Professor Adam Ganz

I am the son of a Holocaust Survivor - my father Peter Ganz ( later Professor of German at the University of Oxford) arrived in the Uk in December 1938 after being imprisoned in Buchenwald Concentration camp after the pogrom in November 1938. At least 15 members of his family were murdered or committed suicide.

I would like to request a speaking slot- since I feel very strongly that the  the Govt’s argument that the public benefit of their scheme is great enough to justify the environmental and heritage harm are not valid

My name is Professor Adam Ganz,

My father was a refugee from Germany who after spending time in Buchenwald concentration camp, managed to come to this country thanks to extraordinary efforts by my grandfather’s employers. Morton Sundour and by the Quakers.  He went on to serve his country in the war. I’ve written a trilogy of radio plays about his work with the Secret Listeners- and what happened in Mainz, the city he left. At least 16 members of his family were murdered. Thanks to archival research I’ve recently been able to discover his route to this country and even meet the daughter of the person whose intervention saved him. he was very lucky.- as we have heard from the moving testimonies today.

Nonetheless I think this is the wrong memorial in the wrong place.

Others have spoken about the power of German Holocaust memorials. I agree - but these are the culmination of a long engagement with the past which has involved painful debate and discussion at every level. It is Germany’s duty to do such work. We need a similar debate in the UK.

For me The Kindertransport is a record of sorrow, as well as success.

It was wonderful that 10000 lives were saved but their parents and their siblings were not. Millions were murdered, and the efforts and the pleas of the likes of Eleanor Rathbone MP and Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld to bring them to Britain went unheard. As Louse London’s work has shown many in Parliament and the Home Office were instrumental in ensuring that the refugees could not come to the UK. it feels to me that the tranquillity of Victoria Park Gardens would be destroyed to try and obscure that.

For some years I lived just across the River from the Gardens and loved the green space with its glorious views and trees and calm and access to the river. A perfect place to reflect on the holocaust- or anything else

I’m also concerned, that others have suggested the choice is building the memorial or not remembering or not teaching the holocaust. This is a false dichotomy. Indeed as museums and archives face funding cuts will make it harder to be remembered not easier. In my view it would be much better spent at other sites- the Wiener Library, and the Imperial War Musuem and in supporting local archives and museums to enable the kind of open national debate which has taken place in Germany.

There has often been an official reluctance to debate or display the difficult areas of British history - or even to erase British crimes as historian Caroline Elkins’ work on Kenya has shown. Archives were destroyed to try and prevent an unpleasant British story being told- one more recent than the Shoah. The recent government response to museums changing their displays makes me worried about the insistence on one narrative which this  memorial might offer.

 I consider the fact that this being considered beside the Buxton memorial (the only site in Central London where there is any acknowledgement of slavery) is what my relatives would once have called a shonde. An abomination. It is a tragedy that there is  still no major musuem about or monument to the victims of slavery in central London..

My father once shared with me his plan for a Holocaust memorial it would involve walking through endless corridors- to be confronted with a mirror.

I am frightened that this bombastic edifice on this site will not only destroy this hard-won calm but will be used towhitewash the role of the Mother of Parliaments  support an implicit narrative that the British are somehow superior, a rhetoric which already being used by the far right - and sadly by  members of Mr Jenrick’s government including the prime minister.

Oliver Goldsmith’s poem The Deserted Village- was written about a village emptied to construct a fashionable landscape garden

“Ill fares the land- to hastening ills a prey where wealth accumulates and men decay.

“Worse I would say in glistening London. to build vast monuments as children drown.”