



WELCOMING TENANTS Shaw Lodge Mills

Brush off the CLOUDS

With regeneration projects gathering pace, Halifax has a lot to be positive about. Let's hope the dark cloud that is HBOS doesn't ruin the mood. **Julie Hayes** reports

The 'hole in the donut' – Halifax – is perceived to have taken a long time to get going on regeneration projects and developments. Compared with neighbouring university town Huddersfield, it has seemed the poor relation. But today the town can hold its head up with the successful continuation of developments, while work in other towns and cities in the region has ground to a halt.

Broad Street Plaza – a £50m mixed-use scheme to transform the town centre – is the envy of more sluggish schemes. Developer Gregory Projects (Halifax), part of the Leeds-based Gregory Group, is expected to start building in September or October 2009 once final funding arrangements are made.

David Brimblecombe, managing director of Gregory Projects, says the company has instructed solicitors with regard to the funding

agreement: "We're cautiously optimistic that we're going to be able to get the funding in place and make a start later this year."

Brimblecombe says the scheme isn't as exposed as other schemes in the region, which have been retail-led and progress has stopped. The 280,000 sq ft development is directly opposite the town hall and bus station, and its anchor tenant is a Vue cinema. It has also signed up a 100-bed hotel Premier Inn hotel and a 430-space multi-storey car park to be run by APCOA. Speculatively the scheme will house other leisure and retail units, plus 30,000 sq ft of Grade A offices.

Brimblecombe says the cinema is attracting restaurant operators and he is in talks with two family restaurants. In terms of potential tenants for the offices, he says:

"Calderdale Council is going through an OJEC procurement for its own office needs and we have a very strong pitch for consideration as the place they relocate to."

But Broad Street isn't the only development securing tenants. St James Securities' development, Shaw Lodge Mills, has secured three tenants this year in the commercial part of the scheme, which includes office and industrial accommodation as well as workshops and studios.

The new tenants, including fashion logistics company Advanced Processing, join a range of existing occupiers such as Artworks, an art and design project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and Labour MP for Calderdale Linda Riordan's constituency offices. St James' Securities, which bought out co-developer Hanson Partners in 2008, also has outline planning permission for an urban village of 300 homes and apartments, offices, a hotel, shops, restaurants and a GP's surgery at the site. But this part of the scheme has been put on hold because of the downturn in the housing market.

Councillor Amanda Byrne, policyholder for regeneration and development at Calderdale Council, acknowledges that development in Halifax has taken a while to get off the ground but says people can see that it's moving now.

The most tangible project is the Shay football stadium. Work on The Shay is well under way and the £4.5m scheme to