a 5 tier waste stream with refuse, recycling, green waste, food, and paper recycling taking place.
- Redbourn Common - very informative talk about the area and the River Red by Zoe. The river is looked after by volunteers. It is a chalk stream and as such is a really rare and valuable habitat. The stream is monitored regularly. Twice a year the channel is cleared to allow the river to flow. A new management plan for the commons is currently out to tender.
- Wild About Redbourn is a newly established community group. Their aim is to encourage the wider community to grow plants which will attract wildlife into gardens by making small inexpensive changes, like creating log piles, bug hotels, bird boxes, nectar cafes and hedgehog highways etc. They have already been very active building and installing bug hotels, bee and bug boxes in the town. There are plans to get people to map the hedgehog population of Redbourn at the “Classics Motor Show” and Village Fete on the common in September.
- Street furniture, notice boards, signage and interpretation boards, together with litter and recycling bins all appeared to be in very good condition generally throughout the town.
- No litter, graffiti, or dog fouling was observed anywhere on the tour.

Considerations for development

- The group are looking to introduce water capture from The Village Hall roofs.
- Unfortunately, there were a few trees observed in distress, or dying or dead at locations around the town, i.e. at Snatchup, the Chalk Stream Bridge, a few trees on the common, beside the fire station, in the main flower bed adjoining the church and at the primary school beside the memorial trees. Generally though, the tree scape throughout the tour was one of mature and healthy trees.
- The gutters needed clearing at the building adjoining the church. They were full of leaves which reduces the effectiveness of the water butts attached to the building.
- Continue to search for solutions to introduce further sustainability across the town whether in future planting schemes, rainwater harvesting, reduction of the use of plastics, etc. Look to increase biodiversity to encourage pollinators and consider nature across all activities.

SECTION C – Community

Areas of achievement

- Redbourn has a population of around 6,000. 150 households are members of Redbourn in Bloom, with around 60 active members. The annual membership fee is £10 per household.
- Evidence of excellent links to the local community and other community groups such as Wild About Redbourn. Redbourn in Bloom encompasses a wide and diverse community across all ages. It receives grant funding from the Parish Council and raises funds through a variety of events that were evidenced in the presentation and portfolio.
- Redbourn in Bloom reaches out to the wider community by organising day trips and holidays which prove extremely popular, with usually around 40-50 people going.

- Bulbs from the winter floral displays are sold to raise funds and volunteers can take plants at the end of their display life home.
- Lots of sponsorship observed of floral decorations and flower beds.
- When needed, the group actively seeks guidance and support from experts, i.e. The Wildlife Trust
- Communications are wide-ranging – the group produces a monthly update, has a presence on Facebook and Instagram, utilises the parish council newsletter, plus local newspapers and radio. The group has introduced QR codes to reduce paper usage and bring the group into the 21st century. The judges were pleased to see the RHS Britain in Bloom banner proudly displayed at one of the entrance gateways to Redbourn.
- There is a very extensive calendar of events.
- Redbourn have their own local In Bloom Awards. In addition, five It's Your Neighbourhood groups were entered in the regional competition this year.
- Tassell Hall Allotment has a diverse range of plot holders with many nationalities. The site holds an annual barbecue, there is a community orchard and large community polytunnel.
- Redbourn Primary School had colourful and well looked after planters at the memorial trees at the entrance to the school. Each year group within the school has a raised bed and there are plans to try to grow all year round and be self-sufficient for snacks for the 400 pupils who attend the school. One child from each class sits on the Eco Council. There are water butts in some areas of the school and the conservation area is a work in progress.
- St Luke's is a Special Educational Needs School for children with moderate learning disabilities aged between 7 and 16. All pupils are encouraged to take part in horticulture in one way or another. Pupils were involved in the design and creation of a garden at the Chelsea Flower Show in 2023 which was awarded a Silver medal. The school has extensive grounds and there are various animals on site such as donkeys, goats, emus, chickens, and pigs who are looked after by the children. The pupil's plant up Redbourn in Bloom's hanging baskets. It was apparent that it is very important for the school to be part of the local community and the school works closely alongside a number of partners including Redbourn in Bloom to achieve this. The school contains a number of gardens and growing areas, including an area for vegetables and a sensory garden. They also grow plants to sell to the general public. The school has a "horse-box" coffee shop which attends local events. This not only raises funds but also provides work related experience for the pupils of the school.
- Teddy Tots takes place at the church on Friday mornings. There are approximately 35 children who enjoy the outdoor environment and grow a variety of plants and vegetables that have all been donated.
- Residents at New Forge Place Sheltered Housing Scheme have worked hard to improve the outside areas of their sheltered housing scheme. It was a delight for the judges to visit and meet some of the residents.

Considerations for development

- Continue in your efforts to try to "future proof" Redbourn in Bloom.
- There is the opportunity for volunteers and members of the community to gain recognition, in their own right, via the RHS Its Your Neighbourhood awards. In the judges' opinion, if they do not already enter, New Forge Place Sheltered Housing Scheme, Tassel Hill Allotments, Teddy Tots, Wild about Redbourn, and the teams

that look after the fire station and library beds, plus the gateway beds, all deserve recognition for the contributions they make. Anglia in Bloom should be able to assist.