

FINAL DRAFT approved by Prof Moonman 26/10/93

I, **ERIC MOONMAN**, of 1 Beacon Hill London N7 will say as follows:-

I am the Chairman of the Community Research Unit of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

The Unit has been established for some thirty years and is concerned specifically with the demographic trends within the Jewish community in the United Kingdom. In this context it undertakes quite uniquely, within Europe, studies and appraisals of Jewish interests and attitudes. I have been Chairman of the Unit for eight years. I am a sociologist by training and I hold a professorship at the City University in Health Management. I am a former leader of a London Borough Council and a Member of Parliament for some ten years.

The question of Jewish ritual and commitment is one that has concerned the Jewish community in Britain for a number of years. Whether the issue has been in the manner of diet or the provision to enable Jewish workers to observe the Sabbath, there is, inevitably, keen debate before approaching the authorities, whether local or national, in order to seek their co-operation and support. In the case of the eruv which is planned for a section of north-west London it would be easy to trivialise the argument by saying that not every Jew within the Borough of Barnet feels a particular commitment to its introduction. I know from my on-the-ground experience as an officer of the Board of Deputies and the survey work undertaken by the Community Research Unit that there is, not surprisingly, a two level support amongst the Jewish community. Firstly there are those who are deeply affected by not being able to fulfil their religious obligations or to come together as a family and, secondly, there are those who whilst not being immediately affected, are distressed that their fellow-Jews should be frustrated in this way. The eruv would provide at the very least an opportunity for Jews in the area not to be hindered in what any other group of people would consider to be normal life style on the Sabbath. There are also Jews, I should add, who are indifferent or who have no opinion on the matter.

Our Community Research Unit reports that the number of Jews in Barnet has grown from 15,647 family households in 1990 to a present figure of some 16,250 representing more than 50,000 individuals.

In the current major survey of attitudes of over 1,300 Jewish women, the results of which will be published next year, there is clear evidence that Jewish mothers living in NW London feel constrained, without an eruv, in their religious freedom and family enjoyment on the all-important sabbath.

I think there are other arguments both social and cultural which would justify the eruv in NW London but I respect the limited nature of your terms of reference and that it is a planning application you are considering. I have had the opportunity of seeing similar eruvin in other parts of the world and I have not seen any sociological or demographic evidence to support the claim made by some that an eruv would somehow be detrimental to the wider community.