

Jewish zealots: We'll patrol eruv

AN EXTREMIST Jewish organisation — possibly linked to groups known for taking violent action — could be planning to set up a vigilante eruv, a document leaked to the Ham & High this week has revealed.

Minutes of a meeting in December of the British Section of the Kahana Defence Group refer to the organisation's decision to set up a "low-profile" vigilante group to protect the proposed eruv boundary.

Alarm in Suburb as extremist plan is revealed

And, the minutes record, "if malice would continue, tougher action would be taken after consultation with the Jewish Defence League in New York".

The name of the organisation suggests a link with the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, founder of Israel's outlawed extremist Kach party.

The document identifies people present at the meeting only by initials. It mentions a discussion that included "D.E." and a member of the "E. committee" — under-

stood to refer to the United Synagogue's eruv committee.

But eruv committee chairman David Schreiber denied any such connection. "It sounds like you have got a spoof. Neither myself nor anyone to my knowledge has had such a discussion, nor would it be anything that we would encourage. We are not worried about vandalism."

The eruv committee has applied to Barnet to erect posts linked with wire to mark the boundary of

an eruv, or symbolically enclosed area. It would take in parts of Hampstead Garden Suburb, Golders Green and Hendon.

Religious law within the boundary can be relaxed to allow Orthodox Jews to push wheelchairs and prams on the Sabbath.

The document mentions discussion of the legal implications of vigilante action. "A.H.D." is recorded as having argued that since the eruv would have council approval, anyone attempting to

damage the "poles or strings" would be acting against the law — making the vigilantes "upholders of the law".

The meeting, held at the house of "A.H.D.", decided to form a low-profile vigilante group, irrespective of the opinion of the eruv committee.

The document, which contains grammatical and spelling errors, says tougher action would be taken if malice continued, after consulting "J.D.L. in HQ/NY".

J.D.L. appears to be the Jewish Defence League, which is linked to Kach, the extreme-right Israeli party led by Rabbi Meir Kahane until his assassination two years ago. Israel outlawed Kach because of its racist policies against Arabs and Palestinians.

Chris Kellerman, manager of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust, said the document showed how divisive the eruv had become.

"This is what the trust said right at the very beginning. Private vigilante groups patrolling could be extremely provocative."

To back page

Eruv patrols

◀From page 1

Hendon South MP John Marshall said he was not convinced the document was accurate. "I can't believe that the individuals in support of the eruv are supportive of Kahane, whose policies were such that he was banned from standing as a candidate in Israel's election by the Supreme Court in Israel."

Michael Whine, a spokesman for the Board of Deputies of British Jews, told the Ham & High: "My initial reaction is to say it might be a hoax. Attempts were made to establish a Jewish Defence League here two years ago but they foundered due to lack of interest."

Sergeant Bernard Forbes of Golders Green police said the document had been passed to Special Branch. "They think it is a hoax. We are not going to permit vigilantes. We never have and we never will," he said.

● The date for a decision by Barnet on the eruv application has been postponed until February 24 because the Department of Transport has not approved the erection of poles and wires on roads it controls.

Aspects of the application passed to the DTP relate to the North Circular, the A1, Hendon Way and Finchley Road, Child's Hill.

A Jewish couple from Child's Hill, who do not want to be named, say they will have to move if Barnet gives permission for the eruv.

In a letter to Barnet the couple said that, as humanists, the fact that some of the poles would be visible from their windows would be "psychologically intolerable".