

Corporation of London: Eruv is threat to Heath

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THE Corporation of London is taking steps towards seeking an injunction to stop plans to establish an eruv encompassing Hampstead Garden Suburb and Golders Green.

The drastic move is being taken over fears that one of the sites for the poles enclosing the eruv would damage trees on Hampstead Heath, which the Corporation of London has a duty to protect as managers of the open space.

The controversial proposals for a six-and-a-half-square mile eruv were approved at a heated meeting of Barnet's development and protection committee last Wednesday.

It involves putting up 87 poles at 39 different sites from which will be strung 1,100 yards of fishing line to create a special area in which observant Jewish families can carry out certain actions on the Sabbath in Jewish law.

But the proposed eruv has courted controversy and fierce opposition since the idea was first mooted in 1987.

One of the sites for the poles is on Wildwood Road bordering Hampstead Heath, which has aroused deep concern among

GETTING THE WIRES UNCROSSED

1 An eruv is a religious boundary, required by Orthodox Jewish law, which defines an area within which pushing prams and carrying personal items, like keys and wallets, is permitted on the Sabbath.

The observant Jews the Sabbath is a day when these pursuits are generally prohibited outside the home.

2 There are more than 150 eruv in cities around the world, including Canada, Australia, Belgium, France and Gibraltar. Every Israeli town has one and virtually every major city in the United States has one.

local conservationists and the corporation.

In a letter written to Barnet Council just days before the crucial planning meeting, Paul Canneaux, Superintendent of Hampstead Heath, warned: "The corporation has strong reason to believe that the poles and wires on Wildwood Road would seriously harm nearby trees on Hampstead Heath."

"I think it perfectly possible

that the Corporation of London has had an eruv for over 20 years."

3 The Washington DC eruv includes the White House, the Supreme Court and the Pentagon, and the Corporation of London has a similar eruv in the City of London.

4 The establishment of eruv dates back 3,000 years since their introduction by King Solomon in Biblical times.

5 England has never had an eruv, despite a population of about 300,000 Jewish people in the United Kingdom.

that if the present eruv proposals were to receive planning consent from your council I would have to advise the Hampstead Heath Management Committee that injunction proceedings should be commenced to prevent those proposals being implemented."

He added: "I very much regret that we should be faced with the possibility of legal action. However, I must emphasise that the Corporation of London is deeply

concerned about damage to the Heath environment, and is strongly supported by the conservation and environmental bodies associated with us."

A spokeswoman for the corporation confirmed: "A report will have to go to the management committee on July 27 and then the committee, with advice from our legal department, will have to make a decision after discussing it fully."

"It may also have to go to the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee."

Responding to the threat, Edward Black, spokesman for the United Synagogue Eruv Committee, who applied for the eruv, said: "The poles that the corporation are complaining about were approved by the planning inspector during a public inquiry into the eruv proposals in 1993 so I do not understand what the corporation are upset about and clearly we need to talk to them."

"We are sensitive to the fact there is opposition. We want to address as many concerns as we can and if the corporation has something bothering them we will contact them, and, as far as possible, we will do what we can in the context of establishing the eruv."