

'Playing Russian roulette with lives'

by Jo Barber

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Reclamation firm boss Gary Clift is worried a half-tonne piece of masonry on the derelict Hill Paul factory looks ready to fall from its position more than 40 feet up — straight down into a public car park.

"The authorities are playing Russian roulette with public lives," said Mr Clift, from Bowbridge, who has complained to the council about the danger posed by the crumbling stonework.

Proposals

Mr Clift said he considers it a disgrace the building at Cheapside, near the town centre, still remained unrepaired more than four months after it was first cordoned off for safety reasons.

"I am not in favour of the recent proposal to knock down this building. But if that masonry falls from eight floors up it would go beyond the hoarding and kill someone, even somebody in a car," warned Mr Clift, a demolition expert.

The former Hill Paul clothing factory, next to Stroud's railway station, was fenced off in October after the defect was discovered.

Director Malcolm Bushell, from Saville Construction which owns the old building, said later he was quite happy



to err on the side of safety.

Contractors would be engaged shortly to remove the stonework, he said.

And head of the Stroud District Council building control section Phil Williams said the Hill Paul building had been regularly monitored all winter, both from the ground and with the aid of zoom photography.

"There does not appear to have been any further movement," said Mr Williams who yesterday met Mr Bushell at the site to discuss the situation.

■ Angry conservationists said only last week that they were outraged by Saville's firm Harper Home's latest proposal to knock down the Hill Paul building and said they would mount a campaign to oppose the demolition.

■ Gary Clift outside the Hill Paul building with (inset) the dangerous masonry.

Photos: Robert Davis

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