**10.34 Wilfried Rimensberger**

Public Enquire Victoria Tower Gardens Holocaust Museum

Statement

I’m a Pimlico/Millbank resident for the past 32 years and have 2 children who grew up there. I’m also the longest serving chairman of Millbank Estate and established the local community platform Millbank Creative Works. I run workshops at Tate Britain and collaborate since 2016 with students and lecturers from ChelseaUAL linking them

with local community projects and residents. I’m also a former chairman of the Westminster Residents Panel.

I asked to give my view after being contacted by a number of local residents concerned about the negativ impact the proposed Holocaust Museum  will have locally if it is going to be built in the grounds of Victoria Tower Gardens.

Currently, local residents are mainly using St George’s Square, Millbank Gardens, St John’s Garden and Victoria Tower Gardens and to a lesser degree St James’ Park. These  are all spaces also utilised by tourists and thousands of government employees for an al fresco lunch or just to have a brake from work.

The parks serve the local community to relaxe, play, exercise, and walk their dogs.They are informal meeting places for an increasing number of people on tight budgets but still seeking to socialise across the community mix.

For many years the local population was stagnant. However, over the past 5 years the area is increasingly subjected to property developments and over 1000 new flats have been built in the Millbank Victoria Street neighbourhood and at least the same numbers are currently under construction. I also noticed that families with children are increasingly moving in to the area. Not just in new developments but also older ones such as Millbank Estate where we have a dramatic increase of young professionals with kids. Furthermore, we experience also a dramatic increase of dog owning residents, and increasingly they are of a larger breed such as Huskies and Greyhounds needing more space to run. A trend is also to have more than one dog. As a consequence the local Green spaces are feeling the pressure. For example Milllbank Gardens behind Tate Britain sees now 3 times as many dogs being exercised than 2 years ago. This is the reason why more people now escape to the larger Victoria Tower Gardens.

With over 1000 new local properties going to being released over the coming year the pressure will grow on existing spaces and it will be made worse if the largest available open space is going to be reduced by a museum/education facility with national appeal and all that comes with it. The area is already suffering from regularly blocked  streets and parking spaces needed by coaches transporting demonstrators, visitors to Parliament Square and attractions such as Tate Britain, BUCKINGHAM Palace and regular mass events such as the Virgin Marathon and Prudential Bicycle Race weekend.

Amongst the existing Green spaces, Victoria Tower Gardens is the one providing the largest local open space where dog owners, families, kids and tourists can go about their business with a minimum of constraints. Football playing, badminton, flying a kite is what can all be experienced there at the same time; And locals mingling with tourists. It does not make sense to reduce existing open green spaces in the heart of London when demand is growing from existing residents and further population growth from new developments. And shopping malls included in some of the new developments offering privately owned public realm are no substitute. It is particularly worrying when one considers we all have probably to live with Covid-19 for some time and social distancing and therefore further urban green space needs to be factored in if planning is working properly.

There is no question on the need for Holocaust education facility.

But with a more than suitable alternative space on offer, not far away and where such a facility actually would add an attraction to the area rather than adding to already existing pressure, Millbank residents have great difficulties to understand why Victoria Tower Gardens should be the location.

Wilfried Rimensberger