

# MP calls for Chase Farm U-turn

By **TRISTAN KIRK**

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LONDON'S top health bosses are under fire for putting lives at risk after approving controversial plans to downgrade Chase Farm Hospital.

NHS London last week gave the green light for proposals to strip Chase Farm Hospital of its maternity, children's and 24-hour A&E departments and consolidate them at Barnet and North Middlesex Hospitals.

The dramatic shift in services was first conceived in 2006, but has come in for fierce criticism over the past five years from campaigners determined to protect the north Enfield hospital.

And in Parliament on Monday, Nick de Bois, Tory MP for Enfield North, restated his calls for health minister Andrew Lansley to stop the changes, claiming they are being "relentlessly" pushed through by bureaucrats.

He said: "The decision, prompted by the previous

Government, to downgrade and rip out our vital A&E service and axe the consultant-led maternity services that see 3,000 births a year, is being relentlessly pursued by those same bureaucrats and officials, despite the fact that the decision will cost lives.

"In ignoring the wishes of thousands who took to the streets and the view of the



**PCT officials are trying to bully residents into accepting the changes**

Nick de Bois MP

majority of Enfield GPs, those same PCT officials, even at this late hour, are effectively trying to bully the residents into accepting the changes without the consent or consultation of the people."

Health trusts in Barnet, Haringey, and Enfield — responsible for the proposals

— refute Mr de Bois' claims, and argue the changes are essential to improve health-care in the three boroughs.

Dr Mayur Gor, who heads the Haringey GP consortium and was in the delegation to NHS London, said: "This strategy aims to save lives, not cost them."

"The vast majority of GPs across the area affected by the clinical strategy, together with the acute clinicians in the hospitals, agree we must make these changes.

"The review of the clinical strategy was driven, and all the recommendations unanimously approved, by the clinical panel whose members were GPs, hospital clinicians, and other health professionals."

Mr Lansley is now under pressure to show his hand in the dispute, having said after the May General Election he would "stop the forced closures at Chase Farm".

A delegation of Enfield politicians from across the political divide are preparing for a summit meeting with the

minister to argue that the four test for NHS changes have not been met by the health trusts.

Dr Harry Grewal, an Enfield GP and part of the delegation to NHS London that argued not only had the four tests not been met, but the argument for change was increasing.

He said: "It is not just about Enfield Town, it's not just about Enfield, it is

the Barnet, Enfield, and Haringey Strategy. There are a million or so people across north London who don't enjoy the health outcomes we want to see."

The meeting with Mr Lansley has been scheduled for March 7, but health bosses are planning to implement their plans until they hear otherwise from the Department of Health.

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