

# APPENDIX A

Lord Mayor, & councillors,

We are a deputation from the Kirkstall Valley Community Association. The members of our deputation are myself, Ken Stratford (Secretary of the Association), Mr Kieth Collridge, Mr Richard Simpson ~~and Ms Ciara Stratford.~~

We are here to make representations regarding ~~information that we have received on~~ the future of the historic mill buildings in Kirkstall, and the adjoining land close to the river Aire. This reportedly involves selling or otherwise disposing of the land for the purposes of private development.

So concerned about this prospect are local people, that about 70 of them turned up at the last Kirkstall Burley Forum, many of whom wished to launch a vigorous opposition to any such proposal. We as an Association are here today to voice that opposition.

In January 2006, Kirkstall residents received a consultation brochure from the council. It explained that the Council had insufficient funds to pay for the refurbishment of both Abbey Mills and St Ann's Mills in Kirkstall, and therefore proposed to sell Abbey Mills for residential conversion, in order to fund the restoration of St Ann's Mill for small industrial units.

Many residents disagreed with these proposals, recalling that both mills were originally purchased to provide Public Open Space, and preferred to see some or all of the buildings allocated for community use. People questioned the council's arithmetic and suspected that the refurbishment costs had been exaggerated because the council was anxious to sell.

People also pointed out that Kirkstall has no public buildings for community use, ~~and over the years it has contributed more than its fair share of asset sales for precious little benefit in return.~~

Residents were however reassured that at least the proceeds from Abbey Mills would be reinvested in St Ann's, and also that the council undertook to return both historic buildings to their former glory. The council made **an express and specific promise** not to build in the riverside green space behind St Ann's Mills, where local people have waited nearly 40 years for the new inner city public park envisaged in the 1972 Development Plan.

~~Imagine our~~ <sup>with</sup> dismay ~~when~~ we learned in September 2007 the St Ann's was being offered for sale, and more recently that it was to be sold with the associated green land as well.

Employment uses after 1974 included "Quick Skip" at St Ann's, and "Chromagene" at Abbey Mills. Both have left a legacy. The former left a swathe of contaminated riverside land and the latter, we believe a large public cost for repairs.

In five minutes, it will not be possible to go into this matter in great detail. We will state here however that our disquiet is underpinned by broad awareness of:

- The ~~fact that~~ building condition surveys in 2003 ~~indicated that most units in the Mills were 'class B - satisfactory'.~~
- That the land at the rear of St Ann's Mills is subject to the highest possible flood risk category – a 'zone of rapid inundation'.
- That ground levels are artificially raised in this area, ~~only~~ because of unlawfully dumped waste.
- That the Environment Agency's view is that such waste should be removed by the Council.
- That developments on flood planes increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.
- That irresponsible decisions to permit development may set precedents for elsewhere.
- ~~We believe~~ Other practical matters, particularly the location of sewers, interfere with the possibility of development in compliance with Environment Agency requirements.
- ~~We are aware~~ that there have been various attempts to find a ~~viable~~ way forward for the Mills in a purely commercial context and that these have not been economically viable.

~~We contend that~~

~~We are convinced~~ that the river valley is potentially a phenomenal environmental asset that could be restored through fostering its regeneration as public open space for the enjoyment of the people of the area and the City.

- There is potential and interest in developing a canoeing facility on that part of the river, including from the Leeds Canoe Club and British Canoe union.
- There is enormous potential for increasing the amount of riverside green space and public walks.
- There is potential for increasing the amount of land given over to the conservation and encouragement of natural habitat for wildlife and encouraging biodiversity in the river valley.
- There is potential for a wildlife centre with interest from the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.
- There is interest in use of mill buildings for artist workspaces and community arts.
- There is potential for the use of Mill buildings by the community, and no lack of expression of interest. Why not have a concerted approach to encourage utilisation of the mill buildings by the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector?
- What about, in this context considering the encouragement of Social Enterprises?
- Is this not an opportunity to address the lack of public buildings in the Ward that supposedly prevents the Youth Service from offering the kind of facilities to young people that are offered elsewhere?
- There is other potential for educational activity through partnerships with educational bodies.

This Association, along with other voluntary groups are willing to work with, consult and explore an approach that could be based on the Council turning over St Anne's Mills and the land to the Voluntary and Community Sector – ~~say on an initial 25 year lease for a~~ ~~period of 25 years~~ and the Council committing itself to cleaning up the waste contamination of the riverbank. Legal forms exist through which this could be made to work and we would be willing to work to bring together partners.

We could explore sources of funding available to the sector, ranging from Lottery; European money; the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme – and others. This suggestion should be given a chance, more – why don't the Council actively pursue and encourage it as an option?

Our Association is currently engaged in work to develop a 'Vision for Kirkstall', which will inform the Council about what people want for their area. Thousands of questionnaires have gone out to local people. It would be a great shame if the Council commits itself to proposals for development that fly in the face of what local people want.

A wrong and bad development, once done, cannot easily be undone.

Thank you for receiving us today and we hope that you will be able to respond positively in due course.

Ken Stratford