



**Joint Committee
on the National
Security Strategy**

Monday 13 October 2025

Rt Hon Steve Reed MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

[By email]

Dear Secretary of State,

Planning application for the new Embassy of China, London

In July, the Committee wrote to the Minister for Security regarding the work of the Defending Democracy Taskforce, which included a recommendation that the Government should prioritise long-term national security in its overall relations with China. We highlighted the decision on the proposals for the new Chinese embassy in London as an important test case. With the final decision on the planning application approaching, we would like to reiterate our concerns.

The plan for the new 'super-embassy' in central London has raised numerous national security concerns given its proximity to fibre-optic cables, data centres and telecommunication exchanges which serve London's financial hubs of Canary Wharf and the City of London. This presents eavesdropping risks in peacetime and sabotage risks in a crisis.¹

Reports of plans for basements rooms and tunnels suggest the complex will be extensive. The security services have repeatedly warned of the "epic scale" of Chinese surveillance in the UK, and allowing China to establish the biggest embassy in Europe would create a hub for expanded intelligence-gathering and intimidation operations.²

We have witnessed serious examples of both. In 2022 a Hong Kong protester was dragged into the Chinese consulate grounds in Manchester and attacked,³ and the controversy over the failed prosecution of suspected Chinese spies this year is only the most recent reminder of the scale of China's illicit activities.⁴

¹ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-new-london-super-embassy-risk-national-security>

² <https://bisi.org.uk/reports/uk-green-lights-chinese-embassy-despite-espionage-warnings>

³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-63280519>

⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cyv6zegez29o>



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We appreciate that you will have received detailed assessments from the intelligence community and others about the risks. We also appreciate the political and economic sensitivities at play, but the Prime Minister himself told the House of Commons in June that China is an adversary.⁵ We urge you to acknowledge that approving this decision is not in the UK's long-term interest, and the consequences of having such a site will be very difficult to handle if relations with Beijing worsen in future.

We therefore urge the Government to keep long-term national security at the forefront of its decision-making, and this must be demonstrated in your response to the embassy planning application. The UK's security and economic resilience will be negatively affected if the plans are allowed to proceed as currently proposed.

In line with usual practice, I will be placing a copy of this letter, and your response, in the public domain. I would be grateful for your response by 20 October.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Western MP
Chair, Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy

⁵ HC Debate, 11 June 2025, [col 969](#)