

Eruv opponents consider making legal challenge

ERUV opponents were this week weighing up whether grounds existed for challenging the Secretary of State's ruling allowing the proposal to go ahead.

Opinion among some, however, appeared divided over whether a potentially costly legal challenge — possibly in the form of a judicial review — was realistic. The inspector's verdict on the eruv, an area where Jewish Sabbath laws are relaxed, was based entirely on planning grounds, which many believe would make it difficult to argue he acted "unreasonably" in reaching his decision.

The Barnet Eruv Objectors Group, which expressed dismay at the ruling, plans a detailed scrutiny of the report before deciding what, if any, action to take.

"We are not ruling anything out and we're not ruling anything in. We are still opposed to it but we have to consult lawyers," said spokeswoman Elizabeth Lawrence.

The United Synagogue Eruv committee, meanwhile, echoed the call of Garden Suburb councillor Frank Davis, one of the eruv's most outspoken critics, in appealing for differences to be set aside. Spokesman

RULING DISMAYS GROUP

Edward Black said: "We appreciate the idea gave rise to anxiety among some. The Secretary of State and inspector considered all the relevant issues and concerns in reaching their decision."

by PAUL FRANCIS

"We therefore trust all parties will put their differences behind them and move forward in an atmosphere of mutual respect."

It will be some time, possibly months, before poles and wire go up.

The chairman of Barnet's town planning committee, Jack Cohen, accepted there would still be some resentment. "It is not going to be easy but I hope people will accept they had a fair hearing and this decision is the right one," he said.

Garden Suburb resident Alan Jacobs, an opponent, acknowledged it would prove difficult to dispute the inspector's verdict. "He's torpedoed things by deciding on planning grounds. Now we have to broaden the debate — though I'm not sure how."