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No. 26,758

Survival plan could threaten more schools

Plans put forward by Tutbury Parish Council to save Rolleston's Forest of Needwood High School could lead to the closure of two other schools in the area, a governor claimed last night.

At a public meeting in Tutbury to air a parish council discussion document, Mr Ken Green, chairman of the Forest governors, said two proposals in the seven-point plan could cause more harm than good.

And there was a great deal of opposition among the 50 members of the public to the parish council plan, many believing it did nothing to forward the case of the Forest of Needwood.

PREFERENCE

In a vote on one of the points only three people supported it, with about 25 voting against.

One of the points objected to by Mr Green was that if the Forest closed, Tutbury children should go to Hatton in preference to Wulfric.

Mr Green said: "Thirty or 40 pupils would then be going to Hatton, and if that happens then it would make a further school in Burton not viable.

"On our figures it would mean they would have to close a second Burton school."

He, and many others present, were also opposed to the parish council's plans for a central sixth form in Burton, with the sixth forms at all other schools closed.

Mr Green said that, if this happened another Burton school would close, with Paget becoming the new sixth form.

CENTRAL

However, parish council Chairman Councillor Bill Crossley said he was concerned with the philosophy of education and that a central sixth form would benefit the area as a whole.

"A central sixth form would guarantee the best chance for all children to achieve their best potential," he said. "And if the sixth form disappeared from the

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Schools face new threat

Another Burton school is likely to close in the next four years.

That was the warning from Staffordshire County Councillor Dave Morris at a public meeting in Tutbury on the possible closure of the Forest of Needwood, Rolleston.

He said: "By the time we have been through all this we are going to be doing the same thing again. Don't think that when we have been through this we can sit back and say it's over."

"I am damned sure a second school is going to close in the next four years."

Councillor Morris said although the closure of the Forest was just an option being discussed by the county council, it was certain that one school would have to close.

Falling school rolls and cuts in government funds had brought the problem to a head.

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Forest of Needwood it would be just about the right size."

But then one woman shouted out: "We are here to save the Forest, not alter the educational system."

Another woman said there was nothing concrete in the council's proposals.

Introducing the seven-point plan, Councillor Crossley said the council opposed any suggestion that the Forest of Needwood should be closed. But he said the council also had to decide what was best for Tutbury children.

DECISIONS

The points were:

● The confused provision of secondary education be eliminated before any decisions on the closure of schools are made.

● Catholic schools should be considered and subject to the same scrutiny.

● New development in the northern fringes of Burton would bring a bigger increase in pupils per year to the catchment area of the Forest than the county council report suggested.

● A central sixth form should be provided.

● As out of school activities form an important part of the education of children the loss of the Forest would have a great effect on Rolleston, Stretton and Tutbury.

● If the Forest closes, Tutbury children should go to Hatton.

● Tutbury children must be guaranteed a free pass if they are forced to go to Wulfric.

The final word came from one member of the audience who said: "To me, it doesn't matter which school closes as long as the standard of education is kept at the highest possible level."

BURTON MAIL 21/2/84