



Chelmsford Borough Council
**Response to additional
questions from the
Casino Advisory Panel**

September 2006



Beacon
Council

2003-2004
Quality of the Built Environment

Chelmsford
BOROUGH COUNCIL

I. Type of Area

[No additional information requested]

2. Social Impact

(a) **What thought have you given to the social impact of your proposal?**

We believe that Chelmsford would make an excellent testing ground for assessing the social impact of a new casino. There are compelling commercial considerations as well as an excellent opportunity to deliver substantial community benefits to this important regional centre.

As stated in our initial submission, we do not consider that a casino will have a negative impact on social inclusion and the sustainability of communities. The Council will work closely with the operator and use its licensing and planning policies effectively, to ensure that a casino development will produce a positive social impact.

As stated in our response to Question 3, the Chelmsford community will benefit from the increase in jobs brought about by a casino, and the service, retail and hospitality business that will develop and thrive in Chelmsford as a result of a casino in a mixed-use development. There will be a variety of jobs for people with different academic qualifications, skills and experience, and the local hospitality economy as a whole will benefit from transferable skills.

There is an excellent working relationship between statutory, community/voluntary organisations and partnership groups in the Borough. This includes the Chelmsford Strategic Partnership whose seven key priorities and associated sub-groups all improve the social, regenerative and economic positions of the community and will strive to ensure that a casino will make a positive contribution to Chelmsford.

Chelmsford has an extensive CCTV network that is monitored 24 hours a day at the Council's control room. The Council would work with a casino operator to ensure that there is suitable CCTV coverage of the public areas surrounding a casino development to ensure public safety and crime prevention.

A casino in a town centre location would form part of the Publink scheme that allows the licensed trade to have direct contact with the CCTV control room via a two way radio, should there be an incident that needs monitoring.

The Chelmsford Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership brings together Chelmsford Borough with Essex Police, Essex County Council and nearly 50 statutory, voluntary and business sector partners to combat crime and the fear of crime locally. It has recently been awarded a 'Chartermark' by the Government for the quality of its work for the third time in a row.

Chelmsford also has an active Town Centre Partnership that brings together local authorities, police and local businesses to promote a vibrant, attractive and safe town centre economy. The partnership has close links with Chelmsford Borough Council and we would work with them to ensure a casino is properly integrated into the town centre to boost the nighttime economy.

Chelmsford Business Against Crime is a new initiative that is a dedicated, formal and pro-active partnership between businesses, the Police, the Council, Town Centre Management and other organisations to maintain a database of individuals involved in crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. It will facilitate the dissemination of information about individuals involved in these activities and will be a powerful tool in the fight against crime.

Chelmsford Borough Council has a successful track record of working in partnership with other organisation on social issues. In particular, we have demonstrated over many years successful partnerships with the Mid-Essex Enterprise Agency, Essex Chamber of Commerce, Essex Development and Regeneration Agency (ExTra), Business Link for Essex and the Learning and Skills Council (Essex).

(b) You might want to comment, for example, on the black and minority ethnic population of 3% being unrepresentative of Britain's towns; or

We do not consider that the introduction of a casino will have a significant impact on the percentage and makeup of Chelmsford's minority ethnic population, or on the persons from these groups. It is likely that, in common with other towns and cities in the country, future immigration patterns will mean that there will be an increase in the make up of Chelmsford's minority ethnic and black population. Future development and regeneration, in terms of housing, but also any other business, retail or leisure developments that may or may not include a casino, will attract persons from all ethnic groups.

(c) What effect might choosing the town centre or show ground have impulse problem gambling risks. (See also 6. below in this context).

It is our view that the potential location of Great Leighs for a casino would have a negligible effect on impulse gambling risks, if any. This is due to the nature of the Great Leighs development, being an environment where visitors will already be likely to be engaged in the gambling activities associated with horse racing. Great Leighs is also in a rural and relatively isolated location which would require a dedicated journey and would mean that patrons are less likely to feature a trip to the casino as an unplanned element of a night out already taking in other leisure or entertainment venues.

As with the Great Leighs site, any casino development in the town centre would have stringent licensing conditions set by the Council to ensure that its

management takes and promotes a responsible approach to gambling, and should intervene, where possible and appropriate (working with organisations such as GamCare), to prevent the accumulation of unsustainable debt by an individual.

It is envisaged that any casino development in the town centre would form part of a new or existing mixed-use development that would include a range of leisure facilities including cinema, restaurants, pubs, bars and nightclubs. Such a development would be used by all sections of the community, which would help to ensure moderate and normal behaviour amongst patrons. It would also reduce the chance of members of the public focusing their time and spend on a single offer, particularly a casino.

3. Need for Regeneration

- (a) **You say that the development of a casino in the borough would “lead to the retention of local disposable income.” How do you defend this assertion against a commonly held view that casinos take money out of the local economy through their profits?**

Businesses, including a casino, make a contribution to the local economy either directly or indirectly by means of business rates, providing employment and hence generation of local income, and local procurement benefiting other businesses and subsequent employment opportunities. Whilst a proportion of profit will undoubtedly go to the shareholders of a casino company, a high proportion will go into “servicing” that business, prize money and reinvestment in the business benefiting the local economy. It is highly likely that the casino would complement a number of leisure facilities, restaurants and retail outlets that will themselves contribute to the local economy. An attraction of this nature will not only increase custom at such outlets, but will also increase the use of other local services, for example local taxi firms and cleaning contractors. A high proportion of earnings and hence disposable income by individuals is from employment outside the borough, particularly London, which is only 35 minutes away by train. Indeed, 115,000 households are within a 30 minute drive of the Great Leighs site. A greater proportion of this disposable income may be spent locally, instead of elsewhere, as a consequence.

- (b) **In what way would a casino support the Chelmer Waterside regeneration project?**

Chelmer Waterside is a large town centre regeneration area comprising a former gas works and other industry. Evidence of regeneration progress so far include the Essex Record Office, canal side housing, a restaurant and banqueting hall. The Council intends the driving force behind major regeneration of the gas works land west of the Essex Record Office to be retail use within a mixed-use development. A casino would support shopping as a complementary leisure activity positioned above or alongside retail and restaurants. On the land east of the Essex Record Office the Council envisages residential-led mixed-use development and a casino could be part of that if placed adjacent to the Record Office with a hotel to support both facilities.

- (c) **How convinced are you of the incremental tourism and jobs impact of your proposal?**

As stated above, a casino will form just part of a wider leisure and retail offer which will attract residents and tourists alike to the borough of Chelmsford. Chelmsford attracts a high number of visitors of which many are here on

business or with specific reasons for their visit besides tourism. A local facility will retain many who travel outside the borough, notably to London, for such facilities as a casino. Chelmsford's visitor attractions are planned to grow significantly over the next few years, for example the new Great Leighs Racecourse, plans to expand the RHS Hyde Hall Gardens, Hylands House and enhancements to the Riverside Ice & Leisure Centre. The addition of a casino will serve to reinforce and expand the Chelmsford visitor offer, firmly placing us as a premier visitor destination. Chelmsford is accessible, being less than one hour's travelling time for some 20% of the UK population, meaning the attraction of a casino would have a significant potential client base. As a key borough close to several gateways for international visitors, notably Stansted, Tilbury and Harwich, as well as its proximity to London, it is also geographically well placed to attract custom from further afield. A casino itself will provide a variety of new jobs for residents with a range of academic qualifications, skills and experience, and additional employment will be created by the businesses that will develop and thrive in Chelmsford as a result of their possible association with a casino to provide an attractive retail and leisure destination. We are therefore totally convinced that a casino will add to our visitor numbers and subsequent employment growth.

4. Willingness to Licence

- (a) **Does the proposal yet have full council support?**

No.

- (b) **What was in your mind in preferring a small casino to a large one?**

We are conscious that there are already two casinos in Southend and that a 'large' casino in Chelmsford may not be as economically viable to a potential operator. Chelmsford Town Centre is not geographically large and whilst it is presently undergoing economic regeneration, we would not wish a large casino to dominate such development.

Having a small casino will mean that more potential sites are available with the space to house such a development. It will mean that any proposed casino would be proportionally less intrusive and more easily managed than a large one, both in terms of infrastructure and potential for problem gambling and public nuisance. Any public anxiousness about the perceived problems of a casino will also be countered by the fact that any such proposal would be smaller, more contained and more easily managed.

- (c) **Your proposal refers to meetings which “identified widespread enthusiasm for hosting a casino.” What persuades you that this enthusiasm was representative of the community at large? Has there been any other local consultation or market research yet?**

The local press have sought to gauge public opinion on the Council's casino application. There have been several expressions of support for a casino, including comments that it would add an extra dimension to the Chelmsford's entertainment offer and would attract new businesses into the borough. Negative responses focus on concerns about gambling as a whole, more so than issues specifically related to a casino. Such issues include problem and compulsive gambling, and problems that are perceived to be associated with gambling such as binge drinking and anti-social behaviour. We are confident that with a combination of stringent licensing conditions, close working with the casino operator and partnership working with groups such as the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, we will ensure that such concerns are not realised and a casino will bring a positive social impact to the borough.

As a Council we are currently consulting residents and businesses about our draft Gambling Policy. The consultation has been advertised in the Essex Chronicle and the policy document sent to 346 parties who may have an interest or be in a position to comment. Only a third of these responses have

included negative comments, many of these being responses from organisations in relation to problems with gambling at a national level rather than specifically related to the borough.

Should Chelmsford be granted the opportunity to host a casino we will undertake full and comprehensive public consultations as part of the normal planning application and licensing procedures.

5. Probability of Implementation

- (a) **What are the timing, challenges, milestones and probability for the Chelmer Waterside regeneration?**

We anticipate a planning application for a retail-led development scheme in September 2007 from the land owning consortium. The main challenge is to secure the adoption of the Town Centre Area Action Plan that will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in October and be the subject of public examination in June 2007. There is a high probability that development will be progressed.

- (b) **What is the status and progress of the Great Leighs racecourse proposal? Please give evidence of such matters as progressing, funding, timing, key issues and challenges. Is the development at Great Leighs dependent on a casino or is it proceeding anyway? Please tell us about the developer/operator of Great Leighs racecourse.**

Status and progress of the Great Leighs racecourse proposal

In 2003 planning permission was granted for a racecourse and showground centre at Great Leighs the former Essex County Showground. The site has two component parts, the main estate and the island site. The main estate comprises an 1800m oval racetrack with grass and all-weather surface, the Showground Centre (multipurpose spaces in excess of 4,000sqm, up to 7,000 spectators, restaurants, bars, circulation space and media centre), training yard for 120 horses and parking for approximately 1,500 cars. The developer hopes that the island site will comprise stabling, veterinary block, jockey accommodation and further parking. The intention is for the two sites to be connected by a pair of underpasses beneath the new A131 Great Leighs bypass. The showground centre will be a strikingly modern building, elliptical in shape, clad in glass and designed by sporting event specialists HOK Sport. The venue is intended to become a major regional leisure facility based around horse racing and equestrian activities.

STOP PRESS “Great Leighs tee’d up for new grandstand” – see Appendix A (issued 26th September 2006)

Funding, timing, key issues and challenges

Work on the racetrack is close to completion with horseracing due to begin in February 2007.

Substantive work has yet to begin on the remaining facilities including the showground centre and Island Site, the principal reason being highway related. Negotiations with the Highway Authority have yet to resolve issues relating to the construction of the underpasses, which connect the two parts of the estate. This is due to be completed in October of this year with work on the construction of the underpasses to begin shortly after.

For these reasons the venue is to be completed in two phases: a) Short-term facilities including temporary stabling, jockey and spectator accommodation are in place or under construction. b) Permanent facilities – The Showground Centre, within which all spectator, jockey and officials accommodation will be located and the Island site incorporating stabling and veterinary blocks. Work will begin in the spring of 2007. The build period is some 12 months.

Relationship of Great Leighs to a casino

Gambling is an intrinsic part of the business plan for the showground and was fully acknowledged by the Local Planning Authority when determining the application for the racecourse. It is accepted that a casino was not part of the original planning submission or approval. However, the internal layout of the showground centre has been designed to ensure optimum flexibility. It is entirely feasible that a large or small casino use could therefore be accommodated within the building and complement the proposed leisure facilities planned for the venue.

Great Leighs developer

The project developer is the Essex County Showground Group Limited whose chief executive and principal shareholder is Mr John Holmes. He has a lifelong association with equestrianism and horse racing and his involvement with the Showground dates from 1997. To take the project through to completion and beyond he has assembled a team of specialists and advisors that include expertise in project management, horse racing, telecommunications and publicity.

6. Regional and Local Context

- (a) **Whilst the remit of the Panel is to advise only on the broad location of casinos, you have chosen in your proposal to suggest two potential sites for a casino, Chelmer Waterside and Great Leighs. Is the Chelmer Waterside site sufficiently close to the town centre as to be regarded as a town centre site in accordance with PPS6? What is your response to the consideration that Great Leighs would not accord with PPS6 policy?**

Chelmer Waterside is sufficiently close to the town centre as to be regarded as a town centre site in accordance with PPS6. We agree that Great Leighs does not accord with PPS6 policy.

Chelmer Waterside has been identified by independent consultants as the most important regeneration site in Southern England. It is close to – and will become – the town centre once redevelopment takes place. The landowners, apart from the Borough Council, are Standard Life, British Gas and the Lend Lease group, developers at Bluewater. The site offers scope for high quality development which will include major retailers, housing and leisure activities. It is anticipated that planning permission will be sought in 2007 with work starting in 2008.

- (b) **Following the publication of the Panel Report on the EiP for the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy, is there anything more you want to say about the regional context?**

The East of England Plan was prepared by the East of England Regional Assembly. It will provide a draft spatial strategy to guide development within the East of England for the next 20 years covering Bedfordshire, Luton, Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Hertfordshire, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex.

The Plan will provide a framework for local authorities to produce more detailed Local Development Frameworks and Local Transport Plans. In particular it sets out the housing and job targets for each Local Planning Authority. It will also inform other strategies and plans including those for economic development, education, health, rural development, housing and culture. Under the new planning system the Plan now provides a statutory regional framework for local planning authorities.

The Plan was published for public consultation in December 2004. All responses were taken into account in the preparation of the final version of the

Plan and were tested at an Examination in Public before a panel appointed by the Secretary of State. The independent panel's report was published on 22 June 2006 and contains recommendations to be considered by Government.

With specific regard to Chelmsford the panel considers that the Borough has an important role to play in the wider growth agenda set out in the draft Plan. This merited Chelmsford being identified as a Key Regional Centre of Development and Change.

The greater weight attached to the role of Chelmsford has resulted in an increase in the draft Plan Policy H1 allocation for the District by a further 2,000 to 16,000 dwellings, with an annual completion rate of 800 per year. In addition the indicative jobs growth levels for the area described as the Rest of Essex, within which Chelmsford is located, has increased to 25,000 from 9,600. However, no apportionment has been made across the districts and whilst this has been noted by the panel no recommendation has been made in this respect.

The strategy for Chelmsford will:

- Provide for substantial growth of housing within an allocation of 16,000 for the District as a whole;
- Seek to strengthen the town's role as a county town and further increase and diversify its employment base; and

Policies set out in the draft The East of England Plan state that:

- Thriving, vibrant and attractive city and town centres are fundamental to sustainable development and will continue to be the focus for investment, environmental enhancement and regeneration;
- There is a need for high quality development which assists urban renaissance and regeneration and provides landmark buildings of an efficient scale;
- There is a need to diversify the employment base (including Chelmsford);
- Development must result in more sustainable pattern of development and movement including a reduction in the need to travel;
- Encourage realistic and sustainable investment in the maintenance, improvement, regeneration, extension and diversification of the region's tourist industry;
- Regionally and nationally significant leisure facilities will be supported in locations that satisfy the sequential test except where the rural attributes make it uniquely appropriate for regionally strategic cultural development.

A casino in Chelmsford would reinforce the status of the town within the regional context outlined above.

7. Community Benefits

[No additional information requested]

8. Unique characteristics

What could you do that would make Chelmsford be more uniquely positioned vis-à-vis other towns wanting a casino?

We anticipate a planning application for a retail-led development scheme in September 2007 from the land owning consortium. The main challenge is to secure the adoption of the Town Centre Area Action Plan which will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in October and be the subject of public examination in June 2007. There is a high probability that development will be progressed.

Appendix A



PRESS INFORMATION – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 26 2006

Great Leighs tee'd up for new grandstand

Sharp-eyed TV viewers may spot something familiar about the grandstand appearing this winter along the home straight at Great Leighs.

The De Boer "Emperor" building - stunning backdrop to the 17th hole at last weekend's Ryder Cup - is being shipped direct from the K-Club, County Kildare, to Essex, where it will showcase Britain's first brand new racecourse since 1927.

The two-tier, 160m long, 20m deep building was designed for the 2006 FIFA World Cup and is the most sophisticated structure of its type anywhere in the world. It has aluminium and wooden elements with glass fascias and a fluted, canopied roof. The modular system lends itself to atria, mezzanine and balcony options enabling all public areas, betting hall, bars, restaurants, hospitality boxes and office space to be contained in one building. The stand will flank the winning post, with some double aspect areas overlooking the paddock area.

The layout of Great Leighs had to be radically reinvented this spring, with both spectator and equine infrastructure moved to the in-field so that racing can commence in February while an unexpected setback over a dual carriageway underpass is resolved.

John Holmes commented: "We have created a very attractive paddock area for our summer course, and wanted a stylish grandstand to complement it, reflecting the attention to detail I have always planned for Great Leighs.

"We searched literally all over Europe. I am thrilled to have bought this beautifully engineered building which combines both form and function. It goes way, way beyond my wildest expectations of what can be achieved with a 'temporary' stand and its presence at the K-Club has given all of our potential users – such as purchasers of hospitality – the chance to see it in real life."

More/

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John Cochrane, UK Sales Director for De Boer, said: “Our Emperor structures have taken hospitality facilities to a new plateau and have been a spectacular success. The fact Great Leighs has decided to purchase is a terrific endorsement of this product and demonstrates De Boer’s market-leading position in the temporary structure industry.”

Details of hospitality packages will shortly be available from Great Leighs’ food and beverage suppliers, Sodexo Prestige, as will the building’s availability for non-racing events.

The stock of conferencing facilities in Essex has not kept up with inward investment, according to Denise Rossiter, Operations Director of Essex Chambers of Commerce. She said: “The De Boer stand will be a most welcome addition. We are certainly in need of quality conferencing facilities in Mid Essex. From a business perspective, it will only enhance the area and of course the East of England proposition.”

Ends

Further information and digital illustrations from Pippa Cuckson, Communications Director, Great Leighs Racing (tel: 01245 362412, pippa@greatleighs.com)

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