

BARNET ERUV OBJECTORS GROUP

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18th September 1996

Dear Councillor *J. Davies*,

Barnet Eruv

The proposed (third) application for planning permission is necessary because the consent granted by the Minister was made subject to conditions which the Eruv applicants are unwilling and unable to fulfil. There is a bar against any work to trees and in addition the movement of any post by even an inch required fresh planning permission. The Minister was only able to grant consent which can never be implemented.

The main purpose of the latest application is to secure a less encumbered consent. Technical difficulties are likely to ensnare the new application. The Eruv has become a semi permanent local public affliction.

The first Eruv campaign started in 1988. The Second Eruv campaign has now begun. Nothing seems to have changed since the Planning Committee was last exercised with the matter two and a half years ago. No one can say exactly where each pole is to be situated. No one has seen a sample structures in situ. Frontagers whose properties or boundaries are being used have not yet been notified. The Minister made it specifically clear that he was not deciding whether social harmony could be a material issue and this remains a complex and contentious matter.

There are two basic issues which have not been addressed directly by anyone. Firstly, is it right to erect a sectarian border across Barnet with poles and wires on the public highway in many cases using residents' properties? Secondly, is the licensing of the Eruv posts on the footway and wires over roads to a body without experience or public responsibilities, compatible with the legal obligation to protect public rights and to prevent non essential obstruction, and minimise the risks to children, the disabled and elderly?

Without considering the principles involved, the planning committee seems to have been gulled into giving priority to commercial interests over public rights on the footway in relation to the intrusive 'retro' columns and advertising panels. There are no excuses for doing the same thing on behalf of sectarian interests.

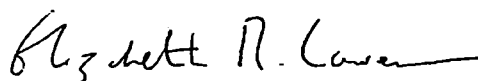
Ethnic/religious groups are to be encouraged in the promotion of their own cultural values within a pluralistic society. But, the marking out of such borders in Northern Ireland, the former Yugoslavia and Israel, in each case justified by religion, tradition, or history has led to the breakdown of civil order. Why add to our troubles?

In a matter like this, voters will want to see Councillors, when they have fully informed themselves, vote in full Council, in public, in an unpressured, unprejudiced, independent conscience, upon the principles involved. If interests must be declared according to the rules, let it be.

In this contentious matter only a decision made this way has any hope of a margin of public acceptance. Let the voice of democracy be heard.

Yours sincerely,

For and on behalf of the Barnet Eruv Objectors Group



Elizabeth R. Lawrence

Reply