**PLANNING INSPECTORATE REF APP/X5990/V/19/3240661**

**HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL**

**Summary of Proof from Baroness Deech**

**I am a crossbench peer and the descendant of Holocaust victims. I have visited Holocaust memorials all over the world and studied research into their purposes and effects.**

**The substantial planning objections to siting this 6th UK Memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens are not outweighed by any 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 by presenting the facts. Moreover the new holocaust memorial would have to be seen to be meeting those objectives while the existing UK memorials do not. The planned Memorial contributes nothing additional or different in support of those public interest objectives that is not already achieved by other museums and projects.**

1. ***Prevention of antisemitism 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. UK politicians are the category of people least in need of being reminded about religious and racial intolerance.**

**The Holocaust did not take place because Germany was undemocratic or lacked a parliamentary system, 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 persecution 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. There are over 300 Holocaust Memorials around the world and many are situated in countries (near government buildings) that have seen the sharpest rise in antisemitism in recent years.**

1. ***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 fufill earlier criteria relating to holocaust 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; the urgency of the drive for restitution for victims of the Holocaust, primarily from Poland, 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. The aims of the project have evolved into the promulgation of British values: integration, anti-extremism and faith as the foundation of those values, to such an extent that it is now more of a monument to those values than a focus on the Holocaust, thereby displacing the responsibility for it and other recent genocides.**

**Given the reported inadequacies of school holocaust education, much more would be achieved by overhauling it. It is now clear that the most effective, economical and accessible education would be digital. This could reach every school and interested party everywhere and there is already much relevant material on line.**

1. ***Holocaust Denial***

**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. The memories of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust are recorded in two oral history projects of the British Library, the Living Memory of the Jewish Community, and the Holocaust Survivors’ Centre interviews. The Kindertransport is covered by the National Holocaust Centre and the new Harwich project. Contextual history is provided by the Imperial War Museum exhibition (and also the RAF Museum), both of which would be relevant settings for a study of British values. There is nothing in this problem of holocaust denial, grave though it is, that points to a special need to site a new learning centre in Westminster.**

**The objections to the site, relating to traffic, trees, loss of a park etc. are well known. Security is a particular issue. As has been seen from the recent 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 2016 and 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, Paris 2019, Oslo 2019, Ottawa 2020, Seattle 2019, Belarus several times; Brooklyn 2019, Oradour 2020), a 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 and graphic. 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 barrier, or otherwise in a way that will reduce its impact. It will also become a focus for terrorist attacks and protests, as evidenced by recent Westminster demonstrations causing damage to monuments.**

**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. It was rejected. The Canadian context, both historical and geographical, was very 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. The essence of the objections to the Berlin one is that the memorial lacks specificity (who killed these Jews? when?) and the omission from it of any human figures, names or dates, thus depersonalising and downgrading the tragedy. 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.**

**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. The presence of a sombre memorial does not sit with the presence of a children’s playground. The re-vamped playground has not been shown to meet the ROSPA and Royal Parks standards and there could be child protection issues.**

**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, even from holocaust education specialists. The Jewish community is in fact divided on the worth of the project. The politicisation and instrumentalisation of the project have destroyed the prospect of its meeting its objectives, and the refusal of Ministers and the Foundation to listen to the anxieties of those who lost family members in the Holocaust is distressing.**