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By email to: [development.control@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:development.control@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

Application No. PA/21/01327  
Assoc. Ref. PA/21/01349  
Location: Royal Mint Court, London EC3N 4QN

30<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Dear Sir,

The Friends of St Katharine Docks (**FOSKD**) has been one of two residents groups to have been engaged in the planning consultation process over the Royal Mint Court site.

Our Committee have had a number of meetings via zoom with the Minister responsible for the project from the Chinese Embassy and her colleagues, as well as representatives from the professional advisors they have engaged on the project (**the Team**). Members of our Committee have also had a site visit with some of **the Team**.

We were to have had another meeting via zoom with the Team on 29<sup>th</sup> July but **the Team** have postponed that meeting to sometime in the second half of August (date tbc) due to key members of the Team not being available.

FOSKD still has some matters of concern outstanding at this time that we wish to discuss further with **the Team** before we can submit our full comments on the planning application to LBTH Council Planning Department. This letter is therefore to inform you that we do have comments on matters relating to the planning application which may or may not be completely resolved by discussion at our next meeting with **the Team** in August.

We therefore propose in this letter to just briefly outline the major areas of outstanding concern and we will submit a more detailed letter with any remaining concerns after our next meeting with **the Team** has taken place. We trust this will be acceptable to the planning officer in the circumstances.

#### **Outstanding matters of concern**

In the main at this point our concerns are about the impact of the application being granted on the space outside the perimeter of the site **as it is currently configured**.

##### **1. Security of local residents, office workers & members of the public in the area outside the perimeter of the Embassy site**

The public realm immediately around the site is dominated by extremely busy traffic which creates a hostile environment. The "Council owned" pavements around the site in the main are narrow. Following our discussions, the plans now partially mitigate this by pulling back the perimeter wall in a key area near the visa section entrance, but it is not possible to make this type of change all around the site due to the lack of space. Our concerns include potential threats posed by hostile vehicles – particularly at the Tower Hill junction at the front of the site and along East Smithfield.

**2. How gatherings outside the perimeter wall will be accommodated and managed**

It is our view that such gatherings are most likely to take place in front of the listed railings at the Tower Hill entrance to the site. The space for people to gather there is very small and the likelihood of people spilling into the road at that point is high. Our concern is that the road would need to be closed to traffic to ensure the safety of the people gathered there and other pedestrians at this very busy junction. The Tower Hill junction is a major arterial route both north/south and east/west. Previous isolated incidents in that vicinity which have required the roads to be closed have caused gridlock in the surrounding roads for quite some distance away.

**3. Vehicular access to the site**

Most vehicles will enter and leave the site via the service road off East Smithfield. The entrance to this service road is almost opposite the driveway to the entrance of the St Katharine Docks estate through the “elephant gates”. That entrance already has “keep clear” markings on the road (which are rarely adhered to by drivers). We suggested that more use should be made of the entrance to the site off Royal Mint Street at the northern end of the service road, but we note that two-way traffic at the junction of the service road and East Smithfield is shown in the plans as filed. Our view is that this entrance/exit point will be dangerous for both drivers and pedestrians as things stand currently.

**4. Lack of Permeability of the Site**

Whilst we understand that an Embassy site needs to be “secure” the inability of the public to access this important historic site unless as an invited guest, is a disappointment in comparison to the previous planning approval for the Delancey scheme for an office development, which would have made the site more open to the public to walk through both east/west and north/south.

In summary, our discussions to-date with **the Team** lead us to believe that their security plans as they pertain to the area outside of the perimeter, rely almost entirely on the actions of the Met Police. We note in the documents submitted that a Security Report has been compiled, but it has not been submitted. From our perspective as close neighbours on the other side of East Smithfield, we would like more of an understanding about how our security is going to be ensured if planning permission is granted for this development.

We cannot see that a recent traffic survey of the surrounding roads has been undertaken and submitted by the Team to quantify the impact this development would have if granted, in relation to some of the points mentioned above.

Yours faithfully,

Ms S. M. Hughes

Chairman, FOSKD