

PROOF OF EVIDENCE SUBMITTED BY
NEVILLE AND KAREN SILVER
IN RESPECT OF THE ERUV APPEAL

1. My name is Neville Silver and I am a Chartered Engineer and a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers. I am also representing my wife, Karen Silver, who is a local magistrate and Justice of the Peace.
2. As residents of the Hampstead Garden Suburb for over 30 years, we have always taken a keen and active interest in the conservation of the Garden Suburb through the Residents Association, the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust and other local organizations. During these very happy 30 years, we have been privileged to be able to socialise with many of the residents with their differing race, religions and creeds and have been impressed by the harmonious way in which people of such a variety of cultures and backgrounds have integrated but at the same time, each respecting the others beliefs and way of life.
3. It has therefore come as a great shock that the proposal for an Eruv has stirred up such animosity and bigotry. I am aware that there is a vociferous minority who have either written to you, sir, or have come along to this Inquiry to express their views against the Eruv, the reasons for which I shall come to later. But I have come along here today to express, what I believe to be, the true and representative feelings of the majority of residents of both Barnet and the Hampstead Garden Suburb.

4. The advantages that the Eruv would bring to the young mothers, the frail and the infirm members of the orthodox Jewish community will have already been fully and carefully explained to you and I do not propose to repeat these in my evidence. However I do wish to emphasise that there are many residents whose quality of life will be significantly enhance by the Eruv and an even greater number, like my wife and myself, who might not benefit directly from the Eruv but who give their full and whole hearted support to those who wish to have one.
5. There can be little doubt that the reasons given by the London Borough of Barnet, and others, for objecting to the Eruv has been strongly influence by anti-racial and anti-religious feelings, since the so-called visual intrusion reasons cited can be no more than a figment of their imaginations. I say this because you will have noted from your site visit, sir, that the short length of Wildwood Road, which has become so controversial, contains no houses and few people walk along it, except perhaps during the summer weekends. However at these times, its rural aspect is severely marred by the many cars and coaches that are parked along it.
6. Having lived on the Garden Suburb for over 30 years, we are as much concerned as others in maintaining the character of the area. However we do not believe that a

few wooden poles on the perimeter of the area joined by a virtually invisible wire will be any more intrusive than existing telephone poles, dish aerials and the recently installed large junction boxes that have been allowed to be erected throughout the Suburb for cable television. Indeed the Eruv poles will, in our view, be significantly less intrusive than any of these erections which have been permitted without any objection or concern. Hence it would seem that the only motivation for the opposition that has been expressed is one of the following:-

a) inherent opposition to Jews being attracted to the area - the term "Ghetto" has been frequently mentioned by the objectors;

b) opposition by non-orthodox Jews, who do not themselves respect the laws of orthodox Judaism and resent the fact that others might wish to do so, and preferring that their fellow Jews maintain a low religious profile;

c) a fear that the Eruv will create some form of boundary for those for whom it has no significance.

8. I would suggest, sir, that none of the above objections can be valid within the context of the Town and Country Planning Act and should be strongly resisted in forming any conclusions as to the acceptance of the Eruv.

9. In conclusion we wish to state that we do not believe that the Eruv will have any detrimental effect on the amenities of the Hampstead Garden Suburb or the townscape of the Borough. Indeed we do not believe it will even be visible or recognisable, once erected, for those who do not wish to respect it. But in any event we consider that any minor disbenefits that might arise will be far outweighed by the benefits and increased quality of life that it will bring to the orthodox Jewish community which forms a large part of the population of north-west London.