

Erebus Royal Artillery Quays Residents Association  
www.eraqra.org  
secretary@eraqra.org

Ms K Grimble  
Chairman, RAQRA



Dr Robert Farmer  
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21 May 2007

## Proposed Partnership Agreement

Dear Ms Grimble,

Thank you for your letter of 16 May 2007 setting out your initial thoughts about a proposed partnership agreement.

As you know, we have repeatedly expressed the desire for a closer and more formative working relationship with RAQRA, and to that end have extended a number of courtesies and invitations that, to our great regret, have not been reciprocated.

We welcome and empathise with your sentiments regarding the need to work together for the good of the development as a whole. However, in order to better understand some of our arguments we feel it is best to clarify, at the outset, our views about the role of RAQRA and ERAQRA.

RAQRA is the residents association to Moat residents at Royal Artillery Quays (RAQ), chiefly, but not confined to, Albert House and Tidlock House. Of the 418 apartments at RAQ we understand these number approximately 80. ERAQRA serves as the residents association for the remaining 81% of the apartments at the development.

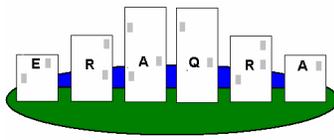
As you will no doubt recall John Rawlinson, ERAQRA's first chairman, made an initial approach to RAQRA about how ('non-Moat') residents of Wyatt Point, Bendish Point, Granary Mansions, Sark Tower, Tideslea Tower and Cumberland House might join RAQRA. At that time it was apparent that membership of RAQRA was not open to these residents and as a result, in October 2005, residents of these six blocks came together and formed ERAQRA. You have, we believe, a copy of our first annual report which details our impressive achievements in our first year of existence – and we hope you share our sense of pride that the two residents associations have done so much, both acting in concert and pursuing their own agendas.

Your letter appears to place a great emphasis on RAQRA's 'recognised' status. It would be helpful if you would send us a copy of your certificate of recognition. But whilst we congratulate RAQRA on this achievement, we would suggest the following;

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Secretary: Michael Portman

Treasurer: Mario Gousse



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- recognition does not in and of itself imply a successful or well run residents association that satisfies the needs of those residents and other stakeholders it was created to serve;
- ERAQRA has successfully engaged with a variety of stakeholders at RAQ and the surrounding area, including but not limited to;
  - Barratts;
  - Solitaire;
  - local Safer Neighbourhood Teams;
  - the police and fire services;
  - Greenwich Neighbourhood Watch;
  - Royal Mail;
  - Gallions Reach Housing Association;
  - Tideslea Path Residents Association;
  - Greenwich Council;
  - management companies at other local developments;
  - local businesses.

In your letter you also describe RAQRA as the residents association for the whole development. If this is the case, we should be pleased to hear from RAQRA details of how;

- ERAQRA members and other RAQ residents may join RAQRA (we understand this would require an amendment to the RAQRA constitution);
- how you propose to open up your committee so that residents of the six blocks currently served by ERAQRA might;
  - become RAQRA representatives of the block they live in;
  - stand for 'executive' posts such as Chairman and Treasurer;
- how residents of the six blocks might gain access to your facilities and events such as online forums, websites, meetings and social events etc. that ERAQRA currently provides (and are open to 'Moat' residents);
- how the financial and other resources of RAQRA might be proportionally allocated to resolving the concerns and problems of residents in the six blocks ERAQRA serves.

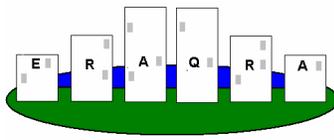
As you will no doubt be aware a recognised residents association is obliged to abide by certain conventions, which include full membership open to all residents in the area covered; a constitutional commitment to equal opportunities; independence from the landlord; democratic election of officers by universal suffrage; and notice of meetings to all members.

You will, of course, agree that the democratic principles so fundamental to ERAQRA's success are of the ultimate importance and if RAQRA is, as you assert, the recognised residents association for all of RAQ it is particularly important that residents of the six blocks (having few or often no 'Moat' residents) are as fully and proportionally represented within your ranks as those in Albert House and Tidlock House. You will further agree that it will also be important to take into account the views of SHFLA (the housing association responsible for Bendish Point) as much as Moat Housing Association when considering the needs of the development. If, on the other hand, RAQRA is not prepared to extend full and equal membership to these residents, or give equal weight to the views of all the stakeholders at RAQ, we would

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respectfully suggest that it confine its activities to those areas that demonstrably fall within its remit.

It might, at this point, be helpful to let you know that a significant proportion of 'Moat' residents are members of ERAQRA, and we are delighted that they have chosen to take part in the interaction, mutual support and communal problem solving that form the basis of our work. Our constitution opens up membership of ERAQRA (with all the rights and privileges that entails) to anyone with an interest in RAQ.

Turning now to detail of your proposal, we should like to deal with each section in turn. You can appreciate the proposal has been considered with a view to the best interests of residents in those blocks we cover.

Firstly, you suggest that all communications to Solitaire should be submitted through RAQRA for consideration by your committee and, if you agree with our proposal, you will feed back to ERAQRA within five weeks of receipt. RAQRA will assume responsibility for pursuing a response, and any action by the management company.

This is not acceptable. ERAQRA reserves the right to communicate with Solitaire without let or hindrance, and encourages members to raise matters with Solitaire pro-actively on an individual basis. We meet with Solitaire about issues and Solitaire has on occasion pro-actively informed ERAQRA when a significant matter arises. We do not believe ceding these lines of communication is in the best interests of our members or wider residents.

We have suggested to Solitaire that, for development wide issues, ERAQRA and RAQRA first agree matters before going to the management company. Solitaire was receptive to this proposal, and it was our intention to bring it to RAQRA's attention in due course – but this letter affords an excellent opportunity to do so now.

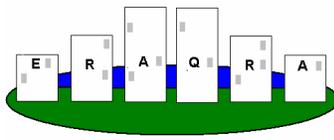
Building on this, in the light of your proposal, we would suggest the following;

- all communication to Solitaire is copied to the other residents association;
- all RAQ wide matters are discussed between the two residents associations before being brought to the attention of any third party/stakeholder;
- both residents associations inform each other of any projects, with particular reference to consultation over any activity likely to affect service charges, property values or disrupt residents (e.g. major works);
- RAQRA and ERAQRA pro-actively inform each other of significant events such as repossessions, crime, antisocial behaviour etc (neighbourhood watch notwithstanding);
- members of each committee act as observers at the other's meetings.

We are sure you can see this is more suitable, and does not fetter the freedom of movement of RAQRA or ERAQRA.

The second part of your proposal addresses face-to-face communication. ERAQRA welcomes your suggestion for joint meetings, and indeed this proposal is broadly acceptable. However, as before, we would suggest the following;

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- an equal sized group from each committee meets every three months;
- a wider meeting involving full committees and members is held annually (separate to each residents association's AGM);
- the secretaries from both committees take notes and mutually agree the minutes before they are published;
- meetings are web/broadcast on eraqra.org to facilitate access by residents.

To deal with the final paragraphs of your letter presents us with a certain amount of difficulty, but we will attempt to address these points more productively than the terms in which they were set out.

We must, of course, work together for the betterment of all at RAQ and the wider community. It is so easy to slip into such a self-important frame of mind that we forget that we serve, between us, approximately 1,000 people; any vainglorious attempt by one to override the other must be a secondary consideration to this duty.

To that end we believe it is Solitaire that has demonstrated the appropriate attitude in giving us an assurance that it does not intend to treat ERAQRA any differently than RAQRA. We are grateful, whatever other issues we may have with the management company, that Solitaire has engaged with us and that we have been able to build a relationship with the management company that has had as great an influence on improving the development as any other factor. We believe this rests on the fact that we are ordinary people who have given their time out of a sense of community and pride to represent more than  $\frac{7}{8}$  of residents for the good of all.

As a final note, you may be interested in the results of our on-line survey and other information about ERAQRA which we attach for your information. You can find out more about ERAQRA at our website, [www.eraqra.org](http://www.eraqra.org), which also includes a copy of our constitution. Do you have any similar data that you might be kind enough to send to us?

We have copied our response to Solitaire and, with your original proposal, to Moat housing association. We also intend to publish both documents on our electronic forum and website unless we receive any significant valid objection within 14 days.

We would also ask that you let us have your response to this letter within that timescale.

Yours Sincerely

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**Dr Robert Farmer**  
ERAQRA Chairman

cc: The ERAQRA Committee  
The RAQRA committee  
Emma Beatty, Area Property Manager, Solitaire  
Derek Strand, National Property Manager, Solitaire  
Moat Housing Association

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