

Concern over eruv tree pruning

THE organisation responsible for building Britain's first eruv has breached planning law and caused damage to some of Hampstead's trees, according to Heath managers and residents.

The Corporation of London, which manages the Heath, says that the United Synagogue Eruv Committee (USEC) did not seek permission before cutting back several trees to string 1mm thick wire at the junction of Wildwood Road and Wildwood Rise, in Hampstead Garden Suburb.

When permission was granted by Barnet Council for the Jewish boundary, it was on the under-

standing that no Heath trees would be touched. The council has now vowed to investigate the issue after receiving a letter of concern from Heath superintendent Simon Lee.

A spokesman for the corporation said: "We regard this as a serious incident and have written to Barnet Council to let them know that planning permission has been breached.

"We are upset that we were not consulted before work on pruning the trees or using the thicker wire started. The eruv is a sensitive issue and this makes it even more surprising that we were not con-

tacted by USEC before they pruned the trees and restrung the wire. We are now waiting for an explanation from Barnet Council."

Members of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association, who met on Tuesday night, have also vowed to write a "strong" letter to Barnet.

Association member Alan Jacobs, who visited the site on Tuesday, said: "Myself and a colleague, who sits on the Heath and Hampstead Society, visited the site and were shocked to see that branches had been crudely cut and new wire - much thicker - had been restrung. This just shows

that the safeguards that have been built into the license for the eruv have been carelessly disregarded."

USEC spokesman Edward Black said that he was unaware that thicker wire was being used but said that he would investigate the issue immediately.

He added: "Since all we were doing was restringing wire I wasn't under the impression that there was a need to consult the Corporation of London.

"We have been very careful throughout the installation of the eruv poles and wire to ensure that our contractors are aware of what is not allowed."

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