To whom it may concern:

My name is Raphael Wallfisch

I am an international concert cellist and teacher. I was born in London in 1953 and educated in the UK. As a musician, I have had the privilege for many years to experience, first-hand, how it is possible, through the power of music, to communicate and deeply affect the lives of people from every background and ethnicity.

My parents were both refugees coming to Britain after the Holocaust.

My father Peter Wallfisch, and grandmother fled Germany for the British protectorate of Palestine in 1937 , with the special help of Emil Hauser, a member of the famous Budapest Quartet, and he eventually came to Britain in 1951. He was an international concert pianist and teacher at the Royal College of Music.

My mother, Dr Anita Lasker Wallfisch MBE, survived Auschwitz and was liberated by the British army from Bergen Belsen 1945. She came to England in 1946 and became a founding member of the English Chamber Orchestra. Subsequently she has been honoured by the UK, German, Austria and France for her work in Holocaust education.

May I say that my sister and I are deeply indebted to the UK for having eventually allowed my parents to make a new life here after the second world war. We both had a first-class education, as have our own children. We certainly experienced no antisemitism during our childhoods, unlike our parents and grandparents.

It is only comparatively recently that the world has been made aware of a serious antisemitic element within parts of our democratically elected political parties in the UK. It was made clear to all that, tragically, this dangerous and ugly element in human society is alive and well at the very heart of our Democracy.

It is wonderful that the ‘British Values Learning Centre’ should be shown to be a paragon of ‘civilisation’. However, the teaching of history to future generations is only truly valuable if it is rigorously truthful, nonpartisan and laser clear.

Therefore, the proposed ‘British Values Learning Centre’, to be symbolically positioned at the heart of Westminster must reflect, clearly and truthfully, the complete and unvarnished truth of Britain’s role before, during and after, the Jewish Holocaust.

If ever antisemitism is to be eradicated, the history and trajectory for the Jewish people must firstly be taught carefully at all levels within the school curriculum. That means not simply the ancient biblical exodus, the Nazi Holocaust and the Israel-Palestine situation, but clearly and accurately how all these events relate to each other. It is vital to understand why the struggle for existence in Israel for the Jews took place and why it continues to this day.

It is essential to understand why Jews have never been able to truly feel safe – for centuries hounded from one country to another, envied, mistrusted, scapegoated and murdered. This, even though so many Jews clearly contributed and continue to do so, for the good of mankind in so many fields. Just think mathematics, science, medicine, music, education, psychology, human rights, politics, sport and many others.

The acceptance of 1000 Jewish children into the UK, known as ‘Kindertransport’ was a wonderful thing. The liberation by the British Army of Belsen became a triumph, a blessing and an historically great event.

However, I wonder whether the learning centre will feature the parents of the 1000 Kinder? I wonder whether it address the question of Statelessness, the UKs refusal to take more refugees in the 1930s, the refusal to bomb the camps, and above all, the UK government keeping Palestine closed in the 1930s, and even after the war. So many people might have been saved if they had been allowed into Palestine.

 A proposed flagship, a centrally placed Learning Centre MUST address the wider issues of the poison that is antisemitism. This poison has not disappeared. It is a poison that was, for centuries, promoted by Christianity at its most perverted. Ugly but real facts.

I feel that those supporting this venture must also realise that the unbalanced and fragmented teaching of Jewish history actually provokes further antisemitism which may lead to violent attacks against the very edifice – the monument and the learning centre – where this teaching would take place. The historic involvement of the UK in Jewish matters is long and complex, and I trust that the ambitious and well-meaning project proposed for Westminster with reflect the true and complete history of Britain’s multi-nuanced role.

Communication of the truth, which means rigorous balance, research and certainly not vainglorious self-promotion, is vital for the future of mankind and civilisation.

In conclusion if as I hope sincerely, planning is refused for the Learning Centre at this site, it might allow for additional time for the search for a more generous space which would enable a thorough and dedicated study of the history and present state of antisemitism in the UK and worldwide.

Yours sincerely,

Raphael Wallfisch, FRAM, FGSM