

*Memorandum*

To Paul Bentley, Living Landscapes Ltd.

From Johanna Waterous

Date 17 April, 2008

## Rose Garden at Wivelrod House, Hampshire

It is with great pleasure that I can provide a professional reference for Paul Bentley and his team at Living Landscapes Sthn Ltd., based on the major project they have just completed at my home, Wivelrod House, near Alton, in Hampshire.

The project entailed creating a partly walled, sunken rose garden, measuring c. 60 foot square, in an unused corner of our garden. Apart from creating a welcoming garden 'room' with multiple beds for shrub roses, a primary objective for the design was to connect and/or make sense of a number of important but asymmetric existing features in the garden. The construction of a level, walled space was complicated by the aspect, at the top of a steep hill, and the ground which is a maddening mix of chalk, flint and clay.

I selected Living Landscapes from three other landscapers based on Paul's response to my initial brief and the style of our first interaction. It was clear from the outset that, while having plenty of his own ideas and a firm view of what was practical. Paul was both excited and undaunted by my own complex concept for the garden. His first set of drawings presented three alternative interpretations which immediately moved on our thinking about how to make the space, and in particular, the asymmetric paths and levels, work most effectively. In subsequent meetings and as the designs were worked up in detail, his understanding of how to translate aerial views into viable construction plans with appropriately dimensioned steps, materials, drainage and irrigation, etc., were critical to the subsequent success of the project. Once construction was underway, Paul was both open to and creative in dealing with adjustments in the layout, as we could see opportunities to improve on the design as the garden's relationship with the rest of the property became more apparent.

For me, an absolutely critical aspect of this project was the selection of materials that were sympathetic to the existing garden features and house, as well as being fit-for-purpose and reasonably priced. Paul did a superb job in finding reclaimed brick, limestone, and other materials that were exactly what I was looking for. He also

employed a number of specialist sub-contractors, in particular, to construct the brick and flint walls and to install the lighting, which delivered extremely high quality work, on time and on budget (something of a miracle when it comes to sub-contractors in my experience), which I take as a tribute to Paul's project management skills.

In terms of the construction work on site, I was consistently impressed with the quality of the work, tidiness of the site, treatment of the surrounding garden spaces and care taken by Paul and his whole team, in spite of the absolutely foul weather conditions and 'trench warfare' with the clay, which are a feature of our part of Hampshire in the winter.

It will be some months before the (500+ !) roses planted in the garden have grown into bloom, but I am already thrilled with the result and am looking forward to enjoying this new space. I would highly recommend Paul Bentley and Living Landscapes to anyone who is looking to work with a professional, technically skilled and flexible team. I would be happy to answer any specific questions or discuss the project further if that would be useful.

Johanna Martin Waterous