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## Charedi community fight over Stamford Hill pub turning into a synagogue

**By Marcus Dysch, September 12, 2008** [Share](#) 0 tweet

A long-standing feud within the strictly Orthodox community has resurfaced for the most unlikely of reasons - a plan to turn a North London pub into a synagogue.

Last month the JC reported that The Swan in Stamford Hill had been sold to members of the Charedi Bobov community for £1 million.

At the time, the deal appeared to be given the seal of approval by Rabbi Ephraim Padwa, head of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, and spiritual leader of London's Charedi community, who said he was "overwhelmed" by the purchase. Since then, it has emerged that the deal has not been finalised.

The dispute between the two Bobov factions emerged after regulars at the pub, who are upset at the prospect of losing their local, organised a campaign against the sale.

Last week, the campaigners received an email from an American private investigator, Bob Grant. Mr Grant claimed that the group attempting to buy the pub is "in no way affiliated with the Bobov community", and said the group was violating a trademark by using the Bobov name. But it is not clear who Mr Grant represents. He did not respond to the JC's email and phone requests to explain his role.

The Bobov community split following the death of its leader, Rabbi Shlomo Halberstam, in 2000 with Stamford Hill's Bobovs dividing between two synagogues, one in Egerton Road and the other in Lampard Grove.

It is the latter group which is trying to buy The Swan to provide facilities for its expanding community.

A spokesman for the Lampard Grove Bobovs admitted there had been disagreements between the two communities and said: "It might be that some people here do not get along with people on the other side. There might be some people upset that Lampard Grove is trying to make a new shul."

He said the buyers did not want to fall out with the save-the-pub campaigners and would be prepared to meet them when the sale is completed to discuss the possibility of keeping a bar open on part of the site.

A senior representative of the Egerton Road community said he was not aware of the American investigator and added: "I don't know anything about a feud. The people buying the pub are not part of our community. It is someone else calling themselves Bobov and I don't really want to discuss it."

When the JC visited the pub on Monday, regulars were enjoying a pint ahead of a Save the Swan committee meeting. The pub is popular with football fans watching matches on big screens and is the base for Hackney Rugby Club's social events. Campaign spokeswoman Sasha Johnson said drinkers had no ill-feeling towards their Jewish neighbours, but hated the idea of losing their favourite pub.

"Why don't the Bobovs find a derelict building that is already empty, buy it cheaper and renovate it?" she suggested. "We are more upset about the lack of transparency [from pub owners Punch Taverns]. It's not who is

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buying it, but the fact it's going to be shut down when we do not want it to be.

"The Jewish community use the pub. A lot of the strictly Orthodox young lads and their dads come in and watch the football with us and enjoy the banter."

She said staff were now fearful of losing their jobs, and that the landlady, who lives in a flat above the bar, would lose her home.

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