

Politicians queue up to 'save' A&E

HEALTH secretary **Andy Burnham** has said he will stop a controversial review that threatens The Whittington Hospital's casualty and maternity units.

The Labour Minister said: "This process in London has become worryingly politicised by the election campaign and that's not right. I will order a complete halt in the process that is being run and I'm asking NHS London to go back to the drawing board."

But he added that the decision was for "clinical experts" to make and not the Government.

His pledge last Thursday meant the main political rivals have fallen into line, with all three main parties singing from the same hymn sheet.

Shadow health secretary **Andrew Lansley** and Liberal Democrat leader **Nick Clegg** have also pledged to save the A&E if they are returned to power.



■ CAMPAIGNERS including actor **Rupert Graves** and his son **Noah** (above) make their voices heard at last Thursday's Day Of Action rally outside The Whittington Hospital

But protesters have vowed to carry on the fight to ensure that cuts are not made at The Whittington – or elsewhere – after the General Election.

Shirley Franklin, joint chair-

woman of the Defend The Whittington Hospital Coalition, said: "The Whittington is saved today, but what about tomorrow?"

She added: "It's not the end of the campaign. We know that there are going to be cuts and the issue is where they are going to happen."

"I think they will probably leave the A&E alone, but what about the maternity ward or the intensive care unit? We will be keeping our beady eye on it."

Mr Burnham's statement came during a protestor-organised "Day of Action" last Thursday in a last-ditch bid to save the hospital's accident and emergency department.

About 300 protesters rallied outside the hospital in Magdala Avenue, Archway, while other campaigners – including actor **Rupert Graves** – waved placards at GP surgeries and other key venues.

Health bosses at the North Central London NHS, who need to save £560million per year by 2016/17, have been considering whether to

downgrade The Whittington – putting its A&E department, maternity ward, intensive care unit, and children's beds under threat.

Local Parliamentary candidates declared victory in their fight to save The Whittington.

Lynne Featherstone, Liberal Democrat candidate for Hornsey and Wood Green, pledged to hold Labour to their promise, adding: "This is fantastic news, and such a brilliant testament to the fact that the power of local people and our campaign has worked! This is the right decision for local residents."

Karen Jennings, Labour parliamentary candidate for Hornsey and Wood Green, said: "He [Andy Burnham] is clear that none of the managers that have been doing the plans have spoken to ministers about proposals."

"He's quite clear that they need to go back to the drawing board because the local clinicians haven't been involved."

A North Central London NHS spokesman said: "Any options for changes to services at The Whittington would have to have clinical backing and there would be a full public consultation before any changes were made."



May day treat

A MOUTH watering slice of May Day tradition is served up by creative cook **Akeba Sturgeon** who holds a chocolate cake replica of the may pole dance.

The Lego figurines replaced the real thing during the feast day celebrations, at Stationer's Park, in Mayfield Road, Crouch End, after rain forced the festivities indoors on Monday.

But the hundreds of guests, who included former London mayor **Ken Livingstone**, were kept entertained with old fashioned fairground games, arts and crafts for the kids and war-time music and drama "Blitz" style.

Coordinator **Tanya Wright**, of the Hornsey Vale Community Centre, said their 20th annual party was "bigger and better than ever".

Children were kept their hands busy by building a giant blue "eco" tree made from recycled materials and painting their own nature mural.

Picture: **Dieter Perry**

Candidates challenged over town hall scheme

POLITICAL candidates nailed their colours to the mast as they were challenged about growing anger over Hornsey Town Hall development plans.

Residents' groups have condemned the loss of community parking and an art house cinema since plans for the historic art deco town hall in Crouch End were first unveiled last year.

The rising height of new flats and the low proportion of social housing in the scheme has also sparked anger.

Liberal Democrat candidate **Lynne Featherstone** called for a review at the Greig City Academy hustings in Hornsey last Wednesday. She said: "There's no provision for social housing and there's no parking. Both of those things are relatively crucial and therefore I think it probably is right to call for a review of these plans so that the people can have their say."

Four four-bedroom social houses are included in the scheme. The plans, drawn up by Haringey Council and the Hornsey Town Hall Creative Trust, are up for

public consultation. Labour candidate **Karen Jennings** highlighted the need to bring the "stunning building within our midst" back into use after years standing empty. She said: "This is such a beautiful building it's going to cost a lot to restore it and that means there's got to be some pay off in the way you do it."

Green candidate **Pete McAskie** backed a car-free development but said housing should be built for the future, not for the 20th century.

Conservative candidate **Richard Merrin** refused to condemn car free schemes but

added "car parking in Crouch End is absolutely impossible".

Independent candidate **Stephane De Roche** triggered a rowdy response when he admitted "I don't know exactly where is the location?".

Architect **Anthony Charnley**, chairman of the resident-led Hornsey Town Hall Trust, said: "Haringey's proposals for the Town Hall have ignored the findings of the consultation. Local people wanted a cinema, low rise development. The scheme has only a hint of a cinema, no community parking and five or six storeys of development."

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