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Ham & High

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Barnet may face Nolan Committee over handling of eruv application

THE Nolan Committee into corruption in public life may investigate Barnet's processing of the eruv application, after protesters questioned a payment

made by Orthodox Jews to the council.

The committee says it may look into the council's handling of the scheme as part of the next stage of its investigations, after being referred by Dr Jeffrey and Elizabeth Segall to a £4,000 cheque the borough received from eruv backers the United Synagogue.

While the committee has yet to confirm the subjects of its next inquiries, local authorities are one of two areas likely to be investigated. The handling of planning applications is one of two topics highlighted under the local authority heading.

"If we get similar allegations from Budeleigh Salterton or Chester as we do from Barnet over planning, then it is quite possible we will look into this issue," said a spokesman for the

committee. "But we do deal only with general issues. Individual complaints are not within our remit."

The Segalls, of Childs Hill, have already pledged to refer the payments back to the Ombudsman if Barnet does not return the cash, donated in 1991 to fund a feasibility study into the eruv.

Barnet rejected the scheme, but was overruled on appeal. Last year, the Ombudsman cleared the council of any impropriety in accepting the money. However, Mr and Mrs Segall believe new evidence entitles the case to be reconsidered.

The complaints have prompted Barnet leader Alan Williams to order a council probe into the payments, which date from before the present Labour and Liberal Democrat administration.