



***Chester
City Council***

CHESTER PROPOSAL FOR LICENSING “SMALL CASINO”

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GAMBLING ACT 2005: CASINO PREMISES LICENSING.

INTRODUCTION

This proposal is for a small high quality casino which will reflect and enhance the existing image of the City as an internationally important heritage and visitor destination at the heart of one of the UK's fastest growing economic sub-regions.

Chester's proposal will inevitably be quite different from many others submitted to the panel owing to a combination of the following factors:

- The focus on quality
- The aim of developing a 21st century facility in a historic context
- The integration of a casino within the Culture Park
- The opportunity to exploit linked trips and complimentary expenditure
- The scope to diversify the tourist offer in an internationally important location as part of a strategy of becoming a "must see" European Destination, at the same time as offering new leisure activities for residents
- The ability to ensure that benefits of job creation and skills development are extended to areas of need locally and sub-regionally, by building upon existing initiatives
- The role of the casino as part of an agreed strategy for diversification of the city centre and a contributor to the achievement of the night-time strategy, within the context of a single action plan
- The potential to create and benefit from critical mass of quality leisure facilities including a premier racecourse in the heart of the city
- The consolidation of a successful urban renaissance strategy, which is strengthening and growing sustainable residential communities and promoting the benefits of City Living
- The chance to capitalise on the compact and accessible nature of the city with a high quality integrated transport network.

CHESTER DISTRICT – A PROFILE

The historic and internationally renowned City of Chester is located between the Welsh hills and rural Cheshire in the County of Cheshire.

The District as a whole covers an area of 448 square kilometres (173 square miles) and encompasses an urban core with an extensive rural hinterland.

Population

The total population of the District is 119,000 with the following age profile:

Thousand Population in Each Age Group (Mid Year 2004 estimates)

	Age 0-4	5-10	11-15	16-44	45-64	65-74	75+	Total
Chester	6.1	7.9	7.1	46.5	30.4	11.0	10.0	119.0

Source: Cheshire County Council Research & Intelligence

Whilst the City of Chester itself is relatively compact (with a population of approximately 90,000) it serves a wide catchment area, providing shopping, employment, leisure and recreation activities to people from throughout large parts of the North West of England and North Wales. Moreover the city attracts over 8m visitors per annum, a significant proportion of whom come from overseas.

Population by distance from Chester City Centre:

Distance	Population
5 miles	101,400
10 miles	204,900
20 miles	419,100
50 miles	680,000

Source: Cheshire County Council, Small Area Population Figures, 2004

The City centre is ranked third in the north West of England (behind only Liverpool and Manchester) in terms of its retail performance, and regularly appears within the top 10 retail destinations nationally.

In the past 4 years there has been a concerted and successful programme of regeneration, promoting urban renaissance through comprehensive mixed-use development in and around the inner urban core. It is estimated that in the period between 2002 and 2010 up to 4000 new residents will live within the city centre, the majority of whom are economically active, young urban professionals with strong "lifestyle driven" aspirations.

Workforce and catchment

Chester is a major centre for employment and lies at the heart of one of the UK's fastest growing economic sub-regions (West Cheshire North East Wales). The city has attracted significant inward investment in recent years and is the location for the National and European Headquarters of a number of major companies including the Bank of America.

Some 66,500 people work within Chester District. There is currently a net inflow of employees of 11,000.

The unemployment rate currently stands at 1.8%, though 33.55% of all 16 to 74 year olds were economically inactive in 2001.

Growth in employment is expected to continue apace over the next five to ten years with more than 20,000 new jobs to be created throughout the sub-region.

Skills and qualifications

Across the district as a whole 27.5% of residents have qualifications at level 4/5 (degree level and above)

However, there are areas of the city which are characterised by persistent deprivation, a component of which is relatively low levels of educational attainment.

One-quarter of residents (24%) aged 16 to 74 years in Chester District have no qualifications.

In parts of West Chester up to 40% of residents have no qualifications, which, in itself, leads to pockets of relatively high economic inactivity, despite low levels of unemployment across the district as a whole.

The city council, working with a range of partners (working through the Chester Learning Partnership and the LSP), is currently undertaking a variety of highly targeted training initiatives and other projects which seek to overcome barriers to

work. Working at the sub-regional level the Council has been developing sector specific skills development programmes targeted on key areas such as retail and tourism.

Tourism and leisure in Chester

Chester is a top 3 UK historic city in terms of volume and value of visitors, range of facilities and levels of customer satisfaction. It is identified in the North West Regional Economic Strategy as a Tourism Attack Brand with the potential for the significant further development and promotion of its tourism offer. The main aim and vision is to build on this to become a “Must-see European Historic city” by 2015.

In 2004 the city welcomed 1.5 million overnight stays and 7m day visits according to the official NWDA STEAM calculation. In addition to a significant number of overseas visitors (within a 45 minutes drive of 2 international airports), the City has excellent communications and a very large local catchment area with 20m people living within two hours travel.

Overall it is estimated that these visitors spent £372m in 2004. The levels are so high because of the breadth, uniqueness and quality in Chester’s offer (e.g. outstanding built environment, first class shopping, major events such as Chester Races, nationally important attractions such as Chester Zoo, large hotel stock with 2500 bedrooms at 3 star or above).

Chester’s mix of leisure and business markets and its regional, national and international appeal mean that it is busy throughout the year with hotel room occupancy only falling below 70% in December – February. Around 20% of overnight visits are made by people from overseas. UK staying visits are spread amongst customers from throughout the country.

The city’s visitor economy sustains around 30% of local jobs.

Chester is a natural retail and leisure visit hub for Cheshire, Wirral and North Wales and its position at the end of the Merseyrail network means that it also has a cultural role as Liverpool City region’s sister historic city, the benefits of which will be further realised through co-operation on Capital of culture 2008.

This means that it supports a range of shops, restaurants and other services that is far greater than a city of its size would expect. It punches way above its weight in this area. In particular it has a high proportion of specialist locally based shops and attractions.

Recent and planned developments show Chester increasing its visitor capacity. The Northgate development will extend the city’s offer and revitalise an under-performing area by 2011 with 400,000sq ft of new retailing, a new performing arts centre, library, bus exchange, restaurants, apartments and public space; before that the HQ development will have provided an iconic entry point to the city featuring the first Northern England Abode boutique hotel and restaurant together with a range of new business space, apartments, restaurants and leisure uses.

The City Council has submitted a £25m Living Landmarks Bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to build a new national visitor facility around Britain’s only imperial Roman Amphitheatre; Chester Zoo, already the biggest and best in Britain, is deep into the planning of an expansion scheme that would make it a European Super Zoo, one of the world’s finest. The realisation of these initiatives will enable a further growth in facilities from developers and operators already attracted by the city’s existing high performance levels.

The focus throughout all of the above is upon sustaining and increasing the diversity and quality of the offer, building upon Chester's international image by creating a 21st century City in a uniquely attractive historic context.

Local plans and strategies for the development of tourism, leisure or gambling in the area.

The growth of Chester's visitor economy is entrenched in Project Chester, the City Council's response to the Community Plan and in the Cheshire & Warrington Tourism Strategy where the vision of Chester becoming a must-see European historic city was first introduced.

Chester realises that for it to achieve its vision of becoming a significant European destination it must raise the bar in every aspect of its visitor offer including facilities, marketing, welcome, skills and productivity. It must demonstrate benefit to a wide range of current and existing stakeholders, including the local community, that extend way beyond tourism.

To address this Chester is currently developing a Place Marketing Strategy that will present it as a vibrant, aspiring city in an outstanding historic built environment. This is being complemented by the development of the "Chester Product". The "Chester Culture Park" is an innovative approach to product development, customer welcome and interpretation that will apply levels of visitor management seen previously only in national parks, and single site attractions to the whole of the city centre. The Culture Park will also widen Chester's core visitor appeal beyond its traditional heart into outlying areas.

A focus for regeneration

Along with the core metropolitan areas of Manchester and Liverpool Chester is acknowledged as being an exemplar of urban renaissance. Over the past 5 years there has been a concerted and focused effort to regenerate large areas of the city centre: to sustain Chester's role in and contribution to the wider regional economy; to revitalise and diversify "tired" parts of the urban area; and to ensure that "all" residents, particularly those from the most deprived areas, can benefit from continuing economic success.

Key elements of the regeneration strategy relevant to this proposal have been:

The implementation of an ambitious Action Area plan for the mixed use regeneration of the inner urban area. This includes the delivery of an integrated transport strategy at the heart of which sits the Chester Station Gateway project, the revitalisation of the railway lands area as a transport hub and centre for business, leisure and living.

The revitalisation and regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods: Developing a neighbourhood management approach to enhancing the social, environmental and economic fortunes of the most deprived wards and improving linkages and access to opportunities and facilities in the thriving parts of the district including the City Centre.

Development and implementation of a Single Action plan for the City Centre drawn up in conjunction with Public Private and Voluntary sector agencies to ensure coherent and proactive development, management and marketing of the Centre as one of the key drivers of the sub-regional economy. This includes a comprehensive strategy for management and development of the Night Time Economy. (Chester at Night) and the establishment of a Business Improvement District for the heart of the city centre.

Developing the sub-regional economy; working with partners in the West Cheshire North East Wales sub-region to take forward the “Deeside Hub” concept. Linking areas of opportunity to areas of need by bringing forward new employment opportunities and ensuring access to new jobs through a range of hard and soft measures.

Promoting an enterprise culture, diversifying the economic base and supporting indigenous business: Focus upon diversifying, sustaining, strengthening and supporting the indigenous economic base (particularly amongst small to medium sized enterprise);

Tackling Worklessness in a number of ways, through co-ordinating and procuring externally funded initiatives to overcome barriers to work including skills and training schemes, access to work, job brokerage, work placements, ILM projects, personal development etc. to tackle persistent problems of worklessness, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods and focusing upon key sectors of the economy (ie tourism. Retail/leisure, financial services).

Recruitment and retention, including up-skilling and training at work – There is an increasing recognition amongst the private sector, and key public sector agencies of the need for up-skilling generally within the workforce and the development of better relationships between training providers and businesses. Moreover, there is still significant recruitment taking place in Chester and the sub-region and the forecast is for up to 20k more jobs in the next 5-10 years including the replacement market as people retire.

Inward investment. In the future major international inward investment programmes and events will be undertaken by CWEA. More local and sub-regional marketing will still be required and will be integrated with the comprehensive approach to place marketing being developed.

Much of the focus is upon securing external/private sector funding and/or managing partnerships to deliver area improvements.

It is estimated that a casino could add £7m of GVA per annum at the local level.

Why would Chester be a good testing ground for the Impact of Casinos?

The multi-faceted nature of Chester, its many layered role as a place to live, work and visit, and its relative influence far beyond its immediate boundaries (considering its size), make it a uniquely interesting place to test the impacts of a casino development, as does the challenge of developing a 21st century tourism and economic product within the context of a historic city

Chester is many things to many people. It is home for 120,000 people, and a place of work for 70,000. Chester is a regional centre for employment. The sub-region that comprises Chester, Deeside, Ellesmere Port and Wrexham is an acknowledged economic driver to the wider economies of the North West of England and North Wales. Over the last 20 years it has been one of the fastest growing economies in the UK. Chester and Deeside are the focus of this economic hub and the image and profile of Chester is the driver for this activity.

For over 8 million people each year it is a place to visit for business or pleasure; only Manchester and Blackpool in the North West receive more visitors. Chester's shopping is usually in the top ten in national retail surveys. Chester is one of the best-preserved and most popular historic cities in Europe.

The business community wants Chester to stay competitive in its key markets such as shopping and leisure by extending the quality and breadth of what's on offer. Most of Chester's jobs are underpinned, in one way or the other, by the money spent by those who visit here. Chester's setting in the midst of green belt and attractive open countryside is part of its appeal and so outward growth is not an appropriate option.

The vision for Chester is one that tries to manage this complex picture. It also reflects the great pride in the place that characterises how people feel about their part of Chester. We aim to work with residents and partners to create a Chester that:

- **locally**, gives residents safe, attractive communities and the quality services and environment they are entitled to
- **regionally**, offers the range of shopping, leisure and employment opportunities that people in our sub-region and wider region need from our city and district
- **nationally**, is seen as a regional centre and a major historic city and is highly regarded as a good place to visit and invest in
- **internationally**, is recognised as a major heritage city and visitor destination.

We need to work in partnership at a variety of levels to achieve this multi-layered vision:

• **locally**, we work with other public agencies and through Chester in Partnership, the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), and our own Area Committees. We listen to and consult local people and interest groups.

• **Regionally** we work with our regional and sub-regional partners:

- The Mersey / Dee Alliance
- Cheshire and Warrington Economic Alliance
- Cheshire and Warrington Tourism Board
- Chester and Warrington Information Consortium
- The North East Wales / West Cheshire Partnership
- GONW, The Regional Housing Board, NWRA and NWDA
- Cheshire Local Government Association (LGA)

• **Nationally**, we work with the national LGA, central government and national agencies and companies that can help Chester.

• **Internationally**, we work with international businesses, The European Commission, the Walled Towns Friendship Circle, our twin towns and our various partners in Europe and elsewhere.

• Chester is known worldwide as a centre for culture, heritage and history and this is the basis of its tourism industry – it is an acknowledged regional, national and international gem. This sector employs a great many local people and underpins much of the local economy. It is the source of much local civic pride. Working with English Heritage, sub-regional agencies, the NWDA, the Chester Civic Trust and other agencies and local groups, we are enhancing Chester's heritage assets and improving their interpretation and maintenance.

• The Culture Park concept pulls together all the heritage and cultural assets of the City, both built and people based, and tells the story of Chester, both past and future, in a modern and exciting way – it is a journey of discovery for both local people and our visitors. This is a process of joining up the City's cultural and heritage assets so that the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts. It is a great catalyst for urban regeneration and seeks to capture the spirit of Chester. The Culture Park forms an important marketing concept for the City.

SOCIAL IMPACT

There are a range of positive impacts that will accrue as a result of developing a small high quality casino as part of Chester's wider regeneration strategy. However, we are not blind to the fact that there may also be a number of problems that can arise with additional opportunities to gamble. We will ensure that we recognise, minimise, manage and mitigate the negative impacts through effective use of licensing powers, and by building upon our track record of working in partnership to manage such activities.

Positive Impacts

- **Job and income Creation.** There will be a full range of types and level of jobs that would be created: skilled and unskilled, full time and part time suitable for range of individuals across the district and surrounding travel to work area which are required to support supporting 500 visits on average to a small casino, per day. (Casino Market Demand Study, Pion Economics, June 2005) The Pion Economics Report suggests a small casino can support up to 200 new jobs – casino staffing, hotel staffing, service staff, and other staff- IT, HR etc. which would create a £3.7m staff and costs bill for a small casino
- There would also be the benefits of a multiplier effect of £5m construction costs (Casino Market Demand Study, Pion Economics, June 2005) and an induced multiplier effect as a result of the casino operation itself – wages, purchase of goods and services supply chain effects as well as spend of clients
- A high value use such as a Casino can act a catalyst to lever in investment for the mixed use regeneration of parts of the city in need of renewal which have been identified in master-plans and development briefs.
- Additional leisure activities attracting more visitors and greater range of activities on offer locally for residents which evidence suggests is required.
- The development of a casino would also enhance and extend the range of activities available in the city centre and would expand the demographic profile of users, particularly at Night. This is a key aspiration of the Single Action Plan for the City Centre and the Chester at Night Strategy.
- A small, well controlled, and high quality casino facility will create a better environment for gaming activity than is currently provided by some alternatives.

Negative Impacts

- **Problem gambling** - Additional opportunities for gaming could lead to an increase in problem gambling and subsequent debt, family/community cohesion/deterioration of mental health, particularly amongst more vulnerable members of the community.
- **Job displacement** - Jobs and investment in a casino may displace demand from other leisure providers already in the area.
- **Nuisance and anti-social behaviour** - The development of a casino in a sensitive location, and its uncontrolled operation during anti-social hours could create problems for local residents (Nuisance, noise, litter etc).
- **Image and status** - A poor quality facility may attract anti-social behaviour and/or undermine the image and quality of Chester as a premier place to live work, visit or invest.

Resolution of negative and positive impacts

Problem gambling –The Council has a number of existing relationships with relevant voluntary and public organisations which are actively tackling problems of debt, financial literacy, personal financial management, and addiction. Specific initiatives have been developed to tackle problems in deprived wards, and these would be extended. Any operator would be required to work proactively with these agencies and contribute to the development of new initiatives, as well as working with Gamcare, a charity organisation which develops and encourages the gambling sector to alleviate problem gambling.

Chester City Council is :

- a Partner and funder of Citizens Advice Bureau
- a Partner and funder of Chester Credit Union
- co-ordinating the Compact working arrangements between Chester City Council and many Local Community and Voluntary organisations
- a Partner and funder of Samaritans;

and plays an active role in working in partnership with other community and voluntary organisations who are well positioned to help with the any negative consequences of gambling such as Chester Aid to the Homeless.

The Council is currently working with the above agencies on the development of specific targeted projects aimed at tackling related issues in deprived areas and with vulnerable client groups. This experience would be directly transferred and extended to address issues arising from a new casino.

Job displacement – There is further capacity to accommodate growth in the retail and leisure sectors of Chester and add to the existing offer. In this context it is anticipated that the casino would complement rather than compete with existing provision. The focus upon small high quality, high end provision would fill a particular niche. The City Council would continue to work with partners to ensure that any job vacancies created through displacement would be filled, by extending current provision of skills and training, return to work and access to employment initiatives, which are being provided successfully throughout the district and the surrounding sub-region. Casino operators would be required to work with the City Council and its partners to put in place similar appropriate and bespoke recruitment and training mechanisms.

Anti-social behaviour and nuisance – The City Council has well developed partnerships which have significant experience of managing major facilities and events. (eg Chester Races which attract many thousands of visitors to the city centre during the summer months, Mecca Bingo which is one of the top ten performing facilities in the Country, and the City centre night time economy, which attracts visitors from throughout the sub-region.) The Community Safety Partnership has a specific identified role to play in tackling crime and community safety issues in the City Centre through its leadership of the City Centre Management Task group on Cleaner Greener, Safer issues. This is a mature partnership with a comprehensive action plan and a record of delivery on the ground.

The Chester at Night Strategy establishes a clear spatial framework and criteria for the location of leisure related activities on the basis of special zones for specific activities. This is complemented by plans for training and development of staff, provision of transport to and from the City, management and maintenance of the public realm etc

Planning policies provide a sound basis for ensuring that issues of nuisance and impacts upon residential amenity are addressed as part of any new development or

change of use, and the Council has adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance on Crime and Community Safety which ensures that consideration of these issues is an integral part of any proposals.

The LSP for Chester has a Development Delivery Partnership which includes members from a wide range of agencies encompassing Health, Police, Fire, Transport, Social Housing, Civic Societies, Education (Including the University), Social Services, Planning, and Property, regeneration, environment and heritage. They jointly consider and inform the development of the city, ensuring that new schemes are properly planned and managed, and that impacts upon service providers and their clients are properly addressed. This group would play an active role in developing specific casino proposals.

Image and status – Chester’s success as a visitor destination and focus for investment is founded upon the quality of its environment and its reputation as a high class location. A fundamental aim of all of the City Council’s plans is to continue to grow the economy by adding value through improvements to both the product and experience of living, working in or visiting the city. It is critical that we do not “kill the goose that laid the golden egg”. This aspiration is shared by the Local Strategic Partnership and the wider community. At the heart of the Community Plan is the aim of developing a thriving Chester by ensuring that it is a good place to visit, and in which to live and invest.

A fundamental requirement of any new casino would be that it was of a scale and quality befitting of Chester’s character and status. Down-market operations would not be accepted. Any new facility would have to demonstrate that it could meet the most testing standards of design, operation, and management.

The City Council and its partners are currently developing and implementing a Place Marketing Strategy which sets the parameters for the promotion of the city as a high Class European Must See destination. A new casino developer/operator would be expected to participate in this Public Private partnership to ensure consistency of product and message, and to make absolutely certain that the image of the city is not tarnished, but enhanced.

The City Council will be widely consulting on its Gambling Policy when the final guidance is released. This consultation will include any groups or organisations that are identified (or approach the authority) as being affected or representing those that could be affected by any of the proposed changes introduced under the Gambling Act 2005.

This Policy and the consultation process will be regularly updated as directed by the legislation and will be funded by the fees charged to applicants under the Act.

Testing the real impacts of a new Casino

The City Council through its nationally recognised research team has a track record of working with partners to undertake analysis of social, economic, cultural and environmental trends. This takes the form of one off consultation and survey work, through comprehensive development of evidence base, to continual monitoring of trends and opinion utilising a residents panel and sharing data with other agencies through a public sector information group at a district wide and neighbourhood level.

An initial baseline assessment of current conditions would form the basis for regular monitoring of impacts over time. Developers/operators of the casino would be expected to contribute towards this work which would inform both their own modus operandi and the approach taken by other agencies

Existing and planned job creation and training programmes, which improve the skill of and benefit local people,

As has been mentioned above the City Council works with a range of partners under the umbrella of Chester Learning partnership and sub-regional alliances to develop and roll out a range of bespoke training and skills programmes, these include:

- Supporting Community Training Learning Project – operating in 16 Index of Multiple Deprivation wards across Chester, Ellesmere Port & Neston and the Wirral, this project supports individual learning, training and personal development .
- Return to work programmes aimed at individuals who wish to re-enter the employment market are currently being run with more planned for the future.
- A “Contact Centre” course based on our Return to Work Programmes.
- Cheshire Oaks Retail Academy
- Welcome Host Initiative
- Previous experience of working with Intermediate Labour Market operations to provide long term unemployed learning and employment opportunities
- Work experience placements through local business grant scheme and partnership working with Connexions
- Many volunteering opportunities with local community and voluntary organisations
- Tailored provision of training with West Cheshire College, Chester University/Business School

A specific programme will be devised from the above menu to which the casino operator will be expected to contribute and adopt.

NEED FOR REGENERATION AND REGIONAL CONTEXT:

The development of a Casino will make a significant contribution towards regeneration both within and beyond Chester district in a number of ways:

- Provide new jobs to compliment, diversify and re-enforce currently strong retail, leisure and tourism sectors.
- Create opportunities to build upon existing training and access to work programmes to tackle worklessness and underemployment in deprived areas.
- Leverage investment to assist in the physical regeneration of the city centre as part of a programme of ongoing urban renaissance including re-use of brownfield land, and/or previously used buildings
- Develop and extend the tourism and leisure offer as a key component of the Chester Culture Park
- Assist in the realisation of Chester’s Night time Strategy and City Centre Action plan
- Add to Chester’s image as a high quality visitor destination and location for investment to the benefit of the locality and the wider region
- Build upon Chester’s existing image to generate new investment and job creation to the benefit of areas of need in the wider sub-region
- Compliment the development of other parts of the Liverpool City Region including Capital of Culture

All of the above would contribute towards Chester fulfilling its role as a Tourism “Attack Brand”, Key Regional Town and Gateway, and centre of the Deeside Hub as identified in the Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Spatial Strategy and Cheshire Warrington Economic Alliance sub-regional strategy, and Cheshire -Warrington Tourism Strategy.

It is anticipated that the casino development would take place as part of the ongoing programme of regeneration which is being delivered over the next 4 years. The market in Chester is currently extremely buoyant, sites are currently available, development frameworks are in place and it is anticipated that delivery would be entirely private sector funded.

It is anticipated that a small high quality Casino could add £7m of GVA per annum at the local level, and £5m regionally.

There would also be the benefits of a multiplier effect of £5m construction costs (Casino Market Demand Study, Pion Economics, June 2005)

Induced multiplier effect as a result of the casino operation itself – wages, purchase of goods and services supply chain effects as well as spend of clients

There is strong evidence in Chester that a high proportion of visits involve more than one activity (ie shopping and culture, heritage visit and sports etc). It is expected that in this respect the casino will compliment other activities and add spend in other related areas.

WILLINGNESS TO LICENCE:

A full meeting of the City Council on 29th March 2006 resolved to support proposals for a small high quality Casino. This followed a strongly supported resolution from the Council’s Licensing Board.

A number of organisations have been consulted and have expressed support for the development of a small high quality casino in the city.

Representatives from the BID Steering Group, which includes City centre Management, the Police, the chamber of Commerce, the Pubwatch, independent retailers, the Property Sector, city and county councils, and the tourism board supported the proposal.

In addition, the Local Victualers Association, Private Hire Operators, Chester Hackney Carriage Operators Association have been consulted and are all in overwhelming support for a application for a Small Casino.

The Primary Care Trust have been consulted and have raised concerns about the possible impact of problem gambling on an individual’s health and their family’s well-being.

As part of the development of a casino in Chester and our overall gambling policy we will work very closely with the PCT in carrying out a wide-ranging Health Impact Assessment particularly aimed at vulnerable people.

The Licensing process would include and be used to ensure the achievement of public health outcomes particularly to prevent gambling related problems in individuals and at risk groups and to protect vulnerable groups from gambling-related harm.

No other objections have been received at the time of submitting this Proposal, but any group or organisations that do raise concerns would be welcomed to be involved in the consultation process of the Authorities Gambling Policy and if eligible be able to object or comment on any proposal received by the Authority. This process of

consultation has successfully been used as part of the process used to implement the Licensing Act 2003.

PROBABILITY OF IMPLEMENTATION:

The City Council operates its own property re-investment programme and is active in the property and development market in the city. Based upon our own intelligence we know that demand is currently high throughout the city for leisure, retail and tourist related development. The current gambling operators are extremely successful with the racecourse and Bingo hall amongst the most successful in the country. The Council has been approached by a number of Casino operators who have indicated a desire to locate in the city, and who would be in a position to move forward proposals if this bid is successful.

Decisions regarding the location of a casino would be based upon a number of complimentary strategies and frameworks including Chester at Night, the Chester District North East Urban Action Area and associated development briefs, and the Chester District Local Plan, Chester Culture Park. Key criteria will be that it should occupy a central location, re-using previously used land and/or buildings, close to public transport, in an area identified for such activities in the above plans.

Such locations will be well served by existing transport infrastructure, accessible by a range of modes including rail, car, bus, taxi, walking and cycling. Chester is a compact and highly sustainable location in this respect and as well as being accessible to local residents the city centre is easily reached by all modes from the wider sub-region. Continued improvements to accessibility, including both hard infrastructure provision and visitor management measures are being undertaken with a combination of private and public sector funding and form part of all regeneration programmes and higher level plans and strategies.

Current gambling provision in the district comprises

12 Betting Shops

1 Large Race Course (40,000 occupancy) with track betting

1 large Bingo Hall

4 Amusement Arcades (including an 18+ area)

35 Club Premises are eligible for larger jackpot gaming machines.

270 Premises Licences (pubs pre Licensing Act) eligible for Section 34(1) or Section 34(5)(e) Gaming Machines.

This level of provision has remained stable in recent years through there have been continuing qualitative improvements in provision in certain sectors, particularly at the racecourse which is now renowned as one of Britain's premier facilities.

It is expected that the development of a new casino would have little or no impact upon existing provision as the Chester offer would meet a particular niche market for high quality provision in a historic setting, heavily linked to visitor spend within which there is significant latent demand. In this respect it is perceived that this proposal will complement existing facilities rather than compete.

The casino will sit along side the development of other key culture, leisure and retail activities in the heart of the Culture Park whose whole philosophy is based upon exploiting the potential of developing critical mass both in terms of maximising attractiveness of the product, increasing investment and managing operations.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

In addition to the range of benefits outlined elsewhere in this proposal, the Council has well established methods for consultation and community engagement in planning and regeneration. Moreover, there is a number of established partnerships and networks who are involved in decisions regarding licensing. The production of the Local Development Framework and its associated Statement of Community Involvement will ensure that stakeholders have a real influence over the design, location, and operation of the casino proposal. The recent development of area based working and neighbourhood management approaches provide an additional means by which local residents can be assured an active role in such decisions.

UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

Chester's proposal will inevitably be quite different from many others submitted to the panel owing to a combination of the following factors:

- The focus on quality
- The aim of developing a 21st century facility in a historic context
- The integration of a casino within the Culture Park
- The opportunity to exploit linked trips and complimentary expenditure
- The scope to diversify the tourist offer in an internationally important location, as part of a strategy of becoming a "must see" European Destination, at the same time as offering new leisure activities for residents
- The ability to ensure that benefits of job creation and skills development are extended to areas of need locally and sub-regionally by building upon existing initiatives
- The role of the casino as part of an agreed strategy for diversification of the city centre and a contributor to the achievement of the night-time strategy, within the context of a single action plan
- The potential to create, and benefit from, a critical mass of quality leisure facilities, including a premier racecourse in the heart of the city
- The consolidation of a successful urban renaissance strategy, which is strengthening and growing sustainable residential communities and promoting the benefits of City Living
- The chance to capitalise on the compact and accessible nature of the city with a high quality integrated transport network.