



East of England Development Agency

Mrs Jane Bransby
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Dear *Mrs Bransby*

EEDA's recommendations of casino locations in the east of England

Thank you for your recent letter requesting information on whether we have any preliminary thoughts on which local authorities might be suitable for the proposed casinos outlined in the recent Gambling Act. At the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) we have closely considered the criteria, set out by the Government, for suitable locations and strongly recommend that Southend-on-Sea should be the location for the development of the UK's first regional casino.

Firstly, as Southend has 30 years of experience of treating seriously the social impact of casinos we believe that the town can deliver a regional casino with care and responsibility. It is an experienced casino town with a high concentration of these facilities for a town of its size. Through continual efforts, the town has been a successful and problem-free home to the casino industry for the last three decades. With this experience, Southend has "baseline" data on the impact of current casino provision against which any pilot for a regional casino can be assessed.

Furthermore, Southend is working with local stakeholders and the local community to ensure that the social impact of any regional casino will be managed and measured carefully. Southend-on-Sea's Borough Council's bid already has the backing of the town's Urban Regeneration Company- Renaissance Southend, the Essex Business Consortium, Southend Business and Tourism Partnership and the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership.

Thirdly, as a local community, there is real interest in this opportunity. There exists a genuine belief that the regeneration of Southend can only be effectively delivered by a step-change in its tourism and visitor economy. Historically, Southend has one of the lowest growth rates of jobs compared to other seaside towns in the UK. To reverse this trend, and to deliver step-change Southend needs conference facilities, four-star hotel accommodation and a range of high quality leisure and entertainment attractions to supplement its existing offer to visitors and residents. This level of regeneration will only be driven by an iconic attraction or a major development which prompts such change. A regional casino could act as the perfect catalyst for the regeneration of Southend.

We also believe that with these developments Southend has the potential to become the preferred leisure destination for the region as a whole. Situating the regional casino in a seaside town as opposed to an urban environment will have a greater impact on people's



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experience, as it becomes part of the leisure and holiday experience for our region's residents and beyond.

We hope that you have found this information of interest. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any additional information.



George Kieffer
Deputy Chair

Consultation Response in respect of short listed locations for casinos in the East of England

Five local authority areas in the East of England were short listed by the Casino Advisory Panel in May as potential locations to be granted casino licences. These areas are as follows:

Chelmsford Borough Council – Small casino

Great Yarmouth Borough Council – Large casino

Luton Borough Council – Large casino

Peterborough City Council – Large casino

Thurrock Council – Large casino (Thurrock have subsequently withdrawn their bid)

EEDA's view on casino developments has always been based on their ability to catalyse and drive economic transformation within the local economy. This is strongly related to the size of the casino and its ability to act as an anchor for complementary developments such as hotels, conferencing facilities, leisure and commercial uses. On this basis EEDA supported the development of a regional casino in Southend which could enable economic transformation and be of regional significance.

There were no locations within the East of England region short listed for a regional casino whilst 5 were shortlisted for large/ small developments. EEDA's view on this scale of development is that they are less likely to act as economic transformers because their scale limits their catalytic potential to enable wider mixed use developments. Furthermore the region's experience of smaller scale casino developments in Southend, Luton and Great Yarmouth have not acted as economic transformers even at a local level.

However if large and small casino licenses are to be granted within the East of England region and these licenses are to be rationed the criteria which EEDA would apply are:

- Extent of deprivation to be tackled by the overall investment
- Extent to which the casino can be evidenced to acts as a catalyst for much wider development
- Degree of local welcoming of the investment
- Degree of past history of casino developments and of managing the social costs/ risks of casino activity
- Strong evidence of market interest in the proposed location from high quality investors/ operators with a strong track record
- Lack of other economic drivers/ investments of similar size/ cost and benefit to the proposed location (i.e. EEDA would recommend locations where there are fewer market-credible alternative strategies for growth and development)

Applying these criteria to the shortlisted locations shows that Great Yarmouth, Peterborough and Luton display major pockets of deprivation which are regionally significant. Great Yarmouth and Luton also have a history of casino developments as well as readily available major developments (Seafront and Vauxhall site) which a casino may catalyse. The Draft East of England Plan has

identified both Chelmsford and Peterborough as key centres for additional development and a casino would add to their overall offer as a major regional centre. The appendix to this response sets out in greater detail the economic rationale and consistency with the draft RSS for each of the short listed locations.

We would appreciate the opportunity for a follow-up meeting with the panel to discuss the application of these criteria further and we look forward to your response to this request.

Appendix – Economic Rationale and link to East of England Plan

The emerging East of England Plan (RSS14) has two policies which are relevant to the operation of casinos in the region. Policy E4 relates to economic diversity, including tourism and culture. Policy E13 encourages policies in the Local Development Framework to provide investment and maintenance for the tourist industry, maximising the benefit to local communities and retaining their distinctiveness. The following sets out the economic rationale for each of the casino proposals and how they relate to the Draft East of England Plan.

Chelmsford

The proposal for a small casino within Chelmsford has the potential to act as a catalyst for two major developments. Within the town centre there is a proposal for a mixed use development incorporating residential, commercial and leisure facilities - the casino is seen as a major part of this development and could act as an anchor tenant for other leisure operators. A further development within the borough involves the creation of a new racecourse and leisure venue with the casino again fulfilling a vital role in increasing the viability of the overall attraction. These two developments have the potential to become regional leisure attractions with the inclusion of a casino significantly boosting the leisure offer.

Both current and emerging local plan policies support development of a casino in the borough. The structure plan promotes sustainable urban regeneration, large-scale tourist development and requires any leisure development to be part of a mixed use development proposal. The local plan encourages new tourist, recreation and cultural facilities. The Local Development Documents will set out the long-term vision and objectives for Chelmsford and these include the development leisure activities. The recent panel report into the Draft East of England Plan identifies Chelmsford as a key centre for development and change and seeks to strengthen the town's role as a county town and diversify its employment base. A casino would complement this policy approach.

Great Yarmouth

The economic rationale for a large casino in Great Yarmouth is based on the need to regenerate the borough. The decline in domestic tourism has contributed to Great Yarmouth being the 2nd most deprived local authority in the region and having the highest unemployment rate within the country. With over 30% of local employment being tourism related the need to revitalise the tourism offer is paramount and the proposed casino development will have a positive impact in terms of employment and investor confidence. EEDA see the casino as being consistent with our joint regeneration ambitions and consistent with the economic aims. Our commitment to the URC, 1st East, which covers Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft is evidence of this. The casino along with one of EEDA's major investments in the area, the new Outer Harbour, would significantly increase visitor numbers and act as a catalyst for wider investment within the borough.

Great Yarmouth is identified as a 'Priority Area for Regeneration' in the emerging RSS. The recent panel report into the Draft East of England Plan promotes a more diverse tourism cluster based on the resort and leisure role of Great Yarmouth and EEDA believes that the casino proposal is consistent with this. Furthermore Great Yarmouth Borough and Waveney District council have sub-

regional status within the RSS and the subsequent Local Delivery Documents will propose specific proposals supporting casino development.

Luton

Similarly to Great Yarmouth the economic rationale for a large casino in Luton is based on its regeneration needs. Following major economic restructuring in recent years and in particular the closure of the Vauxhall Motors plant Luton suffers from high unemployment and is the fifth most deprived local authority in the region. The former Vauxhall Motors site is the preferred location for the proposed casino and it would form part large mixed use development which would incorporate leisure, commercial and residential uses. The whole development is estimated to deliver over 3000 jobs and the casino would be integral to the leisure development. This accords with EEDA's RES which seeks to improve employment access in Luton and raise the quality of the urban environment.

The RSS has identified the sub-region Luton/ Dunstable/ Houghton Regis as a Priority Area for Economic Regeneration and as such a focus for more sustainable economic, social and environmental development. Moreover, the Milton Keynes and South Midlands sub-regional strategy where the emphasis is on Luton as a vibrant, culturally diversified conurbation. The casino proposal and the wider development within which it sits is wholly consistent with this statement.

Peterborough

By 2021 there will be 25,000 new dwellings in Peterborough and 20,000 new jobs created, the panel report into the East of England Plan states that the casino proposal and associated development will contribute to these jobs targets. EEDA and English Partnerships have been working with Peterborough to develop a vision and a framework to guide the development of the city centre for the next 15-20 years. A key objective of these proposals is to develop the city centre as a major destination in the region for cultural, leisure and sporting attractions – the casino proposal is wholly consistent with these plans.

Peterborough still has significant employment in traditional industries which are in long term decline, these industries have left a legacy of low pay and low skills. The proposed mixed use leisure development, which the casino is an integral part, will provide employment opportunities within a growth sector, improve physical attractiveness and will be a catalyst for further development.

The emerging RSS sets out a vision for Peterborough that recognises its key role as a regional capital for the north-west part of the region. Specific sub-regional policy aims include attracting investment in sectors with scope for expansion such as leisure services, harnessing opportunities for attracting investment presented by Peterborough's location within the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough growth area, supporting regeneration of city centre to create improved range of services and diversification of the region's tourist industry. The casino proposal and associated development are wholly consistent with these aims.