

Demolition call protests

21/3/00

THE OWNERS of the historic **Hill Paul** building in **Stroud** want to demolish the landmark mill.

The decision by Harper Homes has infuriated town councillors, who described the firm's tactics as 'demolition by stealth' and voted unanimously to oppose them.

The Caterham-based firm has applied to Stroud District Council for conservation area consent to demolish the property.

At a meeting last night, members of the town council expressed their anger the former mill had been allowed to fall into disrepair while its owners stood by and watched its demise.

Councillor Andy Read, chairman of the council's planning committee, said: "It is largely the owner's fault the building is in such a state. It is being allowed to fall apart in its own time."



■ The Hill Paul building in Stroud.★

by Tim Lezard

The meeting heard that the crumbling building has dry rot and rising damp, its floors are caving in and the roof is in a terrible state.

But despite this, councillors want to preserve what they see is a pivotal part of Stroud's proud industrial past.

Coun. Read said: "So much of the his-

toric town centre has been pulled down already."

And carpet fitter Rob Hulme, whose mother Joy worked as a seamstress in the mill, said: "It would be a shame to see it knocked down because wherever you are in Stroud you can see it - it's part of the town's heritage.

"I hope it's not too late to try and save it."

Planners will visit the site with representatives of Harper Homes next week and the issue will be discussed at a meeting next month. English Heritage will be consulted before councillors make their final decision.

Harper Homes was unavailable for comment.

● Contractors will remove loose masonry from the front of the building on Sunday and have warned Cheapside will be closed for short periods during the day.