

Victoria Tower Gardens Position Statement

The London Parks and Gardens Trust would warmly welcome the construction of a new Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre. We do however urge the Government and the Holocaust Memorial Foundation to urgently reconsider the current proposed location.

We believe that Victoria Tower Gardens is the wrong choice, because the character of the park will be so dramatically and irrevocably changed.

For almost 150 years, the park has succeeded in providing a surprisingly tranquil retreat in a part of central London with very limited quiet green space. The power of the park lies in its natural simplicity, with a beautiful and uninterrupted sweep of grass between rows of magnificent plane trees. This succeeds in providing the perfect foil to the House of Lords.

The proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre anticipates one million visitors a year. The long sweeping lawn of the Gardens will be split apart by a broad moat-like structure, the 80 metre ramp leading down towards the Learning Centre entrance.

A development at the scale proposed will demand civic space and hardstanding at the expense of parkland. It will need associated infrastructure which will be visually intrusive in this listed setting, and extensive paved areas to accommodate the crowds. Prominent new weather-proofed lift pods, escape staircases, service ducts, vents and grilles will all need to be erected at ground level.

Little of the tranquil nature and integrity of Victoria Tower Gardens will survive. Victoria Tower Gardens is a Grade II* listed park created in 1864-70 following the embankment of the Thames. It provides the setting to Victoria Tower, gates to Black Rod Garden; and Rodin's Grade 1 listed Burghers of Calais. It is in a Conservation Area and partly within the UNESCO World Heritage Site, and is designated a zone of Monument Saturation.

Editor's note: The London Parks and Gardens Trust seeks to increase knowledge and appreciation of the places that form London's open space network. We support the petition for relocation led by Barbara Weiss and the Skyline Campaign.

The Trust has been approached to support a campaign to seek alternative accommodation for the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre. The petition launched on change.org can be found here:

<https://www.change.org/p/sir-peter-bazalgette-save-victoria-tower-gardens-no-building-in-this-precious-london-park>