



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Nona Jones, DP9
Home Secretary
Foreign Secretary

Our Ref: APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 &
APP/E5900/V/24/3353755

Sent by email only

2 December 2025

Dear Nona Jones

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 – SECTION 77
APPLICATION MADE BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK
LAND AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON EC3N 4QN
APPLICATION REFS: PA/24/01229/A & PA/24/01248/NC**

1. On 6 August 2025, the Secretary of State referred back to parties inviting representations on a number of matters. On 22 August, responses to this letter were circulated to parties. On 16 October, the Secretary of State recirculated responses to the letter of 22 August.
2. We have now received a response from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Home Office to the letter of 22 August. Please see attached this response, dated 27 November, as well as a previous request for an extension of time, dated 10 October.
3. The party to whom this letter is addressed and copyees as listed below are invited to provide comments on the representations circulated to parties on 16 October, as well as the above attached documents. Please note that any replies received will be copied to the other parties.
4. For ease of circulation and to fulfil the Department's obligations relating to the General Data Protection Regulation, please do not provide hand-written signatures (or copies of) on any responses.

Timescales

5. The Secretary of State considers that a period of 2 weeks to submit responses is reasonable in the circumstances of this case. You are therefore asked to submit any comments you wish to make by email to PCC@communities.gov.uk by Tuesday 16 December.

Variation of timetable

5. Given the detailed nature of the representations that have been provided, and the need to give parties sufficient opportunity to respond, the Secretary of State considers that more time is needed for full consideration of the applications.
6. The Secretary of State therefore considers that he will not be in a position to reach a decision on the above applications by 10 December 2025, as previously notified. In exercise of the power conferred on him by paragraph 6(2) of Schedule 2 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Secretary of State hereby gives notice that he has varied the timetable for the decision which was previously set, and a decision will now be issued on or before 20 January 2026. We aim to issue the decision as quickly as possible.

Yours faithfully

Planning Casework Unit

Authorised to consult with parties and to vary timetable on behalf of the Secretary of State

Copied to

Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Royal Mint Court Resident's Association
Interparliamentary Alliance on China
Friends of St Katharine Docks
Royal Mint Tenants and Residents Association
Hongkongers in Britain
Metropolitan Police Service

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PCCUSER](#)
Subject: Follow up: Recirculation of representations: reference back on proposed embassy at Royal Mint Court, London
Date: 02 October 2025 17:03:11

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]

Dear Planning Casework Unit,

We request an extension to 17 October for representations on the recirculated representations received on 22 August. Should we assess the need for a further extension we will aim to contact you ahead of 17 October.

As noted in the FCDO and Home Office letter dated 20 August 2025, we are working towards a formal agreement on consolidation. Once we can confirm that no public order or national security risks remain, we will write again.

Further to the Foreign Secretary and Home Secretary's letter of 14 January, we continue to believe that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government should not make a decision on this application until our respective Ministers are satisfied that no public order or national security risks remain, and we have confirmed this in writing to MHCLG, *though we are unable to commit to a specific date for this confirmation.*

Kind regards.

Follow us online: www.gov.uk/fcdo

This email is intended for the addressee(s) only: All messages sent and received by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office may be monitored in line with relevant [UK legislation](#)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 27 November 2025 22:33
To: [REDACTED] PCCUSER
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Letter from the Foreign Secretary and Home Secretary
Attachments: FS HS Letter.pdf

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Please see attached a letter from the Foreign Secretary and Home Secretary.

Kind Regards

Follow us online: www.gov.uk/fcdo

This email is intended for the addressee(s) only: All messages sent and received by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office may be monitored in line with relevant [UK legislation](#)

[REDACTED]



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

The Rt Hon. Yvette Cooper MP
Secretary of State for Foreign,
Commonwealth and Development Affairs



Home Office

The Rt Hon. Shabana Mahmood MP
Secretary of State for the Home
Department

[REDACTED]
Inquiries & Major Casework Team Leader
[REDACTED]

27 November 2025

Dear [REDACTED],

We are writing in relation to the planning and listed building consent applications by the Chinese Embassy in the UK for the redevelopment of the Royal Mint Court site in Tower Hamlets [APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 and APP/E5900/V/24/3353755].

We would like to update the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government of the progress since our departments' letter dated 20 August 2025.

Background

The Home Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office have carefully considered the breadth of considerations related to this build. We recognise the importance of countries having functioning diplomatic premises in each other's capitals, whilst maintaining the critical need to uphold and defend our national security. It is for this reason that we have worked closely across government, with policing, and other relevant partners, to ensure that the breadth of national security issues associated with this planning application have been considered and addressed.

The below provides an update on the outstanding matter of the consolidation of China's currently accredited diplomatic premises in London into the Royal Mint Court site (if planning permission is granted).

Consolidation

We can now confirm that we have reached an arrangement with the Chinese Government on the consolidation of its diplomatic premises in London. The Chinese Government has committed to consolidate all currently accredited diplomatic premises in London (excluding the Ambassador's residence) into one site at the Royal Mint Court (subject to planning approval). Accordingly, this outstanding issue is considered resolved.

Both issues raised in our letter of 14 January 2025 have now been addressed.

Yours ever,



THE RT HON. YVETTE COOPER MP

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs



THE RT HON. SHABANA MAHMOOD MP

Secretary of State for the Home Department



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Nona Jones, DP9
Home Secretary
Foreign Secretary

Our Ref: APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 &
APP/E5900/V/24/3353755

Sent by email only

17 December 2025

Dear Nona Jones, Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 – SECTION 77
APPLICATION MADE BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK
LAND AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON EC3N 4QN
APPLICATION REFS: PA/24/01229/A & PA/24/01248/NC**

1. On 6 August 2025, the Secretary of State referred back to parties inviting representations on a number of matters. On 22 August, responses to this letter were circulated to parties. On 16 October and 2 December, the Secretary of State recirculated responses to the letter of 22 August.
2. Further to our letter of 2 December, please see attached responses received from the following parties:
 - a. The Applicant (Note Verbale dated 11 December enclosed in email from Dingkun Zhu of same date);
 - b. Simon Bell on behalf of the Royal Mint Court Residents Association (RMCRA) (letter to the Secretary of State attaching a copy of a letter to FCDO, enclosed in email, all dated 15 December);
 - c. S. Hughes on behalf of Friends of St Katharine Docks (FOSKD) (letter dated 16 December attaching a copy of a letter from the London Fire Brigade to London Borough of Tower Hamlets dated 6 January, enclosed in email of 16 December);
 - d. Iain Duncan Smith (IPAC) (letter dated 16 December enclosed in email of same date)
3. The parties to whom this letter is addressed and copyees as listed below are invited to provide comments on the above attached documents. Please note that any replies received will be copied to the other parties.

4. For ease of circulation and to fulfil the Department's obligations relating to the General Data Protection Regulation, please do not provide hand written signatures (or copies of) on any responses. Please note that any replies received will be copied to the other parties.

Timescales

5. The Secretary of State considers that a period of one week to submit responses is reasonable in the circumstances of this case. You are therefore asked to submit any comments you wish to make by email to **PCC@communities.gov.uk** by Wednesday 24 December.

Yours faithfully

Planning Casework Unit

Authorised to consult with parties on behalf of the Secretary of State

Copied to

London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Royal Mint Court Resident's Association
Interparliamentary Alliance on China
Friends of St Katharine Docks
Royal Mint Tenants and Residents Association
Hongkongers in Britain
Metropolitan Police Service

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PCCUSER](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Note Verbale from the Chinese Embassy in the UK
Date: 11 December 2025 12:13:02
Attachments: [REDACTED]

Dear Sir or Madam,

Hope this email finds you well.

I am ZHU Dingkun from the Chinese Embassy in the UK. Please find attached Note Verbale D190-25 from the Embassy to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for your kind reference. A copy of this Note Verbale has also been sent to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

Kind regards,

朱定坤 Dingkun Zhu Second Secretary

Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the UK
49/51 Portland Place
London, W1B 1JL



中 华 人 民 共 和 国 大 使 馆

No. D190/25

The Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland presents its compliments to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and, with reference to the letter of 2 December by the Planning Casework Unit of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, has the honour to state the following:

DP9 has made a comprehensive response on behalf of the Chinese Embassy on 20 August 2025 in the letter to the Planning Casework Unit of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government to representations raised by relevant parties. And the Note Verbale dated 8 September from the Chinese Embassy to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government has clearly clarified our position again.

We note the response from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Home office to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government dated 27 November, which clearly points out, the two issues raised in the letter of 14 January 2025 by the said offices to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government "have now been addressed".

The planning application for the new Chinese Embassy is of high quality, which has followed international diplomatic practice and fully complied with the UK's planning policy and procedure. The planning permission and listed building consent to the new Chinese Embassy project should be granted quickly and without further delay.

This Note Verbale is intended to serve as a response to the letter of 2 December by the Planning Casework Unit of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

The Embassy of the People's Republic of China avails itself of this

opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland the assurances of its highest consideration.

Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

London, 11 December 2025

C.C Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PCCUSER](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: APPLICATIONS BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK, SITE AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON, EC3N 4QN – PINS REFS: APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 & APP/E5900/V/24/3353755 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (SECTION 77)
Date: 15 December 2025 20:09:07
Attachments: [REDACTED]
Importance: High

Dear PCU,

Please see the attached correspondence.

Kind regards

Simon



Simon Bell
Barrister

[REDACTED]
w: thebarristergroup.co.uk/property

[View Profile](#)

The Bar Standards Board regulates Barristers in England & Wales.

Administration is provided by The Barrister Group. The Barrister Group is a trading name of European Administration Limited, a limited company registered in England & Wales. Registered Number: 04207276. Registered Address: Equity House, Blackbrook Park Avenue, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 2PX.

Please note: This email message is intended solely for the person to whom it is addressed. It is confidential and may also be protected by legal professional privilege. If you have received it in error, please notify me immediately and permanently delete this email and any attachments. Unless you are the intended receiver of this message YOU MUST NOT FORWARD, PRINT, DISCLOSE, COPY, USE OR RETAIN this message, any attachments or any part of it. It is the recipient's responsibility to take such steps as it deems appropriate to scan received messages and any attachments for viruses. No responsibility is accepted for viruses. Chambers' policies can be found at: thebarristergroup.co.uk/contact-us#Usefullinks

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities
and Local Government
Planning Casework Unit
3rd Floor
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

15th December 2025

BY EMAIL ONLY: PCC@communities.gov.uk

Dear Secretary of State


APPLICATIONS BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK, SITE AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON, EC3N 4QN – PINS REFS: APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 & APP/E5900/V/24/3353755 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (SECTION 77)

1. I am instructed to write to you on behalf of the Royal Mint Court Residents Association (“RMCRA”) and further to the letter dated 2nd December 2025, circulating the representations received from the Secretaries of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and the Home Department (dated 27th November 2025) (“the Letter”)
2. The RMCRA is unclear about how much assistance the Letter provides the Secretary of State in assessing the proposals before him. As best, it appears to evidence a predisposition within Government to grant the People’s Republic of China permission to use the site as an embassy (strangely referred to as being part of a “consolidation” process of the PRC’s diplomatic premises in) **if** the Secretary of State is minded to grant permission for the site to be used as such.
3. It is noted that the Letter seems to indicate that a “conditional grant of consent” to use the site as an embassy has been made. RMCRA notes that in answer to a question posed by Kevin Hollinrake MP on 17th November 2025, Chris Elmore MP responded as follows:

“The former Royal Mint site received conditional diplomatic consent in 2018, and this remains conditional on securing the necessary planning and listed building consents from the relevant authorities.”

4. It is unclear on what basis the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and, indeed, the Diplomatic Privileges Act 1964 can permit such conditional consent to be granted before planning permission is granted. In any event, the decision appears to have been taken in 2018, seemingly nearly 8 years before the PRC’s planning proposals are set to be determined. Since then, considerable concerns have been raised by various parties (not least MI5) about the PRC’s conduct towards, and in, the UK
5. In all, the Letter adds to the earlier concerns raised by the RMCRA that, notwithstanding the obvious and cogent planning reasons for refusing the PRC’s planning proposals, there appears to be a determination to grant the PRC permission to use the site as an embassy – seemingly now partly due to a “conditional consent” to grant the use of the site as an embassy for the PRC.
6. RMCRA has written to the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs regarding the concerning idea that the PRC has somehow been granted a conditional consent and how, in the light of the PRC’s more recent conduct towards the UK and the sensitivities of this particular Site, she intends to deal with the question of diplomatic consent to use the Site as an embassy. A copy of that letter is enclosed for your information.

Yours sincerely



Counsel

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH
United Kingdom

15th December 2025

URGENT – BY EMAIL ONLY: fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk

Dear Sirs,

Proposed Chinese Embassy – Royal Mint Court

- 1) I am instructed to write to you on behalf of the Royal Mint Court Residents Association (“RMCRA”) and in respect of the letter provided by you (and the Home Secretary) to the Secretary of State for Communities, Housing and Local Government, dated 27th November 2025, together with the answer provided by Chris Elmore MP to Kevin Hollinrake MP on 17th November 2025¹.
- 2) As part of his response to Mr. Hollinrake, Mr. Elmore provided the following information:

The former Royal Mint site received conditional diplomatic consent in 2018, and this remains conditional on securing the necessary planning and listed building consents from the relevant authorities.
- 3) If this is true, then it appears that you may be proceeding unlawfully if you consider that a “conditional diplomatic consent” was granted in 2018.
- 4) Having considered the Vienna Convention and the Diplomatic Privileges Act 1964, the RMCRA cannot see a basis upon which a “conditional consent” can (or should) be granted. Further, if it is a conditional consent, it presumably needs to be reviewed in light of any consent given and, indeed, the issues raised during consideration of the planning consent. Whilst some matters may be considered to be acceptable from a planning perspective and ultimately determined by the Secretary of State for

¹ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-11-17/91405>

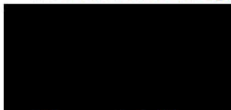
Communities and Local Government, it does not automatically (or logically) follow that they will also be acceptable for the purposes of granting a diplomatic consent to allow the Royal Mint site to be used as an embassy.

- 5) Further, clearly there is a need to reconsider and review any decision-making in 2018, nearly 8 years ago, before making a final determination as to whether the Royal Mint site should be used as an embassy by the PRC. You will not doubt be aware (if only from a brief review of the media from the passing few months) of the concerns shared by many (not least MI5) about the conduct of the PRC towards the UK (not least allegations of espionage and attempts to influence Parliamentarians) together with the prospect that the Royal Mint site could be used for nefarious purposes (such as looking to access sensitive communications cables buried near to the Royal Mint site, or indeed, using basement rooms (for which redacted plans were provided to the Secretary of State for Communities, Housing and Local Government) for purposes beyond what should be expected and accepted for an embassy on UK soil.
- 6) In respect of the above, the RMCRA would like to draw to your attention an extremely troubling incident experienced by one of its residents. On Saturday, 6th December, another demonstration against the use of the site as an embassy took place. The PRC has engaged a private security company at the site. One resident had invited some guests (who happened to be from Hong Kong) into the residents' car park, only to find that members of the private security company were filming them for no discernible reason. At all times, the resident and his guests were on the RMCRA's estate and acting lawfully. It is understood that the police were called on behalf of the PRC and when officers attended, they were required to explain to that company that the resident and his guests were lawfully on land that did not form part of the proposed embassy site. This incident has left residents (and, understandably, his visitors from Hong Kong) concerned about the footage taken of them and the intentions behind its creation and possible distribution. You are invited to raise this with the PRC and confirm why residents are being filmed and what the footage is to be used for.
- 7) In closing, the RMCRA has instructed me to write to you to request:
 - a. Disclosure (again) of any decision provided to the PRC concerning its use of the Royal Mint site as an embassy (from Mr. Elmore's answer, the RMCRA requests site of the "conditional diplomatic request" that was granted in 2018).
 - b. Clarification as to the basis upon which you consider that it was possible to grant a condition diplomatic consent to the PRC in 2018.
 - c. Confirmation that diplomatic consent for the use of the Royal Mint site will not be automatically confirmed if planning permission is granted by the Secretary

of State for Communities, Housing and Local Government. Clearly there is a need to review any earlier indication (in 2018) that such diplomatic consent would be granted, given the passage of time and the position the PRC currently adopts towards the UK.

- 8) The RMCRA requests a response to this letter within the next 7 days. A copy of this letter has been provided to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Yours sincerely



Simon Bell
Counsel

CC: Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (email only).

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PCCUSER](#)
Subject: Response to the letter of 2nd December 2025 re Embassy Planning Application at Royal Mint Court
Date: 16 December 2025 14:13:44
Attachments: [REDACTED]
Importance: High

Dear Sir / Madam

APPLICATION REFS: PA/24/01229/A & PA/24/01248/NC

In response to your letter of 2nd December 2025 please find attached the following two documents:

1. Letter on behalf of the Friends of St Katharine Docks dated 16th December 2025
2. Copy letter from the London Fire Brigade dated 6th January 2025

Please will you acknowledge receipt of this email and attachments.

Yours faithfully,
S. Hughes

Chair, FOSKD



THE FRIENDS OF ST KATHARINE DOCKS

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities
and Local Government
Planning Casework Unit
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

16th December 2025

Sent by email to: pcc@communities.gov.uk

Your Ref: APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 & APP/E/5900/V/24/3353755

Dear Secretary of State

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - SECTION 77 APPLICATION MADE BY CHINESE
EMBASSY IN THE UK LAND AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON EC3N 4QN

APPLICATION REFS: PA/24/01229/A & PA/24/01248/NC

1. I am writing to you on behalf of the Friends of St Katharine Docks (FOSKD) in response to your letter of 2 December 2025 inviting us to provide comments on the representations circulated to the parties on 16 October 2025 and on the response from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and the Home Office (HO) dated 27 November 2025 referred to in paragraph 2 of your letter.

Public access areas

2. In their joint letter of 14 January 2025 to the Planning Inspector the FCDO and HO stated that these applications would present public safety risks and risks to the security of the proposed Embassy unless the two changes they proposed under the heading “Public access areas” in that letter were made, namely a hard perimeter and the removal of unregulated public access to the pavilion and temporary exhibitions. These risks were recognized by the Secretary of State at paragraph 11 of her letter of 6 August 2025.

3. In their joint letter of 20 August 2025 to the Secretary of State the FCDO and HO detailed arrangements they had agreed with the Chinese applicants to address their above concerns which the FCDO and HO stated they viewed “as an acceptable mitigation” of them. FOSKD understands that this agreement was reached on the basis of the assurances contained in a Note Verbale dated

8 September 2025 which would appear to be confirmed by DP9 in their letter dated 20 August 2025 referred to at 1a of the Secretary of State's letter of 22 August 2025.

4. However, in his Note dated 20 August 2025, Charles Streeten, counsel, on behalf of FOSKD opined that the arrangements detailed in the FCDO and HO letter of 20 August 2025 were "unacceptable in planning terms" because they are unenforceable. That opinion is reinforced by Lord Banner KC at paragraph 40 of his Opinion on behalf of the Royal Mint Court Residents Association (referred to at 1d of the Secretary of State's letter of 16 October 2025) where he says that "Put shortly, in law the PRC's assurances are meaningless. The PRC would be free in domestic and international law to U-turn on them at any time and there is nothing that planning conditions could do to stop this". Both those are consistent with *Belfast City Council v Madame Zhang Meifang*, the Consul General of the People's Republic of China, Belfast [2020] NICH 12 which held that planning conditions or agreements cannot be enforced against the foreign state concerned.

5. It is noteworthy that neither the applicant nor its advisers has challenged those legal opinions in their various representations to the Secretary of State.

Redacted drawings

6. It is noteworthy that neither the applicant nor its advisers has challenged the legal opinions of Charles Streeten and Lord Banner KC that the applicant's reliance on redacted plans is unlawful and that in consequence it would be contrary to the relevant principles to grant planning permission or listed building consent in reliance upon, or which incorporates, redacted plans.

Building Regulations & Fire Safety

7. Given the recent catastrophic fire which broke out at the Wang Fuk Court apartment complex on 26th November 2025 in Hong Kong resulting in the destruction of seven apartment blocks and approximately 159 deaths, FOSKD wishes to highlight the critical issue of Building regulations & Fire Safety in respect of this planning application. During the Inquiry held in February 2025 there were discussions between the Applicant, the Local Planning Authority and the Inspector relating to whether or not the Applicant would agree to work to UK Building Regulations or whether they would adopt Chinese codes and standards for internal areas within the Site, exempt from inspection and verification, and would submit Chinese Certificates or other equivalent documentations to certify its fulfilment of certain conditions. FOSKD and the other objectors to this Planning Application will not have access to the Planning Inspector's Report from the February Inquiry until after the formal decision on the Planning Application is announced. We do however know that the Conditions Schedule produced at the end of the Inquiry showed that discussions on these particular issues were "inconclusive." We are concerned that even if the Applicant were to agree at this late stage, via a planning condition, to adopt UK Building regulations, this would not be enforceable as set out in paragraph 4. above.

8. Prior to the start of the February Inquiry, the London Fire Brigade (LFB) sent a letter dated 6th January 2025 titled "Record of Advice Given" (a copy sent by email with this letter) to the Tower Hamlets Planning team which was included in the Inquiry documents. FOSKD and other objectors

were and remain very concerned about the contents of the LFB letter. It is clear that the LFB could only offer advice, as they had insufficient information provided to them by the Applicant, due to redacted plans, to be able to make a full assessment of the fire safety issues on the site. The Royal Mint Court Residents Association members living in the St Mary Graces's Court flats are on land now owned by the PRC who own the Head Lease of their 100 flats. The rear elevations of some of those flats are less than 10 metres away from the narrow service lane that divides them from the building which may, should planning be granted, house the 200 apartments being constructed for the Embassy staff. It is therefore extremely concerning that there has been no agreement as to which Building Regulations are to be adhered to by the Applicant and that the LFB still do not have a complete picture of the potential fire safety issues pertaining to the Royal Mint Court site, as neither of these matters have been resolved in the extensive period of consultation which has taken place between the parties, beginning in 2020.

Yours faithfully,

S. Hughes

Chair, FOSKD

Planning Officer
Planning Team
Tower Hamlets Council

The London Fire Commissioner is the
fire and rescue authority for London

Date 06 January 2025
Our Ref 05/011292
Your Ref PA/24/01229

Dear Sir/Madam

RECORD OF ADVICE GIVEN

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

SCOPE OF WORKS:

Redevelopment of the site to provide an embassy (Sui Generis use class), involving the refurbishment and restoration of the Johnson Smirke Building (Grade II listed), partial demolition, remodelling and refurbishment of Seaman's Registry (Grade II listed), with alterations to the west elevation of the building, the retention, part demolition, alterations and extensions to Murray House and Dexter House, the erection of a standalone entrance pavilion building, alterations to the existing boundary wall and demolition of substation, associated public realm and landscaping, highway works, car and cycle parking and all ancillary and associated works.

PREMISES ADDRESS:

Royal Mint Court, London EC3N 4QN

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED:

Royal Mint Court – Chinese Embassy in the UK: Fire Statement Summary (Cundall, 27/05/21)

PLANS REVIEWED:

B1-_P11_09-00, 10-00, 11-00, 12-00, 13-00, 14-00
B2-_P11_09-00, 10-00, 11-00, 12-00, 13-00, 14-00, 15-00
B3a_11_09-00, 10-00, 11-00, 12-00, 13-00, 14-00, 15-00, 16-00, 17-00
B3b_11_08-00, 10-00, 11-00, 12-00, 13-00, 14-00, 15-00, 16-00, 17-00, 18-00, 19-00, 20-00, 21-00, 22-00, 23-00, 24-00, 25-00, 26-00, 27-00
B3b_16-10-00
B3b_21_11-00, 12-00
B4_11_08-00, 09-00, 10-00, 11-00
B4_16-10-00

The London Fire Commissioner (the Commissioner) is the fire and rescue authority for London. The Commissioner is responsible for enforcing the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (The Order) in London.

London Fire Brigade (LFB) has been consulted with regard to the above-mentioned premises and makes the following comments/observations:

We note the submission appears to relate to the Chinese Embassy only. Therefore, The Order may not apply, and the comments below are provided as 'goodwill advice'.

Plans

1. The submitted plans have numerous areas that are unclear with 'greyed out' sections. Therefore, our comments on this submission are limited to the documentation available.

In particular, the ground floor and entrance level escape routes are unclear. It is also unclear if the 'tunnels' cited in the Fire Statement Summary are to be used as escape routes. The design team should pay particular attention to these areas.

Number and type of lifts

2. We note the proposal for evacuation and firefighting lifts. A sufficient number of lifts should be available at all times for both firefighters' use and occupant evacuation. This number should also include a redundancy to ensure that there is at least one lift still available for use from all areas of the building, in the event of the lift being out of service (e.g., as a result of breakdown or maintenance). A hybrid lift may be suitable to compensate for this eventuality.

We refer you to the guidance of BS 9999:2017 Annex G regarding the design and operation of evacuation lifts.

3. We note from the Fire Statement Summary the proposal that the lifts will return to Level 00 in co-ordination with the buildings' alarm systems. Please note, the evacuation and firefighting lifts will need to be configured to account for their intended purposes.

Open plan flats

4. We note the proposed open plan flats, with inner room bedrooms (see plans B3b_21_12-00 and B3b_21_11-00). We draw your attention to the guidance of BS 9991:2024 clause 8.5.

Smoke control/ventilation

5. We note that the Fire Statement Summary indicates a fire engineered solution will be proposed for the existing two corridors of the residential buildings, however no details have been submitted. We refer you to the guidance of BS 9991:2024 clause 20, and the Smoke Control Association's *Guidance on smoke control to common escape routes in apartment buildings (flats and maisonettes)* (2020).

Access and facilities for the fire and rescue service

6. Dry rising mains (DRMs) to meet the guidance of BS 9990 or equivalent.
7. Wayfinding signage for firefighters should be provided for buildings over 11m in height. We draw your attention to the guidance of BS 9991:2024 clause 48.2.
8. It is LFB standard operating procedure for a firefighter to be assigned to monitor the sprinkler main control valve in the event of a fire incident. Details of the location of the sprinkler main control valve and the route by which this will be accessed should be made available e.g. in the secure information box. It is our expectation that the valve chamber will be accessed either directly from open air at fire and rescue service access level or alternatively via a protected route, with suitable wayfinding signage provided to assist firefighters. The location of and route to the valve chamber should be indicated on premises information plans provided for use by

firefighters, in addition to the block plan required in order to conform to clause 18 of BS EN 12845:2015, as applicable.

9. Secure information boxes should be provided for residential buildings over 11m in height, and other buildings with unusual or specific risks. We refer you to the guidance of BS 9991:2024 clause 48.1.

Sprinkler systems

10. We note the Fire Statement Summary proposes sprinkler systems, including Category 2 systems for the residential buildings. Please note, the guidance of BS 9251:2021 recommends Category 4 systems for residential buildings over 18m in height.

Electric vehicles and car park

11. We note that the proposals include enclosed car parking areas and recommend that consideration is given in relation to electric vehicle (EV) charging units, together with the potential fire risk posed by their battery systems. The following should be considered, preferably as part of a Qualitative Design Review (QDR) and, following the recommendations given in BS 7974. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of considerations:
 - Whether the smoke ventilation provisions for car parks are sufficient to manage the products of combustion from a fire involving one or more EVs
 - Whether AWFSS require enhancements beyond the minimum recommendations of the relevant standards
 - Whether the fire resistance of elements of structure should be increased beyond the minimum recommendations of this code of practice
 - Whether car parking spaces served by EVCUs should be located closer to the access points to the car park for the fire and rescue services and to any fire main outlets in order to assist firefighters in applying extinguishing media to the fire
 - Whether there should be provision for the safe removal of any EV car that has been involved in a fire and may still pose a risk of reignition. If access to the space is only via a car lift, for example, this may not provide such suitable provision
 - Whether the water supplies provided for the fire and rescue services should be enhanced beyond the minimum requirements of BS 9990 and other relevant standards, in particular with regard to the duration of water supply available
 - Suitable protection to car park internal surfaces and drainage systems to facilitate post-fire clean-up and environmental protection.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. However, it covers some of the areas of consideration that we would expect to be addressed by the project design team. We would also recommend liaising with the relevant insurance provider as they may have their own requirements.

A means of isolating the power supply to EVCUs should be provided for the fire and rescue services in a suitable location associated with, but outside of, the fire resisting enclosure to any car park containing EVCUs. This should be at the main designated access point to the building or car park for the fire and rescue services. Signage should be provided to identify the power supply isolation controls and this should state:

"FIREFIGHTERS ELECTRICAL ISOLATION SWITCH FOR CAR PARK ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING UNITS"

The signage should conform to BS 5499-1.

The location(s) of power supply isolation controls serving EVCUs should be indicated on premises information provided for firefighters.

The power supply to all EVCUs should also be automatically isolated upon actuation of the fire warning and detection system or sprinkler system serving the car park in which they are located.

EVCUs should be provided with a suitable level of water resistance to ensure that they do not pose a hazard to firefighters should they become immersed in water, either as a result of the activation of the sprinkler system or firefighting operations.

It is our strong recommendation that car parks containing EVCUs should be provided with sprinkler coverage in accordance with BS EN 12845:2015+A1.

Cycle stores

12. The proposals include cycle storage areas. It is our opinion that consideration is given to the storage (and potential charging) of electric bikes and electric scooters and the potential fire risk posed by these electric powered personal vehicles (EPPVs) which may be located within these areas. There is increasing evidence showing that EPPVs can spontaneously ignite and burn for long periods so there is an increased potential for toxic gases/smoke/fire spread. If EPPVs are to be stored in this location, then a fire risk assessment may identify this room as a place of special fire hazard and appropriate fire safety measures should be provided. We refer you to the guidance provided in RISC Authority *RC59 Recommendations for fire safety when charging electric vehicles*.

Balconies and roof terraces

13. The design appears to include balconies and roof terraces. We refer you to the guidance of BS 8579 or equivalent.
14. We note the use of external terraced areas. Robust management of the evacuation from these areas is required, particularly where the area may be used by occupants unfamiliar with the building. We note ancillary areas of the buildings are to be simultaneously evacuated. In addition to the provision of sounders, it may also be necessary to provide visual alarm devices in accordance with BS 5839-1 in order to provide a means of warning for people with hearing impairments who may be in relative isolation on the terrace space (see paragraph 1.34 of Approved Document B, Volume 2).

Solar panels

15. We note that a significant number of photovoltaic cells are to be installed (see plans B3a_11_17-00; and B4_11_11-00). Care should be taken to ensure that these are installed correctly to the manufacturer's recommendations due to concerns that have become known in regards to the fire hazards associated with poorly fitted installations. We recommend that 'arc-fault' protection is fitted if possible, and also request that it is clarified whether there is any access (e.g., for maintenance) to the areas where the cells are situated. It is our expectation that suitable isolation controls will be provided for use by firefighters. These controls should be accessible to firefighters and provided with suitable local signage to identify their location. The location of isolation controls should also be shown on premises information plans provided in a secure information box or equivalent operational/emergency information pack provided for fire and rescue service use, as appropriate.

Green/living roofs

16. We note that the design includes proposals for roof terraces, and these contain green/living building elements (see plan B4-_11_11-00). We highlight the potential conflicts with the requirement of the Greater London Authority Town and Country Planning policy with regard to combustible elements within the external wall and roof construction.

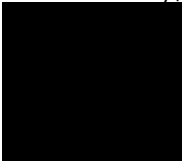
It is our expectation that the fire performance and fire safety of green/living building elements will be fully understood and considered as part of the fire safety strategy for the proposed development. We refer you to guidance such as that given in the Green Roof Organisation (GRO) *Green Roof Code* (2014) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) guidance on *Fire Performance of Green Roofs and Walls* (2013). Where said guidance is insufficient in providing suitable understanding on the fire performance of green elements we expect that further analysis will be carried out which may include fire testing.

General

17. While it is acknowledged that the consultation was submitted prior to the release of the amended BS 9991:2024, we recommend consideration is given to this updated guidance, with regards to the future design of the development.

Any queries regarding this letter should be addressed to FSR-AdminSupport@london-fire.gov.uk. If you are dissatisfied in any way with the response given, please ask to speak to the Team Leader quoting our reference.

Yours faithfully,



Assistant Commissioner (Prevention & Protection)

The London Fire Brigade promotes the installation of sprinkler suppression systems, as there is clear evidence that they are effective in suppressing and extinguishing fires; they can help reduce the numbers of deaths and injuries from fire, and the risk to firefighters.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PCCUSER](#)
Subject: RE: Recirculation of further representations: reference back on proposed embassy at Royal Mint Court, London
Date: 16 December 2025 14:57:36
Attachments: [REDACTED]

Good afternoon,
Please find enclosed a letter for your attention.
I would be grateful if you could confirm receipt of this email.
Yours sincerely,
Iain



The Rt Hon Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP
Member of Parliament for Chingford & Woodford Green
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

<http://www.iainduncansmith.org.uk/> <https://www.facebook.com/iainduncansmith.org/>

If you would like to see our privacy policy regarding how we use your data, please visit this link:

<https://www.iainduncansmith.org.uk/privacy>

UK Parliament Disclaimer: this e-mail is confidential to the intended recipient. If you have received it in error, please notify the sender and delete it from your system. Any unauthorised use, disclosure, or copying is not permitted. This e-mail has been checked for viruses, but no liability is accepted for any damage caused by any virus transmitted by this e-mail. This e-mail address is not secure, is not encrypted and should not be used for sensitive data.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Planning Casework Unit
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Dear Planning Casework Unit 16th December 2025

We received the latest round of correspondence, appending an overdue reply from the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office.

The information set out in this correspondence does not add materially to information already known, and IPAC does not therefore have anything further to add to this point.

IPAC notes, however, that the compromise reached regarding access to the historic ruins does not solve the concerns outlined in the Foreign and Home Secretaries' letter of January 2025. We note that the Chinese side has agreed not to seek diplomatic consent for part of the Visitor's Centre, which would mean that UK authorities could enter without permission. It is explicit in the correspondence, however, that the ruins themselves would be diplomatically inviolable, and therefore inaccessible without permission from the mission head. We note that the Chinese side has published a Note Verbale where they offer permanent permission for the UK authorities to access the ruins. We agree with Lord (Charles) Banner KC in his assessment that the notion of a permanent permission is not compatible with diplomatic inviolability as set out in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. IPAC would also like to make clear that a permanent permission does not appear to be enforceable in law and could be revoked at any time. The risks to visitors, and especially to dissidents who have, inter alia, been threatened with "dragging to the embassy" are evident and unresolved.

Finally, we note the letter from Boris Johnson, sent to the Chinese Ambassador on 6th May 2018 in which he writes "I am pleased to confirm that I have agreed to grant consent for Royal Mint Court to be designated as diplomatic premises, on the basis of your assurances and the further detail provided by the Chinese Ambassador in London." This official designation, backed up with a Note Verbale on 26th March 2018 formally, and without conditions, clearly reveals the mind of the government towards the application, as, prior to the development having even been proposed, diplomatic designation had been provided by the United Kingdom Foreign Secretary. IPAC believes that this letter is clear evidence of predetermination.

L. Forthright

Rt Hon Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP
UK Co-Chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR CHINGFORD AND WOODFORD GREEN



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Nona Jones, DP9
Home Secretary
Foreign Secretary

Our Ref: APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 &
APP/E5900/V/24/3353755

Sent by email only

6 January 2026

Dear Nona Jones, Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 – SECTION 77
APPLICATION MADE BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK
LAND AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON EC3N 4QN
APPLICATION REFS: PA/24/01229/A & PA/24/01248/NC**

1. On 6 August 2025, the Secretary of State referred back to parties inviting representations on a number of matters. On 22 August, responses to this letter were circulated to parties. On 16 October and 2 December, the Secretary of State recirculated responses to the letter of 22 August. On 17 December, the Secretary of State recirculated further responses.
2. Further to our letter of 17 December, for your information please see attached responses received from the following parties:
 - a. The Applicant (Note Verbale dated 22 December 2025 enclosed in email from Xiaojia Zheng of same date);
 - b. Simon Bell on behalf of the Royal Mint Court Resident's Association (RMCRA) (letter dated 23 December 2025 enclosed in email of same date);
 - c. Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (email dated 24 December 2025);
 - d. Home Office (email from Private Office of the Security Minister, dated 24 December 2025)
3. Also attached is a letter from Simon Bell on behalf of RMCRA (dated 22 December enclosed in email of same date). This was not sent as a response to the recirculation but is included for information.

4. The Secretary of State will now proceed to a decision. This will be issued on or before 20 January 2026.

Yours faithfully

Planning Casework Unit

Authorised to consult with parties on behalf of the Secretary of State

Copied to

London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Royal Mint Court Resident's Association
Interparliamentary Alliance on China
Friends of St Katharine Docks
Royal Mint Tenants and Residents Association
Hongkongers in Britain
Metropolitan Police Service

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PCCUSER](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Note Verbale from the Chinese Embassy in the UK
Date: 22 December 2025 15:48:47
Attachments: [REDACTED]

You don't often get email from [REDACTED] [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Sir or Madam,

Hope this email finds you well.

I am ZHENG Xiaojia from the Chinese Embassy in the UK. Please find attached Note Verbale D195/25 from the Embassy to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for your kind reference. A copy of this Note Verbale has also been sent to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

We would be grateful if you could confirm receipt of this email.

Kind regards,

郑晓佳 Xiaojia Zheng
Second Secretary
Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the UK
49/51 Portland Place
London, W1B 1JL



中 华 人 民 共 和 国 大 使 馆

No. D195/25

The Embassy of the People's Republic of China presents its compliments to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and with reference to the letter of 17 December by the Planning Casework Unit of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, has the honour to state the following:

Given that we have comprehensively made clear our position and request on relevant issues related to the planning application for the new Chinese Embassy project, including the fire safety issue, in DP9's letter on 20 August to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, the Embassy's Notes Verbales to the Ministry dated 8 September and 11 December respectively, as well as the planning application documents, we have no further comments to make.

This Note Verbale is intended to serve as a response to the letter of 17 December by the Planning Casework Unit of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

The Embassy of the People's Republic of China avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government of the United Kingdom of

Great Britain and Northern Ireland the assurances of its highest consideration.

Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland



London, 22 December 2025

C.C. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PCCUSER](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: APPLICATIONS BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK, SITE AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON, EC3N 4QN – PINS REFS: APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 & APP/E5900/V/24/3353755 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (SECTION 77)
Date: 23 December 2025 09:38:06
Attachments: [REDACTED]

Dear PCU,

Please see the attached correspondence, sent on behalf of the RMCRA.

Kind regards

Simon



Simon Bell
Barrister

[REDACTED]
w: thebarristergroup.co.uk/property

[View Profile](#)

The Bar Standards Board regulates Barristers in England & Wales.

Administration is provided by The Barrister Group. The Barrister Group is a trading name of European Administration Limited, a limited company registered in England & Wales. Registered Number: 04207276. Registered Address: Equity House, Blackbrook Park Avenue, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 2PX.

Please note: This email message is intended solely for the person to whom it is addressed. It is confidential and may also be protected by legal professional privilege. If you have received it in error, please notify me immediately and permanently delete this email and any attachments. Unless you are the intended receiver of this message YOU MUST NOT FORWARD, PRINT, DISCLOSE, COPY, USE OR RETAIN this message, any attachments or any part of it. It is the recipient's responsibility to take such steps as it deems appropriate to scan received messages and any attachments for viruses. No responsibility is accepted for viruses. Chambers' policies can be found at: thebarristergroup.co.uk/contact-us#Usefullinks

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities
and Local Government
Planning Casework Unit
3rd Floor
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

23rd December 2025

BY EMAIL ONLY: PCC@communities.gov.uk

Dear Secretary of State

APPLICATIONS BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK, SITE AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON, EC3N 4QN – PINS REFS: APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 & APP/E5900/V/24/3353755 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (SECTION 77)

1. I am instructed to write to you on behalf of the Royal Mint Court Residents Association (“RMCRA”), further to the letter from the PCU dated 17th December 2025 and my letter of 22nd December 2025.
2. Dealing first with the “Note Verbale” sent on behalf of the Applicant. The RMCRA continues to disagree that the Applicant’s proposal for the site is of “high quality”. The issue of public safety has clearly not been addressed and remains a concern in respect this proposal. Please see the RMCRA’s earlier representations made to the Inspector and yourself in this regard.
3. Additionally, it is unclear as to how the grant of permission, to the Applicant, at such a sensitive site in Central London would be appropriate, in circumstances where the Security Minister has announced that the Government plans to “*cooperate with China*” when it is in the UK’s national interests to do so and “*...challenge China when it threatens the UK’s national security*”¹. As quoted from the Times article published on

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/action-to-disrupt-and-deter-threats-to-uk-as-mi5-issues-spy-alert> - see also the Parliamentary Briefing “What state-threat activities has China been accused of conducting in the UK”, published on 10th December 2025 - <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10417/>

21st December 2025 (“Invasion of Spies: Inside the Fight to Build China’s New Embassy”):

“...The embassy’s location between London’s two financial districts, the City and Canary Wharf, has also been a cause of concern because a web of fibre-optic cables carrying sensitive information runs underground near by. Last summer the US warned Downing Street not to allow the Chinese embassy to be built near these sensitive financial centres. Dominic Cummings, the former No 10 adviser, has said MI5 and MI6 told him that “China is trying to build a spy centre underneath the embassy”

4. How can allowing the use of the site as an embassy for the PRC be conducive to the UK’s national interests at this time, when the risk of interference with a significant piece of the UK’s infrastructure is present? Given the Applicant’s refusal to un-redact the plans of the basement rooms, there has to be a real concern as to what they are to be used for and whether or not the City’s fibre optic cables could be accessed via these rooms.
5. Further, from the same Times article, the RMCRA was concerned to learn the following:

“China drew up plans to transform the whole site: the offices and housing will be demolished and the families will be told they have to move out”.

6. It is presumed that the reference to the families that are to be told that they will have to move out includes the RMCRA’s residents. In granting the Applicant’s proposal, it seems that (ultimately) in addition to the risk to safety and the UK’s security, the Applicant will look to remove a significant amount of housing from Tower Hamlets’ housing stock. The families at the site are understandably deeply concerned about this, particularly given that if they are “told to move out”, many struggle to see where they will go.
7. This may be why the PRC has no interest in ensuring the safety of the residents through its planning application – it has always intended to remove them from the locality of the Royal Mint site if permission was granted
8. The RMCRA notes the representations made by Sir Iain Duncan Smith and agrees with him that there is clear evidence here of a predetermination of this application. Again, one only has to read the media reports (including the Time article quoted above) where



property@thebarristergroup.co.uk
thebarristergroup.co.uk/property
01823 247 247

the phrase “rubber-stamped” is used in respect of the decision on the Applicant’s proposal.

Yours sincerely

Simon Bell

Counsel

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PCCUSER](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Recirculation of further representations: reference back on proposed embassy at Royal Mint Court, London
Date: 24 December 2025 14:56:11
Attachments: [REDACTED]

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]. [Learn why this is important](#)

To Whom it May Concern,

Thank you for the Planning and Casework Unit's letter of 17 December 2025, recirculating further representations regarding the called-in applications submitted by the Chinese Embassy in relation to Royal Mint Court, London.

We acknowledge receipt on behalf of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the Home Office. The letter from the Foreign Secretary and Home Secretary of 27 November remains the final comment from our departments on this planning inquiry.

The FCDO notes the correspondence from Simon Bell of The Barrister Group and Property Planning dated 15 December 2025 and addressed to the Foreign Secretary referring to the granting of consent for diplomatic premises by the then-Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson in 2018. As the process of granting diplomatic consent was separate and not relevant to the grant of planning permission, a response will be issued via standard FCDO correspondence channels.

Yours sincerely,

Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office

From: [REDACTED]
To: PCCUSER
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Recirculation of further representations: reference back on proposed embassy at Royal Mint Court, London
Date: 24 December 2025 15:01:59
Attachments: [REDACTED]

You don't often get email from [REDACTED] [Learn why this is important](#)

*To whom it may concern,
Further to the representation below from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, we can confirm that the Home Office does not have any further comments on interested parties' representations.*

*Regards,
Private Office of the Security Minister
Minister of State at the Cabinet Office & Home Office*

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 December 2025 14:56
To: PCCUSER
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Recirculation of further representations: reference back on proposed embassy at Royal Mint Court, London

You don't often get email from [REDACTED] [Learn why this is important](#)

Do you trust this email? This email originated from outside the Home Office, or came from a Home Office system that has not been certified. Please exercise caution before opening attachments or clicking on links within this email or any suspicious email, particularly from unknown senders.

[REDACTED]

To Whom it May Concern,

Thank you for the Planning and Casework Unit's letter of 17 December 2025, recirculating further representations regarding the called-in applications submitted by the Chinese Embassy in relation to Royal Mint Court, London.

We acknowledge receipt on behalf of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the Home Office. The letter from the Foreign Secretary and Home Secretary of 27 November remains the final comment from our departments on this planning inquiry.

The FCDO notes the correspondence from Simon Bell of The Barrister Group and Property Planning dated 15 December 2025 and addressed to the Foreign Secretary referring to the granting of consent for diplomatic premises by the then-Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson in 2018. As the process of granting diplomatic consent was separate and not relevant to the grant of planning permission, a response will be issued via standard FCDO correspondence channels.

Yours sincerely,

Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office

[REDACTED]

From: Simon Bell <[REDACTED]>

Sent: 22 December 2025 20:49

To: PCCUSER <pcc@communities.gov.uk>

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: APPLICATIONS BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK, SITE AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON, EC3N 4QN – PINS
REFS: APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 & APP/E5900/V/24/3353755 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (SECTION 77)

Dear PCU.

Please see the attached correspondence. You will note from that correspondence that the RMCRA wishes to raise some new evidence concerning the Applicant's Security Expert, which it considers the Secretary of State needs to consider before determining this application.

I have been instructed to respond further to your recent correspondence, circulating the last round of comments. I will provide that response tomorrow.

Kind regards

Simon



Simon Bell
Barrister

[REDACTED]
[w: thebarristergroup.co.uk/property](https://www.thebarristergroup.co.uk/property)
[View Profile](#)

The Bar Standards Board regulates Barristers in England & Wales.

Administration is provided by The Barrister Group. The Barrister Group is a trading name of European Administration Limited, a limited company registered in England & Wales. Registered Number: 04207276. Registered Address: Equity House, Blackbrook Park Avenue, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 2PX.

Please note: This email message is intended solely for the person to whom it is addressed. It is confidential and may also be protected by legal professional privilege. If you have received it in error, please notify me immediately and permanently delete this email and any attachments. Unless you are the intended receiver of this message YOU MUST NOT FORWARD, PRINT, DISCLOSE, COPY, USE OR RETAIN this message, any attachments or any part of it. It is the recipient's responsibility to take such steps as it deems appropriate to scan received messages and any attachments for viruses. No responsibility is accepted for viruses. Chambers' policies can be found at: thebarristergroup.co.uk/contact-us#Usefullinks

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities
and Local Government
Planning Casework Unit
3rd Floor
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

22nd December 2025

BY EMAIL ONLY: PCC@communities.gov.uk

Dear Secretary of State

APPLICATIONS BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK, SITE AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON, EC3N 4QN – PINS REFS: APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 & APP/E5900/V/24/3353755 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (SECTION 77)

1. I am instructed to write to you on behalf of the Royal Mint Court Residents Association (“RMCRA”) and in respect of new evidence that has come to light following a complaint made to the Registrar of the Register of Chartered Security Professionals (“CSyP”) which the RMCRA considers you should look into and take account of when determining this application.
2. You will be aware from the RMCRA’s statement (INQ.3) on the first day of the Inquiry that the RMCRA had considerable concerns about the abilities, experience and expertise of the Applicant’s security “expert”, Mr. Nicholas Aldworth. As per §13-18 of INQ.3:

13. The Applicant’s own “security expert” has provided a proof of evidence. Having seen Mr. Aldworth’s evidence, had RMCRA continued as a Rule 6 Party it would have wanted to test that evidence fully, particularly as it provides no reassurance to RMCRA. Mr Aldworth fails to address or comment on the security design vulnerabilities highlighted in the Crilly Report. Rather, Mr. Aldworth seeks to denigrate the Crilly Report referring to its “...subjective terms and hyperbole...”.

14. *Whilst not instructed to provide a proof of evidence, due to RMCRA's withdrawal as a Rule 6 Party, Crilly Consulting Ltd has considered Mr. Aldworth's evidence and felt compelled to draw a number of issues to the Inquiry's attention which it has sought to do through the letter from Mr. Williams dated 4th February 2025, provided to the Programme Officer on the same date. That letter is appended to this statement as **Appendix 2** for ease of reference. The Inspector is invited to read this letter in full and use it to assist in framing questions for Mr. Aldworth when he comes to give his evidence. Clearly, Crilly Consulting Ltd disagrees with Mr. Aldworth's analysis and conclusions, and the starting point to this stems from concerns about Mr. Aldworth's experience, expertise and ability to give the evidence he purports to give, with any credibility, to the Inquiry.*
15. *As a starting point, the Inquiry should consider Mr. Aldworth's expertise on security (and in particular security design and bomb blast engineering), as opposed to policing. Indeed, from open-source research, Crilly Consulting Ltd were able to identify that Mr. Aldworth had accepted during a publicly available presentation that:*

"Ex-police officers are not security experts; ex-soldiers are not security experts... ...They are experts at soldiering and policing... I don't consider myself a security expert you need to find people who've got that pedigree of both that experience and qualification..."

A link to that video is provided in the footnotes to this statement.
16. *It should also be noted that Mr. Aldworth was, in a former life, the Chief Superintendent responsible for Parliamentary security at the time of the terrorist attack in Westminster, during which PC Palmer was one of 6 people who died, whilst many others were injured. As reported by the BBC⁸ (**Appendix 3**) during the Inquest into that attack, Mr. Aldworth (under cross-examination) explained that mitigations were not in place on Westminster Bridge as it was not considered to be "a specific location for a specific threat". The extent of Mr. Aldworth's experience and expertise is questionable, to say the least.*
17. *RMCRA's position is that the authors of the Crilly Report (Mr. Williams and Mr. Crilly) have exactly the "pedigree of both experience and qualification" that Mr. Aldworth expects a security expert to have. This experience and qualification is set out on Page 11 of the Crilly Report, which the Inquiry is invited to take into account when assessing the expertise that is being advanced to support RMCRA's objection and also assessing the level of security expertise that is being used to support these Applications. RMCRA's position is that its experts are to be preferred over Mr. Aldworth – however, it will be a matter for the Inspector to assess Mr. Aldworth's*

evidence and form a view on whether he or his evidence can satisfy the Inquiry that the concerns raised by RMCRA can safely be addressed if permission is granted.

18. As per Mr Williams on page 2 of his letter of 4th February 2024, RMCRA considers that Mr Aldworth's overall conclusion at [182] of his PoE is baseless, and he has failed to show, on behalf of the Applicant, that the Residents of St Mary Grace's Court will not be put at risk and adversely impacted by the siting of the proposed Embassy at this site.

3. Given its concerns about Mr. Aldworth's evidence and appearance at the Inquiry, the RMCRA raised a complaint with CSyP. The RMCRA raised a number of complaints about Mr. Aldworth including breaches of CSyP's Code of Professional Conduct and the "four fundamental principles". One breach alleged concerned the fundamental principle of "Responsible Leadership". This provides that:

'Security professionals shall aspire to high standards of leadership. They hold a privileged and trusted position in society and are expected to demonstrate that they are seeking to serve wider society and to be sensitive to public concerns'.

4. The complaint itself, raised under this fundamental principle was set out by the RMCRA as follows:

*Is acting on behalf of the Chinese government in potential breach of the National Security Act being a positive role model for others in the security profession?
Is it demonstrating a service to UK society that is sensitive to public concerns, considers the threat to National Security it could result in, considers the aspirations of the RMCRA and local community to live a peaceful and undisrupted life, free from constant fears of concern for their safety?*

5. The RMCRA's complaint was accepted by CSyP for investigation. On 12th December 2025, the Registrar of CSyP confirmed the following with the RMCRA:

Your complaint against Mr Aldworth was investigated in line with our Code of Conduct.

I can inform you that part of your complaint under exercising responsible leadership was upheld.

As a professional Register, and working within the bounds of GDPR, we cannot disclose any further details.

The complaint process is now closed.

6. The RMCRA consider that, given it sought that the Inspector test the credibility and expertise of Mr. Aldworth, this decision by CSyP is an important one for you to consider in evaluating his evidence and the Inspector's recommendations (whatever they may be) in respect of that evidence. The RMCRA considers that the CSyP's conclusion is one that clearly supports the concerns raised by the RMCRA at the hearing (and described as a "hatchet job" by Counsel for the Applicant at the time) and should be considered further.
7. The RMCRA, upon receipt of the CSyP decision checked for Mr. Aldworth's entry on CSyP's register (which is publicly accessible [here: https://www.charteredsecurityprofessional.org/register-of-chartered-security-professionals/](https://www.charteredsecurityprofessional.org/register-of-chartered-security-professionals/)). Mr. Aldworth no longer appears on the register. This is either (in the RMCRA's view) because he was removed by CSyP or has decided to resign himself. If the latter, it is striking that this appears to have come about around the same time as the CSyP was investigating the RMCRA's complaint against him.
8. A copy of the RMCRA's complaint to CSyP, together with its response, is enclosed with this letter. The RMCRA understands that the complaint was disclosed to Mr. Aldworth, however, it is unclear as to whether the same was disclosed to the Applicant by Mr. Aldworth (which, given the nature of the complaint, RMCRA considers Mr. Aldworth should have disclosed it to his client).
9. In short, the RMCRA considers (as it always has) that the PRC has failed to satisfactorily evidence that its proposal is for an embassy that ensure the safety of not just its staff, but also local residents, those who work locally and members of the public who are visiting the historic area in which the old Royal Mint sits. This can be clearly seen from the Crilly Report and subsequent correspondence between the Inquiry, RMCRA and Mr. Williams of Crilly Consulting Ltd. That evidence is to be preferred to Mr. Aldworth's.

Yours sincerely

Simon Bell

Counsel



Mr David Lake, Chairman
Royal Mint Court Residents Association
19 St Mary Graces Court
Cartwright Street
London
E1 8NB

The Registrar
Register of Chartered Security Professionals
www.charteredsecurityprofessional.org

24th March 2025

Complaint regarding Nicholas Aldworth's use of the Chartered Security Professional (CSyP) designation on behalf of the Chinese Government in potential breach of the National Security Act 1983 and potential breach of the Registrar of Chartered Security Professionals Code of Professional Conduct during the Inquiry in relation to locating a proposed Chinese Embassy at Royal Mint Court EC3 London.

Dear Registrar,

I am the Chairman of the Royal Mint Court Residents Association (RMCRA) and represent the families that reside in a small estate of 100 leasehold homes known as St Mary Graces Court built on the land of Royal Mint Court (RMC) in 1987.

We have recently been involved in a Planning Inquiry concerning the People's Republic of China's planning application seeking permission to use the Royal Mint Court as an Embassy. Our involvement in this matter came about through our serious concerns and fears surrounding the security risk that such a development on our doorstep would have on our lives, homes and those of others in this central London location.

The purpose of this letter is to raise a serious complaint about Mr. Nicholas Aldworth MPA CSyP and the evidence he provided on behalf of the Chinese Government in support of their proposal to site the Embassy at Royal Mint Court.

Background and Context Chinese Embassy 1st Planning Application

1. In addition to our homes, the estate also includes a children's nursery within Cartwright Plaza at the centre of St Mary Graces Court.
2. Our homes were originally built to help working people in key worker roles in London to get onto the housing ladder and are accessed from Cartwright Street E1. Our original Superior Landlord was Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II until a series of sales in 2018 resulted in the People's Republic of China (PRC) becoming our Superior Landlord, with all the rights over us as their tenants. The reason and intention of the

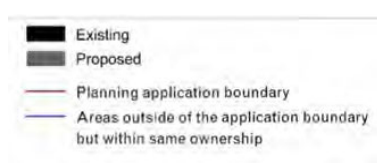
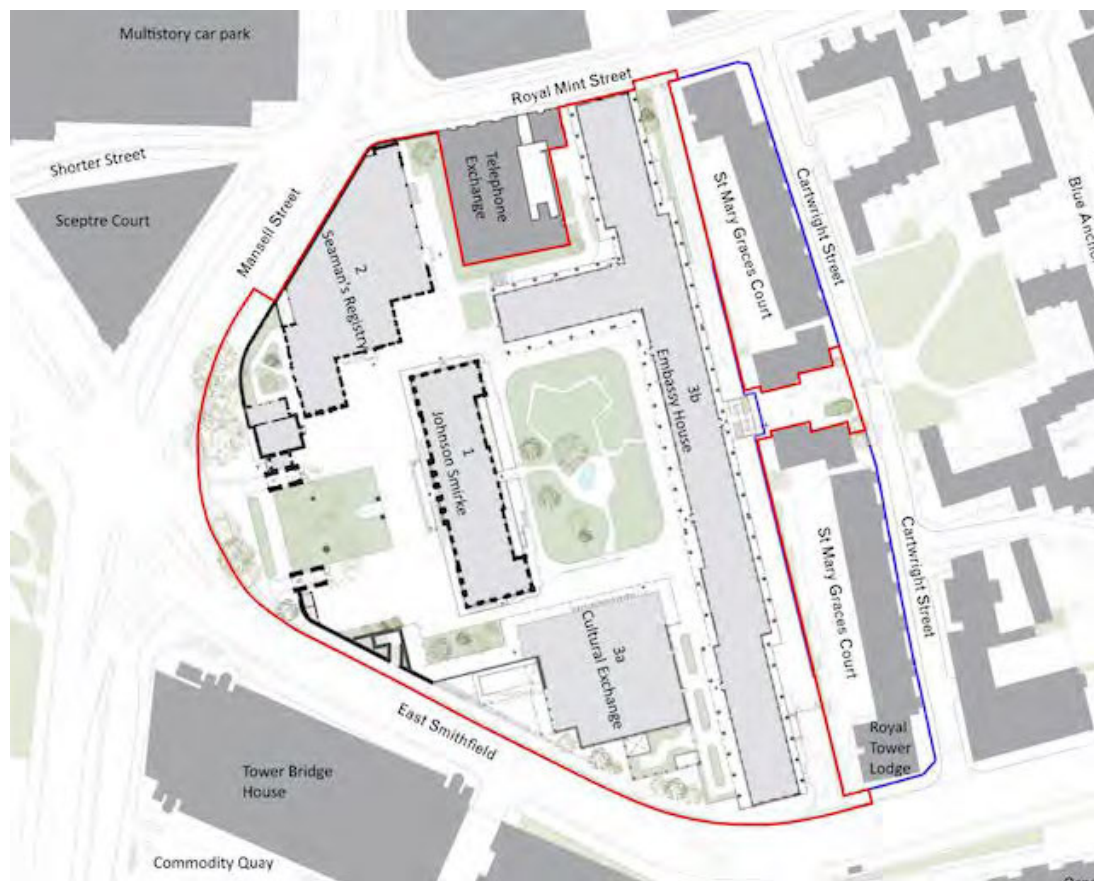
Chinese Government to buy Royal Mint Court land and its land where we live, is to build a 'super Embassy' on it.

3. In 2021, the Chinese Government through their Embassy in London submitted a planning application to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) for a new Chinese Embassy to be built on the Royal Mint Court site. The proposed Embassy would occupy 5 acres, directly overlook and form a shared western boundary with our homes in St Mary Graces Court within the overall plot of land owned by them.
4. The image below shows the building masses of what a giant Peoples Republic of China Embassy would look like against our St Mary Graces Court blocks of flats. Within their application is the construction of a proposed 'Embassy House' to create 200 apartments for Chinese Government officials to live and stay in on site. These apartments are all designed with open balconies and directly tower over our homes in St Mary Graces Court.

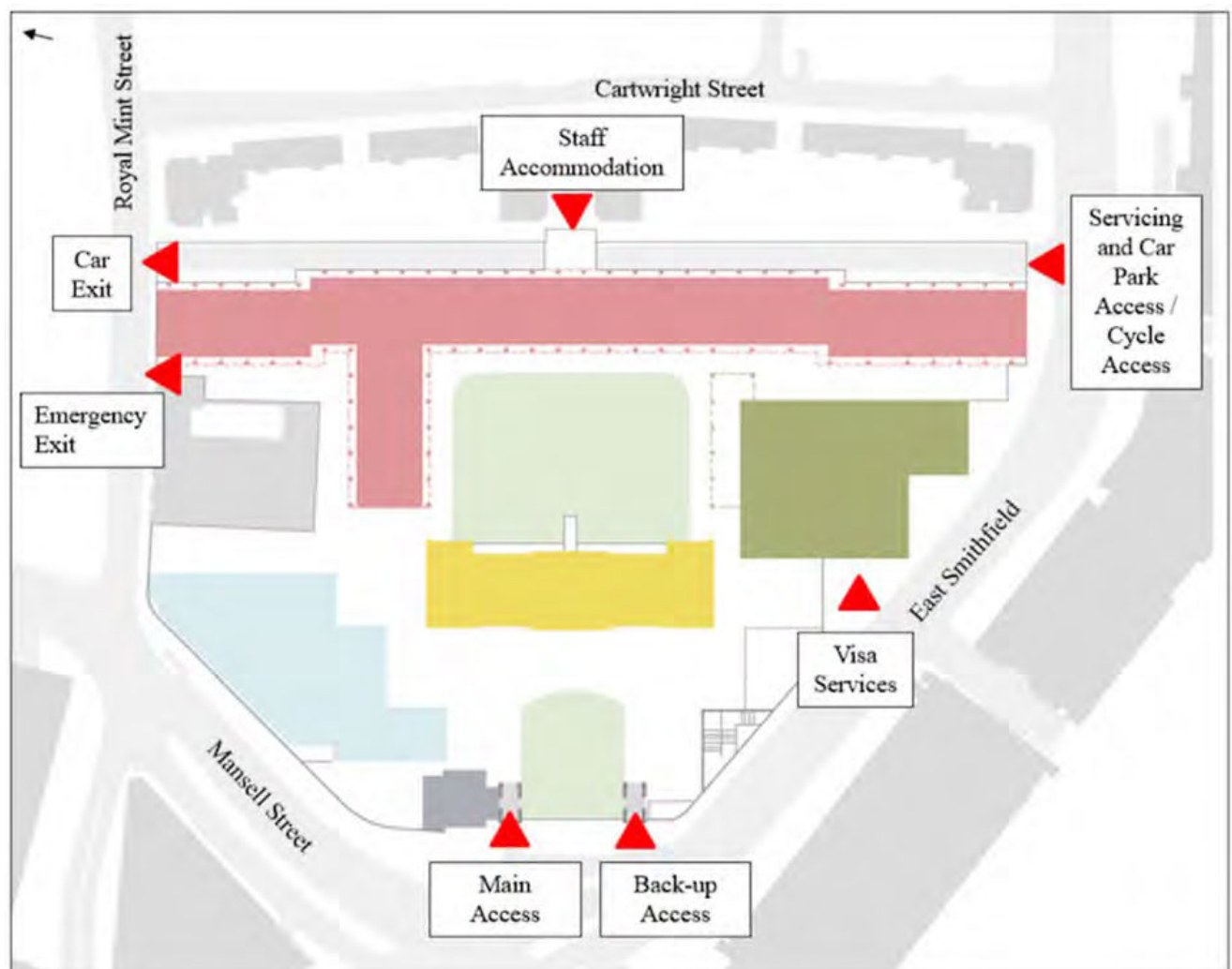


5. Iconic locations of The Tower of London, Tower Bridge and the City can be seen surrounding Royal Mint Court, and the site is a major arterial road for London and Tower Gateway rail network.
6. The building mass shaded red above (of the existing derelict building on Royal Mint Court) is reflective in size of what the proposed People's Republic of China Embassy would be based on their planning application. The proposed 'Embassy House' 200 apartment accommodation and balconies for Chinese Government officials loom over our homes in St Mary Grace's Court, shown shaded in blue.

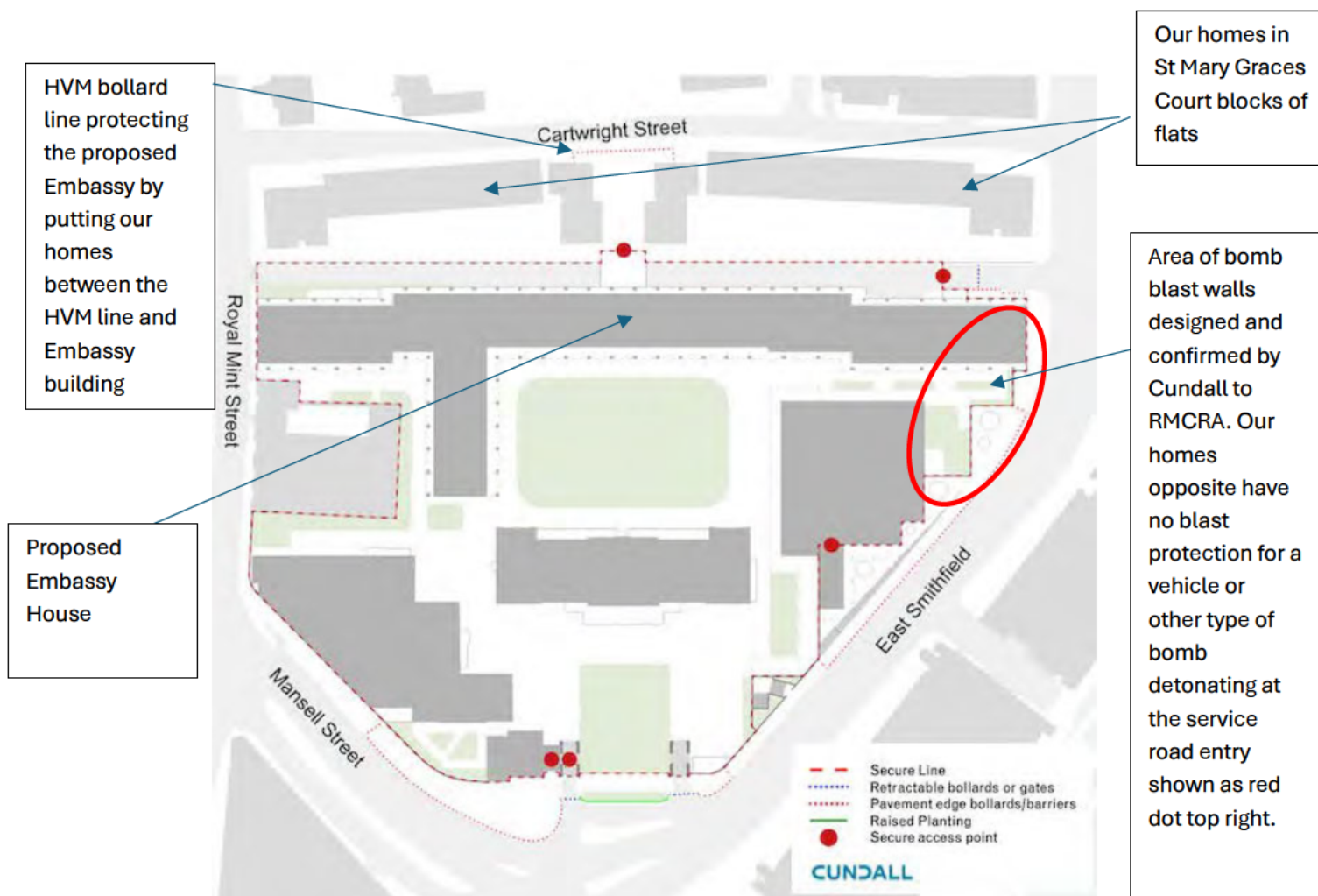
7. Pedestrian access to the Embassy House 200 Chinese government officials' apartments is proposed via a pedestrian gate within the heart of St Mary Graces Court in a small open square called Cartwright Plaza, where the nursery school is. This would mean the daily pedestrian movement of Chinese officials going to and from their 200 apartments would pass directly within our estate, homes and the nursery school.
8. In the foreground right (previous page) is the community of Royal Mint Green with a green park directly opposite St Mary Graces Court and in direct view of the proposed 'Embassy House' and Cartwright Plaza. This community is represented by the Royal Mint Green Residents Association. In the foreground left is St Katherines Dock estate, represented by the St Katherines Dock Residents Association.
9. Below is the proposed Embassy site plan.



10. The plan shows the boundary and plot layout as submitted by the Chinese government for the planning application. The area marked with a red border between our homes in St Mary Grace's Court is Cartwright Plaza, leading to the proposed pedestrian gate entrance to be used by Chinese government officials staying in the proposed 200 apartments of Embassy House.
11. The green space shown to the right of Cartwright Street is the Royal Mint Green Park, surrounded by residential homes. To the south out of picture is St Katherines Dock and Tower Bridge (see image previous page). The major London arterial roads are clearly seen at the front of the proposed Embassy site and main entrance.
12. The planning application also provided the below layout of access points into the proposed Embassy site. The image below was provided by the Chinese Government for their planning application.



13. Of note above is the Chinese government officials staff accommodation access gate to the proposed Embassy House 200 apartments running through our homes in St Mary Grace's Court either side of it. The gate gives access to a footbridge connecting to the proposed Embassy House with an open to atmosphere service delivery road and government official's car parking access (entrance shown top right in the plan previous page) running along the entire boundary from East Smithfield to Royal Mint Street below the footbridge. St Mary Graces Court is at an elevated height looking down into the entire length of the uncovered service road.
14. Initially we engaged in dialogue with representatives of the Chinese government through their existing Embassy in London. We wanted to know more about how a 'Super Embassy' of this size (it would be the largest Embassy of any country in the UK and Europe and one of the largest in the world) would impact us uniquely because we are on the same land and connected to the proposed Embassy as shown above.
15. Our main concern and fears from the outset were the threat and risk of terrorist attacks and protests against the Chinese Government if the Embassy was built, whereby we would also be adversely impacted and at high risk of any attacks and protests from being on the same land, directly connected with the and share the same border line with the proposed Embassy.
16. The Chinese government initially ignored our requests for more security design details and stated there were no safety and security issues with their planning application because in their words, China is a 'peaceful' nation.
17. However, we persisted because we were not reassured China is a 'peaceful' nation. In fact, China is named as a 'state threat' to our National Security within government guidelines for The National Security Act 1983 (including persons acting for foreign powers subject to the Act), which we will come to.
18. Eventually, the Chinese government agreed for us to have a video conference call on 25th February 2021, with their security design consultants, a company called Cundall.
19. During the conference call with us, Cundall shared a physical security design plan (see next page), approved by the Chinese Government and submitted by them as a publicly accessible document to LBTH as part of the planning application required 'Design & Access Statement' in May 2021.

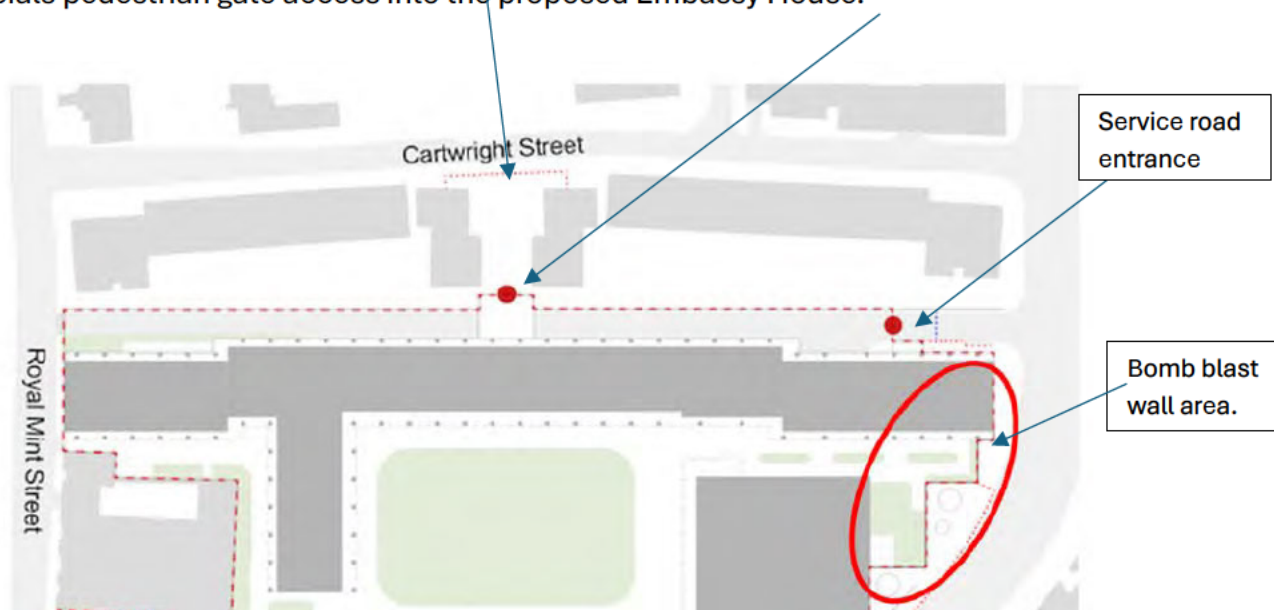


20. Cundall said in their meeting with us, the above security design is based on an ISO 31000 risk assessment they conducted on the site. They said they then implemented risk mitigation measures based on CPNI (now NPSA) UK government security design guidelines.

21. Within their ISO 31000 risk assessment, Cundall said they had identified the threat of vehicle bombs and vehicle as a weapon attack as the most significant and catastrophic threat.

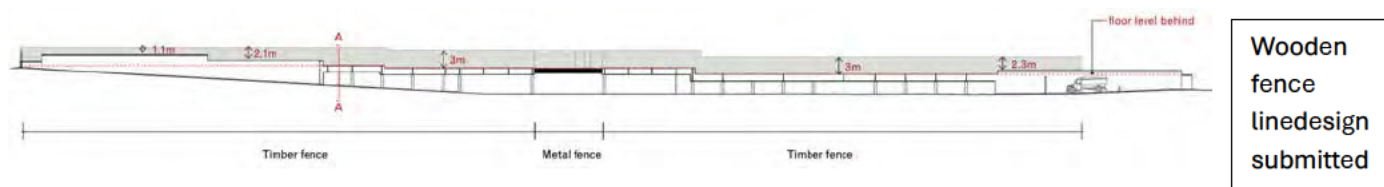
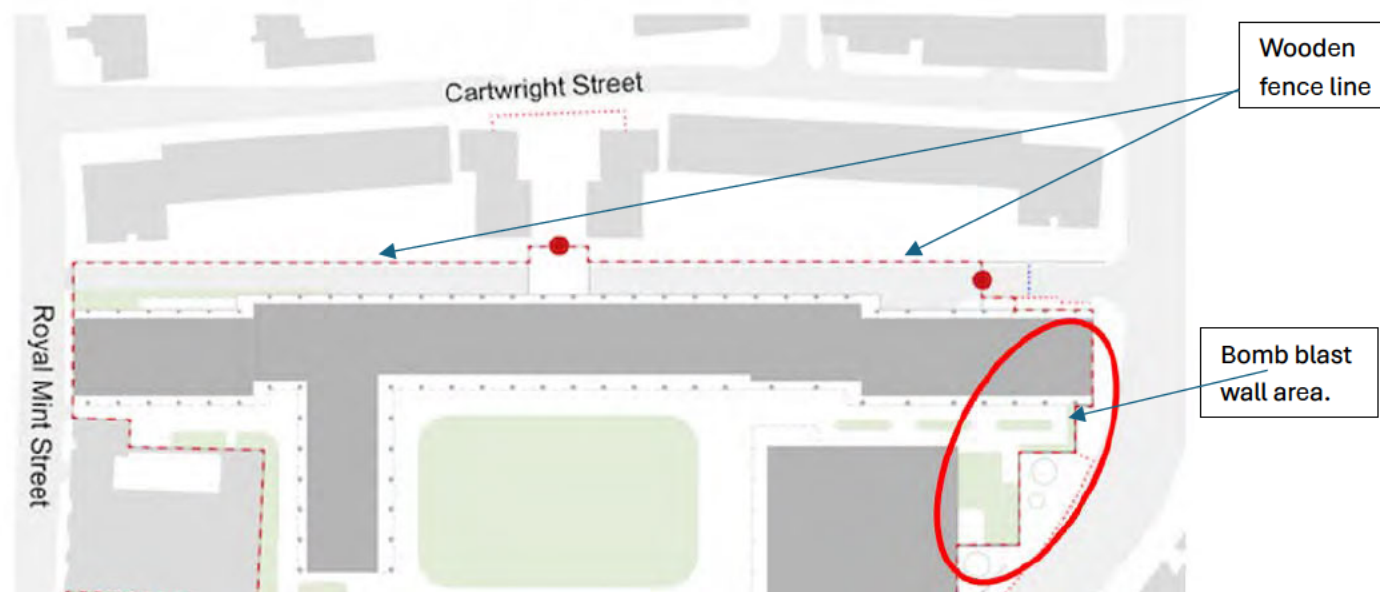
22. Based on this threat they had designed and submitted for planning application approval, secure lines of HVM bollards around the site and at least one blast wall, (area circled above) to protect this side of the embassy from a vehicle bomb blast at the service road entrance (top right) see previous page.

23. They also prescribed protective glazing to protect Embassy windows against bomb blasts but said the windows of St Mary Graces Court, inside the proposed Embassy HVM line and adjacent to the service road areas within the range bomb blasts could occur, were not protected.
24. Cundall said the mitigation measures above would reduce the risk, threat and impact of vehicle bombs and vehicle attacks to a moderate level for the proposed Embassy only. They confirmed there was no blast protection for St May Graces Court within the same blast range as the proposed Embassy protective measures.
25. Cundall also said the threat and risk of vehicle bombs and other types of bombs to St Mary Graces's Court was not included in their security design and mitigation measures.
26. In the section of their design specific to us and our homes in St Mary Grace's Court, we were immediately concerned by the HVM bollards in front of Cartwright Plaza at Cartwright Street see below. These are directly opposite the Chinese Government officials pedestrian gate access into the proposed Embassy House.



27. We asked Cundall why they had designed these bollards here and they stated it was because they had identified a threat of vehicle as a weapon against Chinese officials in this area.
28. They also said the HVM bollards at the Cartwright Street boundary would provide setback for any vehicle bomb directed at the proposed Embassy House 200 apartment Chinese officials' accommodation block.

29. On hearing this we were even more alarmed and fearful because the rear and within St Mary Grace's Court had been identified by Cundall and the Chinese Government as a vulnerable place where the threat of vehicle bombs and terrorist attacks was so high, they had to design in protective security measures to counter this threat.
30. By placing the HVM bollards in front of us, it would turn us, our homes and the nursery school into a human shield, taking the full force of any type of bomb and attack from Cartwright Street and within Cartwright Plaza.
31. In addition, any hostile protests or persons hostile to the Chinese government officials and the Embassy could easily target this vulnerability at the rear of the Embassy.
32. In our opinion, this threat, vulnerability and high risk the Chinese Government is bringing to us is common sense, and you do not even need to be a security expert to see this.
33. Equally with regards to Cundall designing a blast wall in the above and below area circled and designing vehicle HVM security air locks at the service road entrance, they acknowledge the threat.
34. It is also common sense there is a flaw in their security design by not putting a vehicle HVM security airlock on the service exit road into Royal Mint Street, meaning terrorists and protestors can easily target this area and St Mary Grace's Court being impacted by any attack.
35. Cundall also confirmed that what is supposed to be a secure line shown along the border with St Mary Grace's Court, would be just a wooden fence (shown next page).
36. The design for this wooden fence submitted in the planning application is at its lowest point just 1.1m and highest 3m.



37. When we asked Cundall what protection a wooden fence would give us from a vehicle bomb blast at the service road entrance (or the unsecure service road exit), they said the fence, us and our homes would be 'toast' but the Embassy and the Chinese Government officials would be protected by the blast wall and protective glazing.
38. What Cundall told us regarding a bomb blast in this area was also confirmed by a bomb blast survey commissioned by LBTH. Public documents in the planning application available online confirmed there would be injuries, deaths and building structural damage and potential collapse.
39. Following the meeting with Cundall we asked the Chinese Embassy, our superior landlord, if they would provide us as their tenants, the same protective security measures against bomb blast attacks as they had provided in their security design for the proposed Embassy.
40. The fact that the Chinese Government and Cundall designed in these measures, especially their own blast wall told us they considered there was a likely and foreseeable threat and risk of a vehicle or other type of bomb attack against the Embassy if it was built and we would be either collateral damage or a human shield for them in the event of such a bomb blast.

41. We also saw within the planning application a recommendation that refuse bins in publically accessible spaces should be reviewed and potentially removed to reduce any potential risk of terrorist attacks, whereby we take it refuse bins are used as containers to put bombs inside.
42. Because we are the only publicly accessible residential accommodation within the land owned by the Chinese government in Royal Mint Court and especially within Cartwright Plaza where their officials would access the proposed Embassy House, we take it to be the advice to remove refuse bins is reflective of a terrorism threat from improvised explosives, specific to within Saint Mary Grace's Court.
43. Based on the above we decided to oppose the first planning application submitted in 2021, even though we had no funding and were 'David' to the 'Goliath' of the Chinese Government and their UK Embassy.
44. To help do this we asked a security consulting company we know to conduct a security design peer review of the Cundall security design submitted on behalf of the Chinese Government.
45. The security design peer review report was provided to us on a voluntary basis, because at that time as a small Resident's Association we had no funding.
46. When we received the peer review report, it confirmed our fears with regards to what we consider to be the very high threat, vulnerabilities and high risk of terrorist attacks and protests against the proposed Embassy. In addition, the report identified major security design flaws in relation to access through and bordering with St Mary Grace's Court.
47. We submitted our opposition to the 2021 application and included the peer review report to LBTH. At this time in 2021, the peer review report was also submitted to the Chinese Embassy (who provided it to Cundall) and to the Metropolitan Police, London Mayor's Office and other relevant bodies involved with the planning application. Following the submission not one of these bodies including Chinese Government replied to us to refute any of the contents of the report. Also, Cundall did not refute the security design flaws identified in the peer review report.
48. In 2022 I spoke at the LBTH Planning Application hearing and to mine and the Resident's pleasant surprise as 'David v Goliath', the LBTH found in our favour and rejected the Chinese Government's application, based in part on our security concerns and fears and the peer review report.

49. The LBTH decision was then referred to The Mayor of London's Office where it was upheld. At the time we received extensive national and international news coverage regarding the decision on how we as a tiny resident's association were able to successfully oppose one of the superpowers of the world.
50. We also learned that shortly after the decision to reject the application, the Cundall security consultant who made the security design and who we met, was let go from Cundall's employ and sadly since last year is deceased.
51. Fighting the application took an extreme amount of personal fortitude and involved a lot of stress. Because it was the Chinese Government who play the long game, we had a feeling we had not heard the last of them and the stress did not go away.
52. Sure enough and about 2 years later, two weeks after the General Election in 2024 when Labour came to power, we received word that the Chinese Government had resubmitted the same planning application and security design.

Chinese Embassy 2nd Planning Application

53. In September 2024 we submitted a letter of objection to LBTH to oppose the 2nd planning application. LBTH replied to say the application had been 'called-in' by the UK government and the application would be subject to an Inquiry led by a Planning Inspector with the final decision being made by The Secretary of State.
54. In response to this, the LBTH still held a symbolic review of their own and again rejected the application. By calling the application in, in our view this turned the application into a political decision and appeared to result in flip-flopping of subsequent opposition to the application by the Metropolitan Police and LBTH.
55. To be represented at the Inquiry, the applicant and those opposed could apply for what is known as Rule 6 status or give representations as an Interested Party. Rule 6 status would enable full involvement in the Inquiry, would have allowed us to be represented by expert witnesses and be represented by a Barrister.
56. We applied for and were approved for R6 status in November 2024. During this period, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Specialist Operations Counter Terrorism Policing Jon Savell wrote to LBTH on the 14th of November, expressing his concerns about the proposed Embassy and the protests it would likely attract. DAC Savell also wrote in his letter to LBTH that he was aware of, acknowledged and understood the objections raised in the security design peer review report we had submitted and he specifically wrote:

'The vulnerability of the residents of St Mary Graces Court should not be discounted'.

57. A date was set for the Inquiry as 11th – 19th February and the Chinese Government appointed a KC barrister to represent them and a security expert. We had very limited funds and appointed a barrister but needed crowd funding to get full representation of legal services as a Rule 6 party.
58. Unfortunately, and without warning, I was taken into hospital intensive care after Christmas and had to undergo emergency surgery. As a retired person, the situation with the Chinese Government has been a constant demand on me since 2018 and is taking a toll on my mental and physical health.
59. Because of this I decided as Chairman it was unreasonable to ask other members of the RMCRA to give evidence at short notice. I was also mindful that some residents fear the Chinese Government may target them in some way for opposing the application.
60. The first is the Chinese Embassy's decision in 2020 to extend their boundary and build a wall around it's Consulate in Belfast without additional planning permission, (after their initial permission had been granted). To prevent the local residents and High Court taking legal action against them, the Chinese Government declared Diplomatic Immunity and the local residents were powerless to object further.
61. This is something we are concerned may happen with us if the Chinese Government are granted the application. Just like in Belfast, if their application is granted, they could in future declare Diplomatic Immunity and do what they wanted.
62. The second is the case in Manchester on the 16th of October 2022, when a protester was dragged onto the Chinese consulate grounds and beaten. The Consul General Zheng Xiyuan was among those accused of assault. The Chinese officials claimed diplomatic immunity, declined to be interviewed by the police and returned to China. Hardly 'peaceful actions', more like the actions of a 'state threat'.
63. Therefore, because of my health, in January we gave notice to the Planning Inspectorate we would be an Interested Party rather than Rule 6 Party.
64. This meant we would not be able to cross examine through a barrister any security witnesses representing Chinese government or provide our own security expert witness, only provide a statement read out by our Barrister on the first day on the Inquiry, which we did.

65. This was also unfortunate because it would give the Chinese Governments' security witness a free pass to say what he liked at the Inquiry, supported by his KC, with the only questioning being from the Planning Inspector who had no security expertise.
66. However, we did continue with the Crowdfunding to ensure representation of a barrister through the Inquiry and onwards as an action fund to keep on fighting. Below is the status of our Crowdfunding page and it can be viewed on the link below.¹

Explore +Extra funding Stories About

David v Goliath 2 save us from the Chinese Embassy

by Royal Mint Court Residents Association in London, Greater London, United Kingdom

SPOTLIGHT
www.Firstpost.com

London: Protesters Clash with Police as They Oppose China's ...

LONDON FUMES OVER CHINA "SPY EMBASSY"



Watch on  YouTube

David v Goliath 2 - please help save our little community from the mighty power of the Chinese Government.

**£41,312**
raised so far

1058
supporters

Donate

Nicholas Aldworth on Behalf of the Chinese Government as a CSyP

67. Towards the end of January, the Chinese Government submitted their security proof of evidence to the Inquiry. It is at this point we learned that their security representative who produced this evidence was Nicholas Aldworth.

¹ <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/david-v-goliath-save-us-from-the-chinese-embassy>

68. Below is the front cover of his Proof of Evidence submitted to the Inquiry and now a public record. We note he uses his CSyP designation to oppose us and represent 'on behalf of' the Chinese Government through The Chinese Embassy in the UK.

**CALL IN INQUIRY INTO THE APPLICATION BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK FOR
THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE TO PROVIDE AN EMBASSY (SUI GENERIS USE
CLASS), INVOLVING THE REFURBISHMENT AND RESTORATION OF THE JOHNSON
SMIRKE BUILDING (GRADE II LISTED), PARTIAL DEMOLITION, REMODELLING AND
REFURBISHMENT OF SEAMANS REGISTRY (GRADE II LISTED), WITH ALTERATIONS
TO THE WEST ELEVATION OF THE BUILDING, THE RETENTION, PART DEMOLITION,
ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO MURRAY HOUSE AND DEXTER HOUSE, THE
ERECTION OF A STANDALONE ENTRANCE PAVILLION BUILDING, ALTERATIONS
TO THE EXISTING BOUNDARY WALL AND DEMOLITION OF SUBSTATION,
ASSOCIATED PUBLIC REALM AND LANDSCAPING. HIGHWAY WORKS, CAR AND
CYCLE PARKING AND ALL ANCILLARY AND ASSOCIATED WORKS AT ROYAL MINT
COURT, LONDON EC3N 4QN**

PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF NICHOLAS ALDWORTH MPA CSyP

On behalf of

THE CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK

69. In his 'Proof of Evidence', Mr Aldworth provided a 'Statement of Truth' as follows

"I confirm that my evidence to this inquiry has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of my Professional Institutions and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions".

70. By 'Professional Institution' we take this to include the Registrar of Chartered Security Professionals and because he uses the CSyP designation in his evidence on behalf of the Chinese Government, a foreign power state threat designated within the The National Security Act 2023, guidelines to security professionals.

71. We note that within the guidance of the Registrar of Chartered Security Professionals is a Code of Professional Conduct. In our opinion, through him opposing us as residents and members of the British Public on behalf of the Chinese Government, his conduct in doing so, is in breach of your Code and its 'four fundamental principals'. Also, in our opinion, him acting on behalf of the Chinese Government is potentially in breach of The National Security Act 2023.

The National Security Act 2023

72. So far as we are aware, Mr Aldworth has been acting on behalf of the Chinese Government on this Inquiry since at least December 2024 when we were informed the Chinese Government had appointed a security consultant to represent them. Potentially, because of a Chinese and American Embassy security information disclosure request he included in his Proof of Evidence, he has been acting on behalf of the Chinese Government since 2023.
73. We were surprised why any UK security consultant would choose to represent the Chinese Government against members of the British Public, especially when both the LBTH and the London Mayor's Office rejected their first planning application.
74. When we knew it was Mr Aldworth and did some online research on him, we were even more surprised to learn as reported by the national media, he was a former senior police officer responsible for the security oversight of the Palace of Westminster and Westminster Bridge when they were attacked by terrorists in 2017.
75. We were even more surprised and concerned when we learned that that Mr Aldworth did not assess or foresee the threat of an attack on Westminster Bridge, as the national media quoted him saying at the time and during the Coroner's Inquiry into the attack.
76. Also more disturbingly, as reported in national media, officers serving under Mr Aldworth at the time of this attack claimed he had 'blood on his hands' regarding the police officer who died in the attack. We will come to this incident regarding his conduct and your Code.
77. When researching Mr Aldworth, we also came across the National Security Act 2023. As both members of the public and residents being opposed by him on behalf of the Chinese Government, a designated 'state threat', we were even more shocked and disturbed.
78. We note Mr Aldworth served in both the military and the police. When he joined up in both, he would have sworn an oath of allegiance to Queen (now King) and Country, not to or on behalf of the Chinese Government.

79. In the footnote below is a link to the National Security Act 2013, it came into force in December 2023, over 12 months before Mr Aldworth submitted his Proof of Evidence on behalf of the Chinese Government, against us.²

80. We are not lawyers but our common sense as members of the public draws your attention to the following from the Act. I have also highlighted in pages 1 (pdf page 9) and page 24 (pdf page 32) of the Act attached with this letter.

Part 1 of the National Security Act 2013 – Acting for Foreign Powers.

Section 1 Obtaining or disclosing protected information (1) A person commits an offence if— (a) the person— (i) obtains, copies, records or retains protected information, or (ii) discloses or provides access to protected information, (b) the person’s conduct is for a purpose that they know, or having regard to other matters known to them ought reasonably to know, is prejudicial to the safety or interests of the United Kingdom, and (c) the foreign power condition is met in relation to the person’s conduct (see section 31).

(2) In this section “protected information” means any information, document or other article where, for the purpose of protecting the safety or interests of the United Kingdom— (a) access to the information, document or other article is restricted in any way, or (b) it is reasonable to expect that access to the information, document or other article would be restricted in any way.

Section 31 The foreign power condition (referenced in Section 1 further above)

31.1 (a) and (b)

*For the purposes of this Part the foreign power condition is met in relation to a person’s conduct if—
the conduct in question, or a course of conduct of which it forms part, is carried out for or on behalf of a foreign power, and
the person knows, or having regard to other matters known to them ought reasonably to know, that to be the case.*

31.5 The foreign power condition is also met in relation to a person’s conduct if the person intends the conduct in question to benefit a foreign power.

81. On the 24th of January 2025, before the Planning Inquiry on the 11th of February 2025, the UK Government issued guidance to security professionals on how to comply with the National Security Act.

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/32/contents>

The link to this guidance is below and I have also provided it attached with this letter and highlighted what we consider the relevant parts, also provided further below.³



82. In relation to the specific sections we highlight in the Act, these are the following points from the guidance we consider relevant to Mr Aldworth acting on behalf of the Chinese Government.

- *UK security professionals are at risk of being approached by certain states to undertake activities in the UK due to their access to valuable sources of information.*
- *You may be asked to gather information from a range of sources to support a state actor's strategic aims.*
- *Tactics can include collecting information about design, configuration and operation for technical access*
- *You can find some example scenarios of how this activity might manifest within the security sector at Annex A.*
- *You may be at risk of committing an offence if the work you are undertaking could assist a foreign power in carrying out activities against the UK. For example, you may face prosecution if:*
- *You obtain, copy, record, retain, disclose, or provide access to protected information and your conduct, or course of conduct of which it forms apart, is carried out for or on behalf of a foreign power.*

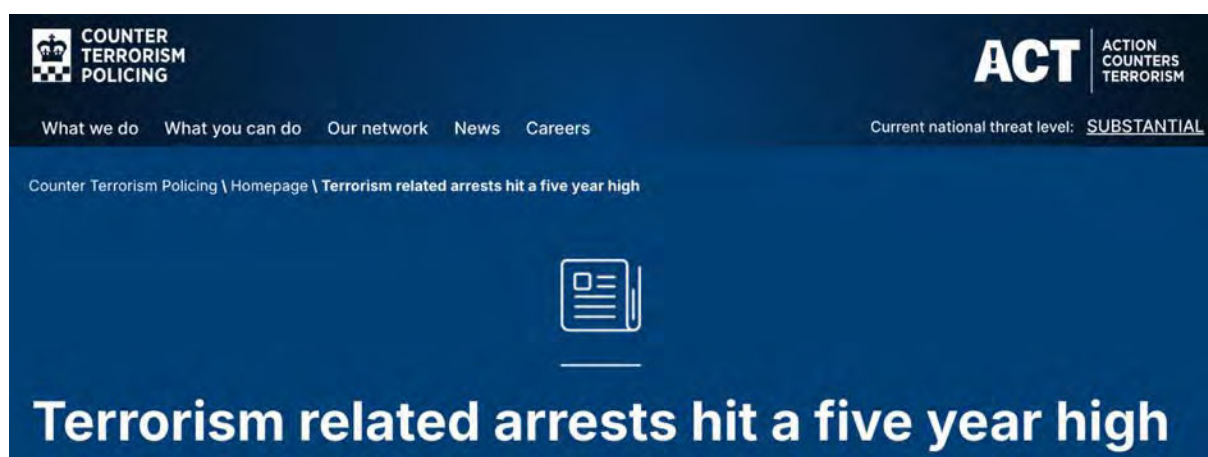
³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complying-with-the-national-security-act-2023-security-professionals/a-guide-to-the-national-security-act-2023-for-security-professionals-accessible>

- Which states should I be worried about?
- The heads of MI5 and SIS have spoken about the growing threat from states, with the Director General of MI5 previously confirming that the threat predominantly comes from **Russia, Iran and China**.
- How will I know that I have been approached by a state actor?
- Could the activity they are asking you to carry out fall under any of the behaviours outlined above? (e.g. gathering sensitive information on an individual or national infrastructure)
- If you answer 'yes' to one or more of these questions, you should strongly consider whether you take on the contract for that client.

Example scenario C

- Business A was offered a contract to undertake security consultancy on the construction, in the UK, of a building by a foreign government. During that contract, Business A was asked to disclose measures used to protect UK government buildings. Business A provides this UK government information to the foreign government, committing an offence under the National Security Act 2023.

83. On the 13th of March 2025, UK Counter Terrorism Policing stated the following on their website:⁴



Over 20 percent of CTP's casework is now focussed on protecting the UK against state threat activity. This involves using the National Security Act and other legislation to counter hostile actions from parts of states such as Russia, China and Iran.

⁴ <https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/terrorism-related-arrests-hit-a-five-year-high/>

84. In addition to the government issuing guidelines to security professionals regarding the National Security Act and naming China, as a 'state threat', there is now the perverse situation of Mr Aldworth as the former National Terrorism Security Co-ordinator acting on behalf of the Chinese Government when, according to the announcement from UK Counter Terrorism Policing above, there is an increase in terrorism driven by hostile actions by China.

85. The United States of America has also expressed concerns about the proposed Embassy. On the 20th of February the Evening Standard reported ⁵

Controversial plans for China's 'super embassy' in central London pose a "significant" security risk, US lawmakers have warned. Senators on the US Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party warned the proposed site in Tower Hamlets risked "interference and surveillance" from Beijing and "risks for sensitive infrastructure like London's financial services".

The committee, led by Republican John Moolenaar, hinted the plans should be dropped, saying: "We must work to urgently address this issue and work with our allies to protect national security."

86. This concern was backed up by the Congress of the United States in a letter to Peter Mandelson, the UK Ambassador to America on the 26th of February, see also attached with this letter.⁶

87. Extracts from this letter are as follows:

We are writing before the upcoming meeting between Prime Minister Keir Starmer and President Donald J. Trump to register our concern about the proposed plans for a new and expanded Chinese "super-embassy" on the site of the Royal Mint Court in London.

the Chinese Communist government is committing atrocities against Uyghurs and Tibetans, uses torture against political prisoners, and employs almost daily military and "grey zone" threats to intimidate the people of Taiwan—including cutting cables, a tactic we have seen employed in the Baltic as well.

*Moreover, conceding the Chinese Communist government such a prominent diplomatic foothold in the UK will only embolden its efforts to intimidate and **harass UK citizens** and dissidents and experts across Europe who oppose or*

⁵ <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/china-embassy-london-security-risk-tower-hamlets-b1212362.html>

⁶ https://selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/Letter%20to%20UK%20Ambassador%20--%20PRC%20Embassy%20in%20London%20II_2.pdf

criticize its policies. China's transnational repression operations are well-documented in the UK and throughout Europe.

88. It also seems perverse that given that The Register of Chartered Security Professionals was established under a Royal Charter issued to the Worshipful Company of Security Professionals and the Worshipful Company of Security Professionals is a Livery company of the City of London, you have a situation where Mr Aldworth as a Chartered Security Professional by acting on behalf of the Chinese government to get permission to build a Chinese Embassy, may be acting detrimentally to the City of London.

Potential Offence Committed Under the National Security Act 2023

89. We are not lawyers or experts on the National Security Act, but it appears that based on Section 1 and Section 31 of the National Security Act and the government guidelines provided to security professionals, there may be a case for investigation of a potential offence committed by Mr Aldworth under this Act.

90. It may be that Mr Aldworth has not done this intentionally, but he must have been aware of the Act and its significance to him acting on behalf of the Chinese Government.

91. Section 1 as stated further above, relates to '*Obtaining or disclosing protected information*' and the Act's guidelines for security professionals' states: '*You may be asked to gather information from a range of sources to support a state actor's strategic aims*'.

92. Section 31 states '*the foreign power condition is met in relation to a person's conduct if— is carried out for or on behalf of a foreign power*' and also states '*The foreign power condition is also met in relation to a person's conduct if the person intends the conduct in question to benefit a foreign power*'.

93. The Example scenario C given in the guidelines (further above) is almost identical to the situation with Mr Aldworth, in this case seeking planning application approval is substituted for construction and if approval is gained because of him acting on behalf of the Chinese Government, construction on the Royal Mint Court site will follow.

94. Regarding meeting the conditions of Section 31 of the Act, Mr Aldworth has stated on the front cover of his Proof of Evidence he is acting on behalf of the Chinese Government, through the Chinese Embassy.

95. Section 31 conditions are also met in that by acting on behalf of the Chinese Government to achieve the aim of planning application approval, his conduct will

significantly benefit the Chinese government by enabling them to be granted permission to build a 'super embassy'.

96. Regarding meeting the condition of Section 1, '*Obtaining or disclosing protected information*'. There may be two cases relevant to this as follows:

- Within his evidence to the Planning Inquiry Mr Aldworth stated '*Off-site screening is one of the methods for protecting Parliament from vehicle borne attacks*'
- Within Appendix 2 of his Proof of Evidence he made freedom of information requests on behalf of the Chinese Government on data relating to the number of protests, number of crimes in the last five years against Chinese and American Embassies in London, the number of police hours involved in responding to and managing protests at the Chinese and American Embassies and the cost of policing the Chinese and American Embassy in London.

97. We are not experts in knowing what is protected information, but common sense seems to dictate that disclosing protective measures on how Parliament is protected against terrorist attacks should not be shared with the designated state threat foreign power of China. Especially when, as reported by Counter Terrorism Policing (see further above) that:

Over 20 percent of CTP's casework is now focussed on protecting the UK against state threat activity. This involves using the National Security Act and other legislation to counter hostile actions from parts of states such as Russia, China and Iran

98. As members of the public, it is also concerning that Mr Aldworth, formerly responsible for the protective security oversight of Parliament and no doubt privy to protected information about the security of Parliament and other national critical infrastructure in his former role of National Coordinator of Counter Terrorism in the UK, is now acting on behalf of the Chinese Government.

99. It asks the question, what other protected information or otherwise may he have inadvertently provided when acting for them.

100. Regarding the freedom of information requests on policing of Embassies, would the American Government be happy to know that Mr Aldworth was trying to get information on behalf of the Chinese Government on how their Embassy was policed in London and then if he was successful in that request, provide it to the Chinese government?

101. Is attempting to gather protest activity against the Chinese Embassy on behalf of the Chinese Government, what a UK security professional and former National Coordinator of Counter Terrorism should be doing when the guidelines to The National Security Act state:

UK security professionals are at risk of being approached by certain states to undertake activities in the UK due to their access to valuable sources of information.

You may be asked to gather information from a range of sources to support a state actor's strategic aims.

102. In the case of Mr Aldworth attempting to gain information on Embassies mentioned above on behalf of the Chinese Government, it appears the intention was this information would prove valuable to them in support of their strategic aim of being granted planning permission for a 'super embassy'

103. A copy of the information requested by Mr Aldworth is provided in the Appendix to this letter. Also of note is the response from the Metropolitan Police to his request is dated the 4th January 2024. This indicates that Mr Aldworth has been acting on behalf of the Chinese Government from at least 4th January and from when the National Security Act came into force in December 2023.

104. It may also be, and your records will show this, that when Mr Aldworth was applying for his Chartered status, he may have already been acting on behalf of the Chinese Government.

Registrar of Chartered Security Professionals Code of Professional Conduct

105. We note that in the first paragraph of your code it states:

All registrants are required to comply with its requirements as part of their ongoing registration. Failure to do so will result in an application being rejected or registration being suspended or revoked (see the Disciplinary Process).

106. The Code then provides 'four fundamental principles that guide a Registrant in achieving the high ideals of professional life' with a short summary (shown below) and additional advisory bullet points regarding the required Conduct for each one.

Professional Competence

'Security professionals have a duty to ensure that they acquire and use wisely and faithfully, the knowledge and security skills that are relevant to their work in the service of others and their organisation.'

Honesty and Integrity

‘Security professionals shall adopt the highest standards of conduct, openness, fairness, and honesty in all professional and business relationships’.

Respect for life, law and the public good

‘Security professionals shall give due weight to all relevant law, facts and published guidance, international human rights standards, and the wider public interest’.

Responsible leadership

‘Security professionals shall aspire to high standards of leadership. They hold a privileged and trusted position in society and are expected to demonstrate that they are seeking to serve wider society and to be sensitive to public concerns’.

107. Regarding your Code of Professional Conduct and the specific criteria of the Four Principals, Mr Aldworth’s use of his CSyP registration to collaborate with and act on behalf of the Chinese Government appears to be a collective breach of your code. Specifically, we ask of you:

- **Principal 1: Professional Competence**

Is acting on behalf of the Chinese government in potential breach of the National Security Act ensuring wise use of security knowledge and skills, acting competently and with care?

- **Principal 2: Honesty and Integrity**

Is acting on behalf of the Chinese government to overturn the UK democratically elected LBTH and the London Mayor’s office decision not to award planning permission an example of acting with integrity and the best use of the CSyP designation?

Is acting on behalf of the Chinese government in potential breach of the National Security Act and given their threats to invade Taiwan and allegations of crimes against humanity and repression, an example of the highest standards of professional conduct, acting honourably, responsibly, diligently, lawfully to uphold the reputation, standing and dignity of the security profession?

Is acting on behalf of the Chinese government respecting the rights of the members of the public, local community and residents who will be adversely impacted by any decision to award a planning application in favour of the Chinese Government?

- **Principal 3: Respect for life, law and the public good**

Is acting on behalf of the Chinese government in potential breach of the National Security Act acting in accordance with the laws of the UK and international human rights standards (given the well-known record of Human Rights violations the Chinese government are accused of by Human Rights organisations), holding paramount the health and safety of the RMCRA and local community and taking appropriate measures in line with current legal requirements when handling proprietary and sensitive information.

Acting on behalf of the Chinese government may also result in Human Rights violations against the RMCRA if the planning application is approved (see Impact section of this letter).

- **Principal 4: Responsible leadership**

Is acting on behalf of the Chinese government in potential breach of the National Security Act being a positive role model for others in the security profession?

Is it demonstrating a service to UK society that is sensitive to public concerns, considers the threat to National Security it could result in, considers the aspirations of the RMCRA and local community to live a peaceful and uninterrupted life, free from constant fears of concern for their safety?

108. We will leave the above for you to decide, which if any of the above breaches of your Code of Professional conduct. Additionally, we would ask you to consider the following with regards to Mr Aldworth's conduct and evidence provided for the Planning Inquiry.

Additional Considerations Regarding Mr Aldworth's Professional Conduct

109. In addition to the potential breaches of your Code regarding the National Security Act 2023, we also found demeaning, disrespectful and at times were offended by the

tone and some of the content of Mr Aldworth's written and oral evidence directed at us during the Planning Inquiry

110. To us, Mr Aldworth came across as uncaring, without empathy, was disingenuous, belittling, sanctimonious, misleading and full of his own self-importance bordering on narcissistic.

111. We may not be security experts, but as members of the Royal Mint Court Residents Association and the families and businesses in the estate we represent, we have a diverse background of occupations and experience in life. Especially because we live and work in central London and understand the realities of crime, terrorism threat and protests where we live.

112. Mr Aldworth was provided with the same evidence regarding the security design of the proposed Embassy as we have set out in the opening Background and Context section of this letter, including:

- the design of a bomb blast wall in recognition of a vehicle bomb threat identified by the Chinese Government he is acting on behalf of, to protect the Embassy but nothing to protect us.
- the design of HVM bollards that protect the Embassy but turn us and our homes into a human shield that would be blasted and turned to 'toast'.
- bomb blast modelling that shows our homes would collapse in an explosion and there would be deaths, but we do not get a bomb blast wall, instead we get a wooden fence.
- the recommendation to remove refuse bins from outside our homes in case they are turned into bombs.

113. On knowing the above, he accused us in his evidence of having an exaggerated, irrational and unrealistic fear of a vehicle bomb threat. Yet he does not accuse the Chinese Government or their security design consultants of being exaggerated, irrational or unrealistic for designing in these vehicle bomb and other types of bomb protection measures.

114. Regarding the above, it is Mr Aldworth we consider irrational and his accusations against us offensive.

115. He was even asked by the Planning Inspector in his oral evidence if he understood our fears, to which he replied without empathy or care that our fear was unfounded because we did not understand the difference between threat and risk and that according to him, the threat of a vehicle bomb did not exist. He said to the Inspector:

And my evidence to you, madam, is that as things stand at the moment, that threat doesn't exist, or doesn't exist in the large terms and extravagant terms that are being suggested that people should be worried about.

116. In his written evidence he concluded our fears and concerns were 'baseless'.

117. In our opinion, this is completely misleading and out of context, our fears are based on the security design of the proposed Embassy with the design proposed for when the Embassy is built and operational, not now 'at the moment'.

118. He also states that the existing Chinese Embassy in Portland Place has no security measures in place to protect against terrorist attacks and gives that as his rational for why there is no or only a remote threat of terrorist attacks against the proposed Embassy in Royal Mint Court.

119. Again, we find it is Mr Aldworth being irrational and misleading, the planning application is for Royal Mint Court, a five-acre iconic site, not the small, non-descript site and building that is in Portland Place.

120. He also stated in his oral evidence:

The bit that I am absolutely refuting is this likelihood of a large vehicle attack...which would create devastating consequences for the residents of St Mary Grace Court

and

Their entire case is predicated on this large-scale attack.

121. Our entire case was not predicted on a large-scale vehicle bomb attack. That case can be found set out in the case statement we provided to the Inquiry⁷. It is our greatest fear and concern because this is what the security design of the Embassy provided by Cundall and the Chinese Government is protecting against with their blast wall and bollards.

122. We also highlighted to the Inquiry several other types of terrorist attacks and disruptive protests that we were fearful of and concerned about because of the security design and Cundall's risk assessment.

⁷ <https://towerhamlets.app.box.com/s/68q9lv6thn0w29gt98y5godmes0rizmn/file/1750529958157>

123. In our opinion, Mr Aldworth also misrepresented and misled the Inquiry by claiming to have security design and risk assessment expertise. In his written evidence under the opening section, 'Qualification and Experience,' he states:

I was responsible for all the design advice provided by the Metropolitan Police's Counter-Terrorism Security Advisors, and the MPS's Security Coordinators

And

I have read, or been briefed on, all the relevant information pertaining to security design and assessments for this application, including material proposed by opponents to the scheme, and have made such enquiries as I believe to be necessary to discharge my duties as an expert witness.

And

Where I discuss terrorism in this report, it applies only to the terrorist threats and risks that might apply to this proposed development.

124. However, during his oral evidence, when the Planning Inspector asked Mr Aldworth

You've done a threat assessment. Why haven't you sought to do a risk assessment, just so I'm clear.

125. He replied

I haven't been commissioned to do one. That'd be the principal reason to do a risk assessment would require detailed technical knowledge that is not mine.

and

So, for example, bomb threat assessments, sorry excuse me, explosive impact assessments and vehicle dynamic assessments, those are engineering qualifications that I don't possess, nor have I claimed to possess.

126. Therefore, he went from giving opinion on security design, risk and bomb blasts in his written evidence to say our fears and concerns were 'baseless' to saying in his oral evidence he was not an expert on security design, bomb blasts and risk assessment.

127. Our fears originated from the security design and risk assessment produced by Cundall. We expected the Chinese Government to at least appoint an expert on security design and risk assessment to adequately review our own peer review of

Cundall's design and assessment. We did not expect someone who implied he was such an expert and then changed his mind during the Inquiry to say he was not.

128. Appreciating Mr Aldworth would have declared to you what his security experience qualification and expertise is when he applied to become a CSyP, we leave it with you to assess what his expertise is in giving evidence in this Inquiry.

129. We also bring to your attention that Mr Aldworth misled the Inquiry in his evidence by saying the ISO31000 risk assessment method used by Cundall and his client the Chinese Government to assess risk, is not used for assessing the risk and threat of terrorism at an individual site location.

130. We are not experts in this standard, but we are aware of it and so is your affiliated Security Institute, who advocate ISO 31000 for their SABRE security design risk management process.⁸

A common framework

The SABRE framework is aligned to the risk management process central to ISO 31000, and is easy to follow. It guides the user through thematic areas; each of which contributes to a successful security outcome.

Within the framework are 'minimum standards', meaning that (no matter what level of certification is achieved) the activities critical to meaningful risk management have been undertaken.

It is also advocated by Protect UK (created by NPSA), the National Counter Terrorism Security Office and Counter Terrorism Policing see below.⁹



8

<https://www.security-institute.org/sabre-get-certified/>

9

<https://www.npsa.gov.uk/blog/security-planning/introducing-protectuk>

131. In his oral evidence Mr Aldworth misleadingly stated ISO 31000 is grounded in health and safety assessments for constructions sites, when as can be seen above, it is for security design and terrorism risk assessments conducted by Cundall for the Chinese Government and their proposed security design.

132. Where Mr Aldworth says he is an expert in threat assessment, we also find this concerning.

133. When Mr Aldworth was a senior police officer during the terrorist attack on Westminster bridge and Parliament, he was, as reported in the national media, called to present evidence at the coroner's Inquiry into the deaths following the attack, including a police officer who died.

134. A BBC news article ¹⁰at the time of this Inquiry in 2018 and many other news articles available online, see link below quoted Mr Aldworth as saying Westminster Bridge was not seen "as a specific location for a specific threat" and there was no need "to mitigate against that threat".

135. The article states:

Security barriers were not installed on London's Westminster Bridge ahead of the March 2017 attack there because it was not judged to be a likely terror target, a senior policeman has said.

The bridge links Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament, and the London Eye - all major tourist sites.

Four pedestrians and a police officer were killed during the attack launched by Khalid Masood.

The inquest into their deaths is taking place at the Old Bailey in London.

Chief Superintendent Nick Aldworth, who is responsible for protective security in London, was asked why crash barriers were not in place, especially after two deadly vehicle attacks in Nice and Berlin where the perpetrators drove into crowds of people.

He told Gareth Patterson QC, representing the victims' families, that the bridge was not seen "as a specific location for a specific threat", and there was no need "to mitigate against that threat".

Kurt Cochran, 54, Leslie Rhodes, 75, Aysha Frade, 44, and Andreea Cristea, 31, were killed when Masood drove an SUV into them on the bridge.

¹⁰ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-45640007>

PC Keith Palmer was stabbed to death while on duty outside Parliament.

136. Mr Aldworth's track record in predicating terrorist threats does not fill us with confidence and increases our fears when he says there is no specific terrorist threat to our location.
137. More concerning to us, although not proven, are the many media articles at this time quoting police officers who served under Mr Aldworth claiming Mr Aldworth had 'blood on his hands' regarding this terrorist attack and the death of one of their fellow police officers.
138. We have never heard of these publically made types of accusations against senior police officers regarding other terrorist attacks (we conducted online research and did not find any). It seems that Mr Aldworth is alone as the only senior police officer to have these accusations made against him.
139. Examples of newspapers that reported this range from The Times¹¹ to The Daily Mail¹²

Britain's most senior terror protection officer was accused of "having blood on his hands" as he admitted that Westminster Bridge had not been considered in need of extra protection.

The bridge was assessed after the Berlin and Nice vehicle attacks in 2016 but "did not meet the criteria" for protection barriers to be installed.

Nicholas Aldworth was in charge of protective security for the Metropolitan Police prior to the Westminster attack. He told the inquest at the Old Bailey into the deaths of the victims that the bridge was not considered a high risk.

Messages posted on Facebook from four officers were sent anonymously to lawyers representing the widow of Mr Palmer and read out yesterday at the Old Bailey inquest into the deaths of Masood's victims.

¹¹ <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/crime/article/terror-protection-boss-tells-inquest-that-barriers-were-not-needed-on-westminster-bridge-c8wthzqgl>

¹² <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6207843/PC-Keith-Palmers-colleague-blasts-senior-security-officer-day-Westminster-terror-attack.html>

One officer accused Mr Aldworth of threatening him with the sack when he questioned the merit of making marksmen carry out roving patrols.

Mr Aldworth ‘bullied and swore’ at the officer after a complaint was made against him, it was said¹³.

140. Even though as we understand these allegations appear unfounded, because Mr Aldworth continued his police career after they were made, retiring in 2019. It is still disturbing to read these type of news stories regarding him.

141. Mr Aldworth, by his own admission in his oral evidence, is prone to ridiculing and making contemptuous remarks about police officers. In his oral evidence, he said to the Inquiry:

The context of that was a public presentation in which I was deriding police officers and military officers who set themselves up as security experts.

142. The above was regards to a video of a presentation made by Mr Aldworth in 2023 on YouTube whereby Mr Aldworth stated he was not a security expert. At the Inquiry he said he was joking when he said he was not an expert, but we consider he most definitely was not, and we ask you to watch the video at the time shown in the link below to make up your own mind

“Ex-police officers are not security experts; ex-soldiers are not security experts... ...They are experts at soldiering and policing... I don’t consider myself a security expert... ...you need to find people who’ve got that pedigree of both that experience and qualification....¹⁴

143. What is not a joke is that he appears happy to ‘deride’ in public his fellow former police officers.

144. There are many other examples of how Mr Alworth misled the Inquiry, derided, disregarded and downplayed our fears and concerns. We can provide additional evidence of his if required.

145. One example key example is where he said:

¹³ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6207843/PC-Keith-Palmers-colleague-blasts-senior-security-officer-day-Westminster-terror-attack.html>

¹⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_uJn6WKteA at 39 minutes and 17 seconds

- *Despite the fears of such things, we must be led by evidence and not conjecture.*
- *The evidence is that there is a remote chance that a UK-based diaspora has either the capability or intent to conduct a high-consequence terrorist attack against the Proposed Development or indeed the current PRC embassy*

In the above he twisted our evidence, we never said there was a threat from terrorism from UK-based Chinese diaspora, we said this threat came from extremist Islamic terrorist groups who have attacked Chinese Embassies and Consulates in other countries. We noted in the evidence in the Inquiry the Al - Qaeda manual states that Embassies and bridges are key targets for terrorists' attacks and that was our concern and fear for the Royal Mint Court site.

With regards to protests he said

- *It is reasonable to assume therefore that protests are generally peaceful and do not unreasonably or unlawfully disrupt the community as has been suggested by the RMCRA.*

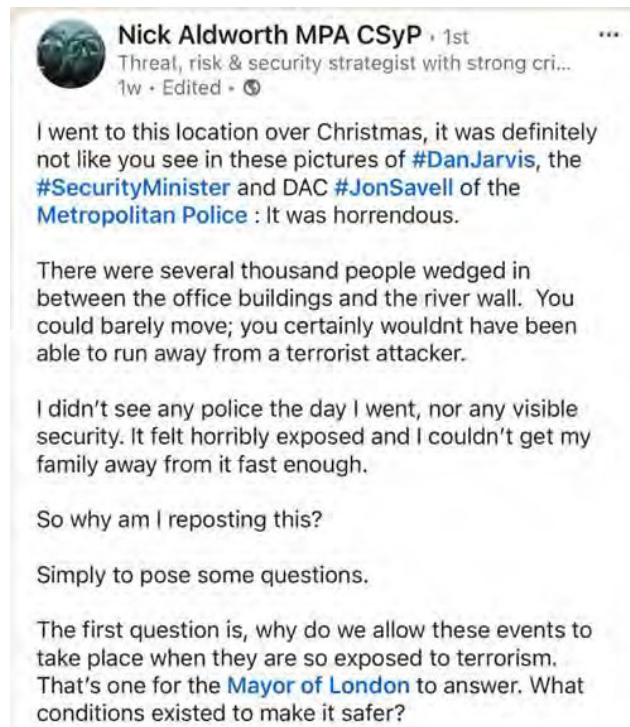
146. Our concern and fear are for violent and disruptive protests if the Embassy opens and in the future China invades Taiwan or causes further human rights, environmental or state threat actions that could cause violent protests.
147. Since the Inquiry there have already been two large protests against the Embassy planning application on the 8th of February 2025 and 15th March 2025. They have been largely peaceful protests in support of our cause but disruptive to traffic and the usual calm of our daily life on these days.
148. The second protest was much larger than the first one and involved thousands of people outside Royal Mint Court and impacted the public, traffic and tourists around the Tower of London and Tower Bridge Road.
149. These are already far bigger protests that Mr Aldworth said they would be in his evidence to the Inquiry, see pictures below and involved considerable police resources to maintain law and order.





150. On behalf of the Chinese Government, Mr Aldworth opposed the contents and opinion of Deputy Assistant Commissioner Jon Savell's letter to LBTH in support of our fears of protests and terrorist attacks. (mentioned earlier in this letter in the Background and Context Section). What we saw above in February and March protests, more closely represented DAC Savell's concerns, than Mr Aldworth's.

151. It also appears Mr Aldworth has other issues with DAC Savell by making what appears to be a negative comment against him and Security Minister Dan Jarvis in a linked in post Mr Aldworth made over Christmas. The screen shot of the linked in post is below next page.



152. Mr Aldworth is entitled to an opinion about at the time we believe Christmas markets in London, but as a CSyP and your Code of Conduct is this type of opinion and tone of admonishment against a DAC and Government Minister, correct?
153. From our perspective it clearly shows how Mr Aldworth has a very high concern for himself and terrorist threats and public crowds in London (in this case Christmas Markets) when promoting himself on linked in but has no concern and underplays the threats of terrorist attacks and overcrowding caused by protests against us living at the proposed Chinese Embassy at Royal Mint Court site.
154. He says he '*felt horribly exposed*' and '*couldn't get my family away from it fast enough*', but is happy when acting on behalf of the Chinese Embassy to disregard as baseless the 'horribly exposed' fears we have.
155. Unlike Mr Aldworth, we would have to live day to day being 'horribly exposed' to the threat and fear of terrorism and protests and spying on us if he is successful in acting on behalf of the Chinese Government to win their planning application. Unlike his own family, we would not be able to get away 'fast enough'.
156. Mr Aldworth asked the Mayor of London below '*why do we allow these events to take place when they are so exposed to terrorism*'. We hope your question to him is how is he happy for us, protestors and tourists to be exposed to terrorism attacks by turning the outside of Royal Mint Court, Tower of London and Tower Bridge into a crowded place as shown in our pictures above and why this is not 'horrendous' for us.

157. Our other question and we hope is yours, is why is Mr Aldworth calling out the Mayor of London about terrorist threats in this linked in post, but he is happy to go against the Mayor of London's rejection of the 2021 Royal Mint Court proposed Chinese Embassy planning application because of terrorist and protest threats?
158. It seems when Mr Aldworth is acting on behalf of the Chinese Embassy, he has an entirely different view of terrorist threat and risk appetite from what he posts on linked in.
159. With regards to crime, Mr Aldworth appeared contradictory and offensive to us with some of his statements during the Inquiry.
160. On the one hand he said there would be less crime in our area if there was a new Embassy, then he said we should fear crimes of sexual violence against us more than the fear of terrorism.
161. We also consider the below statement Mr Aldworth gave in his oral evidence unprofessional, bizarre and concerning:

You know, I'm not a young black male living in South London, and therefore the chances of me being caught up in gang violence are minimal, but statistics will show that for a young black male living in the south of London and other parts of London that their exposure to that particular threat is somewhat higher.

162. We do not live in South London, and we are not impacted by gang violence where we live. This has never been our fear. We know very well the type of crime where we live and how safe our streets are from living and walking on them daily.
163. Mr Aldworth is a white male. What he appeared to be saying is that only black males can be involved in gang violence, not white males. As members of the public, we find this remark from a former police officer and so-called security expert potentially discriminatory against black men and inappropriate. It is as if he is saying only black men, not white men can be involved in gang violence and irrespective of the statistics, stereotyping black men over white men with regards to gang violence.

Impact on the Royal Mint Court Residents

164. If Mr Aldworth succeeds in helping the Chinese Government win their planning application by using the CSyP designation, it will adversely impact our lives forever.
165. We are already aware of the two serious incidents at Chinese Consulates in the UK that cause us alarm and distress. Mr Aldworth omitted and did not mention either of these in his evidence on behalf of the Chinese Government.
166. The first is the Chinese Embassy's decision in 2020 to build a security wall around its Consulate in Belfast without planning permission. When residents tried to act, the Chinese Government declared Diplomatic immunity, preventing the High Court taking legal action against China.
167. The second is the case in Manchester on 16 October 2022, when a protester was dragged onto the Chinese consulate grounds and beaten. The consul-general Zheng Xiyuan was among those accused of assault. The officials claimed diplomatic immunity, declined to be interviewed by the police and returned to China. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly expressed his disappointment that none of the six would now face justice.
168. An underlying fear we had since 2018, is that the conduct of UK and Chinese officials is motivated by a desire to evict our families from their homes once the Chinese Embassy officially relocates to the RMC.
169. The Chinese Embassy have consistently refused to discuss the long-term security of our homes, and this leads us to suspect that they may replicate their actions at their Consulate in Belfast to infringe upon our human rights and claim diplomatic immunity.
170. For example, like with the Belfast Consulate, they may decide after any planning permission is given, to extend the boundary wall of their Embassy and place CCTV cameras in our communal areas to monitor us and we enter and leave home. As the Superior Landlord, they may argue that our homes and the extra acre of land is needed to achieve a minimum stand-off distance in the event of a vehicle borne terrorist bomb and try to evict us and use our homes for their officials instead.
171. One can foresee this happening if demonstrators attempt to gain access to the embassy via the rear perimeter fence. If this hypothesis is correct, it may explain the applicant's proposal to construct what looks like a temporary wooden fence along the dividing line rather than a substantial wall to prevent illegal entry and loss of human life in the event of a bomb exploding in the service road at the rear of the embassy.

172. If the Chinese Embassy did take action that breached our human rights, it is reasonable to suspect they would claim diplomatic immunity as officials did in Belfast and Manchester.

173. If the Chinese Embassy succeed in repossessing our homes, it will potentially result in up to 100 hard working UK families and retired citizens becoming homeless, suffering hardship and thus increasing demand on local government services.

The Chinese Ambassador as Our Superior Landlord

174. I must stress from the outset, even if all the building design issues and security design risks were addressed, an ever-present fear hangs over our heads. As our Superior Landlord, the Chinese Government will be granted all the privileges and immunities afforded under the State Immunity Act 1978.

175. We consider the Landlord rights to have been proportionate when Her Majesty the Queen held this position. However, it is unnecessary and disproportionate to have such rights over law abiding UK citizens afforded to Chinese officials that have diplomatic privileges and immunity. Moreover, there is the recent evidence of Chinese officials assaulting a UK citizen on Consulate premises in Manchester.

176. We have reasonable grounds to believe that siting an embassy at RMC will create a serious risk to our safety and we will live in constant fear for our safety and breach of our Human Rights under surveillance by the Chinese Government.

177. This could be avoided by the UK Government helping the Chinese Government to relocate its London embassy to a location that does not present such significant risks. Alternatively, risks to life could be reduced by introducing building design changes to target harden the 100 apartments at RMC to better protect citizens in the event of a terror attack at the rear of the embassy, which Mr Aldworth calls baseless.

178. Permitting the Chinese Ambassador to continue to exercise the rights over the 100 UK families that is afforded to the Superior Landlord by the Headlease is unnecessary, disproportionate and causes use alarm.

179. This is because it interferes with our fundamental rights to life, security, privacy and freedom of expression as enshrined in the Human Rights Act 1998. This could be resolved by demising the 100 homes and land from the Chinese Embassy site and transferring these to the control of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Conclusion

180. Based on our letter (and I am happy to meet you on behalf of the RMCRA if required), we are respectful to what you decide with regards to Mr Aldworth's continued use of the CSyP designation on behalf of the Chinese Embassy to oppose us. Additionally, if you require any evidence, documents or links that we refer to in this letter, I am happy to provide you with them.

181. We would hope you would at least request Mr Aldworth formally removes reference to the CSyP and use of it alongside his name when acting on behalf of the Chinese Government against us.

182. We are David to the Chinese Government Goliath and their use of Mr Aldworth for their strategic aims. We will continue to fight the good fight and hope we can win again.

Kind regards,

Mr David Lake

Chairman RMCRA

Appendix: Copy of Mr Aldworth's Security Information Request on behalf of the Chinese Government – see section of this letter: Potential Offence Committed Under the National Security Act 2023

APPENDIX TWO

FULL ABSTRACT OF FOIAR RESPONSE 01/FOI/23/032558 DATED 4 JANUARY 2024



Information Rights Unit
PO Box 313
Sidcup
DA15 0HH

Email: foi@met.police.uk

www.met.police.uk

Your ref: FOI-11741-23-0100-000
Our ref: 01/FOI/23/032558

04/01/2024

Dear Mr Aldworth

Freedom of Information Request Reference No: 01/FOI/23/032558

I write in connection with your request for information which was received by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) on 06/07/2023, please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to you. I note you seek access to the following information:

Request 1

In the past 5 years, how many crimes have been reported, under national crime recording standards, linked to each of the following addresses, as either victim, offender, or witness. Please list these crimes and their disposal category.

The Chinese Embassy

Address : 49 Portland Place, London W1B 1JL Chinese Consular Section :

Address : 31 PORTLAND PLACE, LONDON, W1B 1QD Chinese Defence Section :

Address: 25 Lyndhurst Road, Hampstead, London W2 3LH Chinese Commercial Section

Address: 16 Lancaster Gate, London W2 3LH Chinese Science and Technology Section

Address: 10 Greville Place, London NW6 5JN Chinese Education Section

Address : 50 Portland Place London W1B 1NQ Chinese Cultural Section

Address : 11 West Heath Road, Hampstead NW3 7UX Chinese Maritime Section

Address: 31 Portland Place, London W1B 1QD

58

Request 2

In the past 5 years, how many protests have been recorded as taking place at the Chinese Embassy, or clearly in connection with the Chinese government, at or in the vicinity of 49 Portland Place. It is recognised that there are some protests that are enduring, such as the Falun Gong, if it is possible to separate these, it would be helpful.

Request 3

Request 3. In the past 5 years, how many officer hours have been used in responding to, or managing, protests at or near the Chinese embassy at 49 Portland Place. This should exclude protective security services provided under the Vienna Convention (eg. Routine deployments of PADP officers).

Request 4

What is the cost of policing associated with the Chinese embassy at 49 Portland Place, including that provided under the Vienna Convention. Please detail the sources of any funding e.g. National International Capital Cities Grant, Protective Security Grant, MPS Core funding

Request 5

In the past 5 years, how many crimes have been reported, under national crime recording standards, linked to each of the following addresses. Please list these crimes and their disposal category. The American Embassy Address : 33 Nine Elms Lane, London

Request 6

In the past 5 years, how many protests have been recorded as taking place at the American Embassy, or clearly in connection with the American government, at or in the vicinity of Nine Elms Lane.

Request 7

In the past 5 years, how many officer hours have been used in responding to, or managing, protests at or near the American Embassy, Nine Elms Lane. This should exclude protective security services provided under the Vienna Convention (eg. Routine deployments of PADP officers).

Request 8

What is the cost of policing associated with the American Embassy, Nine Elms Lane, including that provided under the Vienna Convention. Please detail the sources of any funding e.g. National International Capital Cities Grant, Protective Security Grant, MPS Core funding



To: Mr David Lake

Date: 12 December 2025

Re complaint submitted on 31 March 2025

c/o Security Institute,
1 Witherley House, Hazell Way,
Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV10
7PQ

T: 02476 346464

www.charteredsecurityprofessional.org

csyp@csyp.co.uk

Dear Mr Lake,

We have taken legal advice.

Your complaint against Mr Aldworth was investigated in line with our Code of Conduct.
I can inform you that part of your complaint under exercising responsible leadership was upheld.

As a professional Register, and working within the bounds of GDPR, we cannot disclose any further details.

The complaint process is now closed.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Bluestone CSyP

Registrar

Register of Chartered Security Professionals



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Nona Jones, DP9

Our Ref: APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 &
APP/E5900/V/24/3353755

Sent by email only

13 January 2026

Dear Nona Jones,

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 – SECTION 77
APPLICATION MADE BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK
LAND AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON EC3N 4QN
APPLICATION REFS: PA/24/01229/A & PA/24/01248/NC**

1. On 9 January 2026, the Secretary of State wrote to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) requesting further information relating to the grant of consent under the Diplomatic and Consular Premises Act 1987. The Secretary of State considered that it was necessary to clarify the position in respect of Exchange Square before proceeding to a decision. Please see this letter attached.
2. Please also see attached the FCDO's response (letter dated 12 January 2026 enclosed in email of same date). Parties, including those copied below, are invited to make any comments on this response.
3. For ease of circulation and to fulfil the Department's obligations relating to the General Data Protection Regulation, please do not provide handwritten signatures (or copies of) on any responses.

Timescale

4. Parties are asked to submit any comments on the FCDO's response by email to PCC@communities.gov.uk by midday on Monday 19 January 2026. In the circumstances of this case, the Secretary of State considers that this is a reasonable timescale for response

Yours faithfully

Planning Casework Unit

Authorised to consult with parties on behalf of the Secretary of State

Copied to

Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Royal Mint Court Resident's Association
Interparliamentary Alliance on China
Friends of St Katharine Docks
Royal Mint Tenants and Residents Association
Hongkongers in Britain
Metropolitan Police Service



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Foreign Secretary

Our Ref: APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 &
APP/E5900/V/24/3353755

Sent by email only

9 January 2026

Dear Foreign Secretary

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 – SECTION 77
APPLICATION MADE BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK
LAND AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON EC3N 4QN
APPLICATION REFS: PA/24/01229/A & PA/24/01248/NC**

1. The Secretary of State is considering the above planning application and application for listed building consent.
2. Before a decision is made, the Secretary of State seeks further information on the matters set out below to assist in reaching a decision on this case.

Questions for FCDO

3. Government Ministers confirmed in Parliament that 'conditional diplomatic consent' was granted to the People's Republic of China (PRC) to use the former Royal Mint site as a diplomatic premises.¹
 - a. Has consent been granted to the PRC to use the Royal Mint as a diplomatic premise under s.1 of the Diplomatic and Consular Premises Act 1987 (DCPA 1987)?
 - b. If so, what geographical area does this consent relate to? In particular, does it include the area known as Exchange Square (a paved and

¹ Hansard, Volume 842, 29.01.2025 at 3.37pm – Baroness Chapman referred to Boris Johnson having written to government of China stating: 'Consent is hereby given for the Royal Mint Court London to be deemed as diplomatic premises for the use as the chancery of the embassy of the People's Republic of China in London.' On 17 November 2025 Chris Elmore MP responded to a parliamentary question posed by Kevin Hollinrake MP as follows: 'The former Royal Mint site received conditional diplomatic consent in 2018, and this remains conditional on securing the necessary planning and listed building consents from the relevant authorities.'

public accessible area outside of the Heritage Information Centre/Pavillion)?²

- c. On what terms (if any) was such consent granted relating to Exchange Square?
 - d. Are there any further process under s.1 of the DCPA 1987 and/or other details to be finalised before the PRC has final consent to use the Royal Mint as a diplomatic premise, in relation to Exchange Square?
 - e. Is there a record of any such consent, in relation to Exchange Square? In particular, has any certificate been issued under s.1(7) of the DCPA 1987?
4. In their letter to the Planning Casework Unit of 20 August 2025 the FCDO, together with the Home Office (HO), stated as follows: 'We can now confirm that Chinese officials have agreed not to seek diplomatic consent for the publicly accessible paved forecourt that sits within Embassy grounds. This limits any risks to public order.' The FCDO/HO indicated that this constituted acceptable mitigation in respect of the concerns previously raised about public access to Exchange Square.
5. Is it the position of the FCDO that the PRC have committed to exclude Exchange Square from the area in respect of which consent under s.1 of the DCPA 1987 is sought, with the effect that the diplomatic inviolability conferred by Art. 22 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) would not apply to Exchange Square?
6. To what extent (if at all) would the position of the FCDO in the joint letter of 20 August 2025 on public access to Exchange Square change if, Exchange Square was in fact included within the inviolable area and PRC's agreement was instead to consent to UK personnel carrying out official duties to access Exchange Square (with the effect that access to Exchange Square would be dependent on the continuing consent of the PRC)?

Timescales

- 7. You are asked to submit your response by email to PCC@communities.gov.uk by 2pm Monday 12 January.
- 8. This letter should not be read as any indication of what the final decision will be. Comments should be confined to any matters arising from the matters above, and should not seek to raise any other matters.
- 9. The Secretary of State will circulate any responses received. For ease of circulation and to fulfil the Department's obligations relating to the General Data Protection Regulation, please do not provide hand written signatures (or copies of) on any responses.

² See Drawing No. 1510A_B4_11_10 and DAS, p280

Yours faithfully

Planning Casework Unit

Authorised to consult with parties on behalf of the Secretary of State

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PCCUSER](#)
Subject: Response to MHCLG Letter of 09.01.26
Date: 12 January 2026 15:32:26
Attachments: [REDACTED]

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]. [Learn why this is important](#)

[REDACTED]

Dear Planning Casework Unit,

Please find attached a response from the FCDO to your letter of 09.01.26 that was addressed to the Foreign Secretary.

Kind regards,
FCDO

Follow us online: www.gov.uk/fcdo

This email is intended for the addressee(s) only: All messages sent and received by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office may be monitored in line with relevant [UK legislation](#)

[REDACTED]



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

Planning Casework Unit

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
pcc@communities.gov.uk

12 January 2026

The Whom it May Concern,

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 – SECTION 77
APPLICATION MADE BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK
LAND AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON EC3N 4QN
APPLICATION REFS: PA/24/01229/A & PA/24/01248/NC

Thank you for the letter of 9 January from the Planning Casework Unit seeking further information on several matters relating to diplomatic consent and diplomatic inviolability of the former Royal Mint site.

We will address each of your questions in turn.

1 a. Has consent been granted to the PRC to use the Royal Mint as a diplomatic premise under s.1 of the Diplomatic and Consular Premises Act 1987 (DCPA 1987)?

By Note Verbale dated 4 May 2018 the then-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Boris Johnson granted consent under section 1 of the DCPA 1987 for Royal Mint Court, London EC3N 4QN to be deemed as diplomatic premises for the use as the Chancery of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in London. The Note Verbale noted that the consent was conditional on the Embassy obtaining any necessary planning permission, and the consent may be withdrawn if this was not obtained.

b. If so, what geographical area does this consent relate to? In particular, does it include the area known as Exchange Square (a paved and public accessible area outside of the Heritage Information Centre/Pavillion)?

The consent granted in 2018 related to the geographical area stated in the Note Verbale of 4 May 2018, i.e. Royal Mint Court, London EC3N 4QN. This is understood to have included the area known as Exchange Square.

However, as noted in the joint letter of 20 August 2025 from FCDO and Home Office to MHCLG, the geographical area covered by the consent no longer extends to Exchange Square.

c. On what terms (if any) was such consent granted relating to Exchange Square?

In granting consent for the premises in 2018 including Exchange Square it was stated that if any necessary planning permission and listed building consent were not obtained, diplomatic consent may be withdrawn. However, as also noted above, the geographical area covered by the diplomatic consent no longer extends to Exchange Square.

d. Are there any further process under s.1 of the DCPA 1987 and/or other details to be finalised before the PRC has final consent to use the Royal Mint as a diplomatic premise, in relation to Exchange Square?

The consent deeming the Royal Mint as diplomatic premises for the use as the Chancery of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in London no longer extends to Exchange Square.

e. Is there a record of any such consent, in relation to Exchange Square? In particular, has any certificate been issued under s.1(7) of the DCPA 1987?

As noted above, the original consent granted in 2018 applied to Royal Mint Court, London EC3N 4QN which is understood to have included the area known as Exchange Square. However, as indicated in the joint letter of 20 August 2025 from FCDO and Home Office to MHCLG, the geographical area covered by the consent no longer extends to Exchange Square.

No certificate under s.1(7) DCPA has been issued.

4. In their letter to the Planning Casework Unit of 20 August 2025 the FCDO, together with the Home Office (HO), stated as follows: 'We can now confirm that Chinese officials have agreed not to seek diplomatic consent for the publicly accessible paved forecourt that sits within Embassy grounds. This limits any risks to public order.' The FCDO/HO indicated that this constituted acceptable mitigation in respect of the concerns previously raised about public access to Exchange Square.

5. Is it the position of the FCDO that the PRC have committed to exclude Exchange Square from the area in respect of which consent under s.1 of the DCPA 1987 is sought, with the effect that the diplomatic inviolability conferred

by Art. 22 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) would not apply to Exchange Square?

As noted above, the Foreign Secretary has removed diplomatic consent from Exchange Square. As a result, Exchange Square is not covered by diplomatic consent and inviolability cannot apply to it. The letter of 20th August 2025 confirmed to all parties the HMG position on the status of Exchange Square.

6. To what extent (if at all) would the position of the FCDO in the joint letter of 20 August 2025 on public access to Exchange Square change if, Exchange Square was in fact included within the inviolable area and PRC's agreement was instead to consent to UK personnel carrying out official duties to access Exchange Square (with the effect that access to Exchange Square would be dependent on the continuing consent of the PRC)?

Having regard to the answers above this scenario does not arise given that Exchange Square is not part of the consent to be deemed as diplomatic premises.

**ON BEHALF OF THE FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE**

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PCCUSER](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Note Verbale from the Chinese Embassy in the UK
Date: 14 January 2026 17:13:37
Attachments: [REDACTED]

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Sir or Madam,

Hope this email finds you well.

I am ZHENG Xiaojia from the Chinese Embassy in the UK. Please find attached Note Verbale D010/26 from the Embassy to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for your kind reference. A copy of this Note Verbale has also been sent to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

We would be grateful if you could confirm receipt of this email.

Kind regards,
郑晓佳 Xiaojia Zheng
Second Secretary
Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the UK
49/51 Portland Place
London, W1B 1JL



中 华 人 民 共 和 国 大 使 馆

No. D010/26

The Embassy of the People's Republic of China presents its compliments to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and with reference to the letter of 13 January 2026 by the Planning Casework Unit of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, has the honour to state the following:

Given that we have comprehensively made clear our position and request on relevant issues related to the planning application for the new Chinese Embassy project, in DP9's letter on 20 August 2025 to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, the Embassy's Notes Verbales to the Ministry dated 8 September, 11 December and 22 December 2025 respectively, as well as the planning application documents, we have no further comments to make.

This Note Verbale is intended to serve as a response to the letter of 13 January 2026 by the Planning Casework Unit of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

The Embassy of the People's Republic of China avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government of the United Kingdom of

Great Britain and Northern Ireland the assurances of its highest consideration.

Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

London, 14 January 2026

C.C. Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PCCUSER](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: APPLICATIONS BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK, SITE AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON, EC3N 4QN – PINS REFS: APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 & APP/E5900/V/24/3353755 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (SECTION 77)
Date: 15 January 2026 08:38:48
Attachments: [REDACTED]
Importance: High

Dear PCU,

Please see the attached correspondence, sent on behalf of the RMCRA.

Kind regards

Simon



Simon Bell
Barrister

[REDACTED]
w: thebarristergroup.co.uk/property

[View Profile](#)

The Bar Standards Board regulates Barristers in England & Wales.

Administration is provided by The Barrister Group. The Barrister Group is a trading name of European Administration Limited, a limited company registered in England & Wales. Registered Number: 04207276. Registered Address: Equity House, Blackbrook Park Avenue, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 2PX.

Please note: This email message is intended solely for the person to whom it is addressed. It is confidential and may also be protected by legal professional privilege. If you have received it in error, please notify me immediately and permanently delete this email and any attachments. Unless you are the intended receiver of this message YOU MUST NOT FORWARD, PRINT, DISCLOSE, COPY, USE OR RETAIN this message, any attachments or any part of it. It is the recipient's responsibility to take such steps as it deems appropriate to scan received messages and any attachments for viruses. No responsibility is accepted for viruses. Chambers' policies can be found at: thebarristergroup.co.uk/contact-us#Usefullinks

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities
and Local Government
Planning Casework Unit
3rd Floor
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

15th January 2026

BY: PCC@communities.gov.uk

Dear Secretary of State

APPLICATIONS BY CHINESE EMBASSY IN THE UK, SITE AT ROYAL MINT COURT, LONDON, EC3N 4QN – PINS REFS: APP/E5900/V/24/3353754 & APP/E5900/V/24/3353755 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (SECTION 77)

1. I am instructed to write to you on behalf of the Royal Mint Court Residents Association (“RMCRA”), further to the letter from the PCU dated 13th January 2026.

Note Verbale, dated 4th May 2018

2. The FCDO letter of 12th January 2026 makes reference to Boris Johnson granting consent under s.1 of the DCPA 1987. This is the first that my client has been made aware of the existence of the Note Verbale which, presumably, sets out the terms of the consent. This is also despite the fact that my client has sought disclosure of material of this nature from the FCDO, which has not been provided.
3. Footnote 1 of the FCDO’s letter, also refers to a letter from Boris Johnson to the Chinese Government. My client was aware of this letter and, indeed, has sought its disclosure from the FCDO.
4. Clearly, you were concerned enough to request the details of the diplomatic consent as granted; however, the FCDO does not seem to have considered it necessary to provide you (and the public) with a copy of this Note Verbale or Mr. Johnson’s letter. My client

considers that, to respond in detail and with the full information before it, the FCDO should be requested to disclose the Note Verbale of 4th May 2018, as well as the associated letter, to you in full. Copies should then be circulated for comments by those who have an interest in this application, including my client. There is clearly an interest in understanding fully the terms of the consent, as well as the full geographical area that Mr Johnson understood he was being asked to grant consent for and precisely how it was set out to the Chinese Government, both in the Note Verbale and correspondence.

5. My client considers that without a copy of these documents, it cannot provide informed comments on what the nature of the “conditional” consent granted means for this planning application. This is important in respect of the account given of the Note Verbale by the FCDO that conditional consent was granted, compared to the footnoted Hansard report of Mr. Johnson’s letter that expresses no such conditionality of consent.

[REDACTED] be aware that my client has already raised concerns about the ability to grant “conditional” diplomatic consent and what this means in terms of my client’s concerns that the decision to grant planning permission for this application will turn on an act of political predetermination that the site can be used as an embassy (see my letters of 18th October and 15th December 2025). It is, therefore, imperative that my client be able to scrutinise the document now said to set out the grant of diplomatic consent and advance its case in objection **before any decision is made**. Per Hickinbottom LJ in *R (Help Refugees Ltd) v SSHD [2018] EWCA Civ 2098 [2018] 4 WLR 168* at §90:

“...the public body doing the consulting must put a consultee into a position to properly consider and respond to the consultation request...Consultees must be told enough – and in sufficiently clear terms to enable them to make an intelligent response”.

7. My client looks forward to receiving a copy of the Note Verbale of 4th May 2018 and the associated correspondence and will endeavour to provide its comments within any reasonable timeframe set by you, once that document has been provided. However, to require a response in the absence of that document by 19th January 2026 is clearly unreasonable. Even if the material is provided before the deadline currently set for comments (midday on Monday, 19th January 2026), it would provide an unreasonably short period of time in which to expect my client, and any other party, to provide comments.


Redacted Plans

8. My client understands, from reporting in the Telegraph on 13th January 2026 (see enclosed) that unredacted plans of the site are now available within the public domain. Presumably these were provided to the Telegraph by/on behalf the Applicant. It seems,

given the reporting, that there is no longer a need, or claimed public interest, in the plans before you remaining redacted. Copies of the unredacted plans should now be provided to you and circulated for wider public consultation. These were not before the Inspector, and clearly, if the report in the Telegraph is correct, they do raise issues that the public (including the police and security services) should be permitted to address by way of further representation.

9. In all, it is very clear that there remain issues to be considered that should provide you with sufficient reasoning not to proceed to a decision “on or before” 20th January 2026.
10. My client looks forward to receiving the missing material set out above, and a timetable for comments to be provided before you make your determination.

Yours sincerely



Counsel

Uncovered: Secret room beneath Chinese embassy that poses threat to City

Telegraph obtains unredacted plans showing how close the underground complex will come to cables carrying sensitive British financial data

[Gareth Corfield](#) 12 January 2026 5:37pm GMT

China is to build a hidden chamber alongside Britain's most sensitive communication cables as part of a network of 208 secret rooms beneath its new London "super-embassy", The Telegraph can reveal.

This newspaper has uncovered detailed plans for an underground complex below the vast diplomatic site in central London, which Beijing has sought to keep from public scrutiny.

Despite the apparent security risk, Sir Keir Starmer is expected to approve the embassy before a visit to China later this month, when he is due to meet Xi Jinping, the Chinese president.

The plans, which are redacted in all publicly available versions, can only be revealed because The Telegraph has uncovered the unredacted documents.

The drawings show that a single concealed chamber will sit directly alongside fibre-optic cables transmitting financial data to the City of London, as well as email and messaging traffic for millions of internet users.

The same hidden room is fitted with hot-air extraction systems, possibly

suggesting the installation of heat-generating equipment such as advanced computers used for espionage. The plans also show that China intends to demolish and rebuild the outer basement wall of the chamber, directly beside the fibre-optic cables.

The disclosures will reignite fears that Beijing could be seeking to spy on the information carried through the network, potentially gaining access to state and financial secrets.

Alicia Kearns, the shadow national security minister, claimed that granting approval would hand China "a launchpad for economic warfare at the heart of the central nervous system of our critical national infrastructure".

She added: "The unredacted plans reveal a concealed room running immediately alongside the fibre-optic cables critical to the City and Canary Wharf. Telegraph readers don't need me to spell out the obvious threats posed, nor China's subterfuge – so why does the Labour Government?"

Other areas obscured by redactions include emergency back-up generators, a sprinkler plant, new lift shafts and communications cabling. The plans also conceal bathrooms and showers, potentially allowing officials to remain underground for extended periods.

Covering 22,000 sq m on the site of the former Royal Mint, the embassy would be the largest Chinese diplomatic mission in Europe.

The project has been mired in controversy since Beijing first sought planning permission under the previous Conservative government, not least because of its proximity to sensitive communications infrastructure. Dominic Cummings, Boris Johnson's former chief adviser, has claimed that MI5 and MI6 warned him China was "trying to build a spy centre underneath the embassy".

Most of the planning documents submitted to Tower Hamlets council were heavily redacted for what China described as “security reasons” a move that led Angela Rayner, then housing secretary, to delay approval and demand clarification.

The Telegraph can now reveal the unredacted plans, offering the clearest insight yet into China’s intentions for the hidden areas of its new diplomatic headquarters.

The secret room

Of the 208 rooms exposed by The Telegraph, the most striking lies beneath the Seamen’s Registry building on the north-west corner of the former Royal Mint site.

Its exterior wall borders Mansell Street, a busy artery at the Tower Hill interchange.

Plans show a triangular underground chamber measuring up to 40m across and 2-3m deep. Crucially, they indicate that the outer basement wall facing Mansell Street would be demolished and rebuilt.

It is not yet known which company China will appoint as its contractors to build its planned new embassy, or who will be responsible for demolishing and rebuilding the Seaman’s Registry basement wall.

But that construction work would place Chinese officials just over one metre from the fibre-optic cables running beneath the pavement – raising the prospect that they could be tapped.

Telecoms cable plans seen by The Telegraph show the fibre-optics here belong to companies including BT Openreach, Colt Technologies and US telecoms giant Verizon Business.

Carrying signals bearing the innermost financial secrets of the British

economy, the cables stretch between the Telehouse group of data centres in Docklands and other centres around the capital. Linked together, these form the core of the London Internet Exchange (Linx). Beyond London, they connect to Atlantic cables linking to the US.

Linx is one of the biggest internet exchange points in the world, handling vast volumes of data spanning everything from financial transactions to instant messages and emails.

Its cables carry the financial transaction data relied upon by banks to update withdrawals and deposits, such as ordinary people's salary packets and payments for goods bought online.

Further drawings from the plans of the secret room suggest at least two air-extraction systems will be installed, venting through an existing lightwell and a new grille – implying the need to remove large volumes of hot air from the basement.

One explanation is that China plans to install extensive computer infrastructure as part of an espionage operation linked to the Mansell Street cables.

Professor Alan Woodward, a security expert at the University of Surrey, said: "China won't say what the basement is for. It could be legitimate classified communications equipment – but that can hide a multitude of sins."

"If they wanted to tap the cables," he added, "they wouldn't need to go far. You wouldn't know what was happening down there."

Options for spying on the data could include diverting cables, inserting a wire tap or even placing a device directly on top of the cables. The fibres could even be bent so that light leaks through their casing, allowing it to be read by specialised equipment.

Prof Woodward described the demolition of the basement wall as a “red flag”.

“There’s a long history of cable-tapping by East and West alike. Anyone who can do it has done it.

“Espionage isn’t just about state secrets. Economic intelligence is central to the mission of foreign intelligence services.

“If I were in their shoes, having those cables on my doorstep would be an enormous temptation.”

China may, of course, have benign reasons for installing cooling systems. The space could house a data centre serving embassy staff, or even a gym or cafeteria.

Even so, the proximity to Britain’s most critical communications infrastructure will deepen concern.

The site borders the Wapping Telephone Exchange on three sides. The BT-owned exchange serves an area of roughly 2 sq km, encompassing hundreds of City firms, including Lloyd’s of London, as well as landmarks such as the Gherkin and the Walkie-Talkie.

Nearby cables also connect 11 data centres forming part of the London Internet Exchange.

Any nation state would be tempted to snoop on such traffic – particularly one with which Britain’s relations have been so fraught.

Flats and bathrooms

Plans also show proposals for flats within the Embassy House building on the eastern side of the site.

Detailed layouts suggest luxury accommodation for senior diplomats, alongside smaller studio-style units. There is no obvious evidence of the detention facilities feared by some critics.

Basement drawings reveal further living infrastructure, including toilets and showers at the southern end of Embassy House. Adjacent rooms vary in size, with the largest suitable for a gym. Others, smaller and more secure, lie behind winding corridors and multiple doors.

The plans also show lift shafts, power and communications ducts, and a tunnel linking the Seamen's Registry to a vast car park beneath the complex.

Utility drawings indicate rooms for high-voltage electricity, water supply and the embassy's official telecoms connections.

At the northern end is a large space apparently designated for emergency generators, confirmed by a ground-floor drawing marked "New emergency generator ventilation".

Ms Kearns said the embassy posed "obvious threats" to national security.

"To approve this site is to hand China a launchpad for economic warfare at the very heart of our critical financial infrastructure," she said.

"No one can reassure me that the CCP's technological capabilities will be containable in a decade – let alone five."

A Government spokesman said: "National security is our first duty and government security experts have been involved throughout the process so far.

"As the Home Office and Foreign Office have previously set out, all the security implications of the planning application have been identified and addressed.

"An independent planning decision will be made by the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government in due course."

China's London embassy did not respond to requests for comment.

BT subsidiary Openreach said it had "robust security measures in place" and worked with the Government to protect its assets.

Explore the unredacted plans in full

From: [REDACTED]
To: PCCUSER
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Reference back: Called-in applications by Chinese Embassy in the UK for Royal Mint Court, London
Date: 15 January 2026 09:22:28
Attachments: [REDACTED]

Good morning,
Please find attached the updated letter, with additional signatories.
Yours sincerely,

Iain



The Rt Hon Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP
Member of Parliament for Chingford & Woodford Green
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

<http://www.iainduncansmith.org.uk/> <https://www.facebook.com/iainduncansmith.org/>

If you would like to see our privacy policy regarding how we use your data, please visit this link:

<https://www.iainduncansmith.org.uk/privacy>

UK Parliament Disclaimer: this e-mail is confidential to the intended recipient. If you have received it in error, please notify the sender and delete it from your system. Any unauthorised use, disclosure, or copying is not permitted. This e-mail has been checked for viruses, but no liability is accepted for any damage caused by any virus transmitted by this e-mail. This e-mail address is not secure, is not encrypted and should not be used for sensitive data.

From: DUNCAN SMITH, Iain

Sent: 14 January 2026 20:23

To: pcc@communities.gov.uk

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Reference back: Called-in applications by Chinese Embassy in the UK for Royal Mint Court, London

Good evening,
Please find attached a letter for your urgent attention.
I would be grateful if you could kindly confirm receipt.
Yours sincerely,
Iain DS



The Rt Hon Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP
Member of Parliament for Chingford & Woodford Green
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

<http://www.iainduncansmith.org.uk/> <https://www.facebook.com/iainduncansmith.org/>

If you would like to see our privacy policy regarding how we use your data, please visit this link:

<https://www.iainduncansmith.org.uk/privacy>

UK Parliament Disclaimer: this e-mail is confidential to the intended recipient. If you have received it in error, please notify the sender and delete it from your system. Any unauthorised use, disclosure, or copying is not permitted. This e-mail has been checked for viruses, but no liability is accepted for any damage caused by any virus transmitted by this e-mail. This e-mail address is not secure, is not encrypted and should not be used for sensitive data.



Planning Casework Unit
By email: PCC@communities.gov.uk

15th January 2026

Dear PCU,

Thank you for your letter of 13th January, to which you append correspondence with the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

We write to seek urgent clarification.

Your letter seeks to address outstanding questions regarding the current diplomatic status of Royal Mint Court, the premises the Chinese Government seeks permission to develop.

We are asked to respond within five days to the FCDO letter, which has been provided without any source material. Specifically, the FCDO makes reference to a letter from then Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, sent in 2018 to the Chinese Ambassador, and a formal communication from the UK to China - a *Note Verbale* - sent in the same year.

Neither of these source documents, relied upon by the FCDO, are in the public domain, and neither has been appended to the correspondence. We wish to register our profound concern at the implications of this for the procedural fairness of the process. In order for us to have a fair and properly informed opportunity to respond to the questions raised in your letter, we ought to be provided with both these documents. Whilst we have obtained a copy of the letter from Mr Johnson dated 6th May 2018 ("the Johnson Letter"), we have not seen the *Note Verbale*.

The Johnson Letter states:

"I am pleased to confirm that I have today agreed to grant consent for Royal Mint Court to be designated as diplomatic premises, on the basis of your assurances and the further detail provided by the Chinese Ambassador in London".

The Johnson Letter appears to grant diplomatic consent for Royal Mint Court. It does not mention planning permission. Indeed, the letter is clear that consent could be granted in 2018 on the basis of assurances ***already provided*** by the Chinese Ambassador, which could not include planning permission, as no application had yet been submitted.

Contradicting this analysis, the FCDO letter makes reference to a *Note Verbale* of 26 March 2018. According to the FCDO:

"The Note Verbale noted that the consent was conditional on the Embassy obtaining any necessary planning permission, and the consent may be withdrawn if this was not obtained."



Supporting the FCDO letter, recent parliamentary replies have argued:

*“The former Royal Mint site received **conditional diplomatic consent** in 2018, and this remains conditional on securing the necessary planning and listed building consents from the relevant authorities.” [Emphasis added]*

We wish to make three points at this stage, in the limited time we have had available so far since your letter, and reserving our right to comment further should the *Note Verbale* be provided to us as procedural fairness demands:

Absence of precedent for "conditional" diplomatic consent

There is no established precedent in international or UK domestic law for "conditional diplomatic consent". The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations defines "premises of the mission" as buildings and land "used for the purposes of the mission". It does not provide for a "conditional" status based on domestic administrative hurdles like planning permission.

Similarly, while Section 1(5) of the Diplomatic and Consular Premises Act 1987 (DCPA) requires the Secretary of State to "have regard to... town and country planning" when deciding whether to grant or withdraw consent, it does not create a category of "provisional" or "conditional" consent.

Under the DCPA, consent is either given or it is not. The Act provides a mechanism to withdraw consent (Section 1(3)(b)) but does not support the concept of a "floating" consent that is contingent on future third-party approvals.

The Johnson Letter as express, unconditional consent

The letter from the Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP dated 4 May 2018 constitutes a clear fulfilment of the Secretary of State's power to provide express consent under the DCPA 1987.

The Johnson letter states: "I am pleased to confirm that I have today agreed to grant consent for Royal Mint Court to be designated as diplomatic premises". This is an affirmative legal act, not a conditional offer. The body of the letter contains no language making this designation dependent on planning permission. On the contrary, it refers to the projects having "political commitment at the highest levels" and expresses an expectation for the "early and successful conclusion" of construction agreements.

The consent was granted on the basis of "assurances and the further detail provided by the Chinese Ambassador". If the FCDO now claims this was "conditional," it is introducing a retrospective requirement not found in the primary instrument of consent.

Legal opacity of the *Note Verbale*

The FCDO's reliance on a *Note Verbale* dated 4 May 2018 to assert conditionality is problematic. The document has not been disclosed for public or judicial scrutiny.



A *Note Verbale* is typically a third-person, unsigned diplomatic communication used for routine correspondence. It is highly irregular for such an informal instrument to be used to override or place caveats on a signed letter from a Secretary of State that explicitly grants legal status.

Without the text of the *Note Verbale*, it is impossible to determine which instruments of domestic and international law it seeks to engage. We cannot assess whether it meets the "conclusive" evidentiary standards of a certificate under Section 1(7) of the DCPA 1987. **We therefore formally request that the *Note Verbale* is disclosed urgently, to enable an appropriate response.**

Contradictory claims

The FCDO claims the *Note Verbale* made consent conditional on planning permission. However, if the Boris Johnson letter (dated the same day) granted consent without mentioning such conditions, the *Note Verbale* cannot be used as a "shadow" legal document to modify an express ministerial grant.

Relevance for the consideration of “predetermination”

The grant of express diplomatic consent under Section 1 of the DCPA 1987 creates a legitimate expectation and a binding international commitment that renders any subsequent planning determination under Section 77 of the TCPA 1990 a matter of predetermination. Indeed, the Chinese Government has publicly spoken of their expectations flowing from the 2018 exchanges, calling on the UK Government to:

“...immediately fulfill its obligations and honour its commitments, otherwise the British side shall bear all consequences” ([London Evening Standard](#))

No fair-minded observer could conclude that the UK Government could retain an open mind to refuse a planning application for a site they have already formally designated as an inviolable foreign mission.

Further, most unusually short deadline set by your letter of just five days, as opposed to extending the decision date so that these important points can be considered properly and with full disclosure, gives the impression that a decision has already been made to grant planning permission (irrespective of the responses received to your letter) before the Prime Minister visits China later this month.

Unsafe access to the historic ruins

Finally, we wish to raise a query regarding safe access to the historic ruins on the site.

In January 2025, the Foreign and Home Secretaries articulated their concerns regarding access to St Mary Graces Abbey to the Planning Inspector in a letter. As this exchange is summarised in your correspondence, we do not wish to repeat it here, suffice to say that the compromise reached, whereby the Chinese will not seek diplomatic consent for the paved forecourt, does not address the concerns articulated by the Secretaries of State.



Rt Hon Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP

Member of Parliament for Chingford and Woodford Green

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7219 2667

Those accessing the Visitors Centre for the purposes of visiting the ruins of St Mary Graces will still have to enter land which attracts the same risks. The Chinese side has made clear that the ruins themselves **will remain on diplomatically inviolable land**. On the basis of the information we have received, therefore, the compromise mooted does not answer the problem of emergency service access to the area containing the ruins, nor does it address the national security concerns hinted at in the letter. We assume the government was referring to those targeted by the Chinese Government, for example Hong Kong activists who have had bounties imposed upon them, who would be beyond reach were they to attempt to visit this site of national heritage.

With regard to the question of a “permanent permission” to violate diplomatic inviolability, we refer you to Lord Banner KC’s legal opinion of 6th September 2025.

We look forward to your urgent reply,

Yours sincerely,



The Rt Hon Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP
Co-Chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China

Members of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China

Sarah Champion MP
Bobby Dean MP
James Naish MP
Chris Law MP
Luke Taylor MP
Marie Rimmer MP
Christine Jardine MP
Rt Hon Tom Tugendhat MP
Nick Timothy MP
Kieran Mullan MP
Lord Mackinlay of Richborough
The Lord Alton of Liverpool
The Lord Shinkwin
The Baroness Meyer CBE