World’s first iron-framed building secures major investment

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The funding will be put towards the first phase of the redevelopment of the Flax Mill Maltings site, which will restore and bring back into a third century of productive use some of the main historic buildings on the site, including the Main Mill – which is the world’s first iron-framed building – the Kiln, the Dye and Stove House, and the Office and Stables.

Space will be opened up for commercial and community use, including exhibition space for visitors to learn about the building’s place in social and international history.

Work is set to begin on site in October 2013 and be completed in early 2016, meaning that the site could be open to the public, and be the workplace for hundreds of people, by spring 2016.

Situated on the northern edge of Shrewsbury, the internationally-important Flax Mill Maltings site reflects a time when Shropshire led the way in engineering innovation. It comprises seven listed buildings, including the Main Mill, which was built in 1797 and is the world’s first iron-framed building and the forerunner of the modern skyscraper.

The site was a flax mill from 1797 until 1897, and then a maltings until its closure in 1987. English Heritage took over the site in 2005.

The bid was submitted by a partnership of Shropshire Council, English Heritage, the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

Reyahn King, Head of HLF West Midlands, said: “The listed buildings at the Flax Mill Maltings encapsulate the very best of British innovation and excellence in engineering and as the forerunner of skyscrapers the Main Mill is of international architectural importance. Shropshire Council’s plans are now set to transform this historic site into a centre for learning, leisure and business enterprise.

“I can’t think of a better use of Heritage Lottery Fund money than to celebrate and reuse our industrial past in such a well-thought out and exciting project.”

Councillor Mal Price, Shropshire Council’s Cabinet member for Built Environment, said: “Securing this funding from HLF is brilliant news and means that our plans to bring the Flax Mill Maltings site back to life will finally become a reality.

“This news is testament to the success of a unique partnership that has been working together for the last few years to develop our plans for the site and to put together this significant funding bid.

“The development and regeneration of the site will provide a huge boost not just to this area of Shrewsbury, but to the town as a whole, and to the Shropshire economy. So while the success of our bid is great news for the partners, it is also tremendous news for Shrewsbury, for Shropshire and for everyone who has supported our plans to develop the site.”

Alan Mosley, Chairman of the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings, said: “This is fabulous news which will mean so much to all the hard working Friends who have contributed massively to the success.

“Apart from protecting and opening up our internationally important heritage to the public, the grant will bring tremendous, and much needed, investment, jobs, services, community facilities and hence, regeneration to the area.

“Local people have really got behind this project and they, alongside the friends, other partners and supporters, can have great pride in their achievement.”

Chris Smith, National Planning and Conservation Director at English Heritage, said: “The Heritage Lottery Fund’s announcement is wonderful news, and will ensure that this internationally-important site can now move with certainty into its third century of economic and community use. The partnership, which I have had the privilege to chair over this very difficult economic period, can now look forward not only to restore these wonderful buildings, but also to see the regeneration benefits that this will bring to the local area."

Nick Rees, Homes and Communities Agency Area Manager Midlands West, said: “This great example of a partnership coming together to save an historic landmark of national significance has been recognised by the announcement of Heritage Lottery Funding. This, together with the funding already secured from the HCA and others, will help to bring the world’s first iron framed building into productive use once again, through a combination of commercial space, job opportunities and fantastic community facilities."

In May 2012 the HLF awarded the project a ‘first-round pass’, and development funding of £465,300 to develop more detailed plans for the regeneration of the Flax Mill Maltings. The second round bid was submitted by the partners in April 2013.

Notes to editors

A detailed press pack gving full background information can be found on the Flax mill website.

Further information

For photographs and images, visit the Flax Mill Shrewsbury Flickr account.

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