

Joy as city's 'forgotten factory' is demolished



Published on Mon May 10 09:46:25 BST 2010

PETERBOROUGH'S skyline has been changed forever after demolition work started on a historic "forgotten factory".

The old Perkins factory, on Lincoln Road, Walton, was knocked down over the weekend, after years of standing in a state of disrepair.

Demolition teams moved in on Friday at the factory, which was once one of the crown jewels of Peterborough's engineering industry, with 400 staff making engine parts to be shipped all round the world.

The factory was built around the start of the First World War for aeroplane manufacturing, before Perkins bought it in 1957.

But after Perkins announced they were closing the factory in 1985, it became known as "the forgotten factory" and the building faced demolition.

In 1988, it was saved after a £3 million investment from Perkins kept it afloat.

It became Perkins Components and supplied the Eastfield-based company with parts and also sold to other companies across Europe.

It had a workforce of 375 and a turnover of £18 million.

It was sold for £11.7 million in 1989 to The Parkfield Group, which ran it under the Triplex name and made car parts.

But since the factory was shut down about 10 years ago, it has remained empty and residents have campaigned for its removal.

However, the future of the factory's trademark tower remains in question, as it is a listed building.

Today, councillor Nick Sandford, who represents the Walton ward, said that the demolition was good news for residents.

He said: "It has been in a derelict state for a long time now and something needed to be done about it.

"A lot of residents in the area have been complaining about it and there have been some concerns as well.

"There were some barrels of oil and chemicals stored there and there were worries about children getting in and setting fire to it.

"I know there were also concerns about asbestos and Peterborough City Council had to make sure the demolition was carried out properly."

However, despite the concerns residents had about the factory, Cllr Sandford said it was sad to see a piece of history demolished.

He said: "A lot of people in the city either used to work in the factory, or know someone who did.

"There is a bit of sentimentality about it, because it has played such an important part in the city's past.

"I am not sure what will happen to the land now.

"It would be nice if it was turned into an industrial complex.

"I think there were plans for flats, but I don't think they have been passed yet."

David Boulton, a member of the firm's heritage committee and author of a book on Perkins' history, *A Square Deal All Round*, said the site had faced an uncertain future for years.

He said: "It was built around the time of the First World War.

"It was originally occupied by Sage, who built aircraft.

"They would build the aircraft in the factory, which was one side of the railway, and take them over to the other side of the railway near to the Marholm crossing and test them. It was eventually nestled around housing and it was always likely that it would be knocked down one day."