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Miner's son and man of vision

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Visionary Reg Ward who rose from a Forest mining family to transform the London docklands has died.

As the first chief executive of the London Docklands Development Corporation he masterminded initiatives such as the iconic Canary Wharf.

But the man credited with laying the foundations which attracted the Olympics to London in 2012 was not so successful on his home patch.

Lydbrook-born Mr Ward moved to Awre after a meteoric international career and was asked for his ideas to regenerate the Forest in the mid 1990s. A furore blew up over ideas such as a flyover from the A48 to Cinderford and link across the Severn.

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Former council leader Bruce Hogan (Lab, Lydbrook) said: "Reg was considered a real guru so he was asked to do some blue sky thinking to regenerate the Forest.

"He was a real visionary and described himself as a romantic with both feet planted firmly in the clouds.

"The problem was that when his ideas were published, people thought the proposals were a blueprint and the bulldozers were about to move in. Some of his proposals that could have been beneficial for the Forest were lost in the mayhem."

Forest educated Mr Ward was encouraged to become the first person in his family to apply to university while a young RAF pilot.

He then joined the Inland Revenue before moving into local government in his 30s and becoming chief executive at several local authorities.

During his time at the docklands, 1980 and 1987, he was known for his forthright style which was credited with the success of the project and earned him the respect of admirers such as Michael Heseltine and the Duke of Edinburgh. He went on to work in Barcelona, Sydney and St Kitts.

Friend Ted Booth from Littledean saw a softer side when his wife was diagnosed with cancer on a round the world sailing trip. "We had to come back but Reg had no hesitation in giving up his lovely house in Awre so we had somewhere to live for two years," he said.

Mr Ward, who died on January 6, moved to Broadwell Manor in Cotswolds with Forest-born wife Betty in 2004. She died last year. He leaves a daughter Sarah and son John.

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