



The Sternberg Centre for Judaism

The Manor House · 80 East End Road · London N3 2SY · Tel: 081-346 2288 · Fax: 081-349 0694

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המרכז ליהדות
במאנור האוס

Director · Rabbi A M Bayfield MA

The Councillors of the London Borough of Barnet
The Town Hall
Hendon
LONDON NW4 4BG

Dear Councillor,

In June of last year I wrote to Cllr. Mrs. Barbara Langstone in support of the eruv. I have followed the debate and discussion on the subject with considerable interest and have not changed the views which I expressed in that letter. Now that the moment of decision is drawing close, I hope that you will find it helpful if I repeat the substance of my views.

As a Reform Jew, I am not directly affected by the issue, since we have liberalised our practice sufficiently to avoid the particular difficulties which the eruv addresses. Nevertheless, I believe it important that I add my voice in support of the majority community.

I am well aware that there are many Orthodox Jews in north west London who are profoundly affected by the absence of an eruv. From my perception, many people - particularly young women with babies - can become virtual prisoners in their own homes over the long summer Saturdays. Whilst not sharing their commitment to the particular understanding of God's will which leads to this restriction, I both understand it and respect it. An eruv will ease a significant number of problems and not only allow people to enjoy the Sabbath more fully but engage in the kind of beneficial social interaction which arises when parents can take their young children to visit elderly relatives and so forth.

I have listened carefully to the arguments of those who have reservations about the eruv. I have to say that I do not believe its construction will cause an unacceptable level of disturbance or inconvenience to our neighbours. I am deeply sceptical of the suggestion that the existence of an eruv will lead to the creation of all those negative features subsumed under the term 'ghetto'. What I know of the American experience supports the contention that the fears are groundless.

Finally and most importantly, I would like to add this. I have learned over the years that God speaks to different people in different and often surprising ways. My admiration is always for those who respond and, amongst those, it is my belief, are the devoutly religious Jews of north west London. I respond to God's