

# Growing Golden Pineapples

It is not the streets paved with gold at Houlton but rather the flower beds. Houlton's recent community gardens project was a runner-up at this year's prestigious Pineapples placemaking awards in London which hands out golden pineapple trophies for winners in their placemaking industry awards. The community gardens project entry was made on behalf of a vibrant community gardens society at Houlton that have been operating for around 18 months and was entered into the category for "Activation of a Community Space". It tracked the journey of the group since their inception through their first growing season and into their first winter. The award showcased the work of mother and daughter competition winners who designed their vision for a community garden and had their dream turned into a reality through the work of U&C and a group of volunteer residents. The community gardens committee is a group of residents some of whom weren't able to secure a dedicated allotment and some of whom didn't want the responsibility of an allotment 'just yet' and who all came together to collaboratively create and care for a communal area for planting, gardening and relaxing. The space has been activated through a series of community events, planting workshops, free vegetable picking for residents as well as an important community watering and weeding rota. The space has benches and social space as well as a new book exchange.

Whilst it didn't quite scoop the top prize, the entry was credited for its authentic and genuinely community-led approach. U&C communities team duo Sonia Nakra-Norman and Joh Thomas were also invited back by Pineapples organisers, The Developer, to speak about the innovative project at their annual Festival of Place.

**Vanessa Hunjan, Community gardens design winner:**  
 "It's such a momentous milestone for the community gardens to be shortlisted, let alone runners up of this prestigious award. I never expected when I initially submitted my design that I would win, let alone that it would create the ripple effect of a dedicated society to support and receive recognition like this. This has given us such a boost to ensure the gardens continue to bloom for future generations to come."

