

Historic England Position Summary

Historic England is a statutory consultee in relation to the historic environment and is the lead body for the heritage sector and the Government's principal adviser on the historic environment.

Historic England entered into pre-application discussions with the applicant in June 2018, and provided ongoing advice before the application was submitted late that year.

Our advice at the application stage and set out in the statement produced for this Inquiry is that the proposals are within or adjacent to a number of designated heritage assets. We considered that the proposal would have an impact on the significance of the Victoria Tower Gardens Grade II registered park and garden, the Grade II* Buxton Memorial Fountain, the Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey including Saint Margaret's Church World Heritage Site, and to archaeological deposits under the proposed development site.

We considered that the proposals would cause a moderate level of less than substantial harm to the significance of the Grade II registered Victoria Gardens through the introduction of a considerable amount of structure and hard landscaping to a historic garden that is currently characterised by open green space. The level of harm would increase if the proposals resulted in the loss or decline of the mature plane trees that line much of the park's perimeter.

The proposals would cause a low to moderate level of less than substantial harm to the Grade II* listed Buxton Memorial through the impact upon its setting arising from the reduction in the visual prominence of the memorial in the open landscape of Victoria Tower Gardens. The proposals, whilst encroaching upon the current unfettered visual relationship between the landscape and architecture of the Houses of Parliament from View 43, would preserve the visual relationship in View 44. In that regard, in our view, the proposals would not significantly harm the Outstanding Universal Value of the Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey including St. Margaret's Church World Heritage Site.

The site is within an archaeologically sensitive location, and to safeguard the archaeological interest on this site, a pre-commencement condition is recommended requiring submission of a written scheme of investigation.

We recognise the importance of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre to London and to the nation, and the potential public benefits it could bring. Given the significance of the assets affected, the harm caused by the development proposals and the permanent feature that these proposals would result in, it should only be accepted if the Secretary of State maker is satisfied that there is clear and convincing justification that the public benefits outweigh the harm identified.