

STATEMENT BY BARONESS DEECH

There may be a place for a sixth holocaust memorial in the UK but this is the wrong place. It is understood that the substantial planning objections may be outweighed by strong public interest in putting up a new building. The public interest that may be prayed in aid of granting the application is 1. Prevention of antisemitism and genocide; 2. Learning about the causes of hatred and genocide; and 3. Challenging holocaust denial. Moreover the new holocaust memorial would have to be seen to be meeting those objectives while the existing UK memorials do not. The other major ones are

- **Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre (National Holocaust Centre and Museum) in Nottinghamshire**
- **The Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre, Huddersfield**
- **The Hyde Park Holocaust memorial, in Hyde Park, London.**
- **The Imperial War Museum Holocaust Exhibition in London**
- **The Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide (London)**

Prevention of anti-Semitism and genocide

The claim that it must be sited next to Parliament (albeit on the wrong side from the perspective of parliamentarians approaching the Palace from Whitehall, Portcullis House or the underground), in order to make the point that democracy protects against genocide is

not evidenced by history.[Paper A attached] The Holocaust did not take place because Germany was undemocratic but because of many centuries of racial and religious hatred across Europe. From the Crusades, the expulsion of Jews from Britain in 1290, the Spanish Inquisition, ghettos, the Russian Pale and pogroms, through nineteenth century racial hatred, one can see that governance is less to blame than religious teaching and ethnic or nationalist claims of superiority. The Jewish communities in central and Eastern Europe survived for many centuries without democracy. Democracies across Europe have been powerless to stop the rise of antisemitism and extremism in recent years – on the contrary. [*Antisemitism Overview of data available in the European Union 2008-2018* published by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-antisemitism-overview-2008-2018_en.pdf]. There are over 300 holocaust memorials around the world, from China to New Zealand and, sadly, the countries which have the most, including the USA and France, are also those that have seen the sharpest rise in antisemitic incidents. Bearing in mind that holocaust memorials do not in themselves combat antisemitism and that proximity to government buildings has no discernible effect, statements about needing a reminder to politicians do not amount to a public interest in siting a holocaust memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens (VTG) that can outweigh the drawbacks. Arguably politicians are the category of persons least in need of being reminded about religious and racial tolerance. If it were a simple tourist attraction there might be a case for siting it in central London, but it is designed to be more than that.

A Learning Centre

If the memorial is to be a learning centre then there is no need for it to be in Westminster. The plan does not fulfill earlier criteria relating to education. Evidence of how the memorial plan has grown and been diverted from its original purpose can be found in the Board of Deputies 2014 submission to the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission. The Board noted the inadequacy of Holocaust education (a problem not yet resolved); it noted the urgency of the drive for restitution for victims of the Holocaust, primarily from Poland (also not yet resolved); and it noted that modern antisemitism often takes the form of excessive attacks on the state of Israel. It concluded that the Imperial War Museum exhibition on the Holocaust should be expanded, and praised it for setting the context; and that there should be a "Central London" memorial. This was a much more modest and effective programme. Then the National Holocaust Memorial Foundation September 2015 paper "National Memorial and Learning Centre: Search for a Central London Site" specified as requirements that the chosen site should provide (1) a place where people can pay their respects, contemplate, think and offer prayer, (2) a lecture theatre and classrooms, (3) office for Holocaust educational organisations, and (4) space for gatherings of up to 500 people for commemorative events. Either these requirements have been abandoned or if they are to be met by VTG the space and building required will be far more extensive than the plans seen so far. Current Holocaust education was reviewed and criticised by the University College London Centre for Holocaust Education Report *What do Students know and Understand about the Holocaust* (2016).

<https://www.holocausteducation.org.uk/research/young-people-understand-holocaust/>. There is no evidence in the VTG project that

the recommendations, especially those on p. 219 of the report, will figure in the planned memorial and there is no suggestion anywhere in the UCL Report that siting in Westminster is vital. On the contrary, the Report manifests the need for accessibility to information by schools throughout the country. The National Holocaust Centre in Newark, and others in the North could, if resourced, extend information to a broader section of the population. It is a matter of great concern that siting such a sensitive memorial in Westminster will turn it into just another tourist attraction. Either it is to be a quiet reverent place of learning and memory or a busy noisy irreverent tourist attraction but it cannot be both. There is a category of so-called “dark tourism”, that is visits to sites with connections to tragedy, and it would be hurtful for the VTG memorial to become one more such site.

Holocaust Denial

This is a form of anti-Semitism as well as a distortion of history. Highlighted by the case of David Irving versus Deborah Lipstadt (2000 EWHC QB 115) it has not diminished. However the rate of holocaust denial in the UK is low (6% according to the David Baddiel programme on BBC TV 17th February 2020) and highest in the Middle East, especially the West Bank and Gaza. If there are particular difficulties in teaching children in remote parts of the UK about the Holocaust, or sensitivities surrounding teaching Muslim children, then centralisation in London will not assist. Moreover Holocaust denial is not subject to rational thought and it is highly unlikely that any deniers would visit the new memorial and learning centre and change their minds. The growth in the number of memorials around the world has not served to put an end to

holocaust denial; hate speech laws and regulation of internet media may be more useful in this regard. There is nothing in this problem, grave though it is, that points to a special need to site a new learning centre in Westminster.

Planning

The reasons for objecting on planning grounds will be well covered by other experts, but my own reasons are:

1. Loss of a park. My office overlooks VTG and I walk by it nearly every day. It is well used yet peaceful, and the existing statues in it can be seen and appreciated. It is planning policy not to lose green spaces, especially in London. There are many residential flats surrounding it and this is their breathing space, as it is also for workers in the parliamentary estate; it will be unusable for such purposes if the memorial is built. It is estimated that it will take up 27% of the space; even if that is correct, and it seems an underestimate from the plans, the queues, those who enter and exit, deliveries, food stalls etc. will fill much more space.

2. Security. While of course the Palace of Westminster has security which can be extended, a new and relevant threat is that of protests. As has been seen from the desecration of holocaust memorials around the world (Greece, 4 times in 2018), Trikala 2019, Ukraine twice in 2020, Budapest 2014 and 2016, Finland 2019, Poland several times in 2019, Montevideo 2017, Boston twice in 2017, France Lyon 2019, Latvia, Strasbourg, Oslo 2019, Guernsey 2013, Prague 2019, San Francisco 3 times in 2008, Belarus several times, Berlin, Brussels 2015, Uruguay 2017, New Jersey, Long Island 2019, White Plains

2019, Philadelphia 2019, Glasgow 2019, Weymouth 2012, Salisbury 2018, Ottawa 2020, Seattle 2019, Brooklyn 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/WorldJewishCong/videos/533117130746223/>) in recent years this new one is bound to become a target for vandalism (as were 5 London memorials recently). Those constructions that do not have an immediate visible message about the Holocaust and its gravity are more likely to attract vandalism than those whose message about the holocaust is immediate. The design for VTG invites mis-use because it stands in isolation and there is nothing in the design to indicate any serious historical significance. So it will have to be protected with a fence, or otherwise in a way that will reduce its impact. It will also become a focus for possible terrorist attacks and protests, especially related to Middle East issues. If the proposed Learning Centre also includes the history of LGBT, Roma and other genocides, it will attract protests connected with them too. Recently we have seen the effect of relatively small and peaceful Brexit protests on College Green, on passers by and on politicians. This turmoil will be magnified if the memorial is placed in VTG. Security is likely to mean more checks at the entrance to the Gardens for everyone, whether intending to visit the Memorial or not.

3. Parking. That stretch of Abingdon St/Millbank is narrow enough and the approach from the Lords' car park barrier and Black Rod's Garden barrier is difficult. It has been estimated that 11 coaches will arrive there every day and that each one will take at least 5 minutes to offload passengers and more to re-board them (estimated as at least a million a year, including VIPs and children). That amounts to some hours a day of coaches parking, even if they come sequentially,

and it will be worse still if several arrive together. If, as has been suggested, the Memorial will become a regular stop for important foreign visitors, the road will have to be closed and extra security and cars arranged. [The barriers erected for the Queen's visit for the state opening of Parliament are an illustration.] The safety of traffic, visitors and pedestrians will be imperilled. If the playground is maintained, there will be child protection issues. Visitors to the memorial and families using the playground will mingle, and this will require a risk assessment, not yet carried out as far as is known. The Palace of Westminster will soon be undergoing at least 5 years of refurbishment, which will inevitably bring more building equipment and heavy vehicles to that area. It seems as if the building of the Memorial, if it goes ahead, and the Palace refurbishment will overlap.

4. The view of the Houses of Parliament from Lambeth Bridge will be lost.

5. The Memorial will overshadow both physically and in terms of significance the Buxton memorial to the abolition of slavery. The prospect of permission to build in VTG being given to one persecuted minority and its genocide has already led to requests to build similarly to commemorate other genocides [Armenia and slavery have been mentioned] in those Gardens or other Westminster locations.

6. The design is entirely unsympathetic to the surroundings. The architects entered an almost identical design for the competition to design a memorial in Ottawa, in a much larger site with few

neighbouring buildings. [photos attached]. It was rejected. It has not been changed to blend with the London surroundings. The Canadian context both historical and geographical was entirely different and yet the same design notion was offered as appropriate for London. It looks like a fence – forbidding entry rather than inviting it, challenging the rest of the Gardens rather than complementing them. Where the symbolism of a structure is not immediately apparent to the passer by, it tends to be treated with disrespect, as has been the case with the open air memorial in Berlin consisting of grey concrete slabs. There is research about the inadequacy of the Berlin memorial [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial_to_the_Murdered_Jews_of_Europe#Public_reception_and_criticisms]. The essence of the objections is that the monument lacks specificity (who killed these Jews? when?) and the omission from it of any human figures, names or dates depersonalises and downgrades the tragedy. This is equally true of the Adjaye design. The assumption that everybody will know what it is about could be the first step on the road to anonymity. Visitors use the Berlin outdoor memorial as a playground or picnic site, as I have seen there. The Adjaye/Arad design likewise is lacking in visible historical reference and is aesthetically unrelated to the deaths of 6 million Jews or to the surrounds. It is more representative of the architects' unique style than the memory: to the untutored eye such as mine Adjaye designs are characterised by stripes, horizontal and vertical, and this is another example; it seems that as an afterthought explanations were sought to relate it to the Holocaust. Legitimate resentment on environmental grounds is inimical to the welcoming atmosphere in which such a memorial should be situated. Some observers have described the plan as an eyesore or a giant toastrack.

7. The original cost of the Memorial and learning centre was estimated at £50m, the size of the government grant. According to the answer to a parliamentary question, the current estimate is £102m. There is no public business plan and no detail of how the centre will be organised, and what will happen if the extra funds are not raised or the running costs escalate beyond resources. If it is not maintained properly there will be further damage to this important site.

8. Alterations to the VTG would be contrary to the London County Council (Improvements) Act 1900 s.8, and therefore would result in litigation unless it is repealed by primary legislation. This statutory provision highlights the importance of the dedication of the Gardens in their open accessible condition which has been maintained for over a century without interruption.

9. The evidence of the consideration or rejection of alternative sites is sparse. The reasons for rejecting a learning centre in a Millbank building are out of date. Some other sites spring to mind, such as the Imperial War Museum and the existing Hyde Park memorial; St James' Park, and Lambeth Palace Gardens. A possible compromise would be a smaller memorial in VTG, one that is visually expressive and blends with the other statues there, with signposting to the Imperial War Museum .

10. The inquiry should note the extreme difficulty in expressing objections, whether based solely on planning considerations or to the project itself. Objectors have been described as antisemitic and considerable pressure has been applied to prevent even the most

reasonable of objections. The Jewish community is in fact divided on the worth of the project and 8 Jewish peers wrote to the London Times in 2018 to express this [<https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/eight-jewish-peers-shoah-memorial-evokes-neither-holocaust-nor-jewish-history/>]. The politicisation of the project has destroyed the prospect of its meeting its objectives and the refusal of Ministers to listen to the anxieties of those who lost family members in the Holocaust is distressing.

February 2020

Documents relied on.

1. Dorian Gerhold *Reasons for Locating the Holocaust Memorial Next to Parliament* May 2019

2. *Antisemitism: Overview of Data Available in the European Union 2008-2018*
European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights No. 2019
https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-antisemitism-overview-2008-2018_en.pdf

3. Board of Deputies Submission to the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission 2014 <https://www.bod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/BOD-Holocaust-Commission-Submission-May-2014.pdf>

4. UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation Search for a Central London Site
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/459046/National_Memorial_and_Learning_Centre.pdf

5. UCL *What do students know and understand about the Holocaust?*
<https://www.holocausteducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/What-do-students-know-and-understand-about-the-Holocaust2.pdf>

6. Wikipedia *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe – Public Reception & Criticisms*
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial_to_the_Murdered_Jews_of_Europe#Public_reception_and_criticisms

Reasons for Locating the Holocaust Memorial next to Parliament

Numerous different reasons have been given for placing the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre next to Parliament. This note distinguishes the different reasons and examines whether they form a coherent case for taking over much of a London park for this purpose. All the quotes are from the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation (UKHMF), its members or government ministers.

(1) Statement of British values

It will stand beside Parliament as a permanent statement of our values as a nation. (David Cameron, House of Commons, 27 Jan 2016)

By placing the story of the Holocaust next to our Parliament, our country will make a powerful statement about our own democracy and its values, reminding us what can happen when hatred is left unchecked. (Marcus Jones, Commons Written Parliamentary Answer (WPA) 111709, 6 Nov 2017)

(See also Sir Peter Bazalgette, Observer, letter, 12 Feb 2017.)

This was David Cameron's original justification for the location, but since 2017 has been entirely replaced by different arguments. It is easy to see why: Britain's values did not include generosity towards Jewish refugees in the 1930s, and the reference to British values suggests an inappropriate tone of national self-congratulation.

A more fundamental problem is that it depends on the false idea that democracy and genocide are clear opposites, as if the Holocaust happened because Germany was undemocratic rather than because of racial and religious hatred. Plenty of states have lacked democracy but have not committed genocide, and racial and religious hatred can be (and are) promoted in democracies. The Jewish communities in central and eastern Europe had survived centuries of lack of democracy before the Holocaust took place. The principles violated in the Holocaust were much more basic human values than the values of democracy. Parliament stands for something important but much narrower, namely that government should reflect the will of the people and that it should be accountable; it provides no guarantee about racial and religious hatred being countered. Placing two structures embodying different values next to each other can result only in a muddled statement.

In the second quote above, the final clause, which is a good statement of what the Memorial should do, does not relate at all to what comes before.

(2) Should be beside one of humanity's oldest parliaments/democracies

What could be a more powerful statement of our shared commitment to tolerance and free speech, and our determination to fight extremism and intolerance than to locate a Memorial to honour the victims of one of humanity's greatest tragedies side-by-side with one of humanity's oldest parliaments? (Ed Balls, Evening Standard, 27 Oct 2017)

There is no location more fitting to honour the victims of one of humanity's greatest tragedies than side-by-side with one of humanity's oldest democracies. (Ed Balls, UKHMF exhibition boards, Sept 2018)

The Proposed Development will honour the victims of one of history's greatest tragedies, located beside one of humanity's oldest democracies. (UKHMF, Planning statement, para 6.6, Dec 2018)

The reference to 'one of humanity's oldest parliaments' ignores the English/UK Parliament's long history of religious intolerance, going back to the Commons' insistence on the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290 (J.R. Maddicott, *The origins of the English Parliament 924-1327* (2010), p. 290) and continuing through the persecution of Catholics and Dissenters. There is no reason to link a great tragedy with an old Parliament.

Whether the UK is 'one of humanity's oldest democracies' is arguable, but can only be a reason for placing the Memorial next to it Parliament if a Parliament necessarily protects against racial and religious hatred, which the UKHMF and government ministers themselves contradict in argument 8 below.

(3) To show that Parliament is a bastion against tyrants

It is my hope that when the memorial and learning centre is built, visitors will leave there and look towards this building and recognise that it is a bastion against tyrants. (Lord Pickles, House of Lords, 9 May 2019, c.1381)

[A variant argument] The view from the Memorial to Parliament will remind us all of the role of democracy in standing up whenever our shared values are threatened. (James Brokenshire, *Jewish Chronicle*, 24 Dec 2018)

The English/UK Parliament has been a bastion against tyrants, but not necessarily against racial and religious hatred. And it is not democracy as such that protects from such hatred (and still less a building), but the people whose will is expressed there and the representatives they choose to represent them there; democracy itself does not 'stand up'. Lord Pickles himself has emphasised elsewhere the ability of parliaments to oppress the people (argument 8 below).

There is also a technical problem, as it seems from the plans that visitors leaving the Memorial and Learning Centre be facing away from the Palace of Westminster (this also affects some of the other arguments below).

(4) Eternal promise to remember

By putting our National Holocaust Memorial and Education Centre next to our parliament, we make a solemn and eternal promise that Britain will never forget what happened in the Holocaust. (Theresa May, press release, 7 May 2019)

This is well-meaning nonsense. No politician can make an 'eternal promise' about anything, and no monument placed next to Parliament can make politicians remember anything if they choose not to.

[A variant argument] I believe there can be no more powerful symbol of our commitment to remembering the men, women and children who were murdered in the Holocaust and in subsequent genocides than by placing the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, in the shadow of our Parliament at the heart of our democracy. (James Brokenshire, PM's press release, 7 May 2019)

This makes more sense, but still makes an unconvincing link between democracy and the Holocaust.

(5) Reminder of what happens when democracy is subverted

It will stand in the shadow of parliament to remind us what happens when democracy and society is subverted. (Sir Peter Bazalgette, quoted in the Guardian, 25 Oct 2017)

A Memorial next to the House of Commons reminds us what happens when democracy fails. (Sir John Major, video attached to PM's press release, 7 May 2019)

This is simply untrue. Many democracies have failed without giving rise to genocide. The Memorial will remind us what happens when racial and religious hatred is unchecked (see argument 6), but not what happens when democracy fails.

(6) Reminder of what happens when racism is unchecked

So it's absolutely right that this new national memorial is situated right next to Parliament, so that we can show what happens when racism and prejudice go unchecked. (Tony Blair, video attached to PM's press release, 7 May 2019)

This is a non-sequitur. Tony Blair is right about what the Memorial should show, but it has no bearing on whether the Memorial should be next to Parliament.

(7) Reminder to be vigilant when values are threatened

Situated next to Parliament, the Memorial will stand as a permanent reminder of the responsibilities of citizens in a democracy to be vigilant and responsive whenever our values are threatened. (UKHMF press release, 4 Dec 2018)

By setting history's worst example of the disintegration of democratic values against the greatest emblem of Britain's aspirations for democracy, it will stand as a permanent reminder of the responsibilities of citizens in a democracy to be vigilant and responsive whenever and wherever those values are threatened. (UKHMF, mission statement)

By placing the greatest example of where democratic institutions elsewhere failed to protect its citizens next to our own Parliament, we are making a strong commitment to stand up whenever our shared values are threatened. (Pickles, UKHMF press release, 4 Dec 2018)

This is an important purpose of the Memorial, but it is hard to see how it is furthered by placing the Memorial next to Parliament. If visitors to the Memorial and Learning Centre are to be vigilant when values are threatened, they will need to do this mainly in their local communities. Also, the responsibility is not confined to citizens in democracies, the Holocaust resulted from something more fundamental than 'the disintegration of democratic values', and democratic institutions had vanished from Germany long before the Holocaust (see argument 8).

(8) Reminder that parliaments have the power to oppress; to hold Parliament to account

[Victoria Tower Gardens] 'will allow us to achieve our aim of holding Parliament to account. We all need to speak up to Parliament, to remind our elected representatives of their basic responsibility to protect British people of all faiths and backgrounds. (Lord Pickles and Ed Balls, Evening Standard, 3 Sept 2018)

Having the Memorial adjacent to Parliament will provide a permanent reminder to political leaders and policy makers of the continued need for vigilance in challenging bigotry, division and hatred wherever and whenever it may occur. (UKHMF etc press release, 1 May 2019)

The Proposed Development will remind parliament that it has the power to oppress as well as the power to protect and remind all communities in the UK of the cost of indifference to intolerance and bigotry.’ (UKHMF, Planning statement, para 6.6)

This is also one of the most frequent observations of the few supporters of the proposal on Westminster Council’s planning website who have given any reason for locating the Memorial and Learning Centre in the Gardens. It is a hazardous idea, as it implies that countering racial hatred is the responsibility of someone else, namely parliamentarians, rather than of every visitor to the Memorial.

It makes two doubtful assumptions: that MPs need to be reminded of the cost of intolerance, and that, if they do, they will be influenced by a nearby Memorial.

A related and peculiar aspect of the case made for the placing the Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens is the suggestion that for German parliament was somehow responsible for the rise of the Nazis:

The Government recognised that the Memorial and Learning Centre should stand as a reminder of the role of Parliaments in legitimising the rise of Nazism in Germany.’ (UKHMF, exhibition boards, Sept 2018)

After all, it was another parliament in Germany that legitimised the rise of the Nazi party and the laws that served as the first steps towards the Holocaust. (Lord Pickles and Ed Balls, Evening Standard, 3 Sept 2018)

‘We will remember that it was a compliant legislature [that] introduced the oppressive Nuremberg laws.’ (Lord Pickles, The House, 20 May 2019)

The problem was not that the German parliament ‘legitimised’ the rise of the Nazis (whatever that means), but that a proportion of the German population voted for them and gave them a platform in the parliament and elsewhere. This emphasises that the defence against racial hatred is not democracy as such but a population which opposes it and a political system (whether democratic or not) that enables it to be challenged. The German parliament approved the Nuremberg laws only after all parties except the Nazis had been banned and it was a parliament in name only. Suggesting that the German parliament was responsible for the rise of the Nazis is absurd.

(9) Encourage visitors to learn about Parliament’s decisions at the time of the Holocaust

Victoria Tower Gardens was chosen as the home for the new Memorial and Learning Centre because, in the shadow of Parliament, it will encourage visitors to learn about the challenging decisions our leaders had to make in the lead up to, during and in the aftermath of the Holocaust. (PM’s press release, 7 May 2019)

(See also UKHMF exhibition boards Dec 2018)

This is purely a matter of imparting interesting but inessential information. The Learning Centre does not need to be next to Parliament to do this.

(10) To question the impact of the Holocaust on our own Parliament

‘Under the shadow of Victoria Tower, the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre would question the impacts of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides on our own Parliament.’ (UKHMF, Planning statement, para 4.24)

(See also Jake Berry WPA 203298, 21 Dec 2018)

It is hard to see the relevance of the Holocaust’s impact on the UK Parliament, unless the passage has just been clumsily written and what is meant is that the Learning Centre will examine the decisions made by the UK Parliament during the Holocaust and other genocides. If so, it will make no difference whether the Memorial and Learning Centre are next to Parliament or somewhere else.

(11) To remind that political decisions have consequences

The view of Parliament from the Memorial will serve as a permanent reminder that political decisions have far-reaching consequences. (UKHMF, mission statement; also in UKHMF, Planning statement)

The Government decided to locate the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens so that the view of Parliament from the Memorial will serve as a permanent reminder that political decisions have far-reaching consequences. (Michael Ellis, WPA 239878, 10 Apr 2019; see also WPA 229625, 248586)

This is simply banal. No visitor to the Holocaust Memorial, and no-one with even the most vestigial knowledge of politics or history, could fail to grasp that decisions have consequences. It is impossible to envisage a visitor to the Memorial who would need to see Parliament nearby to understand the point.

(12) Timeless banks of the Thames

The resonance of being next to Parliament and on the timeless banks of the Thames is exceptional (Jake Berry, WPA, 203298, 21 Dec 2018; see also UKHMF, Planning Statement, para 4.24)

No comment needed.

Conclusions

(i) None of the reasons proposed demonstrate that locating the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre next to Parliament will increase their impact. The promoters show a curious lack of confidence in the power of the Holocaust story on its own to have a deep impact on visitors, without the creation of tenuous links with national values and the role of democracy.

(ii) Many of the arguments rely on an unfounded link between democracy or the lack of it and genocide.

(iii) The chaotic variety of different arguments is strong evidence that they are simply an attempt to justify a decision taken for other reasons, namely that the Government and UKHMF wanted a site that was both prominent and cheap (other sites were rejected as 'cost prohibitive').

Victoria Tower Gardens as a garden of conscience and liberties

The only other argument advanced for placing the Memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens is that the Gardens already contain monuments to liberty and can therefore become a 'garden of Britain's national conscience'.

Its relevance as a commemorative garden of Britain's national conscience, already containing significant memorial sculptures, marking momentous historic events, with significance for the struggle for human rights, that remain relevant today and will do so in the future.' (UKHMF, Planning statement, para 4.24; see also WPA 203298)

Victoria Tower Gardens is already home to memorials that celebrate the fight against slavery, inequality and injustice. A Holocaust Memorial is a perfect fit to this long established theme providing an exceptionally good reason why it should be located within the Gardens. (UKHMF, Planning statement, para 6.5)

[The Memorial will] Be a logical and harmonious addition to the existing memorials in the Gardens, and viewed as a physical representation of the United Kingdom's conscience and values.' (UKHMF, exhibition boards, Sept 2018)

The overall proposal seeks to complete the commemorative narrative of the existing, historic monuments to freedom and injustice.' (UKHMF, exhibition boards, Sept 2018)

The two monuments [Buxton and Holocaust] will create a very powerful agency together. They will stand stronger side by side at the heart of democracy to speak truth to power.' (Sir David Adjaye, quoted on UKHMF exhibition boards, Dec 2018)

There are three monuments currently in the Gardens:

- (i) The burghers of Calais. This commemorates the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy on a specific occasion. It has no long-term significance whatever in the story of human rights and liberties.
- (ii) Emmeline Pankhurst. This is the only one of the three that relates to human rights and liberties within the UK, commemorating the long struggle for female suffrage.
- (iii) The Buxton Memorial. This commemorates the fight against slavery overseas, though not the slaves themselves.

A memorial to six million people murdered hardly forms a series with these. The people who wrote that the Holocaust Memorial 'seeks to complete the commemorative narrative of the existing, historic monuments to freedom and injustice' and 'a logical and harmonious addition to the existing memorials' must have been unaware of what the existing memorials were.

There is also a muddle over whether the garden would be about national conscience or human rights and liberties, which are rather different things. A garden of national conscience would presumably concentrate on things for which England or the UK were responsible, such as transatlantic slavery, the Irish famine and the Amritsar massacre. Whatever the UK's failings during the Holocaust, it was not responsible for it. A garden of human rights and liberties would have a different set of memorials; these might be expected to commemorate in some form Magna Carta, the Petition of Right, the Declaration of Right, the Somerset judgment and many others – in fact enough to fill several royal parks.

The final quote forms a special category of meaninglessness. The two monuments have such different messages that it will be impossible to determine what truth they are supposed to be speaking to power.

Dorian Gerhold 28 May 2019

1. Adjaye design for Ottawa Holocaust Memorial, rejected





Adjaye design for London

2. Ottawa memorial as built

