

A Regional Casino for Solihull

Casino Advisory Panel Formal Proposal Cover Sheet

Please fill in all categories below:

Name of Local Authority:

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Main Contact:

Name: Lynda Hackwell, Head of Community & Economic Regeneration

Address: P O Box 18
Council House
Solihull,
B91 3QS

Telephone: 0121 704 8081

Fax: 0121 704 8130

Email: lhackwell@solihull.gov.uk

Name and title of Submitting Officer:

Name: Katherine Kerswell

Title: Chief Executive

Statement of basis of application:

What exactly are you proposing? Please make clear which type of casino you primarily wish to be considered for.

Regional Yes

Large (state number) 0

Small (state number) 0

If this proposal is unsuccessful what if any is your fall back/ second proposal?

Large (state number) 1

Small (state number).

A Regional Casino for Solihull

Vision

Situated at the heart of the United Kingdom, Solihull is perfectly placed to host the country's first regional casino. No other location can offer the opportunity to maximise the economic benefits of a casino while minimising potentially negative social effects. The success of the casino will be delivered through Solihull's unique locational advantages: an established centre of business, access to a population of 35 million and an opportunity to achieve powerful economic and regeneration benefits. These advantages, recognised and endorsed by a strong and focused partnership, combine to make this bid an outstanding opportunity for the whole region to achieve significant benefits.

Introduction

Linked to the rest of the country by an extensive road and rail network, and to the rest of the world by a major international airport and the National Exhibition Centre, Solihull provides a genuine regional casino to benefit the whole West Midlands.

We are offering

- **A partnership proposal**, with the full support of key partners including Birmingham City Council (BCC) and business organisations.
- Exceptional **regeneration benefits at a regional as well as local level**, helping some of the country's most deprived neighbourhoods and communities in the heart of the West Midlands Major Urban Area.
- The **ideal location in which to assess social impact**: an accessible location; opportunities away from residential areas; a clean test bed; a substantial and varied visitor base; and strong and diverse communities in the heart of the West Midlands.
- A **central location with exceptional connectivity**.
- **Strength and depth in the visitor economy** - including Birmingham International Airport, the National Exhibition Centre, International Convention Centre and National Indoor Arena - providing **the synergy to ensure regional and national economic impact**.
- Genuine and demonstrable commitment, a **track record** of bringing forward and delivering major development schemes.
- A **potential regeneration "double whammy"** massively increasing the regeneration benefits by generating £350 million over 10 years for Birmingham City Council which would be used to fund additional regeneration activity.
- The opportunity to **take forward the emerging City Region agenda**.

We appreciate that the principal task of the Casino Advisory Panel is to propose locations for casino development that provide the best test of social impact. In this respect Solihull has these key attributes:

- Location within an immediate population catchment of some 3 million people within the West Midlands urban area. This population is as diverse in terms of socio-economic, ethnic and other cultural characteristics as any within the UK and so provides this crucial first aspect for testing social impact;
- Location at the centre of the UK and the connectivity provided by road, rail and air transport means that a regional casino in Solihull would also be more readily accessible to users across the whole of the UK than in any other location allowing a further dimension of social impact to be tested;

- Immediate international accessibility of a Solihull location through Birmingham International Airport adds a further element of social impact.

The Panel also wishes to assess the regeneration benefits of casino development. The communities in Solihull and Birmingham in closest proximity to sites that could support casino development are among the most socially disadvantaged in England as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation, with a particular requirement for employment and training. The local authorities in Solihull and Birmingham have very significant experience in successfully translating large-scale development into specific local employment opportunity and would apply this again.

The Solihull Area

Population and Socio-Economic Profile

The Metropolitan Borough of Solihull has a population of 200,400 (2004 mid year population estimate).

- 5.4% are from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (2001 Census).
- 119,400 people are of working age (2004 mid year population estimate).

Solihull also has a number of communities and neighbourhoods affected by **very significant deprivation**.

- Some 16% of its neighbourhoods are amongst the 20% most deprived (Index of Multiple Deprivation, Indices of Deprivation 2004), with 10 Super Output Areas amongst the 10% most deprived overall, and 24 areas amongst the 10% most deprived for Education, Skills and Training.
- Over 40% of Solihull's Jobseekers Allowance, Incapacity Benefit and Income Support claimants are concentrated in three wards in the North of the Borough, adjacent to Birmingham.
- The employment rate for white residents of working age is 78.3%, that for non-white residents is 70.7% (Local Area Labour Force Survey March 2003-February 2004).
- 45.9% residents in the most disadvantaged communities have no qualifications and less than 10% have a qualification at NVQ Level 3 or above (2001 Census).
- Economic activity rates in the north of the Borough range from 70.7% in Fordbridge to 72.7% in Kingshurst (2001 Census) - below the national average.

These disadvantaged communities have been designated as part of a Regeneration Zone (East Birmingham North Solihull (EBNSRZ)) by the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands (AWM), attracting a significant proportion of its funding, and recognising the need for additional activity and interventions to address need and inequality. The extent of this local need is often overlooked and can be obscured by Borough-wide data, which shows an overall economic activity rate of 81.9% and an overall unemployment rate of 4.6% (Annual Population Survey April 2004-March 2005).

Solihull also has **close social and economic links with neighbouring Birmingham** (which has a Black and Minority Ethnic population of some 30% - 2001 Census). Disadvantaged areas in Solihull and Birmingham together form the EBNSRZ. They are part of the West Midlands conurbation, which has a population of some 2.5 million. There are very significant **concentrations of deprivation** across this major urban area, with significant concentrations of unemployment, economic inactivity and low skills.

Solihull has an increasingly important role in the sub-regional and West Midlands economy, with major assets including Birmingham International Airport (BIA), the National Exhibition Centre (NEC), Land Rover, Solihull Town Centre and high quality business parks, making it a key driver of regional regeneration and growth. Its regional role and assets are formally recognised in the Regional Spatial Strategy and the West Midlands Economic Strategy. Despite these assets, and

because of Solihull's key regional role and the need to regenerate disadvantaged communities in Solihull, Birmingham and the West Midlands, Solihull must maximise its opportunities to attract employment and growth to secure economic and social well-being. The Borough faces a number of challenges in an increasingly competitive global market and it must develop and promote its offer to attract business and investment and sustain and grow its existing business base.

Tourism in the Area

Tourism is a key sector in Solihull, with business tourism the major focus. **Home to both the airport and the NEC**, Solihull attracts millions of national and international visitors. Over four million visitors a year attend exhibitions at the NEC, with nearly 70% of visitors to NEC Group venues coming from outside the West Midlands region (KPMG Economic Impact Assessment 1999). The NEC is the UK's premier exhibition venue and one of the busiest exhibition venues in Europe, and is a major regional and national economic asset, generating an estimated £1 billion worth of economic impact for the region every year (Ibid). Solihull has 352 hotels and restaurants (ABI 2004), with a substantial number of major national and international hotel chains (including Hilton, Crowne Plaza, Ramada, Novotel, and Holiday Inn) as well as local hotels and guesthouses offering a wide range of accommodation. Those close to the NEC can guarantee 90-100% occupancy during major trade exhibitions (Hotel Analysis Report, Solihull MBC, 2004): it is understood that this figure can be far lower at other times.

With our international airport and exhibition centre, **Solihull has a critical role in the visitor economy of the emerging City Region and the wider West Midlands**, acknowledged in the Regional Spatial Strategy and West Midlands Economic Strategy. The emerging draft **City Region Development Plan** highlights the strong and growing business and leisure visitor economy and the area's role as the UK's premier exhibition and conference location. It also acknowledges Solihull's role as international Gateway to the region and a key driver of economic growth. It proposes that the area aim to become one of the top five European conference and exhibition destinations: Solihull has a major role to play in this.

Solihull also has a **growing retail and leisure sector** - over 16 million people a year visit the Touchwood shopping and leisure complex in Solihull town centre. The local tourism and leisure sector as a whole accounts for over 20,000 jobs in the Borough (employee jobs, SIC's 52, 55 and 92, 2004 ABI).

Developing the tourism agenda

Developing its visitor economy is an integral part of Solihull's Economic Development Strategy, which identifies BIA, the NEC, and the Tourism and Leisure cluster as key growth drivers. We also have an agreed aim of developing our business tourism agenda, focusing on increasing visitor spend and securing new investment, and of working in partnership to take this agenda forward. Solihull complements Birmingham's cultural "city" offer, creating a total package for business and leisure visitors.

Transport and Location

Solihull enjoys a **central location** and **exceptional national and international connectivity** thanks to its high quality transport infrastructure. BIA offers scheduled links to a range of major European and international destinations and is planning for further expansion. Both BIA and the NEC are on the West Coast Main Railway Line (Birmingham International Station), and Solihull is also served by the Chiltern Line to London, and by the M6 and M42, central to the national motorway network. There are ambitious plans to further enhance the transport infrastructure, including an Airport / NEC Enhancement Public Transport Strategy, and the Phase 2 Development plans of the Midland Metro include a link to the Airport and NEC, providing easy access to and from Birmingham City Centre.

Principal Regeneration Needs

We have identified the following principal regeneration needs for Solihull and Birmingham:

- Creating jobs accessible to residents in disadvantaged communities (in particular those in the

Regeneration Zone designated by AWM);

- Improving the skills base of residents in disadvantaged communities; and
- Delivering sustainable economic diversification and growth, focusing on new sectors (tourism and leisure, and business and professional services), and reducing the traditional dependence on manufacturing.

Although manufacturing remains a major source of employment the area has seen 6,000 recent job losses at MG Rover, job losses at Peugeot, considerable uncertainty at Jaguar, and the loss of 1,300 jobs removed from Solihull's Land Rover plant to Halewood in the North West of England.

A regional casino will make a very significant, lasting contribution to meeting these needs.

Solihull's Community Strategy highlights the fact that not all residents enjoy the benefits of good economic prospects, and there are health and social inequalities with a large gap between the most and least deprived wards in the Borough: its primary aim is to make Solihull a good place to live in for everyone. Current priorities include:

- improving economic opportunities;
- creating better job prospects;
- delivering physical, economic and social regeneration solutions, particularly in the north of the borough;
- developing a diversity of employment opportunities, including recreation and leisure;
- enabling local people to gain local jobs; and
- maximising the opportunities and competitive advantages that attract new firms and investment.

A regional casino would not only create local jobs but would underpin sustainable regeneration by helping to secure the long-term future of the visitor economy, driving investment, growth and economic diversification. Also, the licensing and town planning processes associated with a regional casino would generate significant funding for Solihull to devote to regeneration activity.

Testing Social Impact

Solihull offers **an excellent location in which to test social impact**. A regional casino will create construction and permanent jobs for residents of disadvantaged communities. We have an excellent track record of delivering innovative local recruitment and training initiatives with our partners (discussed in more detail below), aimed at disadvantaged groups and communities.

The area offers a clean test bed as there are currently no casinos or other significant gambling facilities in Solihull, meaning also no potential direct displacement of existing income and employment from such facilities. We can readily apply the most up to date best practice and methods to address any potential problem gambling. Solihull can also offer the opportunity to locate a regional casino in a self-contained environment, away from residential areas, critical for minimising any negative impact on local communities. However, any suitable Solihull location would be sufficiently close to, and accessible from, the EBNSRZ to secure the maximum regeneration impact and enable these benefits to be evaluated.

The social and economic diversity of the Borough and neighbouring areas, particularly Birmingham (with a BME population of approximately 30%), together with the area's large and varied visitor profile, will allow impact to be assessed across different groups of casino employees and customers and through the regional casino's supply chain.

We are currently aware of one regional casino proposal in our area – at the BCC owned NEC – and others may follow. We are committed to running a fair and transparent competition between any site operators applying for the licence. The NEC bid is a comprehensive one and we believe it sets the minimum standard that we would seek from prospective operators in a

future competitive process. For this reason, we from time to time refer to the NEC example in order to provide a more specific response where appropriate.

Social Impact

Social Impact: Employment Growth

A **significant positive impact** is anticipated, with the creation of new jobs accessible to local people, and the long-term boost to the local, sub-regional and regional economy. Employment is a key driver of social inclusion and community cohesion, and a strong and growing economy, offering a range of employment opportunities, is essential to underpin long-term regeneration and the development of truly sustainable communities.

We estimate that a regional casino would create a wide range of new employment opportunities. Based on the benchmark scheme we have received from the NEC, the benefits would be:

- c.3,000 net new jobs, including induced and indirect;
- c.2,000 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs on site at the regional casino;
- c.500 FTE construction jobs

An anticipated 60% of jobs will be at entry level - particularly suitable for residents lacking higher level skills and qualifications, which remain major barriers to employment. The EBNSRZ Skills Survey 2001, which focused on workless residents, found that **65% had no qualifications and 30% had not been in work before.**

Solihull also offers an **accessible location**: 87% of EBNSRZ residents can reach a central transport node in Solihull (BIA) by public transport within 60 minutes travel time during the morning peak (EBNSRZ Accessibility Modelling 2001 Census Update, 2004, Mott McDonald). Solihull is also easily accessible to a much wider potential labour market, increasing the regeneration impact. Analysis of 2001 Census data shows significant flows of workers into Solihull from across Birmingham (including South-West Birmingham wards such as Longbridge – site of the former MG Rover plant), North Warwickshire, Coventry, Tamworth and Bromsgrove.

A regional casino in Solihull would also make a major contribution to **safeguarding employment in tourism and leisure**, and would provide additional opportunities for local businesses, with a further boost to job creation. A development at the NEC itself would have an even greater impact in terms of safeguarding employment both at the NEC and amongst the suppliers and hotel and leisure businesses dependent upon it. This was clearly evident in a 1998 study (Solihull SME Survey, Labour Market Solutions) which showed that:

- c.14% of Solihull SMEs supplied or dealt directly with the NEC;
- 13% considered proximity to it as 'very important' for generating custom; and
- a further 15% considered it 'important'.

This economic interdependence is likely to have increased subsequently. In addition, the NEC already supports over 18,000 direct and indirect jobs and generates £1billion p.a. in economic impact for the region (KPMG). Its ongoing success would ensure these jobs remain secure and that more are created.

Social Impact: Economic Growth

A regional casino – particularly on or around the NEC site – would build on the £40m investment to be made by BCC in NEC facilities between 2005 and 2009. This would help secure the ongoing competitiveness and viability of the NEC Group, but would also underpin the £1.3 billion regional economic impact created for the West Midlands by the Group each year.

A regional casino in Solihull would increase the attractiveness of the NEC core business to exhibition organisers, in particular those arranging large, peripatetic international events such as the International Textile Manufacturing Association, and International Telecommunications World for which Birmingham (NEC) is currently bidding against Paris, Geneva and Dubai amongst others. The additional business and increase in visitors will have a very positive direct and indirect effect, economic and otherwise, on the region.

Development in Solihull will increase regional competitiveness, by strengthening the regional offer, with the NEC itself playing a key role in supporting regional economic growth. It will also complement development in London and the South East, offering an easily accessible location, on an increasingly important axis of growth.

Social Impact: Citizen Engagement

To be the location for a groundbreaking scheme, and a very high profile investment, would have a major impact on civic pride in Solihull and the wider area, helping to underpin citizen and community engagement. There is a widely held perception that the West Midlands does not get its "fair share" of national projects and investment, which has a negative impact on local people.

Social Impact: Dealing with the Negative

Potential negative impacts have been taken fully into account in developing the proposal and it is readily apparent that the positive impact, with major economic and regeneration benefits, and the offering of greater choice to customers, far outweighs the negative. We recognise the risks in terms of problem gambling, crime and anti-social behaviour, traffic congestion and overall impact on local communities: however our approach to setting location criteria, our Licensing Policy and the community programmes we would require the developer/operator to support through its contributions we believe will enable us to manage these risks effectively.

Local Impact of Gambling

We have not as yet commissioned any assessments into the impact of gambling in the area and are not aware of any such assessments locally. To create a baseline, an assessment will be commissioned at the earliest appropriate opportunity.

Policies and Procedures

We are developing a Solihull Licensing Policy that will take full account of current best practice in tackling the potential negative impact of gambling, including the recent Local Authority Coordinators of Regulatory Services policy statement template. We will engage in wide consultation amongst all interested parties, local residents, community and voluntary groups and parish councils, to ensure that all views are taken into account, and that we are able to monitor and measure activity accurately. This will help to raise awareness and increase public understanding of the controls in place to address any negative impact. Our Policy will take full account of the Regulations and Code of Practice on Responsible Gambling to be published by the Gambling Commission.

We will look to include in the Licensing Policy a requirement that the operator implement robust self-policing and put in place procedures to prevent under-age gambling; a responsible approach to the sale/provision of alcohol to customers; and a self-exclusion policy (all of which are within the scope of the draft Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice recently published by the Gambling Commission). We will require potential licensees to provide robust policies and clear evidence of their track record in dealing with these issues and applying best practice.

As visitors to a regional casino will be local, regional, national and international, information on problem gambling must be made available at a future regional casino complex and in the Solihull area. We would expect the operator to provide clear signage to promote responsible gambling throughout the complex, together with brochures identifying sources of help. These would also be made available in local health centres, community centres and Council facilities and from agencies such as Aquarius and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

We would also expect the operator to train its employees (and provide refresher courses) to ensure that they understand responsible gambling and related policies; are aware of sources of information and guidance and can refer guests, where appropriate, to a source of support. Training should also extend to dealing with anti-social behaviour. We would also want to explore with the operator the scope for delivering local educational initiatives, focused in particular at those groups most at risk of developing problems.

We would require the operator to implement a community engagement programme, developing an ongoing dialogue with local people, and would welcome applicants demonstrating a track record of engagement and wider corporate social responsibility activity.

Solihull would be unlikely to licence or grant planning permission for a regional casino that was located within a residential area: this will significantly reduce the risk of negative social impact as it will reduce the likelihood of casual visits and minimise the potential for any disruption to residents.

Our approach will address any potential concerns over increased anti-social behaviour and crime and disorder. Solihull has a well-established and effective Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership, which has overseen significant falls in crime in recent years. Experience gained from the NEC means that local partners have considerable expertise in dealing with large numbers of visitors, with the associated potential for disorder and disruption as well as experience in the management of traffic and noise. The NEC has an outstanding record of managing potential public order issues, with its wide and varied audience profile. For example, it has its own security staff, a permanent on-site police presence and 24 hour site-wide CCTV. All security staff and stewards are professionally trained and, where appropriate, are accredited and monitored regularly by the Security Industry Authority to ensure standards are maintained.

Solihull would draw upon this wide and varied experience of minimising the impact of large-scale operations in respect of the regional casino.

Testing for changes in Social Impact

If a new regional casino were to be licensed, Solihull would monitor the amount of known debt in the Borough through its links with other agencies. Any significant increase would need to be investigated to establish links to the casino. Homelessness applications would similarly be monitored, as would any increases in crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. There would also be close monitoring of job creation, visitor numbers and investment enquiries and business investment in the Borough to help evaluate the positive impact. We would look to work closely with the Gambling Commission (based in Birmingham) and with bodies such as Aquarius, the Responsibility in Gambling Trust and Gamcare, and would also explore the potential to work with independent organisations such as the Alcohol, Drugs, Gambling and Addiction Research Group at the University of Birmingham.

Comparable Initiatives

In addition to those relating to the operation of the NEC discussed above, comparable initiatives include local work with the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Money Advice Services delivered by Solihull Community Housing - Solihull's Arms Length Management Organisation.

Job Creation and Training Programmes

There are very strong and effective local partnerships delivering access to employment programmes and initiatives in the area. The key partnership is the **Solihull Access to Employment Group**, whose role is to bring about local planning and coordination of employment and training activity, address any duplication of provision and to develop and create appropriate provision based on its understanding of the real gaps and issues facing the unemployed and economically inactive. Its membership includes the Council, Birmingham & Solihull LSC, Jobcentre Plus, Pertemps People Development Group (responsible for delivering New Deal in Solihull), Solihull College, Connexions, Centro (responsible for public transport in the West Midlands Metropolitan Area) and Business Link.

Local partners have a track record of developing and delivering innovative and effective approaches to link local people to local jobs:

- The Hub at Touchwood helped unemployed residents of Solihull and Birmingham access construction, retail and other jobs created by the development of the new Touchwood retail and leisure centre, and now provides a permanent facility offering employment, training and recruitment support for jobseekers and town centre employers.
- Bullring Recruitment Project. Following the Touchwood model, a Hub was established to support unemployed, minority and disadvantaged groups getting jobs in the new Bullring scheme in Birmingham. 2,604 people were placed in new jobs - 80% were previously unemployed. Whilst this was a Birmingham scheme, Solihull Council was a partner.
- JobJunction is a rolling eight-week recruitment and training initiative equipping job seekers who require additional assistance with the skills needed to gain employment at BIA, the NEC or Touchwood. The programme includes workplace induction; Skills for Work; guidance in interview skills; CV writing and completing application forms. It is supported by partners including Jobcentre Plus, Pertemps, BIA, the NEC, Birmingham and Solihull LSC and Solihull Council.

A Hub / JobJunction model, together with employment outreach activity focused on disadvantaged groups and communities, would be put in place for the casino, with the operator working closely with local partners. This activity would be supported with contributions from the developer/operator.

Other relevant initiatives are:

- **WorkWise**, operating from Jobcentre Plus in the north of the borough. It helps people access employment opportunities by overcoming financial / transport barriers. It can offer a personalised journey planning service and assistance with public transport for travelling to interviews and new jobs.
- **Construction Employment Alliance**. Planned development is leading to a massive increase in local demand for skilled and semi-skilled construction workers and providing the opportunity to help local people get these jobs and to give support to local businesses with recruitment and training. Partners include Solihull Council, Construction Industry Training Board, Jobcentre Plus, BCC and the local LSC. It offers support to jobseekers and local construction businesses, and can offer jobseekers help to meet the costs of construction training. It can support contractors involved in building a regional casino complex and ensure that local people are able to access these jobs.
- **966/166 bus service**. We brought together major local employers, including BIA, the NEC, Touchwood and Blythe Valley Park, and provided resources to help set up a new bus route from North East Birmingham and through the north of Solihull to BIA, the NEC, Solihull Town Centre and on to Blythe Valley Park in the south of the borough to help local people get jobs at our major employment sites.

Relationships with voluntary and public organisations

A unique strength of our proposal is that it is based on robust and effective regional partnerships. Birmingham City Council is an active supporter and Birmingham will be a major beneficiary of a regional casino in Solihull. The Birmingham and Solihull Employment Strategy Group will have a key role to play in helping to shape the access to employment initiatives that we will put in place, and the EBNSRZ (in which AWM, the business community and the voluntary sector are also partners along with the two local authorities) will also have an important role.

Our existing relationships with the Voluntary and Community sector will be further developed to link local people to employment and training programmes and to prepare for and help manage any negative impact from gambling. This will include close working with the Citizens Advice Bureau to identify any increases in debt, and also working with the Police, Primary Care Trust and Mental Health services to raise awareness of, and help respond to, any problem gambling that may develop in the area.

Need for Regeneration

Assisting Regeneration

A regional casino will make a very significant contribution to the long-term sustainable regeneration of Solihull, Birmingham, the West Midlands Major Urban Areas and the region as a whole. Because of its **unique capacity to secure a regional impact**, it will also help achieve the Government's aims of improving regional economic performance and closing the gap between regions.

There is an acknowledged and urgent need to secure regeneration in Solihull and in the wider area. This is reflected in particular in AWM's designation of EBNSRZ, which is one of the key delivery mechanisms of the West Midlands Economic Strategy.

Our residents have identified a number of regeneration needs: priorities include improved local job opportunities, and improved education and skills training (Solihull Regeneration Programme, Lend Lease, November 2002). The North Solihull Residents Survey (MEL, 2004) confirmed these findings, highlighting that 63% felt that there was a shortage of suitable job opportunities in the area for local people.

Regeneration and Labour Market Profile

The local economy is heavily dependent on a small number of major employers, including Land Rover, BIA, the NEC and British Gas (Centrica). Land Rover has recently confirmed that it is moving 1,300 jobs from Solihull and British Gas is closing its customer centre in Solihull in July 2006 with the loss of c.1,000 jobs. Ensuring that major employers remain competitive, together with the ability to secure new jobs and investment, is essential for the long-term well being of the area.

In January 2006, there were 37,324 Jobseekers Allowance claimants in Birmingham and Solihull, and 4,587 notified vacancies at Birmingham and Solihull Jobcentre Plus. 19.7% of these vacancies were in SOC's 1-3. Claimant rates were very high in a number of wards in the EBNSRZ, including 11% in Sparkbrook, 9.6% in Washwood Heath, 6.2% in Yardley, 5.9% in Shard End and 5.5% in Chelmsley Wood and Fordbridge. These wards are home to communities and neighbourhoods that are amongst the most deprived in the country, where lack of skills and qualifications, long-term unemployment and economic inactivity are major challenges for regeneration.

Analysis of the 2004 Indices of Deprivation shows 13 neighbourhoods (Super Output Areas) in Solihull and Birmingham amongst the 1% most deprived (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004); 138 (17.8%) amongst the 5% most deprived; 253 (32.7%) amongst the 10% most deprived; and 375 (48.4%) amongst the 20% most deprived in England.

Ward	Economic Activity – Male	Economic Activity – Female
Solihull	84.9	74.1
Chelmsley Wood	78.1	64.1
Fordbridge	77.7	63.6
Kingshurst	80.3	65.2
Smiths Wood	79.2	63.4
Birmingham	75.4	61.3
Fox Hollies	77.4	62.2
Kingsbury	78.1	63.4
Kingstanding	76.1	61.3
Nechells	60.0	37.7
Shard End	76.9	63.2
Sparkbrook	62.4	33.4
Sparkhill	69.2	42.3
Washwood Heath	70.4	40.9
Great Britain	81.4	70.3

Source – 2001 Census

These wards are part of the EBNSRZ, recognising the levels of deprivation and disadvantage in the area, and currently have Objective 2 status for European funding. Nine of the Borough's 17 wards currently have Assisted Area status.

We have established a major public-private partnership to undertake the holistic regeneration of the most deprived areas over a 15-year period. The North Solihull Regeneration programme aims to transform these areas by improving homes, shops, schools, health and community facilities, transport, the environment and by creating jobs. It is one of the UK's biggest ever regeneration programmes, changing almost 40,000 people's lives for the better, with £1.8 billion public and private investment anticipated over the life of the programme. It will deliver 8,500 new, modern homes, new, state-of-the-art primary schools and vibrant village centres delivering key services. There is limited employment land in North Solihull and growing pressures on land in neighbouring East Birmingham, so providing employment opportunities in adjacent areas is increasingly important.

The North Solihull Strategic Framework (Supplementary Planning Guidance, adopted February 2005) identifies Solihull's pressing regeneration needs. "With the decline of manufacturing industries in the area and difficulties in developing the skills to access new jobs, unemployment increased. As a result, the area has suffered from physical, social and economic deprivation". "The challenge facing Solihull Council and its partners is to reverse this decline and to secure sustainable change and benefits for North Solihull."

"The renewal of North Solihull is an important component in the regeneration of the West Midlands."

Additional Economic Value

On the basis of the specific evidence provided in the benchmark scheme put forward by the NEC, we have anticipated the impact of the development and operation of a regional casino in the area. It would complement the North Solihull Regeneration programme and wider regeneration activity across Solihull and Birmingham by creating approximately 1,900 permanent FTE jobs, of which approximately 35% to 40% would be in gaming-related activities, 30% to 35% in food and beverage activities and the remainder in hotel, retail, marketing, finance, IT and a variety of other areas. It is estimated that there would be a further 2,300 temporary construction jobs during an approximate two year development period. In addition, the project would result in a significant number of indirect and induced new jobs, as well as new direct and indirect tourism-related jobs. After taking account of jobs from outside the area, as well as allowing for some displacement, it is estimated that approximately **2,960 net new jobs would be created in the area.**

These 2,960 net new jobs should generate **over £100 million GVA** p.a (£117,914,560). This has been calculated on the basis of £3,900 million headline GVA in Solihull in 2003 at current basic prices (Regional Economic Accounts, ONS) and 97,900 people in Solihull in work (employed and self-employed, Annual Population Survey 2004-5) - an average £39,836 GVA p.a. each.

Targetting Benefits

Those wards and communities that are particularly deprived in terms of education, skills and training, and employment and income will be especially targeted by employment outreach programmes.

The Multiplier Effect

It is inevitable that some revenue will be lost to the local economy with some supply contracts and jobs going to organisations and individuals from outside the area. However, there will be a very significant positive multiplier effect due to our focus on ensuring local people get jobs, seeking and promoting local purchasing agreements and, critically, from creating a critical mass of tourism and leisure activity in Solihull and Birmingham that will be a key driver of economic growth.

Wider Regeneration Outcomes

A regional casino would underpin sustainable regeneration by helping to secure the long-term future of the visitor economy, driving investment, growth and economic diversification. Given Solihull's location at the centre of the motorway, air and rail networks, a regional casino would maximise economic contributions to the West Midlands from outside the region by attracting more visitors, increasing visitor spend and ensuring that the NEC remains internationally competitive.

Using the example of the regional casino proposal we have already received, the benefits would be very significant. There would be up to £250 million construction investment; £50 million p.a. expenditure with local suppliers by the operator and **up to 7,000 gross direct and indirect jobs** across construction and operational phases. In addition, revenue generated in returns to the public sector in the first ten years alone is expected to exceed £350 million. Should the NEC be the identified location, as the NEC is owned by Birmingham City Council, any direct revenues would be at the disposal of the City Council who have confirmed that they have formally resolved to ring-fence the funds for regeneration projects, which could include the development of a new multi-sport City Stadium of benefit to Birmingham and the wider region.

In addition to creating new jobs and prosperity, it is also important that a regional casino sustains business, income and jobs that already exist in the region. The NEC already supports over 18,000 direct and indirect jobs in the region and generates £1 billion a year in economic impact (KMPG). Its ongoing success would ensure these jobs remain secure and that more are created. The NEC is now 30 years old and faces increased competition, particularly from international venues. Many centres are investing significantly to improve the quality of their facilities and new centres are being built. Milan opened a new out of town exhibition centre in March 2005 and Hong Kong is building a new exhibition venue complete with the kind of world class leisure offer that would be provided by a regional casino. Clearly, a regional casino in Solihull would be a natural and proven fit with the NEC's existing business model and would help ensure it remains competitive in the international exhibition venue market. **The ability of a regional casino to complement and enhance the NEC's offer is vital for the ongoing prosperity, job and wealth creation prospects of Solihull, Birmingham and the West Midlands.**

Without this further development of the visitor offer in Solihull, the NEC is likely to be adversely affected to the significant detriment of Solihull, Birmingham, the emerging City Region and the wider West Midlands region. Whilst the decline in revenues and visitors cannot be quantified precisely, there is a potential for significant loss, both on a direct and indirect basis. By way of illustration, a 10% fall in exhibition business levels at the NEC would result in a drop in operating profit of around £7 million p.a., and a reduction in regional economic impact of some £100 million p.a. This would impact on the resources available to BCC to devote to regeneration activity, with a negative impact on regeneration in Birmingham. There would also be a negative impact on the Government's aim of improving regional economic performance.

Solihull is uniquely placed to secure wider regional and national economic and regeneration benefits from a regional casino due to this synergy with the NEC - a major national facility – and internationally renowned destination.

A regional casino would:

- attract significant inward financial investment;
- generate income and wealth opportunities for local people and businesses; and
- generate a major "knock-on" regeneration impact for neighbouring Birmingham and the wider region.

Willingness to licence

Our Commitment - Cabinet and Council decisions

We have demonstrated a clear commitment to supporting a casino in our area. At its meeting on 6 January 2005, Full Cabinet considered the implications of regional casinos for economic development and regeneration and gave its 'in principle' support to the development of a regional casino on the NEC site (subject to planning permission and licencing). That decision was made specific to the NEC in light of the available information at that time. Subsequent decisions have reflected legislative and regulatory development. At its meeting on 20 February 2006, Full Cabinet agreed "that Council be recommended to approve the development and submission of a proposal to the Casino Advisory Panel for a Regional or Large casino to be located in Solihull." At the Council meeting on 6 March 2006, this approval was given.

Following the Cabinet decision in February 2006, we issued a press release to publicise our decision. "Cabinet agreed that having a regional casino would have significant positive economic and regeneration impacts, bringing employment, tourism and leisure opportunities.

Cllr Ian Hillas, Deputy Leader of Solihull Council, said: "This is not just about developing a gambling opportunity, more a leisure destination. This is a major opportunity for our region, which would bring regeneration, employment and business."

Whilst each application would need to be considered on its merits, there is a will by Solihull Council to licence a regional casino in this area.

Market Research and Local Consultation

We have received many letters and expressions of support, and many others have been published in the local press, reflecting the **very high level of public interest**. Comment has focused on specific proposals, not principles. We have not received any correspondence from local residents opposing our plans. We are aware of one letter of opposition published in the Birmingham Post on 28th March 2006. At the time of writing, we had not responded to this. We remain committed to ongoing consultation as our proposal is further developed.

".... Millions of visitors, many from abroad find themselves with little to do outside of an exhibition, a casino could capitalise on this."

Andrew Williams, Solihull, 17 March 2006, www.icbirmingham.co.uk

"It will help the NEC group to continue to expand and win more shows. It will help create a range of leisure facilities for the visitors to the NEC to enjoy along with West Midlands residents."

Sam Edgar, Solihull, Birmingham Post, 21 March 2006

The findings of a recently completed local survey (West Midlands Casino Poll – Communicate Research, 7-16 March 2006) asking Solihull residents for their views about a casino have been shared with us. This shows:

- 87% thought that casino gambling was acceptable (37% thought it was acceptable for anyone; 52% thought it was acceptable for others but not them personally). Personal acceptability was higher amongst men, those who had visited a casino and in social grade DE. Only 10% thought it was not acceptable;
- 48% were aware of plans for a resort casino development in the West Midlands;
- Of those who were aware of the plans, 52% supported them and 17% opposed them, with 6% opposing them strongly. Of those who were unaware of the plans, 37% opposed them in principle;

- Respondents who opposed or strongly opposed the plans were asked for their views after having the economic benefits outlined: 33% of this group then felt that they would support a development in Solihull and 7% were uncertain;
- Those who remained opposed to a regional casino development were most concerned about the risk of encouraging gambling among vulnerable groups (44%); 25% were concerned about traffic; 25% about crime and 6% about impact on neighbours;
- When asked about proposals that were in the public domain at the time of the survey (NEC/MGM; Las Vegas Sands/Birmingham City Football Club; and Isle of Capri at Ricoh Stadium, Coventry), of those who were aware of plans, 56% identified the Solihull option as the best location, with 19% opting for Birmingham and 6% for Coventry;
- Benefits identified include jobs (90%); attracting tourists (78%); good for local businesses (73%) and improve local leisure facilities. All respondents not in work identified jobs as a benefit.

There is widespread local support for additional regeneration activity. When asked about the relative importance of Council priorities, residents rated 'regeneration' at 4.5 (on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being very important), with 60% saying more activity was needed (Budget Priority Feedback, December 2004, Brahm for Solihull MBC).

Local businesses want to see us helping them by promoting the area as an attractive location for new business, and by promoting it as an attractive area for customers (Trust Research, Business Interviews, Brahm for Solihull Council, May 2005).

When asked about the strengths of the area as a location for business, current investors highlighted the quality of Solihull's exhibition and hotel facilities (Solihull Investor Survey, Solihull MBC, 2005). 40% of respondents had attended exhibitions, demonstrating the close connection between the NEC's offer and the area's attractiveness to investment. Half of those respondents who entertained clients did not do so in Solihull, choosing other locations, including London – indicative of the relative lack of facilities in the area compared to other locations, and suggesting a considerable loss of revenue to the local economy.

Local Strategic Partnership

The Solihull Partnership has confirmed its support for our proposal.

Local Plans and Strategies

Our proposal is consistent with the aims of Solihull's Community Strategy and Economic Development Strategy, both of which pre-date the Gambling Act 2005.

Expressions of Support/Concern

We have received letters of support from a number of organisations, including Birmingham International Airport (citing synergy with the NEC) and much support has also been voiced in local papers, focused on specific proposals.

Critically, support for our proposal is from a much wider area than Solihull alone, demonstrating the genuinely **regional** nature of this bid.

Birmingham City Council is a key supporter, recognising the major regeneration benefits to the city from a regional casino in Solihull, and has provided us with a letter of support. BCC has confirmed that, should the NEC win an eventual competitive bid in Solihull, it would use the income from a regional casino at the NEC to build (as far as practicable) a stadium and sports village to help address deprivation and stimulate regeneration in its most deprived areas. We have worked with BCC to produce this proposal.

There is also **considerable support from business organisations** for a regional casino in Solihull, based on the proposal produced by the NEC. Birmingham Forward, representing Birmingham's professional and financial services community, has backed the plans following a survey of its members ".... recognising the potential benefits it could bring in terms of

investment and regeneration...however a minority of members have raised concerns about the promotion of gambling.” (Simon Murphy, Chief Executive).

Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry has given its support to Solihull (the NEC proposal), with 53% of its members voting in favour of this option (19% supported an option in Birmingham). The Institute of Directors in the West Midlands has also voiced its support for a regional casino at the NEC, identifying strengths in terms of acceptability to the community, transport infrastructure, and the economic benefits for the West Midlands as a whole.

We have not had direct engagement on this issue with these organisations.

Probability of implementation

We are confident that a regional casino in the Borough can be very successfully implemented. Solihull has an impressive track record in the successful delivery of major development and regeneration projects: expansion at BIA, the NEC and Touchwood and Blythe Valley Park - the latter two schemes in which the council was a partner.

Market Demand Analysis, Catchment and Customer Base

There is very significant demand for the facilities from tourists and from across the West Midlands. Solihull is part of a conurbation of over 2.5 million people, and a region of over 5 million people, with 9 million people living in a 1 hour drive time (BIA Masterplan Review, Economic Impact Assessment, York Aviation), and the area is readily accessible by road and rail from London and the South East, South West and North West. The NEC alone attracts over 4million visitors a year and Birmingham attracts over 19 million (2004 Tourism Economic Impact Assessment for Birmingham). This will provide ample demand for a regional casino.

The proposal we have received estimates demand equivalent to expenditure of £300 million p.a. in the catchment, with a regional casino in Solihull, complementing the NEC, comfortably attracting around £200 million.

A daily average of 7,500 visitors is anticipated, based on the operator’s previous experience, with the scheme likely to be able to accommodate 5-6,000 people at maximum capacity in all areas (restaurants, gaming, bars and lounges etc.). These visitor figures are likely to be conservative given the large market from which a regional casino in Solihull would draw, and the prominence of the NEC as the UK’s largest convention and exhibition centre with an excellent transportation infrastructure and accessibility.

A substantial contribution from existing and new visitors to the NEC, and the Solihull and Birmingham area, is anticipated because of the synergy with the NEC. This means that the scheme is uniquely situated to maximise “out-of-region” business and visitors (estimating that this could comprise over 50% of revenues), thus contributing more than any other potential location to the growth of tourism within Solihull and neighbouring areas and across the West Midlands region.

Location Criteria

To ensure deliverability with the maximum positive regeneration impact and minimum negative impact, we have decided upon a number of clear criteria for identifying an appropriate and sustainable location:

- It should secure the maximum possible benefits for the local, City Region and West Midlands Visitor economy;
- It must contribute to enhancing the national and international profile of the area and to improving the Solihull, City Region and West Midlands visitor and investment offer;
- It must be well served by national and international transport connections and by local transport links, with the capacity to accommodate the numbers expected to visit the casino;

- It should be in an area attractive to and capable of accommodating national and international visitors;
- It should not be based directly in a residential area, as this would increase the risks of negative social impact;
- It should contribute to the delivery of the Community Strategy, the Economic Development Strategy and the North Solihull Regeneration programme and should complement the aims of the City Region; and
- Any application should be consistent with local planning policy. (Should the NEC be the identified location, it would, in principle, be consistent with planning policy).

Additional considerations are detailed in Community Benefits below.

Transport Infrastructure

Transport links will be one of the main criteria by which locations are assessed. Solihull enjoys a **central location** and **exceptional national and international connectivity** via its high quality transport infrastructure discussed above. For example we are aware that, in developing its plans, the NEC commissioned Ove Arup to consider the impact of a regional casino on the transport infrastructure. The report concludes that "... the generated traffic by the proposed Casino will not impact in a negative manner on our local and regional network which includes the motorway box. Also in public transport terms existing provision of bus and rail will allow mode choice. Excellent rail links in particular exist well beyond the region providing connectivity with major cities and towns...". We would expect similar findings in respect of proposals for other suitable locations that would be received in a competitive bidding process.

Gambling in Solihull

There are currently no casinos in the Solihull area. There are 39 Betting Shops, 26 Premises licensed for Amusement Machines with Prizes (AWPS), with a total of approximately 380 machines, and 477 premises licensed under the Licensing Act 2003. Many of these hold a licence for up to 2 AWP's, with an estimated number of 700 AWP's in total. As there are currently no casinos in the area, gambling spend in Solihull would increase. It is anticipated that gaming revenues for a regional casino would be in the region of £200 million p.a.

Competition

There are currently seven known casinos in Birmingham and two in Coventry. It is not anticipated that there will be any significant competition on the significantly smaller existing casinos in and around Birmingham, as a regional casino product, with a leisure and entertainment focus, would be very different to the existing casinos in the Birmingham area. Despite housing the NEC and an international airport, Solihull lacks the full range of leisure and entertainment facilities that would be expected to complement these major economic assets. As such, a regional casino would significantly enhance the local offer rather than create competition.

Tourism and Leisure - Critical Mass

A regional casino in Solihull would offer **exceptional scope to create a critical mass of tourism and leisure activity**. It would increase the attractiveness of the NEC, boosting visitor numbers and creating more customers for local hotels. There is likely to be further investment and job creation in tourism and leisure in Solihull and the wider area. The West Midlands Tourism and Leisure Cluster Opportunities Group confirms the West Midlands' strength in business tourism and states that this is "primarily driven by the NEC and the region's central location".

There is a clear commitment in all the region's tourism related policy documents that business tourism is a vital part of the tourism industry in the West Midlands. The development of a regional casino in Solihull could contribute significantly to maximising the returns from business tourism. As well as attracting more visitors and investment, the enhanced competitive offer would secure more exhibitions for the NEC and result in additional opportunities for local business. It would also enhance and complement Birmingham's significant cultural, leisure and business tourism offer, creating a total destination and visitor experience that would drive growth in visitor numbers and spend.

Investment Potential

On the basis of the proposal received, we anticipate that investment in the development of a regional casino resort could be in the region of £300 million. We anticipate that this would be wholly met by private sector developers/operators. Specific details for the proposal we have received are not publically available at this stage.

Interest

As an example, the process undertaken by the NEC in selecting a partner to develop its regional casino proposal has clearly demonstrated the level of interest in Solihull. In mid-2004, a prospectus was issued by the NEC to some twenty operators / developers / consortia. Eleven responses were received at the end of October 2004. A formal invitation to tender resulted in eight parties responding and five being short listed, all of whom put forward robust proposals demonstrating deliverability in terms of concept and brand; management synergy and operational integration; regeneration and local employment; social responsibility; the UK strategy of the operator; and the professional team of the operator.

Regional and Local Context

Solihull's case to host a regional casino is reinforced by a set of regional, sub-regional and local strategies and our proposal would make a substantial contribution to achieving regional economic objectives for job creation, particularly in growth sectors skills and training, securing investment and helping to regenerate disadvantaged communities. Our proposals are wholly consistent with, and help deliver, local and regional planning policy.

West Midlands Economic Strategy

The vision for the Region includes, "by 2010, tourism will be recognised as one of the region's major economic drivers..... We will build on Birmingham's reputation for business tourism so that the West Midlands is regarded as the premier destination for business events in the UK". One of the ways of achieving the vision will be by "building on the position of Birmingham and its NEC group facilities as an internationally recognised centre of excellence."

Regional Spatial Strategy

Enhancement of the NEC as a world-class regional asset is a core element. The Tourism and Culture Policy (PA10) specifically identifies the importance of supporting the further development of key existing regional assets, placing the NEC first on the list. It states that tourism opportunities should be located in the most appropriate areas, be mindful of their social impact and include the correct supporting infrastructure.

Importantly, the spatial strategy states that AWM and other stakeholders should encourage the development of complementary attractions and facilities in order to maximise the value of visitors in the region. The NEC's existing attractions and visitors, particularly in the area of business tourism, are a key strength of Solihull's proposal.

West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy

The strategic aims are:

- adding value to the visitor economy (with more outside visitors, high value activities and private sector investment);
- enhancing the West Midlands for residents and visitors; and
- supporting local business and cultural life

It recognises the scope to build on the great strength of business tourism, with the Birmingham City Region being a conference and exhibition destination of European importance.

There is a need to focus on the region's key destinations and visitor gateways, including the NEC amongst the top seven destinations in the region for attracting visitors, and stating that: "these destinations need continued investment in infrastructure and services to support their offer." A key feature of the strategy is the focus on creating successful, sustainable destinations by "addressing all ingredients of destinations in a holistic approach to place making". The synergy between a regional casino and the NEC would achieve this aim by linking in with the business visitors already using the exhibition centre and hotels in the area.

A principal theme for product development is business tourism. There are a number of priority actions for the Business Visitor Economy working group, including "Create mechanisms for partnerships with leisure attractions and events.... and showcase other themes" and, importantly "making the most of business visitors – encourage leisure extenders."

There were 55.5 million trips to the Metropolitan Area in 2001 (Visit the Heart of England Economic Impact Assessment, 2001), with 12% of staying visitors coming from overseas. Excluding business visitors (the most important segment for Solihull), 65% of visitors were from socio-economic groups ABC1 (West Midlands Regional Visitor Survey 2002). Particular target groups for the area have been identified: couples on short countryside breaks; couples on last minute overnight trips; older couples staying with friends and relatives; and young groups of singles on late booked city breaks (WM Metropolitan Area Demographic Analysis 2003, Heart of England Tourist Board). For the younger target groups in particular, the range of entertainment and leisure facilities that would be offered by a regional casino would significantly increase the attractiveness of the area as a visitor destination.

Tourism and Leisure Cluster Opportunity Group Action Plan 2005-08

This confirms the West Midland's strength in business tourism and states that this is "primarily driven by the NEC and the region's central location".

East Birmingham North Solihull Regeneration Zone Implementation Plan 2006-2009 (ZIP)

The ZIP has three key goals:

- thriving enterprises;
- thriving people and communities; and
- a thriving environment and infrastructure

Its key mission is connecting people to opportunities.

It notes the challenges facing the area: approximately one-third of its residents in work at the time of the 2001 Census were employed in elementary occupations or as process plant/machine operatives, and over a third worked in sales, personal services or administrative and secretarial work. This makes the Zone highly vulnerable to the continued leakage of manufacturing and administrative jobs to lower cost centres abroad.

The ZIP cites a number of sub-outcomes, which will contribute to achieving its goals, including tackling worklessness and increasing skills, and specifically discusses the role of the NEC, BIA and the M42 Corridor as sources of opportunity and employment, noting also the "Significant efforts to diversify into service activities such as business tourism linked with the NEC..... "

Solihull Unitary Development Plan (UDP), February 2006

It recognises Solihull's place in the wider region, including its "important role.... in attracting development to the Region that would not otherwise come".

It notes the important contribution business tourism makes to the local economy, highlighting a 54% increase in local hotel beds since 1991, and states that "Planning policies should encourage the trend to continue, partly to enhance local employment opportunities, but also to meet regional planning requirement to develop the business and tourism potential of the airport and NEC". It also recognises the need for "better more modern facilities, including new hotels and assorted high quality amenities."

Recreation Policy R8, Leisure, Arts and Entertainment Facilities, supports the provision of leisure, arts and entertainment facilities in town centre or other appropriate locations across the Borough, subject to highway, environmental and amenity considerations. The Plan acknowledges that this policy can assist in the implementation of the Cultural Strategy for Solihull.

The UDP specifically supports the further development of the NEC and proposals for complementary facilities that would enhance the visitor experience, it states:

"The Council will support proposals to develop within the National Exhibition Centre boundary. Such proposals could include exhibition halls, public transport facilities and other developments needed for the efficient operation of the National Exhibition Centre. Proposals for ancillary or complementary facilities that would enhance visitor experience or support operational needs, such as hotels, administrative offices, warehouses, catering, meeting space, leisure and other developments needed to facilitate the enhancement of exhibition centre services, environment and infrastructure, may be supported provided they are justified, appropriately located and do not prejudice its prime purpose as a National Exhibition Centre".

North Solihull Strategic Framework (Supplementary Planning Guidance)

This highlights the important contribution the NEC can make to North Solihull's vision, mainly in terms of employment opportunities. It states that North Solihull is characterised by high and sustained unemployment rates at twice the Borough and national average, and recognises a number of significant employment opportunities for residents including the NEC, Birmingham Business Park and BIA. The vision for the area includes strengthening the physical connection with North Solihull and the NEC / Airport, in order to address the issue of transport accessibility and providing practical measures to tackle this, such as new / more frequent bus routes.

Solihull's Economic Development Strategy

This highlights the importance of business tourism and the key role of BIA and the NEC in a number of ways, including:

"Raise awareness of and respond to the important role of business tourism in the local economy and maximise the economic benefits to be derived from Birmingham International Airport and the National Exhibition Centre, supporting them in realising their potential for Solihull and the region within the overall context of the Community Strategy"; and "Support the Airport and National Exhibition Centre, and associated tourism and supply infrastructure, in realising their potential for Solihull and the region within the overall context of the Community Strategy."

Community Benefits

A regional casino in Solihull would be of major benefit to Solihull, Birmingham, and the West Midlands region as a whole.

Solihull would secure very considerable benefits from the planning and licensing process, which would make a further significant contribution to regeneration. Whilst the details of a Section 106 Agreement would be the subject of negotiation between the Council and the developer/operator, it is anticipated that the value of a Section 106 Agreement would be very significant to Solihull and would contribute to securing the regeneration benefits set out in this proposal. Resources would help support debt counselling, employability, initiatives and ensuring accessibility, and would also contribute to the promotion of the area as a visitor and investment location.

We would also look for local employment and supply agreements as part of the planning process and would work closely with the operator, developers and contractors during the construction and operation of the casino complex. In addition to the employment impact discussed above, there will be very substantial ongoing local procurement opportunities that can benefit local businesses. The proposal we have received has identified spend of up to £50m p.a. on local procurement alone.

There are operators who would work with us and our partners to support local physical regeneration projects, such as environmental initiatives or the development of a physical presence providing access to employment and training programmes (an employment hub), and we would actively seek and encourage this long-term partnership approach.

We would expect the operator to demonstrate a track record of positive community engagement and would support the operator in engaging with local communities and with local, sub-regional and regional partners. This community engagement could include the following, which is based on activities known to have been undertaken by casino operators:

- Meeting with a wide spread of stakeholders involved in the creation of local employment with a view to offering jobs locally and to those most in need;
- Discussions with local business organisations about how projects can help them expand their businesses;
- Understanding and addressing any questions or concerns from residents associations;
- Engaging with the media, including live local radio debate, to address any questions or concerns;
- Newsletters to the local community about proposals and any public exhibitions;
- Extensive public consultation and public exhibitions in prominent areas;
- Effectively promoting public consultation exercises, individual consultation meetings and focus groups;
- Funding internships at universities enabling students to gain work experience in the operator's other facilities.

Given the scale of the proposed development, we would require nursery and child care facilities to support employees and their families, with the operator working closely with the local Children's Trust.

We would also welcome an operator with a broader commitment to corporate social responsibility and experience of delivering schemes benefiting disadvantaged areas and communities.

Given the scale of the development, the operator would be required through the planning process to produce a Green Travel Plan, and would be invited to implement a car-sharing scheme for staff. It is also anticipated that the operator would demonstrate a commitment to environmental good practice, including recycling, waste management and energy conservation.

It would be a fundamental requirement that the operator has, and implements, robust diversity and equalities policies and that these are reflected and promoted as part of its corporate values.

A further public benefit will be a notable increase in National Non-Domestic Rates collected, as the development will have a very considerable Rateable Value.

The proposal we have already received notes that as the NEC is owned by BCC, in addition to providing jobs and income, all revenue would be handed back to BCC. This would offer a double benefit. Firstly it would contribute to the regeneration and sustainability of the NEC, in itself a strategically important tool for regional regeneration and economic stability. Secondly, a regional casino on or near the NEC site would also safeguard and further increase the financial resources generated by the NEC Group for its owners BCC, enabling the Council to carry out its commitment to ring-fence this additional funding for regeneration activity.

Unique Characteristics

Solihull can offer a unique opportunity to pilot a regional casino, providing a clean “test bed” and the capacity to bring forward the scheme in a self-contained environment. It also offers exceptional synergies with the East Birmingham North Solihull Regeneration Zone designated by Advantage West Midlands and would thus make a significant contribution to delivering the regional regeneration agenda.

A Solihull location will provide a **unique opportunity to secure economic and regeneration benefits on a regional and national scale** due to Solihull’s exceptional national and international connectivity and, in particular, the synergies with the National Exhibition Centre, enabling the development to enhance this major national asset, ensuring its greater international competitiveness and continued substantial contribution to the regional and national economy.

This will make a major contribution to raising the West Midlands’ international profile, attracting new business to the NEC and to the region’s tourism and leisure businesses. Raising the area’s profile and competitiveness will also help to secure new businesses and investment in an increasingly competitive global market. This will help drive the long-term sustainable regeneration of the area, the Urban Renaissance aim of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, and to the competitiveness and growth agenda of the emerging City Region centred on Birmingham.

The broader impact of the proposal will be to increase the competitiveness of a region that is currently under performing compared to the national average, helping to address the Government’s aim of raising regional economic performance and tackling regional economic disparities.

A Solihull location will offer exceptional opportunities for the casino and entertainment facilities due to the numbers and profile of the local customer base – the millions of visitors using Birmingham International Airport and, in particular, the 4 million plus visitors per year to the NEC.

An additional unique benefit of a Solihull scheme is its ability to deliver direct financial benefits to two local authorities: Solihull, through the planning and licensing process, Birmingham, through its ownership of the NEC, and both through the East Birmingham North Solihull Regeneration Zone. Should the casino actually be located within the NEC site, following an open competition, there would be a further benefit to Birmingham City Council as landowner as well as a far greater benefit to it as a shareholder. The impact of a regional casino in Solihull would therefore include additional resources for regeneration for Solihull and for Birmingham, both of which have concentrations of significant deprivation and neighbourhoods amongst the most disadvantaged in the country.

In the heart of the UK, with some 35 million people within a two-hour radius, Solihull, together with Birmingham, offers a **unique location** for the first UK regional casino. The area has an established business and leisure tourism industry, which has a proven and robust synergy with this kind of facility, creating a natural **opportunity** to effectively test a regional casino development whilst achieving a **uniquely powerful economic and regeneration impact**.

