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130 Grosvenor Road
London SW1V 3JY

Wandsworth Council
Technical Services Department
Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 2PU

Objection Acknowledged	TECHNICAL SERVICES
No Response Required	REC'D 25 JUN 2009
Response Required	
Comments	23 June 2009

Dear Sirs,

Ref. Planning Application 2009/1506

Thank you for your letter of 1 June and your courtesy in informing residents of adjacent boroughs about proposed developments.

I write to object to planning application 2009/1506 on the grounds of:

- Visual impact. The proposed design parameters are undesirable in terms of effects on strategic and local views. A main building up to 20 storeys and a tower up to 97 metres would be disproportionate to existing neighbouring buildings and to current approved proposals. It would exacerbate the area's lack of architectural coherence which the application rightly criticises. The artist's impression of the view from the north (Drawing 13) seriously misrepresents the proposed building as being about twice the height of Elm Quay Court and surrounded by other tall buildings that do not exist;
- Loss of residential amenity. The proposed development of 97 metres height will overshadow and overlook my home;
- Design issues.
 - The design detail is not provided but we are told that the embassy will "speak to the special relationship between the US and UK" and will include a medium height main building plus a 97metre tower for the occupants to view London and the Thames. Such a design speaks to an unpalatable special relationship of a US embassy looking down on its UK neighbours and raising an architectural finger to London. This is symbolism the Council should avoid. The eagle looking down on Grosvenor Square stirred enough controversy in its day.

- The desired office area of 50,000sq.m. could be achieved easily in a building of ten storeys or fewer;
- Conflict with Planning Policy 3A.3 which says “Development proposals should achieve the highest possible intensity of use compatible with local context.....”;
 - The proposed development occupies a site of 21,500 sq.m. plus an unspecified waiting area piazza to yield office space for only 800 staff. That is not the highest possible intensity.
 - The desired 50,000sq.m. floor space allows an extremely generous average of more than 60sq.m. per person
- Possible conflict with Draft Policy PL11. The draft policy recommendations for the area are for “residential led mixed use development”, contingent on improvements in public transport. It is not evident that the improvements will be made and a massive embassy does not meet the “residential led” criterion;
- Traffic and parking issues.
 - The development will generate about 4,000 trips per day (return trips for 800 staff and 1,100 visitors). Since the “train to desk” walk is of the order of a kilometre it is likely that a high proportion will be by car. The effect on the congested Vauxhall gyratory is reckoned to be an increase of only 2% spread over 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Unfortunately, much of the increase will be concentrated in the morning rush hour with visitors aiming to be early in the consular queue;
 - The proposed parking provision of only 131 car park spaces will be inadequate. The large number of visitors will overload the local on-street parking to the inconvenience of residents (aggravated by the US Embassy’s reputation for reluctance to pay penalty charges);
- Proximity to flight paths. While not directly under flight paths, to site a high-rise US embassy within a couple of hundred metres of two airport approaches and a helicopter route seems unduly reckless and a risk to neighbours. It is worth noting that helicopters frequently deviate from the Thames route (H4);
- Need for security walls. The embassy will require security walls or fencing which by their nature are likely to be unsightly;
- Working hours. The main working hours are said to be 0800 to 1800. However, it is likely that a proportion of the embassy work will be conducted within the office hours of the US eastern seaboard i.e. until about 2300 UK time. That sits ill with a mixed use residential area;

- Misleading application. A number of features of the application documents are misleading, including:-
 - A drawing which understates the size of the proposed building and exaggerates its neighbours (Drawing 13);
 - Another drawing which shows a proposed pedestrian bridge that nobody seems to have heard of;
 - Reference to extensive consultation and blanket leafleting of neighbouring residents. This neighbour was not amongst those approached or given a leaflet.

Yours sincerely

Colin Baker