

# Curzon Street Courtyard, London

<i>Client</i>	Waterbridge Group Limited
<i>Landscape architect</i>	The Terra Firma Consultancy, Petersfield, Hampshire
<i>Quantity surveyor</i>	Burke Collis Partnership, Reading
<i>Engineers</i>	Ian Gledsdale, Sevenoaks
<i>Contractor</i>	Clifton – with specialist input on water features from Fountains Direct and waterproofing from Alumasc
<i>Initial involvement</i>	August 1996
<i>Work started on site</i>	August 1997
<i>Practical completion</i>	January 1998
<i>Project value</i>	£130,000 (£115,000 for hard works and £15,000 for soft works)
<i>Capital funding sources</i>	Waterbridge Group Limited
<i>Revenue funding sources</i>	Waterbridge Group Limited (approximately £2,000 per annum)



## **Project aims**

To bring life in to an otherwise dull office courtyard by the introduction of a strongly designed theme for enclosure, colour, water, planting and lighting for semi-public use of the space.

## **Landscape architect's role**

The landscape architect was the project co-ordinator and liaised with the client throughout the entirety of the project. As lead designer the landscape architect co-ordinated the work of other professionals – engineers and quantity surveyors. Following the development of concepts for the courtyard the landscape architect developed sketch designs into a final design. The planning process revealed no problems and in fact the planners welcomed the scheme. Working drawings and other tender documentation was prepared, with the quantity surveyor preparing the specifications and bills of quantities. The landscape architect also administered the JCLI form of contract on site.



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yakushmanum give year-round colour and texture in the semi-shade planting beds. Specimen trees of yew and laurel are used in pots to provide accents and emphasis at the entrances and exits to the courtyards.

#### **Partnerships and community involvement**

Office users and the church were consulted with the sketch design in informal meetings to discuss the scheme prior to finalisation.

#### **Current site users**

Since the completion of the refurbishment, use of the courtyard has increased significantly. The most popular times of use are coffee breaks and lunchtimes and occasionally meetings are held in the courtyard. The use is somewhat weather-dependent, but there is access through the courtyard all the time. The space is considered to be a good experience to move through because of the sound, light and colour. Significant visual amenity is also provided to people in the church, offices and apartments.

#### **Ongoing management of the project**

A management plan was produced by the landscape architect with the aim of maintaining and nurturing the scheme to the highest possible standard. Details covered in the plan included a full record of the scheme as built and the materials used. A specification of the maintenance of the paving, planting and other elements, such as the water feature, within the scheme were also included in the plan. After three years small sections of the original planting have been replaced, at the suggestion of the landscape architect, by more shade-loving species due to the success of the gleditsias, which form a canopy of semi-shade in the summer.

- 2 View down Curzon Street courtyard
- 3 Lush planting
- 4 The courtyard illuminated
- 5 Detail of water feature

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### **Project constraints**

The courtyard is the roof of a car park and offices, so weight constraints had to be considered and sub-surface services and waterproofing carefully co-ordinated. Working offices and through access had to be maintained throughout the duration of the contract, so working space and programming were severely confined for the contractor.

### **The unique opportunities of this project**

The project offered the possibility of designing a sheltered, protected and well-maintained site with the opportunity of using high-quality materials and features without fear of vandalism.

### **Project design**

Prior to this project being undertaken this 250 square metres of courtyard was paved from wall to wall and was a much under-used open space. The buildings on either side of the courtyard are occupied by different businesses, with a church nearby, and



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thus the symmetrical design would not be seen to favour one set of occupants or the other. There is a formal processional entrance with a central circulation route. The design has created an outdoor room providing an ethereal roof of light tree canopy, a floor carpeted with a strong paving pattern and planted, seating walls. Raised beds provide seating opportunities as well as provision for planting.

In order to give life and a feeling of movement to the space a variety of high-quality materials have been used. Natural stone and brick provide contrast in colour and texture. Water has been used as a visual and aural feature. Lighting highlights the water features, the paved route and the trees. In the summer canopy uplighters are used, while in the winter festoon tree lighting is used. The lighting is controlled by a time switch.

A planting structure is provided by a formal framework of evergreen box. The tree framework is provided by gleditsias, which provide light shade in the confined space. Liriope, heuchera, zantedeschia, hosta, ferns, bulbs and rhododendron

