



Adjaye/Arad team wins Holocaust memorial competition

24 October, 2017 By [Richard Waite](#)

A team led by David Adjaye, Ron Arad and Gustafson Porter + Bowman has won the contest to design a £40 million national Holocaust memorial next to the Palace of Westminster

Some of architecture's biggest names, including Daniel Libeskind, Zaha Hadid Architects, Caruso St John and Norman Foster, had been shortlisted in the contest for the new landmark in Victoria Tower Gardens to honour those killed in Nazi concentration camps.

The [10 teams](#) were also asked to draw up proposals for a 2,650m² subterranean learning centre, which could house recordings of testimony from British Holocaust survivors and camp liberators.

The jury, which included London mayor Sadiq Khan and communities secretary Sajid Javid, described the winning design as 'a living place, not just a monument to something of the past'.

The judges praised the team's 'desire to create an immersive journey for the visitor who would enter a memorial embedded in the land', adding that the proposal 'deftly resolved an essential challenge of the brief: being visually arresting yet showing sensitivity to its location and context'.

The concept, the jury said, had the 'clear potential to be developed into an iconic memorial and intriguing educational experience, attracting visitors from the UK and beyond to learn and reflect'.

Peter Bazalgette, chair of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation and the competition jury, said: '[We were] unanimous in awarding this competition to David Adjaye and his highly skilled and passionate team.

'Their ability to use architecture to create an emotionally powerful experience, their understanding of the complexity of the Holocaust and their desire to create a living place as well as a respectful memorial to the past and its surroundings, will combine to create a new national landmark for generations to come'.



WINNER of UK HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL COMPETITION: Adjaye Associates (UK) with Ron Arad Associates, Gustafson Porter + Bowman, Plan A Consultants, DHA, All Clear, Accept & Proceed, Abigail Morris and Jonathan Safran Foer: Threshold, view

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[zoom inzoom out](#)

David Adjaye said: 'The complexity of the Holocaust story, including the British context, is a series of layers that have become hidden by time. Our approach to the project has been to reveal these layers and not let them remain buried under history. To do so, we wanted to create a living place, not just a monument to something of the past. We wanted to orchestrate an experience that reminds us of the fragility and constant strife for a more equitable world.'

'It is critical these highly important and emotive historical touchpoints are explored, so that future generations are able to experience, learn, reflect and act.'

The jury also awarded honourable mentions to: Heneghan Peng architects with Sven Anderson; and Diamond Schmitt Architects.

The winning scheme will 'now undergo further development through discussion with Holocaust experts, survivors and other victim groups, and local residents, Westminster City Council, Historic England, Royal Parks and other statutory consultees'.



Image by malcolm reading consultants and emily whitfield wicks2

Source: Emily Whitfield Wicks

The competition was organised by [Malcolm Reading Consultants](#), and attracted almost 100 entries from 26 countries. The location of the new memorial, however, has proved controversial.

The Imperial War Museum (IWM) [recently urged the government](#) to reconsider its decision to build the structure in Victoria Tower Gardens, saying it would ‘divide the public offer’ on learning about the Holocaust.

Two years ago the museum asked Foster + Partners to draw plans for its own UK Holocaust Memorial and learning centres at its base in Kennington, south of The Thames.

Earlier in the year the riverside site next to the Houses of Parliament also came in for criticism from Conservative MP Edward Leigh, who warned that the plot was too small, was prone to flooding and that the scheme would set a ‘dangerous precedent’ for parks in London.

He also [voiced concern over the subterranean learning centre](#), arguing that the site faced ‘serious drainage problems’ and that 50 nearby properties were flooded after heavy rain in June last year.

Architecture critic Joseph Rykwert, who was born in Warsaw and moved to England in 1939 to escape Nazi persecution, has also spoken out about the location. He previously told the AJ: ‘With all its inevitably overscaled outworks and signage [a memorial] would disembowel the precious public space at a crucial point by Parliament, which is itself now constrained by the inevitable security outworks.

‘That the ground – like the Palace of Westminster itself – is subject to flooding, all the recent flood defences notwithstanding, means that documents would, in any case, be at risk there.’

Meanwhile a petition against building the structure in the park has already attracted more than 1,400 signatures. Barbara Weiss, a co-founder of campaign group [Save Victoria Tower Gardens](#), who helped set up the petition, is urging the government to choose another site, such as the nearby College Green or the Imperial War Museum, where there is a permanent Holocaust exhibition.



A recent exhibition in Manchester of all the finalists in the Holocaust memorial competition

[zoom in](#) [zoom out](#)

Description of the winning scheme

The winning design concept was inspired by research into the site, Victoria Tower Gardens, next to the Houses of Parliament, with David Adjaye describing the location as a 'park of Britain's conscience'. The memorial links with the statue of Emmeline Pankhurst, the Burgheers of Calais and the Buxton Memorial: all four recognising injustice and the need to oppose it.

In order to keep the park as a park and to maintain the green space, the team placed its Holocaust Memorial at the far southern end of the gardens, embedded in the land. Accordingly, a visitor approaching the memorial would see a subtle grass landform with only the tips of the memorial's fins 'bristling in the distance', its intriguing design giving a sense that something is happening underground and encouraging people to find out more.

The design concept takes visitors on a journey that culminates in confronting the 23 tall bronze fins of the Memorial, the spaces in between representing the 22 countries in which Jewish communities were destroyed during the Holocaust. Entering the memorial would be a sensory experience. While the outside and inside space emphasises collective gathering, the 23 bronze fins require the visitor to enter in an isolated, solitary way, each pathway planned as a different experience. Each path eventually leads down into the Threshold – a generous hall which acts as a place of contemplation and transition into the learning centre below ground. The learning centre includes a ‘hall of testimonies’ and a ‘Contemplation Court’: a silent, reflective space with eight bronze panels. On leaving the memorial, the circulation route ensures visitors will emerge to see the classic uninterrupted view of Parliament – and the reality of democracy.

Shortlisted teams in full

- **[WINNER] Adjaye Associates (UK)** with Ron Arad Associates, Gustafson Porter + Bowman, Plan A Consultants, DHA, All Clear, Accept & Proceed, Abigail Morris, and Jonathan Safran Foer
- **Allied Works (USA)** with Ralph Appelbaum Associates, Robert Montgomery, OLIN, and Lisa Strausfeld
- **Caruso St John (UK)** with Rachel Whiteread, Marcus Taylor, Vogt Landscape Architects, Arup Lighting Design, and David Bonnett Associates
- **[HONOURABLE MENTION] Diamond Schmitt Architects (CA)** with Martha Schwartz Partners, and Ralph Appelbaum Associates
- **Foster + Partners (UK)** with Michal Rovner and Future\ Pace, Local Projects, Avner Shalev, Simon Schama, Samantha Heywood, Tillotson Design Associates, David Bonnett Associates, and Whybrow
- **[HONOURABLE MENTION] Heneghan Peng Architects (IE)** with Gustafson Porter, Event, Bruce Mau Design, BuroHappold Engineering, Bartenbach, and Duncan Boddy (PFB Construction)
- **John McAslan + Partners (UK)** with MASS Design Group, DP9, London Communications Agency, Ralph Appelbaum Associates, Local Projects, Modus Operandi, JencksSquared, and Lily Jencks Studio
- **Lahdelma & Mahlamäki Architects (FI)** with David Morley Architects, Ralph Appelbaum Associates, and Hemgård Landscape Design
- **Studio Libeskind (US)** with Haptic Architects, Martha Schwartz Partners, Lord Cultural Resources, BuroHappold Engineering, Alan Baxter, Garbers & James, and James E. Young
- **Zaha Hadid Architects (UK)** with Anish Kapoor, Event London, Sophie Walker Studio, Lord Cultural Resources, Arup Lighting Design, Whybrow, and Access=Design

Jury in full

- **Peter Bazalgette (chair)** Chair, United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial Foundation and Chair, ITV Board
- **Ephraim Mirvis** Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom
- **Sajid Javid MP** Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
- **Sadiq Khan** Mayor of London