

Home owner 'caged' by Hill Paul fencing

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PLANNED demolition work at Stroud's controversy-dogged Hill Paul factory building has led to a women having to be escorted in and out of her home "like a teenager".

Widow Jan Gwilliam (pictured on page one) is angry she wasn't warned of the move to fence off the site – and her home.

The fence, erected last week due to fears Hill Paul was in imminent danger of collapse onto Cheapside, encloses Mrs Gwilliam's nearby cottage. She has to arrange for an escort when she goes to work in the morning and if she goes out in the evening she has to give a time when she expects to be back.

"I used to answer questions like this when I was in my teens," said Mrs Gwilliam, 55. "I

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feel like an animal in a cage.

"In the last three days I have had no milk delivered, no post and no electricity: they've given me a generator which was so noisy I couldn't sleep, but I'm getting used to it."

Perimeter

Mrs Gwilliam, who worked at Hill Paul for 12 years, said every time she leaves home her 'heart is in her mouth' in case there is no one to let her out.

When she arrived back from work on Friday she couldn't find a security guard to let her in and she had to walk around the fence perimeter to find one.

The first she knew was on Thursday when she arrived home and prepared to go out for the evening. As she locked her door she was met by officers from Stroud District Council. "They said: 'You can't go out, this is all going to be barricaded off in quarter of an hour,'" said Mrs Gwilliam. "They said if I was going to go they would escort me. They closed down the whole road."

Although not overly fond of the old building, Mrs Gwilliam said the way Stroud District Council handled the demolition issue was "sneaky."

A spokesman for Stroud District Council said staff were unable to warn Mrs Gwilliam because the fence was erected as soon as they had reports part of Hill Paul was in danger of collapse. "We had to act for public health reasons and had no alternative," he said.

'Close to deal' on landmark

CAMPAIGNERS hoping to buy the Hill Paul building to save it from demolition said today they were in the "final stages of negotiation".

It has been a busy weekend of talks for the Hill Paul Regeneration Group, which is trying to buy the derelict old factory at Cheapside, said spokesman Glenn Hall.

"It is a case of no news is good news," Mr Hall said today.

"We have a framework for a deal in place. We are in the very final stages of negotiation."

Mr Hall said he hoped the group might be in a position to make a further announcement by the end of today. The asking price for the former clothing fac-

tory and neighbouring builders' merchants' site is believed to be around £1.3 million.

But owner Harper Homes has permis-

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sion to knock down Hill Paul after Stroud District Council agreed with the company last year that the property was dangerous.

Demolition contractors Marron have already moved specialist machinery onto the site in readiness to pull it down.

An added problem at the end of last week was the closure of Cheapside, the

road beneath the building, to all traffic as a safety precaution.

That has also blocked access to British Rail's car park and Stroud District Council's own Cheapside car park, as well as a handful of homes and local businesses.

The campaigners want to save Hill Paul because they believe it is a landmark in Stroud and part of the town's industrial history, even though it has never been officially listed.

If successful in raising the purchase price, the campaigners propose to restore Hill Paul and convert it into a cafe-bar, offices and galleries, and penthouse flats.

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