

You have to move with the times, the matriarch of an historic Halifax dynasty tells Virginia Mason

Past glory: smoke belches from the factory chimneys in this sketch of Shaw Lodge Mills during its early days



Matriarch: Dina Holdsworth

Picture: Bruce Fitzgerald

It's all about community...

FAMILY has always been important to Dina Holdsworth and so has a sense of community.

That is why she is embracing the plans to transform the mill in which she has invested decades of her life.

John Holdsworth and Company in the Shaw Lodge Mills complex has been part of Halifax for more than 180 years.

It has been overseen by no fewer than six generations of the Holdsworth family and through years

of both feast and famine, it has carved out a name for itself as a market leader in the manufacture of upholstery fabric for the transport industry.

Indeed, park your bottom on any bus seat anywhere in the world and the chances are you will be sitting on a top notch bit of moquette, made lovingly at Shaw Lodge.

But times move on. Manufacturing will continue here for the time being but Calderdale planners are now poised to give the nod to transform the site into an

ing, a hotel, shops, leisure complex, even a health centre for the benefit of the new villagers.

No one is more aware of the need to move with the times than Dina, who became a member of the Holdsworth family when she married William, a fifth generation Holdsworth in 1946.

Originally from Holland, Dina settled into married life quickly in Halifax where she remembers that "There was black smoke everywhere you looked."

"The only time the skies were clear was during Wakes Week," she laughs.

She became instantly involved with the mill despite bringing up a



The present: the Shaw Lodge Mill today

sixth generation of Holdsworths. After William's death in 1969 she became "absolutely hands-on," becoming chairman in 1972.

She may now be retired but there is no doubt that the company and its employees will always remain close to her heart.

"You can't stop progress and if Holdsworth's has to move on then it has to be in a good way. It has to be the right move forward and I do believe this is it," she says.

"What struck me as a young woman when I arrived here was this strong sense of community, a sense of family. The Holdsworths weren't the only family who had

been here for generation upon generation. The workforce reflected that too," she says.

"We saw employees working here for years who were then followed by their children and even grandchildren. If there was another generation wanting to come along then there was a job for them. Everybody seemed to know everybody."

"I think that's incredibly important because you create a workforce then that cares and you have employers who care about their workers."

In some way, Dina believes the new plans proposed for Shaw Lodge will ensure this sense of community prevails.

We take a tour of the