

Our Ref: **Leader 2020/10-031**

Your Ref:

**The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP**

Secretary of State,  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local  
Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF



**Via email**

Thursday, 15 October 2020

**Sunday Telegraph Article – Statutes & Public Heritage**

Dear Secretary of State

I am writing to you following the reports in the Sunday Telegraph at the weekend regarding proposed changes to the policies around statues and public heritage.

The report, clearly briefed by the government suggests that *“Boris Johnson is to give a minister the power to veto the removal of statues, plaques, and memorials across the country” and that “(the) Government is preparing to change planning rules to allow Robert Jenrick, the Housing Secretary, to take over formal applications relating to the dismantling of statues and other monuments, rather than the final decision resting with councils.”*

The piece specifically references the review of Lambeth council which I am leading. It is astonishing to read, without consultation or reference to local authorities, that you are considering such a blatant power grab to override the wishes of local communities.

Following a detailed review by our Archives and heritage teams. Lambeth council recently announced a public listening exercise with residents and community/faith-based groups to decide on the next steps to assess and review locations in the borough with historic direct and indirect links to the trans-Atlantic slave trade (TAST) and colonialism.

Far from the nonsensical suggestion from a “senior government source” that this amounts to “cultural and historical vandalism”, this is a considered approach rooted in evidence, the wishes of Lambeth’s diverse communities and in our desire to celebrate our heritage not denigrate it. Any changes, if suggested, would be subject to full consultation with the local democratic accountability that that entails.

I am clear that Lambeth will engage as many residents, community groups, schools and private organisations/businesses in the debate itself and any decisions the council makes in future on new naming proposals. This needs to include key figures such as Olive Morris,

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Terrence Higgins (who was the first HIV+ person to die of the disease in Lambeth and whose name was so closely associated with the leading charity Terrence Higgins Trust), Mary Seacole and key locations and statues associated with events such as the Sharpeville massacre in apartheid - South Africa, among many others. This is an inclusive but honest process – recognising our history not shying away from it.

The idea that such decisions would be better made in Whitehall without reference to the wishes of local communities is absurd and I would strongly urge you to ignore these calls to remove the rights of local communities to decide how best our heritage is celebrated.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Winifred', written in a cursive style.

**Councillor Sonia Winifred**  
Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture

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