

MINUTES OF ORAL EVIDENCE

taken before the

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL BILL COMMITTEE

PETITIONS AGAINST THE BILL

Wednesday, 24 January 2024 (Afternoon)

A video of the proceedings can be found [here](#).

In Committee Room 15

PRESENT:

John Stevenson (Chair)
Keir Mather
Lia Nici
Angela Richardson
Karl Turner

FOR THE PROMOTER:

Christopher Katkowski KC, Counsel, DLUHC
Richard Turney KC, Counsel, DLUHC
Robbie Owen, Parliamentary Agent

FOR THE PETITIONER:

1. Baroness Deech et al
 - Brian Doctor KC
- Baroness Deech DBE KC
 - Joanna Millan BEM JP
 - Dr Martin Stern MBE
 - Trudy Gold
 - Anita Lasker-Wallfisch
- Sir Richard Evans FRSL FBA
 - Lydia Tischler

Exhibits referred to by the petitioner during the hearing can be found [here](#).

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(At 2.15 p.m.)

406. THE CHAIR: This is the seventh public meeting of the Holocaust Memorial Bill Select Committee. As I have done previously, and I will do again, I will read the instruction from the House. The Committee is bound by the instruction from the House, which is as follows: that the Committee treats the principle of the Bill, as determined by the House on the Bill's Second Reading, as comprising the matters mentioned in paragraph 2 and those matters shall, accordingly, not be at issue during proceedings of the Committee. The matters referred to in paragraph 1 are: (a) the Secretary of State may incur expenditure for or in connection with (i) a memorial commemorating the victims of the Holocaust, and (ii) a centre for learning relating to the memorial; and (b) section 8(1) and 8 of the London County Council (Improvements) Act 1900 are not to prevent, restrict or otherwise affect the construction, use, operation, maintenance or improvement of such a memorial and centre for learning at Victoria Tower Gardens in the City of Westminster.

407. As the Bill does not remove the need for planning permission and all other necessary consents being obtained in the usual way for the construction, use, operation, maintenance and improvement of the memorial and centre for learning, the Committee shall not hear any petition against the Bill to the extent that the petition relates to (a) the question of whether or not there should be a memorial commemorating the victims of the Holocaust or a centre for learning relating to the memorial, whether at Victoria Tower Gardens or elsewhere; or (b) whether or not planning permission and all other necessary consents should be given for the memorial and centre for learning or the terms and conditions on which they should be given.

408. I would also make one other request, just so everybody can hear, is to speak clearly and loudly. Over to you, Mr Doctor.

Baroness Deech et al

Submissions by Mr Doctor

409. MR DOCTOR KC: Thank you, Mr Chair. We come now to the petitioners who are collectively known as the Deech petitioners, but that includes Baroness Deech herself, who is sitting next to me, together with four Holocaust survivors, who are

actually petitioners in their own right but they are going to play the role today of witnesses and they will address the Committee on their special interests.

410. Baroness Deech, before I get on to her, we have two other witnesses: one is Sir Richard Evans who is the foremost historian of Germany and that period in the UK and who speaks with special knowledge of the events of which the memorial is intended to memorialise; and also Trudy Gold who is a historian with a particular interest in Jewish history. And we are going to call all of them to address you briefly but we will commence with Baroness Deech, who probably needs no introduction to the Committee or anyone else, but she will nevertheless introduce herself and she has taken a particular interest in the project which we are concerned with and she is hoping to bring to your attention and indeed interest you in the particular approach that she takes to this matter, representing as she does a broad body of opinion within her community, the Jewish community, and more generally.

411. So without further ado, if Baroness Deech would sit over there, to enable her to see Mr Katkowski as well as the members of the commission, and I call on her to introduce herself and give her special interest in this hearing.

Evidence of Baroness Deech

412. BARONESS DEECH: Thank you. Next slide, please. Thank you. My interest: I have taken a lively interest in this, ever since I first heard about the proposal. Like the members of the Committee, I have the privilege of chairing a Select Committee myself and I fully understand the burden that is on you and I would like to respectfully suggest that you will, of course, have views about what is in scope and what is not but I also think that a Select Committee has a constitutional opportunity, maybe even obligation, to tell MPs a lot of things that they do not know, because we may be embarking on something historic, a building that may stand for a hundred years. We certainly do not want a building that people agree should be torn down in a few years. There are many events being described this week which MPs, I am sure, do not know about. So I am hoping that the Committee will not just go into a sort of cul-de-sac but will look at the broader issue with a view to informing fellow MPs and, of course, in due course, the House of Lords as well.

413. My father was a refugee who got here 3 September 1939, which was the day that

war broke out. He was interned. He was a founder member of the World Jewish Congress and, as a journalist, he went to the Nuremberg trials. My grandmother was refused entry to the UK at the start of the war and she died in a concentration camp in Poland. My other grandmother, aunt, cousins and other relatives died also at the hands of the Nazis in Poland.

414. I happen to have a graduate degree in contemporary Jewish studies. I have studied this. I attended the Eichmann trial when I was a student in Jerusalem. I have visited Holocaust memorials and museums all over the world and I have become familiar with their objects and effects. And, by the way, I have noticed that those that are without particular reference to the Holocaust are much more likely to be vandalised than those that are pictorial or figurative. I also happen to have an office in Millbank House, overlooking Victoria Tower Gardens, so I see it or go in nearly every day. So I am familiar with it.

415. We start with the Government announcement that Sir David Adjaye – next slide please – was to lead the design and there is the design. So the Government adopted Sir David as their designer and the Government has announced that he is stepping aside until issues about his conduct are resolved, as you probably know.

416. Next slide. When I saw the design, I thought, ‘This is familiar’. These are all Adjaye memorials. Top left, Barbados, about slavery. Left middle is about Niger, apparently imbued by African folklore. Bottom left was a design for Ottawa and, again, in the centre, the Sclera Pavilion and Abrahamic House. In other words, his designs are, to my mind, generic and I conclude that the design offered for Victoria Tower Gardens is generic. It seems to me to have nothing to do with the Holocaust at all. Twenty-two sticks sticking up in the air, or is it 23, justified similarly for Niger as referring to something else and in Barbados.

417. On its own, it is not a memorial and I am asking, what is a memorial? If you just came across it on its own you would say, ‘What?’ Would you feel reverence? Would you start thinking about the Holocaust? I fear not. This is not a matter of planning because for the planning people, the provenance of a design, the ideology surrounding it is not relevant. But I am saying that we are not really being offered a Holocaust memorial for Victoria Tower Gardens.

418. Next slide, please. Briefly, the silver tree at the bottom is the Budapest memorial. How beautiful that would look in VTG. Vienna, the names. How much I would long to see the names of my relatives commemorated. They are not commemorated anywhere. I know how much pleasure that would have given my parents who grieved over my bedside when I was a child. The one on the right is a detail from the Warsaw Ghetto memorial, which stands next to a wonderful museum.

419. Next slide, please. I am really anxious that my family should be commemorated in a way which is appropriate and reverent. The current design cannot achieve that. It is devoid of names, places or any reference at all. UNESCO has objected to it. There are far better memorials in Newark, Liverpool Street, Harwich, Swanage and in Europe. People often act as if there were no Holocaust memorials in this country, no learning centres. They seem not to know what there is or to have visited them.

420. There are over 300 memorials around the world ranging from China to New Zealand and, as we have sadly seen, antisemitism is on the rise. Nearly every week, I read about another memorial and I read about more and more antisemitic incidents. No one seems to have asked what effect does a memorial have? Who goes? Who goes to a learning centre? What effect does it have on them? There has been no impact assessment.

421. And as reported, I do not know the details, the renowned architect, Sir David Adjaye, has stepped back from multiple projects amid sexual misconduct allegations, which he has admitted at least in part. I do not know the details; I am just telling you what I have seen in the papers and, in fact, only two days ago, the planned slavery museum in Liverpool announced that Sir David Adjaye was no longer to be associated with them and they were starting again with the design.

422. Next slide, please. I propose an amendment that I cannot draft. I propose an amendment to confine the lifting of the 1900 restriction to a memorial only. I can envisage a beautiful, handsome memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens. That is fine. I hope that this Committee will call for a new memorial design to be completed relatively speedily and independently. I have checked online. A number of very significant statues have been erected, including the Queen and Prince Philip, in the last few years, commissioned one year, up three years later. Commissioned in the year, delivered in

24 months or less. It can be done.

423. And I would like the Committee to call for a larger learning centre in central London that includes a history of the Jews in Britain. I draw to your attention that the one and only Jewish museum in this country has just closed down for lack of funds. I find it unacceptable that there should be, as it were, a memorial to dead Jews at a cost of £140 million or more and no museum setting out the history of the Jewish people over 1,000 years, their triumphs and tragedies here. That could all be done for much less than what is being spent now.

424. Also, it is a matter of context. If you wrap up the Holocaust in a shoebox, which is what is going to be done, it enables people to say, 'Oh, that was a long time ago. Nothing to do with us. Frightfully sorry', and they ignore what is going on today. I reference, for example, Elon Musk posing outside Auschwitz two days ago with his child round his shoulders as if he was on a trip to Disneyland. Deeply disrespectful. It is an invitation to politicians to pose. This happens in Berlin. They stand by the Berlin memorial, 'Look at me. I am not a racist'. That is not enough, given what is going on in the streets today, as you know.

425. Next slide, please. VTG, as we call it, is inappropriate. First of all, how can it be contemplated for a moment that there should be a children's playground hard by a memorial to children who had no childhood, with visitors tramping round that children's playground. They need safeguarding. How can one have a café, the sort that is going to sell Coke and crisps, by a memorial to people who starved to death? I cannot think of anything more tin eared and showing that there is a lack of understanding.

426. The site is too small, as the survivors will tell you, for what is needed, because of a decision to build underground, which results in only four rooms and it is a political project. It is being used to convey a political message about British democracy. Lord Pickles said at the inquiry, 'People will emerge from the learning centre, look at the Houses of Parliament and say, "Oh, this couldn't happen here. We have British democracy"'. Sadly, given what is going on in the streets and the marches, I am afraid democracy is not actually a protection but it is being done there as a political message. The values that he says are attached are not exclusively British and it is no protection against antisemitism. It will simply be a backdrop for visits by politicians. Indeed, of

the things that started me on this was seeing Jeremy Corbyn in the front row of a Holocaust memorial meeting several years ago and I think it is all too easy for politicians to stand there and say, 'Look at me', and then do nothing about the extremism and hatred that we are seeing today.

427. A memorial, a learning centre is no excuse for not combatting this very complex, really troubling, worse than I have seen in my lifetime, the hatred going on today. The National Audit Office has raised concerns about it. The Infrastructure and Projects Authority rated the memorial red, which means undeliverable, along with HS2. UNESCO has objected to it. UNESCO has asked the Government to think again.

428. Next slide, please. This all started with a report in 2015 which said, 'The memorial should be a place where people can pay their respects, contemplate, think and offer prayers and there must be somewhere close at hand where people can go to learn more about the Holocaust'. The call for evidence of that report exposed the absence of a professorial chair on Holocaust studies, anywhere in this country. The commission in 2015 called for that and said they wanted a professional chair. They wanted a campus to bring together all the educational organisations. They wanted a lecture hall for 500. All that has gone by the board because there is only room to build four small rooms in a shoebox.

429. Next slide, please. The commission wanted an endowment fund for the long-term future of Holocaust education, with projects all over the country. That has gone by the board. The new centre, they said, would be the heart of a physical and virtual campus, supporting a network of Holocaust organisations which would collaborate to extend high-quality Holocaust education all over. All been abandoned because of the cost of digging down.

430. Next slide. Sir Richard Evans, who I am delighted to say is with us, gave evidence and he is, of course, the greatest expert we have in this country on that period. He said, 'The Imperial War Museum, less than a mile away, is already the National Holocaust Memorial Centre and remains the premium location for a comprehensive and scholarly coverage in the UK of this tragic episode. Compared to the American Holocaust memorial, the one in Westminster would only be an embarrassment for Britain, if it laid claim to be the national institution of learning and research on the

Holocaust’.

431. Next slide, please. The one that we are being served up with, first of all, we do not know if it will have any effect. There has been no impact assessment. We do not know who will go. You will not be able to drop in. Somebody said, ‘You will see it, be intrigued and drop in’. You will not be able to because you have to pre-book. I cannot find out exactly what is in it. I have been struggling with freedom of information for 11 months and the Department will not release even a slither of information. I have to go by what was offered to the public inquiry. I wonder why they are so embarrassed to let me know.

432. What would the learning centre, as proposed, add to the existing ones? I say, nothing. It is a 45-minute walk-through. It cannot attract the casual visitor. You would learn more about Britain and the Holocaust from the wonderful films, ‘One Life’, which I recommend to you, about Nicholas Winton rescuing children and how difficult it was, and, ‘Exodus’. Israel has not been mentioned. People do not want to mention it but it is important to ask how the learning centre will cope with that. If the British mandate had ended 10 years earlier, think how many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, would have been able to take refuge there. We cannot skate over that particular British aspect. The learning centre, as far as I can see, is a political narrative built on a false premise that British democracy saves everything.

433. We also have to ask – I have not got time to go into it – in the present context, you have read the papers, you know the discussion, what is a Holocaust? What is the context? What is genocide? There are competing versions. What will this learning centre add, if anything, to the existing ones?

434. The next three slides rapidly. I have listed 21 existing learning centres. I could have found you more. Britain is rich in such learning centres: the Imperial War Museum; the Wiener Holocaust Library; Sir Martin Gilbert. Move on. There are so many of them. The National Holocaust Centre in Newark, a huge production, no one seems to know about it or go there. It is a wonderful venture set up by a very worthy Christian family.

435. The next slide. Yet more. The Association of Jewish Refugees, Oxford University, Sussex, the Parks Institute. We are rich and blessed in learning centres,

scholarly research, wonderful exhibitions. I fail to see what the little shoebox in VTG would add.

436. Next slide, please. The Holocaust is about antisemitism. I put it to you, it is not about generalised hate or not about being a bystander, which I believe is the message that is going to be given. Lord Sachs, who we miss such, the former Chief Rabbi, pointed out that antisemitism today is addressed to our one and only state, our safe haven, Israel, and the question of Israel needs to be addressed. There is too much misunderstanding which is leading people to say, 'Israel, with another 6 million Jews, should be wiped off the face of the map.' A memorial and learning centre has to address that. I put it to you that much of the Holocaust education going on now in schools is compulsory, judged by the terrible things I see on campus. I specialise in helping students who suffer from antisemitism.

437. Dreadful things are going on on campus and in our schools and on our streets, the marches that you see every Saturday, and that is because, as I said, there is a disconnect between the Holocaust and how it is presented and what is going on today. The lines must be joined up because the children who have had Holocaust education at school, it seems that all they have learned is, if they are angry with Israel or the Jews, they walk around waving a swastika or make hissing noises about gas because the only thing they know about Jews is the Nazis, nothing about our culture, our history, our presence in Britain. This learning centre will reinforce it: all in the past, there it is in a room.

438. Development, next slide. I put it to you that the public inquiry of three years ago is out of date. Many of the things I told you were now known then and not considered. We must have a fresh planning inquiry because everything has changed. For example, as I know well, and you do, the use of VTG, it will be used for 20 years or so for the restoration and renewal of Parliament. I have spoken to the chief executive of R&R who drew me a little plan showing how the whole of VTG will be covered in scaffolding and building works. There will be jetties. I do not even see how you could use the riverside work. The work has started on Victoria Tower already and that is five years. I think it impossible and the authorities wriggled uncomfortably when I asked them. I do not think those major works can occur simultaneously with at least three years' extensive work on a memorial. If you are going underground, it has either got to wait until R&R is done or we must hurry to get up a statue, a memorial, two years,

quickly, before it is done.

439. Next slide. All sorts of things have happened since the inquiry. VTG used for crowds, as you saw in an earlier slide. The Jewish Museum closed down. The potentially violent anti-Israel marches. All my requests for meetings with Ministers and promoters to consider alternatives, have been unanswered or refused. I have asked repeatedly for meetings with Ministers. I get no answer, or in one case, from Baroness Scott, six months later, saying no. I have offered to the promoters to meet and compromise. We have a compromise document. Absolute silence. I have been boycotted, vilified. It has been insinuated that anyone opposed to this is antisemitic. Every possible leverage has been used to stop us talking about it and having a compromise.

440. The Hybrid Bill Committee suggested that there should be dialogue. There has been none. Given the uncompromising attitude, I am not confident that the Minister in the Department will make a decision against the Government if the planning application is called. It was Pincher MP who did it last time. I cannot believe really that if this is rushed through and called in as it was secretly last time, without warning, that whatever decision is made, the Minister will go against it. It beggars belief.

441. The Jewish community has not been consulted. The Board of Deputies has never voted. There are more donors to the party than scholars involved. The Jewish community is more and more divided. There is no debate. The truth has not always been told about how this has come about. The Government hired a PR firm at a cost of £100 million¹ to gather yes/no votes, 'Do you want a Holocaust memorial or not?' without the details. And in relation to public inquiry, of last time, the benefits have entirely evaporated. The inspector spelled out the harms; they certainly remain. And then he was subjected to specious arguments, emotional arguments, laid on thickly about this is sacred and so on, it would be sacrilegious to oppose it and people felt we had to bend to that but all that argument is specious. The benefits, as I have shown, have entirely evaporated. We need a fresh look.

¹ Baroness Deech requested a correction to the record. She stated £100 million, but meant to say £100 thousand.

442. Next slide. A way forward. We have offered this to Mr Gove. We have offered it to the promoters. No response. No meeting. No nothing. We suggest, I suggest, a figurative memorial in VTG, not by Sir David. I thought also of Richmond House near the cenotaph. There is a lovely forecourt there which would be perfect. Indeed, if Richmond House is not used for decanting the Commons, that would be a good place. The Imperial War Museum, however, is the obvious place and also, if you want a learning centre nearby – I check all the time – there is lots of empty office space on Millbank, a few steps from where the memorial might be.

443. We need a new museum and learning centre and campus setting the Holocaust in the context of hundreds of years of global antisemitism and Jewish history up to the present, bringing together all the organisations that I mentioned earlier and a fresh look at education. What is genocide? Many Jews believe that one should not combine the Shoah, as we call it, with other genocides because it de-Judaises what happened. It waters down the Jewish element and leads only to unhelpful waffle about hatred and not being a bystander. We think we should at least have our own memorial and learning centre and other minorities can have their own. I do not think anyone has asked them what they want.

444. Final slide. As I said, we put forward a compromise. What is happening now is being forced on Jewish parties and other minorities without their consent. It is a historic occasion that you have as your responsibility. Why, I ask, is the Government so determined to push this project through when it has alienated so many people, it adds nothing, costs a fortune? Why pick this obviously inappropriate and difficult site? Is it because it is free? There are other free sites. Why spend more than £130 million when we have no museum and no overhaul of Jewish education? And why, in this hearing, are the promoters trying to shut down any objection, no matter how powerful, and even from the people most intimately affected? We finally want people to consider what we have to say.

445. The Government, I put it to you, has neglected their duties of candour and transparency. I want a memorial; I want a learning centre. I want it to proceed with consensus and good will and we can achieve that if the Government will simply listen to us and think again and not regard it as a matter of, I do not know, stubbornness and so on. There is plenty of goodwill on our side, plenty of ideas. We urge you from the

bottom of our hearts to give us a chance to put this on the right course for the next century with the full-hearted support of the Jewish community. Thank you.

446. THE CHAIR: Thank you, Baroness. Mr Doctor?

447. MR DOCTOR KC: I have nothing to add.

448. THE CHAIR: Mr Katkowski?

449. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Thank you, sir. Good afternoon, Baroness.

450. BARONESS DEECH: Good afternoon.

451. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Good to see you in person as opposed to simply on the screen as we did at the inquiry. That very last point that you have made, that you are asking the Committee to set this matter on the right course, I suspect you will know that I have asked all the previous petitioners exactly what they are asking the Committee to do. Do you have a copy of your petition to hand?

452. BARONESS DEECH: No, I do not.

453. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Right, okay. You will recall therefore that it is not simply your petition; it is a petition of six other petitioners as well and you will recall in your petition, and your fellow petitioners' petition, there are five amendments sought. I am just going to remind you of them. I am sure you can remember them all but for the reference, the first of them is in paragraph 7 of the petition. That is to say that in the two clauses, the words 'over' and 'under' should be deleted. In other words, there cannot be an underground learning centre. That is the first point.

454. The second amendment that is sought is at paragraph 8 of the petition that in the event that planning permission is re-determined, there should be a further public inquiry. That is the second one. We are making good progress.

455. Paragraph 23 is the next one, that there should be an amendment to clause 1, that the sole purpose of the learning centre should be in relation to the Holocaust, the Nazi period and antisemitism.

456. Almost there. Penultimate one, paragraph 27, that again clause 1 should be

amended so that the activities referred to should not begin until the Government has established an endowment fund for Holocaust education.

457. And the final one is in paragraph 30, that there should be no sales of food and drink within 200 metres of a memorial in the garden. So those were all of the amendments set out in the petition. You are a longstanding parliamentarian. You will understand obviously the nature of the petition is to set out what you want. Can I take it that that is the cumulative total of the amendments that you seek from this Committee?

458. BARONESS DEECH: I am sure, sir, you will tell me that many of them are not in scope.

459. MR KATKOWSKI KC: That is not my point. I am just asking you whether that is the list.

460. BARONESS DEECH: Yes. I think it is unacceptable to sell food anywhere close by.

461. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Yes. No, but I went through –

462. BARONESS DEECH: And I think it is impractical to dig down and have a learning centre underneath.

463. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Yes.

464. BARONESS DEECH: We need a fresh planning inquiry, as I explained.

465. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Yes.

466. BARONESS DEECH: We need to go back to the 2015 recommendation and overhaul Holocaust education, and we need to drop the Adjaye design. I do not know how much of that can be achieved but as I have said to the Committee, I think I understand the breadth of your interest and responsibility and whatever you may say is in scope or out of scope, I am sure you will listen to what we say and inform your colleagues at the appropriate moment.

467. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Yes. Sorry, and my question was, are there any other amendments apart from those five that you seek?

468. BARONESS DEECH: No.

469. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Thank you. That is a very straightforward answer to the question I asked. I will address the Committee later in the usual way about those five amendments, Baroness.

470. Can I just deal with a few factual points if I may? You will recall, because you were there and you participated, as indeed did my learned friend, Mr Doctor, that the design of the memorial was a subject which was contested at the planning inquiry and I very well remember the architect of the memorial being cross-examined by Mr Doctor, I think on your behalf actually, about the design of the memorial. That is right, isn't it, factually?

471. BARONESS DEECH: Yes.

472. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Good.

473. BARONESS DEECH: And we know much more about it.

474. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Well, we do not because you have said – and, again, I just want to correct the record, for what it is worth – you have said repeatedly that the design of the memorial is Sir David Adjaye. The design of the memorial was a gentleman called Mr Bruno. I carry his photo in my breast pocket. He is Jewish, Israeli. He was cross-examined extensively by Mr Doctor about the design ethos of the memorial. Sadly, he died just a few days before the Minister's decision was issued. This is the architect of the memorial as you very well know. Why have you sat here today and said to the members of the Committee that the design of the memorial was Sir David Adjaye when you very well know it was this gentleman here?

475. BARONESS DEECH: I am sorry; I dispute that. I am quoting the Government. 'Sir David Adjaye' – I copied this from the – 'to lead design of new, national landmark'. Why has the foundation said, 'Sir David Adjaye is stepping aside?' It is all over his website. I took all this from his website. We know that it is his name eternally associated with it. He has a big team but it is an Adjaye design.

476. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Okay, and if the Committee is at all interested, if they look at the inspector's report conclusions at pages 108 to 191, they will see the correct

factual position set out there. But do you not remember the cross-examination by Mr Doctor on your behalf, of the architect of the memorial?

477. BARONESS DEECH: And now we know much more about it. Sir David Adjaye has been accused of impropriety. We have now discovered that his memorial is generic. He does the same thing over and over again. I did not know that then. I do not think anybody knew it then.

478. MR KATKOWSKI KC: The point was made at the inquiry. We had the pictures at the inquiry of other memorials, which were said to be similar.

479. BARONESS DEECH: No.

480. MR KATKOWSKI KC: And they were not Sir David's memorials, by the way. One of them is in Ottawa and, again, it was by this firm of architects.

481. BARONESS DEECH: No, on his website, I have to say.

482. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Just bear with me for one moment. Do you recall Sir David giving evidence at the inquiry and explaining his role in the overall project?

483. BARONESS DEECH: Yes.

484. MR KATKOWSKI KC: You do, yes. And do you recall Mr Bruno giving evidence at the inquiry, explaining that he designed the memorial?

485. BARONESS DEECH: Yes. It is an Adjaye design as we all know.

486. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Well, we will leave it. That is how it is presented.

487. THE CHAIR: Does this really matter to the Committee?

488. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Well, forgive me. It is simply because I have been – forgive me. You are the Committee and I am just here on behalf of the promoter and I have, I think, very, very fairly, and very straightforwardly, simply said on many occasions, 'Look, this is really planning. Not for this Committee etc'. On this one, which is just a straightforward misleading of you, I really felt that I had to dig my heels in, just for a few moments. I will move on now.

489. THE CHAIR: Thank you.

490. MR KATKOWSKI KC: I will move on now, thank you. And as for the content of the learning centre, that was again controversial at the planning inquiry. Four pages of the inspector's conclusions on this, that it is a raging debate. Was it going to be worthwhile? Was it going to be useless? I am summarising very briefly. Pages 177 to 181, if the Committee is at all interested in looking at that. Again, factually, there was that debate at the inquiry, was not there, about the content –

491. BARONESS DEECH: We now know much more about it and the situation has changed.

492. MR KATKOWSKI KC: No, the situation has not changed at all about the contents of the learning centre. We called a witness explaining the content of the learning centre. When you have said to the Committee you do not know what the content is, do you not remember there was a witness at the inquiry who explained the content of the learning centre? Do you not remember that?

493. BARONESS DEECH: We know what it was supposed to be, five years ago. I have asked repeated questions in Parliament and given FOI requests. I get nowhere. Sometimes the Government says it will be about Nazi atrocities. Other times they say Darfur, Rwanda and Kosovo. The do not seem to have made up their mind.

494. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Forgive me, I will not rise to that.

495. BARONESS DEECH: Richard, I am sure, will enlighten you.

496. MR KATKOWSKI KC: There has been a consistent narrative as to exactly what the learning centre will contain but I will move on. Thank you, sir. I will address the amendments later on in the usual way.

497. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Doctor?

498. MR DOCTOR KC: No further questions.

499. THE CHAIR: Any members have a question?

500. MR MATHER: Yes please, Chair, if that is okay.

501. THE CHAIR: Yes.

502. MR MATHER: Thank you very much, Baroness Deech, for taking the time to come and speak to us today. I have two questions, if that is alright. One is, you put forward some sort of revised proposals as to how a memorial could look in regard to its size but also where it could be located in front of Richmond House and so on. And I just wonder from your perspective whether you agree with the Government's original aspiration that, in effect, this would be the national Holocaust memorial, and that was the first question.

503. Then I was also wondering if you could provide your assessment of how the debate around whether or not this particular memorial is the right choice, has played out within the Jewish community? Because I know you mentioned in your testimony that the Board of Deputies did not have a vote on the matter but I just wonder in regard to potentially what BoD members have said, or perhaps the Jewish Leadership Council, just your perspective on what the landscape of opinion is like within the Jewish community.

504. BARONESS DEECH: The VTG learning centre cannot be a national learning centre. It is too small and it has a political message. Sir Richard, I am sure, will tell you. It does not begin to compare, for example, with the Imperial War Museum exhibition. The one in VTG, apparently, is just going to be all digital, laser lights and so on. No objects; no names. It cannot be. We also already have one called 'National' in Newark.

505. As far as the Jewish community goes, well, many people have been coerced into not talking out about it. I was banned on my first attempt from talking to the survivors' centre in Golders Green. I was phoned up a day before I was supposed to go and told I could not. Why not? Because some of the people who support financially the survivors' centre are also people behind the Holocaust memorial. So there is a small group of leaders, nearly all men, who are pushing this. And I am not saying that I am a scholar but I think now I know a bit more than they do and the Jewish community is divided. The National Jewish Assembly took a vote on this and was against. It is not that the Board of Deputies has not had a vote. I have asked them repeatedly to hold a vote and they have refused and they would not hear me or anybody else. It has become

– I do not like the word – toxic, and that is not what a memorial should be.

506. THE CHAIR: Can you just clarify, you are saying there are supporters of this.

507. BARONESS DEECH: Some are, and some are not, yes.

508. THE CHAIR: Okay.

509. BARONESS DEECH: But the more people know about it, the more they have questions. A lot of people do not know what the design is or what is in the learning centre or what there already is. I showed you 21 other learning centres and people seem to be oblivious and have not been there and do not know about them.

510. MR MATHER: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

511. THE CHAIR: Do you have a question?

512. MR TURNER: Thank you, Chair. First of all, thank you for your powerful presentation to the Committee. I think I am right in saying that there was some urgency spoken about by the planning inspector in the sense that the memorial and learning centre should happen whilst there are living survivors. How sympathetic with that contention –

513. BARONESS DEECH: We are blessed to have a few with us here today. Who knows how long the memorial will take but my view is that the memorial is for the future. It is for the next 100 years. It is for future generations. Our survivors know how much we honour them. We have many museums and celebrations for them. I think they will agree that it is for the future. Moreover, if you really wanted something quickly, you could get up a figurative memorial in, say, two years if you are in a hurry. My view is, get it right because it is for the next century; it is not for tomorrow.

514. MR TURNER: Thank you, Chair.

515. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you very much, Baroness. We will go to your first witness, Mr Doctor.

516. MR DOCTOR KC: I am going to call Professor Sir Richard Evans.

517. THE CHAIR: Thank you.

518. MR DOCTOR KC: Right. Richard, would you begin by just – I know you are very modest – but if you just tell us, the Committee, to make sure that they know exactly who you are and what you have been doing and your interest in this?

Evidence of Professor Evans

519. PROFESSOR EVANS: Can everybody hear me?

520. MR DOCTOR KC: Yes.

521. PROFESSOR EVANS: Okay, thanks. Well, I am Sir Richard Evans. I was born and grew up in east London in the Welsh community, as was, there and I became very interested in modern German history and the Nazis, particularly because of all the damage to the houses and the infrastructure, the bomb damage you could see in the east end in the 50s, and even to an extent in the early 60s.

522. My career has been based really on researching modern German history. I am regius professor emeritus of history at the University of Cambridge. I worked for many years on the history of Nazi Germany, among other things. Among my best-known publications is a three-volume history published by Penguin Books and translated into 15 languages, including German, Chinese and Russian.

523. I am deputy chair of the Spoliation Advisory Panel, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on applications for the restitution of Nazi looted artworks, or as they put it in artworks culture, artworks looted, spoliated – sold under value for example – during the Nazi era and I am proud to say that we have recommended the restitution or compensation for a number of cultural objects. We have achieved, I think, a recognition across Europe, and indeed the world, as a pioneer and a model in the field.

524. I was also the principal expert witness in the unsuccessful libel action brought before the High Court in the year 2000 by David Irving over accusations against him of Holocaust denial, subsequently turned into a Hollywood movie called ‘Denial’ where, I am sorry to say, I was played by an actor who should have lost weight before he appeared before the cameras but, again, I am very proud of the work that I and my colleagues did, led by the recently deceased Richard Rampton, a much missed

senior KC.

525. I advised the Imperial War Museum on its Holocaust exhibition wing. The first one, I attended by invitation the formal opening by Her Majesty the Queen in 2000. By invitation, I have submitted a lengthy research briefing to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum on its redesign of the permanent exhibition. I hold honorary degrees from Oxford and London. I am a fellow of the British Academy, fellow of the Royal Society of Literature etc.

526. And, finally, it is worth mentioning, when I was an undergraduate at Oxford, a long time ago, my tutor for modern history was Sir Martin Gilbert, subsequently author of a number of major works on the Holocaust as well as the official biography of Sir Winston Churchill and, indeed, I was his last undergraduate student before he took up the Churchill biography project.

527. MR DOCTOR KC: Thank you. Right.

528. PROFESSOR EVANS: Right.

529. MR DOCTOR KC: Could you now give your views and your evidence on the proposals which are before the Committee, that is dealing with the proposed Holocaust memorial and learning centre.

530. PROFESSOR EVANS: Yes.

531. MR DOCTOR KC: The Bill talks about 'a' Holocaust memorial but the promoter takes the view that all we are concerned with is this one. So you will talk about that.

532. PROFESSOR EVANS: Yes, that is my major concern, in fact. Well, the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust galleries, which opened quite recently, and attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors in a normal year, they are linked to the museum's very significant archival collections, which make it an important research centre on World War II and the Holocaust. The proposed exhibition and research centre in Westminster would be an unnecessary duplication of the museum's offering. It would be on a much smaller scale and so less comprehensive and less effective but, at the same time, it would no doubt divert attention from the Imperial War Museum's larger and more important collection and displays.

533. It is my view that the Imperial War Museum, which is located less than a mile away from here, is already the national Holocaust learning and research centre. It remains the appropriate location, in my view, of a comprehensive, scholarly and professional coverage in the UK of this most tragic episode in modern human history.

534. Now the arguments that politicians of all parties have put forward, that the Holocaust must be remembered and publicly commemorated, future generations need to learn about it and a memorial is necessary as a signal that the UK is determined to fight racism, antisemitism and prejudice of all kinds are, of course, laudable and I completely endorse them. But we already commemorate and research the Holocaust, not just at the Imperial War Museum but at other centres across the country: in Hyde Park; in Nottinghamshire; in Huddersfield; in particular, the Wiener Holocaust Library in London, the world's oldest Holocaust research centre and collection. And, indeed, the current director of the Wiener Holocaust Library, Dr Toby Simpson, also happens to be a former PhD student of mine. So I have a long connection. I have been part of, several years ago now, the academic advisory board and so on.

535. These, I think, are important considerations and, in particular, the Wiener Library has been quite rightly the recipient of substantial public funds in recent years. As a research centre on the Holocaust, the proposed new Westminster memorial and learning centre will not be able to compete, in particular, with the substantial and long-established archival collections either of the Wiener Library or the Imperial War Museum. And compared to the enormous collections of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum on the Mall in Washington, and the internationally important research centre that is associated with the Holocaust Memorial Museum, the proposed learning centre in Westminster, I am afraid, will only be an embarrassment for this country if it lay claim to be a national centre of learning and research of the Holocaust.

536. A large proportion of it, well over a third, would be, I gather, exhibition space, leaving very little space for learning if you take consideration of other uses of the space, corridors, stairways and so on. And the implication that the Westminster centre is needed because more research on the Holocaust is needed is misleading, I am afraid. Britain, with its universities and its research institutions, is already, along with the United States, Germany and Israel, the world's leading country for Holocaust research.

537. One excellent example, for example, is the Holocaust Research Institute at Royal Holloway University of London where staff members such as Professor Peter Longerich, Professor Dan Stone and the late Professor David Cesarani produced world-leading general accounts, comprehensive accounts of the Holocaust. There is also a widely-respected master's degree in Holocaust history there. And to suggest that the recent and current Holocaust-related research and learning effort in the UK is inadequate, or even non-existent, I am afraid does British scholarship and teaching in the field a great disservice.

538. Along with the world-famous British contribution to the history of the Nazi period more generally, you just mention Sir Ian Kershaw's standard biography of Hitler here, standard in German translation, Germany as well as here, in the United States and other countries, I think is something Britain should be justly proud of. I do not think it should be denigrated. I do not think it should be suggested that the Holocaust will no longer be remembered or understood when the last remaining survivors are no longer with us. If the Irving trial proved anything, it is I think that historians can be relied upon to provide accurate, detailed information about the Holocaust and its history.

539. The location of the proposed memorial in Westminster has been justified on the grounds that it symbolises the importance of British values and parliamentary democracy as a bulwark against genocide. As an historian, I think this is rather misleading. To begin with, the democratic and humanitarian values that underlie hostility and other kinds of discrimination – mass murder, genocide – are not just British. They are universal, or should be. To suggest otherwise, I think, is to encourage complacency and self-satisfaction about the British response to the Holocaust, which I gather is to be the focus of the exhibition and presented in a positive light. And I am afraid that looking through the 20th century and indeed the 21st, the existence of a parliamentary democratic political system is no guarantee against an appallingly rapid descent into dictatorship, war and genocide.

540. The Weimar Republic in Germany was a functioning democracy until 1929 to 1930. Nazis won less than 3% of the national vote in 1928. They were a fringe party. In 1933, they were the largest party and, thanks to backstairs political intrigue, they took over the country and we know what happened after that. It can happen with frightening rapidity.

541. An objective historical appraisal of the British response would need to be much more nuanced, I think. Britain placed many obstacles in the way of Jews who tried to escape from Nazi Germany; strict immigration quotas on the British mandate of Palestine; turning back Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany whose arrival would breach these instructions; the British Government's acceptance of the Anschluss, the incorporation into the Third Reich of Austria and its brokerage of the Munich agreement in 1938 in the name of appeasing Hitler, turned a blind eye to the fact that these actions brought hundreds of thousands of Jews under Nazi rule with terrible consequences for them all.

542. Antisemitism was widespread in the higher ranks of the British Civil Service, a disturbing fact brought to public attention by my former tutor Martin Gilbert's book, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, which found that antisemitic sentiment played a significant part in dissuading the Allies from taking action against the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, such as bombing the railway lines that delivered the victims to the camp, for example.

543. I would also, I think, echo Baroness Deech here. We need a satisfactory, a properly constructed and informed coverage of the Jewish experience in Britain, which goes back of course to the Middle Ages and has many aspects to it that I think are poorly understood. The younger generation in this country seems disturbingly unaware of many of the central facts of the Holocaust. Let me just bring one to your attention, just as a closing remark. It always seems to me, and still seems to me, that what we call the Holocaust, that is to say, the mass extermination of 6 million Jews in Europe by the Nazis or at their behest, is a reflection of the fact that antisemitism is different from other kinds of racial prejudice and that the Holocaust, the Shoah, is different from other genocides. And the reason is that it is antisemitism, whether in a strong or a weak form, but antisemitism in the strongest form practised by the Nazis, rests on a belief that Jews everywhere, all over the world, by their nature, by their heredity, are determined, predetermined, whether they know it or not, to be subversive and destructive people. In particular, the Nazis believed that all Jews were everywhere hellbent on destroying Germany. You can see this in the minutes of the notorious Wannsee Conference, which was held at the beginning of 1942 to, as it were, coordinate the Holocaust between different German agencies, because it contains lists of Jews, potential victims, not just in

the countries which the Germans controlled but elsewhere.

544. There is a famous Jewish joke – these are always the best jokes of course – from the Warsaw Ghettos. An old chap, old Jew, gets on to a tram and there is his friend reading the Nazi’s daily paper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, and he says, ‘What are you reading that paper for? It is a Nazi paper’, and the chap says, ‘Well, you know, once a week I like to read how we Jews are the most powerful people in the world. We are conspiring to destroy Germany. We are influencing everybody. We are running the newspapers and so on’. And that is the kind of fantasy you are dealing with. It is not just a matter of prejudice against people who are regarded by the authors of the prejudice as being inferior; it is an entirely separate kind of genocidal mentality and, in the end, practice because the Nazis, and their allies, were determined to destroy all Jews everywhere, without exception.

545. So a number of reasons, I think, I would like to endorse the plea that a properly funded, comprehensive and large-scale learning centre and research centre be set up, a task for which the proposed small shoebox, as it has been called, underground, in the Victoria Tower Gardens, is in no way adequate.

546. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Doctor?

547. MR DOCTOR KC: I have no further questions. Thank you, Professor.

548. THE CHAIR: Mr Katkowski?

549. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Thank you, sir. Just very briefly, Sir Richard, again, we remember you from the inquiry. Pages 330 and 331 of the inspector’s report is a summary of the evidence you gave to the inquiry. Most of what you have said today – most, not all – most of what you have said today, you have said to the inquiry inspector as well.

550. PROFESSOR EVANS: Yes.

551. MR KATKOWSKI KC: In fact, much of it is word for word.

552. PROFESSOR EVANS: Yes.

553. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Which is fine. No problem at all. I only wanted to ask

you this, Sir Richard, and that is simply, which of the amendments that the petitioner has put forward is your evidence aimed at? And I think we have homed in on the learning centre.

554. PROFESSOR EVANS: Yes, it is the underground.

555. MR KATKOWSKI KC: So I do not want to be overly clever or anything about this – I would struggle to do so anyway – but is the idea of a learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens alright but it is the underground nature of it that is not?

556. PROFESSOR EVANS: No. It would do a lot more damage to the environment and the surroundings if it was above ground. I think that is the thought behind putting it underground.

557. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Exactly, and so then the principle then that that takes us to is that there should not be a learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens at all.

558. PROFESSOR EVANS: That is right.

559. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Okay, thank you. I have understood. I can address the Committee on that later. Thank you.

560. THE CHAIR: Thank you.

561. MR DOCTOR KC: Thank you, Sir Richard. The next witness – I beg your pardon.

562. THE CHAIR: Did you have any further questions of Sir Richard?

563. MR DOCTOR KC: I beg your pardon, no.

564. THE CHAIR: No, okay, that is fine. Anybody on the Committee?

565. MR MATHER: Yes please, very quickly, if that is okay. Thank you very much for your evidence, Sir Richard. I did have two questions, if that was okay, and the first one is the same as the one I put to Baroness Deech, just about, if there were to be a Holocaust memorial in SW1, whether in Victoria Tower Gardens or elsewhere, would it, in your view, be appropriate for it to be regarded as the national monument for commemoration of the Holocaust or do you think it forms part of a broader spectrum of

memorialisation across the United Kingdom?

566. PROFESSOR EVANS: Well, I think it would have to work hard to establish itself as the national memorial, if we are talking about the memorial, because there is a lot of competition and a lot of that depends on where it is located and how it is built and how it is constructed and whether it is appropriate or not.

567. MR MATHER: Okay. And just secondly, I very much do appreciate the points you made about the rich tapestry of academic institutions there are across the United Kingdom for research and study of the Holocaust. I do wonder, though, what you think about the merits of the argument that, in a sense, a learning centre might try to fill a more distinct gap in the market, as it were, say for – we have seen a really concerning rise in Holocaust denial, antisemitism amongst British schoolchildren, things like that that do not directly pertain to advanced academic study but it is still an important piece of the educational puzzle. Do you think this merits the argument that a learning centre could add and fulfil that sort of role within the overall tapestry of Holocaust education?

568. PROFESSOR EVANS: Yes, I do. But it has to be large and comprehensive enough and well enough put together. There just is not the space, there is not the room in the present plans for the one that is proposed beneath Victoria Tower Gardens.

569. MR MATHER: Okay, thank you. Thank you, Chair.

570. THE CHAIR: Thank you, Sir Richard.

571. PROFESSOR EVANS: Thank you.

572. MR DOCTOR KC: Thank you, Sir Richard. The next witness is Anita Lasker-Wallfisch.

Evidence of Mr Lasker-Wallfisch

573. MS LASKER-WALLFISCH: Do I start?

574. THE CHAIR: I'll wait for Mr Doctor to be ready. Mr Doctor? Start please.

575. MR DOCTOR KC: Right. You are Anita Lasker-Wallfisch.

576. MS LASKER-WALLFISCH: I am.

577. MR DOCTOR KC: And I have asked your son but you do not mind if I tell the Committee your age.

578. MS LASKER-WALLFISCH: Not at all, on the contrary.

579. MR DOCTOR KC: You are 98.

580. MS LASKER-WALLFISCH: Yes.

581. MR DOCTOR KC: And your hearing means that people must speak up.

582. MS LASKER-WALLFISCH: Yes, please.

583. MR DOCTOR KC: Right.

584. THE CHAIR: Got the message.

585. MR DOCTOR KC: Now, you have generally been referred to as a survivor of the Holocaust. Can you just briefly tell the Committee your experience and how you come to be here?

586. MS LASKER-WALLFISCH: It is impossible to talk briefly about my experience but I will just give you the headlines. I was arrested in 1942 in Wroclaw, which used to be Breslau, went to prison, Auschwitz and Belsen. Every name that I mention has a big story attached to it but I was 19 years old when I was liberated by the British army in Belsen.

587. MR DOCTOR KC: And if I can put this, the prime reasons for your managing to survive was your musical ability. Can you briefly tell –

588. MS LASKER-WALLFISCH: Yes, I was very lucky. It was, in fact, the cello that saved my life. It sounds crazy but that is what it was.

589. MR DOCTOR KC: Can you explain why?

590. MS LASKER-WALLFISCH: Well, when I arrived in Auschwitz expecting to be gassed, I had a conversation with one of the prisoners who wanted to know what was going on in the outside world, not that I knew so much because I had been in prison for so long. And I said, 'Well, I used to play the cello'. 'Oh, fantastic. There is an

orchestra here and they need a cellist'. This is what saved my life. So I became a cellist and I have a generation of cellists. My son is a cellist and my grandson plays the cello. There is a lot of cello in my family, yes.

591. MR DOCTOR KC: Right. And now, you know why we are here.

592. MS LASKER-WALLFISCH: I am aware, yes.

593. MR DOCTOR KC: The Committee is hearing evidence about the desirability of a Holocaust memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens together with what they call a learning centre.

594. MS LASKER-WALLFISCH: It is supposed to be a learning centre, yes.

595. MR DOCTOR KC: Now, can you briefly give the Committee your views and your experience?

596. MS LASKER-WALLFISCH: Yes, I will give my view. In my opinion, we are unlikely to learn now what we have not learned in the last 80 years, especially in the current climate of escalating antisemitism. Now, Victoria Tower Gardens, as you might know, was donated in 1879 by the W H Smith family on condition that it remains an open space to the public. If the proposal should go through, it would mean a felling of hundreds-year-old trees, a serious risk of flooding, inaccessible to wheelchairs or buggies and overshadowing the Buxton memorial on banning slavery and has nothing to do whatsoever with the Holocaust, which is going to be lumped together under the general title of genocides. Like it or not, this genocide was different. It has not stopped.

597. A Jew, unlike a Rwandan, is not safe anywhere now. Countless museums and memorials have not stopped rising antisemitism and then events of 7 October and the reaction of the world should tell you enough. What we have to do is to get a learning centre about these peculiar people, Jews, and that could be anywhere and does not have to be on a dangerous, impossible place, like Victoria Gardens. I rest my case.

598. MR DOCTOR KC: Thank you. Would you like to – you have the opportunity if there is anything you would like to add. You have spoken very eloquently.

599. MS LASKER-WALLFISCH: I find it very difficult to even understand how you

could contemplate such a place, in the first place. But you know, it is all a matter of jumping on the bandwagon. Everybody wants to make money. Oh lovely, we can build a museum. You know, the background, the thoughts behind these things are not necessarily terribly worthy. Everybody wants to be a big success and get a gong in the Parliament etc. I know how these things work. It is a completely idiotic idea and it is almost an insult to think of a learning centre. What are we learning now that we have not learned in 80 years? What are we learning: we should not kill each other? Good idea. So what are we learning? What else do you want to know?

600. MR DOCTOR KC: I think you have been succinct but powerful.

601. MS LASKER-WALLFISCH: I am appalled that we even talk about this place, which is contrary to everything sensible and will not serve any purpose.

602. MR DOCTOR KC: Thank you. That, Mr Chairman, is the evidence of Ms Wallfisch.

603. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Katkowski?

604. MR KATKOWSKI KC: I would not dream of asking a question, with great respect. I think I have well and truly met my match so I have no questions.

605. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Any members of the Committee? We are clearly all too terrified. Thank you very much for your evidence.

606. MR DOCTOR KC: Thank you very much.

607. MR DOCTOR KC: The next witness is Dr Martin Stern.

608. THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Mr Doctor?

Evidence of Dr Stern

609. MR DOCTOR KC: Yes. Dr Stern, will you begin by introducing yourself and telling the Committee who you are what you do and then briefly giving your attitudes and evidence?

610. DR STERN: I will do in just a moment but just to be very clear at the very beginning, I agree with Baroness Deech. I agree with every single word. That will save

me needing to repeat what she has said.

611. I am a Holocaust survivor. As a Holocaust survivor, my fate was not typical. The typical fate was people being dragged from their houses and taken up to the ditch and shot. I was arrested at the age of five by the Nazis with the simultaneous arrest of my one-year-old sister, and both of us were sent to a prison camp in the Netherlands called Westerbork. From there, where most of the Jews were sent to Auschwitz or Sobibor, we were exceptions in that we were sent to Terezin, in the Czech Republic now, or Theresienstadt, a deception by the Nazis who used Jews with connections in the outside world to pretend that this was resettlement and not mass murder, although the intention was that every Jew there would be sent to an extermination centre and die, and about 1,000 at a time regularly did on cattle trucks and goods trucks. And out of 15,000 children who passed through Theresienstadt, only a tiny number survived.

612. I also want to say that I have a tremendous admiration for the people who have proposed the current legislation. Their intentions are good and they are people I admire and they are people I passionately want to work with in the future. What I say is not derogatory to any of the people who have tried to do their best but, in my view, made a very serious mistake.

613. The other thing is, I am grateful for the support that this proposed legislation has for the Jewish population. My goodness, how we need the support. I am very grateful for it. So I am not attacking the people. I am attacking detailed arrangements which I think are a mistake.

614. I have mentioned going through Westerbork and Theresienstadt. My father resisted the Nazis in Germany, escaped to the Netherlands, was married by a young German woman who was not a Jew, so she was risking her life by doing that, and he was captured hiding on a farm near Amsterdam airport. It is safe to assume that he would have been tortured – that was routine – because he shot two of his pursuers and the fact that he had a pistol in his hands means he would have been tortured in order to extract information about the Dutch resistance.

615. He was sent to Auschwitz. He reappeared in Buchenwald concentration camp just outside the beautiful town of Weimar where he died on 25 March 1945. One needs to think about how he got from Auschwitz to Buchenwald. There are two alternatives: the

death march, correctly so named; or an open coal truck, wearing Auschwitz-type clothes in the middle of winter, which also had a very high death rate. Generally, people surviving such transport would die in the fortnight after arrival.

616. I lived for two years in Amsterdam in the care of friends of my parents, a young couple. When I was arrested, they were arrested. The man was sent to Neuengamme concentration camp, 20 kilometres from the centre of Hamburg, and his wife got just his spectacles and a fake death certificate back, so I have some experience of the consequences of the Holocaust.

617. I lived for five years in the Netherlands and came to Britain at the age of 12, stateless. And at age 16, I obtained British nationality, for which I am exceedingly grateful. I went to Manchester Grammar School. I went to Brasenose College, Oxford – boy, am I grateful for the educational influence – and I subsequently practised medicine. In 2002 I retired from medical practice in the hospital and I have been working at Holocaust and genocide education ever since.

618. I am a member of the Stanley Burton Centre of Holocaust and genocide studies in that department in the University of Leicester and I am associated with other academic departments. So Holocaust education is a full-time occupation, most of which I spent studying academically and part of it speaking. I have committed my life to that; I am not against Holocaust education.

619. It is important to understand that Holocaust education is only something that has only been going on seriously since the 1990s. It is a new subject. Otherwise, we are teaching people mathematics and geometry which has been taught for thousands of years – we are quoting Euclid and even Babylonian principles in mathematics. Holocaust education is complete opposite. We are still learning how to do it and there is an underlying assumption that you just need to tell people a bit of history and automatically, they will do the right thing. I think this is an oversimplification.

620. One of the problems with the proposed plan of the education centre is that a rather doctrinaire, simplistic education will be set up whereas what we need is very serious academic research on how such education is best put into practice. It should not be stuck in the routine.

621. We have the problem that the Victoria Tower Gardens were partly bequeathed to the nation, protected by the law. It bothers me that by breaking this arrangement in perpetuity that we discourage other gifts to the nation because potential donors will feel that the conditions are not observed. I have benefited hugely from donations to the nation during my life and I do not wish this one to be betrayed.

622. My chief objection to the whole plan is this: I believe the proposed education centre is far too big for the little park, the site, and it is far too small for the purpose. If this is supposed to be a national centre for education on the Holocaust and maybe on other genocides, this is ridiculously small. I have spent 20 years teaching at the National Holocaust Centre in Nottinghamshire with other organisations. It needs far more and it could not be accommodated there. It is just a mistake.

623. At the National Holocaust Centre, we have coaches turning up and we can cope with that; there's a large car park. It is being proposed that we set up such a centre in Westminster at a place that is already completely suffocated with traffic and an education centre on this site would make it worse. A site like the Imperial War Museum would make that problem far easier to manage.

624. There is a huge problem about the security of such a centre. I believe that it would be a magnet for terrorism and I am very conscious of murders of a policeman, and Airey Neave, people who actually work in our Houses of Parliament.

625. I am concerned that this site, which is intended to counteract anti-Semitism, will in fact increase it. People will say, 'Look at the Jews; they pushed themselves to the front'. I do not want something protecting Jews to be carried out to the detriment of others and to create further ammunition for anti-Semites, quite apart from what we have recently seen in public demonstrations where, for example, red paint was splashed across the door of a Jewish girls' high school before Israel took countermeasures against what happened on 7 October.

626. I have lived for 52 years in Leicester; I now live in London. I lived 200 yards from the leader of an organisation called Friends of Al-Aqsa, who was preaching incorrect information to Muslim students from all over the country. I have attended one of their three day meetings, the whole of it so I have experience of that.

627. I kept silent about my difficulties with this proposed legislation because I thought I was a lone voice, because I thought I was maybe a maverick. But I regularly run discussions with Holocaust survivors who are friends of mine, and I discovered that they share my objections to what is being proposed, I was not a lonely voice.

628. At the same time, Anita Lasker-Wallfisch and Baroness Deech were exposing themselves by opposing the plan and I felt I needed to join them because they are not maverick voices. They have much more support. The problems is that many of my Holocaust survivor friends believe the plan is wrong but are not willing to speak up against it because they feel they will antagonise important people in the field of Holocaust education and people whose friendship they need, certainly, in one case, very prominently, their family. These are people who are being silenced; I should not be.

629. I do support a memorial to the Holocaust right next to the Palace of Westminster. I think it should be there as a memento mori. It should be a reminder to everybody who works in the Palace of Westminster of the terrible things that can happen if democracy is allowed to collapse.

630. We take democracy for granted but in my view, we have only been a democratic country for a relatively short period; it may be roughly a century but that really isn't such a long period and we do see things going wrong democratically in other countries. I do not think we should be glib about the security of democracy in Great Britain.

631. But it should be a memorial comparable in size to The Burghers of Calais or one of the other existing memorials that is already there like the Buxton memorial. But the education centre should not be in Victoria Tower Gardens. The people who planned this have wonderful intentions, I have no problem about that, but the implementation that is being proposed is, I believe, disastrous. I think it is in the interest of all the politicians involved to avert disaster and make a better plan than we have at the moment. Thank you.

632. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Doctor?

633. MR DOCTOR KC: Thank you very much. I have nothing further. Thank you.

634. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Katkowski?

635. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Thank you, sir. I have no questions; Dr Stern is a fellow petitioner with Baroness Deech and I have already checked what the amendments are and I'll address you about them later on so I have no questions. Thank you, Dr Stern.

636. THE CHAIR: Any Committee member? Thank you very much, Dr Stern.

637. DR STERN: Thank you.

638. MR DOCTOR KC: Thank you. The next witness is Dr Lydia Tischler who is also a survivor of both Auschwitz and Theresienstadt.

Evidence of Ms Tischler

639. MS TISCHLER: Good afternoon. A correction – I am not a doctor.

640. MR DOCTOR KC: Oh. It says so in my note.

641. MS TISCHLER: I am a child psychoanalyst.

642. MR DOCTOR KC: Okay. Ms Tischler, would you tell the Committee, just briefly – well you have said you are a child psychoanalyst and if you will mention a small part of your history as to why you are here today and then tell us about your attitude towards the proposed memorials.

643. MS TISCHLER: I spent two years in Theresienstadt, three years in Auschwitz, and six months in a work camp in Germany, then was liberated, actually – we got back in Terezín where were liberated by the Russians, and I came to England in 1945.

644. MR DOCTOR KC: Okay. If you will just look in that direction.

645. MS TISCHLER: Yes. Am I to say more about myself or is that...?

646. MR DOCTOR KC: Yes, a little bit more.

647. MS TISCHLER: Well, when I came to England, I studied – well, eventually studied psychology and trained with Anna Freud, Sigmund Freud's daughter, at her institution in Hampstead and practised child analysis and psychotherapy until last summer – well not practising but teaching.

648. MR DOCTOR KC: Right, and you have got some views about the proposed Holocaust memorial.

649. MS TISCHLER: I do, yes. Please do not erect this memorial in my name. It really has absolutely nothing to do with the Holocaust, the proposed memorial but if you ask me what kind of other memorial, I have two suggestions. One is a group of emaciated children in striped pyjamas surrounded by barbed wire, something like The Burghers of Calais, is it?

650. MR DOCTOR KC: You mean a figurative representative?

651. MS TISCHLER: A figurative – that would actually convey really what the Holocaust was about. The other suggestion I have is, I do not know if any of you have watched the documentary called ‘The Last Survivors’ in which both Anita Lasker and myself featured. It was in a BBC – it was shown on BBC 4 yesterday or the day before and I watched it again. And in that there is a sculptor, one of the people who survived has become a sculptor, and he would be another person who could probably produce something that would relate much more to the Holocaust than the proposal that is before you at the moment. So these would be my two suggestions as far as the memorial is concerned.

652. My question really is why now and why another memorial? As has been mentioned, there are so many already. As for the learning centre, I do not know who is going to teach there and what they’re going to teach, and who is it for – for people who are interested in the Holocaust? The people should know about it are the ones who really do not really quite want to believe that it happened.

653. As a psychologist, I actually think that just to teach people about the Holocaust, to tell them what happened and how terrible it was is not going to change anybody’s attitude unless they are so inclined, but it does not actually explain what made it possible, what made it possible for such a thing to happen, unless you actually understand the psychological mechanism which makes it possible for me to believe that I am as good as gold, I have no hostile feelings, I have no destructive feelings in me, it is all in the other person, they’re the baddies, I am the goodies. And until people accept that and take responsibility for their own hostile feeling to someone who is not like me, this is going to go on.

654. When I have been asked to go and talk to children in schools about my experiences in the Holocaust, I have always used it really only not so much to tell them what happened to me and how I suffered; that is not the point. The point is to bring it to the present and to show them how by – ‘Because you are a Muslim or because you are something else, you are not like me; therefore you are no good, I have the right to despise you.’ Unless people understand this, we have no hope of changing things.

655. MR DOCTOR KC: Thank you very much.

656. MS TISCHLER: That is all I would like to say.

657. THE CHAIR: Mr Katkowski?

658. MR KATKOWSKI KC: I have no questions. Thank you.

659. THE CHAIR: Any members of the Committee? Thank you very much for your evidence today.

Evidence of Ms Millan

660. MR DOCTOR KC: You are Joanna Millan? If you just briefly tell the Committee a little bit about your history and then your attitude towards the Holocaust and learning centre that is being proposed.

661. MS MILLAN: Right, thank you. My name is Joanna Millan. My birth name was Bela Rosenthal. I was born in Berlin. I was deported to Theresienstadt and I was therefore two years. Both my parents were killed and my only surviving grandmother also was killed in Auschwitz.

662. I came to England in 1945, one of the Windermere children, and I came with nobody, an orphan, with nothing, absolutely nothing. Nobody had told us we were liberated so going on a military plane with military uniforms was very, very frightening.

663. When we arrived in England, I didn't know what was going to happen to us and we were six very young children. Nobody expected us to survive. No provision was made for us but eventually, through the good offices of Anna Freud, a place was found for us in the south of England and eventually went to a children's home in Lingfield and later adopted by a Jewish family in London who were very anglicised.

664. So, growing up in London, I had to hide my identity and they changed my name. I was not to talk about the past. I was their child and nothing was ever talked about the past until I was grown up.

665. Now, I have been talking about the Holocaust for over 30 years now. I have been speaking in schools and I am sorry to say, I do not really see any change in attitudes, despite all my efforts. I have spoken to thousands and thousands of children in those 30 years. I do not see any change. Holocaust education, somehow, does not seem to be working.

666. So, I endorse all the previous speakers' comments so I will not bore you with those. But I would add that the cost of this memorial, first of all, has been kept a fairly closely guarded secret. Obviously escalating in cost over the years. I feel that this is a lot of money. I think that the non-Jewish community, the wider community, if they knew how much it was going to cost, I think it would cause more anti-Semitism saying, 'Why should all this money be spent on Jews? What about our hospitals and all the rest of it?'

667. I think not much is known that – I believe and correct me if I am wrong – that the Jewish community are committed to contributing to the cost, and again, that is not well known and it is diverting much needed funds away from our community. For example, the closing of the Jewish Museum and our other brilliant services are starved of money. Certainly, the museum was award winning. It is a brilliant museum. The Jewish community cannot sustain that sort of cost.

668. And second of all, the underground part of the memorial. Well, I do not know about you but I have lived in this area for many years and every so often, all the basements are flooded. The woodwork is warped, the paperwork is mouldy. That site is not suitable for an underground memorial of any sort, a learning centre. And I agree, it is far too small. We do have currently excellent memorial facilities and I really think the underground bit should be shelved.

669. I have been to Berlin; I do not know if you have been to the memorial there. Whenever I speak to people who've been there, and they see the stones and I say, 'Oh, did you go to the museum underneath?', nobody has. Nobody. I have to point it out, 'Did you know there's a museum underneath?' What is the point of the stones? What is

the point of the memorial on top if you do not know what it is about? Like this toast rack – what is it about? So, it does not fulfil its purpose.

670. I really think that on those counts, certainly, I feel very strongly that we are going to create more anti-Semitism. It is going to be a target for all the anti-Semites. Who is going to pay for the cleaning? In Berlin, every day, somebody goes round cleaning. I see people picnicking on the stones. There is security there all the time, 24/7. And yet, the graffiti is there.

671. This is going to happen to this memorial. Do not think it will not because it will. Who is going to pay for it? Are we, the Jewish community, going to pay for this? Are you prepared to commit Government funds for 24/7 security and all the cost of the cleaning? Think of the ongoing costs. It is not just the capital cost of building it.

672. It seems a lot of money for a memorial. I mean, one can do a very simple classical style memorial, I am sure for far less, and the digging underneath must actually increase the cost enormously.

673. I think that we need to embed the Holocaust memorial in Jewish history. It does not stand on its own. It is a five year period in 3,000 years of Jewish history. It does not define what Jews are. And I think we need to think about how we are going to put it in its right setting.

674. I do not want this being rushed through because the last survivors have got to see it. I mean, I am one of the last survivors; I am probably the youngest but one. I am not in a rush to see it. It would be very nice to know that it is being planned, but it is not a competition with other countries. We do a memorial that is right for Britain. It does not have to be bigger than this one or more distinctive than the other one. It is a British memorial.

675. I think we should also think about Britain could have done better too. I think this is a point we should make about it as well. Do not hurry it through because I might be dead tomorrow. It has got to be right. I want to see a memorial that is right for the right price and the right place and I feel that this has been a journey. There have been meetings and talks but it is very important to get it right; do not rush it through, please.

676. THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Mr Doctor?

677. MR DOCTOR KC: I have nothing to ask further.

678. MR KATKOWSKI KC: I have no questions, sir.

679. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Any members of the Committee? Thank you very much for your evidence.

680. MR DOCTOR KC: Chair, the last witness will be Dr Trudy Gold, who is a historian.

681. THE CHAIR: When you are ready, Mr Doctor.

Evidence of Dr Gold

682. MR DOCTOR KC: Can I start? Thank you.

683. DR GOLD: Good afternoon.

684. MR DOCTOR KC: Good afternoon. You are Dr Trudy Gold and you are an historian. You have over 40 years' experience of teaching and your subject is Jewish history, the Holocaust in the UK, Europe, particularly eastern Europe and latterly, even in China.

685. DR GOLD: Yes.

686. MR DOCTOR KC: And if there's anything you'd like to add about your career, please do so, but otherwise, perhaps just turn to the question of –

687. DR GOLD: The memorial.

688. MR DOCTOR KC: The memorial and the learning centre.

689. DR GOLD: I would like to reiterate that my teaching career actually encompasses over 40 years of experience of teaching Jewish history and Holocaust studies.

690. MR DOCTOR KC: If I can just ask you to address your remarks to the Committee.

691. DR GOLD: Sorry. I was one of the original British delegates to the ITF, which is now known IHRA which I am sure you all know about. It is important to remember that the ITF, IHRA, was actually established because of the rise in anti-Semitism in Europe.

692. It was an initiative of the Swedish Prime Minister and I was at the first ever conference of the new millennium, in the year 2000. In fact, the Wallfisch family played an incredible cello concert there, and there were delegates from 60 countries. Britain sent its foreign minister, some countries sent their heads of state and the idea was that we were going to teach about the Holocaust worldwide as a way of fighting anti-Semitism and this is clearly written in the Stockholm doctrine, the Stockholm declaration, which is still used.

693. Now, teacher training was to be at its core and I was already in charge of what became the London Jewish Cultural Centre and because we were based in Hampstead, I had many survivors working with us, including Anita and Joanna, but also we had contacts in Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, and as a result of that, we ran the first ever conference bringing together Polish and Lithuanian teachers. There was a lot of rivalry between the two countries historically, and it was fascinating to bring them together to talk about the Holocaust. For a long time, we felt incredibly, incredibly hopeful.

694. Now, as you all know, and Baroness Deech has talked about this, there are over 300 memorials and museums all over the world. There are wonderful survivors who so desperately do not want – you have heard them today – they do not want it to happen to anyone else. They've been going to schools, in universities, telling their stories. It is on the core curriculum. The survivors have now been recorded but the problem is, and I am saying this as someone who gave 40 years of my life to it, we failed.

695. If our aim was to make the world more sensitive to racism, prejudice and anti-Semitism, we have failed dramatically. None of these efforts have made one indent on the history of anti-Semitism. It is on the increase to such an extent – and I am not being alarmist here – that many Jews in the democratic diaspora are talking of leaving. The marches through London, and I am not going to talk politics – but Holocaust memorial day is on Saturday and I believe there will be another march.

696. My grandsons can't go into London anymore and I have giving you this – I am not being shmaltzy here. Jewish families feel under threat. We have failed in our

well-meaning efforts, both Jew and Gentile, and I believe everyone behind the memorial and learning centre is actually honest and I think they are decent people. I am not saying that. What we need to rethink is big.

697. I am not against a very discrete memorial, and by the way, those of you who know your Jewish history should know that there is a statue of Richard I in Parliament Square, is there not? If you studied Jewish history, you will find out that the worst pogrom in English history actually happened in his reign.

698. The other thing I want to point out: we have de-Judaised the Shoah. Why do I mean about that? We now commemorate along with so many other catastrophes. Now, every catastrophe is appalling. But what it does, it obfuscates the causation which Professor Evans has already talked about. People do not understand. There is a difference between what happened in Rwanda.

699. There have been 16 genocides since World War II, by the way. The point about the Holocaust against the Jews: it didn't happen because a madman came to power in Germany. It didn't happen just because there was economic, social and political unease. It didn't happen because the tradition of democracy was not that well ingrained. There is a much more important reason; it happened because of a 200-year-old history of Jew hatred and that is what is missing.

700. We have got a fascinating situation here. I know it is outside the purview of this inquiry. I have no problems with a very discreet memorial. I think that is perfect, but a learning centre of such a small size is an absolutely – I am going to say this; I have got 40 years' experience – it is ridiculous. I have taken groups to practically all the important memorials in the world. It is not stopping anti-Semitism and racism.

701. Do you really want to be brave? Do you really want to make a difference to education in this country? Why not introduce Jewish history onto the core curriculum? You have got to dissolve the tropes, you have got to demystify the Jews.

702. What if I tell you there is not a positive example of a Jew anywhere in European culture right up until the European enlightenment when a German thinker called Lessing wrote a play called, 'The Jews' and it fails on the German stage because no one can imagine a Jew as a hero. That is what you have got to unpack. You've actually got to

tell the history of the Jews.

703. I agree with Ruth, and I know my colleagues think it would be wonderful to have a proper Jewish museum. Now, I am not just saying, 'We are a special case. Tell our history'. What I am suggesting to you, this could be a pilot – a pilot in schools to actually tell the story of the Jews at GCSE level as a way of introducing the other communities that make up Britain.

704. Britain can be a wonderful place. Look what the survivors have said. It gave them freedom but it is not wonderful for Jews at the moment, believe me. So I'll stop there. Thank you.

705. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Doctor?

706. MR DOCTOR KC: Thank you. I have nothing to ask further.

707. THE CHAIR: Mr Katkowski?

708. MR KATKOWSKI KC: I have no questions. Again, you appeared at the planning inquiry; Mr Doctor called you.

709. MS GOLD: You know my views, yes.

710. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Well, I have read your proof of evidence; it is document 8.43 from the planning inquiry.

711. MS GOLD: You're a good lawyer.

712. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Well, that is kind. I better stop now, hadn't I?

713. MS GOLD: I think so. Better stop while you are ahead, yes?

714. THE CHAIR: Any questions from the Committee? Thank you very much for coming.

715. MS GOLD: Thank you.

716. MR DOCTOR KC: Well, thank you, Mr Chair and members of the Committee. That concludes our evidence on behalf of what I call the Deech petitioners. The next

hearing, I understand, is going to be on 6 February at 2.15.

717. THE CHAIR: That is correct. We'll hear now from Mr Katkowski and then we'll comment about making final submissions after that.

Response by Mr Katkowski

718. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Thank you very much indeed, sir. Briefly, the main target of the petitioners and their witnesses this afternoon – main, not only – main target has been the learning centre, and particularly being an underground centre and whether it will be of any great utility or otherwise.

719. Because of the nature of these proceedings, you are hearing petitioners who wish to make points against. Again, just for the record and for the note, were you ever to wish to read the other side of the narrative, and indeed the inspector's conclusions on this, two paragraphs will do in the inspector's report, page 179, 15138, 15139, is where the inspector set out his conclusions on the, to be quite frank, exactly the points that we have heard today.

720. That said, turning to the amendments that are sought, as we saw, as I went through with Baroness Deech, there are five. I'll just say a few words quickly about each of them.

721. The first is in paragraph 7 of the petition. Remember, this is not just a petition of Baroness Deech, it is a petition of six others as well. The first is in paragraph 7, that is to say that there should be an amendment to clause 1(a) of the Bill and also clause 2, to delete the words, 'over and under'.

722. Clause 1, as I have said earlier on today, is not within the scope of this Committee, it is about funding, and of course, it applies that all of England and Wales, and conceptually, it would be very, very odd to say that nowhere in England and Wales could the Secretary of State spend money on memorialisation of the Holocaust and learning centres relating to the Holocaust over or under land, anywhere in England or Wales. It just would be a very, very odd concept.

723. The suggestion that clause 2 should be amended so as to remove 'over and under'; as we know, clause 2 relates only to Victoria Tower Gardens. It is designed that

amendment to prevent the project which the Secretary of State has promoted for quite a long time, actually taking place. You will understand that my submission which I have made many times over is that that is out of scope for this Committee.

724. The next amendment paragraph 8 of the petition is that any re-determination of the planning application should only be made after there has been a further public inquiry; that is completely out of scope. That's for the planning system and for the minister to decide whether or not he considers there should be a further public inquiry. That's for that process and not for this Committee, with respect.

725. The third and the fifth amendment is in paragraph 23. That seeks an amendment to clause 1 of the Bill. The sole purpose of the centre for learning should be to provide education about the Holocaust and the Nazi period and anti-Semitism. Repeating the point that clause 1 is outside your scope but moving on from that, if you just look at clause 1, the expenditure expressed in clause 1, is expressed to be only – the only thing that is stated is in relation to victims of the Holocaust and learning in relation to that. So it, in itself, is restricted to the Holocaust so even were the amendment in scope, which it isn't, the clause only relates to the Holocaust in any event.

726. The penultimate amendment is at paragraph 27, that no money should be spent under clause 1 and 2 or if there's been an endowment funds set up for Holocaust education, completely out of scope. The final amendment at paragraph 30 is that there shouldn't be any food and drink sold within 200 metres of the memorial in the gardens, and that is a pure planning issue as you will understand.

727. So, that is all I wish to say. Thank you very much indeed for bearing with me.

728. THE CHAIR: Thank you. Angela?

729. MS RICHARDSON: Yes. Mr Katkowski.

730. MR KATKOWSKI KC: Yes.

731. MS RICHARDSON: You, as the promoter, in your opening statement to the Committee told us that you'd made an effort to reach out to the petitioners. In Baroness Deech's presentation slide 18 she said, 'All requests for meetings with ministers and promoters to consider alternatives have been unanswered or refused'. How did you

manage to keep missing each other?

732. MR KATKOWSKI KC: I'll take this step by step. Step number one, the last slide of my opening presentation related to the letters which I believe – yes, I know you have copies of – that we wrote to all the petitioners, asking the petitioners whether they would be interested in meeting with us to discuss matters, you have those letters and we've haven't had a positive response in relation to them. So that is the first point. I am told that Baroness Deech didn't respond at all but anyway, there you are. You have those letters and it is just a matter of record that we haven't had any positive response to those.

733. As for wider requests made by Baroness Deech to meet ministers and so on, I can't sit here now and tell you the factual position in relation to that. I have an understanding of it but I wouldn't like to give that do you because if it would be of benefit to the Committee we can obviously write to you and explain what meetings have been asked for and whether they have or haven't taken place. We can do that if that would be of assistance to you.

734. But the point I made in my opening was a point which related to the correspondence that the promoters have issued to the petitioners asking them whether they would be interested in discussing matters with us.

735. MS RICHARDSON: And would you consider a meeting like that to be helpful to our current proceedings?

736. MR KATKOWSKI KC: My view on behalf of the promoter of the Bill would potentially such meetings could be helpful, and discussions could be helpful, but I would put this caveat: as long as they're about the scope of the business of this Committee, and therein lies the problem. Because there is no point, in relation to this stage of the parliamentary process – and remember, there are other stages where Parliament can do what it pleases to this Bill. It can amend it as it pleases but here, there's a very narrow scope for this Committee. There is absolutely no point, with great respect, in having a meeting saying, 'Well, why do not you put the memorial somewhere else? Why do not you put the learning centre somewhere else?' in relation to the business of this Committee.

737. There is potentially every good purpose in having a meeting about the things which are within scope. The points that I, myself, very openly put my cards face up on the table and addressed you about right at the outset of these proceedings. I'd be perfectly happy to have those discussions.

738. MS RICHARDSON: Thank you.

739. THE CHAIR: Any other questions? Okay. Thank you very much.

740. Just for information purposes, we have one final hearing on 6 February. We are suggesting that, at the end of that, we'll hear from counsel with their final submissions on that day but we'll leave arrangements to be made with the clerk to the Committee.

741. Other than that, it is just for me thank, on behalf of the Committee, all the witnesses this afternoon – very special hearing this afternoon, listening to what they had to say. So thank you for that.

742. MR DOCTOR KC: Thank you, sir.