

Site is part of our heritage, says star Neil

TV STAR Neil Morrissey sent a message of goodwill from Los Angeles to Hornsey Town Hall campaigners.

The Men Behaving Badly star, who lives in Crouch End, was invited to attend the Hornsey Town Hall open day – but he was busy working in Los Angeles.

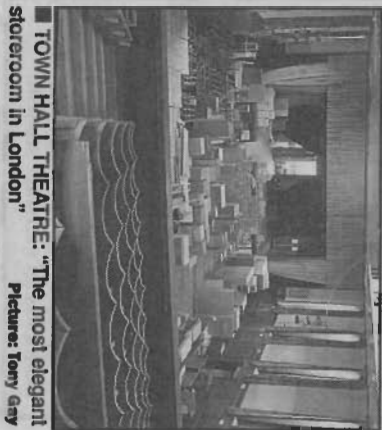
He wrote an e-mail to Crouch End For People which read: "I am very sorry that I can't be with you today and I wish everyone lots of luck in saving the town hall. I think it's outrageous that the theatre has been kept closed and the site threatened with development.

Many have not even seen inside the building. "It was built for the people when the area was booming. The area is booming again. The town hall is the heritage of the people of Crouch End."



■ **GOODWILL MESSAGE:** Neil Morrissey

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■ **TOWN HALL THEATRE:** "The most elegant storeroom in London" Picture: Tony Gay

Crowds enjoy rare glimpse inside historic town hall

MORE than 1,000 people took a guided tour around Hornsey Town Hall at the open day last Saturday.

Council officers took small groups around the grade II listed building – which is not usually open to the public – showing them the council chambers, art deco features and theatre.

Visitors expressed shock about the condition of the theatre – which is in a poor state of repair and currently stores tables and cabinets.

Crouch End resident Andrew Banks, 33, said: "I've never been inside the before, but the theatre is probably the most elegant storeroom in London. It is the heart of our community and it needs massive expenditure."

Pensioner Marie Leonard, 70, who has lived in Crouch End for 46 years, added: "I would like to see the theatre come back into use. Every week the senior citizens go to the cinema in Muswell Hill, but it would be good to have one in Crouch End.

"I remember when there used to



■ **MORE than 1,000 people queued for a guided tour around Hornsey Town Hall** Picture: Tony Gay

be a festival of remembrance there every year, and the theatre would be packed out.

She added: "It's sad to see the way it has been left to rot. The neglect should have been stopped earlier. Some of the theatre is used as a store room now. It used to be beautiful."

Alan Warne, one of the tour guides

town hall's original art deco features were still in place.

The former Mayor's office still has its original curtains, as well as an art deco fireplace and its original wood panelling.

Visitors were shown a council chamber that used to serve as a register office, and hit soap EastEnders recently used the room to film wedding scenes.

There are 25 original art deco clocks in the building – and half still work.

Tour guide David Bond, a surveyor for Haringey Council, said: "The architect designed everything so it was integrated. Its decorative interior is quite unusual. The councillors didn't want it to be plain."

He added: "The town hall is in a valuable location. The only decision that the council has made is that it must pay for itself. Parts of the building have to be converted to commercial use.

"But it would be nice to open up the square and make it pretty."

Campaigners get into the festival spirit for open day

ACTOR Jack Ellis led the festivities in the Hornsey Town Hall square at Saturday's open day.

The Bad Girls star, who lives in Crouch End and is part of campaign group Crouch End For People, got people to chant: "We want our town hall!" while doing a Mexican wave.

Crouch End For People wants the town hall to be transformed into a cultural and community centre.

At the open day, the square - which the campaign group wants transformed into a European-style piazza - was filled with musicians, a bouncy castle, food stalls and face painting.

Mr Ellis said: "The town hall should be part of our community and not just another block of flats. We have the audience potential



■ JACK ELLIS, of campaign group Crouch End for People, gets the crowd going outside Hornsey Town Hall
Picture: Tony Gay

to make our vision work. I'd like everyone to applaud to Councillor Charles Adje, as he has been supportive. The council is helping us, not hindering us."

Barbara Roche, Labour MP for

Hornsey and Wood Green, said: "We want to use this town hall for the community. Support Crouch End For People, and support its campaign for the town hall."

Artist Stuart Free's painting of the town hall, which he has donated to the campaign, was unveiled at the open day.

And numerous Crouch End celebrities were spotted at the event, including author Arabella Weir, former star of *The Bill* George Rossi and actor Leonard Fenton, who played Dr Legge in *EastEnders*.

Mr Fenton said: "The town hall is at the centre of the community, which is unique. There are such of wonderful things that could happen here, like music, dance and theatre. It is an ideal opportunity to develop it.

"This would be better than just another set of shops or flats."

Visitors quizzed on future plans

OPEN day visitors were given the chance to express their views about the future of the town hall building.

Haringey Council is relocating staff from Hornsey Town Hall to the Wood Green Civic Centre.

The move provides the opportunity to consider the entire site and decide how it could best be used to meet the needs of the community.

The council has made it clear that no decision has yet been made - but

education architects have said that it is unsuitable for a new school.

A questionnaire was handed out on the day. Questions included:

- DO you believe there is a demand for particular artistic or cultural provision?
- IT may be necessary to allow some purely commercial uses in the complex, to provide enough income to ensure the building is looked after in the future. What uses do you think are acceptable?