



## Public Accounts Committee

**Sir Philip Barton KCMG OBE**  
**Permanent Under-Secretary of State**  
**The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office**  
**King Charles Street**  
**London SW1A 2AH**  
**By email: [PUS.Action@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:PUS.Action@fcdo.gov.uk)**

21 March 2023,

### **British Embassy and Residence Washington**

Dear Permanent Under-Secretary,

I am writing to you following your [letter of 7 February 2023](#) containing your summary Accounting Officer assessment of the programme to repair and refurbish the British Embassy office and His Majesty's Ambassador's (HMA) Residence buildings in Washington DC, United States.

I would be grateful if you would confirm whether this is the first AO assessment which has been made of the programme, or whether this is a subsequent assessment which has been triggered by the increase in budget and timescale? If it is the former, then this assessment is substantially overdue against the AO assessment guidance which stipulates that the programme should have been assessed when it first joined the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP) in early 2018. In this case, please write to me explaining the reasons for the delay. If it is the latter, please write to me to explain when the original assessment was completed and why it has not been published.

Please also confirm when the decision was made to increase the programme budget and timetable and whether the planned disposal of assets is more than originally planned to cover an increase in construction costs. These will allow me to understand

In addition, the summary AO assessment itself covers the four Accounting Officer standards, but I am surprised to note that it does not contain key information on programme costs and delivery timescales. As well as the information requested above on timings, please could you also confirm the total cost of the programme, by how much the budget has increased from the Full Business Case, and the impact of this increase on the value for money of the programme.

I would be grateful if you could respond to these points before the House returns from the Easter recess.

Yours sincerely

Dame Meg Hillier MP  
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts