

Eruv in view

The UK's first major eruv, to be sited in North West London, is only months away.

At a meeting of Barnet's development and protection committee on Wednesday last week, 19 out of 20 councillors voted in favour of an amended application by the United Synagogue Eruv Committee (USEC), which means construction of the poles and wire notional boundary could begin within six months.

All that remains between now and then is the granting of two licences — one from the council's public works committee, the other from the highways agency. A spokesman for the latter said it was already in the process of issuing a licence.

The decision marks the end of a six-year battle by USEC and has attracted a huge welcome by its spokesman, Edward Black. Opposition speakers meanwhile reiterated a long list of concerns, the most popular being damage to trees and a concern that the structure would infringe on human rights.

The arguments, however, carried little weight. The objections had been heard several times before and each time had been overruled, either as a result of the council's planning policies or, as in 1993, when the matter

by NIGEL REGAN

went to a public inquiry. It was the positioning of the poles which caused the real delay.

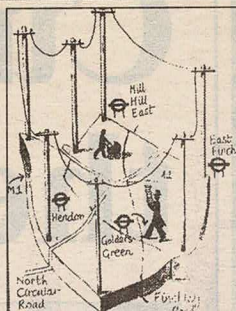
Speaking after the meeting, a jubilant Mr Black said: "We are very pleased the planning application was granted."

"What we have been trying to say is that this is not something that's a world first; there are lots of eruvs all over the world and the impact has been universally positive."

Labour councillor Anita Campbell voted against the application. She said after the meeting she was not convinced by the arguments, expressing concern for those with sight impairments who would have to deal with additional 'street furniture'.

Mrs Campbell, who has eight years experience on planning issues, said: "I believe this is going to be the first major eruv in Great Britain and with it being the first we have to give it good consideration. I don't think it was given good enough consideration."

Elizabeth Segall, one of the eruv's main objectors in the Childs Hill area, said: "It shows that the planning system in Barnet totally ignores the views of a large majority of residents."



There are hundreds of eruvs around the world. The White House in Washington DC is enclosed within an eruv, as is the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, albeit without poles. Australia, Belgium, France and Gibraltar are just a few of the other countries to push aside concerns that the structures in some way infringe upon human rights.

For some, the concept of an eruv is nothing more than a religious cop out, but for Shabbat observant Jews the point is too easy and displays a lack of tolerance. What the eruv allows, they argue, is the simple carrying and pushing of wheelchairs within an area, which would otherwise be restricted to the home.

The North West London Eruv will cover an 11 mile perimeter, taking in all of Hendon, Golders Green and Hampstead Garden Suburb, as well as part of Childs Hill, Cricklewood, East Finchley, Finchley and Mill Hill.

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