

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State
Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

6th December 2023

**London Borough
of Newham**
Newham Dockside
1000 Dockside Road
London
E16 2QU

newham.gov.uk

Dear Secretary of State,

Re: MSG Sphere Planning Application

You should recall that that I wrote to you on the 20th February 2023 to restate my concerns about the application for the MSG Sphere scheme being considered by the London Legacy Development Corporation's (LLDC) planning committee. This was because of the adverse impact the scheme will have on the health and wellbeing of our residents in Newham.

At that time, I urged you as the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to call in the application for your own determination, in line with the Article 31 Direction that your department issued on your behalf.

You failed to do so and left it to the Mayor of London to make a Stage Two determination. Two weeks ago, the Mayor of London directed the LLDC to refuse planning permission for the MSG Sphere being built in Stratford. Like us, the Mayor of London has rightly recognised the need to balance development with the wellbeing, health and welfare of our communities in our borough.

London is not another Las Vegas, and the MSG Sphere does not work for our communities. This is a position that Newham Council and my administration have persistently maintained and campaigned about since I became the Mayor of Newham in May 2018. As stated then and now, the residents living in Stratford, Maryland and Stratford Olympic Park will suffer negative health impacts from light pollution, as well as transport pressures.

Moreover, the unprecedented scale of the scheme requires better accessibility for blue badge holders as presently it is inadequate; and the current control mechanisms on visual intrusion as well as amenity impact have not been met because they can't be adequately assessed. These are vital conditions.

It is for all these reasons I am asking you that either refer the scheme back to the LLDC to refuse planning permission; or you directly refuse permission for the MSG Sphere scheme in its entirety.

You have often called for planners *'to go out and build beautiful, sustainable places in which people and communities can thrive'*. This is certainly something we can both agree on. For instance, here in Newham we build our social housing to the highest design standards and have an approach to place making that creates neighbourhoods that people are proud to live in. Moreover, we are pursuing an ambitious inclusive growth agenda which welcomes investment; but this should not be at any cost or through a massive advertising billboard causing light pollution. Investment must enhance the lives of our residents, promote inclusive growth and well-being.

If you fail to either refer the scheme back to the LLDC to refuse planning permission, or directly refuse permission for the MSG Sphere scheme in its entirety; you would be acting directly against your call to *'build beautiful'*.

That is why I am urging you to listen to us in Newham. Either allow the London Legacy Development Corporation to refuse permission in line with the direction of the Mayor of London, Newham Council and the people of Newham.

If you can't bring yourself to do that, then hear our demands here in Newham and refuse the MSG Sphere scheme application to stop it.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rokhsana Fiaz', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

**Rokhsana Fiaz OBE
Mayor of Newham**