# US trade deal falters amid fears over China’s super embassy in London



Plans for a new Chinese "super embassy" in London are creating significant friction in UK–US trade negotiations, sources report. The proposed facility, set to be located on the historic Royal Mint Court site near the Tower of London, has raised alarms within the White House concerning potential security threats. American officials are particularly worried about the possibility of espionage, citing fears that the embassy could be a hub for Chinese spies accessing sensitive financial information in the City of London.

Negotiators for a UK trade deal with former President Donald Trump are said to have asked for a "China lock" in the discussions, which would ensure that the proposed embassy does not jeopardise American interests or intelligence sharing with the UK. According to diplomatic sources, this issue has generated noticeable tension in talks, particularly as UK officials attempt to reassure their American counterparts while acknowledging concerns expressed by their intelligence services.

The urgency surrounding the trade agreement, which aims to lift steel tariffs imposed by Trump, complicates matters further. British negotiators are eager to seal the deal while simultaneously confronting strong local and political opposition to the embassy project. Members of the London Assembly, encompassing both Labour and Conservative members, have voiced their concerns. They fear the potential for strained policing resources and public safety issues, particularly in light of anticipated protests against the embassy's construction.

The plans for the Chinese embassy have faced criticism since the initial proposal was rejected by Tower Hamlets Council in December 2022. This earlier decision was made despite recommendations from advisers to approve the development. The council's objections stemmed from concerns over security and the potential for diplomatic tensions, especially given the embassy's proposed size—set to be the largest of its kind in Europe, encompassing around 700,000 square feet.

In recent developments, the local council has reportedly signalled it will not oppose the project at an upcoming government hearing, raising suspicions of political pressure being applied from higher government levels to expedite the construction process. Critics have pointed out alarming aspects of the proposal, including the existence of "spy dungeons," which are described in planning documents but have been deemed classified for security reasons. Shadow Levelling Up Secretary Kevin Hollinrake has expressed particular concern, suggesting these areas could be used for the abduction or intimidation of dissidents residing in the UK.

Despite the negative reactions, the Chinese government has categorically denied claims that the embassy could serve as an espionage centre. They characterise these assertions as unfounded attacks from "anti-China elements." Nevertheless, the increased intelligence activities by Chinese operatives in the UK continue to stoke fears, with reports indicating that spies are actively employing tactics like eavesdropping on Whitehall and even on park benches.

As negotiations continue amidst these escalating tensions, it remains uncertain how the evolving diplomatic landscape will shape future UK–US relations, especially given Nigel Inkster's warnings that a wary approach to trade with the US could jeopardise Britain’s critical ties with China, particularly in terms of supply chains vital for both pharmaceuticals and other essential goods.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14790849/US-UK-trade-deal-Chinese-super-embassy-London.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/business/business-news/usuk-trade-deal-could-impact-relations-with-china-exspy-chief-warns-b1222952.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14790849/US-UK-trade-deal-Chinese-super-embassy-London.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/chinese-embassy-royal-mint-court-london-assembly-tower-hamlets-sadiq-khan-b1200795.html), [[5]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/12/01/chinese-super-embassy-blocked-london-blow-xi-jinping/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/08/10/china-revives-plan-for-super-embassy-in-london/), [[6]](https://www.rfa.org/english/china/2025/02/12/china-uk-super-embassy-backtrack/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/business/business-news/usuk-trade-deal-could-impact-relations-with-china-exspy-chief-warns-b1222952.html), [[7]](https://www.rfa.org/english/china/2024/12/11/china-uk-london-super-embassy/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14790849/US-UK-trade-deal-Chinese-super-embassy-London.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/chinese-embassy-royal-mint-court-london-assembly-tower-hamlets-sadiq-khan-b1200795.html> - Concerns have been raised by members of the London Assembly regarding the proposed Chinese 'super-embassy' at Royal Mint Court, near the Tower of London. Both Labour and Conservative members have expressed opposition, citing potential impacts on policing resources and public safety. The Metropolitan Police have also voiced apprehensions about the project's implications for law enforcement, particularly in managing potential protests. Despite these concerns, the Deputy Mayor for Policing, Kaya Comer-Schwartz, declined to criticise the scheme, acknowledging the strong public sentiment on the matter.
3. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/08/10/china-revives-plan-for-super-embassy-in-london/> - Beijing has reintroduced plans to construct a 'super embassy' on the site of the former Royal Mint near the Tower of London. The proposal, which was previously rejected in 2022, has been resubmitted following the recent general election. The Chinese government acquired the site in 2018 for over £255 million, aiming to build a diplomatic facility significantly larger than its existing embassy. The plan has faced strong opposition from MPs and local residents, citing safety, security, and diplomatic concerns.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/business/business-news/usuk-trade-deal-could-impact-relations-with-china-exspy-chief-warns-b1222952.html> - Nigel Inkster, the former deputy head of MI6, has cautioned that a potential US-UK trade deal could adversely affect Britain's relationship with China. He highlighted China's critical role as a supplier of pharmaceuticals to both the UK and the US. Inkster's warning comes amid discussions about a trade agreement between the UK and the US, which could influence existing trade dynamics and diplomatic relations with China.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/12/01/chinese-super-embassy-blocked-london-blow-xi-jinping/> - In December 2022, Tower Hamlets council unanimously rejected a proposal for a Chinese 'super embassy' on the site of the former Royal Mint near Tower Bridge. The decision was made despite recommendations from advisers to approve the development. The proposed embassy was to be the largest of its kind in Europe, covering 700,000 square feet, and was acquired by China in 2018 for over £255 million. The rejection has intensified diplomatic tensions between the UK and China.
6. <https://www.rfa.org/english/china/2025/02/12/china-uk-super-embassy-backtrack/> - Despite previous rejections, the Chinese government has resubmitted plans to build a 'super embassy' in London. The local council, Tower Hamlets Borough Council, has stated it will not oppose the project at a key government hearing, leading to allegations of political pressure from higher levels of government. The proposed embassy would be located on the historic Royal Mint Court site, near the Tower of London, and is intended to be the largest Chinese diplomatic facility in Europe.
7. <https://www.rfa.org/english/china/2024/12/11/china-uk-london-super-embassy/> - In December 2024, Tower Hamlets Borough Council rejected plans for a Chinese 'super embassy' in London for the second time, citing concerns over resident safety, policing, and heritage. Despite the council's decision, the final approval rests with the UK government, leading to fears that the project may proceed regardless of local opposition. The proposed embassy would be located on the Royal Mint Court site, near the Tower of London, and is intended to be the largest Chinese diplomatic facility in Europe.