

ANGER AT PLAN TO SHUT SCHOOL

200 voice closure fears at packed public meeting

by **LYNNE HARRISON**
lynne.harrison@jpress.co.uk

A DEFIANT 200-strong crowd demanded an "honest" consultation into the closure of Crowland's secondary school at a packed public meeting.

Education chiefs attended St Guthlac School in Crowland to answer questions on the plans to shut the school – which could happen as a result of the George Farmer Technology and Language College's plans to transform into an academy.

The crowd became upset when, two hours in, Coun Paul Przyszlak read out a single line from a confidential email sent by Coun Patricia Bradwell, executive county councillor for children's services, on May 12 last year.

It said: "It has always been in our plans to close St Guthlac when the funding became available to develop George Farmer."

It sparked shouts from the 200-strong gathering who had listened to repeated assurances from Coun Bradwell – and children's services officer Andy Breckon – that there will be a statutory consultation lasting around six months before any decision is taken and there is no "done deal".

South Holland and The

Deepings MP John Hayes, who chaired the meeting, asked Coun Bradwell to respond to Coun Przyszlak.

She said: "The email I sent to my colleague was sent as a confidential email and I would not have thought being a Conservative councillor he would read things out like that."

Mr Hayes, a Government education minister, said: "I don't think this is a party political matter. I think it's a question of good faith."

Angry shouts of "it's honest" rang around the Crowland school hall from parents and supporters of the campaign to save St Guthlac.

Mr Hayes continued: "On behalf of this meeting I want an absolute assurance from you, Patricia and Andy, that no decision will be taken until the views of the people of Crowland have been sought."

"Now will you give me that undertaking in front of these people tonight?"

Coun Bradwell replied: "Yes, we will. We have got to go through a consultation process, a statutory consultation process. We will be listening to the views of the local people."

Mr Hayes also promised parents that he will use his influence to ensure that the closure is not a "done deal".

● See page two for more on this story.

Save St Guthlac's School
<http://www.save-stguthlacs.co.uk/>

Campaign Team: Jim Astill, Jackie Colhoun, Paul Przyszlak