

'Battle is not over, yet, say those trying to save St Guthlac'

'Presumption against' closing rural schools

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CAMPAIGNERS are steeling themselves for a final push in their bid to fight the closure of St Guthlac School in Crowland.

Two separate consultations are currently under way on the creation of an academy school for Holbeach at the site of the George Farmer Technology and Language College.

The consultations are being run by academic sponsor the University of Lincoln and Lincolnshire County Council – and campaign group Edu-cation4Crowland is urging people to stand up to save the town's secondary school.

A statutory notice to close the school was published in our sister title the Spalding Guardian on April 21 – sig-

nalling a six-week period for residents to have their say.

Campaner Jim Astill said: "It's not over yet, even though the statutory notice to close the school was published. We would like to remind people that the final decision is not actually made by Coun-cillor Patricia Bradwell until July this year.

"This notice marks a mid-way point in the process, and triggers the next stage of the process.

"Those with concerns have until June 2 to make further comments to LCC about the proposals. We would ask as many people as possible to email the county council."

Fellow campaner Glyn Mayley has written directly to education secretary Michael Gove on the matter – telling the minister that the loss of the school would leave a hole in the community of

Crowland and cause pupils to have to travel a long distance to school each day.

A reply from the minister's office said that any council decision must take into account factors such as the length and nature of journeys to the alternative schools and the views of all interested parties.

The letter added: "There is also currently in place a presumption against the closure of rural schools.

"Although this presumption exists, it does not mean that no rural school will ever close, but it does ensure that the local authority must demonstrate that the case for closure must be strong and clearly identify that it is in the best interests of educational provision for the area."

A meeting for the University of Lincoln's consultation was held at Springfields in

Spalding last Wednesday.

Coun Paul Przyrzak said he was disappointed that the meeting was focused on the development of the school, while campaigners are keen to quiz bosses on the review of catchment areas mooted in consultation documents.

He feels it unlikely that Crowland will be included in the area for the new academy. Coun Przyrzak, the county councillor for the area, says that campaigners are also looking at their back up options in a bid to keep the school open and challenge the way the county council has handled the decision.

The University of Lincoln's consultation ends on May 20. To comment email info@holbeachacademy.org Anyone who wants to comment on the closure notice should email provisionplanning@lincolnshire.gov.uk.