

The Westminster Society earnestly shares the desire of this application to see built a national Holocaust Memorial and centre for study-- to quote Co-chair Ed Ball's words-- "both as a permanent record of the past and a clear warning for the future." But we are appalled by the catastrophic choice of site, which seems profoundly misjudged to our Executive Committee. Its design, somewhat uninspiring as it appears to us, severely miscalculates the public space required, introduces unwanted turbulence in the tranquil park, and proposes to place an inevitable attraction to terrorism alongside our principal structures of government. Above all, we believe that Westminster Planners should recognise that approval of this unsatisfactory proposal would tragically preclude a better-considered Holocaust Memorial on an appropriate site.

Our specific objections are these:

(a) Victoria Tower Gardens is a peaceful park highly cherished by all who live and work nearby. Parks aren't convenient sites for appropriation, even for noble projects. This proposal ignores Royal Parks protections, overrides the location's particular significance in history, and overpowers its two existing historical monuments, the Buxton Memorial and the Burghers of Calais.

(b) The sizeable demand for admission, visitor coach congestion and intensified security measures that will be added to those already required by Parliament will impair successful public access to both.

(c) Though the proposed design's quality as such may not be deemed a planning issue that Westminster is prepared to comment on, planners must consider the size of site related to suitable use, particularly in a design intended for the public at large. Part of a well-conceived Holocaust Memorial, we believe, should be a quiet and amply sized working library for scholars, as well as a learning centre for schoolchildren and visitors off tour buses.

(d) The choice of site is severely shortsighted in that it ignores Parliament's own likely future requirements in 10 to 50 years. Parliament's proposed expenditure of billions for the refurbishment of the Palace of Westminster has earmarked nothing for an adopted masterplan that should determine enhancement to the entire parliamentary precinct, including, for example, how Victoria Tower Gardens might be enlarged by rerouted traffic and improved by pedestrianisation that could begin from Parliament Square. A masterplan, which every decent university and corporation undertakes, is vital to determining needs and connections and designing for the future. An approved masterplan should self-evidently precede an application like this.

This very unsatisfactory planning application should be withdrawn, or decisively rejected by Westminster.