

Webster & Horsfall in plans to regenerate Tyseley site

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One of Birmingham's oldest manufacturing companies is seeking to regenerate a ten-acre site in Tyseley and create jobs in a deprived area of the city.

Webster & Horsfall, which was established in 1720 and currently employs fifth and sixth generation Horsfalls, is poised to submit a planning application for a ten-acre industrial park off Birmingham's A45.

The company is the UK's leading manufacturer of wire and strip and exports its products around the world. It moved to the Tyseley site in 1856. It shares a 16 acre plot with sister company Latch & Batchelor Ltd, a manufacturer of wire rope for cranes and deep mine shafts.

Shortly after the Second World War, the sister companies employed more than 1,000 people. Today, as a result of a decline in Britain's mining industry, increased global competition and new processing techniques, the factories now employ just 108.

At present, the companies occupy approximately 217,000 sq ft of space, with a further 80,000 sq ft now lying redundant. The management team is seeking to consolidate operations into buildings of circa 100,000 sq ft. This is around a third of the site's total footprint and will free up around ten acres for development.

Charles Horsfall, chairman of Webster & Horsfall, believes the proposals will help safeguard jobs within the company, as well as regenerate one of the most deprived areas of the city.

He said: "For a manufacturing business such as ours to survive in the 21st century we need to modernise and invest. The development of our Tyseley site will generate an income stream from our surplus land to help us do this. Our goal is to reach our 300th anniversary, in 2020, fighting fit."

In addition to safeguarding existing jobs at the site, Mr Horsfall believes there is excellent potential for job creation.

He said: "In its heyday, this site was a major employer. Once the surplus land is cleared and new businesses and investment attracted, there is the potential to create a significant number of new jobs, breathing new life into the local economy."

Webster & Horsfall is seeking planning permission for around 160,000 sq ft of new prime industrial, storage and distribution space.

The proposed development, called Tyseley Energy Park after its location off Energy Way, is next to the Tyseley Incinerator, operated by Veolia. Its boundary is close to the King's Road Industrial Estate and the Heybarnes Retail Park, on the Coventry Road.

The company has appointed DTZ to market the site.

Simon Lloyd, director and head of industrial agency at the Birmingham office of DTZ, said: "The Webster & Horsfall site is an established industrial site in a recognised industrial area.

"It has excellent road connections via the A45 and is just 2.5 miles from the city centre. There is also an established and accessible labour pool.

"As a result, we are already talking to a number of potential occupiers and we anticipate that interest in the proposed development will be high."

Webster & Horsfall has received support for its proposals from surrounding land owners following a consultation exercise that began during the summer of 2008.

Feedback from Birmingham City Council has also been encouraging. The scheme is in accordance with the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Birmingham Unitary Development Plan.

Webster & Horsfall is holding a public consultation tomorrow and Friday, from 10am until 2pm, at the St Cyprian Church School Room, next to Webster & Horsfall's main reception at The Fordrough, Hay Mills. Webster & Horsfall intends to submit its planning application at the beginning of November.