

The Palace of Westminster

I was one of the MPs who needed persuading that the Houses of Parliament needs a thorough overhaul and refit such that we need to move out for several years and spend many billions of pounds on the buildings.

I understand that wiring, plumbing and other services need replacing or updating from time to time. These do not all have to be done throughout the Palace at the same time. It is true there is asbestos in the buildings, but most of it is stable and no hazard unless disturbed by builders. Many of the works drawn up for the large project might be nice to have modernisations or improvements, but are not essential to the functioning of the place. Of course there needs to be a regular programme of restoration of stone work and windows to keep the building water tight, and it is crucial to keep roofs in good repair to keep rain out. More of the work can be done in the summer recess, and more can be done by builders taking over smaller sections of the Palace for a time period to do more fundamental work.

I read that following the recent terrorist incident there is some rethinking going on. One of the advantages of the present building is the presence now of a security strengthened perimeter. On the fateful day it is tragic that a policeman on duty was killed. I trust lessons will be learned about having the right support at entrances to deal with any violent intruder and to protect the police themselves before he does harm. It is also the case that the mass murders and injuries occurred beyond the perimeter. We should be more worried about pedestrian safety outside the Palace as a result of those events. The Bus and cycle lane open to the adjacent pavement allowed the murderer easier and faster access to the victims.