

Developer pins hopes on £200m Waterfront

By NEIL ATKINSON
News Editor

A £200m project to revamp a huge slice of Huddersfield is in the spotlight this week.

And for a leading Huddersfield businessman, they could represent the very future of the town.

Plans for The Waterfront Quarter — an ambitious project to provide offices, flats and leisure facilities — will go on show at Huddersfield Town Hall on Thursday and Friday.

And the developers, RCD, hope that it will get the backing of the public.

David Armitage, one of the men driving forward the hugely ambitious scheme, believes it is a great opportunity for the town.

And he has every reason to hope it will succeed, having spent his life working on behalf of the town.

The businessman and philanthropist has talked of his hopes for the project.

"I've spent all my life in the Huddersfield area, 26 years in Birchcliffe, 11 at Beaumont Park and the last 25 in Rastrick.

"My maternal grandmother, Madeline Florence Ulrich, whose husband was killed in the First World War, brought up three young daughters (one of whom died at the age of 8) in Thornton Lodge and also ran a newspaper and stationery business in the Old Market Hall on the Shambles Lane side.

"My grandfather Arthur was a farmer in Lindley and my father John Sykes Armitage learned his trade as a butcher at Huddersfield Co-op and then had his own business in Lindley.

"Huddersfield has provided my roots and I have lived through the town centre changes over the years, some beneficial, others not.

"But we now have a great opportunity to build on our location with a council focused on regeneration.

"The Waterfront Quarter can be a catalyst and provide us with a wonderful opportunity to open up the 'south side' of Huddersfield.

"Look at the map and see the location. Huddersfield is superbly placed to take maximum advantage of the M62

corridor with its proximity to Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield.

"There are great road and rail links and two major airports not that far away.

"The Chapel Hill site on the River Colne and Huddersfield Narrow Canal is where the Colne Valley and Holme Valley meet.

"It means there are possibilities are to regenerate out to Milnsbridge and to the Meltham/Berry Brow areas.

"I assume that comments will be made about financial gain and large amounts of money being made by Sellers Group, who occupy the site, but a considerable proportion of this will be invested in a new engineering factory more suited to our current needs and future requirements.

"Manufacturing is tough — ask any-

one in the industry — and furthermore we have a final salary pension scheme which through no fault of our own is in deficit and needs to be addressed to protect our employees and pensioners alike.

"We need a 'vision' for this area, not forgetting our heritage and preparing the wonderful mill buildings such as Folly Hall Mills.

"But we must also look forward and

ensure we can compete with our neighbours from urban living and commercial office accommodation.

"Traffic will be a problem, but then it is anyway and until we get a better public transport system nothing will change.

"It's no different in Leeds or even Brighouse!

"We need to attract business to

Huddersfield whose employees may live out of town.

"The rents should be more attractive.

"We also need our two local MPs Barry Sheerman and Kali Mountford to 'beat the drum' and work to toward bringing government departments/civil servants to relocate in Huddersfield, as an alternative to the Sheffield, Bradford, Rotherham and Barnsleys of this world.

"So what have we to lose? The opportunity is there, the master plan may be long term but we have to move forward for the benefit of future generations.

"A vision? Yes, let's go for it."

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