

# Asta Powerproject Case Study: McLaren

## SMALL BUT PERFECTLY FORMED - THE POWER OF PLANNING IS PUT TO WORK TO REDEVELOP THE DEVONSHIRE ARMS



The transformation of four buildings and structurally remodelling them into two in the heart of London's busy West End wasn't a simple process. It was not only technically challenging, but managed amidst the constant hubbub of Piccadilly streets, and straight opposite one of London's busiest theatres.

Project managing the activity was Gavin Turnbull, whose achievements were awarded a Silver Medal at the Construction Manager of the Year Awards 2014 for projects under £2 million. He successfully delivered for a delighted client despite encountering numerous challenges and changes, including over 100 variations,

McLaren Construction is an award winning contractor with an established reputation for consistent delivery of outstanding projects across all market sectors. McLaren is one of the UK's most successful privately owned businesses, with over 480 employees.

It specialises in new build, refurbishment and fit out projects for major blue chip customers.

**McLAREN**

resistance from local businesses, surprise underpinning needs, theatrical road closures and many out-of-scope demands. With a constant need to adapt to change, re-sequence works and re-plan deliveries, he required a robust project planning platform, and for that turned to Asta Powerproject.

### ► RESISTANCE RE-SEQUENCING

All construction contractors are familiar with local resistance to change and common party wall issues. The configuration of these four buildings, converging to a point on Piccadilly, compounded these issues. Gavin explained: "Simply getting started

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was a challenge, as our scaffold and hoarding licenses were delayed due to issues from residents across the road. Because of that we lost 2½ weeks right from the outset. We used Asta Powerproject to help re-sequence certain works on the façade and instead start on internal works. You have to be quite creative to stay on schedule – I decided to alter part of the demolition to retain some of the internal floor joists as temporary props, rather than removing them entirely, to make up some of the time we lost due to the scaffolding delays.”

### ► INFORMATION UNDERPINNING DECISIONS

Occupancy of adjoining buildings not only created a need for careful relationship management, but also led to some nasty discoveries. “Full access for structural investigation prior to works simply wasn’t possible because the buildings were occupied. We then discovered that the entire perimeter had no foundations – this meant we needed to underpin. Then you have to make hard decisions about other work, and we used Asta to re-programme the basement works. While there, we found

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that the ground floor joists above the basement were all rotten and had to be changed out – so we had to re-programme that area as well.”

### ► THAT’S SHOWBIZ, FOLKS

Gavin spoke about the challenges specific to the Piccadilly location: “The location you work in can make a big difference. We were smack opposite the Piccadilly Theatre with neighbours in the buildings beside us, above us – on one side was a bar and club. There were not only lots of party walls but lots of tourists too. It all means you have to pay attention to the site appearance.”

When the theatre closed the entire road for complete scenery changes at the end of a run, the McLaren team could easily have been thrown off track. Thanks to the careful relationship management that Gavin had

brokered from the start, he was able to negotiate access. He said: “When unforeseen changes happen, you see the value of good planning. Good site logistics were essential, to accommodate deliveries and skip movements, which meant very careful scheduling. Thanks to hoarding license delays at the outset we had nowhere out of sight to park the skips, or to bring bins out to. We had to reach an agreement with the council to use the road to manage waste.”

### ► GOOD COMMUNICATIONS PAY DIVIDENDS

Good subcontractor communications are always essential and when you are combining refurbishment of a historic building as well as rebuilding the numbers can mount up: “We did fit-out on office, as well as the shell and core on the retail part of the building. That meant demolition teams, asbestos removal, dryliners, tilers, decorators, flooring guys, steel workers, carpenters, roofers, scaffolders plus restoration and remedial specialists for the façade such as lead-workers, sash window experts, and so on. Asta enabled us to just highlight a specific trade at a time – so when you have a catch-up with a particular subcontractor weekly you can pick out the items that relate to them, and roll it up so they see where they need to be and by when. It enables you to show people the impact on them of something else that is delayed, and the impact that their delays have on other trades.”

The software was also used to facilitate joint meetings, as Gavin explained: “I used Asta Powerproject to support my weekly joint meeting with all the trades, and show them the whole target programme, so that we could talk about what was coming up and what requirements they have of each other, in order to stay on track.”

Gavin was responsible for both internal and external reporting and relationship management. “Asta Powerproject is very useful for reporting. I would present the programme with a drop line, and clearly show where we were either ahead or





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behind, and write the programme up monthly for the directors forecast meeting. We also used it to create a monthly client report. When you look at things on site you think you are fine on particular activities... but then when you put it into the software you realise you aren't always doing as well as you thought. It enables you to flag things up that may otherwise not be on your radar, or spot things that aren't finished when they should be. You can see what's coming up ahead, and look specifically at 4, 5, 6 weeks ahead."

"I have used Asta Powerproject previously, and had a training course a while back. I really became familiar with it when, as a site manager, a planner would visit every two weeks to run through the programme with me. I started to learn how to use it correctly. As you get more familiar with it you get better at utilising it and working faster, using the tricks and short cuts. When I started on the Devonshire Arms project I used Asta Powerproject to turn the tender programme into a contract programme and then into a target programme, and started using it day in day out."

Now that Gavin feels fully confident with Asta Powerproject he has already put it to work on another project: "I recently did a 'what if' analysis on a new project where we had a poor turnover of work per floor, thanks to the performance of our concrete frame contractor. I was able to do a programme based on current turnaround to project exactly where we would be in six



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months' time. I like the fact that with Asta I can issue the exact information to a subcontractor and show them where the target programme needs to be, what they need to do to get it there, and can discuss any changes they should be making. It helps me to drive accountability, as well as being excellent for reporting up to directors so that they can have informed conversations with clients. Asta helps give us control, and avoid surprises."

### ▶ ABOUT ASTA DEVELOPMENT

Asta Development is a leading international developer of project, and resource management software which provides solutions for managing any size and any type of project.

Since its launch in 1988, the company's core solution suite, Asta Powerproject, has evolved and improved driven by regular feedback from users and using the latest technologies available. It has proved its capabilities over the years on high profile

projects throughout the world and is now used by thousands of planners in a wide variety of industry sectors in the UK, Europe, Asia Pacific and the USA. Asta Development supports customers directly from its offices in Oxfordshire and Shropshire. Outside of the UK, Asta Development has a network of distributors who supply, train and support customers, with the software available in up to seven different languages. Asta Development is a

part of Eleco plc, a holding company focused on software development and services for architectural, engineering and construction industries. The company is listed on the London Stock Exchange's Alternative Investment Market (AIM).

More information about Asta Development and its products can be found at [www.astadev.com](http://www.astadev.com) and information about Eleco plc can be found at [www.eleco.com](http://www.eleco.com).