

B.870 BRONDESBURY 'ERUV'**DESIGN, HERITAGE AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

Origin of application

This application is being submitted on behalf of Brondesbury Park Synagogue.

The community was founded in 1934 with about 30 members; membership struggled in the early years, but by 1938 the community was on a solid footing and sufficiently established to commission its original building in Heathfield Park, which was subsequently listed. In November of that year it became a constituent member of the United Synagogue.

The community subsequently grew and expanded its premises after the war; owing to normal demographics it declined somewhat in the latter years of the 20th century but since 2003 it has grown rapidly to its current total membership of close to 600 members, a significant proportion of whom comprise young families and children. The synagogue attracts a regular Saturday attendance of 200 or more worshippers, with significantly more on festivals and on family occasions. This growth trend shows no sign of abating due to the community's self-generating strong focus on social activities.

The United Synagogue parent body itself is the central body of traditional Judaism in England, founded with the sanction of the Jewish United Synagogue Act, 1870 and is the largest Jewish religious grouping in Europe, having a total of 62 communities under its aegis.

Definition of an 'Eruv'

All constituent synagogues subscribe to traditional Orthodox Jewish practice, the laws of which are derived from those set out in the first five books of the Bible, known as the Pentateuch. These laws were subsequently interpreted in detail by subsequent generations of rabbis and codified in the Talmud, completed in the 6th century. Further interpretation and derivation has continued throughout the intervening period including in modern times, to confront differing circumstances in living conditions including those of the modern technological era.

One of the fundamentals of Judaism is the observance of the Sabbath from sunset on Friday until nightfall on Saturday. Among the basic rules defining this observance is a prohibition of the use of any form of transport and, in addition, the carrying or moving of any object from a private into any other domain other than within an enclosed area; this latter prohibition is the impetus for the provision of an 'Eruv'.

The qualifying definition of an enclosure under Jewish law includes, in addition to walls or fences at least 1 metre high, a structure technically known as a 'gateway', which to qualify as such needs to comprise no more than a thin wire spanning between the tops of two poles.

Thus it is possible to achieve 'enclosure' of an area encompassing a large number of properties as defined in Jewish law (known by its Hebrew term 'Eruv') within which carrying of objects is permitted.

This is of great benefit to Sabbath observant people who are thus able to carry not only personal effects such as handkerchiefs, keys, spectacles, etc but, more importantly, it enables non-ambulant persons, i.e. wheelchair users and babies to be pushed in the street overcoming a hitherto limiting restriction both on them and on their carers.

It is these pairs of poles, and the wire between, which form the subject of this application.

Existing examples

In recent years an Eruv has been approved and established in NW London, Edgware, Stanmore, Belmont, Borehamwood and in North Manchester and approved in Bushey, Barnet, Mill Hill and Woodside Park. Applications for Planning consent have been submitted or are in preparation for, among others, Camden, Highgate/Muswell Hill, Pinner and Kenton. There are numerous examples of *eruv*s in cities throughout Europe, America and Australia.

Design

The large majority of the 'enclosure' required for an Eruv utilises existing walls and fences. There unavoidably remain a number of locations where no existing enclosure exists, principally across roads and footpaths and for which pairs of poles and a nylon or fluorocarbon monofilament are proposed to provide the necessary 'enclosure' in the form defined.

Mindful of real and also of perceived concern about the visual impact of the proposed poles and wires, these follow precedent in having the narrowest possible diameter pole (76mm) with a colour-coated finish to conform to other local street furniture or, where appropriate, to match immediately adjacent painted walls or other features; the wire spanning between the poles is less than 0.5mm nylon monofilament fishing line which is visually imperceptible.

The height of the poles is generally 5.5 metres being the preferred height to achieve clearance even for exceptionally overheight vehicles; a lower height is adopted for public footpaths. Where poles are required to be installed, their siting throughout has been very carefully considered so as to minimise visual impact on the streetscape as well as avoid any impact on existing trees in both the public and private domain.

Heritage and Conservation Locations

Whilst these are avoided wherever possible, the location for some poles falls unavoidably within Conservation Areas or adjacent to Listed buildings.

In all locations, but particularly within these designated areas, great care is exercised both in the location of the poles and their colour is assessed and specified so as to minimise its visual impact; the colour of poles is indicated in the application and also stated 'to be agreed' on an individual basis. Existing eruvs have demonstrated that with appropriate sensitive choice of location and colour poles are visually imperceptible without a specific search for them.

Access

As referred to above, the erection of an Eruv not only relaxes an ancient religiously-held prohibition for the benefit of all observant Jewish residents but more significantly, it allows those who are disabled, as well as those who are carers of disabled adults or pre-ambulant children, to leave the confines of their homes on Friday evenings and Saturdays and move freely within the local designated eruv area -- and into adjoining eruv areas and participate fully in communal, social, leisure and religious activities.

This has been shown greatly to enhance the lives of young and old, parents and carers within areas where an eruv has already been erected.

Thus the provision of an Eruv accords with the Disability Discrimination Act, 2005; the London Plan, Policy 3A.14; PPS1 'Social Cohesion and Inclusion' and also with Section 149, clauses (1)(b), (3) (a)+(b), (4), (6) and (7) of the Equality Act 2010.