

CASINO ADVISORY PANEL

EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC:

SHEFFIELDS CITY COUNCIL'S PROPOSALS TO BE PERMITTED TO LICENCE A REGIONAL CASINO



Statement By Yorkshire & Humber Assembly (Regional Planning Body)

A. Introduction

1. The Yorkshire & Humber Assembly (YHA) is responsible for providing regional leadership and agreeing regional strategic priorities. In its statutory role as Regional Planning Body it oversees work to develop and implement Regional Spatial Strategy (which includes the Regional Transport Strategy). The YHA also prepares the Regional Housing Strategy and is responsible for scrutinising the Regional Economic Strategy.
2. The purpose of this statement is to provide a summary of the position of the Regional Planning Body in its draft RSS as it relates to the proposal to permit a Regional Casino Licence in Sheffield and, specifically, to inform discussion of "Key Area 6: Regional and Local Context" during the Examination in Public on the 6th September 2006.

B. Context

3. Regional Planning Guidance issued in 2004 for Yorkshire and the Humber does not have a specific policy on casinos. However, Policy SOC3 required that existing city and town centres should be the main focus for major leisure activities and that proposed developments reflect the scale and character of the centres to which they relate.
4. The Assembly agreed to publish revised draft RSS in December 2005 and this includes a revised approach to retail and leisure policies. In particular, supporting Sheffield and Leeds as being the appropriate preferred locations for regional casinos.

C. Regional Spatial Strategy

5. This approach supports the core spatial vision for Yorkshire and the Humber set out in Draft RS. This is based upon strengthening the role and performance of the Region's main towns and city centres. Despite the recent growth in employment, many of the Region's urban centres still require an economic, social and environmental "renaissance".
6. The main thrust of RSS Policy in South Yorkshire is transformational economic regeneration. In order to achieve regeneration there is a pressing need to

strengthen the economic roles of the main urban areas and avoid dispersed and unsustainable patterns of investment. The historic legacy of dispersed economic activity is a particular issue in South Yorkshire; it is a reflection of the former reliance on the steel and coal based economy. Addressing the spatial weakness in South Yorkshire will directly improve the sustainability of the area and the wider sub area.

7. This is addressed in Policies YH3 and SY1 of draft RSS. This approach reflects the "Spatial Vision for South Yorkshire" agreed by Local Authority Leaders in 2004 and the Sheffield City Region Development Programme.
8. Sheffield, as the main economic driver of South Yorkshire, is promoted as the hub of connected activity, accessible by public transport. On this basis, it is regarded as a prime focus for development. This focus applies to major people movement generating uses, not just those traditionally associated with economic regeneration. This is addressed within the Sub Area guidance for South Yorkshire set out in draft RSS.
9. The RSS therefore focuses on Sheffield as a location where the maximum number of people can access major developments. This minimises the need to travel and maximises access within and beyond the region to a regional/national facility. This focus is seen as a key means of breaking historic spatial patterns of investment and directly addressing economic regeneration.
10. Accordingly, formal Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) now includes a policy that refers specifically to casinos. It reflects the core approach and regional vision of RSS and has drawn on the independent study undertaken for Yorkshire Forward (The RDA), which looked at market analysis issues. This informed, rather than set, the policy approach.
11. Economic Policy E2 of Draft RSS indicates that -

"Sheffield and Leeds will be the preferred locations for any future regional casinos and related development – any proposals should demonstrate support for the health of the city centre including its night-time economy Sub-regional centres will be the preferred locations for any large or small casinos"
12. The plan does not name a single location for a regional casino. While this may have given a clearer message to the current regional casino evaluation process, the Plan is intended to cover a twenty-year period.
13. Draft Regional Spatial Strategy will be the subject of an Examination in Public starting on 12 September 2006.

D. Conclusion

Draft Regional Spatial Strategy unambiguously supports the strategic principle of Sheffield's bid for a regional casino.

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