

LETTER to all MPs 28/2/2023

The case for preserving Victoria Tower Gardens and supporting an alternative National Holocaust Memorial

Dear Colleagues

You will have received a letter and a pamphlet from DLUHC Minister Felicity Buchan on 23rd February, about the Holocaust Memorial Bill – in advance of a briefing for parliamentarians.

The information supplied to you by DLUHC contains several serious errors and other misleading information, as set out in detail in the document sent with this letter.

We are supportive of the noble aims of this initiative to tackle antisemitism. But, by choosing to build on a protected park, the Memorial as proposed is in the wrong place and, importantly, fails to meet the requirements defined by the Holocaust Memorial Foundation in September 2015.

Major issues include:

1. *The loss of open space in a public park* – directly contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework;
2. *The park is small and the area of it affected by the Memorial is much larger than claimed by DLUHC*; the construction of a large building attracting several million visitors a year will completely change the character of the park, turning much of it into a civic space;
3. *DLUHC failed to conduct a regular site search and to consider alternatives* which could meet the Government's criterion of closeness to Parliament better than Victoria Tower Gardens, eg *College Green, Richmond House on Whitehall, Parliament Square itself, or the site of the temporary Parliament Education Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens itself*;
4. *There has been no consultation on the Victoria Tower Gardens site*, which was not chosen by the Holocaust Memorial Commission in 2015 and falls far short of the requirements defined by the Holocaust Memorial Foundation in 2015 – for which see https://www.westminster.gov.uk/sites/default/files/national_memorial_and_learning_centre.pdf ;
5. *There is considerable antagonism in some parts of the Jewish community* to the project, for a host of reasons, not least among them security concerns due to rising antisemitism, and about whether this plan on this site is the best possible way to remember the Holocaust;
6. *DLUHC continues to ignore the importance of the Buxton Memorial commemorating the abolition of slavery – which will be overshadowed by the proposed Holocaust Memorial.*
7. *The concerns about the management and costs of the project raised by the National Audit Office in June 2022 are deeply worrying and have not been addressed by DLUHC.*

Please read the attached document and vote against the bill which fails to deliver on the noble intentions that inspired it.

We know colleagues may well feel uneasy about perceptions of antisemitism, but we assure you that our objections to the current proposals arise from the scale of the proposal, its

impact on the World Heritage Site, and its destruction of a precious public park, and not to the concept itself.

We must keep a highly used public park open for future generations by defeating or amending this Bill. This will lead to a more appropriate Holocaust Memorial than currently proposed, one that can be even closer to the Palace of Westminster - and will ensure that Holocaust education and Holocaust awareness are national commitments.

Please contact any of us if you would like to discuss this further.

Sir Peter Bottomley, MP

Baroness Brown of Cambridge

Lord Carlile of Berriew

Lord Cormack

Baroness Deech

Baroness Fleet

Lord Laming

Lord Williams of Oystermouth (Rowan Williams)