

Campaigners vow to fight on as four schools face closure

EADT 26 January 2010

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Publishing its future plans for the Sudbury and Great Cornard area, Suffolk County Council said it planned to shut All Saints Middle, Sudbury, Uplands Middle, Sudbury, Great Cornard Middle and Stoke by Nayland Middle.

Under the proposals, pupils who would have attended those schools would stay on an extra two years at primary and then transfer two years early to either Great Cornard Upper or Sudbury Upper.

An action group called Save Our School Stoke by Nayland was set up to try and turn the village middle school into a fully fledged secondary school.

Last night they vowed to fight on despite being told by the county council their proposals were not feasible under the current rules.

Ronan Connolly, spokesman for the campaigners, said: "There's a real chink of light here. We will have to digest what has been said. There will be a period of consultation and the county council would expect us to be robustly involved in that.

"There's a lot of support for our proposal. Every one of the council's points to us can be debated and will be debated."

Mark Ereira, Independent and Green schools spokesman, said: "A key issue with all of this is why don't we spend money on the schools we've already got rather than wasting this money on sorting out the structures?"

He said he supported SOS Stoke by Nayland's bid to save its school, saying its closure risked the "further undermining" of "rural life and communities of place".

Speaking about SOS Stoke by Nayland's suggestions, cabinet member for schools Graham Newman said: "We have had a very close look at their proposals and under the current rules it did not stack up."

He said the county was not currently able to have three separate high schools in the Sudbury area because there would be too many surplus places. He said, those rules were to be relaxed if a Conservative government was elected this year.

Speaking generally about the cost of the process and what it was meant to achieve, Mr Newman said the review would enlarge village primary schools and make them more viable in the long term. He said schools like **Monks Eleigh Primary**, which can only take 10 pupils each year, would expand by up to 20 pupils by gaining two extra year groups which meant it could afford to offer a broader curriculum.

The county council recommendations will be considered by the authority's decision-making body, the cabinet, next Tuesday.