
SUNNY VOHRA SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE

Introduction

1.1 My name is Sunny Vohra and I am the Chairman of Twickenham Studios. I have been an avid fan of the film and television industry ever since I was a child and grew up watching movies on both the big and small screen. For me it was always a fascination as to how films and television shows were made.

1.2 I'm the kind of guy that if I had any free time I would go and sit in an empty cinema in the middle of the afternoon even if I was alone just so that I could watch a movie on the big screen and in absolute silence.

My involvement in the Studios

1.3 I always wanted to be involved in the industry in some shape, form or other after much negotiation I managed to secure a deal with The Studios' administrators in June 2012 and completed the purchase of Twickenham Studios in August 2012.

The re-emergence of the studios

1.4 As the studio needed a lot of investment at the time and would continue to do so, I put together a group of like-minded family and friends to rescue the studio from being demolished and in so doing managed to secure its future and that of the personnel employed which in turn secured the jobs of hundreds of people working in production companies that used these facilities.

1.5 When I bought the studios there were about 20 people working there and on completion of works we had nearly 70 full time employees. At any given time when the studios are busy at 80% capacity, there could be anything between 500-700 people on site.

1.6 After the purchase of the studios we have invested nearly £9m in bringing the studios to the standard they are today. Currently all the theatres are equipped with state-of-the-art mixing desks, projection equipment and sound technology. But, as is the nature of this business, continued investment is always needed.

1.7 Today we have two of the best sound theatres in the country as proven by some of the films achieving nominations and awards at the Oscars, Baftas and other global events.

- 1.8 Internationally renowned directors, actors, producers, post-production supervisors and sound professionals have worked at the Studios.
- 1.9 Some of the biggest Hollywood studios namely Paramount, Universal, Fox have used our post-facilities and our talent.
- 1.10 We are the only studio within the M25 that offers a script to screen service, whereby you can walk in with a script and walk out with a finished movie.
- 1.11 If these studios did not exist a lot of this production would go overseas. In addition, we would lose many projects that came in from Hollywood.
- 1.12 Most of the people who work at the Studios visit Crown Road for their grocery shopping, hairdressers, nail bars, pubs, butchers, green grocers, ironmongers, post office etc. Bearing this in mind if Twickenham Studios were forced to close or reduce operations, all the above traders would lose a large volume of trade as a consequence.
- 1.13 We need to expand as supply cannot meet demand and the fact that UK has some of the best talent in this industry.
- 1.14 If planning was granted to Arlington Works for the development of residential flats, there would be a major interruption to revenue which would put the business at risk. The main revenue and profits of the studio are generated by the sound centre which is literally adjacent to Arlington Works, as is Stage One, all of which would become completely inoperable, as was the case when the oil refinery was decommissioned.

Adverse effect of car parking loss

- 1.15 The studios rent some space from Arlington Works that is used for parking. If they took that space back, the studios would lose about 21 car park spaces, which are important to the operation of the Studios.

History of offers

- 1.16 Over the years myself or Studio management have had a few meetings and discussions with one of the owners of Arlington Works, namely Dawn Roads, and have offered to purchase the site and make it part of the studio. The site has been valued at £750k-1m and our current offer stands at £1.5m, which is far in excess of the valuation. This also exceeds the current use value,

£1.385m, carried out by Arlington Works themselves. I even met Dawn and her brother to discuss this.

- 1.17 Personally I have recognised the studio needs further expansion and growth and to this end we have partnered up with two other industry people namely Piers Read and Jeremy Rainbird of Time and Space Studios to take the studios to the next level. They have brought on board General Projects and British Airways Staff Pension Fund to invest heavily and to take us through to the next decade and beyond.

Conclusion

- 1.18 Twickenham Studios has a special place in the TV and film industry. If Arlington works are granted planning permission for housing, Twickenham Studios' revenue and proposition to clients would be severely affected with an obvious impact on employment and an adverse impact on the TV and film industry in London. We will have no option but to close the sound theatres and Stage 1 for the duration of the works. The local borough and the immediate vicinity would thus lose millions of pounds coming in from film production, one of the top 5 earners for the UK economy. This money would go to studios elsewhere and possibly even abroad. There would be a major interruption to revenue which will put the entire business at risk.
- 1.19 Thank you for the time afforded me to speak and hopefully put my argument across to all concerned.