



# Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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*Dear Tom,*

## **REFURBISHMENT OF EMBASSY COMPOUND IN WASHINGTON**

Thank you for your letter of 19 July following my FCO corporate update of 12 July, asking about our plans to refurbish the British Embassy Compound in Washington.

As I mentioned in my letter, Washington is one of several major estate refurbishment projects driven by health and safety concerns. We need to carry out essential health and safety works on the Residence, Old Chancery and main Embassy buildings. The Embassy buildings are 60 years old, and the Residence 90 years old. All main services are nearing the end of their lives (for example pipes are rusted throughout the estate) and need replacing. There have been several floods in the Residence, including in the representational areas. Refurbishment is necessary and long overdue.

The project will upgrade the main Embassy office building to provide a more modern, efficient and secure working environment and platform for the broad range of HM Government Departments who operate in Washington. The future Embassy design will also provide larger entertainment space for some public events. So we have an opportunity as well as a need.

We shall not close the Embassy at all throughout the refurbishment project. We will phase work carefully to ensure minimal disruption to critical operations at Post. However, we will need to vacate the Residence for a period of at least twelve months given the disruptive nature of the infrastructure work there, which includes asbestos



removal. We will make alternative arrangements for housing the Ambassador and his family in the interim.

Completion of the necessary works will leave the Embassy better able to support and enhance the UK-US relationship, on whose importance I completely agree with you.

*Your ever,  
Simon*

**Simon McDonald**