

Tories band together to axe school

EALING Council has voted to recommend the closure of Elthorne High School.

The future of the school now lies in the hands of Secretary of State for Education, Sir Keith Joseph.

Hopes of campaigners that the council would change its mind were quashed at the full council meeting on Tuesday night.

Supporters and schoolchildren, who staged a peaceful demonstration outside Ealing Town Hall before the meeting, left in tears as the Tories voted with the whip.

The vote was 35-34 in favour of closure.

The school's fate depended on the votes of local ward councillors Maron Honeyborne, Ross Sault and Mayor Bob Hetherington, who is also one of the school governors.

To gasps of dismay from spectators in the gallery, they voted against Cllr Hilary Benn's motion for the Hanwell school to be saved.

A disappointed Mr Matt Atkins, chairman of the school's Parent Teacher association, told The Leader: "This was a chance for some Tory councillors to make a name for themselves by voting according to their consciences and against the whip.

"Their action will be judged at the next election in the wards. But for us, that will be too late."

During the debate, Cllr Benn paid tribute to the school's supporters for persevering with their campaign since January — when it was first decided the school should go.

Cllr June Shipton, who was chairman of the education committee which supported the school's closure but is now an independent Conservative, voted with the Labour and Liberal group.

She said to her former colleagues: "I appeal to the many members within the Conservative group who have doubts to stand up and be counted."

Cllr Anita rookes, the present education committee chairman, said: "Our job is to provide the best education for all the children in the borough."

STOP PRESS

THE axe has finally fallen on Elthorne High School.

Yesterday Education Secretary Sir Keith Joseph announced that the school

must close by 1986, and already education chiefs in Ealing are drawing up arrangements for the shutdown.

● See page three for lead up to shock decision.