

**PRESS RELEASE, 1/10/24:**

## **UK Holocaust Memorial: Lords suggest a new approach**

After nine years of bitter dispute over the location of the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre proposed for Victoria Tower Gardens [1], and with peers calling in the Lords last month for a rethink of the project, a compromise proposal is gathering high-profile support in the Palace of Westminster.

Peers have urged that a Holocaust Memorial be built in Victoria Tower Gardens, similar in scale to other structures in the park. The group then proposes that a substantial Learning Centre should be built in a high traffic location elsewhere in London, combined with the well-established Jewish Museum London, which will soon be seeking a new location and new building [2].

The proposal is supported by Save Victoria Tower Gardens [3], The Thorney Island Society, London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust and other bodies campaigning to protect Victoria Tower Gardens.

In 2016 the Cameron government chose Victoria Tower Gardens as the site for the new Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre. The park had never been on the list of sites under consideration, and it fell very far short of the selection criteria set out by the 2015 Holocaust Commission [4]. Last month Lord Wajid Khan, a Minister of State in MHCLG, finally admitted in Parliament that his predecessors had failed to consult properly and widely regarding the choice of VTG [5].

During a recent debate in the House of Lords [6], Lord Lee of Trafford, President of the Association of Leading Attractions, and a former Tourism Minister, was one of many members of the House of Lords to suggest linking the Holocaust Learning Centre with the Jewish Museum. Speaking after the debate, Lord Lee said:

*“Siting a large Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in a cramped and already congested area makes no sense. Far better to combine it with a Jewish Museum on a new site with easy and open visitor access.”*

Baroness Deech said:

*“The Holocaust should not be taught in isolation from Jewish history. We need to teach people about Jewish life, not just about Jewish death. Marrying the Holocaust Learning Centre with the Jewish Museum would ensure that we set the Holocaust in the context of Jewish history, faith, culture and contribution, able to explore a thousand years of Jewish life in Britain, its triumphs and tragedies.”*

A spokesperson for the Save Victoria Tower Gardens Campaign said:

*“A memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens, on a similar scale to the Buxton Memorial or Burghers of Calais, could easily be accommodated within the park without affecting everyday use of it. Constructing the proposed underground Learning Centre in the Gardens would be much more expensive and high-risk, as well as being extremely disruptive for park users. Moreover, as*

*Holocaust Survivor Martin Stern has said, "the Learning Centre would be too large for the park, but too small for its intended purpose."*

More than two years after the High Court quashed planning permission for the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, on the grounds that Victoria Tower Gardens is protected for use as a public park [7], there is now a chance that a different kind of project could take shape.

As currently proposed, the Memorial and Learning Centre is budgeted to cost at least £200m [8]. Sitting below the water table in a flood zone, it will be an engineering challenge; sitting in a public park it will restrict access and normal recreation.

The new proposal could be completed quickly, while survivors of the Nazis are still with us, and would be less expensive to build, meaning that more could be invested in education than in construction.

Campaigners hope that the new government will listen to constructive suggestions and expert opinion, for the benefit of the project and all concerned.

### Notes for Editors

1. The proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre features 23 bronze fins atop a large grass mound in the middle of VTG, with an underground learning centre [whose exact contents are as yet unclear, but which will be largely or wholly digital](#).
2. <https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/2023/06/01/jewish-museum-london-announces-closure-of-current-building/>
3. Save Victoria Tower Gardens is a campaign which unites local people and environmentalists, and Jewish and non-Jewish people concerned about the nature of the project's educational proposals and its destruction of parkland.
4. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7e51c1e5274a2e8ab47401/Holocaust Commission Report Britains promise to remember.pdf>
5. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-09-04/debates/5FC010DB-3032-4DB7-946C-A558233E6D70/HolocaustMemorialBill> - Column 1225: *"General public consultation was not carried out at the stage of recommending a preferred site because at that point, there were no clear proposals for what a memorial would look like and how it would sit within Victoria Tower Gardens."*
6. [The Holocaust Memorial Bill](#) has been introduced to enable building a Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre (HMLC) in Victoria Tower Gardens (VTG) next to Parliament. The Bill would also give the government powers to use public funds to build and operate the HMLC. The [Commons Select Committee](#) appointed to examine the Bill was highly critical of the project as currently proposed. The Bill was [debated in the House of Lords](#) on 4 September 2024 and is due to go before a House of Lords Select Committee, to consider possible amendments.
7. <https://londongardenstrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/London-Historic-Parks-and-Gardens-Trust-v-Minister-of-State-for-Housing-Judgement-Final.pdf>
8. In April 2024 DLUHC, now MHCLG, [published a letter](#) on its website, appointing Peter Lee as Senior Responsible Owner for the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre programme.

In this letter Mr Lee is authorised to “approve expenditure of £138.8 million plus a contingency allocation of £51.8 million” which, with inflation is likely to be more by now. The letter has since been updated online to remove these figures, and the Government continues to quote a budget of £138.8m plus an unspecified contingency.

**For more information, please contact: [savevictoriatowergardens@gmail.com](mailto:savevictoriatowergardens@gmail.com) or 07887 563357**

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SVTG

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