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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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HOUSE OF LORDS

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The following abbreviations are used to show a Member's party affiliation:

Abbreviation	Party/Group
CB	Cross Bench
Con	Conservative
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GP	Green Party
Ind Lab	Independent Labour
Ind SD	Independent Social Democrat
Ind UU	Independent Ulster Unionist
Lab	Labour
Lab Co-op	Labour and Co-operative Party
LD	Liberal Democrat
Non-afl	Non-affiliated
PC	Plaid Cymru
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

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House of Lords

Wednesday 4 September 2024

3 pm

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Southwark.

Introduction: Baroness Hodge of Barking

3.07 pm

The right honourable Dame Margaret Eve Hodge, DBE, having been created Baroness Hodge of Barking, of Great Massingham in the County of Norfolk, was introduced and made the solemn affirmation, supported by Baroness Blackstone and Lord Kennedy of Southwark, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Introduction: Baroness Beckett

3.13 pm

The right honourable Dame Margaret Mary Beckett, GBE, having been created Baroness Beckett, of Old Normanton in the City of Derby, was introduced and made the solemn affirmation, supported by Lord Kennedy of Southwark and Baroness Merron, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Oaths and Affirmations

3.18 pm

Several noble Lords took the oath or made the solemn affirmation, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Social Disorder Question

3.22 pm

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the possible links between social disorder in major cities, and economic and social policies.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Lord Khan of Burnley) (Lab): My Lords, there is no excuse for violent disorder. The thuggery of a few contrasts with the inspiring unity that we have seen in response, with communities pulling together to rebuild after the violence. However, we must not ignore the fact that this violence occurred in places with broader social and economic challenges. In response, MHCLG is leading cross-government efforts to help places recover, working in partnership with communities and local stakeholders to rebuild, renew and address the deep-seated issues.

Lord Sikka (Lab): My Lords, I thank the Minister for his Answer. Social disorder is the outcome of despair arising from real wage cuts, poor housing, corporate profiteering, the erosion of living standards and the destruction of public services. That anger cannot be addressed by policing. Does the Minister agree that it requires a redistribution of income and wealth, direct state investment in public services, curbs on corporate profiteering, and the building of community centres, youth clubs and libraries? If so, when will we see the tangible results?

Lord Khan of Burnley (Lab): Government policy plays a key role in supporting thriving and resilient communities. Under the Conservative Government, however, we saw a lack of investment in local authorities and public services. That has left our communities more vulnerable to cohesion challenges and wider economic and social deprivation challenges. The recent Khan review into social cohesion and resilience highlighted that communities with lower levels of cohesion were less resilient to the threats of extremism. The review called for a more institutionalised and coherent approach to social cohesion to address these issues. I reassure my noble friend that work is under way in my department to develop a stronger approach to support our communities and build resilience against challenges.

The Earl of Devon (CB): My Lords, the riots were deplorable and their perpetrators and instigators are criminals. Those criminals feed on a real fear, however, and a dangerous sense of dislocation among those who consider themselves our traditional indigenous English population. At a time of such social dislocation, is it wise for His Majesty's Government to be assaulting the traditional fabric of this Parliament and our constitution by reforming this House?

Noble Lords: Oh!

Lord Khan of Burnley (Lab): My Lords, the Government were elected on a manifesto that stressed a partnership approach with local authorities and an intention to stabilise the funding system through multiyear funding settlements. In a meeting with England's metro mayors on 9 July, we put into action our plan to work hand in hand to spread better opportunities and transfer power out of Westminster into the hands of elected local leaders. Local places will rightly seek clarity on funding commitments in relation to the challenges ahead.

Baroness Blower (Lab): My Lords, since 2010, 1,200 council-funded youth clubs, 800 libraries and hundreds of local community centres, children's centres and leisure centres have closed. Many young people therefore roam the streets with nowhere to go and become easy prey to far-right extremists and, indeed, county lines gangs. What resources will the Government seek to provide to enable local councils to rebuild such community networks?

Lord Khan of Burnley (Lab): My noble friend makes a very interesting point. As the Minister with responsibility for regional investment within MHCLG, I know at first hand that deprivation and poor cohesion tend to

[LORD KHAN OF BURNLEY]

leave communities more vulnerable to extremist narratives and disorder. Regardless of those factors, there is no place in British society for violent disorder. I have been engaging with communities across the country to understand the issues that they face, and I have recently visited Leeds, Southport, Sunderland, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool to witness their concerns at first hand. I reassure the noble Baroness that work is under way to understand what contributed to the disorder that we saw and to develop a more joined-up and strategic approach to communities and social cohesion. I shall be in a position to make a statement on that in due course.

Baroness Hussein-Ece (LD): My Lords, the Minister quite rightly points out that there are a variety of challenges to address the root causes of these riots. Much of the violence appeared to be triggered by false rumours that the perpetrator of the terrible killing of the three girls in Southport was an immigrant. Online misinformation circulated, targeting very vulnerable people. While we accept that many people are struggling to make ends meet, the rise in immigration can be and was an obvious scapegoat. Misinformation—that somehow migrants are taking people's homes and jobs, claim benefits and get free houses—causes flashpoints. Does the Minister agree that every one of us, led by the Government, has a responsibility to convey the truth and correct misinformation about asylum seekers taking people's jobs and getting free homes? The truth is that they are entitled to £49 a week, and they cannot work—

Noble Lords: Question!

Baroness Hussein-Ece (LD): That was a question. They cannot work until they are granted asylum. Millions of migrants make a massive contribution to our economy, filling jobs such as in social care. We need that kind of information to get through to communities.

Lord Khan of Burnley (Lab): Anyone who stokes this sort of violence, whether on the internet or in person, can face jail time. Riot, public nuisance and criminal damage all carry a sentence of up to 10 years in prison. Those who incite hate online must face the consequences. The Technology Secretary has had useful meetings with social media platforms to make clear their responsibility to continue to work to stop the spread of hateful misinformation and incitement online. Where they have already acted, they have the full backing and support of government officials. This is a really important point. The Government continue to work with social media platforms to proactively refer content for them to assess and take action, and to ensure that they are actively engaging with law enforcement on criminal intent.

Baroness Scott of Bybrook (Con): My Lords, the scenes that we saw over the summer were shocking. The police and courts made an exemplary effort to respond to the situation, but the Government must now look at the root causes of this violence. What steps will the new Government take to improve social cohesion and tackle racism wherever it raises its ugly head?

Lord Khan of Burnley (Lab): I thank the noble Baroness for raising that important point once again. Just to remind the House, I have already visited Leeds, Southport, Sunderland and Middlesbrough, as well as other places, so I assure her that work is under way to understand what contributed to this disorder. We are developing a strategic approach to communities. This is a cross-government approach—it is not just for the MHCLG to look at—to work out how we enhance social cohesion and build community resilience.

Lord Hogan-Howe (CB): My Lords, we saw in the riots police officers outnumbered and attacked with bricks for defending people in mosques—asylum seekers and some of their colleagues. Their job is made no easier by excusing the behaviour of the rioters, even though the causes of that riot may need to be understood. We should celebrate the officers' behaviour and the fact that they did it while outnumbered and carried on walking forward when it would have been easier to run away. Will the Minister support me in saying that?

Lord Khan of Burnley (Lab): I support the noble Lord's comments 100%. The police have our full support to use their powers without fear or favour. I have enormous gratitude for the dedicated officers who worked tirelessly to respond to the unfounded violence and abuse. The Home Secretary continues to work with law enforcement, across government and with the entire criminal justice system to ensure that we are fully equipped to deal with these incidents.

Baroness Hoey (Non-Aff): My Lords, does the Minister agree that disinformation must not happen also because the Government are involved in any kind of disinformation? I am sure he will agree with that, but will he then agree that perhaps it is not sensible for Ministers or the Government to condemn almost anyone who was involved in any protest using the terminology "far right"?

Lord Khan of Burnley (Lab): My Lords, the Khan review cited divisive language from politicians and a decline in trust and participation in democracy as factors that contribute towards worsening social cohesion. Politicians on all sides have a duty to use language carefully and consider the effects of their language on social cohesion. The Government have made a firm commitment to restore trust in government.

Lord Woodley (Lab): My Lords, poverty increases people's disillusionment with the political system and encourages people on the far right to join up. Fire and rehire and forced zero-hours contracts are a major insecurity of poverty. Can the Minister assure the House that the forthcoming legislation will impose a ban on fire and rehire and forced zero-hours contracts?

Lord Khan of Burnley (Lab): I say to my noble friend that this will be discussed and legislation brought forward in due course to tackle the issues he raises. Let me use my final point to say to the House that there have been 1,280 arrests related to the disorder and 700 people have been charged. The number of charges

will increase significantly over the coming days and weeks. More than 100 extra prosecutors have been brought in to work with the police.

Palliative and End-of-life Care: Funding *Question*

3.32 pm

Asked by The Lord Bishop of London

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of funding arrangements for accessible and equitable palliative and end of life care.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Baroness Merron) (Lab): My Lords, we want a society where every person receives high-quality, compassionate care, including at the end of their life. Integrated care boards are responsible for the commissioning of palliative and end-of-life care services to meet the needs of their local populations. This is to promote a more consistent national approach and supports commissioners in prioritising palliative and end-of-life care. We will be considering the next steps, including funding, more widely in the coming months.

The Lord Bishop of London: I thank the Minister for her reply. We know that the hospice sector depends on charitable giving because of the low level of statutory funding at present. This means that the wealth and resilience of a community define the level of hospice services. This entrenches inequalities of place and means that access to hospice services is extremely unequal. Can the Minister outline what the Government are doing to look at the funding settlement, and particularly the wider hospice funding model, to ensure that this is not just another service that has poorer access for those in more deprived areas?

Baroness Merron (Lab): I certainly take on board the point that the right reverend Prelate makes. It is the case that the amount of funding that charitable hospices receive varies by ICB area. That, in part, is dependent on the breadth of a range of palliative and end-of-life care provision within the ICB area. I can assure your Lordships' House that my colleague, Minister Kinnock, the Minister of State for Care, has recently met with NHS England, and discussions have started on how to reduce inequalities and variation in access to services and their quality.

Baroness Pitkeathley (Lab): My Lords, does my noble friend agree that when end-of-life or palliative care is delivered at home, the principal deliverers are usually the family—the unpaid carers—of the patient? Does she agree, therefore, that they must be considered in this equation to get them as much support as possible, and that they ought to be given as much information as possible about the patient's prognosis and the treatment plan, bearing in mind the sensitivities associated with such information?

Baroness Merron (Lab): My noble friend is absolutely right, and I certainly agree with the points she has made. Those who care for their loved ones are absolutely crucial to ensuring that the right care is provided in the right place and the right way for that person. Everybody is individual, and we want a society where everybody receives the right kind of care at the end of their life. That should be a time of dignity, and we want to provide that.

Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie (Con): My Lords, people with neurological conditions face many barriers to accessing palliative care, even though it could do them a huge amount of good. The answers to this are better identification of individual needs and better collaboration between palliative and neurological services. Can the Minister assure me that she will look at this? There is a great inequity in access to palliative care. I declare my interest as a chair of the Scottish Government's neurological advisory committee.

Baroness Merron (Lab): The noble Baroness is quite right to raise this, and I can give her that assurance. She raises the point about identification of people with specific needs. I am interested to see that there are some very good examples of local good practice—for example, in Dorset, where they have proactively gone out to identify who needs palliative and end-of-life care. By so doing, they have raised the percentage of the local population who should be receiving it. That is a model we will want to look at. With regard to those who have particular needs, as the noble Baroness describes, I think that model will be helpful too.

Baroness Hollins (CB): My Lords, the Minister has rightly pointed to the growing need for excellent palliative care close to home, and I am glad of that, but I wonder whether she is aware of the Hospice UK report pointing to the number of redundancies occurring across the sector. In the context of the 2022 Act, which required the NHS to commission adequate NHS care, this seems to be rather urgent, not just to provide good care for people but to reduce the impact on the acute hospital sector of not providing palliative care.

Baroness Merron (Lab): The noble Baroness is right in her observations, and we certainly recognise that times are difficult, particularly for many voluntary and charitable organisations including hospices, for example, due to the increased cost of living. We are working alongside key partners and NHS England to proactively engage with stakeholders, including the voluntary sector and independent hospices, because we want to understand the issues they face and to seek solutions to them.

Baroness Brinton (LD): My Lords, the charity Together for Short Lives has found that the NHS local funding for children's hospices has dropped by 31% in the last three years. Worse, the previous Government's £25 million children's hospices grant has been given to local integrated care boards, many of which have delayed distributing it. As a result, the children's hospice movement is in

[BARONESS BRINTON]

real crisis. Please will the Government urgently review the funding that government has in the past put aside for children's hospices, to make sure that they receive it?

Baroness Merron (Lab): As the noble Baroness said, in 2024-25 the £25 million in funding from NHS England was distributed, for the first time, via integrated care boards. As I understand it from the previous Government, that was in line with NHS devolution. We will carefully consider the next steps on palliative and end-of-life care funding much more widely in the coming months and will take on board the comments of the noble Baroness and other noble Lords.

Lord Evans of Rainow (Con): My Lords, everyone should be able to access quality palliative and end-of-life care and patient care in their local area. Under the Conservatives, we made integrated care boards legally responsible for commissioning palliative care services to meet the needs of the local population. What assessment has the Minister made of access to palliative and end-of-life care across the country? What steps will the Government take to ensure that everyone, especially those living in rural areas, can access quality end-of-life care?

Baroness Merron (Lab): As the noble Lord will be aware, statutory guidance and service specifications are provided to support commissioners in ICBs to meet their duty. As I am sure the noble Lord is also aware, NHS England has developed a palliative and end-of-life care dashboard that brings all the relevant local data together and helps commissioners to understand the situation so that they can provide for their local populations. This is part of ongoing work for this new Government to see how we meet requirements to provide dignity, compassion and service at the end of life and just prior to the end of life.

Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town (Lab): My Lords, although I pay enormous tribute to the hospice movement, there will be some people for whom end-of-life care means assisted dying. We will have the Second Reading of the Bill in November. I hope that my noble friend will be able to give strong government time, if not government support, to enable that Bill to make good progress.

Baroness Merron (Lab): The Prime Minister has already reiterated his commitment to allow time for a Private Member's Bill and a free vote. I recognise that this is an extremely sensitive issue with deeply held views on the various sides of the debate. Our commitment is to ensure that any debate on assisted dying in Parliament will take place in a broader context of access to high-quality palliative and end-of-life care and that we will have robust safeguards to protect vulnerable groups, if the will of Parliament is that the law should change.

Lord Patel (CB): My Lords, the Minister mentioned funding—I am glad that the Government will look at funding—as well as the NHS England dashboard.

Both are processes that do not deliver care, particularly for children who require hospice and end-of-life care. I will give an example that the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton, briefly referred to. Because NHS England has devolved funding to ICBs, average funding for ICBs supporting hospices for children is £149, with a range from £18 to £376 per case. ICBs are legally bound to deliver hospice care, but the accountability to do so is not there—and that is what NHS England needs to focus on.

Baroness Merron (Lab): I am grateful to the noble Lord. I will ensure that my colleague, the Minister of State for Care, is fully aware of the comments that he and other noble Lords have made today. They will form part of our looking at the situation to make sure that services—not just processes—are provided.

High-speed Rail Services: West Coast Main Line *Question*

3.43 pm

Asked by Lord Liddle

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to facilitate improved high-speed rail services between (1) London Euston and Manchester, and (2) on the West Coast Mainline north of Crewe.

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Lord Henty of Richmond Hill) (Lab): This Government are currently reviewing the position that they have inherited on rail infrastructure and will consider how we address capacity needs while maintaining financial discipline. We will set out our plans in due course. We need a long-term approach to infrastructure and investment, taking account of local transport priorities, which is what we will provide.

Lord Liddle (Lab): I thank my noble friend for his reply. Of course we need a long-term plan for investment, but does he agree that there is a huge problem of congestion and capacity on the west coast main line, which is a key artery of our transport system? These problems have been made worse by the former Prime Minister's impulsive and ill-thought-through cancellation of the second stage of HS2; the National Audit Office says that this will reduce capacity on the west coast main line by a further 17%. We need an investment solution to this. Will my noble friend also confirm that the Government have not ruled out use of the existing HS2 route to provide that extra capacity?

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill (Lab): Following the cancellation of HS2 phase 2, the Government are looking at all options to improve rail journeys to the north-west and Scotland, including managing the long-term issues that my noble friend describes, with capacity that HS2 phase 2 would have alleviated. In the meantime, Network Rail is progressing a programme to renew and modernise the west coast main line between Crewe and Scotland, and work on that will continue through the next three five-year control periods.

Lord Wigley (PC): My Lords, before the last election, the previous Government announced that, in lieu of a Barnett consequential to Wales arising out of HS2, they would move forward with plans to electrify the line from Crewe to Holyhead. Do the Labour Government intend to honour that pledge and, if not, will they ensure that Wales does indeed get a full Barnett consequential related to the spending on the HS2 project?

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill (Lab): As with a number of other projects suggested by the previous Government, the electrification from Crewe to Holyhead had never been funded and has not been developed. In relation to the Barnett formula, I had a very good meeting with the Welsh Government's Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Transport and North Wales. He put his point of view on that subject and I responded to him.

Lord Austin of Dudley (Non-Affl): My Lords, the noble Lord, Lord Liddle, is absolutely right that we need a long-term plan for the west coast main line north of Manchester. But the service that Avanti is providing right now is also a complete disgrace and needs to be dealt with. Trains between the West Midlands and London are often late, frequently cancelled, and dangerously overcrowded. When will the Government get a grip of Avanti's services? While we are on the subject of rail services in the West Midlands, can the Minister explain why CrossCountry was allowed to do engineering works and replace the trains with a bus service between Birmingham and Leicester last Saturday—the one day in the year thousands of people from Birmingham were travelling to Leicester to watch Aston Villa beat Leicester?

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill (Lab): The first performance meeting that my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Transport had was with the Avanti management on the Network Rail route. Its performance is far from satisfactory. The contractual position prevents the rapid action that one might want to take, but we are pressing it extraordinarily hard to deliver the service that passengers and taxpayers need. On the football match last Saturday, I do not have the details to hand but I will write to the noble Lord.

Baroness Wilcox of Newport (Lab): My Lords, notwithstanding the issues in train services to the north of England, can my noble friend the Minister say whether the department could also look at the constant difficulties experienced on the south Wales to London main line, an important link between our two countries that fails on a daily basis?

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill (Lab): The performance of the Great Western main line has been the subject of a great deal of discussion and a change of management in Network Rail, and the infrastructure is improving. Nevertheless, I will take away my noble friend's remarks on it, and we will press both Network Rail and the train operator to do better.

Lord Moylan (Con): My Lords, I welcome the Minister to his place. I did not feel that the very good question asked by the noble Lord, Lord Liddle, was adequately answered, particularly in relation to Euston. Can the

Minister be candid with the House and say how much public money his department is bidding for in the current spending round to extend the operation of HS2 from Old Oak Common to Euston—or does he hold the view that this can be achieved entirely by private sector investment?

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill (Lab): The noble Lord's question in relation to Euston is germane in relation to the usefulness of HS2. The Government have been left with a position where many things have been promised and there is not enough funding for them all. However, we are reviewing the position on Euston urgently and intend to respond when we can to the proposition to extend HS2 from Old Oak Common to Euston.

Lord Watts (Lab): My Lords—

Lord Goddard of Stockport (LD): My Lords, it is this side. I have been waiting for a train for 20 minutes.

I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Liddle, for asking the first friendly Question on railways in the almost 10 years that I have been in this House. He hits the nail on the head. What matters is capacity; this was never about speed. Many times, you get on a train at Euston and the train manager says, "If we don't leave in two minutes, we'll be behind the slow train to Milton Keynes or Watford", and, similarly, from Crewe. Will the Minister liaise with the elected mayors of Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham and keep trying to work with them? They are the people who understand more about the need to move people around for business, pleasure, leisure and life opportunities.

Also, in the spirit of glasnost, can the Minister keep this House involved in future progress? As the noble Lord, Lord Moylan, just said, the money must come from somewhere. It has been found for the pay offer for the rail drivers. Perhaps it can now be found for the public who travel on those trains.

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill (Lab): Of course the combined authority mayors have a very important part to play in determining the rail services in their areas. This Government are absolutely committed to discussing with them, on the capacity of the railway, the balance between long-distance travel and travel needed within those areas to create growth, jobs and housing. On future progress, the Government must review the railway as a whole. It is a network. As we do so, no doubt we will be asked questions about it and this House will be fully involved.

Lord Hope of Craighead (CB): My Lords, I return to the Minister's response to the noble Lord, Lord Liddle. Does the Minister accept that it was a mistake to discontinue the HS2 phase 2b line to Crewe? If that line had been extended to Crewe it would have benefited services to Wales, directly linked into the west coast main line, and—if I may put it this way—added much needed credibility to the whole project. Are the Government willing to look at that matter again?

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill (Lab): The Government are reviewing the position that we have inherited on HS2. The connectivity points that the noble and learned

[LORD HENDY OF RICHMOND HILL]

Lord raises are good ones. The proposals for the development of the railway network will indeed have to take those things into account and will look at solving some of the issues that he mentions.

Lord Bellingham (Con): My Lords—

Lord Watts (Lab): My Lords, this side!

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent (Lab): My apologies: I believe that this is a question for the Conservative Benches.

Lord Bellingham (Con): I thank the noble Baroness very much. I declare an interest as a former member of the Select Committee on HS2, which spent nearly two years hearing copious evidence from many different experts. The one underlying recurring theme was the crucial importance of getting the link through to central London and Euston. Without that, we will not be able to solve a capacity issue.

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill (Lab): The link to Euston must be considered alongside many other commitments for railway investment, not all of which can be funded in the present financial situation. However, we hope to come back quickly on Euston because it is easy to recognise that it is part of the integral HS2 project.

Civil Service: Recruitment Question

3.54 pm

Asked by **Baroness Neville-Rolfe**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the political neutrality of Civil Service recruitment following recent appointments to Civil Service roles.

The Lord Privy Seal (Baroness Smith of Basildon) (Lab): My Lords, the impartiality of the Civil Service is one of its fundamental principles. Civil Service appointments must follow the correct rules and processes. Previous political activity is not prohibited, but all appointees must be able to comply with the Civil Service Code. The majority of Civil Service appointments are undertaken by fair and open competition. The use of appointments by exception are set out in the recruitment principles and have been used by successive Administrations.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe (Con): My Lords, despite the assurances the noble Baroness has given, there has been widespread and, I believe, legitimate concern about the politicisation of Civil Service appointments since the election, with 10 Labour staffers having been appointed as civil servants by exception, and not as special advisers. The speed, scale and seniority have been quite new, and this is very worrying for those of us who support a politically neutral Civil Service. One way of improving matters would be to increase the transparency of the appointment process. Does the Minister agree? Would the Government ensure that any appointments made in the Civil Service by exception

where the appointee has a record of recent political support for the government party are made public—and made public immediately?

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, I welcome the noble Baroness's commitment to this issue—however recent it may be. Perhaps I can tell her that around 80,000 people were hired through open competitions and around 9,000 were hired through the different exception routes. She should look at this, because there is a very different role for special advisers and civil servants and there are criteria by which, if people are appointed to the Civil Service, they have to be agreed by the department following certain criteria and they need to abide by the Civil Service Code. I am sure she is aware of that. The same process is undertaken now as it was under previous Administrations.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock (Lab Co-op): My Lords, has the Leader of the House noticed that the inquiry announced by the First Civil Service Commissioner goes back only to 1 July, so does not cover any of the really dodgy appointments made by the previous Government? Does this not throw doubt on the impartiality of the First Civil Service Commissioner, who herself has received great largesse from the Tory Government—no doubt due to her leadership of the Brexit campaign?

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, I am confident that the rules in place mean that no Government have made dodgy appointments to the Civil Service—because the rules are very clear on this. On the first part of my noble friend's question—why the current review is being carried out only from 1 July—apparently there is a regular, ongoing, routine investigation and audit by the commission, but this is exceptional and in addition to that. Apparently, the commissioner wrote to heads of department to say that it was in view of the “recent interest in appointments by exception”—but all appointments are part of a regular audit process.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): My Lords, does the Minister agree with the statements that the noble Lord, Lord Maude, and the noble Baroness, Lady Finn, made on a number of occasions during the coalition Government that the Civil Service benefits from the recruitment of outside experts to senior roles? I declare an interest: I happen to have worked with one of the two people recently recruited for a short period of time in Labour Together and I never had any impression when working with her of any partisanship—she was extremely professional. Does she further agree with what Henry Newman, formerly a Conservative special adviser, wrote in *The Whitehall Project* two weeks ago:

“There is nothing inherently wrong with appointing either individual, but it should have been done with transparency and through clear procedures”?

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, there are clear procedures in place. The department has to be satisfied when bringing in external expertise at all levels of the Civil Service. We are talking about 9,000 out of 80,000, and these are not just senior appointments. We might need to bring in expertise for short-term

reasons or for specialist knowledge. It might be because of the nature of the appointments; if they are short term, it might not be appropriate to have a long recruitment process. It is absolutely right that an appointment has to be signed off by the department, which must be satisfied that it is justified, relevant and complies with the Civil Service Code. I think it was the noble Lord, Lord Maude, who introduced those appointments to the Civil Service around 2010.

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Con): My Lords, does the noble Baroness recognise that Ministers take decisions and govern, not civil servants or special advisers? Therefore, is it not a matter of great regret that so many of her Front Bench colleagues are not being paid because so many Ministers have been appointed in the House of Commons as part of the Prime Minister's patronage?

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, it is a leap from the Question and, as always, I admire the noble Lord's ingenuity. Every one of my colleagues on the Front Bench of this House is worth every penny that they are paid and more.

Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean (Lab): My Lords, I declare an interest as a former civil servant but, more importantly, as a former general secretary of the First Division Association, which represents the senior Civil Service. The fact is that Ministers take advice—quite rightly—from the Civil Service. However, this Question refuses to acknowledge that Ministers have the right—indeed, the duty and responsibility—to consult further than the Civil Service. In my experience, that is what they do. The decisions they take are theirs. My decisions were my decisions, and I believe the same of any Minister worth their salt, and certainly of my colleagues.

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My noble friend makes a powerful point. It was similar to the first point made by the noble Lord, Lord Forsyth: it is for Ministers to get a range of views and to make decisions. It is dangerous for us to think that civil servants are not impartial. They are impartial. That does not mean that they are neutral and have no views, but they bring impartiality to their posts. That is why we have to bring in outside, as well as existing, expertise.

Baroness Finn (Con): My Lords, I am a strong supporter of external appointments to the Civil Service and of strengthening Ministers' powers to bring in people, where there are skills shortages, to achieve their agenda. As my noble friend said, transparency is key to these appointments. Will the Minister therefore commit to publishing a list of all the external appointments requested by Ministers, at all grades?

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): This Government should follow the normal practice of publishing appointments in government and we will do so.

Lord Watts (Lab): As we are looking at public appointments, should we extend this to the BBC and Ofcom, because both those organisations seem to be dominated by Conservatives?

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): I must admit that I have not entirely checked the political allegiances of all those appointments. However, there is a proper process for public appointments, which should be followed at all times. In the cases that have been complained about, given that the independent adviser has said that no investigation is necessary—we have the exceptional investigation by the commission—I am confident that all processes have been followed properly.

Water (Special Measures) Bill [HL]

First Reading

4.03 pm

A Bill to make provision about the regulation, governance and special administration of water companies.

The Bill was introduced by Baroness Hayman of Ullock, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Product Regulation and Metrology Bill [HL]

First Reading

4.04 pm

A Bill to make provision about the marketing or use of products in the United Kingdom; about units of measurement and the quantities in which goods are marketed in the United Kingdom; and for connected purposes.

The Bill was introduced by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent (on behalf of Baroness Jones of Whitchurch), read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Imprisonment for Public Protection (Resentencing) Bill [HL]

First Reading

4.04 pm

A Bill to make provision for a resentencing exercise in relation to all Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentenced individuals; to establish a time-limited expert committee, including a member of the judiciary, to advise on the practical implementation of such an exercise; and for connected purposes.

The Bill was introduced by Lord Woodley, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Women, Peace and Security Bill [HL]

First Reading

4.05 pm

A Bill to support women in UK sponsored and supported conflict prevention, peace processes, mediation and diplomatic delegations; to ensure systematic gender consideration and responsiveness in UK foreign and defence policy; and for connected purposes.

Baroness Hodgson of Abinger (Con): My Lords, I declare my registered interests as co-chair of the All-Party Group on Women, Peace and Security, as a member of the steering board of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, and as founder of the Afghan Women's Support Forum.

The Bill was introduced by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill *First Reading*

4.06 pm

The Bill was brought from the Commons, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Business of the House *Motion on Standing Orders*

4.06 pm

Moved by The Lord Privy Seal

That, in the event that the Budget Responsibility Bill has been brought from the Commons, Standing Order 44 (*No two stages of a Bill to be taken on one day*) be dispensed with on Monday 9 September to allow the Bill to be taken through its remaining stages that day.

Motion agreed.

Holocaust Memorial Bill *Second Reading*

4.09 pm

Moved by Lord Khan of Burnley

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Lord Khan of Burnley) (Lab): My Lords, many noble Lords will be familiar with the Bill we are debating today and will remember that it was previously introduced in the previous Parliament. We have reintroduced the Bill for the same purpose that it was first brought forward by the previous Government: to help ensure the victims of the Holocaust will never be forgotten.

This horrendous crime—the murder of 6 million Jewish men, women and children—was an attempt by the Nazi state to eliminate an entire people. If we are to honour those families, communities and individuals, we must constantly ask ourselves: how did it come about? What was the context within which such hatred could grow? How did it happen that people could turn with such violence upon their neighbours? What led a Government to plan and execute the murder of millions?

A new national memorial to the Holocaust, with an integrated learning centre, will enable future generations to ask and answer those questions for decades to come. It will be a focal point for remembering the 6 million Jewish men, women and children, and all

other victims of Nazi persecution, including Roma, gay and disabled people. That is why we supported the Bill in Opposition and are promoting it today.

I want briefly to explain how we arrived at this moment, and pay credit to all those who supported the project until this point. In particular, I thank those involved in the work of the Holocaust Commission, launched by the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton, when he was Prime Minister. It was the recommendations of that commission, set out in its 2015 report, which called for a

“striking and prominent new National Memorial”, which should be

“co-located with a world-class Learning Centre”.

In the years since, the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation has done extensive work to find a suitable location. Since Victoria Tower Gardens was identified and the design team of Adjaye Associates, Ron Arad Architects and Gustafson Porter + Bowman was appointed, the project has consistently benefited from strong cross-party support. Since 2018, that support has, of course, been led by the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, and the right honourable Ed Balls through the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, building on the work of the commission, which itself received almost 2,500 responses to its call for evidence.

The design of the Holocaust memorial and learning centre is itself the product of an international competition, with hundreds attending the exhibitions of the short-listed entries and then the winning design. A detailed planning application was then submitted to Westminster City Council at the end of 2018, with around 4,500 comments submitted online. Then, the 2019 call-in by the Minister led to a planning inquiry, chaired by the inspector, which received almost 70 oral representations. Throughout this process, views have been properly considered, and will continue to be properly considered as future decisions are taken.

In this time, the project has benefited from the support of academics, including Michael Berenbaum and Professor Stuart Foster; teachers and educators such as Ellie Olmer and Martyn Heather, the director of education for the Premier League; religious leaders, including both the Chief Rabbi and the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury; and, of course, the voices of many Holocaust survivors.

I also stress that I accept there will never be universal support, and I want to assure the House that, for those who oppose the project, I will always be available to listen to, engage with and respect any concerns about this Bill. Indeed, I note that the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, has tabled a regret amendment that the Bill does not include certain provisions or deal with particular issues. This brings us neatly to an explanation of the Bill's provisions, following which I will pick up on the points that the noble Baroness raises in her amendment.

The Bill is before the House to provide parliamentary authority for spend on the project and to address the view of the High Court, which said that Section 8 of the London County Council (Improvements) Act 1900—the Act which saw the creation of Victoria Tower Gardens in more or less its current form—is an obstacle to construction. Clause 1 seeks powers to enable the

Secretary of State to provide funding for the construction, maintenance and operation of a Holocaust memorial and learning centre. It is a long-standing convention that Ministers should have adequate and specific legal authority to commit funds to significant new activities.

Clause 2 seeks to address the statutory obstacle inherent in the 1900 Act. I would like to spend a few moments explaining precisely what Clause 2 does and does not aim to achieve. The clause, if enacted, would provide that the 1900 Act should not be a barrier to the construction or operation of the Holocaust memorial and learning centre. The clause does not seek to repeal any part of the 1900 Act. I want to make clear that we are not seeking to overturn the guarantee that Parliament gave 124 years ago that Victoria Tower Gardens should remain protected,

“as a garden open to the public”.

The Government remain firmly committed to retaining and, indeed, improving the gardens, ensuring that all users of the gardens can continue to enjoy them. There will, of course, be some loss of space as a consequence of building the memorial, but the remaining area is more than 90% of the current space. Visitors to that 90% of the gardens will, as a result of this project, enjoy improved lawns with better drainage, more varied planting, more accessible seating and new boardwalks alongside the River Thames.

Clause 3 deals with extent, commencement and the Short Title.

In the previous Parliament, the House of Commons made clear that it wished the Bill and the project to proceed. We now have the opportunity in this House to give the same clear message. I am delighted that, as a new Government, we can also make very clear our support for this project. I confirm that the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State will continue to promote the planning application put forward by her predecessor to ensure that it is built.

It is important to note that this Bill does not provide powers to build the Holocaust memorial and learning centre. Planning consent must be obtained through the separate statutory process, which takes full account of the need to assess in detail all aspects of any development and to hear from both supporters and opponents. I have already referred to the consultation carried out as part of the planning process, one of the topics the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, asks in her Motion for the Bill to cover. Similarly, the process for site selection and appraisal and all matters relating to security have been scrutinised through the planning process, including at a public planning inquiry.

On project costs, a statement of expected costs was published by the then Government at Second Reading of the Bill. Forecast costs will continue to be reviewed and agreed with the Treasury in the normal way.

I will endeavour to respond in more detail in my closing speech to these and other points made by noble Lords in the course of the debate.

The proposal for a Holocaust memorial and learning centre at Victoria Tower Gardens will demonstrate the significance of the Holocaust to the decisions we take as a nation. I referenced Holocaust survivors earlier and, as I finish, I want to tell the House about a personal motivation for why I am so keen to see that

the memorial is built. Throughout my life and the lives of Members of this House, we have all heard direct, first-hand accounts of the Holocaust from those who were there. They are stories which were often deeply painful to relate but were told by survivors who knew the importance of sharing their testimony. Sadly, the opportunity to hear first-hand testimony will not be available for future generations. Each year, we are losing more and more Holocaust survivors. Last year, Holocaust survivor and staunch supporter of the project Sir Ben Helfgott died, and we know that not seeing the Holocaust memorial and learning centre built in his lifetime was a great sadness to him. Earlier this year we saw the passing of Henry Wuga MBE and Hella Pick CBE, who both escaped Germany on the Kindertransport and made their homes here. For those courageous survivors who fear that attention will fade after their departure, the Holocaust memorial and learning centre provides strong reassurance.

The history of the Holocaust will always be important to Great Britain, and in an age of increased disinformation and misinformation, this memorial and the learning centre will mean that history continues to be told, and respected, long after its witnesses are no longer with us. As the great-grandson of a 100 year-old survivor, Lily Ebert, said

“When we no longer have survivors like Lily among us, this memorial will help to ensure that their experience is never forgotten. We can create the next generation of witnesses”.

I beg to move.

4.19 pm

Amendment to the Motion

Moved by Baroness Deech

At end insert “but this House regrets that the Bill fails to allow for a full appraisal and consultation on any preferred site for a Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and that in preparing the bill the Government have failed to establish the true cost of the project or deal with issues of security around the Memorial”.

Baroness Deech (CB): My Lords, we are debating a project that would change the environment of the Palace of Westminster for ever—and for the worse.

Victoria Tower Gardens, the subject of the Bill, were given to the locality by the benefactor WH Smith 150 years ago, with a statute of 1900 prohibiting building on them. These are gardens filled to capacity at each Coronation and each royal funeral—sadly. Your Lordships will recall the queues that formed there for the late Queen’s lying-in-state, and inevitably they will be needed again for such occasions—not to mention the space needed for restoration and renewal, the repair of Victoria Tower itself, and the education centre’s continued existence, itself the object of a severe contest.

The gardens are a breathing space for local residents, many of whom live in council flats, and for workers—such as us. The project will take up 20% of the gardens, not 7% as the promoters would have us believe, and the plans and calculations are available to establish this.

[BARONESS DEECH]

The Government propose to wreck all of this. The Bill before your Lordships, ostensibly to make a democratic point, is an authoritarian and anti-democratic move that will overrule a century-old law to ride roughshod over the right of local residents to protect their environment, and it belittles the good intentions of donors.

The Bill is contrary to the Government's own green policies, their open space policy, and the decision of Westminster City Council that had determined to refuse planning permission. The proposed grab of the site has been done without consultation. The Board of Deputies of British Jews, for example, has not voted on it. I do not know what other minorities consider about their inclusion. It has been done without an assessment of risk or impact and without proper consideration of alternatives, so negligently that those responsible did not notice the 1900 Act prohibition until it was too late. So many millions—I believe £17 million—have already been spent in litigation and combat before a sod has been turned.

The Government tried to close down debate in the Commons Select Committee on the Bill, but I am sure your Lordships will not let them do the same here in this House, which is self-regulating and has a moral and legal duty to see what is being done to its environs.

The choice of location has been criticised by UNESCO, Historic England and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority, which has rated it as “red—undeliverable”, in the same category as HS2. There is the flooding risk—so much worse recently—a real danger to an underground space, and the design is an eyesore. If it goes any further, it must be subject to the proper full planning process rather than a short cut to a Minister with a foregone conclusion. I hope the Minister will reassure us on that.

The design is by the once-fashionable designer David Adjaye, now dropped by many clients because of allegations of inappropriate behaviour. Not only that, but the design is third or fourth-hand. A bunch of sticks in the air, it is almost identical to his memorial designs for Niger, Barbados and Ottawa—all, I need hardly tell your Lordships, very different contextually. It was a lazy choice, trumpeted by the Government but made without proper research. It bears no relevance to the Holocaust, the gardens or the UK. It will block the view of the Palace and has already been christened the “giant toast rack” or, if viewed from the air, a set of false teeth. My own research shows that abstract memorials are more prone to vandalism than graphic ones—but we will come to that. In sum, what is being put forward is not about the Holocaust and it is not a memorial.

Supporters will give an emotional account of how important it is that the commemoration of one of the greatest tragedies in history should be in Westminster. They will hint that it is anti-Semitic to oppose it. What they will not tell you is the downside: 11 coaches a day on Millbank; a million or so visitors tramping through the gardens every year; queuing through the children's playground, which also would have to be reduced by one-third; armed guards who will have to check every visitor to the gardens, whether or not they are going to

the memorial; the litter; the crowds; and the insensitivity of having a coke and crisps café and playground on top of a memorial to the starving and the dead.

More importantly, the planners have had to abandon the opportunity to fulfil the important recommendation of the Holocaust Commission set up by the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton, which started all this off in 2015. It recommended that there be a large Holocaust education campus with a lecture hall, room for 500 to meet at ceremonies, offices for educators, a professor and an endowment. All those recommendations have gone because there is no space for this in the gardens, and the funds will all be used up in excavation.

We may need a large learning centre and we definitely need a new Jewish museum to replace the one that has closed for lack of funds, but first we need to ask what this project would add to the six Holocaust memorials and 21 learning centres we have already, all of which outclass what is proposed now. They include the esteemed Wiener Library, established by the grandfather of the noble Lord, Lord Finkelstein; the British Library, with its recorded testimonies of Holocaust survivors; and the Holocaust galleries at the Imperial War Museum, with artefacts that the planned learning centre will not have because it is all to be digital. They all have education programmes that will put the learning centre to shame, as Sir Richard Evans, our eminent historian of Germany, has pointed out.

The location of a new learning centre is not important so long as it is accessible. Looking around the more than 300 Holocaust memorials in the world, it makes no difference whether they are near parliaments or not. All we know is that the more they go up and the more Holocaust remembrance ceremonies are packed out, the more anti-Semitism is growing. The irony of the Westminster location is that this is the very area where hate-filled marches have taken place for weeks, the police being unable or unwilling to stop them; where politicians have been unable to protect Jewish students from abuse and do not shy away from undermining protection of the land where the Holocaust survivors took refuge. Westminster: where misinformation in the media spreads hate uncontrolled. A new learning centre here would be a model of complacency; an excuse for those who call themselves non-racists to pose by it; a defence against excessive anti-Israelism.

The department has refused to release any information about its contents, despite a freedom of information battle lasting over a year. As far as one can tell from the public inquiry, the theme of the learning centre will be a generalised call to stop hatred. It will commit the cardinal academic sin of juxtaposing the Jewish genocide with others, thereby watering down its uniqueness and the study that needs to be carried out of the roots and consequences of anti-Semitism. As Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, a 99 year-old Holocaust survivor, supported by several others, said to the Commons Select Committee: what can you learn in a 45-minute walk through five rooms?

As mentioned, the cost is now estimated at £138 million, plus some £50 million for contingency. This is largely due to the need to excavate several storeys down in the park. It could be avoided by locating a learning centre close by—for example, in the empty offices of Millbank

or by the Imperial War Museum. It is not value for money, let alone the question of the annual running costs. Only £75 million of the cost is in place—the government grant; the rest needs to be raised.

Finally, there is security. Threats should not stop such a building, of course, but one has to be prepared. It will be a prime target, from land and from the river. Vandalism and even risk to life and limb will necessitate the strictest patrols. That means armed guards and searches in this little park, affecting every stroller. We have no information about it. I would very much like an evocative memorial to my lost relatives—two grandmothers and many more—one no bigger than the Buxton and other sculptures in the gardens. I ask noble Lords please to accept the criticisms of the Commons Select Committee. Start with a beautiful new design for a fitting memorial in the gardens, and a museum or learning centre elsewhere, with planning permission. I beg to move.

4.30 pm

The Earl of Effingham (Con): My Lords, it is a huge honour and privilege to be standing here before you today at the Dispatch Box. It is something I do not take lightly, and I will endeavour, as I have always done, to add value wherever possible. I am also very aware that this Bill has both supporters and opponents from all sides of the House. The subject matter at hand is an emotive topic which should be treated with the utmost care and the respect that it deserves, with many significant considerations to be discussed.

It is almost 11 years to this day that my noble friend Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton spoke at the Holocaust Educational Trust and sowed the seeds to ensure Britain has a permanent and fitting memorial, with an educational resource for generations to come. His Majesty's Official Opposition are supportive of the Bill but there are several areas which require detailed scrutiny.

The chair of the Jewish Leadership Council was tasked back in 2013 with assembling a commission, representing our whole society, to research and investigate such a memorial, its feedback several years later being that there should be a striking and prominent new national memorial co-located with a world-class learning centre. During the Victoria Tower Gardens planning consent legal action of 2022, all parties involved in the action supported the principle of a compelling memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, with a separate report evidencing widespread dissatisfaction with the existing national Holocaust monument and available educational resources. The Board of Deputies of British Jews has openly said that it supports the proposed memorial and learning centre.

This Holocaust memorial centre will stand as a testament to the horror of the Holocaust, and the learning centre will educate future generations, so that it may never happen again. It is clear that we must proceed with haste. The memorial that everyone agrees should be created has been 11 years in the offing, and the need for progress on building the memorial and learning centre has never been more urgent. Many survivors are no longer with us and those who remain, and who want to, should be part of our renewed vow to remember the Holocaust.

We appreciate that noble Lords' concerns lie around the proposed location of the memorial, but we also hear the words of the Chief Rabbi in the UK, who has described the choice of venue as "inspirational", saying that it

"is a most wonderful location because it is in a prime place of ... prominence ... at the heart of our democracy".

The most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury suggested:

"The proposal for a Holocaust Memorial with a Learning Centre by the Houses of Parliament and across the river from Lambeth Palace provides a symbolic opportunity to present the full story to new generations",

while the executive director at the Centre for Holocaust Education at UCL agreed that the memorial and learning centre should be in a place of immense importance. Locating it directly adjacent to the iconic Houses of Parliament therefore has an irresistible appeal.

That being said, a number of key issues remain and we seek clarification from the Minister. The park is a wonderful open space right next to the Palace of Westminster. I have been there myself; the view of the Palace is spectacular. It is clearly used by both locals and tourists alike. It is therefore of paramount importance that it should continue to serve this purpose in addition to its role as the location for the memorial and learning centre. What guarantees can the Government give the House that the current enjoyment of the park will continue in the same way post construction?

The architects' plans state that there will be

"a subtle grass landform with only the tips of the Memorial's fins bristling in the distance",

with government estimates of an 8% occupation of the gardens and a 15% reduction in lawn areas. However, other research suggests that it will be more like 21% of the gardens and 31% of the children's play area. Can the Minister please confirm exactly what the loss of space is, and why the Government's calculations are different from others on what should be clear-cut maths? Can he also confirm that, whatever permission is granted, the visual impact on the park as it currently stands will be minimised?

Underground, in the learning centre itself, how will the Government ensure that this is actually a world-class learning centre? Who will decide the content within? Is there a current plan for what it will contain?

We have many beautiful buildings in our country, and the listed building laws aim to protect them for future generations. How will the Government manage the process of respecting and maintaining the statutes of Emmeline Pankhurst and the Burghers of Calais, and the Buxton memorial fountain, which are all listed and in place in Victoria Tower Gardens?

On construction, one could be forgiven for thinking that there are roadworks all over the capital. What assessment have the Government made of the disruption to traffic flow in the area, given that the project is estimated to take up to three years to complete and is on a major thoroughfare through the city?

We are all too aware of security issues and protests around the Palace. How will the Government manage the increased footfall in the area as a result of the memorial? Will there be additional measures in place to protect the public from any potential disruption, as well as the Palace itself given its close proximity?

[THE EARL OF EFFINGHAM]

Finally, what assessment have the Government made of the cost to both build the centre and maintain it? Raw material prices continue to spiral, as do labour costs. What are the Government doing to mitigate these risks? Assuming that the Bill passes, how soon will the Government commit to kicking off the relevant work to deliver on the memorial and learning centre while at the same time providing value, given that delays will only increase expenditure?

I hope we can achieve an outcome that produces a world-class memorial and learning centre, while at the same time respecting and preserving the beautiful space of Victoria Tower Gardens, so that everyone benefits and feels like they are getting a good deal.

4.38 pm

The Lord Bishop of St Albans: My Lords, I rise with a certain reticence to speak, partly because of my own lack of experience of family members or others being involved in the Holocaust. I am aware that many Members of this House will have personal reasons why this is so raw and important. I underline that I am not trying to speak on behalf of the Church of England or the Lords spiritual. We hold a number of differing views on the Bill.

It hardly needs repeating, but I personally know of nobody who opposes the Bill because they are against the concept of having a prominent Holocaust memorial in this nation's capital. As someone who has visited a significant number of Holocaust memorials in other parts of the world and other capital cities, I am well aware of their importance and how moving they can be.

I agree with much of what the Minister said in his assessment of remembering the horrors of what happened and the need to do everything we can to make sure that a holocaust can never happen again, not least because so few Holocaust survivors are still with us and because of the strategic importance of learning about the Holocaust—especially now, given the ongoing scourge of anti-Semitism. It has been deeply saddening and distressing to read of the increase in anti-Semitic incidents this year, and of some of the hate-filled violence in riots across the country this summer. So it is even more urgent for us to find a way to address the division and prejudices that are damaging our communities, and we need to do all we can to highlight the great evil of these things when they happen.

It is of course deeply regrettable that the establishment of a new Holocaust memorial in London has been so long delayed, but I do not believe that rushing things through without proper public consultation is the right answer. Having said that, I do not support the proposed site of the memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens and the removal of the protections conferred by the 1900 Act that the Bill seeks to enact. Surely it is unnecessary to disrupt and decimate one of the few peaceful public green spaces in Westminster, particularly for residents for whom this is their main neighbourhood park and who have a right to access green space. I have been contacted by more than one member of the Buxton family—a very old Hertfordshire family whose forebear is commemorated in the Buxton memorial—who is deeply concerned about this.

I underline what the noble Earl, Lord Effingham, said about the need for His Majesty's Government to be absolutely clear about how much of this space will be taken up by the new memorial. We are told it is 7.5%, but this has been contested by the London Historic Parks & Gardens Trust, which claims that it is 20.7% of the total area of the gardens. I cannot see how this cannot be resolved, and we ought to be clear about what it involves.

There are further concerns, which I am sure my noble colleagues will outline in more detail and more persuasively than I could possibly hope to. There are security issues and increased costs, as well as the abandonment of many of the original recommendations for an educational centre, which came from the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission in 2015, simply due to space constraints. I note that 18 petitions have been submitted to the Lords Select Committee for the Bill, and I will follow the consideration of these closely after today's debate. It is for the reason I have outlined here that I am minded to support the amendment from the noble Baroness, Lady Deech.

It seems to me that the values guiding both sides of this debate are in fact rather closely aligned—an interest in the public good; public education and access for all; and a belief in the value of preservation of, on the one hand, our collective memory and, on the other, a vital shared green space at the heart of this city.

4.43 pm

Lord Mann (Lab): My Lords, I reference my entry in the register of Members' interests, and observe that it is a very British affair to spend 11 years discussing a planning matter. In that time, I have knocked on many doors, and I have yet to find anyone with a view on the matter, so it is not necessarily the heartbeat of the country. But I hope that we can have a degree of coming together.

I am very familiar with the different arguments that have been put, and put succinctly and clearly. There is only one issue that has not been raised, and so I will throw it to the Minister myself, because it is important to have clarity on this. I trust that the department has had appropriate discussions with the House authorities about any implications of the refurbishment of the Palace of Westminster, which I have seen described as becoming potentially the biggest building site in Europe. Whether that will ever happen in my lifetime, I also—in a very British way—wonder. However, it is a pertinent issue to have clarity on; the last thing that anyone would want, whatever their views, is to have a new memorial and education site built and then find that the portacabins from the refurbishment of the Palace of Westminster are suddenly occupying that green space, however temporary that might allegedly be.

I hope that we can shift the discussion to what is by far the most important issue. I am no expert, but both location and design are important. However, fundamental to tackling discrimination and anti-Semitism in this country is the effectiveness of the content within the centre. I hope that government and Ministers will take up the cudgel and outline in far more detail in the coming months—I am sure that the Bill will be passed, if the Official Opposition are in favour—what that content is, and what input people can have to that.

I work very closely with the world-leading centre at UCL, which has been referenced several times already. The observation made to me repeatedly by people at the centre is that, in their work with teachers on Holocaust education, they have to answer questions repeatedly about contemporary anti-Semitism and there is a void there. At the heart of the original report was the question of whether the Holocaust education that we have at the moment is working. That question has not been answered, because the external evaluation has not been done. UCL has a lot of research, but it is qualitative not quantitative. It is very good, and I recommend it—there is a lot of detail—but, at its heart, it needs to say that there must be more quantitative research. What is happening in schools and in the country with people's understanding of history and of prejudice to all communities, including the Jewish community? The situation in those 11 years has worsened. Therefore, the educational content, and how good it is, is critical to the whole point.

I make one modest suggestion to the Government, although it is not my prerogative to do so. My observation is that there needs to be hands-on ministerial drive on this. If I have any criticism of the past 11 years, it is that the approach has been a little too hands off. I appreciate that the Minister has been in post for only a few weeks and that it may be daunting—and it may not be him who is responsible but someone else—but the content has to be top quality. We need to know what is happening in schools and why it is not all working. That evaluation has to be independent and external, and that is a vital part of this process.

4.48 pm

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton (Con): My Lords, I am grateful for this opportunity, and it is a delight to follow the noble Lord, Lord Mann. Until he spoke, I was beginning to feel like the father of a rather unloved child. I agree with what he said, and indeed with what the Minister said.

I announced the Holocaust Commission back in September 2013. It was multifaceted, with teams of experts, and one of the biggest ever gatherings of Holocaust survivors. It was also, of course, thoroughly cross-party—anything that can bring together Ed Balls and Michael Gove is worthy of note. It was a genuine attempt to look at this, and it was clear. It did not say that the existing memorials are sufficient. It did not say that the current state of Holocaust education was good enough. It did not say that we could put this thing somewhere else in London. It said that there is real power in bringing together the monument and the education, and having it at the heart of our democracy. I want unashamedly to put my cards on the table and say that I think this is the right idea, in the right place and at the right time.

The right reverend Prelate said that there was a danger of rushing. With the greatest respect, I think that 11 years is not rushing. Indeed, often people wonder in this country whether we are capable of making decisions and building things any more. I hope that we can. I totally respect those who take a different view, but I want to say that I think this is the right place, the right time and the right idea, and I hope we can make it happen.

I remind your Lordships that, at the time, the commission said that it is a permanent and fitting memorial and educational resource for years to come. I think that is right, and the Minister said it brilliantly in his speech. The Holocaust was not just one of the defining moments of the 20th century, when 6 million people lost their lives. It was not just an event. It should be a permanent reminder of where prejudice and hatred lead us, and what it can end in. This is not just some monument to something that happened; it is a permanent reminder. That is why it is so important that it is co-located with our Parliament. When young people study the importance of democracy, it is enhanced, I hope, when they come and see Parliament in action. Here, they can see where history and democracy have led to. We talk about the future and what we want to do, but, at the same time, why not remind people of a dreadful event in the past that we should try to learn from?

Maybe one of the reasons I feel so strongly about this is that the great privilege of being Prime Minister is the things you get to see and the people you get to meet. I will never forget going to Auschwitz, as Prime Minister, and standing on those railway tracks and looking at the terrible, huge, mechanical industry of murder that was constructed there. It is only when you see it yourself that you fully understand the scale and intent of the slaughter. It is not just that which strikes you: it is only when you go into those little rooms and see the way that every suitcase was stored, the hair that was kept, the teeth, the room with the children's toys and clothes, that you realise the full horror of what was done there and why we need to remember it today.

The other great privilege as Prime Minister is the people you get to meet. Ben Helfgott has already been mentioned. I will never forget meeting this extraordinary man, who had been in two death camps, who had been on a death march, and who made it miraculously to Britain, with which he had almost no connection. I have never met a prouder British citizen, so proud to represent his country at the Commonwealth Games and the Olympics. He spent a lifetime educating people about the Holocaust. I will never forget Gena Turgel, who was in two camps, ending up in Belsen; she was liberated and ended up marrying her liberator, a wonderful British soldier. Hers was a lifetime given to explaining what happened during the Holocaust. Not everyone gets to go to Auschwitz and not everyone gets to hear from those survivors—in fact, you cannot hear from them any more, because they are not with us. That is why the need to get this done is so great.

Having listened to the debate so far, and from conversations with colleagues, I know that many support the concept but not the location. I am afraid that I think that it is not just a good idea in spite of the location but a good idea in part because of the location. We have a problem with anti-Semitism in this country, and it is growing. What better way to deal with this than to have a bold, unapologetic national statement? This is not a Jewish statement or a community statement; it is a national statement about how much we care about this and how we are prepared to put that beyond doubt. As I have said, where better than Parliament to combine a focus on our democratic future and the lessons we learn from the past?

[LORD CAMERON OF CHIPPING NORTON]

There are those who raise issues of security, and of course there will be issues of security—there are issues of security with this Parliament. However, the very fact that the issue of security is so great demonstrates why we need to do it so badly, and why locating it somewhere else because of security would be a surrender, really, to those who do not want to commemorate the Holocaust and do not want to learn from it.

I recognise that I have already gone over my time—I have a lot to learn, although I am on the Front Bench as a Back-Bencher. I end—with apologies to our Bishops—with a simple catechism. Do we have a problem with anti-Semitism and ignorance in our country? Yes, we do: 25% of young people do not think the Holocaust happened. Is it getting worse? Yes, it is. We know it is getting worse; we have seen that tragically in recent years. Do we need to educate people better about the Holocaust and hatred and where it leads? Does that go together with a memorial? Should we be bold and build it here in Westminster? My answer to all those questions is an unreserved yes. Build it, build it here, build it now, and be proud of it.

4.55 pm

Lord Carlile of Berriew (CB): My Lords, it is an enormous privilege to follow the noble Lord, Lord Cameron. Particularly as somebody with my background, I admire the motivation and ambition which he expressed when he announced the commission. The difference between us is about location. It may be partly because when I went to Auschwitz—as I have once, and frankly I do not have the courage to go there again—I went into the very room where my father's first wife, my sister's mother, was murdered after three years as a slave worker in that camp. After that visit, I came back thinking, "How really can we honour the people who died like Tosia?" That was her name.

My belief is that we can honour those people not by choosing a symbolic location about which not everybody agrees, but only by choosing a place which in itself declares honour for those people, where children and adults can go and learn about what happened to those people, where tyranny is laid out for what it is—tyrannical—where there is the academic potential for people to teach and learn in large numbers about what happened during the Holocaust, and where they are going to be secure.

The noble Lord, Lord Cameron, and I agree about almost everything, but the location in my view is far too small. It is far too mechanical, and I use the word literally. The architecture is mechanical; that is why it is so repetitious, as the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, declared. In my view, it also creates a security issue, not only for the centre itself but for this Parliament. There have been terrorist murders in and around this Parliament. We know that; some of us were here when some of them took place. We cannot say for sure that the curtilage of Parliament will not have to be extended at some point for security reasons. There are arguments for extending the curtilage of Parliament from one bridge to the other. If that were advised and were to happen, it would cause great difficulty for people visiting and leaving a centre in Victoria Tower Gardens.

Then there is the point raised by my noble friend about the number and nature of security guards who would have to be there. The figures we have been given suggest that between 2,000 and 3,000 people every day would visit that memorial centre, wherever it was situated. I do not want to be the person who says later, "I told you so", but this is the real world and some of those 2,000 or 3,000 people could be terrorists. Terrorists are often not stupid people—they know how to cause terror.

Everybody who goes near that centre or enters the garden would see police officers holding machine guns, as we have outside Peers' Entrance. There would have to be detailed searches. It would take hours to get in and out of the premises. It would be open only by appointment to people who had booked on the internet the previous day; it would not be open to the general public simply to walk around the grounds and see memorials to the Holocaust which had been erected there.

I say to the noble Lord and anyone who thinks that this is the right site: please go to Warsaw. It took people a very long time to build the POLIN centre there, but it is the most magnificent, broad and diverse centre you can have for an understanding of the Holocaust and the wickedness of tyranny. What I say is not only for myself but for my parents, who are dead now. My mother, too, was an extremely brave Holocaust survivor. She saved the little girl who later became my half-sister; she and my sister's father fell in love and, for good or ill, they had just me. I speak from a family like this.

I want to add one more thing, if I can be forgiven the brief time that it will take. The noble Baroness, Lady Golding, is sitting next to me. In the other place, she and I played a significant part in the War Crimes Act. It was very hard opposed at one stage, and we believe that we contributed to something very important in memory of those who died in the Holocaust. There have not been many cases, but its existence is important, and there has been at least one very major case. Equally, what I want for my deceased relatives and my still-living sister is an establishment which is not just symbolic but able to teach everything one can learn about what happened at that terrible time.

5 pm

The Lord Bishop of Southwark: My Lords, like my right reverend friend the Bishop of St Albans, I speak personally in this debate. I have had the privilege of knowing a good number of Holocaust survivors, which has been life-changing and life-enriching for me. Future generations will be denied that privilege, which is why it is so important that we get this right.

I acknowledge the desire of His Majesty's Government and so many of your Lordships to proceed with a matter that was, in many minds, settled back when the commission reported in 2015 and when the then Government came forward with proposals in 2016, as we have heard. I am also grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, and the secretariat at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for its recent briefing note, which addresses, so helpfully, many of the objections to the current scheme.

My concerns are around fulfilling the commission's original recommendations and the contemporary challenge of Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism, which are growing threats, as the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, said. It has been clear from the outset that the winning design for the underground learning centre is smaller than that which was recommended. It will not be a centre for study, as was detailed by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech. We are told that this is obviated by digitalisation and the strictly optional nature of physical study and in-person meetings that current technology affords us. My own experience of such joys—alongside that of the continuing world of assembling together as people of faith, or, indeed, in your Lordships' House—suggests to me that the learning centre will lose something vital in this regard by not having such space to study and to meet in person.

Such space is available in the now-vacant government and private sector buildings in Westminster, if it should be in Westminster; or adjacent to the site of the Imperial War Museum, which has been considered; or in one of the many remnants of Jewish heritage in the East End of London, where I served throughout the 1990s, which have not yet been considered. A suitable building may then have a striking image, sculpture or other artwork affixed; we have already heard about the great merit of such a sculpture in Victoria Tower Gardens. Such options might more readily deal with the traffic problems and related safety issues for coachloads of children visiting Victoria Tower Gardens, if the current proposals succeed.

It is important that children—and not just children—should be exposed to the reality of the Holocaust, the reasons for it and the part Britain played at various times in receiving, as well as inhibiting, Jews leaving Germany for Britain and Mandatory Palestine. Indeed, whatever happens to this project, there is an urgent need to ring-fence and deploy funds in a vigorous online campaign against Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism. Both are all too prevalent and are given the means to proliferate via social media—another growing threat—at the agency of very malign influences. There is a failure to match such foul endeavours on the scale that they now exist. Combating this requires greater resources than we currently deploy.

It would be my hope, then, that a striking and prominent Holocaust memorial and a properly funded and well-sited learning centre might be championed equally, thus provisioning a resource against misinformation. But I am yet to be persuaded that the proposals for Victoria Gardens, as opposed to elsewhere, best achieve that. Indeed, I am persuaded that the concerns raised by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, and others need to be heeded.

5.05 pm

Lord Strathclyde (Con): My Lords, there are few things in life which are non-controversial. Creating a Holocaust memorial should be one of them. As we have heard from my noble friend Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton, the memorial and learning centre has cross-party agreement and multifaith support—although perhaps I detected on the Spiritual Benches some disagreement on that. Both Labour and Conservative Governments are and have been in full support. Yet

I find myself in the position of believing that something has gone badly wrong in terms of gaining public support for the memorial and learning centre. The fact that it was initially announced 10 or 11 years ago, and it has taken this long to get to the point where legislation is introduced and required, is proof of that. Listening to the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, confirmed my view.

If passed at Second Reading, the Bill will go to a Private Bill Committee. I hope that it will look carefully at the case for a different location in central London for the memorial and the learning centre to be sited. That strikes me as being the key. I offer two alternatives. First, the corner of Horse Guards Road and the Mall: a position of national significance regularly visited by heads of state, including our own monarch—I have to say, they never go past Victoria Tower Gardens.

Secondly, I suggest the large space between Green Park underground station and the Bomber Command memorial at Hyde Park Corner. There is plenty of room for a memorial and a learning centre there. Both of these sites have none of the problems of Victoria Tower Gardens, and have plentiful access through the underground and the bus network. By contrast, there is only one underground station at Westminster and the bus network is already crowded for the thousands of people who are expected to visit.

It has been suggested today, and I have read elsewhere, that the memorial and learning centre should not be located in the same place. My noble friend Lord Cameron made a powerful argument against that. However, when the committee reports back, it should give us a view on that. I can see the attractions but, if there is only a memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens, it should be consistent in size with the other memorials in the garden, as the noble Baroness suggested. The learning centre is a substantial building and I understand that other organisations, including the Jewish Museum, have suggested suitable locations or even offered their own space. This seems to demonstrate a constructive way forward and I hope the committee can meet soon and report back early as well, so that we can get on, put this period behind us and come to an early conclusion.

5.08 pm

Lord Lee of Trafford (LD): My Lords, I declare firstly an interest as president of the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, whose members include the Royal Parks and the Imperial War Museum.

It is very sad that the siting of this memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens should prove so controversial when we are dealing with arguably the greatest ever crime against humanity. But Governments past and present should be ashamed that they are driving this through against the views of residents, Westminster City Council, the Royal Parks, Historic England and UNESCO—and the Jewish community is split on this issue.

There is no direct link between our Parliament and the ghastly Holocaust. There is no architectural link between what is proposed and the Palace of Westminster. Victoria Tower Gardens is already, as we are all aware, a very constrained site. Imagine the traffic during construction. Perhaps the Minister will tell us where the access will be for the lorries taking debris and soil

[LORD LEE OF TRAFFORD]

out and bringing in materials—and, similarly, where the route will be for visitors. The security considerations, which the noble Lord, Lord Carlile, talked about a little earlier, are obvious and considerable.

In my judgment, and quoting the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of St Albans, the site, post any construction, will be “decimated”. I suggest that we shelve the idea of putting this memorial in the Victoria Tower Garden site. A new site, or the Imperial War Museum, which already has well-regarded Holocaust galleries, would surely be much more appropriate. The noble Lord, Lord Strathclyde, mentioned a number of places where one could perhaps have a memorial also associated with a new Jewish museum—which was referred to by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech.

5.11 pm

Lord Russell of Liverpool (CB): My Lords, I have three reasons for speaking at Second Reading today. The first is that one of my great grandfathers, in December 1938, after Kristallnacht, put his name to something called the “Lord Baldwin Fund for Refugees”. In the next eight months it managed to raise the modern-day equivalent of nearly £43 million, which was used directly to bring Kindertransport children to this country.

Secondly, the previous holder of the rather long name that I bear, my grandfather, was the Deputy Judge Advocate-General and responsible for the management of all war crimes trials in British-occupied Germany between 1946 and 1951. He and his team had to gather the evidence of the horrors which the Holocaust memorial and any educational centre will try to tell the world about. In 1954, only eight years after the end of the war, horrified by growing evidence of Holocaust denial, including in Germany, he published a book, *The Scourge of the Swastika*, which I am ashamed to say is still in print. Over the years, many of your Lordships have told me that they read it at a relatively young age and have never forgotten it.

Thirdly, I am a petitioner, among others, on this Bill. In principle, how can one be against the idea of a national Holocaust memorial? But what a muddle we have got ourselves into in a wonderfully and typically British way. The report of the Holocaust Memorial Bill Select Committee in another place from 17 April of this year makes uncomfortable reading. I suggest that all noble Lords, whatever their views, would benefit from reading what it says. In some ways the most important thing is what it does not say, because there is clearly a high degree of scepticism, a feeling that the committee has not been told as much as it would wish to know and that it has been quite constrained during its deliberations to actually get to the heart of the matter—an echo, I am afraid, of other instances where decisions to go forward with a project are often taken in the political rush of the moment without necessarily having thought through in detail what needs to be done to do it effectively.

There is clearly quite a high level of discomfort about this Bill. On the basis of past experience, things are likely to get worse before they get better. At the moment, with the rise in anti-Semitism, the last thing

that we should inadvertently do is agree to an already flawed process which runs the risk of continuing as it has done to date.

There is a saying which is suitable since the construction would involve a degree of excavation. It is that if you are in a hole, it is usually quite good advice to stop digging. I speak as someone who, in his late teens, used to help our gardener, who was the local gravedigger, so I know exactly what is involved. On the assumption that this Bill proceeds—and I am sure it will—I would hope that lessons have been learned from the fact that we are where we are today and from the degree of dissent and concern around the Chamber that there clearly is.

A combination of the noble Lords, Lord Mann and Lord Carlile, really put their finger on the essence of this. This is not just a sculpture, a symbol; it is above all a tool and a way of trying to educate all of us, but particularly the generations after us, to try to inoculate us against the toxicity of anti-Semitism, which is all around us. We cannot be inoculated unless we really understand what that disease is. Once we understand it, we have a chance of being inoculated successfully. I am sure this will proceed, but for goodness' sake, let us learn the lessons to date and do it better than we have heretofore.

5.16 pm

Lord Howard of Rising (Con): My Lords, I cannot think of any possible or rational reason for objecting to a memorial to something quite so awful as the Holocaust, but I think there are strong reasons for objecting to the proposed monument being located in Victoria Gardens. There is the aesthetic: the proposed design is out of keeping with its surroundings. Anything quite so hideous and inappropriate as this off-the-shelf toast rack, as the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, described it, would in normal circumstances have been blocked by English Heritage, which has a duty towards the surroundings of buildings of national importance such as the Palace of Westminster. UNESCO's criticisms and objections have been ignored.

The shocking act of bulldozing through the protections that surround Victoria Gardens so that it can no longer be used for peaceful enjoyment by the generations to come is distasteful. To abuse the generosity of WH Smith would be bad enough; to do so with something so controversial which will destroy the atmosphere and peace of the gardens is vandalism. Stating that only a small percentage of the site will be taken up does not allow for the numbers going through or the necessary security arrangements mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Carlile.

From a practical point of view, how will the projected extra 1 million visitors be coped with? The whole area is cordoned off for state occasions and, regularly, for demonstrations. Even today, I had to get out of a car and walk from Whitehall because one could not get to the Palace of Westminster. Sometimes, residents in the area around Smith Square have found that there is only one street by which they can access their house, and that is from the west. Anyone trying to get to their homes from the east may have to go south of the river, come back across Vauxhall Bridge and approach from

the west. What will happen when the hordes of visitors are trying to gain access to the memorial and cannot walk through Parliament Square? There are projected to be 11 busloads a day. Where will the buses drop off, and where will they park while they are waiting? When there are demonstrations, spare parking is taken up by police reserves.

Some of the main objectors to the memorial are members of the Jewish community. Their objections are not to a Holocaust memorial but to a location where it would cause offence, inconvenience, controversy and general unhappiness. The proposed memorial could also quite possibly act as a beacon to anti-Semitism. I urge the Government to find a more appropriate location for this very worthwhile project and not put it in a place which creates antagonism and thereby fuels the fires of anti-Semitism.

5.19 pm

Baroness Noakes (Con): My Lords, the issues have already been brilliantly explained by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, and other noble Lords. As has been noted, there is no disagreement about the value of a Holocaust memorial and an associated learning centre, but there are real issues about the chosen solution. I support the amendment of the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, to the Second Reading Motion. If she chooses to divide the House, I will readily vote for it.

My party has not covered itself in glory in this whole saga and I am very disappointed that the Labour Government—generally so ready to trash the many things that we achieved in government—have embraced the last Government's policies on this. The Labour Party is doubtless keen to shed its anti-Semitism problems, but I believe that, as an incoming Government, they would have been wiser to have paused and reflected on the issues involved in a memorial rather than rushing to legislation.

The choice of Victoria Tower Gardens remains a mystery. It appeared as if from nowhere, in early 2016, and was not one of the sites originally identified by the Holocaust Commission. It has never been the subject of consultation. It was obvious from the outset that Victoria Tower Gardens is far from ideal as a site: it is too small to accommodate both a memorial and a learning centre of the size originally specified by the Holocaust Commission; it will attract many additional visitors to an area of London already overrun with tourists; and there is no available parking for the coaches that will disgorge visitors throughout the day, unless Millbank is closed to other traffic. The key virtue of the site—its proximity to the Palace of Westminster and thus the heart of our democracy—is also its key downside.

Back in 2016, we had not seen the scale of the demonstrations that have blighted central London in the wake of Israel's response to the Hamas terrorist attack. A memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens will be a magnet for malign intent towards Jewish people and the State of Israel. Security is a big issue, not only for the memorial but for the additional risks that it will bring to the Palace of Westminster, as the noble Lord, Lord Carlile of Berriew, reminded us. Those risks have not been properly identified, costed or funded.

The costs of the project itself are far from certain. The Government originally committed £50 million, but the latest estimate, including a contingency, is nearer to £200 million. We all know that the cost of public projects goes in only one direction, especially when many elements are still quite vague. It sounds insensitive to put a price on something as important as remembering the appalling legacy of Nazi Germany, but times are hard, as the Chancellor and Prime Minister keep telling us. No one knows who will run the memorial and its learning centre or how that will be funded. The Bill could have dealt with that, but it is silent.

Victoria Tower Gardens is a small, tranquil island of green in a busy part of London. One-fifth of its area will be taken up by the memorial and the construction phase will bring its own disruptions. It will no longer be peaceful if between 1 million and 2 million visitors descend on it each year. The roots of those magnificent plane trees, which are an integral part of the gardens, will likely not survive a major excavation for the learning centre. Cultural vandalism on this scale is not a fitting memorial to the Holocaust.

5.24 pm

Baroness Altmann (Non-Affl): My Lords, I declare an interest in that I am the child of Holocaust survivors and I have grown up with stories of how the Holocaust originated. My mother is thankfully still with us—I do not know for how long—and this summer I buried and laid a stone to a cousin who was on the Kindertransport.

Those stories are that the Holocaust was not initially about war. It was about the rise of anti-Semitism across a country that was considered a democracy and that was perpetrating anti-Semitic murders well before the Second World War. I grew up with the gratitude of a family that was saved by this country, at least in tiny part, believing my whole life that it could not happen again, but I fear that the anti-Semitism that led to the Holocaust, which I never believed I would see in this country, is rising again right now in Britain and elsewhere.

I am therefore so grateful that the noble Lord, Lord Khan, and the new Government want to carry on with this project, for which I am so grateful to my noble friends Lord Cameron and Lord Pickles, to Ed Balls, and to many others who have worked tirelessly, not because they are Jewish like me and have that history but because they genuinely want to warn and leave a legacy mark to demonstrate the concerns about any of this happening once more.

I am used to the idea that anything one does that is a major new construction project will cause controversy. Whatever you build, there will always be people who like it and others who do not. I am grateful that so many noble Lords support the concept of a memorial and recognise its importance. I am not sure of the detailed history of how this site has been chosen or the design that has been chosen, but I am sure that if this is not agreed, passed and done now, it will not happen. As my noble friend Lord Cameron said, it is much needed now. The signal of not proceeding at this stage would be of great concern to me.

Of course I respect and understand the concerns that have been expressed about the security of the site, but that would apply wherever it was placed. I appreciate

[BARONESS ALTMANN]

the feelings and concerns of the noble Lords, Lord Carlile and Lord Russell, and I am very grateful for the actions of their families and for the stories that we have heard in this important debate.

I congratulate both this Government and the previous one on wanting to push this idea to its conclusion, and I am very sad that the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for whom I have enormous respect, has this deeply held opposition to the project. I can respect and understand it, but I genuinely believe that, with so much support from people who do not have the history, we need to grasp the opportunity now to make sure that this project proceeds.

5.29 pm

Lord Blencathra (Con): My Lords, I want to make it abundantly clear that I favour an appropriate and uniquely British monument to the Holocaust in the heart of Westminster, and a properly sized learning centre somewhere nearby with the capability of telling the whole story of the Holocaust and of Jews in Britain and the ability to operate online to tackle the resurgence of Jewish hatred we have seen in the last few months. Never before has education about the eradication of 6 million Jews been more essential as we see frightening calls for a new Holocaust.

However, I am afraid this is an appalling little Bill. It was appalling when the last Government introduced it and it is still an appalling Bill today. That is no fault of the Minister, for whom I have the highest regard.

This memorial fails every recommendation of the Holocaust Commission and instead foists on us a grossly inadequate edifice that does no justice to the past Holocaust nor the threats of a new one, designed by a discredited architect, David Adjaye—a grotesque design already rejected by Canada, and dumped on a completely unsuitable site in London that was never considered by the commission in 2015. At least the Canadians now have a decent one on a one-acre site next to their war museum. It is three stories high and all above ground—not a pokey little thing buried in a bunker in a small park.

The commission wanted something uniquely British. Instead, we get the same inexplicably obscure but uniquely ugly design that Canada rejected. In February 2019, on the BBC, Mr Adjaye justified the ugliness of it by saying that

“disrupting the pleasure of being in a park is key to the thinking” of the memorial. What? What an appallingly feeble excuse for bad design in the wrong place. Key to the thinking should be educating people on the evil of National Socialism as practised by Hitler and the Nazi regime.

When the commission reported way back in 2015, the conventional view was that all education and learning had to be in a physical building. All that has now changed following Covid. The only point of a physical museum is if there are physical objects to display and the learning cannot be imparted in any other way but by a physical presence. Look at the brilliant display at the Imperial War Museum, which I visited recently. Of course it has the usual photos and videos we have all seen, but it has some physical artefacts: the striped suits, some shoes, jewellery, and a good mock-up of the

railway wagons used to transport Jews to the extermination camps. But the bunker here will just have copies of the same posters and videos we have all seen before, because all physical artefacts have already been scooped up by physical museums.

DLUHC, as it then was, boasted to the House of Commons Select Committee that the exhibition would be

“a powerful audio-visual exhibition that will set out the events of the Holocaust from British perspectives, historically, politically and culturally”.

But why would children and young people—or, indeed, anyone—want to visit a building to see things they can get better on their mobile phones and iPads? How many busloads of children will come from Scotland and Wales, or even the English regions, to look at a video show with nothing new in it? How many would visit the Natural History Museum, the British Museum, the Churchill War Rooms or even this place if all they could see in these magnificent buildings were some posters and videos rather than physical artefacts?

Adjaye’s justification for these fins is that the 22 gaps between them represent the 22 countries from where Jews were plucked to be exterminated. That is a completely irrelevant number that no one has heard of before. Why not one fin representing the country that did it, Nazi Germany? Why not 20 fins, the number of concentration camps, or six, the number of large extermination camps? Many numbers could be chosen but they are all irrelevant except one: 6 million—6 million Jews exterminated. That is the figure that needs to be represented in any memorial, and it is more important today than ever before.

On 27 January 2019, the BBC published a poll showing that 8.5 million Brits—19% of our population—thought that fewer than 2 million Jews had been exterminated. Some 2.2 million people—5% of our population—believed there never was a Holocaust at all. There are frightening, deliberate lies being spread by social media, and that level of Holocaust denial is increasing rapidly. We need not an old-fashioned, analogue bunker in the ground but a large, modern, high-tech, 24/7, digital educational operation, attached to the Imperial War Museum, which would be keen to house it, pumping out the true facts of the last Holocaust and rebutting the lies on social media about Jews in this country and abroad.

I am proud of what Jews have delivered for this country over the past 500 years despite bias and discrimination. Now they are under attack like never before. The Holocaust is being denied, and this failed Adjaye design does nothing to educate millions of people on the horrors of it nor counteract the present threats of a new Holocaust. That is why this Bill fails all the tests of the original commission.

5.35 pm

Lord Leigh of Hurley (Con): My Lords I rise to support this Bill as it stands and congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Khan of Burnley, on bringing it through. A cursory glance at my interests in the register will reveal that I have many interests in the Jewish community. I am president, chairman or vice-president of a number of Jewish community organisations, including a synagogue, a think tank and a leadership group. Not

listed is my involvement in and support of a number of other Jewish-related charities, such as the Holocaust Education Trust. I was at the dinner where my noble friend Lord Cameron made his eloquent speech with this idea. However, I cannot possibly claim, and would not wish to, that I represent any of them or that any of them agree on anything, particularly this issue. They all have different views of different strength.

I have to be honest that, initially, I struggled to come to terms with any objection. As Sir Mick Davis said in his commission's report,

"The Holocaust was also a catastrophe for human civilisation. The very scientific and industrial innovation which had propelled society forward was used on an extreme scale to take humanity into the deepest abyss of moral depravity".

It was so depraved and evil that it has taken some many decades to be able to address it and consider how to mark it.

As my noble friend Lord Cameron and the noble Lord, Lord Carlile, said, those of us who have been to a camp, read about the Holocaust or seen documentaries can never forget the images and the stories, often told first-hand, but not for much longer. Those who do not have a personal connection will from time to time be reminded by popular culture. Who will ever forget the sight of Dr Jacob Bronowski in "The Ascent of Man" standing in a pond where the ashes of 4 million people reside or how popular culture reminds us of the bravery of Oskar Schindler and Nicholas Winton or *The Escape Artist: The Man Who Broke Out of Auschwitz to Warn the World*, the story of Rudolf Vrba told by Jonathan Freedland, or even our own noble friend Lord Finkelstein's telling of his family's ordeals at the hands of Hitler? However, these will pass. The world will move on and perhaps fail to believe that a country that was at the very peak of the civilised world, the most sophisticated, mannered, wealthy, cultured country in existence at the time—Austria, as Stefan Zweig described it—could have produced Adolf Hitler? Your Lordships do not need me to tell you all this. We are all of a mind to ensure that the creation of an evil capable of perpetrating the humiliation, depravation and, ultimately, attempted extermination of the Jewish people and others needs to be prevented from ever happening again.

I want to address some of the concerns raised. In all honesty, I find it very painful to have to have a public argument on this debate. I am more than happy to have a ding-dong and set-to with noble Lords about Brexit, the economy or taxation, but this is difficult. It upsets me to know that some Peers are against this proposal, particularly those whom I rate so very highly and respect more than I can say in public without embarrassing them and me, none more so than the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, whose description of her interest in her petition is so moving, starting with the words:

"I am a direct descendent of Holocaust victims".

Who am I to disagree with someone with that pedigree?

I want to say that I understand the noble Baroness's concerns. I agree with her that this must not be just a memorial to British values. It must retain its focus on the 6 million exterminated and the attempt to eradicate one single group of people. We need to ensure that this memorial and learning centre explains that this really was an attempt at a genocide in the true sense of the

word, not as currently bandied around in some parts of the Middle East at the moment—to do so is gut-wrenching.

Her concerns that the learning centre is too small when compared to the commission's recommendations are well made, but there can be other learning centres for greater study. This venue will make people, in particular children who come to visit us in Parliament, stop and stare, not just now, not just for decades, but in hundreds of years, and say "Wow! Why did they build that here? Why is it so prominent with its 22 fins?". That reaction will come only from a structure and venue as currently proposed and with an opportunity for visitors to learn enough about what happened to understand its importance.

We in the Jewish community, and others, have spent too long arguing over this proposal and, as we have done so, survivors such as Zigi Shipper, Sir Ben Helfgott and many others, so keen to see it built, sadly are no longer with us. We can ensure that the memorial and learning centre achieves the spirit of the objectives of the commission, we can address many of the concerns raised by the petitioners against it, but we should not allow the many nimby and other objectors to overturn a project whose time has come.

5.40 pm

Lord Lisvane (CB): My Lords, the Holocaust was a stain upon humanity. It must not be allowed to fade from our memories as the survivors—now a dwindling number—die. As we all agree, there must be a memorial.

Alas, so far as the site is concerned, this Bill is an unnecessarily contentious and spectacularly ill-judged attempt to realise that end. There was no consultation on the site of either the memorial or the learning centre. As the noble Lord, Lord Lee of Trafford, reminded us earlier, and as other noble Lords have done, the whole proposal has been opposed from the beginning by Westminster City Council, Historic England, the Royal Parks, a number of amenity organisations and UNESCO—remembering that Parliament Square and its associated buildings form a UNESCO world heritage site.

In the case of this Bill, the hybrid Bill procedure seems to have worked very well, despite an attempt via an instruction in the Commons to limit the scope of the Select Committee's considerations. But that committee reported that the Government had failed to consult on the selection of a site; that they had failed to establish the true cost of the project, about which the National Audit Office was equally critical; and that they had failed to address issues of security. I did not find the previous Government's response to those criticisms at all convincing. I hope that the Minister will be able to assuage the concern which I—and, I know, other noble Lords, as it has been mentioned already—have about the percentage of the area of Victoria Tower Gardens that would be taken by a memorial. The Government's figure is 7.5%, but the best reckoning I have seen produces a figure of 20.7%. I hope that the Minister will be able to take us through this working, in writing afterwards if necessary.

A near neighbour of the proposed memorial site is the Parliament Education Centre. When I had another role down the other end of this building, I had overall

[LORD LISVANE]

responsibility for that project. It was quite contentious for some Members of Your Lordships' House but I was extremely keen on it, as I am obsessive about getting people, especially young people, to understand and experience Parliament.

The education centre has some resonances for the Bill before us today. We had a real struggle to get planning permission. The key issues were: the impact on Victoria Tower Gardens; people management—coaches stopping to let passengers off in Abingdon Street, and all the safety issues involved; and, of course, security. Parliament was, and remains, a very high-value target.

The planning permission for the education centre—which, incidentally, has proved extraordinarily successful—was due to run out in 2025. But the weary and indefensible, in my view, delays to the restoration and renewal project led the parliamentary authorities to seek an extension of that permission. That has been granted, but only to 2030, when, without any further argument, the centre will have to move.

In reporting on that application, Westminster City Council's planning officers said that the key issues were:

"The principle of retaining a development of this size and form"—

rather smaller than what we are being asked to agree to today—

"within Victoria Tower Gardens, which is a Grade II registered park and garden and area of public open space and recreation; and ... the impact on the significance of heritage assets, including the registered Victoria Tower Gardens and its associated listed memorials, the Westminster Abbey and Parliament Square Conservation Area, the World Heritage Site ... and adjacent listed buildings including the Grade I listed Palace of Westminster".

Given the intention of the Bill before us today, this seems to be happening in a parallel universe.

I finish with the question of security. Maintaining the security of our Parliament is a difficult task at the best of times, as I know very well. It is also extraordinarily expensive. The last few months should have convinced us of the foolishness of providing a focus for protest and demonstration, and possibly more sinister intentions, within a few yards of the Palace of Westminster. I trust that wiser counsels will prevail.

5.45 pm

Baroness Bottomley of Nettlestone (Con): My Lords, it is an honour to speak after the noble Lord, Lord Lisvane, with whose views I so frequently agree, although he always expresses the arguments with much greater eloquence and style. I am here as an acolyte of my friend, the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, and as my master's voice—the parliamentary expression now of my late lamented parliamentary husband. I also declare an interest as I live in Smith Square. I do not wish anybody to say that I am doing this out of self-interest; I am doing this out of a passionate belief that this is the wrong building in the wrong place.

This congested, subterranean shoebox bears no comparison to the first Holocaust memorial I visited. I shall never forget the first time I visited Yad Vashem. I was on an official visit and was totally overcome with emotion as it was so powerful and evocative. I had immersed myself in every sort of reading and study about the Holocaust, but the experience of going to

Yad Vashem, which has subsequently been renovated and further improved, was so powerful. I do not believe anybody can visit this proposed unattractive bunch of sticks—as I think the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, called it—and have anything other than a sense of wretchedness that we could not have done better. We can do much better.

I spoke today to the wonderful Dame Vivien Duffield, who has poured a fortune into the Imperial War Museum. I hope everybody has been to the Holocaust galleries. They are magnificent. The content is tremendous. That is an experience for young people. There is space in the park. You can meet, gather and go to the café. You can park a coach. I am also a great believer in the Wiener Library, the collection of amazing works concerning the Holocaust from the grandfather of my noble friend Lord Finkelstein. This is rich, proper, full content. We are not talking about anything of that nature in Victoria Tower Gardens.

I do not really understand the parliamentary imperative. I am very attached to the Buxton memorial. Buxton took over from Wilberforce—the Member of Parliament for Hull, for those who mind about Hull. This was a parliamentary campaign to abolish slavery. I am very attached to the Pankhurst statues. Again, women's suffrage is really powerful. The Burghers of Calais are really important but not quite so parliamentary—they are close, but nevertheless, I do not understand why the Holocaust museum, which I want to be tremendous, has to be in Victoria Tower Gardens. If it becomes a sticking point, let us have a small memorial.

I said in the King's Speech debate that I was so pleased that the King did not mention this at all and that the Prime Minister simply referred to a memorial and not a learning centre. This is a most unwise project. I thought my noble friend Lord Strathclyde's idea of the corner of Horse Guards Road and the Mall was great. Green Park by Bomber Command? That is a bit over the top—the Holocaust museum should be bigger than Bomber Command—but there it is, loud and proud for us all to see. A memorial should be like a pilgrimage—like the *Canterbury Tales*. You should travel to it, experience it and not just creep in by some security guards, unable to park.

I am also incredibly worried about the security. We have just had a very distinguished shadow Cabinet member, Jonathan Ashworth, lose a 22,000 Labour majority to a militant Gaza supporter with a majority of 1,000. We are living in more volatile times on these issues than ever before, and it is asking for trouble to put the Holocaust museum so close to Parliament. It is a folly; the security implications, the danger and the sinister effect are beyond belief.

I am also offended by the manner in which the protagonists have sought to railroad this through. They did not want Westminster City Council to have anything to do with it when they realised that it was going to oppose it. They have disregarded the 1900 London parks Act; as a former Parks Minister, I object to that. The design is revolting and if it was not good enough for Ottawa, why on earth do they think it is good enough for here? The costs and delays are ridiculous. Might I suggest that the costs would be better spent providing copies of the book by the noble Lord, Lord Finkelstein, to all young people?

Lastly, when you are in a hole, stop digging. I implore the protagonists not to start digging up this small oasis of calm and recreation. There are far better places.

5.50 pm

Lord Gold (Con): My Lords, it is an honour to follow the noble Baroness, Lady Bottomley, even though I am not in full agreement with what she had to say. It saddens me very much that the debate so far has concentrated on location. I will come to that in a moment, but let me start by talking about the need for a fitting memorial.

For many people of my generation, born after the war when so many had lived through it and served our country bravely, knowledge of the Nazi atrocities, the murder of 6 million Jews and so many others was known by the majority of us, subscribing to the statement “never again”, but now it is different. Few survivors of the war are still living, let alone survivors of the murderous camps. There are only a handful of people able to provide their testimony of what they lived through—of what the Nazis did and of how they tried to wipe out the Jewish race. Yet despite the Holocaust being on the national curriculum there are so many people, especially young people, who do not know what happened or do not believe it.

As an example of how little is known, I am shocked that in a 2023 survey over a third of people polled had no idea that Winston Churchill was our wartime Prime Minister. Indeed, in a US survey in 2020, 63% of those polled did not know that 6 million Jews perished in the Holocaust.

In 1994 the film director Steven Spielberg recognised the need to create a permanent record of what had happened, so he launched the Shoah Foundation to interview and record the testimonies of Holocaust survivors in order that this evidence would always be available when those who had suffered the Nazi regime were no longer alive. This was an unprecedented effort to record, preserve and share the facts. It gave me considerable comfort that knowledge of the Holocaust would be engrained in our minds and that of our children and grandchildren for ever, but I now have real fears that this may not be the case.

Advances in social media and the creation and dissemination of false news have enabled wicked people to deny the Holocaust and challenge the authenticity of the testimony that has been recorded. The creation of false images provides Holocaust deniers with an excuse to challenge the authenticity of the filmed testimony. As a result, in a 2023 poll a fifth of US citizens between the ages of 18 and 29 believed that the Holocaust was a myth. This confirms my fear that the frightening rise of anti-Semitism, especially since 7 October 2023, shows that the lessons from the Holocaust have been forgotten by many and how the recent history of the Jewish people has been totally ignored.

This all demonstrates how important it is to have a permanent memorial to the Holocaust and a learning centre that can educate and inform, not watered down by attempting to equate what happened to other acts of genocide. This is essential if we are to ensure that present and future generations truly know what happened. But I go further: as we have heard, a great number of noble Peers who support the creation of a Holocaust

memorial believe that it should not be located in Victoria Tower Gardens. We have heard today why that is so, but I consider that no place in Britain is more suitable for such a centre than there.

It is right next to the mother of Parliaments for the whole world and at the very heart of our democracy, where Winston Churchill’s famous speeches against Nazism were made during the war. The symbolism is enormous. This is a statement to our people and the world that we truly remember the Holocaust and recognise its significance. Millions of people from all over the world visit London every year, and many will come to see our Parliament. What a statement it will be to them if they see that we regard a Holocaust memorial and learning centre as so important that we locate it there. As to the logistical issues and security problems, of course those are serious but we have shown before that we can cope.

Nevertheless, today we have heard some most important points of concern, not least in the speech by the noble Earl, Lord Effingham, which I hope the Government will answer. There have been suggestions that the memorial should perhaps be separated from the learning centre, and the Government should consider this. Around the world there are tremendous memorials to the Holocaust—in New York, Washington and Berlin. The buildings themselves tell you what has happened. They are very moving. As the noble Baroness, Lady Bottomley, pointed out, Yad Vashem is a tremendous memorial to what happened. That is what we should be creating in the gardens nearby, and we can look after the other issues that have been raised today.

5.57 pm

Viscount Craigavon (CB): My Lords, speaking very much as a local Westminster inhabitant, I declare an interest in being affected by the proposals in this Bill to my local park. But in addition to recording its negative effects on the more general and longer-term users of this park, while trying to take in the wider aspects of the issues before us, I will list a number of individual shortcomings in the process of this legislation, many of which have already been mentioned, and concentrate on some more major aspects.

Like others, I fully support a Holocaust memorial and any learning centre, but not this one and not here. I have visited the Imperial War Museum’s impressive current presentation, whose relative space and context could be appreciated. How can anything like that be replicated by spending 45 minutes underground, that or less apparently being the estimated time of a Victoria Tower Gardens Holocaust visit?

I picked up from his opening speech that the noble Lord, Lord Khan of Burnley, said that the intention was to provide a world-class learning centre. Very few would call what is in prospect that: five rooms, and entirely digital. The noble Lord, Lord Cameron, said that others should learn, as he had, of the scale and content of the slaughter—but surely not in that confined underground space.

So many of the problems that have arisen have derived, as has been said, including by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, in moving her amendment, from an earlier lack of prudent, normal consultation and planning

[VISCOUNT CRAIGAVON]

for how any new structures would be used. I join those disagreeing with the figure of 7.5% of space being lost. These estimates hide behind unnecessary complications and definitions and are intuitively highly unlikely. My advice is that, by using the definition of unusable open space not available for ordinary park use, we should get a figure of 20.4% lost. The noble Baroness also quoted that 20% figure.

I personally believe that the promoters need to drop the talk of 7.5% in order to be taken seriously on this, or they need to intelligibly redefine its context. In his opening speech the noble Lord, Lord Khan, moved slightly to the figure of more than 90% being available. We were told that Westminster City Council had endorsed the figure of 7.5%, but only using complicated definitions. In that way, trust in all this is being lost.

Following the theme of an original lack of consultation on what is trying to be achieved, it is on reflection astonishing that it is still continually being discussed. The noble Baroness, Lady Deech, has highlighted that after all this time we still do not know if we are being asked to focus on sharing all this with other holocausts, and maybe subsequent genocides. One might hope not. Some years ago, the original requirement for a prominent London location was turned into being one near Parliament, which is not persuasive to force what needed much greater space into this underground cavern.

As a local familiar to this space, I draw attention to some security issues. One is clearly fearful of the increase in activity, numbers and neighbouring traffic problems—not just personally, but for all users of the neighbourhood including the park, which is meant to be used normally, and for Parliament. One might think that requiring—as apparently is going to happen—pre-booked and timed free ticketing would solve some problems but, if names have to be checked in advance and cannot be obtained on the day, there will sadly be no opportunity for passing or spontaneous custom. This is unlike tickets for Parliament, which can be obtained by anyone at an external kiosk where people can decide at the last minute. One has to assume that bags will have to be searched as efficiently as at the Cromwell Green entrance to Parliament.

I conclude by referring to architectural illustrations of what is in prospect and depictions one has seen of the scene. One may see in those pictures people using the various areas and the barriers that will be required. However, what seems to be played down is the difference and tension between the inner area for those with tickets, who should have been searched, and those using the park outside normally. The masonry barriers between the two areas are depicted as quite low—less than waist height—and easy to leap over. To maintain the separation of the inner area from the general public outside, it is likely that high metal barriers would have to be erected, which might destroy the impression the present pictures tend to give. One is told it involves good sight-lines being maintained from one side to the other.

There is a lesson to be learned from this building. In a recent drop-in exhibition in the Royal Gallery, it was shown that the steel and concrete Corus barriers, which provide our barriers to the public street and the limits to our car park, will for security reasons require

metal extensions attached to them to provide a height of 3 metres, to prevent people leaping over them. It is that sort of security, which is currently not illustrated for the gardens, which might be required to safely enclose the inner area. This will then look less attractive than currently illustrated.

That is just one example of what might be down the line if we agree what is before us. It is officially dealt with—in the words we have been told—by claiming to be

“working with security experts ... to develop the necessary level of security”.

What else might have to be included? I fully support the amendment in the name of the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, whether she chooses to press it or not, which might take into account what I have just described.

6.03 pm

Lord Griffiths of Burry Port (Lab): My Lords, I welcome my noble friend Lord Khan to his present position—not that I envy him in any way, having his first parliamentary exercise as a Minister to be to take this Bill through. I am very pleased, too, to stand here as a member of the Labour Party, now in government, and fully committed to delivering a national Holocaust memorial and learning centre. However, as we have heard in this debate, we should not automatically think that the two have to be next to or part of each other. I am told that Committee will be an opportunity to debate relevant concerns. I hope we do debate them, as I certainly have concerns.

I stand by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for her noble campaign to activate many of us and to increase our awareness of the nuances, as well as the broad themes that are in play, in discussing the Bill. Certainly, she has revealed to us the need to have more exact information about the location. I am confused by the various statistics aired in this debate. I stand with the noble Lords, Lord Carlile and Lord Lisvane, in the concerns they have expressed about security. It really will be a serious issue; who can doubt that? To have the centre in close proximity to Parliament raises its own questions.

My own feelings centre on the nature of education. What is education? It is the transmission of information, but it is more than that. We are dealing with a country that, at any odd moment, displays ugly anti-Semitism almost at will. How do we get into the genetic make-up of a whole culture in order to change that?

I can refer to the way that my own inner being, and my own unconscious biases and prejudices, have been helped and developed to get to a better place. I have had the privilege of living in north-west London. I remember sitting in a room in Hendon with a rabbi who had been a soldier in the Second World War. He was a chaplain, and he was with his unit as it liberated Belsen. The commanding officer said to him, “This one is yours, padre”, as all those emaciated people behind those fences just posed—well, did they? Did they paint a picture for us? It is beyond that. I do not even know how to find words to express what comes into my being—not my head, my being, my everything—when you see the capability of humanity to impose, extract and shape that and hand it over to a padre in that sort of way.

I remember being with my wife in the Odeon cinema in Golders Green when the first showing of “Schindler’s List” took place. In the darkened interior of the cinema—how many of us non-Jews were there, I do not know—I cannot forget the sobbing and weeping that was so audible as the film presented its narrative.

I also had the opportunity to visit the Kinloss synagogue in north London and other synagogues for mid-week meetings with pensioners and the like. These meetings were always better than the Methodist ones, by the way, because I invariably came away with a bottle of whisky, which never happened—nobody knows about that—in the Methodist equivalent. It was through informal conversations with people ready to show me the numbers engraved on their arms that trust was generated, and those circumstances made me aware of what we somehow have to achieve through whatever it is we call education on these matters in a broader sense.

We lived on a street with secular and religious Jews. We had reform, we had Masorti, liberal, United Synagogue; we had the lot. I remember being in a campaign for the *eruv* that they wanted to put around to enable people to push prams to the synagogue on a Saturday. On the Sunday that we left Golders Green, my wife and I were invited to have a little drink, a parting gift, with friends Sol and Claire, an ex-tailor from the East End of London. When we got there after my last morning service, what did we find? The entire street was there. The toast was, “To our Methodist rabbi”. I honestly want to convey to the House the feeling that, unless things happen in those profound ways to people’s whole aspect and understanding of themselves, education will not have happened. Putting up what I hear is to be put up does not get near that. I stand here just to offer this testimony, knowing of my inadequacy as far as most of this debate goes.

6.09 pm

Lord Austin of Dudley (Non-Affl): My Lords, it is always a pleasure to listen to the noble Lord, Lord Griffiths. I will speak today in support of this project. The most important reason for this memorial is to remember, as the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, said, the 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered by the Nazis. Many visitors will mourn their own families, like my dad’s mum and sisters, who were murdered in Treblinka in 1942 only because they were Jewish, but we must also remember the Holocaust because it matters to us in Britain, now and in the future, for ever. It shows how people can treat their neighbours, how communities can turn against those they consider different, how national leaders can exploit hatred, and how the machinery of the state can be used for terrible evil. This summer shows that there will never come a time when those lessons do not need to be learned.

This memorial will honour those murdered by the Nazis. It will stand for ever to teach why the Holocaust is history’s greatest crime. For decades, this has been taught directly and personally by Holocaust survivors. But, as has been said today, the time when we can listen to them directly is drawing to an end. People have asked why this location. The Holocaust Commission recommended a new national memorial in central London to attract the largest possible number of visitors and to make a bold statement about the importance

that Britain places on preserving the memory of the Holocaust. Victoria Tower Gardens is the right setting precisely because it will be a permanent reminder—to people next door in Parliament, to UK citizens and to visitors of all nationalities to Westminster and central London—of what can happen when politics is poisoned by racism and extremism. If you go to Berlin, you see a Holocaust memorial next door to the parliament, right at the centre of national life. In Paris, you would not even know that it exists.

There are serious voices in the Jewish community who do not agree. I respect them, but there is no doubt that the vast majority of Holocaust survivors and refugees, their families, the overwhelming majority of the Jewish community, and its leadership support this project. The Chief Rabbi said the venue was “inspirational” and that

“it is in a prime place of prominence, the heart of our democracy”.

Holocaust survivor Mala Tribich asked:

“What better symbol to remind our Parliamentarians and the wider public of where apathy as well as prejudice and hate can ultimately lead?”

Her brother, the late Sir Ben Helfgott, was one of the driving forces behind this project and its location. Yesterday, a number of us met Eve Kugler, who told us that she has devoted her life to Holocaust education and supports this project and its location because her mother told her:

“Everyone has to know what happened, so that it may never happen again”.

I will deal with some of the objections that have been raised. It is not true that the memorial will dominate Victoria Tower Gardens. It is a fact, accepted by Westminster City Council, that it will take up just 7.5% of the park. That is a matter not of opinion but of fact, so it is not true that the memorial will prevent the peaceful enjoyment of the park, as we have been told. The Buxton memorial will not be moved and the river walk will remain open.

Claims about a dramatic increase in traffic and tourism are not true either. The number of visitors will actually be a tiny fraction of the millions of tourists already visiting Westminster. In fact, many of the memorial’s visitors will be people who would already be visiting Westminster. It will also not have any real impact on traffic: 11 coaches a day is a fraction of the traffic on what is already a major bus route.

It is also claimed that the Government’s approach to Holocaust commemoration and education is wrong because anti-Semitism is increasing in our country. I have seen students, in places such as Dudley with no Jewish community at all, learn about the Holocaust, listen to survivors and dedicate their lives to fighting racism. The increase in anti-Semitism is actually an argument for the memorial and for increased spending on Holocaust education and commemoration.

Of all the objections I have heard this afternoon, the one I find least powerful is the claim that it will be a security threat or will attract anti-Semites or even terrorists. First, Westminster is already the most protected and safe place in the country. Secondly, and much more importantly, since when did we make decisions like this on the basis that extremists and racists might object? That is no basis on which to take this decision.

[LORD AUSTIN OF DUDLEY]

I will ask the Minister a couple of brief questions. When it comes to the content, will he confirm that this is clearly and specifically a memorial and learning centre about the Holocaust, not genocides in general, and that it will commemorate the Holocaust properly and specifically? Will he confirm that the learning centre will teach about the history of anti-Semitism? Will he do everything he can to accelerate progress and get this built much more quickly? It was announced in 2016 by the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, and we were promised that it would be built by the end of 2017. As it stands, it will not open until 2029. It must be possible to build it more quickly than that.

6.15 pm

Lord Howell of Guildford (Con): My Lords, my concern is whether this project and the Bill fulfil the prime aim—the essential and vital aim—of keeping fresh the memory of the most satanic massacre in recorded history of one of the world's greatest and most brilliant peoples. Some say that Stalin killed many more, but there is no doubt in my mind that it was the systematic, organised and almost enthusiastic slaughter and murder—in the way that was particularly revolting in the gas chambers—that marks out the Holocaust as the worst of all and the most terrible thing that could happen and could be done by man to man and woman to woman. Does the Bill do what my noble friend Lord Cameron asked at the beginning? It must be a permanent reminder; does it fulfil that function? I have to give a qualified answer: not as it is organised.

In many speeches this afternoon, we have heard the common theme that it is the location that is the problem—it is the location that chokes. Of course, with the location goes the security problems outlined so vividly by some speakers. That is why one has to reluctantly agree with all sorts of authorities, including the *Times* newspaper, which called it a bungled effort by all parties and a national embarrassment, and said that something is wrong and has to be put right if we are to get near that prime aim.

What is wrong with it being in Victoria Tower Gardens, a small park? The answer is that it will be huge, on a Baalbek pillar scale. I do not know whether colleagues have examined all the photos of what is intended—we have to judge by the photos—but they are absolutely terrible. It dominates; the photos present an enormous feature, quite out of keeping with all the features around and with the glorious Palace in which we work at present—although it will presumably lie empty for a time ahead. It will obviously suffocate and completely blot out the statues, which my noble friend Lady Bottomley spoke about so beautifully a few minutes ago. These represent the suffragettes, a fantastic cause, and our fight against slavery, of which I am very proud, although it seems to get overlooked half the time. There is also the “Burghers of Calais”, reminding us of the price of freedom.

If anyone wants to see where we should be going on this line, they should go to Berlin, to the heart of where the horror was authorised. Go to the memorial—those beautiful granite blocks. It is not too tiring but just right. When the rain falls, they are the tears of

those who were slaughtered and of those left behind. It is right next door to the Führerbunker, where the arch-murderer of all lived and, thankfully, died. That gives a feeling of the idea and size we should work for.

The 1900 Act said that it had to be a park for ever, and this Act says that it is not going to be a park for ever; it is going to be dominated by a project and a structure which I do not believe does justice to the cause, honour or memory of the Jewish people, of whom I am a huge admirer. It falls short of the adequate homage to their suffering, of which we should always be reminding ourselves, and so should our children and grandchildren.

The noble Baroness, Lady Deech, said it all at the beginning in her superb and accurate speech. Common sense just cries out in this whole situation. The previous Government seemed towards the end of their days to be encased in a fatal Westminster bubble, cut off from common sense. It was a long descent from the first and second Cameron Governments, which my noble friend led so ably. A connection with what most sensible people were doing throughout this country had been lost. As a result, this is now widely regarded as a major mishandling and mistake, which we must put right, but neither the past nor the present Government seem to realise this.

I will certainly support the Motion from the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, if she puts it to a vote. I shall also be guided entirely by the proverbial common sense of my noble friend Lord Strathclyde, who put the words into everyone's minds and mouths: that we should put behind us this ridiculous difference, created by the obviously wrong location decision, and get on and build a good, genuine memorial that works, in the right place and of the right design. That is what we should be capable of doing on both sides of politics and in the organisation of government of this country.

6.22 pm

Viscount Eccles (Con): My Lords, I am sure we all agree that the Holocaust should be marked, remembered and studied, and I do not believe that anybody in this House would dissent from that. But in thinking about where we are, I am very conscious that we have a new Government. I want to go back to the commission's excellent report and ask the Minister and his department to study carefully how we have got from that report's conclusions to today's position.

Let me give an example. The report firmly said that an executive body should immediately be formed to implement the commission's recommendations. At the very beginning, it was thought that that would happen, but it did not; instead, we have an advisory body, which of course is much less expensive—and much less committed. An explanation of why that recommendation was not accepted and carried out is due. It has been a feature of this long story that, when one has asked questions about the commission's conclusions, it has been very difficult if not impossible to get answers.

The other thing that should be carefully thought through is the complexity, thoroughness and ambition of the commission's conclusions. It went all over the world, and it definitely wanted to see this country come up alongside the leading exponents of Holocaust memorial and study. It is not easy for us to argue that

we have succeeded in doing that. For example, the bar set by the commission for the characteristics of the memorial and of the world-class learning centre was pretty high, and I do not think we can in any way argue that we have reached it. We have accepted some sort of compromise.

I would very much like the Minister to look into the effect of the £50 million, which was the only funding promise given when the commission reported. If you think about the report's implications and implementation, and take account of the fact that the commission did not consider or, at least, report on the expected costs of its proposal, you will conclude that matching the commission's recommendation of £50 million—or, indeed, £75 million, or £75 million plus the promise of another £25 million from philanthropic sources—was very difficult. It was an enormous stretch. Throughout the period, we have been facing compromise.

I shall give two examples. First, it was freely said when Victoria Tower Gardens was chosen that one reason was that it would come free. It was also said—and it is there for us to see—that there was no hope of having a separate memorial and learning centre in association with a campus. If you read what the commission said it wanted to see, you will see that it was way beyond anything we are being offered now. So I urge the Minister to think through the situation with some care, because I truly fear that, if the present proposals are carried through, in the longer term they are likely to fail.

6.28 pm

Lord Howarth of Newport (Lab) [V]: My Lords, the planning committee of Westminster City Council had good reasons for rejecting the then Government's application to site a Holocaust memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens. Among its concerns were the damaging impact on the amenity and beauty of the park, so precious for local residents and workers, the implications for congestion and pollution of the additional coach traffic, and the security risks. However, in a dubious proceeding of ministerial legerdemain, the Secretary of State's application was called in, and approved, of course, by his junior Minister. That decision was then overthrown by the court. It beggars belief that the department ignored the relevant provision of the London County Council (Improvements) Act 1900. So now we are presented with this Bill, which disappplies previous statute, flouts the deeply considered view of the local planning authority, authentically representing the local community, ignores criticisms by parliamentarians on all sides, and ignores the advice of numerous members of the Jewish community.

What may have seemed to party leaders a decent and relatively uncontroversial idea in 2016 in the circumstances of 2024 needs complete reconsideration. What is now offered is a memorial too large for the site with a learning centre which is so far from being world-class that it is minimal. Some complain that the project has lost focus on the unique character of the Holocaust. Some contend that other genocides—Rwanda, Yugoslavia—have an equal claim on our moral concern. Holocaust studies are not a tranquil and uncontested academic zone. Since the project was first mooted, we have witnessed a growth in consciousness and articulation of the historical evil of slavery. Some scholars argue

that the focus on the Holocaust is a Eurocentric view, that the Holocaust does not have a unique status in the history of human depravity, and that in Britain we have been too slow to recognise our own historical guilt. It would be an unfortunate effect of the overbearing design of the Holocaust memorial if it should be considered to belittle the adjacent monument to Thomas Fowell Buxton, the parliamentary leader after Wilberforce of the abolition movement and author of the Slavery Abolition Act 1833. There are more sensitivities in this territory than the proponents of the plan appear to understand.

What I want to say most urgently, however, is that to establish, at substantial public cost, a high-profile memorial to the Holocaust in the purview of Parliament will be, in our present circumstances, recklessly provocative. Let me be very clear: I abhor anti-Semitism; I consider the Holocaust to be one of the most terrible events in human history; it should never be forgotten; I think people should be educated about it; but this is not the right way to memorialise it or to educate people. These things will be better done at the Imperial War Museum and other excellent memorials and academic centres.

In the 11 months since Hamas perpetrated the atrocities of 7 October, Israel has prosecuted a war of ferocious destruction in Gaza. In London and across the world, there is passionate feeling about the Israel-Palestine conflict. The police have had great difficulty in managing repeated demonstrations, mainly pro-Palestinian, in central London. The criticism of Israel is intense. Israel is accused by many of practising genocide. Anti-Semitism is rife on university campuses. Additionally, at our general election in July, we saw an upsurge in voting for a party trading in hostility to another racial and cultural minority, the Muslims. Since then, we have experienced extreme anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim violence on the streets of Britain, compounding a long-simmering hatred of asylum seekers. Social media manipulators of the mob are ingenious and ruthless. Issues of race are more volatile and dangerous in our national life than they have been for a long time.

In this perilously fraught state of affairs, how can it be sensible to legislate to promote, in a most prominent civic location, a monument which is certain to be a focus for emotion and action on the part of people who are anti-Jew and anti-Israel? Will my noble friend the Minister tell us what recent assessment the Metropolitan Police and MI5 have made of the security implications of locating the Holocaust memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens?

Lord Keynes said, "When the facts change, I change my mind". So should the Government.

6.33 pm

Lord Goodman of Wycombe (Con): My Lords, I shall ask three questions, if I may. First, does Britain need a new Holocaust memorial? Secondly, if it does, is this the right scheme? Thirdly, if it is the right scheme, is it in the right place? We must all answer these questions for ourselves, and my answers are as follows.

Does Britain need a new Holocaust memorial? As the Minister correctly said at the start, the present generation of survivors is passing away and I believe

[LORD GOODMAN OF WYCOMBE]

we need a new something. It might be a new memorial; it might be a new Jewish Museum; we might prefer to put resources into Holocaust education, which does not seem to be in a particularly good way; we might prefer to build on what we have already got in, say, the Imperial War Museum. However, all these considerations are somewhat theoretical, because the only proposal we actually have before us is the one pointed to in the Bill, so we must weigh that carefully.

Secondly, do we need this particular scheme? Here I pick up a concern originally aired in this debate by the noble Lord, Lord Mann, about the content. My concern is as follows. A learning centre can focus either on the Holocaust in the context of 2,000 years of European anti-Semitism and the story of the Jewish people, with its joys and sorrows, not forgetting the others who also died in the Holocaust, or it can range more widely through racism to, as the last speaker suggested, other genocides, such as the Rwandan one. I would have no objection, myself, to the Rwandan genocide being referenced in the learning centre, but here we run into a problem, which is that the idea of genocide is somewhat contested. There is a legal definition, a sociological idea, a political and policy idea and then finally there is a popular idea in which genocide tends to merge into crimes against humanity, which in turn tend to merge into war crimes. It is perhaps a feature of modern warfare that any war that involves a mass loss of civilian life risks incurring the charge of genocide, whether that charge is justified or not. In short, I am concerned, given that we appear to know so little about the content of the learning centre, that the unique horror of the Holocaust may be lost, though against this I have to weigh the expertise of the historians who will advise and the reliability of the committee that appointed them—although I have to add that it is not yet clear to me what the successor body to that committee will be and how subsequent appointments will be made.

Finally, is it in the right place? I can add nothing to what noble Lords have already said on that score. I feel, myself, that a learning centre does not necessarily have to be in the shadow of the Palace of Westminster, though I understand that other noble Lords feel differently, and their feelings about this may well be more important than mine.

In conclusion, it seems to me that where the Bill is going is that at Third Reading, the choice may well be between the proposal the Bill points to or making do simply with what we have. If that is the choice, I will cross that bridge when I come to it, but I hope and believe that the questions I have raised are good questions and I look forward to pursuing them in Committee and on Report.

6.37 pm

Lord Turnbull (CB): My Lords, I consider that this Bill is an abuse of power. When the Government take something away from one group of people, who have for 120 years had access to this park, and give it to another group without compensation, we call that confiscation. We could even call it theft. The Bill started with laudable intentions. Given the enormity of the crimes committed by the Third Reich, and its goal to

exterminate the Jews in Europe, the Prime Minister was justified in setting up a commission in 2014 to investigate whether a new memorial and learning centre should be established in Britain. It was no surprise that the commission welcomed this idea, notwithstanding the many other Holocaust memorials and research centres around the country. The report made three suggestions about possible locations but, significantly, Victoria Tower Gardens was not one of them.

At that stage, the proposal enjoyed a good deal of support, though not universal support, and there were divisions in the Jewish community. So far, so good, but then it went off the rails. Subsequently, without prior consultation, the Prime Minister offered Victoria Tower Gardens as the location. The detailed examination of the project on this site was not adequate. Issues, which many noble Lords have spoken of, of security, traffic, the marshalling of visitors, the impact on the environment and on the rest of the park were not bottomed out. The engineering challenge of creating a structure, mostly below the water table, was underestimated. Costs ballooned from around £75 million, of which £50 million was to come from the Government, to around £180 million, with no clear funding plan. The Chancellor reminded us recently:

“If we cannot afford it, we cannot do it”.—[*Official Report*, Commons, 29/7/24; col. 1037.]

There were criticisms of the design—that it was too showy. As others have mentioned, I recommend that people go and have a look at what has been done in Berlin, which is more powerful and contemplative. There were also criticisms that the design was not respectful enough to the site and the memorials already there, that there was too much construction and not enough outreach and education, and that it was a reworking of a failed bid in another architectural competition—London deserves better than Ottawa’s cast-offs. The story was put around that the memorial and learning centre would take up only 7.5% of the park area. This is implausible if visitor numbers approach anything like those projected.

Most damaging was the belated discovery—after judicial process—of something that should have been found out right at the start: that it was not in the Prime Minister’s gift to allocate this site. The site did not belong to the Government but was created by Act of Parliament in 1900 for the benefit of the community.

Two Administrations have however decided to press on, hobbling the Select Committee in the other place, and riding roughshod over the views of many watchdogs protecting heritage and environment and the responsible planning authority, Westminster City Council. They are effectively saying, “We don’t have the power to give you this site, but we will simply introduce a Bill to make that possible”.

The Government should progress this Bill no further but should re-examine how the twin objectives of memory and learning can best be achieved. It is not essential that they should be in a single project or location. We have seen in recent weeks how outbreaks of prejudice and scapegoating of categories of people can flare up, even in Britain, so we need to be constantly vigilant, but this project, in this place, is not the best way to do that. Any new project should be affordable and spend less money on civil engineering and flashy

design. The learning centre should be located in a place where it can achieve the ambitions of the original commission.

As a final observation, I say that while attention is rightly focused on the Holocaust, we should not allow this to exclude the memory of the Third Reich's other great goal: the pursuit of Lebensraum. The number of Slavs and Russians murdered in the east of Europe in that cause also ran into millions and should also not be forgotten.

6.41 pm

Lord Sandhurst (Con): My Lords, of course there should be a Holocaust memorial in London; it is absolutely right that in London we mark properly the terrible events of the Holocaust. An appropriate memorial will be a much-needed bulwark against anti-Semitism—but this is not it. The site is inappropriate. The Westminster City Council planning authority was right: the proposed memorial is too large for this site, and the proposed education centre is too small and will not do what is required.

As Sir Richard Evans, a leading expert on the Holocaust, explained in his petition, we already commemorate and research the Holocaust most impressively at the Imperial War Museum just down the road. Not long ago, I spent half a day there. It was exhausting, moving and memorable. That exhibition apparently attracts some 600,000 visitors a year. It is linked to the museum's significant archives and is an important centre of research and learning. The IWM exhibition centre is truly excellent. I speak as one who has also visited the exhibition in the House of the Wannsee. That was an experience which left me with a headache.

We have other education centres in this country: Beth Shalom in Nottinghamshire, the Huddersfield centre and the Wiener Holocaust Library in London. It is quite plain that the education centre proposed now is not the education centre of quality which the commission advocated. We should do better elsewhere, not in the bunker proposed.

I will move on to the memorial itself. On any basis it is large, which is appropriate, but it is of questionable artistic merit and, as we have heard, the design is one which was effectively booted out by Ottawa. It is far too large for this setting. The fact that it is to be sunken is at one and the same time a recognition of its inappropriateness for this site, yet it will detract from the impact that such a memorial should make. It should make an impact; it should not be hidden halfway down.

Of course, therefore, such a memorial should dominate. This one, notwithstanding its semi-sunken state, will dominate this confined site and detract from the other memorials already there. One, to me at least, is of particular importance and sensitivity: the Buxton memorial. It marks the 1834 abolition of slavery in the British Empire. The transatlantic slave trade was simply appalling. Over 12 million Africans were transported in the 350 years prior to 1867. Up to 2 million may have died in transit and millions more died of disease and ill treatment after arrival. That fact is that, up until 1807 and then 1833—the two abolition Acts—Great Britain was a significant party to that process, yet the charming and

relatively modest memorial to Buxton and his supporters who brought that to an end will be diminished and overwhelmed by this proposed memorial. That is unfortunate. Context is important.

Finally, security on this site so close to Parliament must be a serious issue. To ground refusal in part on the basis of security risk is not to give in to the mob but to be grown up and rational. The noble Lord, Lord Carlile, and others have explained why. The noble Lord, Lord Lisvane, enumerated important planning considerations. In short, this is the wrong proposal for the memorial which all good people want. We must start afresh and get it right.

6.46 pm

Lord Verdirame (Non-Affl): My Lords, I would like to say a few words about the learning centre. Like other noble Lords who have spoken before, such as the noble Lords, Lord Goodman and Lord Mann, my main concern is about the content. Holocaust education in this era faces two key challenges. The first, as others have remarked, is that we are going through a period of rising anti-Semitism. This is a fact that should give us all pause to reflect on how effective our education about the Holocaust and anti-Semitism has been. How can anti-Semitism still be on the rise, and how do we explain the fact that it is rising among people who consider themselves progressive, and who may often be genuinely progressive in a lot of ways? If we do not use this occasion to ask ourselves these difficult and uncomfortable questions, we risk building a monument to our failure.

While Cynics may have been wrong to think that virtue cannot be taught, it is true that some virtues are more difficult to teach than others, and freedom from anti-Semitism is one of them. As the Oxford physicist David Deutsch suggested, the reason may be that we too often tend to think of anti-Semitism as another type of racist hatred or xenophobia. Anti-Semitism may cause both those things, but it is fundamentally different. Professor Deutsch argues:

"It is a more dangerous moral pathology, centred on the need to preserve the legitimacy of hurting Jews for being Jews".

This moral pathology has emerged over centuries and not just in the Christian West, by the way. The reason why so many of our Jewish friends and colleagues consider certain criticisms of Israel as anti-Semitic is not because they think that it is anti-Semitic to criticise Israeli policies, but because some of those criticisms are so disproportionate, absurd and obsessive that what drives them is precisely the irrational impulse to want to find some justification for violence against Jews. Unless people are made aware of this distinctive and uniquely irrational mode of thinking and acting that is the essence of anti-Semitism, many people, including some of the highly educated, will continue to fall victim to it.

The second challenge for the learning centre is another contemporary malaise: conceptual overreach. Another Oxford professor, John Tasioulas, has argued that this is a particular form of degradation of the public sphere, whereby core ideas—such as human rights, the rule of law and now genocide—are put through "a process of expansion or inflation"

[LORD VERDIRAME]

in the mistaken belief that expanding their meaning and overusing them is a form of progressive politics. It is not; it is the opposite. It blurs important moral distinctions, discredits ideas and corrupts public argument. How will the learning centre teach a new generation about the genocide of European Jewry at a time when the word “genocide” is losing its meaning and being instrumentalised even in the most august international fora? In fact, it is perversely and cruelly being used to find excuses for—guess what?—violence against Jews.

Last April I was privileged to be invited by the Rwandan Government to attend, in Kigali, the 30th commemoration of the genocide of the Tutsis. I began my career in the late 1990s interviewing Rwandan exiles in Nairobi, where the community included survivors of the genocide but also some perpetrators. The latter, thankfully, were dispatched to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda shortly thereafter and convicted. I was impressed by the way Rwanda commemorates the genocide and educates about it. No one made grotesque comparisons with other situations. There was no mission creep, and no attempt to use that occasion as an opportunity to raise other causes, however worthy. They were focused on the commemoration of that tragic event, and theirs was a genuine and sombre attempt to understand how it could happen.

Looking at the objectives of the Holocaust Memorial Charitable Trust did not allay my concerns about conceptual overreach. The objectives include goals such as promoting human rights throughout the world, promoting equality and diversity, and furthering charitable purposes relating to persecution more generally. All are wonderful goals, but a learning centre that seeks to teach everything will teach nothing. I echo the questions from the noble Lord, Lord Austin, to the Minister, who I hope can reassure us that there will be no such mission creep, that the learning centre will maintain focus and that it will have the moral courage to reach out to those communities in our society where we know that anti-Semitism is prevalent and where the need for Holocaust education is the greatest.

6.51 pm

Lord Mancroft (Con): My Lords, like most, if not all, speakers in this debate, I believe it is right that we do all we can to make sure that, first, those who suffered in the Holocaust, perhaps the wickedest crime of all time, are remembered through a fitting national memorial, but also that their memory and what happened to them are never forgotten. I therefore share the view that our national memorial should incorporate a comprehensive learning centre. I say that at a time when anti-Semitism has grown among us, in a way that I never thought would happen again in my lifetime—how wrong I was. For that reason, I do not support the proposal to divide the memorial from the proposed learning centre. I realise that this has been proposed because it is quite simply impossible to incorporate a comprehensive learning centre alongside, let alone underneath, a memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens—there is simply not enough room.

I strolled through the gardens in the sunshine yesterday, past the statue memorial to Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst and the Burghers of Calais, both beautifully

commemorated. Looking across the grass to the Buxton memorial, which is also a fitting reminder of another of the world’s most terrible crimes—between the wonderful plane trees, whose leaves cannot be more than a few yards apart—I found it almost impossible to believe that anyone will be able to see what Adjaye Associates have described:

“Visitors approaching the Memorial will see a subtle grass landform with only the tips of the Memorial’s fins bristling in the distance”.

I think it unlikely that they will see anything except a confusing muddle between the Buxton memorial and the trees. I simply do not see how it is possible to produce a structure of the quality that this project demands in such a constricted site.

I share with others the concern that the design produced is, at the very least, underwhelming. It is brutalist, symbolically obscure and, to my mind, hideous. It is meant to stimulate

“a sense of curiosity and intrigue where visitors are encouraged to explore further into the memorial”.

In my view, it is unlikely to inspire anything except sadness that the Buxton memorial has been overwhelmed by a new, inexplicable encroachment. If as many people visit the memorial as we would wish, they will inevitably turn the gardens from a place of peace and tranquillity into an overcrowded space. If they do not, it will mean that the memorial is not attracting the numbers we all hope for.

In her 2022 ruling, Mrs Justice Thornton said that all those involved in the action

“support the principle of a compelling memorial to the victims of the Holocaust”.

I go further than that. As the heir to probably the oldest Jewish community in Britain—Sephardic Jews from Spain, who made their home in the parish of Mancroft in Norwich in 1180 and remained there for more than 800 years, staying hidden throughout the expulsion—I am one of the few people of Jewish heritage who has, as far as I know, no relatives who were victims of the Holocaust. I am not even a practising Jew, as my father was, as I was baptised into the Anglican Church. When I visited Yad Vashem, I found it beautiful, fascinating, horrifying, informative and incredibly moving, and I shall never forget the experience. If we here in Britain were to create a national memorial only partially as impressive, we shall have done a very good job. But I fear that an ugly projection crammed into the far end of Victoria Tower Gardens, with a pokey underground visitor attraction posing as a centre of education, surrounded by traffic, will be simply another over-budget, government-sponsored infrastructure failure that will please no one and serve only to ruin that lovely garden.

Let us today take this opportunity, before it is too late, to say to the Government that we want a national Holocaust memorial with an education centre, but that the far end of Victoria Tower Gardens is not a suitable site for such a uniquely important national project. We are in danger of trying to create a silk purse out of a sow’s ear, and I am sorry to say that we shall fail.

6.56 pm

Lord Kerr of Kinlochard (CB): My Lords, my views are very much in line with those of the noble Lord, Lord Mancroft. My father was an Army doctor who

was at Bergen-Belsen in April 1945, when 13,000 unburied bodies were found, alongside 60,000 surviving skeletons, 14,000 of whom died in the first three months after liberation. My father would certainly have demanded an appropriate Holocaust memorial in central London, as do I.

The case is overwhelming, lest we forget—but why Victoria Tower Gardens? I listened very carefully to the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, but I did not hear an explanation as to why he overruled his commission, which looked at 29 sites and recommended three, by choosing one that was in neither the 29 nor the three. I do not understand why there has to be such a downside to establishing the memorial centre that we undoubtedly need.

I can see that Victoria Tower Gardens would be quite a good place to have another statue, ideally of the same quality as the Burghers of Calais, and I think I understand the concept of the design, with its—no doubt deliberately—ugly spires and its ramp, underground bunker and gates of Hades. But where I part company completely with the plan is that there is absolutely no way you can site there an education centre of the kind that we need, as the noble Lord, Lord Mancroft, said. For me, it is the education centre that really matters. The place is too small for an appropriate centre and yet far too big for the site. Surely the right place for auditoria, lecture theatres, cinemas and so on, where successive generations can learn, is where people now go to learn.

In Washington, the admirable Holocaust museum is alongside the Smithsonian. Our young people go to our museums quarter in Kensington, to the British Library or to the museum in Southwark. I do not see why we have to do co-location and, if we have to do co-location, I do not see how we can do it in Victoria Tower Gardens, because there is no room for the sort of education centre that we need.

Why do we need it? We need it because it was a horrific event and one in which we were involved. On the wrong side, the Germans rightly commemorate the horror of what they did and teach it in schools; we need to teach the horror of what we failed to do. I salute the grandfather of the noble Lord, Lord Russell, but his was very much a minority position.

Our Government's response to the Nuremberg laws and to Kristallnacht was not to protest, offer sanctuary and amend the Aliens Act. On the contrary, our Government hung back, and went on hanging back, which is one of the reasons why the Évian conference and the Bermuda conference failed. Nobody stepped in. We did not attempt to encourage others to step in or step in ourselves.

Kindertransport was an admirable initiative, but not one backed by government, who insisted that hosts had to guarantee full financial sponsorship. Only in 1946, with the war over, was UK citizenship on offer to the tragic orphans of Kindertransport. In 1938, the *Daily Mail* shouted:

"The way stateless Jews and Germans are pouring in through every port in this country is becoming an outrage".

We need to learn about that, and we need to learn from that. Today, the *Daily Mail* still sings a similar song, but now it is about asylum seekers. The *Sun* talks about "migrants storming Kent's beaches". A recent

Home Secretary talked about "invasions" and the last Prime Minister saw the Rwanda scheme as a potential vote winner. Manston, although bad, is no Bergen-Belsen, but we still need to be regularly reminded of where monsterring minorities can lead.

So, I strongly back an education centre. If we fail to learn from history, we risk repeating it. However, we need a proper education centre, which means we need a proper plan. We need to go back to what the commission set up by the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, originally recommended when it comes to the question of sites.

7.03 pm

Baroness Fookes (Con): My Lords, I start on a very modest personal note. Until recently, I would enjoy a walk from over the river in Kennington from my flat, through the Garden Museum gardens, over Lambeth Bridge, and then there was the absolute joy of the little oasis of the gardens, walking through there to the House of Lords. It is amazing what a difference it makes whether you walk on the Millbank side with the road or go into the park itself, where the walk takes on a totally different atmosphere.

I used to enjoy greatly seeing the change of the seasons, the way the flowers and shrubs would change, looking at other people walking quietly, people with dogs, ladies with pushchairs, and then of course, later in the day, office workers enjoying a break, or residents. I know of one pair who are elderly and extremely concerned because they can see this little haven, which is within their reach to enjoy—bearing in mind they cannot walk awfully far—being destroyed if this particular arrangement goes ahead.

Like others, I have no quarrel whatever with the concept of a learning centre or any kind of memorial. However, I am concerned about the use of this site, particularly because it was dedicated—this is embodied in the law of 1900—as a public garden, or what we might call a park. I believe that it is shocking that any Government should try to overturn that for this particular purpose.

I have particular worries about the impact on the garden itself. I would have declared my interest as the co-chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Gardening and Horticulture Group except that, of course, it all came to an end with the new Parliament and it has not yet been reconstituted. However, that is where I come from and that is the point of view I take: the absolute importance to the environment and to people's health and well-being of these places where, in urban areas particularly, there is some place where people can relax and enjoy themselves.

I find it striking that the previous Government, who I thought were devoted to the environment—I assume that the current Government are also—will, when it comes to the pinch, quite happily sacrifice one of these little oases, as I call them, in what I suppose they regard as greater interests. I am not convinced. For a start, even if only 7% is to be lost—and I query that, despite what others have said—that is still too much when you have a small area; it is not very big.

I have other worries. If we are digging underground to form the underground learning centre, what of the roots of the major trees? My noble friend made that

[BARONESS FOOKES]

point earlier in the debate. I know that Westminster Council employed consultants on trees, and I think it was pretty clear that the trees would be in real danger. You cannot dig down and expect the roots of major trees to be unaffected. There is a very real possibility that these trees would be destroyed gradually, if not totally. What, then, of our environmental considerations? Consider how much carbon dioxide those major trees absorb. For that reason alone, I am very concerned about this development.

Others have mentioned security; I am thinking purely in practical terms of security. If people have to be checked airport style and their tickets recorded, or whatever it might be, where is the space for that to go? It cannot go in the road, can it? That is obviously overcrowded already. It seems that it would have to come out of the gardens themselves, which will most certainly make it far more difficult for the gardens to remain in their present state. I see my time is up, so I will say no more.

7.08 pm

Lord Black of Brentwood (Con): My Lords, although I am speaking in a personal capacity, I declare an interest as a trustee of the Imperial War Museum Foundation and a former trustee of the IWM from 2007 to 2015.

As the Bill centres on the Holocaust—the most appalling series of events in mankind’s long and brutal history—it touches on so many issues of massive importance to our history, our society and to our humanity itself. The building of a memorial to those who perished and those who survived—and an education centre to stand as a warning to those who would seek refuge in the ideology of the far right in future—is something we should all unite around. This Bill, regrettably, simply sows division. My feelings towards it can be summed up in four words that have characterised much of this remarkable debate: “Great idea, wrong place”.

As regards the proposed location of the memorial, a botched decision-making process and a lack of consultation got us here. There will be the terrible consequences for the environment, the real security threat not just for Parliament but for the media who work around here, the lack of space for a proper education centre, the dreadful design without meaning or feeling and the funding black hole—a very popular thing at the moment—of perhaps £100 million. From all those points of view, virtually everything in this proposal is wrong.

The right answer is for a memorial and education centre to be housed just a stone’s throw from Parliament at the Imperial War Museum, which has held the national collection for the Holocaust for a quarter of a century. The IWM, established by Act of Parliament following the horrors of the First World War, has always had at its heart, in the words of its first director-general, Sir Martin Conway,

“the action, the experiences, the valour and the endurance of individuals”—

the very values that surely are central to our remembrance of the Holocaust. The IWM has all the qualities needed to make a truly international success of a memorial and education centre: space, expertise, history,

and, above all, as a potent and visible imposing national symbol of remembrance, authority. The IWM is already the place to which people from across the UK and internationally who want to remember the Holocaust, and those who want to learn from the atrocity, gravitate.

The IWM has held the national collection of the Holocaust since 2000, and in November 2021 opened exceptional new Holocaust galleries which are breathtaking in their scope, power and impact. Developed using the most up-to-date research and evaluation, including archive material available only since the end of the Cold War, the horror of the Holocaust is told through individual stories based on over 2,000 photos, books, letters and personal objects—real objects, which would not be available here. It is a stunning experience that makes history come alive. These galleries rightly take their place alongside new, equally impressive Second World War galleries, costing £31 million and powered by generous philanthropists and foundations, with, vitally, two suites of learning centres using the most up-to-date digital technology to tell stories and encourage discussion and reflection. They are global success stories in which the UK should take great pride. The success of these galleries itself tells a tale which is key to this debate.

As my noble friend Lord Sandhurst said, since the end of 2021, less than three years ago, 1.2 million visitors have gone through these galleries and over 20,000 students have taken part in learning programs. The facts speak for themselves. The IWM is already the central location to which people, young and old, instinctively go for remembrance and learning. Why on earth would we want to build another memorial and learning centre, which would inevitably be inferior to that offered by the IWM, when we already have the resources there and, in the beautiful Harmsworth gardens, space to build a fitting, dignified memorial without the terrible disruption and the risk of shoehorning it into Victoria Tower Gardens? That site has everything that Victoria Tower Gardens does not: it is accessible, it is safe, it has history, it has potential, and it works with the environment rather than against it.

We have squandered too much time—over a decade—trying to get this done. If we are to stand any chance of getting a fitting Holocaust memorial and associated learning centre built while the sadly dwindling number of Holocaust survivors are still with us, we must find a compromise. The Imperial War Museum is the answer. We just have to be brave. History, at the very centre of this debate, will not look kindly on us if we fail to do so.

7.13 pm

Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-Affl): My Lords, no one doubts the good intentions of a desire to memorialise and pass on more learning about the Holocaust to new generations. However, I have a lot of sympathy with the concerns articulated so well by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, and her numerous supporters here today. I worry that the project is likely to be counterproductive and divisive, as the noble Lord, Lord Black of Brentwood, has just explained.

Of course we can all support learning, but just repeating the word “learning” does not guarantee learning. Education depends on the content of what is

being taught. If this learning centre relativises the Holocaust, you can count me out. But it is difficult to have a serious discussion when we do not know what it is that we are going to be learning. We can all agree on the importance, especially now, of putting the fight against anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial at the heart of our democracy, but to see this as a geographical question rather than a moral one—to think that by placing the learning centre and memorial literally next door to Parliament will solve a problem—seems superficial to say the least, and lacks imagination.

I want us to use our imagination to consider what is being envisaged and to ask whether it matches up. As a visitor arriving at this new learning centre, you might assume that it must be at least as impressive as the superb Holocaust collections at the Imperial War Museum, already praised here today. Surely this new venture will or should be a world-class facility, including perhaps a comprehensive new museum to help people understand Jewish culture and history, with a detailed historic account of the changing forms that Jew-hatred has taken—or maybe not, because then we read those dread words, “high-tech immersive experience”. Those words should send a chill down all our spines. This is little more than a grandiose visitor centre, with limited intellectual depth. How do I know that? Because each visit is expected to last only 45 minutes. What an insult. This is a TikTok version of the Holocaust learning experience.

We then emerge from this underground, fully digital exhibit and face the magnificent site of the non-digital Palace of Westminster. I suppose this is where I worry about the motivations around the location. I worry that we are using the Parliamentary Estate as a prop for a narrative; the creation of an optical link between British democracy and “never again”. I find it somewhat unsettling that we would force visitors’ gaze away from the victims of Nazi extermination and shift it to our own Parliament, as though it was a bulwark against anti-Semitism and genocide. This, uncomfortably, is close to self-congratulatory in tone.

I am usually the kind of person who warns about the fashionable war on the past, with, for example, the decolonisation movement insisting on an entirely negative account of British history and accomplishments. However, the antidote to that trend is not to construct a simplistically positive rendition of history. If this project wants the public to gaze up at the Palace and celebrate the British Parliament as a saviour of the Jews in the Second World War, I find that problematic. I am sure that we do not want to be accused of spreading historic misinformation by forgetting to mention the many obstacles that Parliament put in the way of Jews fleeing fascist Germany, or the well-documented virulent and widespread anti-Semitism in the most senior ranks of the Civil Service at the time, and so on and so forth.

Let us imagine today visitors emerging from the learning centre and looking up from Victoria Tower Gardens to Parliament. What would they see, if we were being honest? This week, they would see a betrayal—British politicians attempting to disarm the Jewish nation after it suffered the worst act of anti-Semitic barbarism since the Holocaust. Turn the gaze the other way: I worry that politicians will look out to Victoria Park Gardens at this new memorial and

conclude, complacently, “We built that. It proves that we’re fighting anti-Semitism and, what’s more, we’re now stamping down on far-right bigotry”. So dazzled by its own creation, Parliament will turn a blind eye to the tens of thousands of progressives carrying placards featuring swastikas defiling symbols of Israel, or turn a deaf ear to the ugly pro-Jihadist, anti-Semitic chants in the Westminster vicinity. There is a lot more to fighting anti-Semitism than props. Finding a fitting memorial and a proper way of teaching and learning is not contained within this proposal.

7.19 pm

Lord Robathan (Con): My Lords, it is a pleasure to follow the noble Baroness, not least because I agree with most of what she said.

It is quite difficult to say anything original at this stage of the debate—but I will give it a go, I suppose. As my noble friend Lord Cameron, a man for whom I have a huge regard, said—I paraphrase—you cannot appreciate Auschwitz unless you have been there and seen the mechanics of the railways and so on. I was taken some 15 years ago by the Holocaust Educational Trust to Auschwitz. It was a horrifying and very important experience. I would like to thank the trust and, indeed, the excellent Karen Pollock, who organised the visit. I defy anybody to go there and leave with dry eyes. It is the same at Yad Vashem, which I have visited three or four times and other people have referred to. The last time I went was last year and it is the most brilliant and moving educational asset.

My noble friend Lord Black of Brentwood has just referred to the Imperial War Museum. I went to the Holocaust Gallery in the summer, which was really brilliant and, again, very moving. But this site and this learning centre, which I have heard referred to as a squashed shoebox, is frankly an absurd idea. Anti-Semitism, we hear, and I believe it to be the case, is on the rise—and in the 2020s. It makes me want to weep. We have had Holocaust education for many years—this was referred to by the noble Lord, Lord Mann. We do not know quite why it is not working, but it seems to me that it is not. How do we change that? I suggest that we do not change it with this misconceived project in Victoria Tower Gardens. Turning to the gardens, in London we are blessed with fabulous parks, but there is only one place on the north bank of the Thames where you can walk beside the Thames in peace without a road in the way between Barnes and the East End, and that is Victoria Tower Gardens. I am afraid that, whatever anybody says, the gardens will be destroyed by this learning centre.

At the same time as the Government oppose anti-Semitism—and I am delighted to hear that they do—at a different angle, they are banning some arms sales to Israel. I think Israel is facing an existential threat. The Government are also restoring supplies and aid to UNRWA in Gaza. It is a terrible situation in Gaza, but can we monitor that aid as we give it to UNRWA? Of course we cannot. The Chief Rabbi has been quoted in support of the project today. Well, he said yesterday, I think, that the decision to limit arms sales “beggars belief”. If you are going to quote the Chief Rabbi, you have to him onside, and he is not very much onside with this. I do not accuse the Government

[LORD ROBATHAN]

of being anti-Semitic, but I do accuse them of bending toward some of the more extreme opinions which are, frankly, anti-Semitic.

This learning centre is not about the Holocaust. The Minister referred to “the Holocaust”, but this project, this learning centre, will be about not just Nazi atrocities but, as I understand it—perhaps the Minister can clear this up—any genocide, any massacres and hate. I think that undermines the whole issue, the whole point of the place. It will lose the powerful impact—and it is really powerful—of both Auschwitz and Yad Vashem.

The Minister said that “all users of the gardens will still be able to enjoy them”. I have to tell him that is not the case. I know those gardens and that is absolutely not the case. Victoria Tower Gardens will be destroyed. We all agree that the idea of having a learning centre is a great one; I am absolutely in favour of it. But this is the wrong place. And by the way, however well intentioned, this idea should be supported by everybody; it should not be born out of acrimony, as this debate is showing it is. Victoria Tower Gardens is the wrong place and I urge the Government to think again.

7.23 pm

Lord Herbert of South Downs (Con): My Lords, like so many noble Lords who have spoken, I find myself wondering how an idea that is so right can have gone so wrong. As is the case with so many good intentions, I fear it has foundered because of legitimate feelings so strong that the consequences seem trivial or entirely justifiable. This sentiment—that the most powerfully held views are unanswerable, that the end justifies the means—is, sadly, the spirit of our age. It is this sentiment which I believe will undermine so many good causes and undermines this one, which is among the most important causes of all.

We are told that the Bill is necessary to overcome opposition, to get the job done. Would that such resolute government action applied to a single other development. We have neither the ambition nor, apparently, the ability to build houses or roads, railways or airports, not least because of local interests. But, apparently, we can and must deploy the full power of Parliament and government to override near-unanimous objections and build one monument.

The Government indeed have a responsibility to act in relation to this proposal, but in precisely the opposite direction to the one they have chosen. Their proper responsibility is to protect precious nationally and internationally significant sites. So this Bill does much worse than merely override local concerns; it abrogates the duties of others while ignoring the Government's own duties.

I am struck by the difference, and yet the similarity, in how these issues have been dealt with in Washington DC. On the one hand, the visitor centre in the Capitol was cleverly hidden underground, protecting the magnificent immediate environs of the building for everyone. On the other, highly controversial museums have been built in the Mall, regardless of laws categorically requiring the Mall's protection, eroding public and green space—far more space, by the way, than the few blades of grass we have—and, paradoxically, tarnishing the great causes they were meant to support.

Like every noble Lord, I more than understand the need never to forget the evil of the Holocaust. Like many noble Lords, I have visited Holocaust memorials in other countries and learned. Like many noble Lords, I have been to Dachau concentration camp and was haunted. But all of this is beside the point. Surely, we have seen that righteous anger at the most terrible abuses of human rights is not enough to justify any response, including the assumption of arbitrary powers and the sweeping aside of the very rules on which freedom relies.

Every noble Lord today has spoken of the need for a worthy Holocaust memorial. Many have spoken of the need for a proper learning centre—a need that the events of recent months have only underlined. Few have agreed that the memorial is in the right place. What a shame that the finest of ambitions and the most noble of causes are set to be so undermined through the best of intentions.

7.27 pm

Baroness O'Loan (CB): My Lords, we agree that we should never forget the mass murder and terror of the Holocaust and that we must ensure through all possible processes—whether in Holocaust centres, through school curriculums, through university research and teaching—that the reality of the Holocaust is made known to present generations. Almost 80 years on from the end of the Second World War, there are multiple very serious conflicts across the globe and we need to shine a very clear light on the scale, extent and the horror of what happened over those years. We must ensure that the tragedy—and that seems too small a word, having visited Auschwitz—of the Holocaust is neither denied nor forgotten. Yet the Bill we are debating today is highly contested. I support the Motion of the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, and I am grateful to her for all that she has done in informing the debate and correcting some of the erroneous assertions that have been made.

In the Gracious Speech last July, His Majesty said we must do everything we can to ensure that the Holocaust is never forgotten and to fight anti-Semitism and all forms of hatred and prejudice in our society. He was right, but there are multiple problems with the proposed project. There has been criticism of management and cost control by the NAO; Victoria Tower Gardens was not identified as one of the three possible sites; there is a serious risk of flooding, et cetera.

There are six Holocaust memorials and some 21 Holocaust centres in the UK. The proposed centre will not focus exclusively on the Second World War Holocaust, in which 6 million Jews and many others—homosexuals, members of the Travelling and Gypsy communities, the learning disabled and Catholics—were exterminated and subjected to indescribable torture, to medical experimentation and other atrocities. It will have a much wider scope and, in so doing, there is a very significant risk that the understanding of the Holocaust which we seek to promote will be lost in these brief 45-minute tours, by the limited number of people who are able to afford even to travel to London to visit it for such a limited time, of the very limited centre that will deal with multiple atrocities.

The architectural proposal was drawn up for a memorial in Ottawa and was not acceptable. It is old and dated in design. It does not in any way convey the

Holocaust to me. We need to provide a dedicated space in which an appropriate, dignified, meaningful monument, which clearly depicts some of the reality of the Holocaust, might be created; and, possibly elsewhere, a proper centre for study and learning about the Holocaust—something more extensive and more profound than that which would result if the current proposal were given effect.

This centre would become a focus for those who seek to remove the Jewish people from Israel and who protest about the rights of Palestinians. Such protests could result in extensive damage to the centre and gardens and the requirement for an additional focus of police resources in an area where it is challenging to provide an effective policing service currently. Parliament experiences massive security risks in an environment in which international terrorism has become very effective. The noble Lord, Lord Carlile, whose expertise in the prevention of terrorism is widely known, has expressed his concerns about the security threat. This is a real risk.

On a related matter, there is a plaque that was given to Parliament in appreciation for the 10,000 Jewish children whose lives were saved in the Kindertransport operation. That plaque is of enormous importance, as it commemorates the courage and trust shown by those parents, many of whom died in the Holocaust, who sent their children to this country. It is located in a shabby back corridor. While we determine the best way to remember what happened in the Holocaust, could we possibly clean and reposition this very important plaque to a place where it might be seen?

The Government have a duty not to rush through the Bill, as the last Government attempted to do. Further thought should be given to clarifying how we construct both the monument and an extensive functional learning and research centre—not buried in the ground but built above ground in honour of those who died and those whose lives were so damaged and broken by what happened.

7.32 pm

Baroness Harding of Winscombe (Con): My Lords, I declare my interest as a member of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation and as a resident of Westminster. I walk my dog in Victoria Tower Gardens and I played with my children in the playground. That is just as relevant an interest as my membership of the foundation.

I wholeheartedly support the Bill and the need for a national Holocaust memorial. It is shocking that, in 2024, we do not have one. I wholeheartedly support this memorial and learning centre in this location.

I fear I have quite a reputation for taking on impossible jobs but, 10 years ago, when my noble friend Lord Cameron asked me to join the Holocaust Memorial Foundation, I did not expect that, 10 years later, I would be speaking in favour of the Bill on the opposite side of so many dear friends who have spoken today. But I will set out a couple of reasons why.

A number of noble Lords said that location does not matter. Location does matter. Any woman who has ever entered an Oxbridge college and looked at all the portraits of men knows that who we memorialise and where we memorialise them matters. So the location we choose for a national Holocaust memorial really is important. The criteria that we used to discuss its

location were: prominence and having a truly prominent place in our national fabric; footfall, where millions of people would genuinely come; good transport links; space for contemplation; and the ability to have a learning centre. The proposed location meets those criteria better than any of the 50 other locations that we assessed.

Much has been said with great passion, and no doubt real integrity, about the Imperial War Museum and its outstanding work on the history of the Holocaust. I just point my noble friends and colleagues to the fact that the chairman of the Imperial War Museum is one of my fellow members of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation. This is not being done against the Imperial War Museum; it is being done with it, complementary to it.

Contrary to others' views, there is not near-unanimous objection to this memorial; it has been supported by every living Prime Minister and the leader of every faith. We have to be careful not to use hyperbole in this debate and recognise that we are at quite a different place from many other leaders in our society about this. Collocation is very important—collocating with the memorial and collocating with other symbols of the fight for freedom and against tyranny and intolerance.

I have gone on a learning journey in the last 10 years on Holocaust education. Although it is obviously important to empathise and try to understand what it might feel like to be a victim or the relatives of victims, the deeper and more important learning is to look into your soul and wonder how you would avoid being a perpetrator yourself. A learning centre that asks us to understand that Britain did not get this completely right at all, and that it would be very easy to walk down the path of intolerance—as we sadly see across the whole world today—is the learning that we need to prompt.

I know that I am a digital fanatic in this House, but much has been said in the debate about 45 minutes not being long enough. Actually, 45 minutes is a long time in which children can form a deep impression that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. We should not think that education is through only history; it is also through experience.

In the short time left to me, I will ask the Minister one question. I was brought on the Holocaust Memorial Foundation because of my digital expertise, in the expectation that there would be planning permission and a building going up fairly swiftly. We needed to think about how to make sure that this was not in just one location but that the learning experience was accessible to people wherever they lived in the four nations of the country. I just ask the Minister to confirm that this Government are similarly committed to making sure that, as we digitise the experience and ask people to look deep in their souls into how they will avoid falling into the trap of intolerance, we do that digitally as well and make sure that schools, particularly, are able to access those materials.

Unlike my noble friend who fears that the park will be destroyed, I look forward to a future when I will still be walking my dog there. Maybe, if I am really lucky, I will be playing with my grandchildren in the playground and telling them a tale about why it is important that we link the horrors of the Holocaust to

[BARONESS HARDING OF WINSCOMBE]

the horrors of slavery and the fight for female emancipation, about how precious it is to hold on to our democracy and why, therefore, these are all collocated.

7.38 pm

Lord Balfé (Con): My Lords, I have seen a lot of concentration camps. I was in the European Parliament for 25 years, when I saw Bergen-Belsen, Auschwitz and Dachau. We had our own pet one down the road from Strasbourg called Struthof. I went to them several times over those years. They were horrifying and remain horrifying. However often you visit them, the emotions are the same.

My first concern about the idea of the Holocaust is how we teach it. I was very impressed by what the noble Lord, Lord Kerr, said, because the truth is that the Holocaust was German inspired but widely supported throughout Europe.

I am a very sad person—I spent the summer reading through some of the newly released Vatican archives on the Second World War. I am a Roman Catholic so I am not attacking my own Church, but I will say that the record of the Roman Catholic Church in collaborating with the Germans when they occupied Italy and in failing to defend its Jewish population is nothing to be proud of. Nor is its record in defending Jews in Germany, in encouraging its Church, in backing Father Tiso in Slovakia, in backing Austria and in the role of the Church and individuals.

When Austria was applying for EU membership I visited Vienna and was told that Austria was the first victim of the Germans, despite the fact that there were more Nazis in Austria per head of population than in Germany. So my first plea is to make sure the history is accurate.

The second thing I would like to mention is the centre itself. Mainly because I am a Euro fanatic, I was the European Parliament representative on the Jean Monnet foundation in Paris and we constructed an education centre. The first thing we found was that we had far more coaches than we could cope with. I do not think 11 coaches is anywhere near what you will need. That is roughly one every 40 minutes. The demand will be much higher than that, or the whole thing will be a failure, so first we must look at that. We found at the Jean Monnet centre that we started off with 20 coaches and in the end had to produce a park for about 45, because the demand went up. So the first thing is capacity.

Secondly, for all the worldly touch-and-feel looking at the pictures, people like to look at items. There is nothing quite as moving as a child's shoe or dress in a pile in one of these camps, and I am sure that our colleagues of the Jewish faith would be able to help us erect a proper learning centre where people could immerse themselves and see what it was really like. That is what is needed here.

Someone said we have the right idea in the wrong place, which is true. If it were me—it will not be, because they do not trust me enough to put me on any committees here—I would have a monument in Whitehall. That is where the war memorials are. I would have a learning centre at the top of the Mall. Take the Admiralty

Arch and convert some of that. If it was good enough to give John Prescott a flat, I am damn sure we can take it over for a worthy cause such as a learning centre. Immediately behind it is a car park where they do Trooping the Colour. I say, “Back to the drawing board, friends”, and if the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, moves a vote and tries to take us back to the drawing board, I will be scurrying into her Lobby.

7.43 pm

Lord Strathcarron (Con): My Lords, I think it is fair to say that this whole project has not worked out as originally intended 10 years ago. Like so many other noble Lords, my objections are not to a memorial and learning centre—of course not—but to the location in Victoria Tower Gardens. From the start there was no consultation about using a public park and no assessment of the feasibility of choosing Victoria Tower Gardens. Worse, there was still no transparency or consultation when the fateful decision, the so-called “moment of genius”, was taken two months later to build the associated learning centre underneath the memorial.

This is a wonderful example of top-down decision-making where every consideration was given to grandiose gestures and political symbolism and very little given to the effect all this would have on those who had to live with it. The great and the good, deciding all this from on high, did not even research that there was an existing Act of Parliament forbidding them from doing exactly what they wanted to do. All this is precisely why nine years later we find ourselves in the mess we are in today.

Next, £50 million of taxpayers' money was agreed to make this happen. Needless to say, nine years later that £50 million is heading north towards £200 million. Let us face it: no one has the faintest idea of what this will eventually cost. We have a wonderful example right here on our doorstep—the renovated Elizabeth Tower, which was signed off at £29 million and ended up costing £81 million.

It goes without saying that nine years later, following that fateful decision, not a single brick has been laid. We now have a situation where pretty much everyone who is affected by this decision is against it and the only people seemingly still for it either are not directly affected by it or are involved in it. In business studies courses, this syndrome is known as escalation of commitment theory and the sunk cost fallacy principle. Both describe themselves but can be summed up as a management, in this case the Government, continuing to double up on promises and investments already made rather than objectively assessing what is before them and what is likely to lie ahead—a lack of thinking that always leads to compounding the problem rather than solving it. Think HS2 or NHS Test and Trace as other recent examples.

In the same way that this project has suffered from chronic overspend, it has also suffered from mission creep as the focus has spread from the Holocaust as we know it to the memory of subsequent genocides in general. This brings me to my main objection. These new genocide memorials will be absolutely guaranteed to attract the many hundreds of thousands of demonstrators we have seen regularly marching through London who believe passionately that Israel is committing

genocide in Gaza against the Palestinians. The fact that these demonstrators do not follow the dictionary definition of genocide is totally beside the point. They believe it is a genocide and so, for them, that is exactly what it is. To think that they will not descend on the Holocaust memorial in their hundreds of thousands to protest against Israel at what they will see as a series of memorials to other genocides is not only an irony beyond belief but wishful thinking of the most delusional kind.

Even if the police manage to secure the area around these Houses of Parliament, what effect will that have on not only those of us who work here but, much more to the point, the many hundreds of thousands of people who live and work near us? It is so obviously a police and public order disaster waiting to happen that that alone should be enough reason to pause and relocate before it is too late.

This whole ill-gotten, ill-fated project is in the wrong place at the right time. It is not too late to put the nine wasted years behind us and agree a better site. There are many far more obvious ones on offer. It is a difficult decision for those involved in keeping it alive, but the public interest must come first and it is our role in this House to make sure that it does.

7.48 pm

Lord Inglewood (Non-Afl): My Lords, there is a certain kind of person who thinks that any piece of open land, regardless of any other consideration, should be developed—be it brownfield, greenfield, green belt or even a UNESCO world heritage site. Of course, that is not so. Ever since the earliest days of theorising about architecture, and what the French call urbanisme, it has been recognised that architecture is as much about the space between buildings as it is about the buildings themselves.

Given its location—these things are site specific—I believe that Victoria Tower Gardens is one such place. Quite simply, I reject the suggestion that a memorial and learning centre be put there, where it would interfere with the context of the west front of the Palace, which to British people, and to Britain, is so important, and where it would gobble up open public space.

As was said earlier, the trustees of Victoria Tower Gardens are trustees for the past, present and future. The state should not, without very good reason, usurp their authority, get in their way and deploy its statutory powers to promote such a site-specific project which, whatever its good intentions and merits—there are plenty of them, as numerous speakers have said this evening—cannot be said to be of overriding national importance. Frankly, it is simply spurious to suggest that it is. On top of this, let us remember that we are not talking about a planning application, where there is still these days a slightly nebulous presumption of granting consent. This is different; it is about restrictive covenants for the protection of the Palace of Westminster and open space for the public.

In somewhat similar circumstances, in the case of Lake Ullswater, which is in Cumbria, in 1962 this House threw out at Second Reading a government-supported Bill proposing that the Manchester Corporation convert that lake into a municipal reservoir. Opposition was led by that greatest of lawyers, Norman Birkett,

Lord Birkett of Ulverston. His very celebrated words in this Chamber at Second Reading, found in House of Lords *Hansard* for 8 February 1962 at col. 229 and following, are more powerful than mine and he elaborated his arguments at greater length than I would expect your Lordships to be prepared to listen to me, either on any occasion or this late in the evening. In short, he argued that the scheme under consideration was entirely unacceptable, even though the underlying project in its widest sense had real merit. The same is true in this case. Like a number of people, I support a Holocaust memorial and learning centre, but not here. It is very simple. It is a powerful, relevant, and indeed overriding perspective.

Finally, it seems a bit ironic when we are considering something site-specific of universal relevance but of especial significance to the Jewish community that a very celebrated episode in Jewish history is very much to the point. That is 1 Kings, chapter 21: the story of Naboth's vineyard. Your Lordships will remember that King Ahab, or more precisely his wife Jezebel, wanted Naboth's vineyard for purely personal reasons and was punished seriously by God for improperly achieving that. I hasten to add that I would not wish any such biblical affliction imposed on anyone involved with this scheme, but in this instance the Government covet this site for reasons which, as has been mentioned by a number of speakers, cannot fairly be described as of overriding national importance. Rather, they would like to have the site because they think it important, but nothing more than that. It is a nice-to-have, not something for which there is an overriding requirement from their perspective. This point was made by the noble Lord, Lord Turnbull, and the noble Baroness, Lady Bottomley: that is not a good enough reason to promote legislation to bring the scheme about through statutory powers.

As many speakers have said, the Holocaust memorial and learning centre should not go ahead in Victoria Tower Gardens, although I have absolutely no objection at all to a suitable small-scale monument there, comparable in scale, character and quality to Rodin's "Burghers of Calais", to go with those there at present. For my part, I will support any proposal to remove the powers to enable the learning centre to be sited in Victoria Tower Gardens and support any to promote the project elsewhere for all the reasons other people have already made this evening, which require no more repetition from me.

7.53 pm

Lord Polak (Con): My Lords, I refer the House to my registered interest as a trustee of the Holocaust Memorial Charitable Trust. I begin by praising the noble Lord, Lord Khan, for the way he introduced the debate and for being so open to our many colleagues, even being on Zoom when his mum was taken ill—we wish her well. I am really grateful to him for that. I also pay tribute to my noble friend Lord Pickles and to Ed Balls, who together have worked tirelessly over many years to try to get this thing done. I of course express my gratitude to my noble friend Lord Cameron, who is not in his place, for his visionary leadership in initiating this project. I too was at the dinner when it was announced, and his commitment to establishing a

[LORD POLAK]

national Holocaust memorial and learning centre has laid the foundation for what will become a profound symbol of remembrance and education.

We cannot have a debate such as this without referring to the words of the late Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks, of blessed memory, which resonate deeply as we consider this project. He stated in 2007:

“Memorials are not just about remembering what happened; they are about teaching future generations why it happened and what must be done to prevent such hatred from taking root again”. These profound words remind us of the necessity of this memorial, not just as a place of remembrance but as a beacon of education and vigilance against prejudice.

Many noble Lords have talked about the survivors. They are dwindling, for obvious reasons. Many are no longer with us. They have voiced strong support. A number of noble Lords referred to Sir Ben Helfgott, who was a friend. Back in the 1980s I was the director of the Yad Vashem trust and he was my chairman. He said in 2021:

“I look forward to one day taking my family to the new national memorial and learning centre, telling the story of Britain and the Holocaust. And one day, I hope that my children and grandchildren will take their children and grandchildren, and that they will remember all those who came before them, including my mother, Sara, my sister, Luisa, and my father, Moishe”.

The Bill before us addresses concerns about the legal and environmental impacts with respect and care. It ensures that the construction will occupy a small proportion of Victoria Tower Gardens and that the park's overall appeal will be enhanced, including the protection of the mature trees and improvements to the amenities. The learning centre will provide that space for reflection and education, fostering a deeper understanding of the Holocaust and its lessons.

Noble Lords from across the House have spoken passionately, and I have deep respect for everyone who believes in the project itself. I have agreed with my friend the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, on 99% of everything throughout the years in this Chamber. Many noble Lords have referred to the Jewish community being divided. That is nothing new; we are divided about what we are going to have for dinner. We are always divided, but that is the nature of the community. I do not think that quoting one side or another helps us.

The memorial will stand as a daily reminder to all who visit Westminster of the dangers of hatred and the importance of combating prejudice. It is not merely a physical structure but a promise to future generations that we will remember the past and continue to stand against intolerance. As many have said, this has gone on for far too long. I wonder what historians will say in 50 years' time when they look back at this period and this issue of the National Holocaust memorial centre. What will they say and write about the prevarication? I argue that the heroes will be the Minister who will get this through, Ed Balls, and my noble friends Lord Pickles and Lady Harding—if I may add her after her speech today—and, of course, my noble friend Lord Cameron, who conceived this idea.

7.59 pm

Lord Tugendhat (Con): My Lords, I stand amazed that this Bill should be brought before the House. By its very nature, a memorial to the dead, let alone to the

millions of people who were killed in the Holocaust, should not be an object of controversy. As soon as it became clear that this project as it stands can be carried forward only in an atmosphere of discord and acrimony, it should have been withdrawn. To proceed with it in such circumstances is surely to disrespect the dead and to demean the very horror that the memorial and its accompanying learning centre are commemorating. By withdrawing, I do not mean cancelling; I mean that the memorial should be reconsidered in the light of the debate that has taken place, not just here, but elsewhere, about its location, design and context and its place amongst existing Holocaust memorials and museums and the work that they do.

As a number of noble Lords, including my noble friends Lord Herbert and Lord Sandhurst, and many others on all sides of the House have said, we should come up with something better and something more appropriate to what is needed because one thing is clear: if this project is brought to fruition in its present form, this controversy surrounding its genesis will contaminate its purpose. The message it is seeking to convey will for ever be competing with the attention and controversy surrounding its birth.

Indeed, it could be much worse than that. I agree with what the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, wrote recently in the *Jewish Chronicle*. She said that the memorial will become,

“a focus for anti-Israel and antisemitic protest”.

For as long as, and whenever, the Israeli Government pursue controversial policies towards the Palestinians and their neighbours, the memorial will attract those who oppose those policies just as the United States embassy in Grosvenor Square became the focal point of opposition to the United States at the time of the Vietnam War.

If that would not be bad enough, such demonstrations will conflate criticism of the Israeli Government, which is as legitimate as criticism of any other Government—the United States or anywhere else—with anti-Semitism, which absolutely is not. This conflation of hostility to and criticism of the Israeli Government and Mr Netanyahu on one hand with anti-Semitism on the other is already happening and is something that must be combated in the strongest possible manner, but if a memorial to those who were killed in the Holocaust should become the backdrop for expressions of anti-Semitism, that would surely be nothing short of sacrilege. We must not allow that to happen. I am amazed that the Government are pursuing this project in its present form, and I hope very much that we will be able to come up with something better, more suitable and more worthy of the terrible atrocity that it is commemorating.

8.03 pm

Baroness Wolf of Dulwich (CB): My Lords, many speakers have already referred to the mess we seem to have got into on this, and the number of speeches we have listened to bears witness to that. It also seems to me, as the debate grows close to its end, that there is a common belief in this Chamber that it would all be soluble and the project would be easily realised if we could just move everything to another site. I think that is completely wrong.

Take, for example, the Imperial War Museum, which came up a number of times and is often cited in this context. The noble Lord, Lord Black, speaking in a personal capacity, said this seems to be an excellent idea. As a south Londoner, I strongly disagree. I invite noble Lords who still possess an A-Z to take a look at the pages that cover Lambeth and Southwark. They will see that if you start at Lambeth Palace, which has its own gardens, and go east, you basically do not get anything until you are way east of Tower Bridge at Rotherhithe and Southwark Park, except for one small piece of green, which is the gardens of the Imperial War Museum. It seems to me that, far from being an obvious and simple site for a number of reasons, there is rightly going to be considerable opposition and unease at having built around with steel and effectively losing one of the few, tiny parts of green that the whole of Lambeth and Southwark possess.

I talk about the Imperial War Museum simply because that is the part of London that I spend a lot of my time in and know very well, but the point is much more general. If you look across the river to this side, you will see that as well as Victoria Tower Gardens, which noble Lords all know well and value, which is on our doorstep, there are a lot of pieces of green here. There is the wonderful St James's Park. There are also Whitehall Gardens, Embankment Gardens, which I love, with its playground and Vincent Square. Would those be fine? If we put the memorial there, would that solve everything? I beg to disagree. The point is that any green space in any part of London is going to have all sorts of pressures upon it, and you cannot simply say "Don't put it in Victoria Tower Gardens. Let's just move it. That will solve the problem".

The other thing that I was slightly taken aback by during the debate is the idea that the security problems mean that we should put the memorial somewhere else and that if we put it in another site, there will not be an issue. I think that if we had been having a debate like this nine years ago, we would not have spent as much time on security. The awful 10 months we have just completed have made this an issue in a way that it was not when this was first discussed. After all, this has been a period in which the Wiener Holocaust Library has been vandalised, and the Anne Frank statue in Amsterdam has been vandalised twice, so there is an issue. It is an issue that we must face wherever we think about putting the memorial and learning centre, but it seems to me that, first of all, as Bob Blackman MP said in the other place, the threat to any memorial is not an argument for why the memorial is not needed, but the opposite. It is an argument for why the memorial is needed. I certainly feel that it is and that successive Prime Ministers have been correct in feeling this.

Whether or not the memorial is in Victoria Tower Gardens, Westminster has surely to be the place that can offer security as well as being a place where we make a statement. I am sorry to keep harping on about the Imperial War Museum, which I adore, but it is not the same. Westminster is the centre of London, and if we want to make this statement and have this memorial, the real centre of London is where it belongs. This is a place which knows about security. I am deeply impressed by how well we manage to bring thousands of people through this precinct day after day.

Finally, I feel listening to this that the memorial and the learning centre are quite rightly separated in discussion and that that is probably somewhere where a lot of thought is needed, but I feel strongly that we are kidding ourselves if we think that everything will be fine if we just look for a brand-new site somewhere open and away from Westminster.

8.09 pm

Lord Sassoon (Con): My Lords, legislation to overrule decisions of the courts that the Government do not like should be used very rarely. It should not be used in this case to promote a scheme which started with the best of intentions but has gone sadly, badly wrong.

My mother's father and uncle were born in Frankfurt, Germany. They escaped the Holocaust as they had moved earlier to the UK. Other members of my mother's family were not so fortunate. But in 1933, that great-uncle, Otto Schiff, founded the Jewish Refugees Committee in London. That committee took the lead in bringing German Jewish refugees to the UK, including through the Kindertransport. Otto Schiff was honoured by the Government a few years ago as a British Hero of the Holocaust. So I feel as strongly as anyone that there should—must—be an appropriate Holocaust memorial in the UK. But the memorial proposed is the wrong memorial, in the wrong place.

It is the wrong memorial because the design proposed and its location adjacent to Parliament have a wholly inappropriate and unfortunate air of triumphalism. The UK's initial response to the plight of Jews in Germany was far from glorious, letting in only tiny numbers of refugees and under onerous conditions. Having a soaring, gleaming structure at the heart of Westminster, I believe, risks sending out all the wrong messages. I disagree fundamentally with other noble Lords on this point. But I do agree with my noble friend Lord Howell of Guildford, who pointed out the scale of what is proposed, which would block the marvellous view of the south façade of this Palace. I mention, as others have done, the Holocaust memorial in Berlin. It is a simple structure of low concrete blocks. It is extremely moving. Less is often more.

It is the wrong memorial because it includes, as we have heard, an inadequate learning centre. Yes, there must be a learning centre, but the story of the Holocaust is told brilliantly in the Imperial War Museum, as we have heard from my noble friend Lord Black of Brentwood. I do not see why the story cannot be developed further there, where it can be done properly.

It is the wrong memorial because it is becoming dangerously expensive. Last year's estimate was £188 million, including contingency, and building costs have soared since then. At this time of strained finances, it is wrong to be committing such sums of public and charitable money without looking at more cost-effective options, which may also be quicker to build.

It is the wrong memorial because we are now told that it will put the Holocaust in the context of subsequent genocides. The Holocaust was uniquely appalling in the history of humanity. To muddy the story in this way raises many questions, as my noble friend Lord Goodman of Wycombe has pointed out. I think it is wrong.

[LORD SASSOON]

The proposed memorial is in the wrong place. There has been no public consultation on the alternative locations, to which my noble friend Lord Strathclyde has added some interesting new ideas today. The lack of consultation is wrong.

Finally, the Victorians' greatest contribution to London's cityscape was the creation of the wonderful two-mile sweep of grass and trees that starts beyond Lambeth Bridge and follows the River Thames all the way to Temple Gardens, interrupted only by this Parliament's great buildings, themselves a UNESCO world heritage site. The fact that this Bill facilitates the desecration—I am sorry to say—of this glory of London's cityscape goes well beyond ordinary planning considerations. It is wrong.

I can hope only that the Government will reconsider this whole project. The country needs a more appropriate Holocaust memorial, with a more adequate learning centre than the one currently proposed.

8.14 pm

Baroness Pinnock (LD): My Lords, I am speaking from the Liberal Democrat Front Bench but nothing I say commits individual Members to share my opinion. As we have heard in the debate, there are differing views across the House. As this is a hybrid Bill, I will not attempt to reflect on what has already been said. Rather, I will give my personal interpretation of the Bill and its implications.

It is astonishing that it has taken nearly 80 years for our nation to commit to a fitting national memorial to the Holocaust. It is just as surprising that it has taken over 10 years since it was first mooted for a decision to be made. It is thoroughly disappointing that a proposal to commemorate the Holocaust and to learn from its horrors has become so mired in controversy.

The proposal for a memorial and learning centre has overwhelming support. The disagreements have arisen, first, from the way the site in Victoria Tower Gardens was chosen, as it appears to have bypassed normal consultation processes. The commission report of 2015 identified three sites, none of which was Victoria Tower Gardens. This was first proposed by the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, which had been tasked with creating the memorial. The Government accepted its recommendation to use Victoria Tower Gardens in 2016. Widespread consensus was lost at that point, to the detriment of the whole project. However this was done, whoever did it must take some responsibility for creating a controversy from a consensus.

The second key area of disagreement arises from the practical implementation of the principle of a memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens. The co-chairs of the UKHMF have stated:

"To establish a new national Memorial at the very heart of Westminster is an ambitious aim. Only the most serious, momentous and profound subject matter could justify such a step. With the Holocaust—the systematic attempt by a modern, civilised state to exterminate the whole Jewish people—we have exactly such a reason".

It seems that the gardens site was chosen because, although nearly always connected with conflict and war, the Holocaust and other genocides were the consequence of particular decisions made by Governments.

Making the controversial decision about the site was just the start of a series of challenging decisions to be made. The first was whether the learning centre and the memorial should be co-located. I accept that putting the memorial and the learning centre together could be very moving and a powerful statement. However, I am not convinced that what is being proposed achieves that noble aim.

The next decision was how to fulfil the aims of the project while accepting the differing and legitimate demands for use of the gardens. By minimising the footprint of the design, just 7.5% of the gardens is used. Of course, the footprint omits the wider impact on the gardens, which, as we have heard, is closer to 20%. The consequence is that the project's sincere desire for a prominent statement of purpose and intent has been seriously compromised.

A number of designs were submitted to the competition to create the design for the memorial and learning centre. These may have been bolder in concept and thus succeeded to a greater extent in achieving the visual prominence at the heart of the project. Perhaps the Minister can share what those designs were like and we can see them and decide whether we think they are better than what is before us.

As we have heard throughout this debate, there is huge concern about the consequences of having 1 million additional users of the gardens each year—apparently there is an expectation of about 3,000 people every day. I have read the 408 pages of the planning inspector's report. It goes into significant detail on the practical implications of the design on listed buildings, heritage sites, UNESCO world heritage sites, trees, transport and security. Nevertheless, it gave a green light to the planning application. However, what cannot be ignored is that the nature of Victoria Tower Gardens will change forever due to the number of visitors that are expected.

Finally, I want to question the clarity of thinking around the fundamental purpose of the memorial and learning centre. We have heard during the debate today that many Members believe that the learning centre will focus on the Holocaust against the Jews. I would support that if that were the case, but it is not. As some Members have indicated, what is being proposed is that the Holocaust against the Jews should be seen in the context of other genocides perpetrated at the time against Roma Gypsies, gays in Germany and other parts of western Europe and disabled people, and subsequent genocides such as those in Rwanda and Darfur—we could go on—and sadly many others.

The learning centre apparently aims—and I think the noble Baroness, Lady Harding, pointed to this—to expose the response of democracies and Governments to the challenges of the Holocaust and genocide. I am not convinced that a digital and immersive experience is appealing to schoolchildren, in particular. They respond to seeing things that link with the past. I live near Huddersfield and am a vice-chair of the university where the Holocaust centre is established. I went round and saw the shoes, the labels, the striped suits and the tiny suitcases. They are the moving part of that learning centre. It is not the photographs so much; relating to human beings who were exterminated is what is moving. That is what a learning centre should achieve if we are

to tackle not only anti-Semitism but, as the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, said, discrimination, racism, intolerance and hate in our society.

Having listened throughout this debate to many well-argued and evidenced assessments, both in favour and against, I can only say how relieved I am that, having spoken today, I am disqualified from sitting on the Bill Committee.

I will end by quoting from Eleanor Rathbone MP, who said in the debate on this very issue of the Holocaust in the House of Commons in 1943,

“let no one say: ‘We are not responsible.’ We are responsible if a single man, woman or child perishes whom we could and should have saved”.—[*Official Report*, Commons, 19/5/1943; col. 1143.] Perhaps that should be the abiding goal of the memorial.

8.26 pm

Baroness Scott of Bybrook (Con): My Lords, it is a great pleasure to speak on behalf of the Opposition in response to this Bill and I welcome the Minister to his place. We support the Government’s decision to press ahead with plans to deliver a Holocaust memorial and learning centre that will stand as testament to the horrors of the Holocaust and the evils of anti-Semitism and will support the education of a new generation. When the Holocaust memorial was first proposed, my noble friend Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton made a solemn commitment to the survivors of the Holocaust, saying that

“the past will never die and your courage will never be forgotten”. We must make good on that promise.

Some 11 years have passed since my noble friend made that promise and had the vision for a Holocaust memorial and learning centre. Even though I have listened to all the debate this afternoon, you would not believe that a lot of progress has been made to deliver this. To that end, I thank my noble friend Lord Pickles and his co-chairs of the memorial foundation for their continued unwavering support to take that vision forward. I would like to say how sorry I am that the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, has not been able to take part in the debate today, but I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Harding of Winscombe, a member of the foundation, for speaking so passionately about the project.

I know that many noble Lords have concerns about the location, design and the security of the new Holocaust memorial and learning centre, which I will speak to in a moment, but I begin by reminding the House again that it is now over a decade since this was first promised. It should be our goal to deliver on our promise as soon as possible, in particular so that Holocaust survivors who are still with us can be part of this important project. It is in that context that the new national Holocaust memorial and learning centre must be delivered urgently and we will support the Government as they make progress with this Bill.

Noble Lords have raised concerns about the decision to build the memorial and learning centre on the Victoria Tower Gardens site and Ministers must listen to these. The Opposition support the Government’s work to establish the memorial here in Westminster, right in the heart of our democracy. I think we should listen to Ed Balls and the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, the co-chairs of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation, when they state:

“Victoria Tower Gardens, at the heart of Westminster and alongside the great symbol and heart of our democracy, is absolutely the right place to construct the national Memorial to the Holocaust”.

Again, I quote the Chief Rabbi, who said that the venue was “inspirational”, arguing that it was the

“most wonderful location because it is in a prime place of ... prominence ... at the heart of our democracy”.

That is why I believe that the gardens are the right location for this project, but it must be delivered in the right way. I reiterate my noble friend Lord Effingham’s question: will the Minister provide the House with clarity on exactly how much of the park will be taken up by the new memorial and learning centre? Will he also reassure the House that disruption to the park will be minimised, so that people will not be deprived of the use of it for any longer than is necessary? While it is right that we hold the Government to account in this place, I know that those noble Lords who have concerns will surely agree that making a clear statement of our commitment to remember the Holocaust, to learn from the past and to build a future without anti-Semitism is a worthy one.

Several noble Lords have also put questions to the Government on the congestion and disruption that will be caused both in the construction process and by increased visitor numbers to the site. It is crucial that Ministers engage constructively to mitigate the impacts of works to build the centre and of the increased number of visitors to the area. We will be holding the Government to account on their plans for these issues.

We have heard concerns about security. In Government, we worked—I worked—hard to address these issues, but it is important that this House is kept informed as things move forward. Security is a moving issue and noble Lords need to be kept informed as changes are made and challenges come forward. Will the Minister undertake to provide the House with as much information as possible to those noble Lords who have raised these concerns, so they can be assured that the Government are looking at this and that those security issues are being dealt with?

Before I finish, because I do not want to keep the House much longer tonight, there are a number of other points that I would like the Minister to clarify, because if they are that will help the House to support this important project. First, will the Government commit to continue engaging with noble Lords who have concerns about the plans, not just as a one-off? We did not have many at the engagement earlier this week but, if we can continue that, the more information noble Lords have, the better I think they will feel about this project. Also, have the Government assessed the expected date of completion of the centre? If we can see an end to this project, it will be an important symbol. What plans do the Government have to mitigate, as I said, the congestion caused by this construction work and the increased footfall around Victoria Tower Gardens?

The Opposition support the Bill and wish to see our new national Holocaust memorial and learning centre delivered as soon as possible, mainly so that those Holocaust survivors who are still with us can be part of the project. In my two years as the Minister responsible, I met many survivors, but I am also sad to say that

[BARONESS SCOTT OF BYBROOK]

many I met are no longer with us. I urge this Government to get this project built and off the ground, please, and let us have some Holocaust survivors at the opening. That is what I will support them to deliver. This is a landmark project that will stand as testament to our commitment never to forget the Holocaust and, as I said, the Opposition support the Bill.

8.34 pm

Lord Khan of Burnley (Lab): My Lords, I am grateful to noble Lords from across the House for their powerful contributions on this important Bill. It is heartening to hear cross-party support from across the House, but I also want to recognise the strong feelings, for and against, and respond to the concerns raised by noble Lords. Given the lengthy consultations and public inquiry that have taken place over the past decade, many of these concerns have been responded to previously, but I want to take time to go over a few of the specific points made.

On a broader point, I first draw attention to the planning inspector's conclusion that the civic, educational and social public benefits of the proposal "outweigh the identified harms". I also want to reference the separate process for the designated Minister to consider next steps in retaking the planning decision, which is a completely separate process from the Bill. On that, I can tell the House that arrangements are in place within the department so that the designated Minister remains isolated from the Holocaust memorial project and can make planning decisions in a fair, transparent and unbiased way.

As this is a hybrid Bill, there has also been an opportunity for those who are directly and privately affected to petition against it, and for those petitions to be considered by a Select Committee, both in the House of Lords and in the other place. In the Commons, the Select Committee heard eight petitions and decided not to amend the Bill. Eighteen petitions have been received in the Lords and will be referred to a Select Committee for consideration following this debate. Those opposed to the planned Holocaust memorial and learning centre have had every opportunity to make their comments known.

Moving on to specific concerns that were raised, the noble Baronesses, Lady Noakes and Lady Bottomley, the noble Lord, Lord Carlile, the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of St Albans, the noble Viscount, Lord Craigavon, the noble Lords, Lord Howarth, Lord Sandhurst, Lord Strathcarron and Lord Sassoon all talked about the security risk, as did the Opposition Benches. The Holocaust memorial and learning centre will have security arrangements similar to many other public buildings in Westminster. We are working with security experts, the National Protective Security Authority and the Metropolitan Police to ensure that the site has the necessary level of security measures.

Based on this expert advice, physical security measures will be incorporated into the memorial and landscaping which will meet the assessed threat. Expert advice has also informed our proposed operational procedures, which will be reviewed and updated routinely in response to current threat assessment.

Full security information was submitted as part of the planning process, but in the interest of safety and security it was not included in the public planning information. It would be completely unacceptable to build the Holocaust memorial in a less prominent location simply because of the risk of terrorism, a point made by many noble Lords. That would amount to allowing terrorists to dictate how we commemorate the Holocaust, as many noble Lords said.

Noble Lords will understand that there are good reasons why the details of security arrangements cannot be shared widely. We have relied and continue to rely on advice from the appropriate security experts. Nevertheless, I recognise that the noble Lord, Lord Carlile, has a great deal of expertise in these matters and he is absolutely right to draw attention to the need for proper security arrangements. I will be very happy to arrange a private briefing for the noble Lord with members of the project team to discuss the security arrangements we are proposing. My office will be in touch with him soon.

A number of noble Lords alluded to the content of the learning centre, including the noble Lords, Lord Mann, Lord Goodman, Lord Blencathra, Lord Austin and Lord Verdirame, the noble Viscount, Lord Craigavon, and the noble Baroness, Lady Fox. The exhibition will confront the immense human calamity caused by the destruction of Jewish communities and other groups. The learning centre will also address subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. The exhibition will examine the Holocaust through British perspectives, looking at what we did and what more we could have done to tackle the murder and persecution of the Jewish people and other groups. The content for the learning centre is being developed by a leading international curator, Yehudit Shendar, formerly of Yad Vashem, supported by an academic advisory group, to ensure that it is robust, credible and reflects the current state of historical investigation into and interpretation of the Holocaust.

Noble Lords across the House—including the noble Baronesses, Lady Noakes and Lady Bottomley, the noble Lords, Lord Kerr, Lord Strathclyde, Lord Balfe, Lord Inglewood and Lord Sassoon, and the noble Viscount, Lord Eccles—asked why Victoria Tower Gardens was chosen. Victoria Tower Gardens was identified as a site uniquely capable of meeting the Government's aspiration for the national memorial and learning centre. It is close to buildings and memorials that symbolise our nation and its values. It is the most fitting location in terms of its historical, emotional and political significance, and its ability to offer the greatest potential impact and visibility for the project. The view of Parliament from the memorial will serve as a permanent reminder that political decisions have far-reaching consequences. It will encourage all UK citizens, and visitors of all nationalities, to reflect on the lessons of the past.

The noble Baroness, Lady Deech, and the noble Lords, Lord Howard, Lord Howarth and Lord Black, spoke about the adverse impact on the park, trees and playground. The design is sensitive to the heritage and existing uses of Victoria Tower Gardens. It uses approximately 7.5% of the area of Victoria Tower Gardens, while making enhancements to the remainder

of the park that will help all visitors, including better pathways and improved access to existing memorials. The memorial will be positioned to minimise the risk of damage to tree roots, and great care will be taken with the trees during construction. The play area will be retained and redesigned to make better use of the space and a more attractive play environment.

Many noble Lords across the House alluded to the issue of size. The figures of 7.5% for open space loss and a 15% reduction in green space were calculated using architects' scale drawings of the site. A detailed breakdown of these figures was published in April 2023 in response to a Parliamentary Question from the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, and supporting documents were placed in the Library of the House. It was a matter of common ground between parties at the planning inquiry, as noted in the inspector's report at paragraph 15.79, that the actual loss of open space, principally as a consequence of the entrance pavilion and courtyard, was 7.5%. Extensive information about the Holocaust memorial and learning centre, considered at the planning inquiry, remains publicly available on Westminster City Council's website.

On the points made about the increase in traffic, the majority of the visitors to the memorial are expected to be visiting the local area and arriving by bus or tube, with just a short additional walk along Millbank to the memorial. We estimate that there will be 11 coaches per day, using a proposed coach bay on a quieter section of Millbank, which will minimise disruption to traffic and pedestrians. Coaches will use these bays only to drop off and pick up passengers, not to park while visitors are in the exhibition.

The noble Baronesses, Lady Pinnock and Lady Noakes, referred to consultation regarding potential sites. The UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation engaged with a wide range of organisations, including the Royal Parks, Holocaust commemorative and educational organisations and London boroughs, as well as directly commissioning the advisers to identify potential sites. The foundation also published a document, *National Memorial and Learning Centre: Search for a Central London Site*, inviting all interested parties to put forward expressions of interest. 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.

A number of noble Lords, including the noble Lords, Lord Strathclyde, Lord Howell and Lord Sandhurst, mentioned the possible adverse effect on the Buxton Memorial. The planning inspector concluded that the development will not compromise the outstanding universal value of the world heritage site. The Buxton Memorial will be kept in its current position; the views of it will be preserved, and new landscaping and seating will be added to improve the setting, viewing experience and accessibility. The Holocaust memorial will be no higher than the top of the Buxton Memorial. The memorial's bronze fins step down progressively to the east, in visual deference to the Buxton Memorial, where they are closest to it.

On cost, an issue raised by the noble Viscount, Lord Eccles, the noble Lords, Lord Lisvane, Lord Goodman and—

Lord Lee of Trafford (LD): During construction, where will the access point be for all the lorries that will take out the soil and the debris and bring in the building materials? The Minister has not answered that question.

Lord Khan of Burnley (Lab): I will address the noble Lord's individual concern after I talk about the more specific concerns.

Updated costs of £138 million were published in June 2023, so that Parliament and all interested parties could have a complete picture ahead of important debates on the Holocaust Memorial Bill. It is deeply regrettable that delays to the programme have led to increased costs. With construction price inflation at high levels, the delays arising from the High Court's decision to quash planning consent have inevitably added to the programme costs.

The noble Lord, Lord Russell, talked about the scope of the hybrid Bill and the Select Committee. The Bill does not include powers to construct the memorial and learning centre but deals with a narrow point in the London County Council (Improvements) Act 1900 that was found to be an obstacle; it focuses on that in particular. Had the Select Committee considered matters that fall within the scope of the planning decision-making process, it would have risked important matters being addressed in a partial and potentially unfair manner, in particular risking that the voice of supporters of the Holocaust memorial and learning centre would not be heard.

The noble Baroness, Lady Pinnock, asked how the design was decided. There was a competition, and 10 design teams were shortlisted, with 92 entries, in 2017. It was announced that Adjaye Associates, Ron Arad Associates, and Gustafson Porter + Bowman were the winning team. On the concern of the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, about the allegations against Sir David Adjaye, I note that Adjaye Associates stated that Sir David will not be involved in the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation project until the matters raised have been addressed.

The noble Baronesses, Lady Pinnock and Lady Deech, and the noble Lord, Lord Lisvane, talked about public consultation not being enough. Ahead of the planning application, public consultations were held to gather feedback from local residents and the wider public. Around 4,500 responses were submitted to the planning application and, at a publicly held planning inquiry, many people spoke for and against the proposals. Planning processes ensure that all affected parties have the chance to make their views known on proposed developments, including this proposal. Consultation on the Holocaust memorial and learning centre has been extensive and thorough.

To the noble Baroness, Lady Scott of Bybrook, I say that the construction phase is expected to last three years, with a further six months for fitting out. Provision has been made to ensure that as much of Victoria Tower Gardens as possible is open to users during construction works. This includes the riverside walk and the northern area of grass around the "Burghers of Calais" and up to the Houses of Parliament perimeter. The team will engage with specialist contractors from an early stage to ensure that works are well planned and disruption minimised.

[LORD KHAN OF BURNLEY]

The noble Baroness, Lady O’Loan, and the noble Lord, Lord Lisvane, referred to the National Audit Office’s July 2022 report on the project. We welcome that the National Audit Office has addressed all its recommendations. It recognised the challenges we face in managing cost pressures in the context of inflation across the construction sector and of disappointing delays arising from opposition to the planning application. It is important to say that the National Audit Office also recognises that governance arrangements are in place. The strategic benefits of the programme have been clearly identified and specialists with the necessary skills have been recruited to the programme.

A flood risk assessment concluded that Victoria Tower Gardens is heavily protected by the Thames river flood defences, significantly reducing the risk of flooding on site. The UK Holocaust memorial and learning centre will include rainwater attenuation measures and improvements to the surface water drainage within Victoria Tower Gardens.

Our aim is for the completion of the memorial to be witnessed by Holocaust survivors—a very important point that a number of noble Lords made and that the noble Baroness, Lady Scott of Bybrook, summarised on behalf of the Opposition. Subject to the Bill passing and planning permission being regained, we aim to begin construction in 2025 and to open in 2029. It is a source of deep regret that delays to the programme will mean that fewer Holocaust survivors will have the experience of seeing the memorial open in their lifetime.

On the impact of visitors, our projections are that, based on the number of people visiting Westminster, the maximum number of visitors to the memorial will be around 500,000 per year.

A number of noble Lords, including the noble Lord, Lord Mann, and the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of St Albans, talked about work in relation to the restoration and renewal programme team. The team met regularly to share information and co-ordinate plans to reduce potential impacts. The memorial site is at the southern end of the gardens and need not prevent the use of the gardens by the restoration and renewal programme. Subject to the Bill being passed and obtaining planning consent, we expect construction in 2025, as mentioned. Parliamentary works to the Victoria Tower are expected to start then, and more comprehensive restoration and renewal works are subject to the approval of Parliament and costed proposals in 2025.

A number of noble Lords asked why we could not build at the Imperial War Museum. Victoria Tower Gardens was identified as a site uniquely capable of meeting the Government’s aspiration for the national memorial. The Imperial War Museum has endorsed our proposal, as has been mentioned. Matthew Westerman, the former chair of the Imperial War Museum’s board, is a member of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation. We will continue to talk with the Imperial War Museum about our plans. The learning centre’s exhibition will serve a different though complementary purpose to the Imperial War Museum’s Holocaust gallery. We are confident that the project will add to the excellent existing provision on Holocaust education.

The learning centre will provide essential context to the memorial. The Holocaust Commission recommended that a new world-class learning centre should physically accompany the new national memorial. The learning centre will provide the opportunity to learn about the Holocaust close to the memorial, helping people to better understand how the lessons of the Holocaust apply more widely, including to other genocides.

The Government believe that young people should be taught the history of the Holocaust and the lessons that it teaches today. In recognition of its importance, the Holocaust is the only historic event that is compulsory within the national curriculum for history at key stage 3. Effective teaching about the Holocaust can support pupils to learn about the possible consequences of anti-Semitism and other forms of extremism. It is right that we also build this Holocaust memorial as a focal point for national commemoration and to demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that its lessons are never forgotten.

A number of noble Lords talked about the alarming rates of increasing anti-Semitism since 7 October in particular. Anti-Semitism has absolutely no place in our society, which is why we are taking a strong lead in tackling it in all its forms. Making sure that British Jews not only are safe but feel safe is one of our top priorities. The Government have committed further funding of £54 million to the Community Security Trust to enable it to continue its vital work protecting UK Jewish communities until 2028. That brings total funding for the Jewish community protective security grant to £72 million over the next four years.

Memorials alone cannot prevent anti-Semitism, but this memorial will play a part in reminding everyone where anti-Semitism can lead. It will be a reminder to us all, in Parliament and across the whole nation, of the potential to abuse democratic institutions to murderous consequences, and it will challenge us to stand up and combat racism, hatred and prejudice wherever they are found.

On the point made by the noble Earl, Lord Effingham—I welcome him to his place—the play area will be retained and redesigned to make better use of its space and a more attractive play environment. This will allow only a modest loss because of the project.

The noble Lord, Lord Lee, talked about the views of UNESCO, Historic England and others being considered at the planning inquiry. The planning inspector concluded that the development would not compromise the outstanding universal value of the world heritage site. On the comment by the noble Lord, Lord Howard, who said that the design was off the shelf, the memorial design was created specifically for Victoria Tower Gardens.

I just want to pick up some important points that the noble Lord, Lord Austin, talked about and the questions that he asked. Everything will be done to complete the project as quickly as possible, consistent with safety.

The noble Viscount, Lord Craigavon, talked about the learning centre being only digital. We will work with leading producers and designers to create a very powerful and informative digital exhibition. The noble Baroness, Lady Harding, talked about making full use of digital technology to enable young people across the country to learn more about the Holocaust and

take advantage of the impressive new learning centre, showcasing the excellent work of the many other Holocaust education organisations.

I want to finish off with some brief comments. The High Court quashed planning consent on the basis that the London County Council (Improvements) Act presented a statutory obstacle to building in Victoria Tower Gardens. This is what we are debating today. The Bill seeks to remove the obstacle by providing that Section 8 of the 1900 Act should not prevent construction or operation of the memorial and learning centre. The aim is to clarify the position before a new decision can be taken by the designated Minister.

The planning application remains current and a new decision on it will be taken. Arrangements are in place within the department, as I said before, so that the designated Minister remains isolated from the project and can make planning decisions in a fair, transparent and unbiased way.

I close by thanking noble Lords across the House for their contributions in this important debate and for their support to deliver on the Government's commitment, which is long overdue. As Holocaust survivor Susan Pollack said recently:

"I am 93 years old. My dream is to see this memorial and learning centre finally built and to see the first coachload of school children arrive and ready to learn. That is what it is all about. And, hopefully, those students will learn what happened to me and become beacons of hope in the fight against contemporary antisemitism".

The Holocaust memorial and learning centre will draw on the history of the Holocaust to stress the importance of tackling intolerance and hatred at all levels. It will be a memorial that delivers this message for all people across the UK and the rest of the world, regardless of faith and background. We must lose no more time in building a Holocaust memorial and learning centre of which we can all be proud. I repeat the words of the noble Baroness, Lady Harding: it is shocking that, in 2024, we do not have a national memorial. Who we memorialise matters and what we memorialise matters. In the words of the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton, the former Prime Minister, it is the right idea, in the right place, at the right time. I commend the Bill to the House.

8.56 pm

Baroness Deech (CB): My Lords, this has been a moral and historic debate. There were some good things in it and some mistakes and bad things. One of the things that struck me was that people seem to be ignorant of the existing Holocaust memorials. There is a national Holocaust memorial. There are at least six up and down the country. There are 21 learning centres. Hardly a day goes by, if you Google, when you will not find a seminar or a course on the Holocaust. The country is replete with it and with Holocaust education as taught in schools, but I have to say it has not worked. The young people who march—and there will be another march soon—waving swastikas and calling for intifada and worse, have had Holocaust education at school. It does not seem to have done them any good.

As I said, the more these memorials go up, the worse the anti-Semitism, and no one has asked or bothered to find out what impact a visit has, what

effect a piece of sculpture has. Just as with, say, discrimination or slavery, would it make any difference to discrimination against black people to put up another statue about slavery? I doubt it very much. It has to be a question of education. As the late Lord Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi, said, Holocaust education has to be in context. It has to be set within the entire history of the Jewish people. You cannot just take the Holocaust and put it in a package and say, "That was Nazi Germany, that was a long time ago, nothing to do with us today". Nor can we generalise. Apparently, the theme, as far as one can find out, of the learning centre will be, at the end, "Do not be a bystander" or, as the noble Baroness, Lady Harding, said, we must have more introspection. That is insufficient. Introspection does not get us anywhere where anti-Semitism or other forms of racism are concerned. We need a proper history of the Jewish people, we need a Jewish museum and maybe even a Jewish history month.

No one has said what the learning centre that is proposed will add to the other 21 that are already in existence; there does not seem to be anything it will add. Remember that there will be only about five rooms, of which one will be a mock-up of the House of Commons Chamber, one will be devoted to people who saved victims and, as we have heard, every single genocide you have ever heard of will be included, which dilutes the unique nature of the Holocaust. Any reading of Jewish scholarship will tell you that we have to study the Jewish Holocaust on its own and not mix it up with the others.

I mentioned the late Chief Rabbi. There is, of course, a variety of opinions in the Jewish community. There are rabbis on the far right and on the left who do not like this particular project. As far as Holocaust survivors go, it is a mistake to say that this has to be built in a hurry for them. It is not for them; it is for the future. It would be a mistake to rush it. The Holocaust survivors who I know have actually said, as recorded before the Commons Select Committee, "not in our name". Those who I know do not approve of it. As I said, the community is divided; there is no unanimity there. However, education is certainly important, and it is not working.

I fear that the whole project is tainted by the association with Sir David Adjaye. Even if the allegations are disproved, it will always be his memorial, with a striking resemblance to all the others he has put up around the world.

Around the Chamber, we see quite a lot of consensus that the learning centre is too small and inadequate, and that there is no evidence that will change people's attitudes. I am surprised and saddened that the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, is no longer standing by the recommendation that his commission made for a much larger learning centre, with an overhaul of Holocaust education.

We need a better memorial, and we could do it quickly. We could have had one very quickly in the last few years if we had just had a small memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens, and then took our time over designing a learning centre close by. It is perhaps not too late for this, if the Holocaust Memorial Foundation took a different turn, and perhaps with new leadership.

[BARONESS DEECH]

I am talking about a regret amendment, not a wrecking amendment. If noble Lords do not agree with the amendment, they are saying that they do not need to know any more about appraisal and consultation, or security and costs. I cannot believe that that is what most noble Lords want to hear.

I hope that the planning application will start from scratch. It is no good saying that we will put it to the Minister—who is, of course, independent. It is quite unrealistic to suppose that any Minister, after all of this, would turn down the planning application. It needs to go back to Westminster and through a proper inquiry, because so much has changed in the last few years.

I hope that the House will agree with my amendment, but I have one more word to say about this. This is a moral issue; it calls for a free vote. Noble Lords should use their knowledge and feelings about what they have heard, and vote the way that their conscience tells them. If ever there was an issue that should not be whipped, this is it. I would like to test the opinion of the House.

9.03 pm

Division on Baroness Deech's amendment

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Baroness Deech's amendment disagreed.

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9.14 pm

Bill read a second time and committed to a Select Committee.

House adjourned at 9.15 pm.

