



## STAYING POWER...

Longevity in business is something to be admired. In this series of features, we are celebrating some of the most accomplished professionals from across the North East business community. Aimed at major players with extensive experience in their respective sectors, we provide a fascinating insight into what makes them tick and what we can learn from them.

This month we chat to...

### CHRIS PIPE

Director of Planning House

#### Did you always envisage a career in the industry?

Initially I thought my calling was as a Geography Teacher, however I realised through studying A-levels (Sociology, Geography and Classical Studies) and analysing the changes the area I lived had gone through in the 90's (an ex-mining settlement) that my passion was to try and make a difference to people/places and that began a passion for town planning.

#### What is your favourite aspect of the job?

One of the perks about town planning is each project is different, residential, commercial, change of use and listed building projects all have their own set of planning issues which need to be factored into how you deal with a proposal. I thrive on knowing each day can be different.

#### What has been your career defining moment?

Whilst I've been fortunate to have some great achievements in my career I believe that starting my own business is by far my career defining moment, I do however believe my greatest business achievement is yet to come.

#### How do you measure success?

I love a challenge and strive for success however client satisfaction is my key measure as I want to ensure that I add value to a development. This is why I agreed to be a Grand Design Live Ask the Expert at the London ExCel in May, I provided advice and guidance to people embarking on their development journey.

#### What have been the biggest changes in the industry since you started?

Town planning constantly evolves however the biggest change in town planning during my career came in 2012 with the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which turned the thousands of pages of national policy into a 59 page document.

Whilst the interpretation of the NPPF is still being challenged and is currently being reviewed I do believe that this document has helped professions remember planning is about people and places not red tape.

#### How has your skillset developed accordingly?

I realised town planning is bigger than just looking at policies and regulations, at the end of the day as already said, it's about people and places, once I embraced that I became a better town planner.

I was working as Head of Planning for a Local Planning Authority when the NPPF was launched and whilst my experience was invaluable until you work in private practice I don't think you can truly appreciate the challenges developers face.

#### Are you a risk taker by nature or more conservative?

I think if you set up your own business there is a part of you which is a risk taker, however I like to weigh up risks before I act.

#### To what would you attribute your success?

I have a strong work ethic and whilst I have maintained my focus I'm open to criticism and on advice ways to improve. However ultimately you have to love what you do – and I do.

#### What's your biggest weakness and how have you managed this?

I have so many ideas for taking my business forward sometimes it's challenging to find time to work on and in the business at the same time. My growth plans for the next few years will however help with this.

#### How do you remain motivated?

Ultimately success, I have a strong desire to achieve my goals and feel empowered knowing my business direction, this drives me and keeps me motivated.

#### Would you prefer to be liked or respected?

Whilst not mutually exclusive I'd prefer to be respected, it's nice to be liked however if you're respected it means you're appreciated and valued in your profession.

#### I'll retire when....

The business is at a stage where it no longer needs me. I have a passion for town planning, however my plan is to build the business so my role becomes increasingly more limited to enable me to spend more quality time with my family.