

West Midlands Regional Assembly

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Jane Bransby,
Secretary to the Casino Advisory Panel,
DCMS
2-4 Cockspur Street,
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15th December 2005

Dear Jane Bransby,

Initial Consideration re: New Casino Developments in the West Midlands.

Thank you for this early opportunity to input into the work of the Casino Advisory Panel.

The existing West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) provides a policy framework with locational guidance that could be applied to any potential large scale casino operations.

The WMRSS seeks to promote an urban and rural renaissance. Critical to the successful implementation of the RSS is the creation within the Region's Major Urban Areas of sustainable communities, attractive to investment and supporting a high quality living environment. The Major Urban Areas are identified as the West Midlands (Birmingham, Solihull, Coventry, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Dudley) and North Staffordshire (Stoke-on-Trent and part of Newcastle-under-Lyme) conurbations. This strategy is supported by the identification of urban Regeneration Zones (see Appendix Policy PA2) within the MUA's which are to act as the focus for concentrated investment to help reverse long standing trends of economic and population decentralisation.

This approach is complemented by the identification of a network of strategic centres and local regeneration areas which are to act as critical drivers of the regeneration renaissance agenda. These centres identified in the strategic network are seen as the focus for major retail, leisure, office and tourism growth.

With respect to the tourism sector, the RSS seeks to encourage new provision and to improve upon existing facilities. A list of existing tourism and cultural assets are identified which it is considered would benefit from continued development.

The relevant RSS policies are set out in detail in the attached Appendix. While there is no specific policy that addresses the provision of regionally significant casino development, the above policies provide the context for their consideration.

Phase 2 of the Partial Revision of RSS for the West Midlands formally commenced in November 2005. Among the policy areas that will be updated in

this work is the provision of guidance to local authorities across the region for the location of the new generation of casinos. The current timetable for the Revision is as follows:

November 2005 Launch Draft Project Plan
Early 2006 Completion of technical work
Spring 2006 Strategic Authorities advise RPB
Summer 2006 Options stage
Winter 2006 Development of Preferred Option
Late Spring 2007 Submission to Secretary of State
Later 2007 Examination in Public
Early 2008 Secretary of State. Proposed Changes
Autumn 2008 Final RSS Phase Two changes published

In the shorter term, and to assist the West Midlands Regional Assembly, and Advantage West Midlands (the RDA), in determining how it will respond to the formal invite to make submissions to the Panel before the end of March, consultants have been appointed to provide information with respect to the potential social and economic impacts of siting a regional/large casino facility within the West Midlands.

There is known developer interest within the region for the siting of a regional scale casino with potential schemes currently focussed within the West Midlands conurbation (as defined above). Known schemes include a business diversification proposal at the NEC, the expansion of existing premises at Star City Birmingham, a new City of Birmingham sports stadium, a multi purpose leisure proposal at Brierley Hill, Dudley, a Racino proposal at Wolverhampton Racecourse and the upgrading of a new casino facility at the Ricoh centre, Coventry. The latter already has permission for the operation of a casino facility under the previous licensing arrangements and is currently under construction. No doubt your local authority questionnaire will provide you with more detailed information.

To date, while there have been brief discussions at the Assembly Board and the Full Assembly, the Regional Assembly has not formally expressed any views on the matter of regionally significant casino development. While there is support within the Assembly particularly from some local authority and business members stressing the regeneration and job creation potential, concern has been expressed about the social impact of such developments by both local authority and other community group representatives.

I hope you find the above information of use to you in your initial scoping work and look forward to receiving in the New Year, the formal invite from the Panel to submit representations. We will be particularly interested in the selection criteria and the research that you might be undertaking.

Yours sincerely,



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ROSE KOZICKI

DIRECTOR OF POLICY, WM REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Appendix 1 Relevant RSS Policies

POLICY UR1: Implementing Urban Renaissance – the MUAs

A. Throughout the MUAs, local authorities, Regional agencies and partnerships should work together to:

- i) restructure land use and transport networks to create employment growth, new residential environments, improved environmental quality, integrate transport and join up centres;
- ii) undertake environmental improvements (QE Areas of Enhancement diagram) including greening programmes (QE4) and conservation of the historic environment (QE5);
- iii) maximise the use of the existing housing and business stock where economically and socially viable;
- iv) raise the quality of urban design, architecture and public art and spaces (QE3,4);
- v) rejuvenate urban centres to act as a focus for regeneration; and**
- vi) increase accessibility particularly for those currently disadvantaged in accessing jobs (T1).

B. These objectives should be achieved using techniques such as:

- i) establishing local urban renaissance visions through effective participation of residents, businesses and other stakeholders;
- ii) introducing neighbourhood management techniques;
- iii) establishing innovative forms of delivery partnerships and mechanisms; and
- iv) sharing best practice through demonstration projects.

C. Targeted action should be taken in areas of greatest need and areas of opportunity to create growth and new choices. Partnership working should be prioritised towards:

- i) developing integrated renewal strategies for the most deprived communities;
- ii) housing market improvements combined with improved services, such as health and education in the market renewal areas and housing renewal areas (CF 1);
- iii) concentrated action within the urban regeneration zones, including business support, skills training, access improvements, land assembly and environmental improvement (PA2,QE3,4);**
- iv) developing strategies to provide for employment growth and creation of new residential environments in areas of opportunity; and
- v) identification of the complementary roles and identities of centres within the MUAs as catalysts for urban renaissance (UR3).**

POLICY UR2: Towns and Cities Outside Major Urban Areas

A. Local authorities and other agencies should seek to improve prospects in the following local regeneration areas by bringing forward local regeneration policies and programmes. Where possible access should be improved between concentrations of local deprivation and need within these towns and areas of economic opportunity, in line with policy T1. Any support for local regeneration programmes should not prejudice the need to focus resources within the MUAs.

Biddulph, Kidderminster, Rugby, Tamworth, Burton upon Trent, Leek, Rugeley, Telford, Cannock, Redditch, Stafford, Worcester

B. The changing pattern of deprivation will continue to be monitored and the above list of local regeneration areas kept under review.

POLICY UR3: Enhancing the role of City, Town and District Centres

City, town and district centres and in particular those centres identified in the network of town and city centres in PA11, should be enhanced to play a leading role in urban renaissance programmes in order to provide services for local communities, a sense of identity and as drivers of economic growth. This will be achieved through:

- i) maintaining and enhancing the pattern of urban centres according to their function and role in the Region;
- ii) developing strategies to maintain and enhance the underpinning role of all urban centres to serve their local communities in terms of retail provision, access to services and cultural/leisure activities;
- iii) developing strategies to promote a sense of identity and local distinctiveness;
- iv) identifying and creating opportunities for development, particularly for business, retail, leisure, tourism, cultural, educational and other services which are accessible to all;**
- v) adopting strategies to encourage more people to live in or close to centres through the reuse of sites, development of mixed-use schemes, the conversion of property and initiatives such as "living over the shop";
- vi) ensuring the highest standards of design are adopted, building on the existing character and identity of centres; and
- vii) enhancing urban centres as the primary nodes of the public transport network.

POLICY PA1: Prosperity for All

A. Economic growth should, wherever possible, be focused on the Major Urban Areas (MUAs), with an emphasis on creating greater opportunities for development and support for existing economic activities within agreed regeneration areas.

B. In the development of related (but essentially non-land-use) policies and programmes, local authorities, AWM and other agencies should:

- i) ensure that conditions in 'areas of need' are addressed so that they also become 'areas of opportunity'. Particular emphasis in this approach should be given to the Regeneration Zones (PA2, RR2). To the extent that needs and opportunities cannot be matched, then beneficial economic linkages should be developed between areas of economic opportunity and more economically vulnerable areas of employment need;
- ii) maintain and improve transport accessibility – both of goods and people – by all modes into, within and through all parts of the Region;
- iii) **ensure that the environmental and cultural assets are maintained and enhanced to help attract and develop business activity; and**
- iv) **develop the skills and abilities of the West Midlands people by improving access to training, higher education and employment opportunities.**

C. Where growth opportunities are provided outside the MUAs, emphasis should be given to locating development where:

- i) **it can help meet the needs of the MUAs and promote positive economic linkages with them in areas accessible by sustainable forms of transport;**
- ii) **it can help meet the needs of rural renaissance, especially of market towns;**
- iii) **it can serve the needs of the local regeneration areas; and**
- iv) **it can help create more sustainable communities by generally providing a better balance between housing and employment and limit the need for commuting.**

D. Any development proposed on the edge of the MUAs or on other greenfield sites should meet the following criteria:

- i) **there are no suitable alternatives available on previously developed land and buildings within built up areas;**
- ii) **the development should be capable of being served by rail or high quality public transport within easy access of centres and facilities; and**
- iii) **the development respects the natural environment, built environment and historic heritage in accordance with policies QE1-9.**

POLICY PA2: Urban Regeneration Zones

In order to encourage urban renaissance and help reverse long-standing trends of decentralisation of economic activity and population and to encourage the regeneration of economies, policies and programmes of local authorities, AWM, local economic partnerships and other agencies should focus investment within the following Regeneration Zones:

- i) East Birmingham and North Solihull;
- ii) North Black Country and South Staffs (Future Foundations);
- iii) North Staffordshire;
- iv) Coventry and Nuneaton; and
- v) South Black Country and West Birmingham (Arc of Opportunity).

POLICY PA10: Tourism and Culture

A. Development plans should generally encourage both the improvement of existing provision as well as the creation of new facilities, subject to the capacity of infrastructure and the environment to accommodate the new facilities and visitors associated with them. They should include policies that support the further development and success of key Regional tourism and cultural assets such as:

- The National Exhibition Centre.
- Birmingham International Airport.
- The International Convention Centre and Eastside regeneration in Birmingham.
- Historic town and city centres such as Ludlow, Shrewsbury, Worcester and Lichfield.
- Stratford-upon-Avon and Shakespeare Country.
- Warwick Castle.
- The Region's network of live theatre and music venues.
- The Malvern Hills and the Marches and the small parts of the Peak District National Park (covered by RPG for the East Midlands) and the Cotswolds that lie within the West Midlands Region.
- Black Country Heritage Attractions.
- Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site, the Severn Valley Steam Railway and West Midlands Safari Park.
- Alton Towers and Drayton Manor Park.
- Stoke and the ceramics and pottery heritage.
- The canal network.
- The Region's significant historic sites, buildings and gardens.
- The Region's registered museum collections, major libraries and archive collections.
- Indoor and outdoor sports stadia and venues of all types.

POLICY PA11: The Network of Town and City Centres

A. A network of strategic town and city centres will be developed across the Region as set out below:

Birmingham, Kidderminster, Shrewsbury, Walsall, Burton-upon-Trent, Leamington Spa, Solihull, West Bromwich, Cannock, Lichfield, Stafford, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stratford-upon-Avon Worcester, Dudley, Nuneaton, Sutton Coldfield, Hanley (Stoke-on-Trent) Redditch, Tamworth, Hereford, Rugby, Telford

B. This network of 25 town and city centres will be the focus for:

- i) major retail developments (i.e. those of more than 10,000m² gross floorspace, excluding floorspace dedicated to the retailing of convenience goods);
- ii) uses which attract large numbers of people including major cultural, tourist, social and community venues (see also PA10 and UR3); and**
- iii) large scale leisure and office (Class B1a) developments (i.e. those of 5,000m² or more gross floorspace).

C. There are many other centres within the Region that meet local needs and development plans should identify and develop policies for such centres within their respective areas which best meet local needs. Local authorities should be proactive in encouraging appropriate development to maintain and enhance their function as town centres (UR3, RR3).

