

# BENN

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1983

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**THE decision to close Elthorne High School has been overturned by Ealing Council's education committee.**

If the full council agrees on October 18, it means victory for the 12-month campaign by parents to save the school in Boston Road, Hanwell.

But there is no guarantee that this will happen. Tuesday night's decision came about because the ruling Tory group found itself outvoted.

Three Conservative members were absent and Labour councillor Hilary Benn took the opportunity to propose that the decision to close the school be withdrawn and the Government informed.

## Decision on Elthorne overturned

By Martin Brice

His argument convinced two co-opted members of the committee to tip the scales in his favour and the move was passed by a single vote.

At full council the Tories can count on 36 votes with a full turnout and no rebels. Labour can count on 30 votes with a full turnout. Liberals hold two votes, and the two remaining votes are held by former Conservative June Ship-ton, now an independent, and by the winner of next Thursday's Wood End by-election.

Tuesday's shock vote came after Labour's education spokesman Hilary Benn asked if a decision had been made on Elthorne's future by Education Secretary Sir Keith Joseph.

Education chairman Anita Forster said she received a letter from Sir Keith saying he hoped to make a decision soon.

Cllr Benn said: "We are nearing the time for parents to choose high schools for their children. It is very difficult to see how the closure date of September 1984 for Elthorne can be kept to in all fairness to parents."

Cllr Benn's move was passed by 18-17, with the two religious representatives, the Rev Ron Swan and Father John Woods, voting with the Labour Party.

The debate in full council could be pre-empted if Sir Keith makes a decision before it meets.

Ealing Southall Labour MP Syd Bidwell has written to Sir Keith Joseph drawing his attention to the education committee decision.

"Tory parents have been protesting. This is a genuine community protest and not automatic Labour opposition to a Tory decision," he said.