

insideout

the journal of the Higgins Group

issue 1



Welcome to insideout

Welcome to InsideOut which is designed to provide customers and employees of the Higgins Group with news of our recent successes and developments.



I hope that you find it interesting and informative.

We have had another successful year and have just approved our accounts in time for the Chairman's reception on 14th November. Group sales amounted to £231 million - the fourteenth year of growth and an increase of £25 million from last year.

This would not have been possible without the dedication and professionalism of all those who work for the Group. I welcome all the new staff that have joined us during the year as well as congratulating the many individuals who have achieved promotion and success in examinations.

Finally, please pass on any newsworthy items to the editorial staff for inclusion in later editions

Richard Higgins
Chairman

In Celebration of the new venture

The Fledgling

Peering over the edge the fledgling wonders
Will it hurt me if I try?

What he does not know, him being young
He must if he's to fly.

Confidence will come from those
behind him

Those who've made the trip before
He'll get a nudge, a friendly push
And through the air will soar

The thrill, the excitement, the exhilaration
The sheer wonder of it all

Will prove to him that to succeed
First be prepared to fall.

Vic Ranger

Senior Project Co-ordinator -
Higgins Construction

On the cover...

**The Orchard,
Crawley**
see article on
page 4



Over 46 years ago...



Over 46 years ago, on 1st March 1961, the Higgins Group was founded. With three sons under the age of five, Mr. Derek Higgins and his wife Olive bought a van and boldly set up DJ Higgins & Sons Limited. The first contract was worth £36. 10s. 0d and the first set of accounts showed that this company had turned over £9,705. 9s. 0d and made a profit of £58. 4s. 4d.

A few days ago the Group Director's, Richard Higgins (Chairman), Stephen Higgins, Martin Higgins and Paul Lewellen – signed off the 2007 accounts which showed sales of £231,048,000 and a steady 5% profit margin.

The numbers have certainly grown but many of the business principles laid down in 1961 have been continued by the current directors and management.

The Higgins Group continues to operate almost exclusively in private and social housing and education and has become a major estate regenerator. New build schemes usually require the remediation of brownfield land and frequently involve medium and high rise frame structures.

Higgins Homes has created some spectacular housing schemes. All combine internal design flair with creative elevations and attractive landscaping. Last year we sold over 350 properties from schemes throughout Essex, Hertfordshire, Greater London and Sussex.

Higgins Construction reported sales of over £140 million and has a business plan to grow to £250 million

by 2010. ...with a careful balance of new-build and refurbishment work. Operating as a "community contractor" within London and the Home Counties there is plenty of opportunity for this to be achieved given the demand for housing in the south-east of England.

The Group's two principle operations are now working together to provide social housing clients with a "one-stop shop" for estate regeneration. Where the Government are now demanding a greater mix of properties for private sale, intermediate sale (shared ownership) and rent. By having all the disciplines under one roof we believe that we can provide our clients with a better service.



Clearly this cannot be achieved without employing people of the right quality and experience. We manage this by investing heavily in professional training and by ensuring that individuals gain both depth and variety in their personal development.

As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Higgins Group we can look back with pride and look forward with confidence to a future that presents great opportunity.

What is going on within a developing London?

Higgins Group is pleased to be the main sponsor for the London Housing Federation Development Conference 2007 which is the highlight of London Housing Associations calendar.

The conference is being held at The Building Design Centre in Islington on Wednesday 5th December and

explores the key challenges facing all stakeholders responsible for

housing in London. The event is well attended by all our key partners and the keynote speaker this year is Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London.

**NATIONAL
HOUSING
FEDERATION**



A Home Environment in an En

“ My vision was to achieve a balance of modern living space in a rural environment, whilst at the same time keeping the history of the development in mind – retaining much of the original planting and creating a community for all to share ”
Martin Higgins
 Higgins Homes PLC



In designing The Orchard our aim was to create homes, not just places to live. A ‘village’ where residents could integrate and socialise, whilst retaining their individuality, be a sanctuary from the stresses of modern day living and offering space to live and room to grow. By utilising skills and experience from both Higgins Homes and Higgins Construction we have developed the unique design and innovative style of this new community.

Working closely alongside Moat Housing Association we have been able to give considered thought and detail to the individual layout and styling of these new homes to ensure that we deliver exceptional properties. A distinctive landscape utilising traditional sloping roofs and rectangular architecture against the contrast of the modern use of ruby red brick work, blocks of crisp white rendering or wooden cedar panelling has been created.

The Orchard has been delivered through joint working and comprises 176 three and four bedroom houses situated in Ifield Green, near Crawley town centre. Built on the former site of an orchard the development is lined with mature trees and communal nature areas which creates a complete sense of rural seclusion.

This stunning new development with its variety of styles and sizes of contemporary homes and imaginative landscaping has enhanced the integration of the affordable and outright sale housing, providing the perfect environment for life to develop and thrive.

This joint venture has key advantages to all parties involved, especially benefiting the new residents of these homes. It allows for the spreading of costs and risks, improves access to financial resources and provides benefits in terms of economies of scale. Access to new technologies and innovative managerial



processes, in particular working with Modern Methods of Construction specialists and delivering the Egan agenda have all been utilised. However, the real benefit is the synergizing of expertise and values.

We are also extremely proud that by working together we have been able to ensure the retention of the natural habitat to which the Orchard owes its name. The mature trees provide an attractive and fresh grid, amongst which the houses and new streets have been designed. Bordering the site is an area of natural habitat, which we have worked hard to retain and improve. Our consideration for our neighbouring residents and minimal interruption of their lives extends on this development not only to the human neighbours, but also the various species known to be living in the habitat. Concern for the welfare of these, in particular the amphibians and newts, was so high that a special tunnel has been built for them, so as not to interrupt their life cycles, breeding patterns, movements and obviously access to water.

There are few exemplar blueprints for mixed tenure housing developments in the market and we often find ourselves working with a blank sheet of paper. Our success at The Orchard in creating ‘Home Environments in an Environmental Home’ is one that we look forward to watching develop and replicating in the future.

Latest News



This exceptional development has also received an accolade from the prestigious Daily Mail UK Property Awards 2007 who have voted The Orchard the Best Development in Sussex – making this a truly award winning development

Environmental Home



‘Built on the former site of an orchard and surrounded by mature trees and greenery, this stunning development combines a variety of 3 and 4 bedroom homes with a natural wildlife area to create a real community feel’

Project Update Brockley PFI

Working in partnership with Lambeth Local Authority, Pinnacle PSG, Equipe, Sumitomo Bank and Regenter, Higgins Construction is undertaking this £73 Million project consisting of 1365 tenanted and 464 leaseholder flats, maisonettes and houses within 93 blocks. This will involve new bathrooms, kitchens, windows, roofs, electrical and mechanical replacement being carried out to properties to meet the availability standards.

As part of this project our web base data management system, HAWKE, is being utilised to enable all correspondence to be monitored. Through a simple traffic light system enable the progress of all works from survey to end of defects to be tracked.



Huntingfields

Higgins Construction is delighted that our first development in Norfolk is a £5 Million state-of-the-art resource centre for the elderly.

When completed in Autumn 2009 the centre will combine 34 sheltered homes, 20 respite care beds and a daycare service, with 40% of the homes earmarked for people with physical disabilities. Support for carers will also be provided at the centre, helping to maximise independence for older people. The centre has been made possible by a £1 Million grant from the Housing Corporation, together with a £1.8 Million investment by Norfolk County Council and Saffron Housing Trust providing the remaining £2.2 Million.



Silwood Estate, Bermondsey

This is a £110 Million comprehensive regeneration programme in seven phases providing 1325 new mixed tenure homes. Key priorities were to design out crime and provide energy-efficient new homes that residents can be proud of. As building works progressed Higgins Construction converted existing buildings into London & Quadrant's award winning internet-linked Cyber centre to

provide residents with training facilities to improve employment prospects and also established a training centre on the estate as part of our partnership with CSV.

Higgins Construction have regenerated this estate to such a level that the final two phases will be for private sale. Higgins Homes are proceeding with one of these phases and will be submitting planning for 189 new homes.

Training and Development

Higgins Homes PLC is one of only 16 housing developers throughout the country to invest in the NHBC backed Level 3 NVQ on the sale of residential property for new homes.

Four members of Higgins Homes have just completed the course, which focuses on key competencies including marketing properties, advising prospective buyers, negotiating the sale of properties, customer relationships and health and safety.



Janette Channon, Sue Smith, Rebecca Taylor and Paul Fowler all received certificates for passing the course, which took 12 months to complete. Jeremy Marcus, Sales and Marketing Director at Higgins

Homes, commented 'we are keen to maintain our leading position and excellent reputation in this increasingly

competitive market. The buying and hand-over process of new homes is becoming more complex and it is vital that our sales staff are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure that the process is well managed and that our customer satisfaction levels remain high'.

Rebecca Taylor commented 'I have been working in the new homes industry for over 15 years and Higgins Homes has been the only housing developer to offer me this level 3 NVQ course. It is fantastic to have such a recognised qualification and I hope that many more developers will follow Higgins Homes' example and invest in this invaluable training'.

Ice, Stevenage, Herts

This landmark development will comprise 238 one, two and three bedroom apartments and penthouses. Developed in four blocks and rising in a series of steps off a pedestal base with a central courtyard the development will form an inspiring and dynamic focal point.

The scheme offers the ultimate in living space with most flats having access to a private external space and all apartments have access to the landscape courtyard. Underground car parking is available for all apartments and separate provision has also been made for cycle and motorcycles.

The sales campaign is due to begin in early November.



Imperial Apartments, Colchester, Essex

A fabulous contemporary development in the heart of newly regenerated Colchester. With a stylish unique identity this

development comprising 97 one, two and three bedroom apartments will have huge appeal to local young professionals and investors.

The development has been designed as three main 3 and 4 storey blocks of apartments around central

landscaped amenity areas and parking courtyards. Combining independent outside space, elegance and location these homes are ideal for the busy commuter.

The Development launches 20th October.

Innovation

Raising the environmental performance of new buildings

In the modern age of global warming and CO2 emissions, achieving environmental and sustainable performance has become a critical factor in the construction sector.

Higgins embraces the new Code for Sustainable Homes to drive continuous improvement, greater innovation and exemplary

developments. This Code is designed to replace EcoHomes and uses a sustainability rating system – indicated by stars, ranging from one star (entry level) to six stars - being the highest, to communicate the overall sustainability performance of a home.

Higgins is currently formulating a strategy to deliver 100% of homes at 6 stars by 2015.

In addition to addressing the wider Sustainability agenda, we are also working towards achieving ISO 14001

accreditation. This is an internationally accepted standard that helps us to put in place an effective Environmental Management System (EMS), designed to reduce the environmental impact of our operations, both on our sites and at One Langston Road.

New environmental procedures have been developed as part of the EMS, which have been designed to complement existing ISO9001 procedures for each department.

If anyone would like information or a more detailed explanation of either our approach to sustainability or ISO 14001, please contact Tim Carey at One Langston Road.

Spotlight

Higgins Group Services



I thought I'd take this opportunity to make everyone aware of who we are and what we do.

We cover a range of services including...

Head Office Facilities - Kerry Hart coordinates all facilities matters at One Langston Road. This includes reception, telephony, post room and maintenance of the building. We also have our own print room housing a wide format printer managed by Paul Merrifield. This impressive machine can copy anything up to A0 size drawings.

Finance - Mark Francis has overall responsibility for the Finance Department. Linda Walker heads up the Payroll section and Debbie Wood looks after all other finance matters. They make sure that you all get paid on time as well as dealing with sub contractors and suppliers and ensuring the timely collection of monies from our clients.

Fleet - Mandy Cruden looks after all company vehicle issues and also covers car insurance claims and the congestion charge.

Human Resources - Chris Parle ably assisted by Keith Sullivan and Debra Green covers all training and personnel matters. We actively encourage staff to develop their roles within Higgins to their full potential.

Information Technology - Martyn Waller heads up our IT Team which covers not only computer technology but also telephony. With around 60 sites as well as Head Office running through our wide area network, Martyn's team covers a whole range of technical challenges. Ian Peckham, our Business Systems Manager, is in the process of implementing a Document Management system designed to integrate and share our project data and market information.

Insurances - Group Services has a close involvement in all insurance matters including non-contract claims relating to loss, damage or injury.

Charles Green
Group Services Director

Family Fun Day

The first Higgins Group Family Fun Day was held on Saturday 15th September and following its great success and popularity, is intended to become an established annual event.

We had an excellent turn out down at Debden Sports Ground and feedback since has been very positive. The level of involvement was also impressive, people's competitive sides coming to the fore during activities including Dodgems, Bungee Running, Bucking Bronco and a Bouncy Castle, enjoyed by kids and adults alike.

A special well done to all the teams involved in 'It's a knockout' and 'The Children's Sports Extravaganza', and in particular to the Orange Team,



whose weeks of training and admirable team spirit left them crowned proud champions of 'It's a knockout'.

Throughout the day there was also an opportunity for children to have a look around the Higgins office to see where their parents spend all of their time!

Thank you to all those who supported and took part in the event. We look forward to an equally memorable day this time next year.

National Construction Week

To promote the 'World of Construction' to schools Higgins Construction came up with an innovative idea of really getting on the same level as children, to inspire and interest them.

Working with Bacons College, Rotherhithe, which is located just over a mile from Higgins Silwood Redevelopment programme, we developed an 'activity' which involves the SIMS3000 computer game to facilitate the children's minds to think about the world of construction by using technology that they are familiar and excited by. This programme assisted the children to think about design, buildability, how to read a construction drawing and got them to think about other issues like utility companies and environmental and green issues.



The children were split into groups, managed by Higgins Staff, and competed against their peers to build the perfect (SIM) City.

Going that Extra Mile

Three Higgins employees completed the five mile run at Copped Hall, Epping. This is part of a Higgins Group and Guardian & Gazette newspaper Group sponsored annual event which is organised by Epping Rotary Club. The event also included a one and two mile run in which almost 100 excited and enthusiastic juniors took part.

Robin Chapple, Pre-Construction, Debbie Wood and Angela Harrison

from Group Services did exceptionally well, over what, to all intents and purposes, was a very wet and muddy cross country course. They completed the run in times ranging from 40 mins to 2 days. (Angela was after all entered in the Junior event).

All runners received a Higgins tee shirt after the run, which along with water supplied from a local company helped them to 'warm down' after the run.

Higgins Group

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Higgins