

Peers calling for Lords debate over new eruv scheme

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TWO eminent peers have joined the renewed storm of protest against London's first eruv.

Labour peer Lord Howie, who lives in Hampstead Garden Suburb, is planning to write a letter of protest about the controversial scheme to Environment Secretary John Gummer.

He and Lord McGregor, who resigned as chairman of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust over the eruv issue several years ago, are also planning to call for a debate on the matter in the House of Lords.

Objectors have been given a second chance to oppose the scheme as roadworks and building development have forced organisers, the United Synagogue Eruv Committee, to reapply for planning permission.

The original planning application, for the 11-mile notional Jewish boundary around North-

West London, including Golders Green and part of the Suburb, caused a bitter argument which split the Jewish community when it was submitted in 1991.

It also sparked protests from local residents whose homes had been designated as part of the boundary, within which Orthodox Jews would be able to push prams or wheelchairs and carry certain items, which they are normally forbidden to do on the Sabbath.

In 1993, against council offi-

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cers' advice, Barnet planners turned down the application. But their decision was reversed in 1994 by Mr Gummer who granted permission for the scheme following a public inquiry costing the council £23,000.

Since then, roadworks on the North Circular Road and a planned redevelopment of the Express Dairy site in Cricklewood, both on the proposed perimeter, have necessitated repositioning some of the poles and

wires that would make up the boundary. This means the whole application must be resubmitted to Barnet planners.

Members of the United Synagogue believe that because the principle has already been established by the secretary of state, the council should approve the changes automatically.

But several members of the planning committee, including Suburb ward councillor Frank Davies and Conservative council-

lor Sheila Scott, who objected to the scheme last time, have vowed to oppose it again.

If the new scheme is rejected by councillors and the commit-

tee appeals again to Mr Gummer, Lord Howie will write urging the minister to reconsider his previous decision.

Lord Howie said he believed the eruv should be viewed not just in planning terms, but as a wider social issue.

"I believe that to impose an eruv on an area which has never had any religious significance and has people of all religions living there is a social issue and should be considered as one," he said.