

Summary Proof

Appraisal of Design, Architecture, Townscape, and Visual Amenity

Professor Robert Tavernor, BA, DipArch, PhD, RIBA

Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 77; Town and Country Planning (Inquiries Procedure) (England) Rules 2000

Call-in Inquiry into the Proposed Development of the United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre located within Victoria Tower Gardens, Millbank, London, SW1P 3YB

Local Planning Authority Reference: 19/00114/FULL

September 2020

Planning Inspectorate Ref: APP/X5990/V/19/3240661

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Appraisal by Professor Robert Tavernor of Design, Architecture, Townscape, and Visual Amenity



Proposed aerial view of raised landform and memorial beyond

1.0 Appointment and Scope of Proof

Introduction

- 1.1 My name is Professor Robert Tavernor, BA, DipArch, PhD, RIBA. I am Emeritus Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), and have held other university chairs nationally (Edinburgh and Bath) and visiting professorships internationally. As an architectural and urban design consultant I provide – with my colleagues in the Tavernor Consultancy – architectural, heritage and urban planning advice to institutions, developers, and architects. Most our work has related to large-scale masterplanning and building design submissions (including in London: Greenwich Peninsula, Croydon Gateway, New Wembley, Battersea Power Station and Earls Court) and the design of individual buildings very large and small. We have advised on the townscape and heritage

impacts of approximately 500 projects in central London during the last 20 years, and regularly consider their visual impact on London's World Heritage Sites.

- 1.2 My first involvement with the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre (UKHMLC) was at the competition stage in January 2017 when I was asked by Adjaye Associates to review their competition design proposals. I know and admire their work as architects and have worked with them previously on several major planning applications in London. On winning the design competition, Adjaye Associates appointed me to provide them with direct Design, Architecture, Townscape, and Visual Amenity advice as part of the package of services that they provided for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). My advice was formalized in an Independent Architecture, Heritage and Townscape Statement that Adjaye Associates appended to their Design and Access Statement for the December 2018 Planning Application, and the April 2019 Planning Application Addendum (CDs 6.11/6.12 and 6.15). My advice was provided independently of Montagu Evans who wrote the Built Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (HTVIA) chapter in the Environmental Statement (ES, Vol. 3; CDs 6.11/6.12 and 6.28/6.29), and who were appointed on a direct contract with the MHCLG.



View south from adjacent to Rodin's sculpture 'The Burghers of Calais' with the Buxton Memorial Fountain, Memorial Fins and proposed landform rising in the distance

Scope of Proof

- 1.3 As an extension of my Independent Architecture, Heritage and Townscape Statement for Adjaye Associates, I was appointed by MHCLG to write an Independent Appraisal of the Design, Architecture, Townscape, and Visual Amenity of the Call-in Scheme.
- 1.4 I do not repeat in my proof the work of Montagu Evans (ME) in relation to their Heritage and Townscape Visual Impact Assessment (HTVIA). Having read their separate HTVIA (the key views component of which is abridged in Section 6.1 of architects' Design and Access Statement (DAS)) I state simply and directly that I concur with their townscape conclusions, principally that the visual effects of the Call-in Scheme will be beneficial to Victoria Tower Gardens and the assets it contains and that surround it.
- 1.5 Adjaye Associates' 2018 DAS provides a comprehensive account of the proposals and its detail, which is updated in their 2019 Addendum (CD 6.15). Sir David Adjaye and Asa Bruno's architectural design evidence for the present inquiry (on behalf of Adjaye Architects and Ron Arad Architects, respectively), and Donncha O'Shea's landscape design evidence (on behalf of Gustafson Porter + Bowman) set out their responses to the brief in great detail, and I will simply introduce the main elements of the Call-in Scheme in section 3 of my proof before presenting the illustrated kinetic sequences in section 4. I am in no doubt, from having studied their documents that the proposed design will be an appropriate – indeed, world-class – architectural and landscape intervention within the Grade II Registered Victoria Tower Gardens. More completely, as I conclude in section 5 of my proof, I firmly believe the Call-in Scheme – through its design and architecture, and responses to townscape, and visual amenity – will enhance in townscape terms the settings of the adjacent World Heritage Site (WHS) and Palace of Westminster, and will increase the opportunity for existing and proposed new users of Victoria Tower Gardens to enjoy and appreciate the cherished artefacts already sited within it.
- 1.6 To explain my positive conclusions regarding the Call-in Scheme and its effects, I firstly describe in my proof my experience of the Application Site in relation to the memorials of Victoria Tower Gardens and their setting (section 2), before appraising the character and qualities of the Call-in Scheme's design and architecture (section 3), and – by referring to key kinetic experiences through Victoria Tower Gardens – the proposed townscape effects and amenities (section 4). My appraisal is based on 40 years' experience as an academic, architectural and urban historian, critic and

author, and – in the last 20 years – as a provider of consultancy advice that has focused on many significant architectural and urban developments in London. I explain in my proof why I believe this is an appropriate site for the Call-in Scheme, and why I am convinced it will be a world-class and thoroughly worthwhile addition to the experience of the adjacent WHS and this specific part of central London.



View north across the Memorial Courtyard to the Memorial Fins

2.0 Conclusions

2.1 I consider in my proof the potential of Victoria Tower Gardens to accommodate the proposals based on the relevant documentation and evidence received from the design and planning team, and my extensive experience gained from advising on major developments in London. The kinetic sequences set out in the proof illustrate the character and quality of the proposals as they are likely to be experienced by pedestrians moving around, through and into the UKHMLC.

2.2 My conclusions regarding the Call-in Scheme are that:

2.2.1 The UKHMLC will have some minor visibility on key views outside Victoria Tower Gardens – very little visibility from Lambeth Bridge and from the northern end of Millbank near the gate which leads to the Pankhurst

memorial. The bronze Memorial Fins will be more visible across Millbank from adjacent to Great Peter Street and Dean Stanley Street, where the abstract character and coloration of the slightly patinated Memorial Fins will read as an intermediary element between the natural vegetation of the Gardens and the polychromed and very geometric Buxton Memorial Fountain beyond the proposed Memorial Courtyard. This relationship will be visually attractive and intriguing and is likely to draw visitors towards this part of Victoria Tower Gardens. Where visible externally, the Call-in Scheme will add positively to the character of the Gardens.

- 2.2.2 Within the Gardens the Call-in Scheme will enhance views south from its wider northern end: the lawn will tilt up and away from the viewer and will provide the narrowing Gardens with a powerful new landform, enhancing the setting of the adjacent Buxton Memorial Fountain bordered by the existing mature trees: the visible tops of the bronze Memorial Fins will provide a subtle visual conclusion to the lawn and their coloration and articulation will relate positively to the trees and natural vegetation of the Gardens. The setting of Buxton Memorial Fountain will be enhanced by the visual relationship with the Memorial Fins and the complementary themes they convey of 'humanity over inhumanity'.
- 2.2.3 The proposed playground and kiosk beyond the raised landform will be hidden from view when standing at the northern end of the Gardens and from within the Parliamentary Education Centre. As will the increased number and activity of visitors as they converge on the proposed Entrance Pavilion and make their way through the gently sloping Memorial Courtyard towards and between the bronze Memorial Fins down into the Learning Centre concealed below ground.
- 2.2.4 Approaching Millbank from Lambeth Bridge the mature trees will continue to dominate and largely shroud Victoria Tower Gardens and the rich visual backdrop of the Palace of Westminster of the WHS will continue to provide the principal focus of views – along the river frontage and along its skyline silhouette. There will be glimpses between the mature trees bordering the Gardens of the proposed structures within – especially the kiosk, Entrance Pavilion and Memorial Fins – each with their own distinct shape and character, and with the bronze Fins also drawing the gaze due their coloration. They will serve to provide the interior of the Gardens with visual

depth and interest for passers-by and passers-through, as well as providing a visual structure and hierarchy, aiding wayfinding for visitors to the UKHMLC.

- 2.2.5 The southern end of Victoria Tower Gardens will be provided with a new and powerful character and sense of place, which will be very specific to that end of the Gardens. The majority of the Gardens will have a very different character, distinctly separate from the southern end. Here, where the Gardens are their widest a carpet of grass will be maintained and subtly sloped above the proposed Learning Centre and landscaped with meandering paths. The proposed raised landform will provide visitors with a new viewing area where they can pause and appreciate the south elevation of the Palace of Westminster beyond the Parliamentary Education Centre at its base.
- 2.2.6 The settings of the existing memorials in the Gardens will also be respected and enhanced. At the northern end, the settings of the Emmeline Pankhurst Memorial by the northwest entrance to the Gardens, and Rodin's 'The Burghers of Calais' located centrally adjacent to the Parliamentary Education Centre will remain unchanged. At the southern end, the Spicer Memorial will be acknowledged by an embracing curve of the northern boundary of the proposed Playground and will have more prominence as seen by visitors entering and exiting the proposed Entrance Pavilion of the UKHMLC. The Buxton Memorial Fountain will remain visible outside the Gardens when moving east from Smith Square down Dean Stanley Street towards Millbank and the Gardens – the Memorial Fins to its right will accentuate its visibility without detracting from its setting. In views from the north of the Gardens looking south the Buxton Memorial will be seen as integral to the proposed landscape layout, and it will mark the threshold between the larger open landscape of the majority of the Gardens closest to the WHS, and the UKHMLC entrance and Playground in the more contained area to the south.
- 2.3 Fundamental to the whole notion of the UKHMLC, the Call-in Scheme represents a complementary addition to the existing Victoria Tower Garden memorial thematic of 'humanity versus inhumanity'. I firmly believe that the Call-in Scheme will be an exemplary work of architecture and landscape design and, as such, will enhance the existing Gardens as a whole, as well as the existing memorials. I therefore fully endorse the proposed United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre and commend to the Inspector its design and architecture, townscape effects and proposed amenities.

Professor Robert Tavernor, *RIBA*



View north from top of mound, approximately 6m higher than base of Rodin sculpture in the distance, providing a new elevated view of the south front of the Palace of Westminster and WHS.