

Holocaust Memorial Bill: Security Matters

Questions proposed by Lord Carlile: responses from the Metropolitan Police Service and UK government security advisors

NB: while the questions were, as Lord Carlile suggested, also put to JTAC it is important to note the assessment of terrorism-related risks associated with a new building which is not due to open for several years is not within JTAC's remit. The responses below have been prepared by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and UK government security advisors.

1. What is your assessment of (a) risk and (b) threat of damage and injury if the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre [HMLC] are erected in VTG as proposed?

Regardless of its location, the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre (HMLC) may be seen as a target.

It will be essential to put in place a professional security solution at whichever site is chosen: visible, effective security measures will act as a deterrent. At Victoria Tower Gardens (VTG) the deterrent effect is likely to be further enhanced by the existing security measures and rapid response to any incident that may occur in this area adjacent to the Palace of Westminster.

VTG as a location for the HMLC offers important benefits:

- Neighbouring sites working to a commensurate level of risk (with mature security plans).
- Existing local security forums (not planning in isolation / sharing good practice)
- Increased formal and informal surveillance opportunities.
- Increased-capability Police and security guard-force response.

As the HMLC is a new-build rather than an existing structure, the opportunity exists to ensure that the structure is resilient to blast conditions or to hostile vehicles.

The HMLC, once occupied, would qualify for 1-2-1 Counter Terrorism Security Adviser (CTSA) engagement, including a thorough site security assessment and action plan that helps security leads to prioritise security plans. The resilience of the site can be greatly enhanced through strong governance, CT policy, well-rehearsed operational procedures, and building effective partnerships with the local community (rather than planning in isolation).

The MPS Protective Security Operations through their Counter Terrorism Security Advisors (CTSAs) will provide support to achieve these objectives using tried and tested national CT products - Action Counters Terrorism (ACT), and SEE, CHECK, and NOTIFY (SCaN). These products are designed to benefit both strategic, operational decision makers, and ALL staff (whether security staff or not).

All of the products and engagement are designed to reduce risk and impact but unlikely to eliminate risk in its entirety.

CTSAs currently understand the threat from terrorism generally across the UK to be broad and evolving. The advice so far as the proposed HMLC is concerned will be threat-informed taking into account current and emerging threats and risk (future proofing).

2. To what extent do you think the risk/threat has changed since the events of 07 October 2023?

Antisemitic incidents and offences have increased significantly since 7 October 2023.

It is not clear whether an increase in antisemitic incidents would necessarily correlate with an increase in risk to the HMLC.

The Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) is responsible for setting the overall threat level for the UK from terrorism. Since February 2022 the threat has been assessed as 'SUBSTANTIAL'.

Police CTSAs recognise that the boundaries between protest and terrorism have become blurred. Protective security advice recognises and is responsive to the needs of the communities affected.

The HMLC must be, and has been, designed to be resilient against a broad range of potential threats; It is not assessed that the increased incidence of antisemitic offences has brought a change in the nature of the potential threats that must be considered.

3. If the HMLC is erected, what additional human security and surveillance will be required to protect visitors to the HMLC and users of VTG?

The Metropolitan Police Service and UK government security advisors have been and will be consulted on the development of operational security and surveillance activities at the HMLC. The National Protective Security Authority (NPSA) is the national technical

authority for protective security and produces guidance about the security measures that sites and organisations can select from.

All HMLC staff will receive SCan training (www.npsa.gov.uk/scan).

NPSA's security-minded communications approach will be built in to all the online (eg. Website, social media and ticketing) and at-site communications with the aim of deterring hostile activity whilst informing, reassuring and recruiting the public to be part of security.

The HMLC proposals include an entrance pavilion through which all visitors will need to pass for search and screening. Security checks on all visitors will take place in the entrance pavilion by professional security officers also trained in SCan.

Security-minded signage can be strategically placed to act as both a deterrent and reassurance.

CCTV coverage of the entrance pavilion, courtyard and the underground Learning Centre will be the responsibility of the HMLC; cameras and a security control room (SCR) are included within the design. SCR Managers and Operatives will attend NPSA's Security Control Room courses and SCan for CCTV operators.

Existing arrangements for CCTV coverage across the wider area, as part of the Government Security Zone and participatory Government and Parliamentary premises, will contribute to the security of the HMLC.

Although there will be outward facing CCTV surveillance and SCan trained staff observing outwards, there are no plans for security checks on visitors to Victoria Tower Gardens who do not intend to visit the HMLC: security checks will not occur until a visitor reaches the Entry Pavilion. By exception, for Major/VIP Events a wider area may be subject to additional protective security measures deployed by the police and/or security staff/stewards.

4. Does the proximity of the HMLC to the Palace of Westminster increase the risk/threat to the Palace and/or its occupants?

The Palace of Westminster is well-protected, with internal security measures operated by the Palace itself and a range of measures put in place by the Metropolitan Police Service.

Enhanced and multi layered security measures are designed to protect the Government Security Zone, which includes the Palace of Westminster, provide hostile vehicle

mitigation barriers, surveillance (CCTV and human) and an increased policing presence including overtly armed officers and more discretely deployed teams who identify unusual activities or behaviours. As part of the HMLC project, additional hostile vehicle mitigation measures are proposed for the perimeter of Victoria Tower Gardens, which will contribute to the protection of people in the Gardens and to the southern perimeter of the Palace of Westminster.

Taking into account:

- the existing high profile of the Palace of Westminster and its occupants
- existing protective security measures
- the distance between the HMLC and the Palace of Westminster, and
- new protective security measures which will be put in place around the HMLC

there is no reason to regard the HMLC as the cause of increased risks to the Palace and its occupants.

5. Do you wish to suggest any changes to the existing proposals for the location and design of the HMLC to take account of current risk and threat assessments?

MPS CTAs and UK government security advisors have both offered advice throughout the development of proposals for the proposed HMLC and that advice has been instrumental in the framing of the current scheme. Many of the security measures offer protection against a wide range of threat methodologies from petty criminality to terrorism and state actors. MPS CTAs and UK government security advisors will continue to provide advice including on operational matters as appropriate.

6. Is there any part of your risk/threat assessment that you would not wish to be made public in the context of planning proceedings?

This note has been prepared for publication with the agreement of MPS and UK government security advisors.

As noted above, both MPS and UK government security advisors will be consulted further ahead of the redetermination of the planning application. As part of the undertaking given by the Government to the House of Lords Select Committee, any comments they provide will be forwarded to the designated Minister ahead of any redetermination decision. If any material is judged to be sensitive and not suitable for publication, that would be made clear at the point of submission to the Minister.