



Historic England

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Our ref: PA00848005
Your ref: Victoria Tower

7 November 2018

Dear Dr Miele

Pre-application Advice

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL, VICTORIA TOWER GARDENS, SW1 3JA

Thank you for arranging the presentation of the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre to our London Advisory Committee on 25 September. The Committee formally considered the proposals on 27 September, and its members' views have informed the Historic England position as follows. In summary, whilst we broadly support the principle of the project, we are concerned at the increased scale of the proposals and how they relate to this very constrained and sensitive historic site.

We note that the competition-winning design concept by Adjaye Associates, Ron Arad Architects and Gustafson Porter + Bowman (landscape architects) has been significantly developed over the past year, and that the addition of an entrance pavilion has increased the overall size of the memorial and learning centre. In order to understand the justification for the larger entrance pavilion, we would welcome sight of a visitor management strategy. We would also welcome further discussions on how the increasing impact of the proposals on the surrounding historic environment could be mitigated. Given this impact, we encourage you to take this opportunity to reconsider whether a memorial and education centre of this scale could be more appropriately sited at another larger location, for example, at the Imperial War Museum. We would be happy to be engaged in this conversation. If this remains the Government's preferred location, however, then the provision of a large memorial and visitors' centre as proposed means that there will be unavoidable impacts on the heritage of this relatively small site. What follows is a brief summary of some of the most significant impacts. Most of the intervention associated with the memorial and learning centre occurs underground so there are potential impacts on archaeology and existing mature trees. The southern third of the park would be transformed by the



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removal of grass and planting and their replacement with hard landscaping and structure, including the large entrance pavilion. The tops of the bronze fins and raised green roof of this building would be visible at the southern tip of the landscape when viewed from the north and the proposed memorial structures would be visually prominent in views from the south of the gardens and from the west. The landscape would be modified on top of the raised green roof of the learning centre and north of the proposed memorial with new path network linking the listed statues, which will remain in their current position.

In considering the current proposals we have looked at the historic environment in the round, which here means special attention to the impacts on landscape, setting of listed buildings and memorials, and archaeology. We have clear recommendations as to how the identified harm could be reduced which will be considered in turn below. The most obvious impact on significance relates to the loss of open green space to the Grade II registered park and the harm to its character, function and use that will inevitably follow the introduction of the memorial. The provision of a designed landscape south of the Palace of Westminster from 1879 created the modern relationship of that building with its wider setting as a major monument rising above semi-pastoral parkland. It follows that the open space is a key element of the significance of the designed landscape, and any reduction of open space would cause harm. With this in mind, we encourage you to consider how modifications to the design could substantially reduce the footprint of the entrance pavilion.

With regard to the existing mature plane trees that line the perimeter of the park, help frame views towards Victoria Tower and the Palace of Westminster, and contribute strongly to the significance of the Grade II registered landscape, we encourage you to assess the impact on these trees and provide clear and convincing confirmation that the proposals would not harm them.

The increased size of the proposed Holocaust Memorial would also have an impact on the significance of the Grade II* listed Buxton Memorial by encroaching upon its setting. Whilst we acknowledge that the memorial was moved to its current site during the mid-20th century, it enjoys a prominent position within the landscape of Victoria Tower Gardens, the open setting of which contributes to the significance of Victorian memorial. The proposed Holocaust Memorial would be sited very close to the Buxton Memorial, reducing its prominence and potentially dominating its architecturally exuberant but much smaller design, altogether harming its significance. We therefore encourage you to consider whether a better solution would be to re-site the Buxton Memorial to avoid competition between these two deeply important commemorations, and to allow the Buxton to retain its prominence. We welcome the proposals to conserve the memorial including reviving its function as a working water fountain.



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The proposals have the potential to harm significant archaeological deposits on the site, and we look forward to more detailed evaluations to assess the likely impacts. We encourage you to carefully evaluate the site's archaeological potential while producing a clear strategy to manage and mitigate the risk of major discoveries.

Overall, Historic England supports the principle of the Holocaust Memorial and the public benefits it would bring. Given the historic and deep sensitivity of this particular site, we encourage further consideration of whether less harm would result from an intervention within a larger and less sensitive landscape. However, should Victoria Tower Gardens remain the preferred site for the memorial, we encourage you to consider and prepare a suitable mitigation strategy for harm caused across the site as well as consideration of the recommendations above. We would also urge you to consider the proposals in the context of the Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster.

Significance

What follows, for context, is a summary of the historic environment significance of the proposed site of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre at the southern end of Victoria Tower Gardens, a Grade II registered landscape laid out as a public open space for recreation and enjoyment in 1879, and extended between 1912-1914 after the river was embanked south of Westminster Palace. A children's play area and the Spicer Memorial were introduced in the 1920s. The garden was simplified in the 1930s to maximise views towards Parliament, and therefore now mostly consists of lawn, which is divided by paths and enclosed by railings, the Thames Embankment and rows of plane trees that line the perimeter paths on the west and east sides. Further changes to the landscape were carried out in 1955 to better integrate the memorials and statues within the garden (namely, Burghers of Calais, by Rodin, Grade I; Emmeline Pankhurst, Grade II and currently under assessment for upgrading to II*; SS Teulon's Buxton Memorial Fountain, Grade II*), resulting in its present layout. The playground was refurbished in 2005.

The site is within Westminster Abbey and Parliament Square Conservation Area and just outside the Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey including Saint Margaret's Church World Heritage Site. In addition to the listed memorials and statues set out above, there are several major listed buildings nearby, including the Palace of Westminster (with Victoria Lodge and Gates, all Grade I), large early 20th century office buildings along the west side of Millbank (Church Commissioners, Grade II* and Norwest House, Grade II), and Lambeth Bridge (Grade II). The river embankment was



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extended south of the Palace of Westminster to Lambeth Bridge in 1900 and is listed Grade II.

The site is thought to contain very significant archaeological deposits and is a 'tier 1' Archaeological Priority Area. Prior to the construction of the embankment in the mid-19th century, the area lay astride the 16th-19th century river frontage where river walls, wharves and associated commercial and industrial premises were located. During the medieval period it lay just to the south of the Abbey and Palace of Westminster along the river bank and foreshore at the mouth of the Tyburn River. A substantial medieval stone-built river wall may extend into the NW corner of the gardens where the sites of the Abbey Mill and St. Peter's Wharf are believed to lie. There is high potential for significant new discoveries.

The site's potential for pre-medieval archaeology is harder to judge as river levels fluctuated and at times the site could have been submerged and/or suffered from erosion. Nevertheless, it is known that the Thames provided a focus for settlement and religious practices including the construction of timber bridges and jetties and the ritual deposition of valuable objects and human remains. Good survival is likely due to lack of modern disturbance and waterlogging adjacent to the river. Overall there is clear potential for undesignated archaeology of national significance which has equivalent weight in planning decisions to a scheduled monument.

Policy context

It is also useful to set out the policy context, particularly in a site with so many different historic environment and planning considerations.

Sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 impose a statutory duty on planning authorities to consider the impact of proposals upon listed buildings and their settings. Section 72 of the same act imposes a statutory duty on planning authorities to ensure that proposals preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Government guidance on how to carry out the statutory duties in the Act is found in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). At the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of 'sustainable development' where protecting and enhancing the built and historic environment forms part of one of three overarching interdependent objectives (economic, social and environmental).

Section 16 of the NPPF sets out how the historic environment should be conserved and enhanced, and makes it clear at paragraph 193 that when considering the impact



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of a proposed development on a heritage asset (including its setting), local planning authorities should give 'great weight' to preserving the asset's significance. Any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification and substantial harm or total loss should be exceptional. In the case of Grade II* or Grade I listed or registered assets or World Heritage Sites, substantial harm or loss should be wholly exceptional (paragraph 194). The policy also applies to non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest which are demonstrably equivalent significance to scheduled monuments.

Where harm is caused to a heritage asset, the NPPF requires decision makers to determine whether the harm is substantial, or less than substantial. If the harm is deemed to be less than substantial, paragraph 196 of the NPPF requires that harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals.

If the harm is substantial, or results in a total loss of significance, paragraph 195 states that local authorities should refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss, or all four criteria apply:

- a: The nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b: No viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c: Conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d: The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

Policies in the London Plan for the protection of London's heritage are set out in 7.8-7.12. Between December 2017 and March 2018, the Mayor of London consulted on a new draft London Plan. This included policies on design, heritage and tall buildings. The following draft policies are relevant: Parts C1 (a) (i) relate to visual impacts on important local or strategic views; C1 (d) requires proposals to 'take account of, and avoid harm to, the significance of London's heritage assets and their settings'; C1 (e) provides policy protection for the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage Sites' and C1 (f) gives protection against impacts of developments on views from the River Thames.

In March 2012 the GLA adopted 'London's World Heritage Sites - Guidance on Settings' as Supplementary Planning Guidance. The document includes a framework





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for assessing the potential impact of development on the setting and OUV of World Heritage Sites and assets within those sites.

The Mayor's London View Management Framework identifies a number of strategically important London views that require careful management. View 19A (Lambeth Bridge: downstream) encompasses the development site, and recognises how Victoria Tower Gardens forms a visual 'semi-pastoral' setting to the World Heritage Site that needs to be retained.

Next Steps

We would welcome further discussions with you about potential design changes that would reduce the impact of the proposals on the surrounding heritage in and around Victoria Tower Gardens, which are summarised again below. In particular, and should Victoria Gardens remain the preferred location for the proposed memorial, we would welcome a reduction in the scale and footprint of the entrance pavilion, with an eye to the significance of the registered landscape and views of the historic buildings nearby. Additionally, we encourage you to consider a different design approach to the setting of the Buxton Memorial, which could include the possibility of moving the commemorative structure to an appropriate location within Victoria Tower Gardens away from the proposed Holocaust Memorial, to ensure its own prominence. We would also encourage an assessment of the impact on the historic plane trees and a mitigating measure for any harm to these trees. We would also expect reasonable efforts to have been made to evaluate the site's archaeological potential, and a clear strategy to manage and mitigate the risk of major discoveries. And finally, we would welcome seeing a visitor management strategy as well a suitable mitigation strategy for the site as a whole, to ensure that the multi-layered heritage significance in this site is fully addressed.

I hope this is helpful and we look forward to ongoing discussions.

Yours sincerely

Michael Dunn

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Information Provided

Presentation to the LAC Committee on 25 September



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