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Council: Lamp posts will carry eruv wires

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HAM + HIGH

Controversial boundary dangerous to trees

WIRES used for the North West London eruv will be tied to lamp posts in an environmentally sensitive part of Hampstead Heath after Barnet Council backed "major concerns" expressed by Heath managers the Corporation of London (CoL).

The move to attach the eruv wires to the posts in Wildwood Road, Hampstead Garden Suburb, was agreed by Barnet Council's planning committee on Wednesday (September 10).

It followed complaints by Heath Superintendent Simon Lee that wires from the controversial Jewish boundary – a six-and-a-half square mile area made up of poles and fishing line – posed a threat to the trees in the conservation area.

Supt Lee said it was likely that the wires – currently attached to four wooden poles –

would have to be continually changed and there was a strong possibility that every time this operation was carried out, trees would be damaged.

He said: "This is excellent news. It moves the eruv away from the line of the trees and reduces our fears regarding pruning of these trees."

In a report to the committee, officers backed Supt Lee's concerns and said: "Retention of the wire on the wooden poles in Wildwood Road will create the potential for damage to trees on to Hampstead Heath every time the wire has to be replaced and is a source of major concern to the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath."

Officers also admitted that the threat of legal action was one of the reasons behind the recommendation.

The report said: "Relocating the wires onto the lighting columns will minimise the risk of damage to the trees and possible action against the Council by the Corporation of London."

The eruv, installed in March after 13 years of opposition, allows Orthodox Jews to carry keys, push prams and carry out activities normally banned outside the home on the Sabbath.

The idea of tethering the wire to lamp posts was proposed by the United Synagogue Eruv committee (USEC), the organisation behind the eruv.

USEC spokesman Edward Black said he was "pleased" that the council had agreed to the proposal.

But furious anti-eruv campaigners claimed that the decision was a breach of an agreement by the council in 1993 not

to allow the eruv to be attached to lamp posts.

Elizabeth Lawrence, of the Barnet Eruv Objectors Group said: "The 1993 conditions have not changed, which means that the decision constitutes a clear breach."

She added: "It is wrong to put symbolic religious paraphernalia on public street furniture."

"This would be offensive to the majority of citizens in the borough that do not use the eruv and is discriminatory against those of other religious persuasions or none."

But Barnet Council claimed there was no breach because new lamp posts had been installed in the road which were strong enough to carry extra attachments.

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