

Letters To The Editor

The eruv, the MP and local concern

I HAVE NO doubt that Rudi Vis MP knows full well what an eruv is ("Golders Green MP in eruv storm," JC, March 2). I share his reservations, though I see the matter more as one of political correctness than social engineering.

It is naive to claim, as does your editorial and US president Peter Sheldon, that an eruv is simply a matter of poles and wires which inconvenience no one.

It is much more than this; it is a concession to a marginal group, unrepresentative of British Jewry, who will regard it as a base from which to make further demands, a minor folly that could well grow into a major embarrassment.

How long before demands for road and shop closures on Shabbat? How long before fundamentalists from other faith groups see this as a precedent?

ZVI FRIEDMAN,
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IN YOUR leading article "Ignorance is Vis" (JC, March 2) you point out that "in dozens of towns and cities worldwide where eruvs exist residents soon become utterly unaware of their existence."

Mr Vis knows that this is true. Shortly before he was elected in 1997, I asked him what he thought about the eruv. He told me that when the issue first surfaced in Barnet he had rung his Jewish ex-father-in-law

who lives in Florida and asked him to explain the concept of an eruv. His father-in-law had never heard the word before but said that he would make enquiries and report back.

He subsequently rang back, having discovered that he had been living inside an eruv for the previous 20 years.

DAVID COHEN,
WEST HEATH ROAD,
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WE MUST PROTEST at your editorial of March 2.

We do not consider as "relatively minor practical matters" Barnet Council's granting of a licence to The United Synagogue Eruv Committee, a newly formed company whose assets are worth £40, nor the fact that

neither the eruv applicant nor Barnet Council has been able to arrange insurance for injury or damage which might result from vandalism or some other interference with the eruv structures.

All public utilities that put structures on the highways are subject to strict regulation at all times. However, Barnet Council proposes to hand over the work of erecting and maintaining poles and wire on our roads and footways to a company whose objective will be to keep the structures ritually intact between sundown on Friday and sundown on Saturday, rather than comply with the safety of the public at large.

The eruv's proponents wish to create a private domain encompassing 6.5 square miles of the borough bordered by 87 poles and 13 miles of wire. There are no other eruvs of this type anywhere in the world where homeowners' premises are used as boundaries without their specific consent. There is no comparison with telephone poles or electricity wire, which are public utilities for the benefit of all.

Your comments on the phrase "social engineering" are disingenuous. The perception of opponents is that the proposed eruv wires and poles are markers of a religious and social divide and set a dangerous precedent.

Your inflammatory editorial adds nothing to the much-needed serious attention this subject demands.

ELIZABETH R. LAWRENCE,
BARNET ERUV OBJECTORS' GROUP,
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Deir Yassin event

I WAS IMPRESSED by the article (JC, March 2) by Rabbis John Rayner and Jeffrey Newman in which

Arabs in two weeks following the Partition resolution, 1947; 55 Jews murdered by a bomb planted by Arabs in Jerusalem; February 1948.

with the neighbouring Jewish settlement of Givat Shaul and there are reports that they had