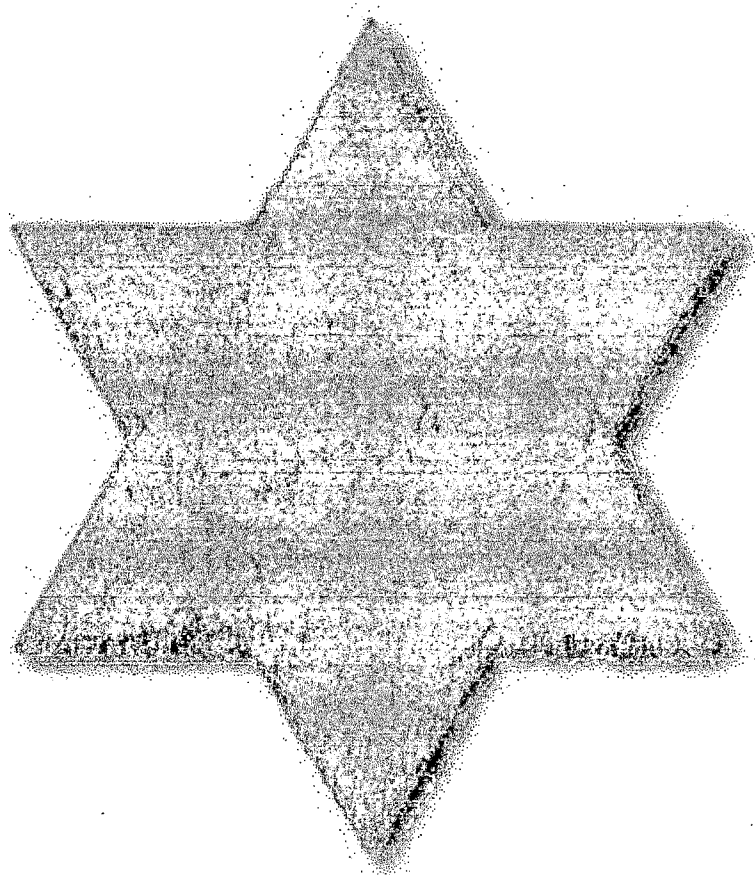


NEWS

HAM HIGH NETWORK

Eruv go-ahead met by joy and outrage



CONTROVERSIAL plans to establish an eruv in Hampstead Garden Suburb and Golders Green have been approved, amid chaotic scenes.

Wednesday night's meeting at Hendon Town Hall had to be halted to allow tempers to cool after Barnet Council's development and protection committee gave the go-ahead for a six-and-a-half-square-mile eruv.

Stunned opponents of the "enclosed" area - in which observant Orthodox Jews are permitted to perform otherwise prohibited tasks - shouted abuse at councillors who approved the scheme by 19 votes to one.

Many of the eruv's critics confronted councillors outside the

committee room during angry exchanges.

"It's a disgrace. I am ashamed of these councillors," said Madelaine Simms, who is Jewish. "I do not know any Jews in Barnet who want this. They think it's selfish, divisive and totally self-centred."

Norman Burgess, another protester, added: "It's monstrous; I'm extremely disappointed."

Elizabeth Lawrence, a member of the Barnet Eruv Objectors group, said: "The committee did not consider any planning issues and completely ignored their own new planning policies. I am convinced there is a hidden agenda here and this has been pushed through at all costs."

The plans entail erecting a total of 87 poles. About 1,100 yards of wire will be strung between 39 locations to create a special exemption area within which certain elements of Jewish religious law are suspended. Orthodox Jews will be able to push prams on the Sabbath, for example.

Edward Black, spokesman for the United Synagogue Eruv Committee, said: "We are very happy. It is unfortunate that a number of opponents condemn the eruv as an attempt to create a sectarian boundary or as a sinister institution, which it is not."

But Elizabeth Segall, a vigorous opponent of the scheme, said that the decision "violates our human rights".

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