



West Midlands Regional Assembly

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Ms. Jane Bransby,
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22nd June 2006

Dear Jane ,

Casino Advisory Panel Further Consultation

I am writing in response to your request for additional input following the publication of the Casino Advisory Panel's shortlist of candidate authorities and to inform you that it is considered that the policy context provided by the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is supportive of all three short-listed authorities within the West Midlands. The detailed assessments underlying this conclusion are set below.

The three selected authorities are located within the Major Urban Areas (MUAs) identified in RSS11. A potential casino development would therefore be fully aligned with one of the principal elements of the published regional strategy which promotes the Region's MUA's as the prime focus for economic growth as one aspect of Urban Renaissance (RSS Policy PA1).

In approving the RSS in June 2004, the Secretary of State identified a number of policy areas that should be the subject of an early review. The first phase of this work in relation to the Black Country has now been completed with a draft revision having recently been submitted to the Secretary of State. This draft RSS Phase One Revision confirms and further develops regeneration priorities in this part of the West Midlands Region. Specific aspects of this Revision that are of relevance to the shortlisted authorities are highlighted below.

The following broad assessment therefore draws out relevant elements of the RSS strategy, both as currently published and as proposed in the draft RSS Phase One Revision, that are supportive of the shortlisted candidate authorities.

Dudley – The proposal within Dudley MBC is focussed upon the Brierley Hill area of the Borough. Brierley Hill is located within the 'Arc of Opportunity' Regeneration Zone. The Regeneration Zones are one of the principal delivery mechanisms of the Regional Economic Strategy and are also integrated as a key policy component of the RSS. They therefore provide for targeted action to encourage both economic and wider regeneration in the Region's areas of greatest need (RSS Policy PA2).

Although not included in the RSS approved in 2004, the RSS Phase One Revision now proposes that Brierley Hill/Merry Hill should be designated as one

of four strategic centres within the Black Country with the centre also located within one of the corridors intended to act as a focus for growth, redevelopment and environmental change. The overall regional network of strategic centres is identified within RSS (Policy PA11) as one of the drivers of the regional economy and a focus for a range of development opportunities, including large scale leisure uses.

Solihull – Specific reference is made within the RSS Policy PA10 to the role of the National Exhibition Centre, particularly as a key regional tourism and cultural asset. Regional policy promotes the improvement of such facilities where these are not the subject of environmental or infrastructural constraints.

Part of the Borough comprises part of the East Birmingham and North Solihull Regeneration Zone and much of the rest of the Borough, including the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) area, is easily accessible to residents of the Zone. Birmingham International Airport, which lies outside the Regeneration Zone adjoining the NEC, is identified in RSS11 as the Region's principal international airport where airport and other appropriate related facilities should be developed to enhance its role.

Wolverhampton – The race course is the focus of the Wolverhampton bid. RSS Policy PA10 identifies a list of key Regional tourism and cultural assets which includes outdoor sports stadia. Regional policy promotes the improvement of existing facilities where these are not the subject of environmental or infrastructural constraints.

Virtually all of Wolverhampton Borough including Wolverhampton Racecourse is situated within the 'Future Foundation' Regeneration Zone. The Regeneration Zones are one of the principal delivery mechanisms of the Regional Economic Strategy and are also integrated as a key policy component of the RSS. They therefore provide for targeted action to encourage both economic and wider regeneration in the Region's areas of greatest need (RSS Policy PA2).

A large part of the Borough is also designated as one of the Black Country Growth Corridors in the RSS Phase One Revision i.e. identified as the focus for regeneration, development and investment.

I trust these further views will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



RP.

Rose Poulter
Director of Policy