

Landmark factory lit up for a new era

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Picture: Richard Besent C212405A29

by Citizen reporter

NEW life was breathed into Stroud's landmark Hill Paul building when campaigners lit hundreds of lights to signify a new era in the factory's long history.

The Hill Paul Regeneration Group lit up the building to launch a weekend of consultation about the factory's future with the people of Stroud.

Protesters have been fighting to save the century-old factory in the Cheapside area of Stroud since last November.

After much negotiation, the Hill Paul Regeneration Group reached an 11th-hour deal with developers in January.

The group now faces the task of raising £1.3 million to buy the site from owners Harper Homes.

A total of £20,000 has to be paid each month to Harper Homes until January next year, when a final payment of £1 million must also be handed over.

Demolish

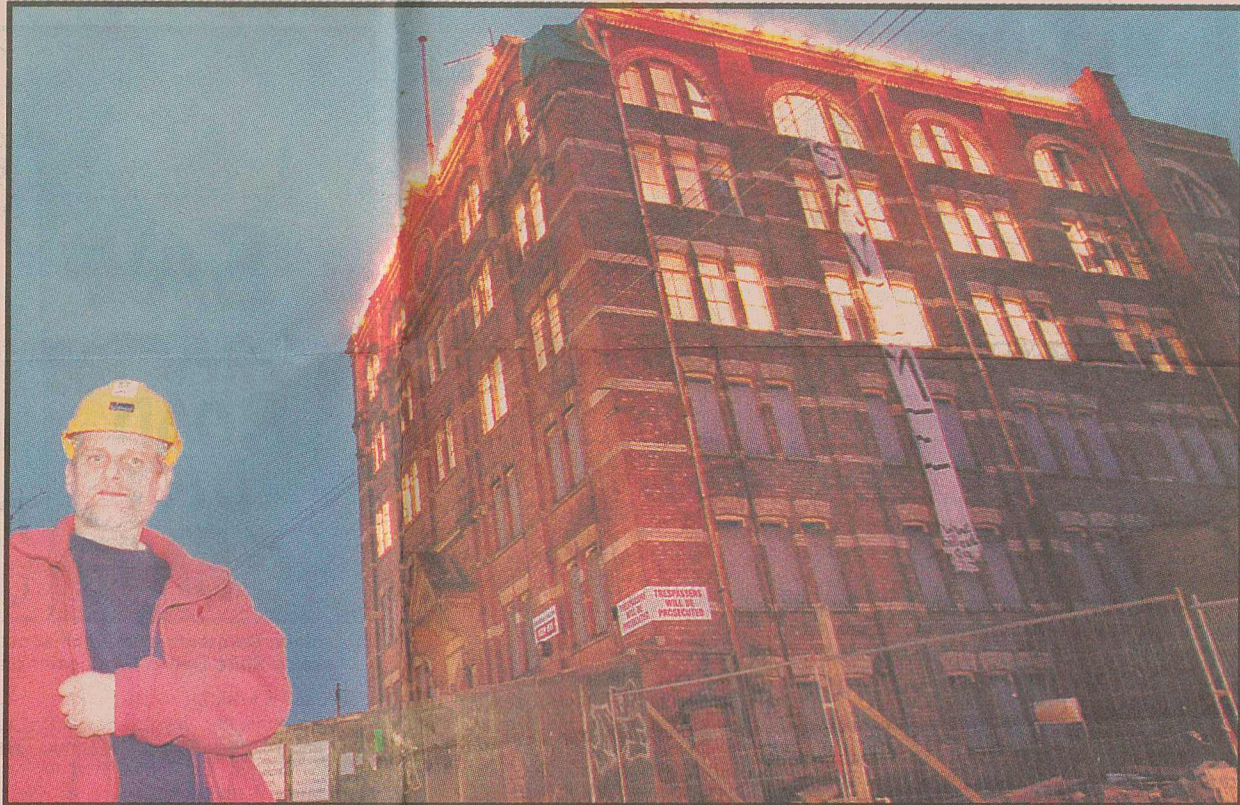
If the payments are not met, Harper Homes will demolish the former factory. A total of £100,000 has so far been raised.

Harper Homes was granted permission by Stroud district council to demolish the building last year. But members of the Hill Paul Regeneration Group never gave up hope of saving the building and were thrilled to succeed in buying the site for £1.2 million.

Now the group has tabled many proposals for the site, which will be presented to the people of Stroud this weekend through a series of ballot forms.

Residents will have the chance to select their preferred proposals and offer alternative suggestions.

Spokesman for the Hill Paul Regeneration



■ The Hill Paul building at Cheapside, Stroud, lit up with 16KW of electric light. Pictured is Glenn Hall of the Hill Paul Regeneration Group.

Group Glen Hall said: "One of the proposals is for us to convert some of the buildings into affordable flats, but there are many other suggestions.

"The main thrust of what we are trying to do is to use the redevelopment of the site as the trigger for the regeneration of Stroud generally.

"But we need to get more public opinion.

The only way this is going to be a success is if it becomes something the people of Stroud want."

The group had considered selling the land surrounding the factory to a developer.

"We decided against this because we couldn't agree a sensible scheme with the developer," said Mr Hall. "We have very strong views that the people of Stroud don't

just want to hand over the site to a housing developer - for more standard houses.

"People want something better than that - housing that is sustainable and that is ready for life in 2001."

The group plans to use the Hill Paul building itself for a variety of activities. Restaurants and businesses will all feature in future proposals.