

Growing town needs school - campaigners

Petition to save St Guthlac has 800 signatures

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CAMPAIGNERS against the closure of Crowland's secondary school have hit back at a leading councillor's comments on the issue.

A group of Crowland residents say their fight to save the St Guthlac School from the axe is gathering momentum - with more than 800 signatures on a petition in support of saving the school.

The news of a threat to the school has sparked a group on social networking website Facebook, with almost 400 members, and creator Jim Astill has questioned why the future of the school is in doubt at a time when the town is expanding.

St Guthlac would close under plans to transform the George Farmer Technology and Language College in Holbeach into an academy, an £18m scheme announced last month by Lincolnshire County Council which would

Memorial to former governor will survive



Top councillor has sympathy over fate of St Guthlac School

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Looking back: How we reported Coun Bradwell's comments last week.

see the Crowland building used by the oversubscribed South View Primary School.

Mr Astill said: "Crowland is a growing community, and once the new A16 is open future expansion either via employment or housing in the area is likely.

"Reports commissioned by local councils in the past few years also appear to suggest that Crowland is an area that

could expand. But without facilities such as a secondary school, it is possible that Crowland would not be as attractive an option for people moving to the area.

"My fear would be that the new proposed academy would soon become oversubscribed and force Crowland children requiring secondary education to be split between Deeping, Spalding, Holbeach and Peterborough."

His comments follow a story in last week's Spalding Guardian with the views of county council executive member for children's services Coun Patricia Bradwell. She expanded upon them in a letter to Mr Astill.

Coun Bradwell said that the size of the school makes it difficult to attract the funding needed to compete with bigger schools and drive up standards - a problem that caused the school to move into a federation with the George Farmer.

She wrote: "Results have improved but the governing body and the local authority do not feel numbers and per-

formance can be sustained in the longer term.

"Furthermore, the range of choice which parents and children expect cannot be maintained.

"When this is coupled with the inability to recruit high quality staff, it is difficult to see a long-term sustainable future."

"The governing body of the two schools voted unanimously for the proposal and the reason I believe they did this is that they have spent three years struggling to find a way to make the school work.

"The county council would not issue a press release about the primary school moving to the secondary school site if that is not what is planned and it combines with our plans to sustain and improve the community facilities in Crowland."

Coun Bradwell added that the academy plans will have to go out to consultation and said the authority is still waiting to hear if funding for the academy will still be available - after the new coalition government announced a review.