

Response by Mansfield District Council to Questions asked by the Casino Advisory Panel.

Do you see anything special about Mansfield that would make it a good place to test the social impact of a casino development?

Mansfield is an excellent place to test the social impact of a casino. As a town with well documented high levels of deprivation which we have highlighted in previous submissions; Mansfield receives funding such as Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and was also successful in gaining funding through the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative which aims to boost levels of enterprise and employment in deprived areas. These funding streams and programmes would allow the positive benefits of the Casino to be maximised within some of the most deprived areas in England. Mansfield currently does not have any casinos so direct impacts can be measured without confusion from the influence of any existing casinos. This gives a unique opportunity for Mansfield to fully evaluate the social impact of a casino.

In addition to these systems are in place to monitor any negative effects from a casino. The council and its neighbourhood renewal team have worked with local communities to develop neighbourhood management teams which comprises of people who live within those communities. These structures which are in place and running allow local people to report on issues that are affecting their individual areas directly to service providers so that action can be taken. This would allow the effect of a casino both actual and perceived on Mansfield's deprived areas to be monitored closely without having the delay in waiting for updated statistics to be produced. Therefore Mansfield already has direct community linkages and communication procedures set up to evaluate the impact of a casino.

Mansfield District Council is currently looking to become a Beacon Council in Community Safety. This expertise would be used from the start of a casino development to ensure that measures would be taken to negate any anti-social behaviour that may result from a casino, which our research has shown is one of the highest concerns about a possible casino from local people. Indeed the Council's Community Safety team is ideally placed to monitor any antisocial behaviour.

Has any further thought been given (since your original submission) to the question of social impact and if so what is the outcome of that research?

Since the original submission Mansfield District Council has consulted widely with local communities through Mansfield District Council's citizen panel and local business leaders through Mansfield Area Strategic Partnership Economic Development Partnership. From this a resolution of support was given from the Economic Development Partnership to fully support a casino within Mansfield. The consultation with the Citizen's Panel gave information about what concerns people had about the casino. These included the possible increase in anti-social behaviour and that it would only create short term low skilled jobs.

We have discussed these concerns in detail with each of the casino operators that we have met and explored ways in which these problems could be tackled and how their particular development plans could be used. The casino operators in turn have given us details about schemes that they have run in their other casinos which were aimed at helping and developing local communities. Favoured options by Mansfield District Council would include employment contracts by the operators to recruit and train people from the local area to raise their skill levels. We have also spoken with a GMB Union Regional Coordinator who is satisfied that a casino would create sustainable jobs for local people and has expressed their support for a casino in Mansfield in a letter to the Casino Advisory Panel.

Question from Methodist Church – As in Mansfield there is much poverty, is it a good idea to offer people in economic distress an attraction – “a quick fix” – which could make their position worse?

The Council is aware that there is a concern that a casino in Mansfield could lead to a rise in problem gambling especially among its poorest residents. However we would argue that there are already avenues available for people to look for “quick fixes” such as the national lottery and online gambling. Since the bid was submitted Mansfield District Council has met with several casino operators and has asked them about what steps they take to deal with problem gambling.

Through talking to operators we are aware that they train staff how to spot and help problem gamblers and also for extreme cases which can not be helped in this way they have voluntarily entered into groups and or given financial contributions with local health providers to identify and help problem gamblers. If Mansfield is successful in its bid for a casino we would look for casino operators in the bidding process that would follow to fully demonstrate how they would tackle problem gambling that may happen from a casino.

The Council would like to stress that Economic Regeneration in the district is concentrated on increasing the economic opportunities for people within the most deprived neighbourhoods in a sustainable way. Through the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative we are hoping to increase the amount of enterprise activity within the most deprived areas and by working with Job Centre Plus and using their Making the Connection model we will work with employers to get people from these deprived communities into employment. We see the casino as part of a long term approach to creating opportunities within Mansfield most deprived neighbourhoods to raise people out of economic distress. The casino would be one of many opportunities that we are hoping that people from the deprived communities can take advantage of as well as the opportunities from the associated developments.

In what ways do you expect a casino to enhance the economy of Mansfield? What specific benefits are you seeking?

As has already been stated in our bid Mansfield is an area that has suffered from the loss of primary industries such as coal mining and is still suffering from the decline in manufacturing. The importance of regeneration is clearly stated in the Draft East Midlands Regional Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy) which identifies in policy 19 the need for regeneration in the Northern Sub Area which Mansfield is a part of because

of the legacy of the mining industry. As part of these regeneration efforts we would look for the Casino to enhance the economy in the following ways:

- The creation of employment directly as well as through its supply chain.
- The development of a casino and associated development to act as a significant catalyst in raising the profile of the town and demonstrate that there is a much needed confidence and opportunities for investment.
- Increase the diversification of leisure opportunities in an area where there is little leisure opportunities for those outside the 18-25 age range. Whilst this will have a direct benefit to existing residents it also encourages more highly skilled people into the district. This will in turn raise skill levels and increase the areas skills base for local employer.
- To increase the support infrastructure for businesses within the area through associated development such as a hotel and ancillary leisure uses which will give the businesses in the area a good quality conference facility that they can use as well as providing a leisure destination venue for the Northern Sub Region of the East Midlands.
- Diversify the skill base within Mansfield by giving more people training in customer service skills which we know from talking to local businesses and from official statistics is a skill lacking in the local area.

What makes you believe you have the catchment area to support a viable casino?

Mansfield currently does not have any casino with which a new casino would have to compete. Through discussions with casino operators we have been told that for a large casino to be viable it needs to be in a position where it can get a catchment of 300,000.

Mansfield has this catchment because it is the main urban centre in North Nottinghamshire and so has developed a role as a service and retail centre which already can claim this number of people. This role has been confirmed in the draft East Midlands Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy for the East Midlands.

The Office of National Statistics figures for Mansfield travel to work area put the number much higher than this. The official figure that they give for the population which is within a 30 minute drive of Mansfield is 1,197,700. As well as this the Mansfield/Ashfield conurbation which numbers about 200,000 by itself was named as one of the principle town and cities in the State of the English Cities Report published earlier this year

This represents a significant population for a casino to find customers as well as the high numbers of visitors that are attracted to the area each year for internationally know attractions such as Sherwood Forest and Nottingham City. Both population and visitor numbers are set to grow particularly as the draft Regional Spatial Strategy is

proposing to increase the housing allowance for Mansfield to 410 units a year. There are also plans to extend the Sherwood Forest Visitor and make it into a regional park.

To what extent do people in the wider urban areas look to Mansfield for leisure rather than other towns and cities such as Nottingham?

In the last year Mansfield District Council has worked with the pubs and clubs in Mansfield to do an audit of number of people in the town centre through counting the number of people in all the bars and clubs at a certain times. This showed that on Friday and Saturday nights Mansfield has on average 10,000 people coming into its centre for its entertainment venues.

There is evidence that Mansfield is able to attract a high percentage of people for regular weekend entertainment. This has been further evidenced by a study carried out by Experian and the Automobile Association in 2002 which showed that people from as far away Worksop and Lincolnshire regard Mansfield as the place to go “for a big night out”.

However this question is why Mansfield needs a casino because despite its success in attracting these numbers they are mostly from the 18-25 age group because the leisure offering is most suitable for that age group. People outside that age group do go to Nottingham for leisure and entertainment because there are not the facilities they are looking for in Mansfield. This is neither environmentally or economically sustainable. Having a casino in Mansfield would help satisfy this demand and so keep that spend and activity within Mansfield.

What is the recent track record of Mansfield in attracting inward investment from the leisure industry?

Over the last 5 years Mansfield leisure industry has grown dramatically centred on a core leisure area. Through a wholesale redevelopment of the Clumber Street area in Mansfield has led to investment by some of the main leisure operators increasing the number of bars and clubs in the town as well as attracting high quality restaurants. This success was shown in the most recent town centre health check that the council has carried out which has showed that the percentage of space in the town centre which is classed as A3 use is higher than the national average. This success is echoed in Mansfield entertainment venues with an audit of Mansfield’s Palace Theatre last showed average attendance of 70% of capacity compared to a national average of 59% bringing £3 million into the economy each year.

Also in the last 5 years Mansfield has seen the completion of new retail parks which have also included a multiplex cinema. The number of fitness centres and other leisure uses has increased in Mansfield as can be seen by the completion of a new £55 million leisure centre which was built in a partnership between Mansfield District Council and Tesco Superstore.

Have you had any commercial interest in developing a good class hotel and large casino?

As we referred to in our further submission submitted to the Casino Advisory Panel Mansfield District Council is currently in pre-application discussions with a developer for a development that would include a small arena for which a feasibility study has already been undertaken to demonstrate its viability, a hotel and possibly a casino. This would be done through a partnership based approach which also includes an internationally recognised casino operator.

Separately from this with the last 10 months Mansfield District Councils inward investment service has responded to 5 enquires from major hotel chains or consultants working on behalf of hotel chains enquiring about possible sites for a hotel in Mansfield. Also since the casino bid has been submitted Mansfield District Council has had meetings with 6 different casino operators to discuss our perspective sites in more detail and the community benefits that each could deliver.

What evidence of support from Regional Authorities can you provide for your proposal? Has there been any further regional support since the original submission?

Since the bid has been submitted the EMRA has written to the CAP supporting Mansfield casino bid.

The East Midlands Regional Assembly has also included the following policy in the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy which was published for consultation on 28th September:

Policy 22 Regional Priorities for Casino Development

Local authorities, emda and Sub Regional Strategic Partnerships should work together to ensure that proposals for new casinos licensed under the 2005 Gambling Act benefit the regeneration areas identified in Policy 19 (Policy 19 includes the Northern Sub Area as a regeneration priority.) and are subject to a full assessment of social, economic and environmental impact.

In addition to this paragraph 3.2.16 of the RSS states that all three areas which are bidding for casinos in the East Midlands "have significant regeneration needs that could benefit from such development. However, it is important that the full social, economic and environmental implications are properly assessed, and that sites are allocated in accordance with the sequential approach and sustainability criteria set out in Policy 2".

EMDA have also written in support of the application and we have been working closely with their international investment team to identify potential casino operators and arrange meeting with them.

What leisure or tourism strategies are in place, within which this proposal would fit?

The Nottinghamshire Tourism Strategy which was prepared by Locum Destination Consulting identified that the main brand for Nottinghamshire was Sherwood Forest

but an “Around Forest Brand” should also be created through the diversifying of other attractions and activities.

A casino would achieve this by helping to diversify the attraction by giving a wider base of activities for visitors to partake and so help sustain their visit in the area for longer.

More recently the East Midlands Tourism Strategy Destination East Midlands has been released. This outlines the region's strategy for tourism within the East Midlands and makes links on how tourism contributes to the Regional Economic Strategies vision to make the East Midlands one of the top 20 most competitive regions in Europe by 2020. One of the main actions that it proposes is improving the quality of services to visitors.

A casino and associated development in Mansfield would contribute to achieving this by offering visitors a greater choice in activities and accommodation when they visit the northern sub region.

Has any further thought been given (since your original submission) to the question of community benefits and if so what is the outcome of that research?

As already mentioned the main focus of the Mansfield District Council's regeneration efforts are to bring economic opportunities for the people within the most deprived neighbourhoods so that when we were writing the original bid we were already looking at what sort of agreements we would want from any casino operator, possibly in the form of local labour pact and agreements to take an active part in partnerships set up through the Mansfield Area Strategic Partnership through the use of community benefit schemes.

Since the bid research has been undertaken into the capacity of local communities to take up the role of engaging with companies in the local area and working with service providers to identify what is needed to make the most of those opportunities. From this the council is producing an action plan to help make these community groups sustainable and not dependent on the use of government grants. This will allow these groups and communities to prosper independently of government grants and ensure that they can develop a lasting partnership with a casino development to ensure that all the benefits are maximised and that any negative effects are highlighted early enough for action can be taken to combat them.

What could you do that would make your area more uniquely positioned compared with other similar areas wanting a casino?

As we outlined in our recent further submission to the Casino Advisory Panel we feel Mansfield is uniquely positioned in that the town itself is on the edge of starting some major regeneration schemes that will change and rejuvenate a town that is pulling away from its mining past to confirm its position as the main service and retail centre in North Nottinghamshire. This gives a unique opportunity to integrate a casino development into a plan to develop a town centre.

We will do this by reflecting the aspirations of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the use of a casino as a regeneration tool within the Local Development Framework to ensure its deliverability in a properly planned framework.

Mansfield is also uniquely positioned because of its proximity to the Sherwood Forest which is an internationally known attraction. To make Mansfield more uniquely positioned we intend to foster stronger links with that brand through Experience Nottinghamshire and use this brand to make a casino in Mansfield more marketable and sustainable.

Mansfield is also continuing its lobbying efforts for increased rail facilities to the town allowing it to be more connected to the national rail network. This along with the new transport interchange that has been described in previous submissions will ensure that a sustainable public transport network will be available to support a casino development.

How do you consider that the development of a large or small casino will help reinforce the distinctiveness of the area?

Due to adverse media attention the town of Mansfield is wrongly held in low regard by many people outside the area. However this hides the fact that many companies are thriving in Mansfield because of the quality and loyalty of the workforce. Despite this image, Mansfield has many residents that are happy to live in Mansfield because the town is a large service centre which gives them much of the services they would get in a city but with the quality of life they get from living in a town.

It is these characteristics that make Mansfield unique but are overlooked because of the negative perception. Mansfield has historically had its distinctiveness through being a sub regional service centre but with the opening of the coal mines and the influx of population that came with them this distinctive identity was lost and Mansfield became known as a mining town and with the decline of the mining industry was associated with the deprivation that resulted from this.

As we have outlined Mansfield is regenerating itself and regaining this old distinctiveness. The casino will be part of this by diversify the leisure offering so that is attractive for more different types and ages of people. Mansfield can provide jobs, housing and services to the people in the surrounding area. A casino would add to this offer and give a facility so that the people that Mansfield is attracting in do not have to go all the way to Nottingham or Sheffield for their leisure needs.

Mansfield is ready for a casino; its regeneration projects are creating the jobs and increasing the town's population. Mansfield has the sites for a casino with a political will to see them developed. The structures that will provide links into the communities to ensure that the casinos benefits are maximised for Mansfield poorer residents are already set up and running. We hope that from all our submitted material the Casino Advisory Panel can see that a casino would not just be adding to the regeneration of Mansfield but would play an integral part in a joined up plan for the town.

