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HEADLINE: British Jews win approval for sabbath zone

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Britain's largest Jewish community won permission Wednesday to set up the country's first eruv, a symbolic walled city that will allow them to move freely on the Sabbath.

"The Secretary of State for Environment John Gummer has accepted the recommendation by a planning inspector that the eruv be allowed," a government spokesman said.

"It will be the first in Britain," he added.

On two previous occasions, Barnet council in north London had rejected plans for the eruv, sponsored by the leading orthodox wing of British Judaism, the United Synagogue, which said it was essential for young mothers, the elderly and the disabled.

The council vetoed the plan last year on environmental grounds, saying the symbolic domain of about six square miles would entail erecting 85 poles linked by wire to complete boundaries already marked by a road and an underground railway line.

The eruv will cover Golders Green, Hendon and Hampstead Garden Suburb in north London.

The United Synagogue appealed to Gummer, who reversed the earlier local decision.

The Talmud, the body of Jewish civil and ceremonial law, forbids Jews from working on the Sabbath. But an eruv creates a symbolic extension of the home which would allow Orthodox Jews to carry objects and to do other daily routines.

"On the Sabbath, I personally can't go out because I have a child who cannot walk and I can't carry," Tanya Robinson said in a newspaper interview. "The majority of my friends are in the same situation. It certainly affects hundreds of people," she added.

Eruvs have already been created in Israel, the United States and France.

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