

18<sup>th</sup> October 2019

To the planning department at Islington.

I write in support of policy SP3 in the Islington Local Plan proposal of September 2019.

I am the Chairman and founder of Big Sky Studios, a media business with 50,000 square foot of space on Brewery Road and York Way specializing in the production of photographic/video content for the advertising and editorial industry, mainly focusing on the fashion and entertainment sectors.

Within our spaces, we serve a diverse international community of photographers, creatives, filmmakers and celebrities as well as most of the world's leading fashion, entertainment and publishing brands. In the previous 12 months, we have welcomed 629 photographers and 580 clients into our studios.

We employ over 80 full-time employees, the vast majority under 30, creative, driven and socially mobile. A similar number of freelancers collaborate with us and advance their careers from our studios.

The diversity of talents that we employ reflects the services offered by Big Sky: photographers, set designers and builders, lighting technicians, digital capture engineers, editors, re-touchers, effects producers and even chefs! Our kitchen and catering services supplies productions all over central London and beyond from our building.

Even more importantly, every month thousands of individuals engaged by our clients populate Big Sky's three buildings on Brewery Road/York Way and make our district the fulcrum of a dynamic, diverse community of artists, designers and creators all of whom come back time and time again due to our commitment to excellent customer service and a central location. Both are defining USP's of the Big Sky business.

We also partner with Central Saint Martins UAL, a Camden based institution on an exclusive collaboration with the fashion photography MA course to create opportunities for the students to obtain work experience within the Islington borough in parallel with their study curriculum.

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Furthermore, we are highly committed to engaging with the local community through an in-depth relationship with Islington Council and are proud have been involved in 4 different programs recently. These include developing an apprenticeship program at Big Sky, actively participating in the 100 hours scheme and the Islington Knowledge exchange and last but not least, hosting the Aspire youth employment event last November, in collaboration with the Employment & Skills group at Islington council.

Our 3 buildings are located at the following addresses which ultimately create the Big Sky creative hub; akin to your desires for the area.

- 29 / 31 Brewery road
- 78 / 82 Brewery road
- 260 /266 York way

Therefore, as a significant tenant of the area and having examined carefully the Planning policy draft, we want to express our support for the vast majority of policies set out in section SP3

We are very pleased that our council recognizes the value provided by the cluster of creative industries of which Big Sky is one of the originators (and largest). We know first-hand the impact of the cluster on local employment, which is an area of great pride for us and one we will continue to support.

We commend the promotion and preservation of industrial uses in an area that is quickly being encroached upon by corporate offices, and we support the protection of industrial buildings, which represent the history and heritage of our area.

However, we have to object in the strongest possible terms to the policy contained under paragraph 2.36

Our concern touches specifically the building at 29/31 Brewery road, where we propose to construct an industry leading daylight studio on the roof. This development is crucial to continue to accommodate forward-facing clients and to keep up with the cutting edge needs of the production market which demand the creation of a natural light space coupled with emerging technologies.

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Our building, originally conceived in the 1950's as purpose-built photography studio, is conspicuously short of windows in its main stages. This reflects the technology in the 1950's, where the use of artificial, controlled light sources was necessary due to the fleeting nature of London's light.

60 years on, we are immensely proud of our building's unique heritage, however it is business critical to update our offering by growing in the place that offers the cleanest and purest light: our roof.

A relevant planning permission was granted at the beginning of this decade, which brought the total height of the building at 22 meters.

That project never went ahead because of the inertia of our landlord; however, their approval was finally won in Q1 2019.

In the meantime, the building technology has evolved too, with the development of lighter structures and more performant glazing materials.

With this in mind, we are now embarking in the definition of a new architectural project. In many ways our goals are compatible, with massing being minimized by translucent sides and a very considerate design language.

What we can't compromise on is the height: a modern stage needing to accommodate both video and stills shoots needs 8/10 meters ceiling height, with the bare functional minimum being 6.5 meters. This would presumably bring us close to 22 meters in the tallest spot. On balance, it would seem that the biggest challenge would come from the viewing corridor between the Market Street Clock tower and the Randell Road bridge. We would be happy to have more detailed information on this to spare our anxieties: depending on the specifics of step-down requirement, our existing 1950's building could already be above the limits.

We thank the planners in Islington for the very considerate policies they propose. To those that aren't aware of exactly what we do and the spaces we do it in, we are thrilled to extend an invitation to visit Big Sky Studios, for a firsthand experience of the febrile activity and positive work narratives that materialize in our street.

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