

Demolition begins at landmark site

by Jo Barber

CONTRACTORS have begun to demolish the old Hill Paul factory in Stroud.

A team of workmen in white hard hats from specialist firm Marron moved onto the contentious site at Cheapside early today.

By shortly after nine this morning one single-storey building on the former builders' merchants' site next door was already being reduced to rubble.

Marron contracts director Simon Barlow confirmed he was engaged by Hill Paul's owner Harper Homes to knock down the main red brick Victorian building, which he expected would take about four weeks.

Mr Barlow said he planned a traffic management system to ensure minimum inconvenience to users of the narrow road, Cheapside, immediately below Hill Paul's.

A long-reach excavator will be used to demolish the main Hill Paul property, said Mr Barlow

Architectural remains worthy of re-use, including the clock face, will be salvaged, he added.

But asbestos has been found in piping inside Hill Paul, and Mr Barlow said he intended to enclose it for safety reasons before beginning the main demolition.

The long-derelict Hill Paul building, which formerly housed a clothing factory, has been at the centre of controversy in the town as local conservationists and historians believe it is a landmark relic of Stroud's industrial heritage and should be preserved.

But Harper Homes gained permission from Stroud District Council to knock it down after their experts' reports showed the property was dangerous as well as uneconomic to renovate.

The demolition begins as campaigners are launching a bid to persuade Harper Homes to sell the building to David Crownshaw of Snow Business of Nailsworth. It will come as a blow to Stroud Civic Society members and other conservationists.

Members of the Hill Paul Regeneration Group had mounted a mass Christmas card plea to Harper to sell Hill Paul for preservation

Yesterday it appeared that negotiations would be reopened after Snow Business' initial bid was rejected.

Picture: Not for resale



■ The derelict Hill Paul Building which has been the subject of a row between developers and conservationists for years. Demolition contractors moved in today.