

# News story: Public consultation marks next stage in development of UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre

A public exhibition and consultation of the latest designs for the new UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre has been launched today (4 September 2018) by the Secretary of State for Communities the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP at a reception attended by the Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry and the UK Holocaust Memorial co-Chairs Ed Balls and Lord Pickles.

In 2016 Prime Minister Theresa May launched a design competition for a Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens, adjacent to Parliament in Westminster.

The winning scheme proposed by the team led by architect Sir David Adjaye impressed the jury with a sensitive and impactful design that preserved the green space of the Gardens and respected the UNESCO World Heritage views.

The consultation launched today, running until Saturday 8 September in Central London, will ask for views on the proposed designs for the Memorial and Learning Centre before a planning application is made later this year.

The exhibition will be an opportunity for people to see the designs for themselves. It is crucial that as many people as possible – from a range of different communities – have a chance to be heard before a formal planning application is submitted later this year.

The exhibition reveals further details of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre proposed design and improvements to Victoria Tower Gardens, including:

- The architects' proposals to retain 85% of the green space of Victoria Tower Gardens, through a streamlined design with a separate entrance pavilion to the Memorial and Learning Centre.
- Measures taken to improve the health of trees in the Gardens by improving the drainage of paths.
- Improvements to be made to the surroundings and green space of the Gardens, while retaining their character. This includes the creation of a gentle slope to improve views of the river and Parliament, new seating and pathways along the river bank and better filtration for the green areas to limit issues of flooding in winter.
- Plans to improve access to the existing memorials – allowing visitors to appreciate them in a new way, particularly the Buxton Memorial to the abolition of slavery which could get improved lighting, and, if possible, a reinstated water fountain.
- The renewal of the café area to the south of the Gardens, and plans to consult the local community on improvements to be made to the children's playground.

The proposed design for the Memorial and Learning Centre consists of 23 bronze fins to the southern end of the Gardens. Visitors will walk through an entrance pavilion then across a courtyard where they will enjoy spectacular views of Parliament's Victoria Tower.

The Learning Centre, accessed by pathways set between the fins, is an integral part of the Memorial. Visitors will leave with an improved understanding of the Holocaust and its impact on Britain. It's a chance to reflect, remember and learn.

The content of the Learning Centre is still in development but is expected to focus on Britain's relationship with the Holocaust. It is important that we celebrate the ways we intervened for the safety of the Jewish communities in Europe, but also what more could have been done to protect individuals and families.

At a reception to mark the opening of the public exhibition, Secretary of State for Communities the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

There can be no more powerful symbol of our commitment to remembering the men, women and children murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators than placing the memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens.

The Holocaust Memorial will stand as a stark reminder that a central role of democracy is to encourage tolerance for ethnic, religious and racial differences and fostering religious freedom, individual rights and civil responsibility.

UKHMF co-chair the Rt. Hon Ed Balls said:

What better way to show that we will not tolerate hatred than our new Holocaust Memorial, right next to our Parliament.

There is no location more fitting to honour the victims of one of humanity's greatest tragedies than side-by-side with one of humanity's oldest democracies. There is no better gift we can pass to future generations than the knowledge of where hatred, unchecked, can lead.

UKHMF co-Chair the Rt Hon The Lord Pickles said:

By building a Memorial and Learning Centre next to our Parliament we are fulfilling a commitment made to a past generation and committing future generations hold our democracy to account.

It reminds Parliament that it has the power to oppress as well the power to protect. The learning centre is a timely reminder, to all

communities in the UK, of the cost of indifference to intolerance and bigotry. All who care about our country have a vested interest in standing up to prejudice and hatred wherever and whenever it occurs.

## **Victoria Tower Gardens as a location**

- When conducting a site search of central London locations, the aim was to find the most meaningful location which could best reflect the impact of the Holocaust. Access, footfall and visibility were key considerations.
- Victoria Tower Gardens was selected as the site that best suited joint aims, being the most significant location and offering the greatest value.
- The Foundation recommended Victoria Tower Gardens to then Prime Minister David Cameron, who first announced the chosen location at Prime Minister's Questions on 27 January 2016. Funding for the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre
- Total project costs are currently estimated at around £100 million.
- The government has committed £50 million to the project. It will kick-start a society-wide fundraising effort which will meet the costs of construction and operation.
- Foundation member Gerald Ronson CBE has agreed to lead the fundraising campaign. As well as being a major philanthropic donor, Mr Ronson has extensive experience of raising funds. His family trust has raised close to £200 million for charities at home and abroad.

## **Flooding and drainage**

- As with all sites close to the river, a full flood risk assessment will have to be carried out as part of the planning application process.
- The proposed Memorial and Learning Centre will be located south of the existing Thames Water Storm Relief drain. The project has been discussed with Thames Water and will comply with their requirements for building in the proximity of the storm relief drain.

## **Tree health**

- Measures are being taken to ensure that the trees will not be harmed. We've had accurate GPR (ground penetrating radar) surveys of the tree roots carried out by arboricultural experts and have relocated the Memorial further north to minimise the risk of damage to tree roots.
- Further to this, trial pits are being excavated using air spades to make a precise assessment of the extent and location of the tree roots immediately adjacent to the Memorial.
- By improving drainage and surface permeability, particularly in the hard landscaping and paths, the Memorial and landscaping is likely to be more conducive to tree health.