



Ted Giffords

Sabbath limit: campaign co-ordinator David Schreide (right) illustrates some of the activities now prohibited

Easing of Sabbath law comes closer

By Bethan Hutton

ORTHODOX Jews in north London may later this year be able to visit friends on a Sabbath and not have to leave their homes unlocked.

Barnet Borough Council this week brought closer the establishment of an eruv – an area within which aspects of Jewish law are relaxed.

Sabbath laws forbid carrying anything out of doors, which means not just bags held in the hand but keys carried in the pocket. Pushing prams or wheelchairs is also prohibited.

Strict adherence to the law can be severely limiting for disabled people and families with small children, who cannot attend synagogue services or visit relatives on what is traditionally a family day.

An eruv waives this law,

though stricter sections of the community continue to observe it.

Most Jewish communities around the world already have eruvs, but it is only now that the United Synagogue has launched a plan for Britain's first eruv.

The area proposed covers 6½ square miles of London around Hampstead Garden Suburb, Golders Green and Hendon where Jewish communities have congregated.

Barnet's permission was sought because an eruv must have a clear boundary. Natural boundaries such as rivers or railways are used where possible, but in gaps, a thin wire stretched between metal poles indicates the boundary. The United Synagogue has won clearance for the poles under safety rules, but must apply for full planning permission.