

LONDON, NOVEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup> 2020

FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE PLANNING INSPECTORATE  
PROPOSED HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL CENTRE (“HMC”)  
VICTORIA TOWER GARDENS (“VICTORIA GARDENS”), LONDON SW1

STATEMENT OF OBJECTION:

JONATHAN D. LASS – PRIVATE CAPACITY

INTRODUCTION:

1. I HAVE LIVED IN LONDON MY WHOLE LIFE AND AM ENORMOUSLY PROUD OF OUR GREAT CITY. PROFESSIONALLY, I HAVE PRACTISED CORPORATE & COMMERCIAL LAW, MUCH WITH AN INTERNATIONAL ELEMENT. I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH NUMEROUS PHILANTHROPIC AND CHARITABLE CAUSES AND ORGANISATIONS IN LEADERSHIP AND ADVISORY ROLES. I AM A GRADUATE OF CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY AND AM A FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF THE ARTS.
2. HISTORY, THE ARTS, THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT INCLUDING PARKS AND GARDENS, ARE ENDURING INTERESTS. THESE ELEMENTS UNDERPIN WHAT LIVING IN LONDON IS ALL ABOUT. THEY NOURISH OUR SPIRIT AND UPLIFT US: SO VITAL IN THESE CHALLENGING TIMES.
3. I GREW UP IN A TRADITIONAL JEWISH FAMILY AND HAVE HAD A LIFELONG INTEREST AND PASSION FOR JEWISH HISTORY AND EDUCATION.
4. I AM A MEMBER OF THE WEST LONDON SYNAGOGUE OF BRITISH JEWS (“WLS”) UPPER BERKELEY STREET, LONDON W.1. WLS IS THE OLDEST REFORM CONGREGATION IN THE UK FOUNDED IN 1840 WITH SOME 2000 MEMBERS. I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVING WLS IN MANY ROLES, INCLUDING THAT OF CHAIRMAN.
5. MY FATHER WAS BORN IN BRITAIN AND SERVED IN THE ARMY IN WW2. ON THE OTHER HAND MY MOTHER’S FAMILY WERE FROM POLAND AND LATER VIENNA, ESCAPING IN 1938. MOST OF HER LARGE AND EXTENDED FAMILY DIED IN THE HOLOCAUST.

6. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND I FULLY SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL THAT THERE SHOULD BE AN ENHANCED HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE IN CENTRAL LONDON. THIS WOULD BE IN ADDITION TO THE SMALL SCALE AND SADLY NOT WELL-KNOWN MEMORIAL IN HYDE PARK AND THE AMAZING REPOSITORY AT THE WEINER LIBRARY IN BLOOMSBURY. THERE ARE OTHER HOLOCAUST COLLECTIONS IN THE UK, NOTABLY THAT ESTABLISHED BY THE SMITH FAMILY IN LAXTON NOTTINGHAMSHIRE: THE NATIONAL HOLOCAUST CENTRE & MUSEUM.
7. HAVING SAID THIS, I FEAR I CANNOT SUPPORT THE VICTORIA GARDENS PROPOSAL FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS: LOCATION, SCALE, COST & DUPLICATION.
8. THE ENQUIRY WILL HAVE NOTED THE OBJECTIONS OF NUMEROUS BODIES INCLUDING WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL AND ROYAL PARKS. THE CURRENT PROPOSAL RISKS THE POTENTIAL LOSS OF UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE STATUS.
9. THE ENQUIRY HAS HEARD SUBSTANTIAL EVIDENCE DETAILING THE INCONGRUITY OF THE LOCATION. THE NOTION OF SITING AN EDIFICE OF THE MASS PROPOSED TAKING UP ALMOST 30% OF VICTORIA GARDENS WILL, COMBINED WITH THE PROJECTED VISITOR NUMBERS IN SUCH A UNIQUE AND HISTORIC LOCATION IS TROUBLING. THE SCALE IS SUCH TO DETRACT FROM THE EXISTING PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE, THE ABBEY AND VICTORIA GARDENS THEMSELVES. IT WILL HAVE A MATERIALLY DAMAGING IMPACT ON THE PARK AND EQUALLY IMPORTANT, THE VISTA OF THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER.
10. ONE MUST ASK WHAT POSSIBLE RATIONALE COULD THERE BE FOR CHOOSING VICTORIA GARDENS AS THE BEST LOCATION FOR THE MEMORIAL & EDUCATIONAL CENTRE (“MEC”) IN LONDON. THERE HAS BEEN REFERENCE TO CONTRASTING BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY AND VALUES EMBODIED IN THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER AS A BULWARK AGAINST ANTISEMITISM AND GENOCIDE. BUT GIVEN BRITAIN (& the US’S) AMBIVALENT ROLE IN SAVING JEWS IN WW2, THIS SEEMS HARD TO ACCEPT.
11. TO DEPLOY SOME £75 MILLION GOVERNMENT SUPPORT WITH AN ADDITIONAL £25 MILLION OF PRIVATE CONTRIBUTION WOULD BE HARD TO JUSTIFY IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

12. TO MY MIND THE MOST PERSUASIVE ARGUMENT TO REFUSE THE CURRENT PROPOSAL IS SIMPLE:  
DUPLICATION.
13. THE ENQUIRY WILL BE AWARE OF THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM (“IWM”) NOT MORE THAN 1.5  
MILES FROM VICTORIA GARDENS.
14. THE IWM AND CABINET WAR ROOMS HAVE PROVIDED MY FAMILY ACROSS THE GENERATIONS AND  
COUNTLESS VISITORS FROM ABROAD WITH A RICH EXPERIENCE AND SENSE OF HISTORY OVER  
MANY YEARS.
15. IWM COMPLETED REFURBISHMENT OF THEIR WONDERFUL WW1 GALLERIES IN 2018 FOR THE  
CENTENARY OF WW1.
16. IN SEPTEMBER 2021 – IN NO LESS THAN 10 MONTHS FROM NOW, IWM WILL OPEN THEIR NEW,  
ENLARGED GALLERIES AS PART OF THEIR MASTERPLAN DESIGNED BY FOSTER & PARTNERS.  
COMPRISING:
1. NEW HOLOCAUST GALLERIES – SPATIALLY AND INTELLECTUALLY IN THE CONTEXT OF  
WW2 – SOME 1300 SQ METRES.
  2. NEW WW2 GALLERIES, AND MOST IMPORTANT
  3. NEW DIGITALLY ENABLED AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING CENTRE, SOME 500 SQ. METRES.
- A V1 FLYING BOMB WILL BE IN AN ATRIUM BETWEEN THE TWO SPACES, LINKING THE ATTACKS ON  
LONDON IN 1944/5 AND MARKING THE V1 AS THE PRODUCT OF THE HOLOCAUST, AS IT WAS BUILT  
BY SLAVE LABOUR.
17. IWM HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN MAJOR CURATORIAL EFFORT ON THEIR SUBSTANTIAL HOLOCAUST  
ARTEFACTS AND EXHIBITS EXCEEDING 1500 ITEMS. THEY WILL DEPLOY THE LATEST DIGITAL  
TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION FOR ALL VISITORS, YOUNG AND OLD  
ALIKE FROM ALL OVER THE UK AND THE WORLD, PARTICULARLY SCHOOLS WHERE KNOWLEDGE OF  
THE HOLOCAUST IS LIMITED.

18. IWM IS ALSO ENGAGING WITH NUMEROUS OTHER MUSEUMS INCLUDING THE NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVES IN TOKYO AND THE HIROSHIMA PEACE MEMORIAL, TO FURTHER ENHANCE THEIR RESOURCES.
19. IWM HAS RELATIONSHIPS WITH SOME DOZEN MUSEUMS AND INSTITUTIONS IN THE UK TO ENHANCE EDUCATION, SUPPORTED BY UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON.
20. THE IWM IS A WELL RECOGNISED CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE. THE HOLOCAUST GALLERIES FORM PART OF A STATE-OF-THE-ART OFFERING INTEGRATED AS PART OF THE NEW WW2 GALLERIES. THIS IS UNDERPINNED BY A VISIONARY DIGITAL AND EDUCATIONAL OFFERING, WHICH WILL FOCUS ON THE PLACE OF THE HOLOCAUST IN 20-21 CENTURY. EQUALLY IMPORTANT, IT WILL FOCUS ON GENOCIDE AND CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY SINCE WW2, SO AS TO BE RELEVANT TO CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.
21. IT IS MY RESPECTFUL SUBMISSION TO THE ENQUIRY AND ALL THE EMINENT AND DISTINGUISHED INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE GIVEN EVIDENCE, THAT THE IWM HOLOCAUST GALLERIES PROVIDE A FITTING RECORD OF THE HOLOCAUST AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE. IT IS ON THE DOOR STEP OF THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER. NO ADDITIONAL USEFUL PURPOSE IS SERVED BY THE CURRENT SCHEME.
22. HOWEVER, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE HOLOCAUST GALLERIES AND EDUCATIONAL CENTRE COMPREHENSIVE AS IT IS IN ITS CURRENT ITERATION, DOES NOT HAVE "A MEMORIAL" AS SUCH.
23. I WOULD LIKE TO PROPOSE A JOINT VENTURE BETWEEN THE HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL FOUNDATION ("FOUNDATION") AND IWM FOR A COMPETITION TO CREATE AN APPROPRIATE "HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL" EITHER WITHIN THE ENVELOPE OF THE IWM HOLOCAUST GALLERIES, OR POSSIBLY IN THE GROUNDS OF THE IWM, WHERE THERE IS MORE THAN ADEQUATE SPACE. IWM, I IMAGINE, MAY HAVE CONSIDERED THIS AT SOME POINT BUT THIS IS NOT PART OF THE GALLERIES OPENING IN SEPTEMBER 2021.

24. THIS "MEMORIAL" IN THE IWM COULD THEREFORE COMPLETE THE HOLOCAUST GALLERIES USING A FRACTION OF THE £100 M BUDGET OF THE HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL. IT WOULD BE A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FOUNDATION TO WORK WITH IWM TO ACHIEVE THIS, THEREBY AVOIDING THE MATERIAL PROBLEMS POSED BY THE FOUNDATION PROPOSAL.
25. THE CURRENT PROPOSAL HAS DIVIDED OPINION ON SO MANY GROUNDS. IT CANNOT POSSIBLY MAKE SENSE TO CREATE A MASSIVELY EXPENSIVE AND DUPLICATIVE OPTION, WHICH WILL TAKE SEVERAL YEARS TO COMPLETE.
26. WITH GREAT RESPECT, THE PRESENT APPLICATION SHOULD BE REFUSED AND THE PARTIES SHOULD WORK TOGETHER ON A SUITABLE MEMORIAL INCORPORATED AS PART OF IWM'S OUTSTANDING NEW HOLOCAUST GALLERIES AND RESOURCE CENTRE OPENING IN SEPTEMBER 2021 FOR THE BENEFIT OF US ALL AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.

THANK YOU

JONATHAN LASS