

THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE ERUV COMMITTEE



ERUV UPDATE OCTOBER 27, 1998

The United Synagogue Eruv Committee is delighted to announce that today the Public Works Committee of Barnet Council approved the Eruv planning application by 13 votes to 1.

This represents a very significant step indeed towards the establishment of the North West London Eruv.

The next stage is obtaining a similar highway authority license from the Highways Agency with respect to trunk roads. Thereafter various matters of detail in relation to the implementation remain -- such as obtaining the council's final agreement as to the design and colour of the posts to be used and retaining contractors for the work involved in establishing the eruv.

Edward Black a member of the Eruv Committee said:

We are naturally thrilled with tonight's result. It represents another very significant step in the realisation of the eruv project. When it is completed the eruv will benefit many thousands of orthodox Jews in North West London while harming no-one.

We are most appreciative of the support shown by members of the council. We are also very grateful to the council officers for the diligent and co-operative manner in which they have handled the various applications before the council over a very long period of time.

We thank the community for its continued support and look forward to reporting further positive developments in this important communal project which we hope will reach fruition during the coming year.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS:

The proposed North West London eruv is an important amenity which will enable thousands of orthodox Jews in North West London, particularly families with young children and with elderly or disabled members to enjoy the Sabbath (Shabbat) to the full. The eruv will enable these families to attend the synagogue and to participate in community life on Shabbat. Although the eruv will greatly enhance the religious and spiritual life on Shabbat for those who accept its significance, taken in context and as a whole the eruv should have practically no impact on those who do not make use of it. An eruv is not in any sense mystical or holy, nor is it a claim on territory. It is of no more significance to those who do not make use of it than a postal district or street sign. Under Orthodox Jewish law, Shabbat is a day set apart from the working week. Family time and spiritual pursuits are emphasised and certain activities associated with the working week are prohibited. Carrying and pushing wheelchairs and baby buggies is permitted in private homes and in community areas whose symbolic boundaries are marked by an eruv.

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An eruv is simply a practical method of denoting the area within which carrying and pushing wheelchairs and baby buggies is permitted.

There are well over 150 eruvim in communities all over the world -- and many more in Israel. Every major city in North America has one - Toronto, Phoenix, Memphis, Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago, Providence, Miami, New York City and Washington, D.C., to name but a few. Outside North America there are eruvs in Johannesburg, Melbourne, Gibraltar, Antwerp and Strasbourg. The Washington, D.C. eruv includes the White House. The Strasbourg eruv includes the European Court of Human Rights. The proposed North West London Eruv is the first large scale eruv proposed in the UK.

The proposed eruv has a circumference of about 11 miles. Approximately 10.4 miles consists of existing boundaries such as the M1 and the Northern Line of the Tube. In order to complete the eruv, the United Synagogue Eruv Committee has applied to Barnet Council for permission to put up a small number of posts to support some single strands of transparent nylon line which will span the gaps in the existing boundaries. The current proposal calls for a total 87 posts and 1042 metres of nylon line.

The principle of the eruv was approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment in October 1994 following the recommendation of a planning inspector after a full public enquiry. Partial planning permission for an amended plan was granted in January 1997 and the remainder of the application was approved in June 1998.

Jewish law permits carrying and pushing prams and wheelchairs on Shabbat in a private home and in an area surrounded by an eruv. Under Jewish law there are limits on the size of the area which an eruv may cover. It is, therefore, impossible to implement suggestions made in certain earlier press coverage that the M25 or the shores of the British Isles should be the boundary in an eruv. Similarly, there is no mechanism in Jewish Law which permits religious authorities to grant dispensations declaring carrying to be permissible. - nor to change any other centuries-old laws.

The United Synagogue Eruv Committee consists of the rabbis and lay representatives of the four United Synagogues within the proposed eruv and a number of independent orthodox synagogues within the area. The supervisory authority with respect to matters of Jewish law is the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Jonathan Sacks and the Court of the Chief Rabbi headed by Dayan (Rabbinical Judge) Chanoch Ehrentreu.

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