

Case study: Bouygues UK

Rapid Project Planning Helps Bouygues UK Establish Calm Control to Create Luxury London Residences



BOUYGUES
UK

Summary

The high value and visibility of this £15m+ ultra-luxe residential project for a major land client meant that Bouygues UK could not afford to fail at Hempel Gardens. It was complex, involving retention of a conservation-protected façade, with a limited site footprint and costly supply chain.

Despite some early challenges, incoming project director Augustin Dufour gained rapid and effective control and planning rigour, with the support of an experienced planner and the rapid planning capability of Powerproject. He was rewarded by an individual Silver medal at the Construction Manager of the Year Awards, while the company completed a project of which it could be immensely proud, spot on the planned completion date for the reworked project.

The development known as the Hempel Gardens Project is located in the City of Westminster, in a busy and affluent residential area. It involved the demolition of the former famous boutique Hempel Hotel, behind a retained façade, to make way for the development of 18 ultra-luxury apartments.



Bouygues UK was appointed in July 2014 and started on site that September for a planned 18-month development. However, due to a number of delays and challenges early on in the programme, it was recognised that a rethink would be required, by both client and contractor. At the time, London construction was booming, leading to rapid price inflation on the supply side which was also causing costs to start to spiral. Not only was the site itself constrained,

but it featured all the accessibility and supply challenges of a city development, coupled with the delicacy and community concerns demanded in any such privileged neighbourhood.

Refreshed approach

Augustin Dufour, an experienced project director, was given charge of the project refresh and tasked to regain control of the programme, design and costs, to bring it to a successful completion. He said: "When I joined the project six months in, demolition was complete and very early work had started on the structure, but the original programme was no longer a reality. I did a lot of due diligence and re-assessed the challenge, analysing everything from the tender, commercial context, relationships, risks, site team, and the programme itself. I

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realised we needed to re-programme it completely.”

Augustin drafted in David Izaguirre, a Bouygues Senior Planning Manager, to provide full-time planning on the scheme. David told us: “We saw straight away that some things would take far more time than originally expected, so did some extensive work to re-sequence activities in the client programme, which had been created in Powerproject. Then we were able to present a new programme to the client, with a new completion date. The client liked the approach.” David’s mission was to measure progress on a daily basis, coordinating all communication and meeting with site managers and supply chain partners.

Powerproject was used from that point onwards. The need to move fast to make up for lost time meant that the programme had to be developed fast. David commented “We prefer Powerproject on the client side at Bouygues UK because it’s very quick and easy to knock out a simple programme rapidly. We can make a quick programme that has almost all the logic, certainly enough for client reporting

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purposes, to submit, then we can play with it later. The main advantage is the sheer rapidity with which you can create a programme.”

Some delays remained inevitable and had to be planned properly into the new sequence. In addition to those created by things such as traffic management, restriction of hours in Westminster, and the noise and dust sensitivities of neighbouring owners and occupiers, the building footprint itself effectively comprised the entire construction site.



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Sub-contractors had minimal storage for materials, and even the loading bay was obstructed by scaffolding. “The logistics and space on site had a huge impact on the programme. We had to freeze some areas to store materials, and when you do this you create delays in your own programme and need to take that into consideration” outlined Augustin.

Repetitive individuality

Residential development planning always features repetitive sequencing, as did the Hempel project. Augustin stated: “The software allowed us to go into sequence for one flat, to monitor the sequence of that, then after that we could copy and paste for the other flats, then adapt the plans for each one, as they were not all same size.”

The dissimilarity was considerable. He explained: “The plan was to demolish the existing building and build a new structure to accommodate 18 ultra-luxury flats. There were nine duplexes,

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one triplex, four three-bedroom lateral flats, plus a studio and three two-bedroom flats in the basement. We also had to deliver all the communal areas, bike store, and of course a concierge area.”

Continuing control and communication

The luxury specification would mean a large number of specialist finishing trades to manage, as well as the normal array of trades and sub-contractors. It made good team communication essential. Augustin said: “Powerproject is powerful to help you not only sequence tasks, but extract different aspects of the programme and communicate to your supply chain and sub-contractors. You can plan your resources quite easily in the software, and it helps you have conversations with sub-contractors about ensuring the right number of resources were on site at any time, to meet the programme. The Powerproject programme was the basis of all our discussions with the supply chain.”

To ensure that the new programme would stay under tight control, the team updated the programme weekly and used it to report to the client. To create additional controls, they extracted data out of Powerproject and into Excel, to create a variety of additional reports. Augustin explained: “We took the programme dates out to create some monitoring curves. For a particular trade, like painting, we could put the dates on the horizontal axis, and 18 flats on the vertical axis. We then had a theoretical curve of what we wanted to

achieve and could plot actual progress against that.”

Precision luxury

With such a luxury objective, fit-out was arguably the most critical stage on this exacting project, which was designed to appeal purely to high net worth buyers. Finishes included luxury kitchens, marble flooring in kitchens and bathrooms, full air-con, underfloor heating throughout. David related that “We used Powerproject to create very detailed room-by-room sequences, showing each contractor which areas of work they would be doing, which was monitored in a weekly meeting.”

During fit-out, it became apparent that the site team needed virtually a day-by-day programme, to explain every detail of what had to be completed. David shared that he believed Powerproject’s rapid planning ability made that easier than it might have been: “We had to sit down with a member of the team each day and make a very, very detailed programme. It was so quick and easy, and that is what differentiates Powerproject. And it was easy to share the actual plan with the guys on site, as we have it with us, on our computers –

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The complexity of the M&E requirements had become clear, and Augustin and David decided to create a separate, detailed M&E programme in Powerproject: “The sequence was simply too complex to be on the client programme” explained Augustin. “There was so much interaction between different aspects of M&E with, for example, the joinery, flooring and other packages – you can’t close a wall if you haven’t got the pipework finished.”

Perfect finish

The Hempel Collection of luxury apartments is now a stunning set of finished apartments behind the elegant original façade, and there is no hint of the difficulties that beset the project in its early months. The project was reprogrammed and completed, technical challenges were overcome, with only minimal design changes, and without compromising quality in any way.

Constant and excellent client engagement was one of the keys to bringing this troubled project to a highly successful conclusion. “The only way that delaying a project is permissible is if you can justify the changes – and the only way to do that is to prove it with a great programme you can show your client” declared Augustin. “You need to make sure your client always knows the truth, whatever the consequences. They need to know when you will finish, and that you keep your original programme as a baseline. In this case, our client received the news very well, and could see the complexity of the project clearly outlined in Powerproject. We worked together, and completed on the date we had set when we redrafted the programme.”

He concluded: “I think Powerproject is a great tool, and very powerful. It becomes easy if you use it on a regular basis. I wasn’t trained on it at the time we did this project, but have taken some training with Elecosoft since. As long as you know how a Gantt programme works, it’s quite easy to move to Powerproject. I particularly like the monitoring drop-line, and the fact that when you need to reschedule you can click one button and it automatically recalculates all your delays.”

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