

PlanGrid helps strengthen the foundation of a family business.

General Contractor | Jerram Falkus | Case Study

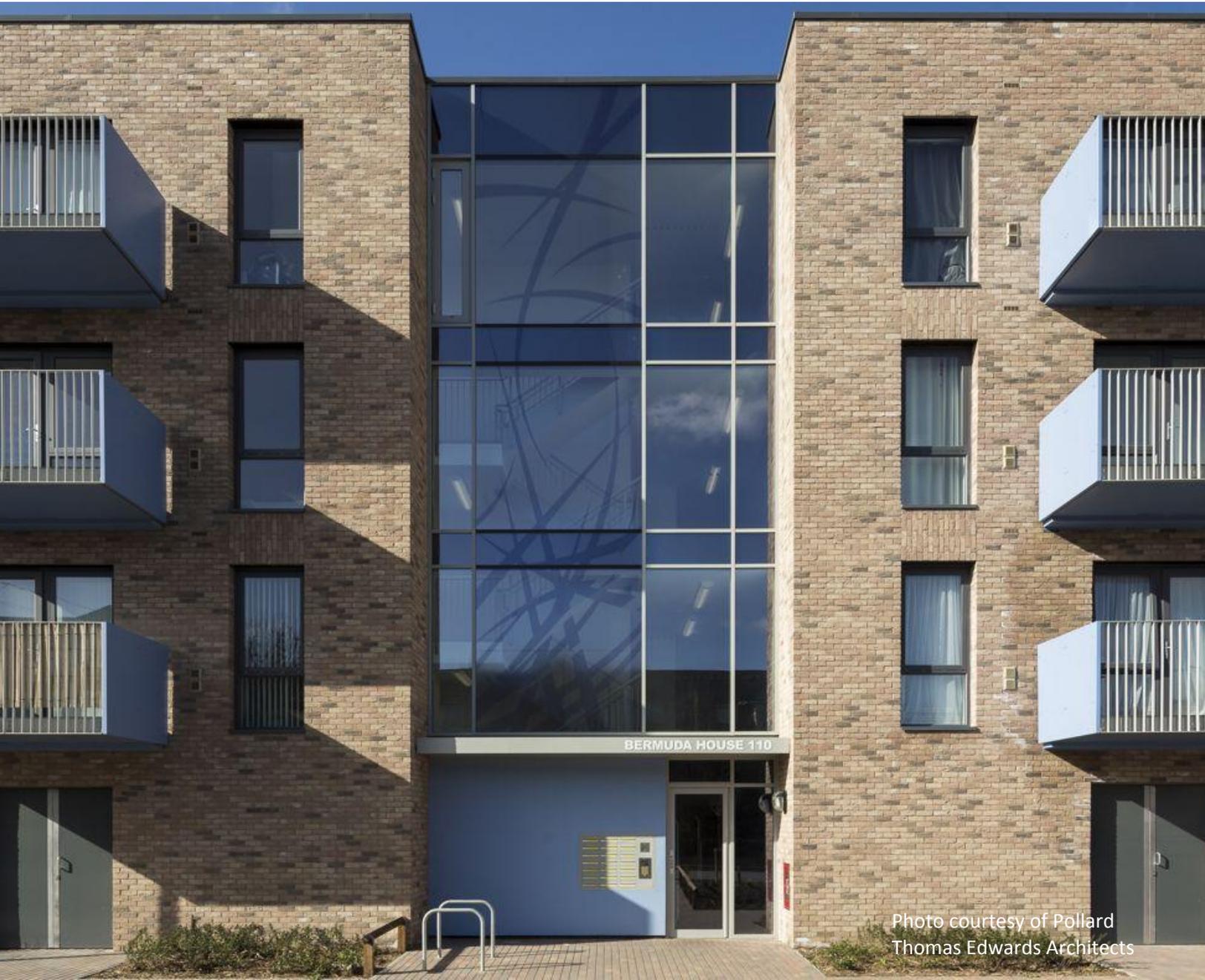


Photo courtesy of Pollard
Thomas Edwards Architects

Jerram Falkus Group is a family business, founded in Shoreditch, London in 1884 by William J Jerram. By moving with the needs of the community and changes in the industry, Jerram Falkus has enjoyed steady growth over the years, and management has worked hard to maintain a focus on quality rather than quantity. The company offers expertise in all sectors of construction: commercial, education, healthcare, and residential.

Problem

Martin Hickey joined Jerram Falkus as Project Leader in 2014, with fifty years experience in construction, working on and managing residential and commercial new build and refurbishments across all sectors of the market. Over the years, Martin has seen the industry develop, moving away from the reliance on manual labour, to the mechanisation of many aspects of construction to help boost productivity. When he joined Jerram Falkus, he identified a number of challenges impacting the business, and ultimately their profitability.

Martin observed that many projects in Jerram Falkus were delayed due to production issues on site. The company's existing system meant that teams were not always getting the right information in their hands at the right point in time, resulting in costly delays and errors, and increasing the potential for rebuilds.

Drawings were received by email or via an online storage application and uploaded to a shared server. From this stage, it could take up to a week to make their way into the hands of site management and subcontractors. This process was further complicated when changes were requested mid-project and the teams needed to share new drawings.

There was not an efficient process to communicate markups or to record changes made on site into the drawings. As a result, it was often difficult to keep track of the different versions, and in fast-track programmes it could lead to teams working off out of date information – often a costly mistake. Furthermore, this impacted the ability to collate accurate as-built records as required on all projects.

The company employed some technology to share drawings, but contracts and specifications were all shared in written form. The only way to ensure teams were complying with requirements on a project was for the project manager to haul all the relevant paperwork on site – a cumbersome and inefficient approach. A manual system also made it difficult to record snags and defects on projects which could be shared with the relevant parties for resolution. It required time spent in the site office interpreting and transcribing handwritten notes from the jobsite and searching through digital site photos to provide relevant evidence to resolve issues.

Despite these challenges, the company had come a long way since it was founded in 1884, and management had successfully embraced the many changes in the sector over the decades. Martin was confident they would consider his proposal to invest in a cost-effective solution which would bring all their building project activity together into one application and could be run on a tablet from site by the production staff.

Solution

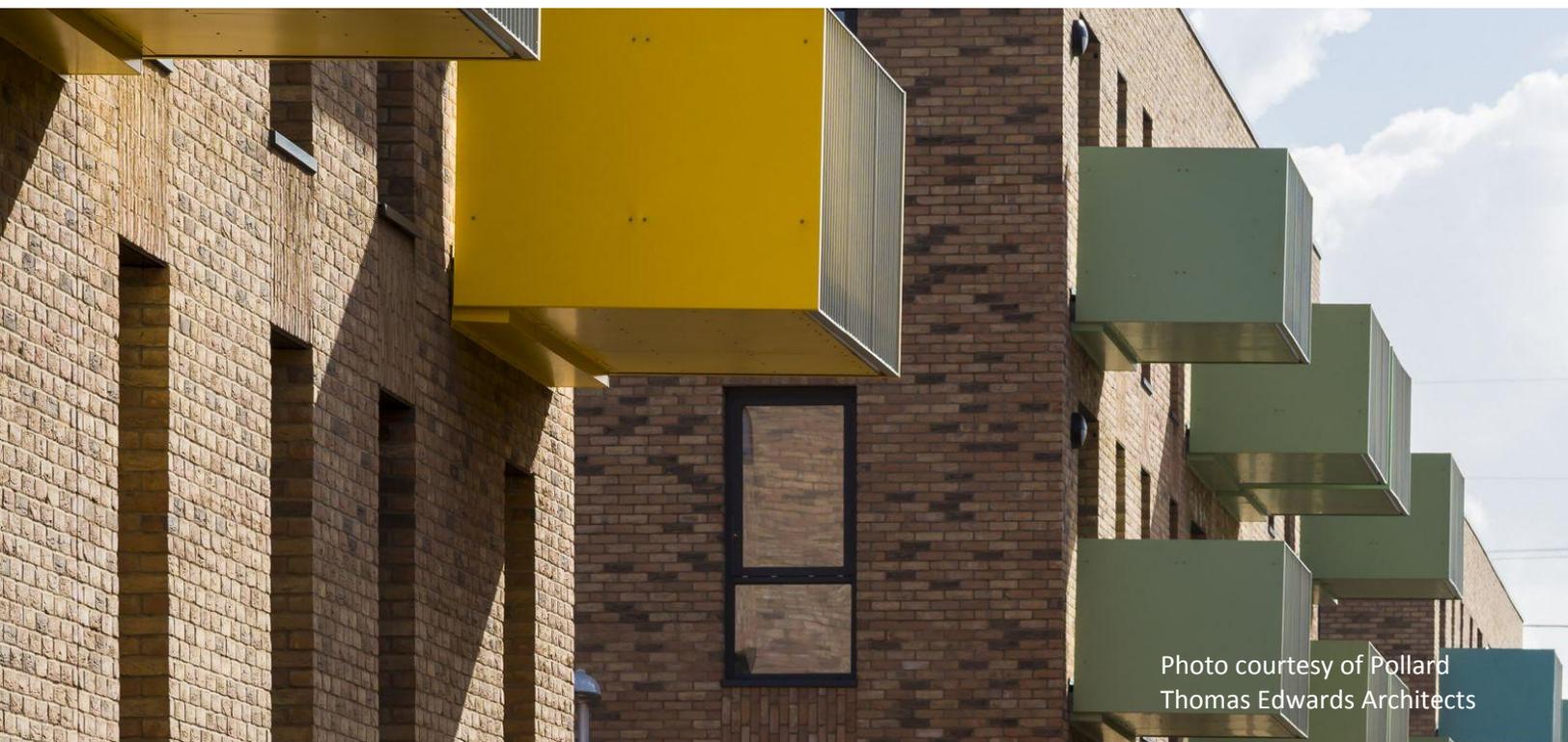
Martin has always had a keen interest in the use of smart solutions, and he researched the opportunities for new technology to help Jerram Falkus overcome their production challenges. He discovered PlanGrid on the app store, bought an iPad, downloaded the free trial, and acquainted himself with the application. He also reviewed an alternative solution, but ultimately felt PlanGrid was better suited to resolving the problems the team was experiencing.

The next step was to set up a meeting with his managing director, William Jerram, to introduce PlanGrid and make the pitch for the technology. Martin focused on the requirement for the company to resolve issues they had with production, highlighting examples which had impacted the bottom line.

He emphasised the importance of ensuring that Jerram Falkus focused on getting their quality right, building in the right way across all teams on all building projects. He pointed out that PlanGrid would more than pay for itself by reducing the delays, overruns, and reworks the company experienced with projects.

Furthermore, the SaaS solution required no capital expenditure and could be easily tailored to the number of drawings and team members needed. Martin was able to reference drawings, markups, and photographs he had collected on site to demonstrate the power of PlanGrid to his managing director.

The proposition was successful, and Martin was approved to try PlanGrid for one year before any decision was made on a wider rollout of the technology. He was confident in the prospect of success and believed the tool would help improve collaboration on projects, boost team efficiency, and help to drive performance, both individually and as a group.



Results

Jerram Falkus put PlanGrid to test on a complex build project in Brighton, on the south coast of England. Martin was responsible for the implementation, management, and training of PlanGrid with the team, so he visited weekly to stay close to the project. He brought his iPad onsite to share the capabilities of the application and demonstrate its use in both offline and online scenarios.

The trial was successful. The Brighton project was delivered on time and budget with minimal defects. The directors were happy with the results, and PlanGrid was rolled out company-wide. By concentrating on one project initially, teams in Jerram Falkus became familiar using web-based applications and smart tablets in a remote environment.

At the outset, Martin spent time on site to socialise PlanGrid. Some of the site managers have been with the company for 50 years and were initially reluctant to embrace the new technology. Martin demonstrated how PlanGrid could make their lives easier, freeing up a couple of hours per week and improving communication across a project. They embraced the ability to have the information they needed at their fingertips and have seen the benefit of moving away from a manual system. Up to date drawings, specifications, and contracts can be easily shared, and time-stamped photographs help to resolve snag lists in a timely manner.

PlanGrid is easy to use and very intuitive. The company took advantage of PlanGrid training to get up and running. Some users need more one-to-one support to get up to a consistent level with the application and Martin has stayed close to the teams as they become familiar with the new technology. He has found PlanGrid Support responsive and helpful when needed. As it's an evolving platform, PlanGrid is receptive to suggestions from users.

Four years from the first trial, Jerram Falkus is using PlanGrid across all projects and is reaping the benefits of improved collaboration and an increase in productivity. Martin has been able to demonstrate how PlanGrid has helped the company to deliver a series of projects on time, on budget, and with minimal defects. This helps to set the company on the right track to prosper for many more generations of the family business.

Key Benefits

- Cut down on time to respond to queries and mitigate mistakes.
- Eliminate lost information or miscommunication by allowing users to record issues immediately.
- Assign roles and responsibilities to respond to RFIs and tenders.
- Reduce the reliance on email for communication.
- Collaborate with 25 users of PlanGrid at any time with the flexibility to add licences as required.

“A photo can tell a thousand words; with PlanGrid we get that priceless information at our fingertips in minutes.”

– **Martin Hickey**, Project Leader, Jerram Falkus



“We make our profits by doing the job right, doing it right the first time around, building it on time and building it in accordance with the contract documents.”

– **Martin Hickey**, Project Leader, Jerram Falkus

Photo courtesy of
Pollard Thomas
Edwards Architects