



Eruv campaigners to challenge Barnet decision to reject plan

BARNET could end up paying heavily for rejecting the application to establish the country's first-ever eruv, if campaigners win their bid to overturn the decision.

The United Synagogue confirmed it is due to lodge an appeal with the Department of the Environment this week against Barnet's refusal.

by PAUL FRANCIS

The appeal will mean a public inquiry and should Barnet lose, there is a strong possibility the council could be landed with a massive legal bill, running into thousands of pounds.

If the inspector rules against Barnet, the fact councillors ignored an officers' recommendation will be a crucial factor in deciding costs.

Of the four appeals resulting from council-

Barnet may face large legal bill as synagogue prepares appeal

lors overturning officers last year, three were allowed.

The United Synagogue, which had wanted permission to put up 85 telegraph-type poles linked by wire to denote part of the boundary of a symbolical six square mile zone, is considering appointing Queen's Counsel to present its case.

Council leader Roy Shutz would not be drawn on the repercussions of losing an appeal, saying only that he believed councillors had made its decision on "reasonable planning grounds".

But planning committee vice chairman Don Goodman, who supported the eruv application, was convinced Barnet stood to lose.

"I think they will win hands down," he said.

The impact could be devastating on Barnet's planning budget, this year cut to about £1.5million.

The deep feelings the eruv proposal aroused showed little sign of abating this week. Some councillors who backed the eruv claimed opponents had orchestrated the vote prior to last Wednesday's meeting.

One councillor reported witnessing scenes of mutual congratulations in the council's clubroom immediately after Wednesday's meeting among those who opposed the scheme.

"It was obviously set up beforehand," the councillor said.

Eruv committee spokesman David Schreiber said Barnet may have acted reck-

lessly in leaving itself open to "very substantial costs".

Neville Nagler, chief executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said it was regrettable arguments that were "misleading and of doubtful relevance" had clouded the debate.

"What was being sought was a right that exists in many other countries. A multicultural society needs to find ways of accepting the practices of religious groups," he said.

Hendon South Conservative MP John Marshall backed the move to appeal, adding he would be prepared to give evidence at any inquiry.

"Naturally I am disappointed. The eruv would have benefited the elderly, the infirm, the disabled, and mothers of young children," he said.

Finchley & Friern Barnet MP Hartley Booth, who previously expressed support, declined to comment.

Councillors caught in the crossfire of a fiery debate

THE eruv proposal prompted an unprecedented amount of public interest and debate.

Few councillors had received so much lobbying on a planning issue before and many felt under intense pressure.

The outcome of last Wednesday's meeting, however, did not, as most council matters do, fall along party lines. Both the Tory and Labour groups split on the issue, revealing tensions which divided not only a council but the whole community.

For: Councillors Goodman; Ellison; Czarny; Cohen (Melvin); Greenspan; Cohen (Jack); Turner.

Against: Councillors Davis; Lyon; Bunn; Cross; Scott; Philips; Williams (David); Bull; Anani; Campbell; Tiplady.

Abstained: Vis; Slocombe.



Councillor Jack Cohen
(Childs Hill).

"The arguments have gone far beyond simple planning issues. If we judge this in the context of other applications we receive, nothing tremendous is proposed."



Councillor Frank Davis
(Garden Suburb)

"Any additional street furniture must be strongly resisted. I would call this urban vandalism in a unique conservation area of national importance."



Councillor Julian Czarny
(Edgware)

"This ought to be a very straightforward recommendation."

"We are in danger of blowing this out of all proportion."



Councillor Don Goodman
(Brunswick Park)

"If it goes ahead, those people who are opposed will have forgotten about it. It will only be remembered by those people who would have benefited."



Councillor Sheila Scott
(Hale)

"It is very easy to say what difference one telegraph pole would make. But it is the cumulative affect on the street scene which would be offensive."