

School's academy bid re-submitted

George Farmer's case for government cash

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THE BID to transform Holbeach's George Farmer Technology and Language College into an academy has been re-submitted to the Government - with ministers set to make their final decision on handing over the cash shortly.

The George Farmer was successfully granted £18million cash by the previous Labour government before the election - but the incoming coalition quickly announced a review on school spending projects, putting the plans on hold.

The academy has sparked opposition from some residents in Crowland as it would involve closing the St Guthlac School, with all pupils taken on at the

new 1,200-pupil academy at Holbeach by 2014.

The Holbeach site was set for a "65 per cent re-build" with old school buildings torn down to make way for state-of-the-art facilities.

George Farmer and St Guthlac executive headteacher Steve Baragwanath told the Lincolnshire Free Press that he has lodged a further application with the Department of Education and is now waiting for the final decision.

It is thought that about 60 schools are competing for one funding pot.

Mr Baragwanath said: "It is being considered by officials in the department who have said it won't be long before the decision is made, although the time scale isn't certain."

If approved the academy plan would then go out to public consultation - giving protestors in

Crowland the chance to raise their concerns.

Lincolnshire County Council education chiefs said smaller schools such as St Guthlac, which has about 320 students, will always struggle to attract enough funding to survive.

Parents and local councillors are concerned that children will be forced to travel to Holbeach for their lessons and vowed to fight the closure.

Campaigners recently met MP John Hayes and last week Crowland Parish Council heard how he will hold a public meeting with residents to air concerns. The meeting is pencilled in for early in the New Year.

Under the original plans the University of Lincoln would have been the academy sponsor and the project was set to involve Langwith Builders, A H Worth and Holbeach Tyres.

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

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