

Luton Borough Council

Answers to supplementary questions

Luton (large fb small)

1. Social Impact

1. Has any further work been done since the submission of your proposal to examine the social impact of a large casino and to develop appropriate policies and procedures? If so, please advise us.

In September, Luton Borough Council (LBC) conducted a tour of the StarCity casino in Birmingham.

Attendees represented a cross section of community groups as well as cross party representation from the Council including: The Liberal Democrat portfolio holder for Regeneration; Labour Chairman of Development Control Committee; the Leader of the Conservative Group and Cllr. Ireland (Labour).¹

LBC has met with GamCare and, combined with the visit to StarCity and the post-visit feedback the Council received, this has informed our planned procedures to examine social impact. Work is now being carried out to:

I) Establish a Community Casino Group (CCG), with the following representatives: LBC; Operator; Local Strategic Partner (LSP); Voluntary Action Luton; Luton Forum; Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB); Luton Council of Faith; the Salvation Army; University of Bedfordshire; the Police; PCT and the Race Advisory Forum.

The CCG will operate independently of the Council, and we envisage it to have the following remit:

A. To conduct a Community Impact Assessment in order to provide a benchmark for the future. Involving:

- A local prevalence study into gambling behaviour.
- A thorough audit of all counselling and debt related services and their usage.
- A consultation of the local community within the immediate vicinity of existing casinos and the proposed new casino sites.

¹ In addition to the Councillors listed, the following also attended the tour: LBC's Corporate Director, Environment and Regeneration; LBC's Head of Environmental and Consumer Services; LBC's Principal Licensing Officer; the Chief Executive, Voluntary Action Luton; an Advisor CAB; Dr Beaumont of Bedfordshire University; the Chair, Race Advisory Forum; the Director of Corporate Service, Chamber Business. LBC also invited representatives of Luton's ethnic community who were unable to attend at the last minute.

- Analysis of OIS (Police) statistics. (Examination of Police records has revealed only six minor incidents relating to casinos in the past year.¹)

B. To ensure adequate access to training and jobs for local people by:

- Working with local Job Centre Plus and overseeing the establishment of a gaming and leisure industry training skills programme.
- Liaising with Job Centre Plus and Learning and Skills Council to match local people with job opportunities.

C. Advise on policies and procedures to mitigate any negative impact of a large casino by:

- Overseeing the establishment of a local Mini GamCare and expanding the training of existing alcohol and drug counsellors to include gambling.
- Raising awareness amongst schools of the risks involved with gambling.
- Liaising with religious and community groups.
- Monitoring funding and staffing levels of key local counselling bodies including: GamCare, Gamblers Anonymous, the Salvation Army, the CAB and Voluntary Action Luton.

GamCare have agreed to meet local community and faith groups to discuss their counselling services and reassure them that GamCare, like LBC, does not envisage a new Large casino leading to a significant increase in the levels of problem gambling.

II) Establish a Community Casino Fund (CCF) to be administered by the CCG.

- Contributions will be sought from operators and local partners including; the Primary Care Trust, the LSP, Safer Luton Partnership and the LPSB.²
- It will fund regular community impact assessments.

¹ OIS System, Social Behaviour Unit, Luton

Ian Middleton, Inspector with Bedfordshire Police and the Partnerships Officer within Luton's Social Behaviour Unit also stated:

“I must admit to having been very pleasantly surprised by the low level of incidents that are occurring at these locations. Given how few incidents there have been on OIS, I have not interrogated any of our other systems as OIS would log all incidents requiring a police attendance at the location.”

² Local Public Service Board

- Help fund local projects that would benefit the most deprived areas.

2. What is the research that you refer to at the head of p.5 of your proposal?

The following publications were used to ascertain the social impact a Large Casino:

- *National Gambling Impact Study Commission Report*, The National Gambling Impact Study Commission, Washington DC, 1999.
- *Betting on the Future: The Economic Impact of Legalized Gambling*, Phineas Baxandall (Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston) and Bruce Sacerdote (Dartmouth College) 2005.
- *Expansion of gambling in Canada: implications for health and social policy*, Dr David A. Korn, Department of Public Health Sciences, University of Toronto, Toronto, 2000.
- *The Social and Economic impacts of Regional casinos on the UK*, Hall Aitken, 2006.
- *The Socioeconomic Impact of Gambling On Iowa Citizens, Businesses & Government*, Ernest Preston Goss, Goss & Associates, 2004.
- *A Review of Research on Aspects of Problem Gambling*, Professor Max Abbott, Dr Rachel Volberg, Dr Maria Bellringer and Dr Gerda Reith, Auckland University of Technology, 2005.

Recent research published by the Scottish Executive supports the findings in our original submission that the “understanding of the social impacts of gambling is limited by a shortage of high quality research. The field is complex, and some findings are contradictory.”¹

3. Why do you suggest that half the jobs created by the proposed casino would go to unemployed people (p.6)?

4. Given the substantial population of Asian origin, to what extent do you think that people in many of the deprived areas of the Borough would directly benefit from a casino in their area?

¹ Gerda Reith & Scottish Centre for Social Research, *Research on the Social Impacts of Gambling – Main Findings*, 2006, p.1,

This figure was chosen to reflect the impact a Large Casino and associated development could have on levels of unemployment in the Borough. LBC believes that a Large casino (including its restaurants and bars) would provide up to 380 direct jobs, and, in the case of LBC's preferred site, a further 120 jobs would be created by a 4/5* 200 bed hotel and up to 100 jobs from the extensive conferencing and leisure facilities.

We have assurances from UK operators that with the appropriate skills training in place it would be possible to fill over 65% of the proposed casino-related jobs with a locally trained workforce. One casino operator revealed that at the time of opening one of their new casinos, over 90% of the employees were local people.

The CCG, will establish a robust plan to ensure that people in the most deprived areas have good access to the training and employment opportunities provided by a Large casino and associated development. It is envisaged that the CCG would also contribute to local projects and initiatives that directly benefit the most disadvantaged parts of the community.

LBC want a new casino to be easily accessible by public transport (and the proposed new Translink) from the most deprived wards in the Borough, such as Dallow and Biscot.

LBC will consult with all ethnic community groups before deciding on the precise location of a new casino. The highest number of Asian residents live in Biscot and Dallow wards¹ (west of the town centre), which also have the highest number of unemployed.² As demonstrated above, a large number of jobs will not be purely casino related. Cross-migration of jobs in the community will be inevitable, with jobs filled at the casino development creating openings at other establishments, which may be more acceptable to the Asian community.

It should be noted that many casinos have Asian staff, and it would be wrong to assume that all members of the Asian community are unable or unwilling, for religious or other reasons, to work in the casino industry.

The multiplier effect of a scheme of this nature would also have an incremental positive impact on employment levels, wages and the local economy across the whole Borough.

5. We note the proposal for mixed tenure houses to be located near a possible site for a casino. Please comment on the suggestion that such a location could complicate the management of problem gambling?

¹ Administrative Hierarchy 2003, www.statistics.gov.uk

² Luton Borough Council, *Unemployment Bulletin*, August 2006

There are a number of mitigating reasons why LBC believe the location of a casino at Napier Park would not complicate the management of problem gambling.

Compared to other town centre locations, there is a low density of residential units within the vicinity of the proposed casino at Napier Park. For example, there are no recognisable residential areas within a 2km radius to the North East, East, South East and South of the proposed location see Appendix A. The distinct topography of the site also highlights the natural barrier between the residential area and the commercial section¹.

The Council also has taken note of recent research by the Scottish Executive that states:

“Longitudinal studies from Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. have found that the prevalence of problem gambling has remained stable or declined over time despite the introduction of casinos and other forms of gambling. This has been attributed to the provision of public awareness campaigns and treatment services, as well as processes of adaptation whereby communities adjust to the presence of gambling around them.”²

It will be the job of the CCG to monitor the impact of the casino. This will include regular consultations with those residents in close proximity.

6. In testing social impact, how would you expect a researcher to isolate the impact of the proposed casino from the effects of existing casinos and others for which planning permission has been granted?

LBC would seek to isolate the effects of existing casinos by ensuring a thorough audit of their community impact is conducted prior to a Large casino opening. Key indicators used would include the social and economic impact on family life, relationships, the individual and the community as a whole.

The following action will provide the Council with a true reflection of social impact, providing an accurate benchmark from which to evaluate future data:

Conducting a local prevalence study, including information on: frequency of visits; age of participants; average spend; type of gambling activity; location of activity; distance travelled and ethnic origin.³

¹ It is envisaged that the majority of the social housing element will be situated on the highest plateau of the scheme, (40 meters higher than the level of casino), and the furthest possible distance from the casino. There will also be a large boulevard dividing the main (open market) residential area to the west of the site from the commercial and leisure element to the east.

² Gerda Reith & Scottish Centre for Social Research, *Research on the Social Impacts of Gambling*, 2006, p.8.

³ LBC will obviously pay due regard to methodology used in forthcoming Gambling Commission prevalence studies.

Conducting a thorough audit of all counselling and debt related services and their usage.

Conducting a detailed local community consultation within the immediate vicinity of existing and proposed casinos, as well as a larger representative sample of the ethnic community and the whole Borough.

Monitoring detailed OIS (police) statistics, which record incidents (by postcode) that have required police attendance.

Whilst it is envisaged that the CCG will oversee this process, consideration will need to be given to variables, including: changes to casino advertising; consumer debt levels; interest rates and prevalence of other forms of gambling such as FOBTs and the internet.

3. Need for Regeneration

7. Given the relative your deprivation and employment/unemployment rankings in relation to other competitors, why do you place such emphasis on public intervention ¹

8. Why should the development of a casino be the right approach to regeneration?

LBC recognise that the development of a Large casino will not, in itself, be a panacea for deprivation and unemployment. However, acting as a catalyst in a larger development, the casino will play an important role in securing future investment and employment across the Borough.

Set in the right development context, the new categories of casino will have unique characteristics that will help to address certain deprivation and employment issues, such as:

- Casinos create both full and part-time, entry level jobs, across a range of disciplines. In house training of chefs, customer service assistants, managers and croupiers will provide employees with valuable transferable skills.
- A Large casino development will have a significant multiplier effect and the impact of extra earnings and consumer spend will impact on the whole town.
- A casino / hotel / conference facility will act as a unique attraction to both business and leisure users from all over the UK and Europe – helping to ensure visitors stay in Luton for longer.
- No other viable land / leisure use possess these characteristics to the same extent as a casino.

¹ Following clarification from Nick Crowther, LBC have understood this question to mean whether LBC need a casino to address unemployment and deprivation issues.

LBC has always stipulated that Napier Park must provide the maximum level of employment. Previous proposals for the former Vauxhall Motors site have failed because of the site demolition and remediation costs and no single suitable land use could be found that would help offset these costs.

Pre-application consultation with the developers revealed that a land-use providing a significant economic injection was essential to ensure the successful and timely delivery of the entire project without adversely impacting on the town centre. LBC are convinced that a Large casino fits well with the rest of the leisure and commercial offering and would be the ideal catalyst.

Whilst LBC is sure that the impact and benefits of a Large casino will be felt beyond just the development, it believes that if it only helps to deliver the strategic redevelopment of this major brownfield site (and another 3,000 jobs), then that alone would be sufficient justification for its location there.

9. You refer to up to 600 fte jobs being created in the proposed large casino and related hotel, restaurant and bars, and to this figure being derived from “soundings from casino operators” (p.11).

10. How is this figure divided between gaming floor and technical staff and catering and other ancillary staff? How can you be sure of these figures?

The number of fte jobs created will depend on a number of factors.¹ Data provided by a casino operator has indicated that a Large casino in Luton would generate 320 – 380 fte jobs (see below), and with the hotel and other leisure services a further 170 – 220 fte jobs. ²

Gaming (tables & machines)	140 – 160
Food & Beverage (within the casino demise)	100 – 125
Other (management, finance, marketing, HR, admin., security etc.)	80 – 95

4/5* - 200 bed hotel	100 – 130
Conferencing a leisure services & other restaurants	70 – 90
TOTAL:	490 - 600 fte

¹ Demand; size of licensed gaming area; number of tables and gaming machines; number and size of restaurants and bars and ancillary facilities; opening hours and the regulatory and legislative environment in place at the time.

² These estimates were based on Aspers’ casino in Newcastle, where they currently have 218 full-time equivalents to operate a 45,000 sqft 1968 Act casino with 22 gaming tables, 150 gaming machines and terminals, 1 restaurant and 2 bars. The numbers of employed in the hotel, conference and leisure services were based on industry assumptions such as 2/3 of person per hotel room and discussions with other hotel and conference establishments.

Figures provided by other operators indicate these estimates are on the conservative side.

11. You also claim that these jobs would have a higher average wage than other sectors in Luton. Is this really to be expected in the catering, etc sectors?

The average gross annual salary in Luton is £23,391¹, whilst the average salary of a hotel or restaurant worker in the East of England is £13,196.²

Due to reasons of commercial sensitivity operators have been reluctant to provide us with details of employee salaries. LBC understand that with a London loading croupiers could expect to be paid in excess of £17,000. LBC are reasonably confident that the average salary of a croupier will be on a par with those employed in 'Education', 'Health and Social', 'Hotels and Restaurants' and 'Other' which account for 33.7% of Luton's workforce.³

LBC would expect similar catering and restaurant related jobs in the casino to be paid inline with the regional averages.

12. You already have three casinos. What makes you consider that a fourth, larger casino will actually have incremental positive impact?

LBC believe it will have an incremental positive impact because:

- A Large casino, when combined with a quality hotel, restaurants, conference and leisure facilities is a unique proposition for Luton. It will attract a much larger market than the existing casinos in the town centre. It will also take advantage of the forecast increase in airport passenger numbers.
- Since March, LBC have been approached by a number of interested operators, including those based in Luton, and they all concur that there is significant unmet demand for a Large casino in the area. Operators have indicated that the location of one of the new "Large" casinos in Luton would have no impact on an existing casino.
- A fourth "Large" casino will have a positive impact on: employment levels; wages; regeneration and Luton's image. It will also underpin a

¹ All statistics from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2005, www.statistics.gov.uk

² All statistics from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2005, www.statistics.gov.uk

³ Based on information from the Annual Business Inquiry and East of England regional salary averages from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2005.

quality hotel destination and facilitate access to jobs via contributions to local infrastructure.

- The existing highstreet casinos do not significantly contribute to the image of Luton as a visitor destination. A new Large casino development, as envisaged by LBC, will greatly enhance the town's image and leisure offering.

4. Willingness to Licence

13. Has the proposal been endorsed by your Full Council?

The Council's Executive Committee supported its bid for one of the new Large casino licenses at its meeting on 27th March, 2006.

LBC believes that it is inappropriate for our proposal for a Large casino to be put before Full Council until LBC's Draft Gambling Policy has been agreed. It is envisaged that the Draft Policy will be put before the Full Council for approval by the end of the year. However, the CAP should now have received letters of support from all three main political parties and Margaret Moran, MP. (A letter of support from the Leader of the Conservative Group can be found in Appendix B.)

Further supporting letters from EEDA, EERA and South Bedfordshire District Council are included in Appendixes, C, D and E respectively.

14. What was the outcome of the postal community survey (p.13)? Please provide a summary of the conclusions

A summary of responses was provided on p. 14 of our submission.

Twenty-four responses received in total:

9 wrote expressing their personal view

15 wrote on behalf of an organisation

In total:

50% support the development of a casino

21% are undecided, mixed feelings or no opinion

29% are against the development of a casino

Of the 9 personal views:

4 supported, 4 were against & 1 neutral.

Of the 15 organisation responses:

8 supported, 4 were neutral & 3 against.

Of those who supported the proposal for the casino, the majority focused on the regenerative benefits and jobs it would bring to Luton.

Of those who did not support the casino, the majority expressed personal views regarding the detrimental impact it would have on the local community.

In April, LBC received a petition of 30 signatures from the Salvation Army, opposing the casino.

5. Probability of Implementation

15. What is the proportional breakdown of users of Luton Airport as between passengers beginning a round trip there and arriving from overseas on the outward leg of their return trip?

16. To what extent do you expect the Airport to bring tourists from overseas to the proposed casino?

In 2005, approximately 40% of passengers that flew into LLA were on an outbound journey which originated outside of the UK. Approximately 60% were beginning a round trip to travel outside the UK. LLA's Draft MasterPlan predicts that by 2030, 50% of the passengers using LLA will be foreign-originating.

LBC believe that a new Large casino in Luton should be sustainable without relying on the traffic generated by LLA. LBC believes that very few overseas visitors would make a dedicated trip to the UK for the main purpose of visiting a Large casino in Luton. However, the Council anticipates that a 4/5* 200-bed hotel, casino and conference offering would attract more business and leisure users from other UK airports. LBC envisage this offer will capture a larger proportion of the "weekend break" market, especially given the town's proximity to central London (25 minutes by train), its unparalleled connectivity with the rest of the UK, and the fact that LLA is 1km away providing access to over 90 destinations across Europe and beyond.

LBC also hope that the new development will capture some of the market provided by the 22,102 annual private aircraft movements at LLA. ¹

17. You mention (p.15) the grant of planning to casinos in the town centre. When were these permissions granted? Are there signs of their realisation?

¹ Figures provided by London Luton Airport, Statistics based on the year ending August 2006.

The 'Courts Warehouse' application by Rank Gaming Group (granted permission on 15th March) is for the relocation and enlargement of their existing Grosvenor Casino in Dunstable Road. LBC have been informed that their existing premises will not stay as a casino. LBC are not aware if any internal work in the building has begun.

The Thistle Hotel application was approved on 31st January, 2006 and there appears to be no progress at present in respect of implementing the permission.

18. What is the current status of the proposal to redevelop the former Vauxhall site?

19. What progress has been made with its regeneration?

20. What is the timing of the proposal, its staging and the challenges and problems that this large redevelopment faces?

LBC resolved to grant Outline Planning Permission for the wholesale regeneration of the former Vauxhall Motors site in March 2006. All the conditions attached to the Consent have been resolved and the engrossed S106 agreement is in the process of being signed.

At a cost of £5m, the Developers have now finished the construction of a new 4 acre 'holding area' for up to 1,300 completed General Motors vans. This was essential in order to make available to the developers the prime Kimpton Road frontage.

After 47 weeks and an estimated cost of £10m to £15m, the remediation, demolition and enabling of the entire site has been completed.

Significant earth works, the complete remodelling of the site and the provision of the primary infrastructure is expected to begin in early 2007. Whilst it is anticipated this will take up to 12 months to complete, plots will be progressively freed up and some will become available for development much sooner.

LBC has worked closely with the Developers of Napier Park in order to produce a quality, balanced and sustainable mixed-use scheme that is economically viable and meets the Council's strict employment and planning use criteria.

We understand from the Developer that the front loaded costs of the extensive demolition and remediation work required to bring the site forward for development were exceptional in Napier Park's case. Furthermore, the distinct topography of the site has made land use planning particularly challenging.

LBC's main imperative has always been to ensure the site delivers the highest levels of employment, helping to replace the significant loss of manufacturing jobs when Vauxhall Motors ceased operations in Luton, thereby placing obvious restrictions on the options available to the developer.

21. How will the regeneration of the Vauxhall site be affected by the proposal for a large casino?

22. Would the proposed redevelopment go ahead without the proposed casino?

A Large casino licence will guarantee a key anchor tenant for the main landmark building and facilitate the securing of leases from quality hotel and conference operators. It will have a quantifiable positive impact on the regeneration of the whole site, acting as a driver and catalyst for the take up of the commercial space, ensuring the site is economically deliverable.

Luton competes for commercial investment with the surrounding area such as Hemel Hempstead, Watford, St Albans, Milton Keynes and North London. To be competitive and encourage investment in this market a good quality development is essential and a casino will help achieve this.

LBC believes that without a Large casino, the true potential of the site will not be fully realised and, the commercial element could remain dormant for longer. Luton needs the employment and other wide spread community benefits associated with the redevelopment of such a strategic, emotive and prominent site as this.

If LBC is unsuccessful in its bid for a Large casino, it will remain committed to the regeneration of the former VM site. The challenge that the Council (and the Developer) would be faced with is trying to find a land use that fits with the rest of development mix at Napier Park, employs significant numbers of people and acts as significant catalyst for the rest of the site, without competing directly with the town centre.

It is important to stress that should the Council be successful in its bid for a Large casino then LBC will conduct a fair, open and transparent tender process in accordance with the Government guidelines due to be published next year.

6. Regional and Local Context

23. You identify as a potential site for the proposed casino the former Vauxhall Motors site. Yet PPS6 refers a town centre location for such a use. Comments please.

Under PPS6 a sequential test had to be undertaken to justify the use of a casino in a non-town centre location. Large scale casinos by their nature cater for demand from a larger geographical area, and offer a wider range of facilities than smaller casinos, such as those currently located in Luton Town Centre. The combination of complimentary uses, associated with larger casinos, requires a larger land take and as such there are limited alternative town centre locations.

It is not possible to disaggregate the proposed casino use on Napier Park into a number of smaller units. To divide the use into smaller plots merely provides additional facilities of a scale and type already found in the town centre, and would therefore compete with town centre facilities which is contradictory to the Local Plan.

It is essential that the casino forms part of a larger leisure offering to ensure the maximum economic benefit is felt. Whilst other facilities complementing a town centre site already exist in the town centre, a casino at Kimpton road will be served by a custom built hotel and conferencing facility and therefore the servicing of the casino can best be delivered at the Kimpton Road site.

The town centre has a number of possible sites for development, however these are predominantly smaller sites of less than 1 hectare. Some of the sites in the town centre may also experience difficulties in terms of land acquisition and site preparation. Therefore, there is less certainty over their availability. LBC also has concerns regarding the impact of the traffic generated by a large casino on the already congested town centre.

LBC's report to the Development Control Committee of 22nd February stated, "In the context of the regeneration and employment growth strategies identified at regional and sub-regional level and having regard to the factors identified above, it is considered that the issue of need at both the local and regional level are acceptably addressed."

The Report went on to state that, "the proposed casino would not detract from the shopping role of any existing centre".

The proposed casino at Napier Park is an integral part of a larger mixed-use scheme. A casino on this site accords with the 6 objectives of policy KR1 of Luton's Local plan and also Luton's Community Plan. Therefore LBC believe there is significant justification for its location on this edge of a town centre site.

7. Community Benefits

8. Unique characteristics

Appendix A

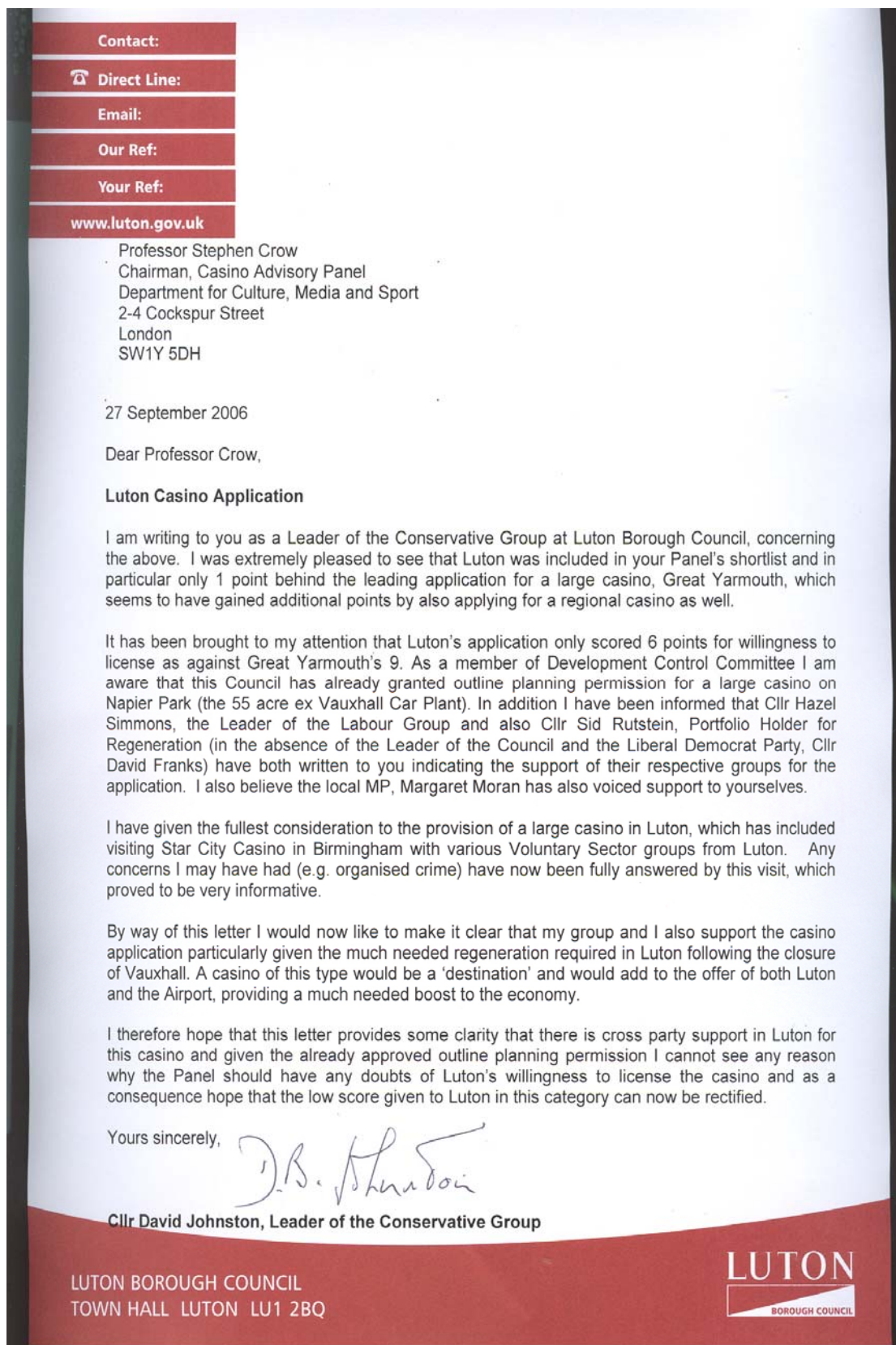
Napier Park in relation to the Town Centre

The red mark represents the proposed Casino



Appendix B

Letter from Councillor David Johnston, Leader of the Conservative Group



Appendix C

Letter from Steve Cox at EEDA



East of England Development Agency

The Business Centre
Station Road
Histon
Cambridge CB4 9LQ
Tel: 0845 456 9200
Direct: 01223 200857
Fax: 01223 713940
Email: stevecox@eeda.org.uk

Colin Chick
Corporate Director Environment & Regeneration
Luton Borough Council
Town Hall
George Street
Luton
Beds
LU1 2BQ

28 September 28, 2006

Dear Colin

Re: Casino in Luton

I am writing to you to express EEDA's support for your bid to become a location for one of the country's large casino developments. EEDA recognises the impact that a successful bid for such a development will bring to Luton especially in the wake of the Vauxhall car plant closure.

EEDA recognises the potential economic value of casinos in the East of England. The development of a mixed-use site including leisure, office, commercial and residential developments on the former Vauxhall car plant is crucial to mitigating the effects of economic deprivation which persist in the borough and the importance of a large casino development being the major leisure anchor on this site is equally crucial. Furthermore the potential for the casino to be a catalyst for leisure developments such as a 5 star hotel and high quality conferencing facility all within a mile of Luton airport provides a compelling economic argument for this location. The mixed-use development, of which a large casino would be a critical anchor, has the potential to create up to 4,000 jobs in an area still suffering from the after effects of the Vauxhall closure.

The case for Luton's submission is prepared in regional terms. In particular the role of the MKSM guidance and its regeneration and job creation objectives are one that EEDA, along with other public sector partners, are committed to delivering. The large casino would introduce significantly the achievement of those objectives as part of a wider regeneration framework. EEDA will need to give full consideration to the detailed proposal but supports, in principle, the case put forward by Luton on grounds of the regeneration benefits.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Cox', with a horizontal line underneath.

Steve Cox
Director General, Development

Appendix D

Email from Adrian Cannard at EERA

From: Adrian Cannard [mailto:Adrian.Cannard@eera.gov.uk]
Sent: 28 September 2006 17:43
To: Chick, Colin; McNamara, Sinead
Cc: Helen Buckingham; Mark P. Barrow (Deputy Chf Exec GYBC); Brian Stewart
Subject: Casino Panel and schemes in the East of England
Importance: High

Apologies for the delay in this response.

Further to our telephone conversation and your recent letter, I can confirm that it is still the position of the Regional Assembly that all of the remaining candidate casino locations in the East of England are consistent with regional spatial planning policy, and that the Assembly has not sought to prioritise or rank those locations.

The comments in my email of 26th July were purely seeking a reaction from the Regional Casino bidders in connection with the wide variation in 'Regional Context' scores given by the Casino Panel to the four Regional scale proposals in the East of England, which did not match well against the assessment of regional policy contained in the report taken to Regional Planning Panel on the 27th April. As none of the regional scale bids were shortlisted, that point is moot.

I note that the supplementary questions posed to local authorities in the region by the Casino Panel in July under the heading of "Regional and Local Context" do not raise any issues over regional policy, but mostly concern themselves with matters relating to PPS6 and town centre locations. Should the Casino Panel have any queries over regional planning policy we would be happy to assist them.

I hope that clarifies the situation. I will send this confirmation to those cc'd on your letter.

Regards

Adrian

Adrian Cannard
Acting Joint Head of Planning and Transportation
East of England Regional Assembly

01284 729443

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Appendix E

Email from John Hoad at South Bedfordshire District Council

-----Original Message-----

From: John Hoad [mailto:John.Hoad@southbeds.gov.uk]

Sent: 28 September 2006 17:14

To: Slater, Ian

Cc: Church, Laura; Andy Lewis; Chick, Colin

Subject: Casino Bid

As discussed, happy to elaborate using my delegated powers to respond to consultations within our normal policy framework.

I can add to previous SBDC comments:

"SBDC is unable to comment authoritatively on the details of a casino development in Luton, as my Council has not explored this issue in depth.

However, SBDC strongly supports LBC's efforts to encourage the economic regeneration of Luton. A casino development is certainly appropriate to a well connected/easily accessed sub regional centre such as Luton, and has the potential to generate significant beneficial economic activity.

In particular SBDC supports LBC's efforts to use a Casino as part of a development package to enable the regeneration of difficult to develop off town centre brown field sites. This is an appropriate strategy, particularly when it is essential that potential alternative high value enabling uses, such as retail, are directed to the key Town Centre development projects that SBDC supports. The effective regeneration of Luton Town Centre is an important part of SBDC's shared aspirations with Luton for overall economic development of the conurbation."

JH

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