



Change to Banbury hospital maternity services could cost lives, MP and campaigners warn



Keith Strangwood, chairman of the Keep the Horton General campaign, who is fighting against the removal of maternity consultants.

3 days ago / **Matt Oliver**, Local government reporter. Call me on 01865 425498 / [@OxMailMattO](#)

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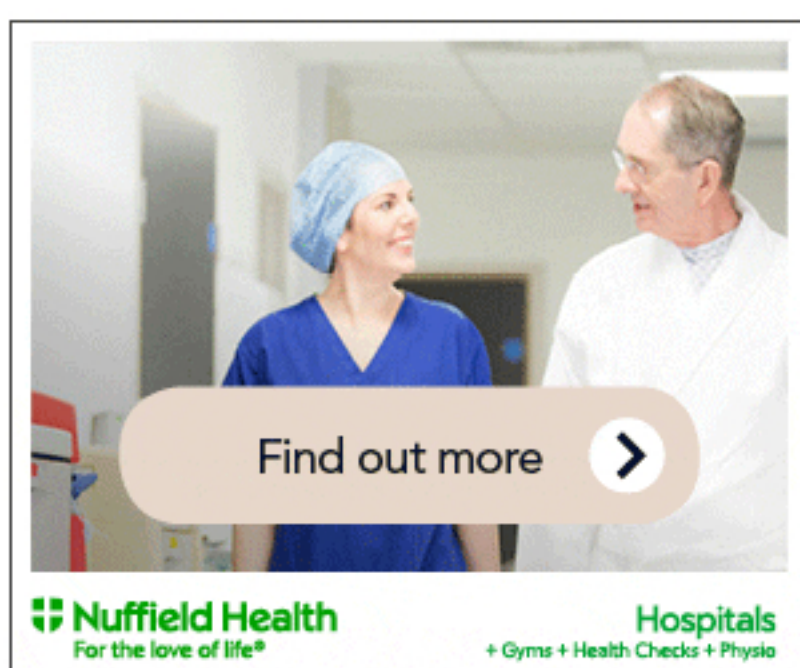
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LIVES will be put at risk if maternity services at Banbury's Horton General Hospital are scaled back, its MP has warned.

Victoria Prentis said the change could mean women in childbirth who experienced complications would have to be transported by ambulance to Oxford's [John Radcliffe Hospital](#).

This is because plans being considered by [Oxford University](#) Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH) to save £2.2m would see maternity consultants moved, with the Banbury unit staffed only by midwives. A special baby care unit would also be scrapped.



It came as the trust also promised an expansion of services on offer at the Horton General, but campaigners say the risk created by reduced maternity services would be too high.

They have revived the 'Hands off our Horton' campaign, which successfully fought from 2003 to 2008 against a downgrading of the hospital.

Banbury MP Mrs Prentis, who lost a son during childbirth in 2000, said: "I am personally very concerned by this issue and would be very worried about maternal and baby safety if these plans went ahead.

"Midwives are fantastic, but not having consultants on site means women would be left without the option for an emergency caesarean if that became necessary.

"Instead they would have to be blue-lighted to Oxford along roads that are not up for it – and that journey can take up to an hour and a half if the [traffic](#) is bad.

"It is really important we have a back-up option for these situations, I would not want anyone to go through what I went through."

She said Banbury and its surrounding area were also due to see a population rise as thousands more homes were built, adding: "We need to make sure we have the right building blocks in place and maternal and child safety is crucial to that."

According to consumer website Which? about 1,500 births took place at the Horton in 2013/14. There are consultants on the wards for 20 hours a week.

Keith Strongwood, chairman of the Keep the Horton General campaign, said: "These measures are just about saving money but if they go ahead they could end up costing a life.



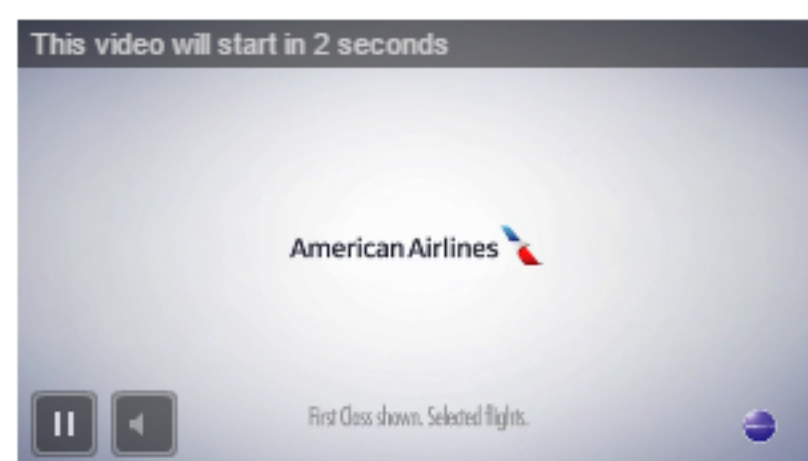
"There are mothers going to the Horton who may have complications at the last minute and having consultants on site means those can be dealt with straight away."

An OUH spokesman could not break down how the measures would save money. But he added: "The trust is undertaking a clinically-led review of the Horton General Hospital to ensure it meets future healthcare needs and proposals are being aligned with and developed alongside the Oxfordshire 'transformation' plans.

"At the moment, we are in the early stages of discussions with our staff, local stakeholders and the community partnership network.

"No decisions have been made and over the summer our clinicians and managers will be meeting with patients and public as part of the local engagement process."

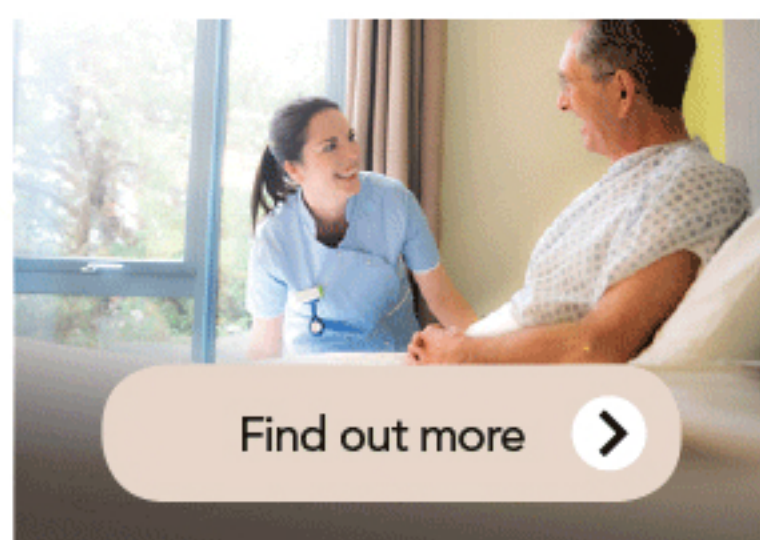
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