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Pole position: Rabbi Conway watches Stuart Griggs install the first Barnet eruv pole

VICKY ALHADEFF

Essex leaders want second British eruv

BY NATHAN JEFFAY, REDBRIDGE AND
ANDREW SANGER, FINCHLEY

ESSEX communal leaders were this week "pushing forward" with plans for a second British eruv, as the poles for the first were driven into the ground in Barnet.

Proposals for an Essex eruv — incorporating Redbridge, Chigwell and Newbury Park — were drawn up in 1987, but were later put on hold until the Barnet scheme was completed.

But Ilford Synagogue chairman Malcolm Nathan told the JC that now that Barnet's eruv was under construction, he would be "pushing the plans forward." He will be meeting local rabbis in the next month to initiate planning applications and the "necessary halachic surveys."

He said there was "much support" in the local community, pointing out that it would help "Orthodox people who cannot afford the high prices in North-West London but wish to benefit from an eruv."

Like the Barnet eruv — which will allow Jews to carry certain items on Shabbat — it would be built under the auspices of the United Synagogue, Mr Nathan said.

The first poles of the Barnet eruv were installed in a quiet cul-de-sac in East Finchley on Tuesday. The two workmen arriving at Prospect Place to set the grey metal poles into the ground were surprised to encounter a crowd of reporters, photographers and two TV crews.

Also present were US president Peter Sheldon, Rabbi Jeremy Conway and other members of the US eruv committee, as well as officials from the Chief Rabbi's office.

Mr Sheldon said: "The last of the poles will be erected within a month and then the wires will be put in place. To those who observe the Sabbath — and there are many in this area — it will make a considerable difference to their lives."

Eruv enthusiast Charlotte Benjamin, 29, agreed. She had driven with her two-year-old daughter, Talia, to watch the poles being put up.

Mrs Benjamin, a member of Hendon's Ner Israel Synagogue, commented: "It's very exciting. I have made use of eruvs in Toronto, New York and around the world. I am expecting my new baby any day now. Without an eruv, I'd have to wait till the child could walk before I could go to shul."

Also watching were three prominent eruv opponents, among them an "outraged" Elizabeth Segall.

She claimed that "Barnet council has lied and deceived in order to push this through."

A number of local residents, including several with mezuzot on their front doors, also expressed disquiet about the eruv.

Local Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator, Kenneth Dunjohn, 74, said he was puzzled at Barnet's eagerness to adopt the scheme. "We have been trying to get better lighting here on the railway bridge because there is a lot of vandalism, but the council turned that down."

Most of the Barnet eruv's 11-mile perimeter will be marked by boundaries such as the North Circular and railway lines. But at certain points, the boundary will be designated by sets of poles linked by thin wire. There will be 84 poles in total.

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BBC Rosh Hashanah slot for Kaufman's Israel film

BY SIMON ROCKER

THE BBC is giving a prime-time Rosh Hashanah slot to a film by Manchester Labour MP Gerald Kaufman on why he has fallen out of love with Israel.

Mr Kaufman, one of Ariel Sharon's fiercest Parliamentary critics, vowed a year ago not return to Israel. But he was persuaded to go back to make "End of the Affair,"

which will be broadcast on BBC2 on September 7 at 9pm, the second night of the festival.

Contacted by the JC, the politician — who says in the film that "the lovely Israel I first came to with such infatuation no longer exists" — was initially happy to comment about the project. But he later rang to withdraw his remarks.

A BBC spokesman said "some thought" had been gone into the scheduling of the programme, in which Mr Kaufman hears from "a

broad spectrum of civilians, soldiers and politicians." It was considered appropriate because "the New Year is recognised as a time for retrospection and reflection."

But the Board of Deputies' director-general Neville Nagler commented tartly: "The fact that the BBC wants to put out a programme of such interest to Jews on Rosh Hashanah speaks for itself."

Over the past year in the Commons, Mr Kaufman has variously branded Mr Sharon "a war criminal

and a fool" and called for economic sanctions on both Israel and the Palestinians.

In a New Statesman article last week opposing an attack on Iraq, he wrote that America had been rightly criticised "for giving active support to brutalities the Israelis have inflicted on the Palestinians."

Meanwhile, Channel 4 is on Saturday screening a film on Israel by another British Jew, Jacqueline Rose, professor of English at London University's Queen Mary and

Westfield College. The film, "A Dangerous Liaison: Israel and America," takes her back to Israel after 20 years to argue, according to the Radio Times, "that among the founders of the State of Israel were those who believed that the country could only survive if it was aggressive in its own defence."

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks's annual Rosh Hashanah message — on interfaith relations — is to be screened on BBC1 on Thursday night, September 5 at 11.15.