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PA/24/01229/A1 Proposed planning permission - Chinese Embassy at Royal Mint Court

Dear London Borough of Tower Hamlets

I am writing to you in reference to the above application for the redevelopment of the site at the Royal Mint Court, London, EC3N 4QN made by the Chinese Embassy in the UK.

I have concerns about the planning proposal for the new Embassy which if granted would cover a substantial footprint impacting the immediate vicinity and potentially attracting significant protest activity.

My understanding is that this is the second submission of these plans and that in December 2022 the Tower Hamlets Strategic Development Committee rejected the first application for the following reasons:

- Impact on resident's safety and security.
- Impact on heritage assets both within the application site and around the site.
- Impact on the location as the key borough tourist destination Impact and strain on local police resources.
- Congested nature of the area and interrelationship that has with safety and security.

The new application appears to have been made with no changes from the initial proposal and with no consideration for the issues that led to its rejection previously.

An assessment of the proposed site from a policing protest viewpoint identified the following issues:

- There is nowhere at the location that would accommodate more than approximately 100 protestors.
- The rear of the site is almost entirely residential. Any protest would cause serious disruption to the local community.
- The new prominent location is likely to make it more appealing to protestors and the busy junction will be attractive for protestors to block to gain attention for their cause.

- In the event that more than 100 protestors attend the location they will either spill into the road or have to move across towards the Tower of London, an obvious iconic tourist attraction, which would adversely impact on visitors and other users of the area.
- Overspill of protestors from the pavements would compromise the roads which would be difficult to police and maintain the safety of protestors without shutting roads, thus causing greater community and business disruption.

The close proximity of the proposed site to key arterial roads that would be affected by any of these outcomes would have a significant impact. Disruption for road users would occur for those travelling into the City from the west, for those travelling east out of London and for those attempting to use Tower Bridge north and south. These roads are also used for several bus routes and the HEMS fast car response teams from The Royal London Hospital Trauma Unit.

An analysis of data held by the MPS MO6 Public Order unit to identify the number of protests that have been held outside the current Chinese Embassy for 2023 and 2024, showed that 47 protests have taken or are due to take place. Of those, 14 protests were planned with over 100 protestors, 7 of which were planned with 200 protestors or more and a further 7 with between 50 to 100 protestors. This is a significant number of protests with over 100 attendees.

The impact on local policing and resourcing is significant. Policing this proposed Embassy would require officers to be taken away from frontline duties to fulfil the requirement of policing spontaneous and known protests at this location. This has not been factored into the local policing model, unlike other areas where the majority of Diplomatic missions are located.

In addition, the initial police response to an alarm call to any Embassy or Diplomatic premises falls to the Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection (PaDP) Command. They have several bases located centrally in order to provide an effective response to emergency calls. The proposed location of this Embassy would impact response times. In the event PaDP would need to provide static protection or regular mobile patrols, logistical and geographical difficulties would result in there being an increased cost to policing the Embassy compared to the current central Embassy location.

I am aware of the Crilly Consulting Design Peer Review paper and I acknowledge and understand the objections raised. The vulnerability of the residents of St Mary Graces Court should not be discounted.

I trust that this letter clearly outlines the concerns I have with this proposal. If you require any further clarification, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Jon Savell
DAC Specialist Operations