



st james urban living

Working with Darwin Consultants to meet the challenge of managing remote construction sites.

St James Urban Living is an award-winning, design conscious, creative and sustainable developer with a record of culturally successful and diverse projects. Originally established as a joint venture between Thames Water and The Berkeley Group Holdings Plc in 1996, St James is now a fully owned subsidiary of The Berkeley Group and continues to transform disused sites into sustainable and attractive developments. Their attention to the impact of design on the environment runs from the planning stages right through to interior design, and they continue to set industry standards in development.

The Business Situation

Undertaking development projects from large, multi-phase urban regenerations to much smaller local redevelopments, St James must be agile and capable of managing their operations in premises ranging from purpose-built office buildings to single temporary Portakabins™.

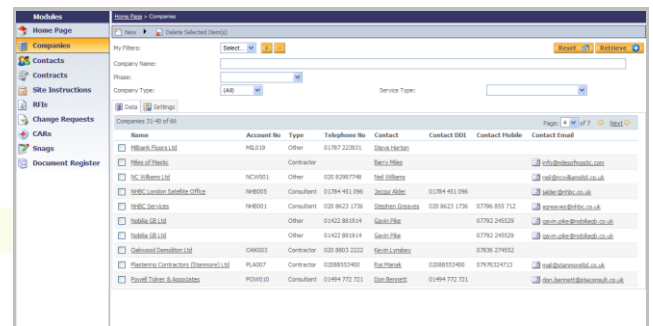
To help manage these developments, St James implemented a system using Microsoft Access. This system was used to record Contractor information, local business and health and safety contacts, produce Site Instructions, manage the Change Request process and record snagging issues in the finished properties.

The system worked well for individual sites, but it soon became clear that the ageing technology and isolated nature of the data meant head office was finding it increasingly difficult to get a consolidated view of the business situation across all regions. In addition, documents requiring formal approval, such as Change Requests and Variations, were taking days to turn around as the printed request had to be posted or faxed to head office, signed and returned before any work could commence.

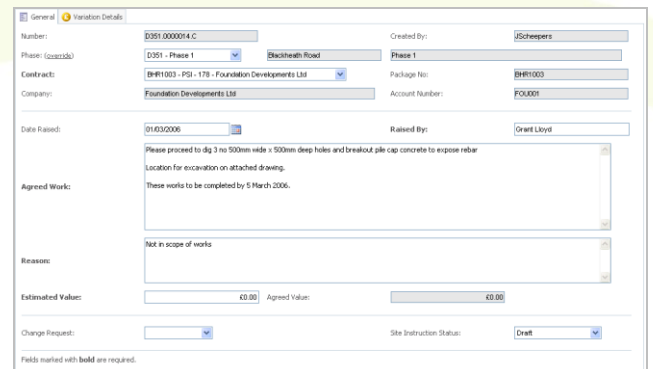
Our Solution

The distributed nature of the project teams out on the various sites managed by St James meant that any solution would need to be easily accessible and simple to deploy. Additionally, St James were keen to ensure that the operations of these remote sites adhered to a consistent set of business rules and that consolidated information from all regions could be easily viewed at any time.

The solution was the **St James Project Management System**.



Working closely with the management and project teams at St James, Darwin Consultants produced a web-based system that shares Company and Contact information across all sites and provides the tools required to create and manage Contracts, Site Instructions, Variations, Change Requests and Snags.



A comprehensive Document Register ensures that the project teams always have access to the correct version of the various plans and drawings relating to their developments. In addition, a full set of standard reports provides sophisticated management analyses of the operational data compiled by each site.



Being web-based, the **Project Management System** is easily accessible by project teams and management, regardless of their physical location. A simple computer with a web browser and broadband connection installed is all that is required to gain access to the system, meaning that new development projects can be up and running and integrated with the central corporate database almost immediately. A secure connection and database ensures that only the team members authorised by St James are able to access the system.

Hosted and supported by Darwin Consultants, the impact of the solution on the internal IT function at St James has been minimal. All data backups and site maintenance are managed by Darwin Consultants; our Help Desk ensures all users in the field are supported, whenever and wherever they access the system.

The Results

The new system has been well received by the project teams at St James. Financial, operational and quality-related benefits have all been realised; over two years into using the new system, **Steve Dickinson, Commercial Director at St James Urban Living**, has this to say...

"St James procured the Project Management System to formalise and automate our procedures for dealing with sub-contractors. We needed to halt the erosion of build budgets by bringing sanity to the flow of information when reviewing and approving Variations.

It pleases me to say that not only do we now have a single repository of supplier, contract, financial and variation-status information that is consistent across the Region, we are also able to see exactly what commitments are being planned in the field before approving spend.

Most significantly of all, the system has enabled St James to reduce its contingency provision on build costs by as much as 40% over the two years that the product has been installed. Preliminary costs have stabilised through reduced project delays. Audit trails are clear and corporate governance is more demonstrable. The wholesale loss of knowledge through staff attrition is a thing of the past.

The universal take-up by project teams on all sites is testimony to the "get it right first time" approach adopted by Darwin Consultants. They have fully understood our needs and demonstrated their ability to deliver an intuitive solution."

For More Information

For more information on this case study or any of Darwin's services, contact our head office on **01273 325315**, email enquiries@darwinconsultants.co.uk or visit our website at www.darwinconsultants.co.uk.

For more information about St James Urban Living, visit their website at www.stjameshomes.co.uk.