



A CASINO FOR ST HELENS



St Helens Council's bid to the Casino Advisory Panel for the allocation of a Large Format Casino.

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CASINO ADVISORY PANEL Formal Proposal Cover Sheet

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Statement of basis of application:

Regional ~~Yes~~/No

Large (state number) One

Small (state number)

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

Large (state number) One

Small (state number)

INTRODUCTION

St Helens is pleased to submit its proposal to be considered as a location for a large casino as defined under the 2005 Gambling Act.

The opportunity, the development and successful operation of such a facility is in line with the St Helens Economic, Tourism and City Growth Strategies and with the Boroughs objectives for regeneration, which are linked to the well being of its local communities and inhabitants. The vision of the St Helens Community Plan is to "Make St Helens a modern, distinctive, economically prosperous and vibrant Borough".

St Helens is an area designated for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, and one of only a handful of areas chosen for Local Enterprise Growth Initiative support.

The positive balance of economic and social impact considerations means that St Helens believes it is right to be considered as a location for a large casino. Our Tourism Strategy aims to make St Helens a Leisure Borough for the region and any large casino would be part of a more substantive private sector led development for a new Saints Rugby League Stadium and, 'Destination St Helens' ambitions in our City Growth Strategy proposals.

The existing and nationally acknowledged leisure destination of Haydock Park Racecourse is also within St Helens. The inclusion of a large casino in St Helens will be part of the 'mix' which is available locally to help diversify the Boroughs economic base and to help create employment, It is entirely consistent with developments proposed within our land use plans and tourism development, alongside high value investments in 21st Century technologies, much of it built on reclaimed brownfield sites.

We acknowledge and appreciate the levels of sensitivity which surrounds the prospect of gambling facilities but believe that St Helens is a suitable and appropriate location for a new large casino that adds value to our economic and associated growth strategies, and is consistent with our endeavours to secure a diverse range of facilities and provide employment opportunities for our community.

As such, St Helens offers the following detailed submission for consideration by the Casino Advisory Panel.

1.1 St Helens – Type of Area

- 1.1.1 The Borough of St Helens comprises the town itself and smaller settlements such as Haydock, Newton-le-Willows and Billinge and is situated on the Lancashire plain in the heart of the North West region. It is roughly 12 miles from Liverpool city centre and 25 miles from the centre of Manchester. The local authority is administratively in Merseyside and so falls within the Merseyside Objective 1 Programme area (2000-2006). The M62 runs through the south of the Borough, the M6 to the east and the A580 (East Lancs Road) runs through the north part of the Borough.
- 1.1.2 Population and Ethnicity: St Helens' total population at midyear 2004 was approximately 176,700, of which 48.5% are male and 51.5% are female. The population of the Borough accounts for approximately 11.9% of the Merseyside total population and 2.6% of the North West population. The population of St Helens has remained relatively constant with little overall change in recent years (-0.1% or 200 people over the period 2001-2004). The ethnic composition of the Borough is predominantly White (98.8%) with a small proportion of residents belonging to Black or minority ethnic groups (1.2%).
- 1.1.3 St Helens' population age structure is very similar to the national profile, whereby there has been a clear ageing of the population. Between 1981-2004 the Borough's under 15 population fell by approximately 10,000 (3%points), whilst the number of residents in the Borough aged over 65+ increased by 3,700 (3% points). This change can be attributed to a decrease in both the rate of births in the Borough and in mortality rates. Labour force: According to the 2001 Census there were some 71,000 residents in work, one of the lowest proportions of adults in England. St Helens is a net exporter of labour as there are 56,000 employees employed in the Borough (2001), or 6.4% of those in work (compared to 11.4% in GB).

1.2 Unemployment

- 1.2.1 The current unemployment rate as at February 2006 is 3.1%.
- 1.2.2 Although St Helens has seen ILO measured unemployment fall in recent years and has performed well in comparison to regional and national levels, a more spatially focussed analysis of unemployment, using claimant count measured unemployment, highlights certain wards where unemployment is an acute problem in the Borough.
- 1.2.3 The Town Centre ward had the highest levels of claimant count unemployment with 6% of residents claiming JSA. This level of claimant unemployment is significantly higher than the Borough average which was 2.6% in December 2005.
- 1.2.4 St Helens has also experienced mixed fortunes over the last six years in its attempts to improve its employment rate. It should be noted that over this period (1999-2004) the borough has consistently had below average employment rates in comparison to the North West and England. In 1999 the employment rate in St Helens was 69.9% whilst by 2003 the employment rate stood at 71.3%. The overall change over the five year period had been 1.4% points, although the employment rate had fluctuated over this period.

1.3 Skills and Education

- 1.3.1 The proportion of St Helens (working age) residents qualified to NVQ 3 (37%) and NVQ 4 (17%) is considerably lower than the national averages (43% and 24% respectively, 2002 data). Whilst significant absolute improvements in the overall levels of qualifications held by St Helens' residents have been witnessed between 1997 and 2002, the gap in the proportion of those holding higher level qualifications has increased relative to both national and regional benchmarks. School performance in St Helens has, however, improved both in relative and absolute terms over most of the last eight years. For those pupils who stay on for full-time / 6th form education, St Helens does well overall, outperforming the regional and national averages.

1.3.2 Business stock: There were 3,040 VAT registered firms in St Helens at the start of 2002 (2% Of regional total). This equates to 212 firms per 10,000 adults, which is 30% below the North West and 40% below the UK averages. The rate of increase in the last five years has been similar to the regional rate but from a considerably lower base. The gap is most noticeable in the financial/business services sector. Roughly 300 new firms register for VAT each year. The rate of new business starts (per head of population) is even lower, at 32% below the regional and 46% below the UK averages. Just 6% of those in work are self-employed, well below the regional (10%) and national rates (11%). With regard to land and property issues, there is around 12 million ft² of industrial property in St Helens (20% of the Merseyside total) and around 1.7 million ft² of office floor space (8% of the Merseyside total). There is a substantial stock of older, poor quality accommodation and low levels of speculative development (although this has improved in recent years).

1.4 The Principle Needs of Regeneration in the Area

1.4.1 St Helens has already undergone a massive period of industrial change and restructuring (in common with many other towns and cities in the north of England). The consequence of this change make representation in all its guises a continuing challenge for St Helens.

1.4.2 Two decades ago St Helens was a highly specialised industrial town, particularly dependent on glass-making (in Pilkington and other firms), but also on coal mining and other manufacturing industry (e.g. chemicals and pharmaceuticals manufacture). At their peaks, coal mining and glass manufacture between them employed around 50,000 people (mainly men) in St Helens, or well over half the workforce. The fall in employment in key sectors from the 1970s through to the early 1990s led to loss of over 20,000 jobs (between 1978 and 1995), with most of the fall occurring in the early 1980s. By 2000, employment in the core glass sector had fallen to just over 2,000 jobs.

1.4.3 The industrial past and rapid change over the last 20-30 years have left three important legacies in St Helens – an obvious physical legacy, a less obvious, but potentially more challenging, cultural legacy, and a business structure legacy.

1.4.4 Deprivation and social exclusion: St Helens is, according to the index of Multiple Deprivation (2000), the 36th most deprived local authority area in England. There are a number of particular problems in St Helens. The proportion of our population, particularly men, who have a limiting long-term illness is very high (23.6% of the total population), as is the proportion of those with general poor health. St Helens contains a number particularly deprived neighbourhoods (SOA's). 13 out of the 118 SOA's in St Helens, lie within the 5% deprived SOA's naturally. The most severe deprivation (top 3%) is formed in a corridor which runs south from the Town Centre ward to Bold ward.

1.4.5 The initial phases of regeneration locally have been to deal with the legacies of the past, including the transformational loss in traditional industries and jobs in the town during the 1970's-1990's and the dealing with contaminated and derelict sites in and around the town centre and wider former industrial areas. The economic plans for the future are based on diversifying the business base and enhancing the place of St Helens, building on the evidenced strengths of the area. Changing perceptions outside in inside the Borough as St Helens to be a place in which to be employed, be entrepreneurial and to grow businesses of the future are important. However, there remains the need to regenerate local communities and neighbourhoods within St Helens so there is not only a ladder of opportunity, and achievement, but an understanding and an engagement with the wider needs of lifelong learning and skills, health and well being.

1.4.6 These need to be linked, in part, to wider economic and employment opportunity, and the need to raise the levels and aspiration of some parts of the St Helens Community in its most deprived areas, where neighbourhood renewal is being targeted and where the St Helens Local Area Agreement has taken the 3 overarching themes of tackling worklessness, health inequalities and liveability issues faced by people in their (deprived) neighbourhoods.

1.4.7 Helping and regenerating people and the places in which they live and work remains at the core of local strategies. Such as CGS, /LAA and NRF. The Local Enterprise Growth Initiative will continue to give this important focus, as nothing which is proposed and implemented in the

name of regeneration will be designed to make St Helens residents worse off or more disadvantaged. It is with this very much to heart that St Helens believes that, with all factors considered, setting and operation of a large Casino in St Helens can contribute to delivering positive economic, social and regeneration benefits to the Borough.

1.5 Changing Fortunes of St Helens

1.5.1 The last ten years have seen a real shift in St Helens' fortunes, with the beginning of a significant transformation of the Borough. Some of the changes have been led by the public sector, through the provision of new infrastructure, some by the private sector via new investment, and some through excellent public-private partnerships.

The St Helens M62 link road creates a direct link from Junction 7 on the M62, to the town centre and to a string of development opportunities and sites along the way. The road enables much more of St Helens to capitalise on its strategic location and provides vastly improved visitor access to the town centre and business access to several key sites. It was instrumental in helping developments take place in Sherdley Park, Lea Green Farm and Ravenhead Park.

1.5.2 The last five years of the 1990s saw the creation of around 5,000 new jobs in St Helens, an overall increase of 10%.

A significant proportion of these were created in public sector services. However, the private sector has been a net creator of employment through major investment in three areas:

- Construction employment – related to the wider growth of opportunities across the region.
- Distribution activity – concentrated around Haydock, the M62 link road (e.g. the new 50,000m² Wincanton distribution centre at Lea Farm East) and Newton-le-Willows.
- Town Centre and related retail and leisure – the new Ravenhead Retail Park and new facilities in the town centre, such as the Hilton Hotel.

1.5.3 The demand from the private sector has led to on average 12 hectares of employment land being taken up each year, although the take-up has been variable because of the large nature of some requirements (from the distribution sector) and the new supply becoming available. The take-up of employment premises has also shown steady growth, with a clear upward trend from 1997 onwards. In comparison, land take-up in Warrington over the period 1997/8 to 2001/2 was around 15 hectares per annum.

1.6 St Helens: Key Opportunities and Challenges

1.6.1 The work in carrying out the baseline for our City Growth Strategy in 2003 helped establish a clear view of the key advantages for St Helens to build upon, as well as some of the difficult challenges we face. St Helens has very considerable potential which we want to fully exploit.

1.6.2 The analysis of issues and advantages has been informed not only by the baseline, but also by other recent work such as the Merseyside Economic Review, and the North West Regional Economic Strategy.

1.6.3 Our main competitive advantage is our strategic location in the North West region, situated in the middle of a market of some 7 million people and the second largest economy in the UK outside London and the South East (this factor has been a key to the growth of our near neighbour Warrington). We have immediate access to the M62 and M6 motorways and sit between the region's two principal cities of Manchester and Liverpool (both with growing international status). To date we have been able to exploit this location largely through the growth of a significant logistics and distribution sector. However, there are other features we are well placed to develop:

- As a location for firms servicing regional markets (business services, construction and engineering support, etc).
- As a convenient residential location for workers to commute elsewhere in the region, especially if supported by better public transport links.
- As a highly accessible regional visitor destination

1.6.4 This central location also makes St Helens readily accessible to a large labour pool (including highly skilled labour) living outside (as well as inside) the Borough, from Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Lancashire. The former United Glass Site close to the Town Centre has been identified as the most suitable for a new Saints Stadium and 'Destination St Helens' proposals situated at the immediate south of the Town Centre at the end of the M62 Linkway.

1.6.5 St Helens has a competitive advantage as a relatively low cost place to do business. In spite of the centrality of our location, industrial and commercial rents in St Helens are between 25% to 30% lower than in Warrington, and labour and house prices are also significantly lower. St Helens sits within Merseyside, which is an area where businesses are, currently, able to obtain the highest level of state support in Europe. This further increases the cost-competitiveness of our location.

Our labour force is a positive feature. Traditionally workers from St Helens have been imbued with a strong work ethic. Employers in the town have a workforce who are hard working and loyal. Rates of labour turnover are low and loyalty to employers is high. Standards of education and skills have improved rapidly in our schools and we have two very successful further education colleges that draw students from a wide catchment area, well beyond St Helens.

1.7 Transforming St Helens

1.7.1 The ten year vision and central tenet for the City Growth Strategy in that of 'Transforming St Helens'. Underneath this banner are four main theme areas to achieve the vision of St Helens to become "A vibrant modern place for enterprise and a regional location of choice".

The four themes are: -

- Transforming our Business Base - Which includes developing our local clusters, one of which is Tourism and Leisure
- Achieving a Cultural Transformation - Which included 'plugging' St Helens into wider opportunities
- Achieving a Physical Transformation - Within which is 'Becoming a Leisure Borough for the Region'
- Transforming Perceptions of St Helens - Which includes 'Projecting a Modern St Helens'

1.7.2 Under each theme, the City Growth Strategy has developed a series of Action Areas which are in turn supported by a series of projects to make St Helens' a vibrant modern place for enterprise and regional location of choice.

1.8 Tourism and Leisure Development and Trends in St Helens

1.8.1 Business Clusters, including Tourism and Leisure Strategies are within the Theme Transforming Our Business Base of the CGS.

1.8.2 Tourism and Leisure covers a wide range of activities from hotels (e.g. Hilton, Holiday Inns, and Thistle, already established in the Borough), Museum and visitor attractions (e.g. the World of Glass and North West Museum of Transport), and sports facilities (such as the Haydock Race Course, the proposed new St Helens Rugby League Stadium), to the bars, restaurants and cultural facilities (such as the newly refurbished Theatre Royal and award winning Citadel Arts Centre and George Street Cultural Quarter) concentrated in the Town Centre. These component parts of the tourism and leisure offer for St Helens cater for both residents and visitors to St Helens, drawn mostly from within the North West Region.

1.8.3 The Tourism sector has been growing rapidly in St Helens, but is still relatively underdeveloped. It is a target cluster for both Merseyside and the wider North West, for which tourism (and Regional Economic) Strategies have been produced. There is also a key opportunity to capitalise on Liverpool's successful bid for European Capital of Culture 2008. Overall, the development of the tourism sector will directly benefit the local economy (through more visitors, spend and jobs) and will also improve facilities for residents and the quality of life offer locally.

1.8.4 Within this context, making St Helens a Leisure Borough for the region 'including the development of Destination St Helens' is not only part of the City Growth Strategy for St Helens, but is at the heart of the dedicated Tourism and Visitor Strategy for the Borough, launched in 2002.

1.9 St Helens Tourism and Visitor Strategy 2002

- 1.9.1 The important contribution that developing the local tourism sector makes to spurring on the social and economic revitalisation of St Helens is acknowledged in the Strategy. In 2000 the World of Glass Visitor Centre was opened alongside the Town Centre (North West Tourism Board best small visitor attraction 2001) and this world class new facility, plus recognised growth in the leisure sector linked also with funding for major local regeneration initiatives, helped demonstrate to the Borough the unique opportunity to make the most of its to hither untapped potential to attract visitors.
- 1.9.2 The strategy set out 3 key elements, namely
- Developing quality attractions and facilities
 - Effective promotion, marketing and information
 - Investing in Skills and Standards
- 1.9.3 These, in turn, helped determine a further cross cutting objectives aimed to
- Increase visitor numbers and spend
 - Enhance the quality of life and opportunity locally
- 1.9.4 Included within the Strategy are ambitious plans for the construction of St Helens Arena, a state of the arts Sports Stadium, with conference and hospitality facilities. This project is 'Destination St Helens' in the City Growth Strategy, and is the potential location for a large casino, integral to the rest of the development on the former, now derelict, United Glass Site.

1.10 Baseline for tourism in St Helens

- 1.10.1 Figures for 2000 produced by The Mersey Partnership reveal the following baseline position for St Helens in terms of the tourism sector:
- 250,000 staying visits – about 10% of the 2.4 million Merseyside total
 - million day visits – around 6.6% of the 16.8 million Merseyside total
 - £32 million annual visitor spend – approximately 5.3% of the £604 million Merseyside total
 - around 1,230 jobs supported by tourism (based on annual spend)
- 1.10.2 The majority of overnight stays are due to either business visitors or those visiting friends and relatives. These two groups also account for the majority of day visits, in addition to those coming for supporting or other events such as Super League Rugby matches, racing at Haydock Park, or the annual St Helens Show.
- 1.10.3 Given St Helens' strategic location, growing range of attractions, and the fact it is home to around 13% of Merseyside's population, these figures indicate that the Borough's tourism sector is comparatively underdeveloped within the sub-regional context. This is confirmed by a 2001 DTZ growth sector appraisal revealing that the tourism sector accounts for just over 1% of total employment in the Borough, well below the Merseyside, regional, and UK averages.
- 1.10.4 Again, the tourism strategy is intended to help redress this, particularly as both the 1998 St Helens Economic Assessment and the Merseyside Economic Strategy identify tourism as a potential growth industry for the Borough as well as the sub-region as a whole. This has been subsequently embraced in the St Helens 2001-2006 Economic Development Plan. (Now the City Growth Strategy 2003-2013).
- 1.10.5 In light of the strengths, opportunities, and growing array of existing and intended visitor draws to St Helens presented below, there is now genuine optimism that this potential can be realised within the next five years. This optimism is supported by the same 2001 DTZ report cited above, that showed that employment in the local tourism sector increased by 6% from 1995-1999.

1.11 Assets, Strengths & Opportunities

- 1.11.1 The Town Centre Boasts a Vibrant town centre nightlife: business is booming thanks to the host of new café's, bars, clubs and restaurants that have sprung up in and around the Westfield Street Quarter since

January 2000 and already transformed the town's night-time economy. A new multiplex cinema, restaurant, and nightclub complex was opened in 2001, and this appeal is already begging to attract nightlife coach excursions from as far away as Yorkshire.

- 1.11.2 St Helens town centre is the biggest on Merseyside after Liverpool city centre, and offers abundant low-cost parking for its excellent shopping facilities. Positive feedback has also been received by a number of disabled visitors, boosted by the highly successful Shopmobility scheme now in operation. The retail and leisure offer was further enhanced alongside the town centre by the completion of the nearby Ravenhead Retail Park in 2002, which already boasts the largest B&Q retail warehouse in the UK and a major JJB leisure facility.
- 1.11.3 The Borough is closely associated with supporting excellence, primarily thanks to the "Saints", the 2000 rugby league World Cup Champions on top of back-to-back Super League championship wins in 1999 and 2000. Matches regularly attract crowds of more than 10,000 spectators. Meanwhile Haydock Park is one of the country's premier racecourses and attracts over 200,000 race goers a year, as well as being a popular venue for conferences and other weekend events. Sutton Leisure Centre is a venue for number of regional/national sporting events, and for example will play host to a 4-nations judo international in the run-up to the Commonwealth Games. The Selwyn Jones Regional Sports Complex in Newton also counts a number of professional athletes and sports clubs among its clients, thanks to its first rate facilities.
- 1.11.4 St Helens is well appointed for hotel accommodation, with three high grade hotels all offering extensive leisure facilities and indoor pool – the Hilton (84 rooms), Holiday Inn (138), and Haydock Thistle (139) – plus three budget hotels – the Waterside (43), Travel Lodge (62), and Travel Inn (40) – and a good selection of over 20 other smaller hotels and guesthouses.
- 1.11.5 St Helens has four resident venues – the Hilton, Holiday Inn, Haydock Thistle, and the Waterside – with conference/wedding/function facilities catering for 100 or more people, that between them can accommodate around 1,340 guests. In addition, Haydock Park racecourse can cater for up to 1,500 non-residential delegates alone, and is one of the largest exhibition venues on Merseyside, benefiting from its location 0.5 miles from Junction 23 of the M6 and specialising in outdoor events. The World of Glass can also comfortably accommodate up to 200 conference delegates in its prime town centre location.
- 1.11.6 St Helens college, a designated centre of excellence, has a large hotel, catering and tourism faculty that produces a significant number of students well qualified for a career in the tourism industry for whom, until relatively recently, few jobs existed locally. However two of St Helens favourite nightspots are also at the forefront of the College's programme and serve as the College's premier "real life" chef/waiting/hospitality management training venue; meanwhile the Beecham's Bar, a real ale pub housed in the historic Beecham's Building, serves branded beer brewed under license by College students as part of their accredited training.
- 1.11.7 The strength of provision at St Helens College is a major asset to new establishments setting up in St Helens (and elsewhere) and offers a strong training and employment element in any new casino operation.

1.12 Becoming a Leisure Borough for the Region

- 1.12.1 One of St Helens' assets is the centrality of its location and excellent access from the highways network. It starts therefore on the front grid as a potential leisure destination for many parts of the region.
- 1.12.2 St Helens sees its development as a key regional sporting and leisure destination as a logical part of the CGS for several reasons. It is one of our target local clusters because of the following:
 - Our central location and availability of sites for development
 - Existing attractions which can build upon a strong sporting tradition with the St Helens Rugby League Club and Haydock Park Racecourse
 - Under-utilised assets such as Sherdley Park and Carr Mill Dam
- 1.12.3 Visitor attractions in surrounding areas have established themselves as regional attractions (e.g. Gullivers World in Warrington, Knowsley Safari Park, Wigan Pier, etc.), building on their accessibility. St Helens is as accessible, if not more so, than these locations.

1.12.4 The development of St Helens as a leisure Borough for the region also meets several objectives simultaneously.

- It would provide enhanced facilities for the existing residents and workers in St Helens.
- It would increase and enhance the range of employment opportunities in the town (many of which would be in the town centre and so highly accessible).
- Spin-off facilities, such as hotels and restaurants, would also come, increasing the range of facilities for local businesses.
- It would greatly increase the liveability of St Helens, particularly, but not exclusively, around the town centre.
- It would enhance the external image and help put us on the map.

1.12.5 The proposals for St Helens are entirely complementary and consistent with the recently published North West and Merseyside Tourism Strategies. Our intention at this stage is not for St Helens to develop as a brand and destination for visitors from outside the North West. Rather, it is to develop as a location largely for the leisure day trip market for residents from the region. For visitors from outside the region, in the parlance of the regional tourism strategy, it will become a “Slipstream Brand”. Many of our proposals for St Helens support the target themes of the regional tourism strategy, including a “Sports Mecca”, “powerhouse” (industrial heritage) and “family fun”.

2.1 Social Impact

2.1.1 St Helens does not believe that willingness to test social impact alone is a good reason for the establishment and operation of large (or any other type of) Casino here or anywhere else. The two main studies in the public domain are the Pion Economic Study ‘Casinos in the North West’ an assessment of market need (June 2005) done for the NWDA, and a broader (and negative) report on the social and economic impacts of regional casinos in the UK produced by hall aitken in February 2006.

2.1.2 Beliefs, opinions and sensitivity nationally, are balancing the arguments for and against the principles of offering additional gambling opportunities for people who can least afford it and who may be further disadvantaged by involvement in potential losses through participation in its activities.

2.1.3 Our proposal for being considered for a large Casino brings with it more than the 400-600 job opportunities envisaged (London Clubs International 2005) and, whilst this scale of job creation is not unknown to St Helens (we have recently worked with Somerfield and others such as Costco to help secure sustainable and well structured local employment opportunities for residents from our most deprived / Pathways Communities) it is recognised here and elsewhere that a Spotlight will be put on places where Casino’s are situated, to try and make a case one way or the other for the Social Impact which has come about consequent to their establishment.

2.1.4 There are likely negative impacts which St Helens acknowledges, such as problem gambling – perhaps not the scale of problem in a large casino as it will be in RC, but it will still need addressing. Evidence from around the world is mixed as to causes and impacts. Each locality must address this issue at the local level and work with the Gambling Commission and chosen operators to put in place measures to mitigate this. This we will do and, at the local level, this could include demanding that the chosen operator puts in place educational and awareness programmes; working with local agencies and faith groups to identify vulnerable people and communities; and showing evidence of financial commitment to funding research and monitoring impacts.

2.1.5 Possible breakdown in social cohesion – eg rises in crime, levels of debt etc. This is difficult to prove from international evidence, but we are aware of these issues. Again local agencies are best placed to monitor impacts at the community level and operators can be asked to participate and fund this work.

2.1.6 St Helens has a strong track record in local delivery and of establishing innovative strategies and solutions aimed at tackling the social impact of job losses in its traditional industries. It has introduced positive strategies to bring disadvantaged people and neighbourhoods back into well being and gainful engagement with the world of work. Neighbourhood Renewal, Local Area Agreement, Local Enterprise Growth Initiative, and other local strategies are and will continue to be directed at local people and places. The impact in the growth in opportunity is most relevant to ‘testing’ Social Impact, and St Helens has been proactive in endorsing to introduce new wealth creating activities from which local people benefit.

The social impact this has is positive and provides any acceptable backup against which measurements might be taken.

2.2 Social Impact Linked to Economic Impact

- 2.2.1 There is much debate and some reporting on the anticipated social and economic / regeneration impacts of regional casinos in the UK.
- 2.2.2 St Helens does not wish to diminish, or wish to be seen to dismiss, genuinely held views about the perceived negative impact problem gambling can have on individual lives, families and, potentially, communities already classified as deprived by IMD statistics. However without a definite proposal to place before public opinion in St Helens it is difficult to provide detailed evidence of individual / organisations / lobbying for or against a large casino in the Borough, linked to Saints Stadium development and / or Destination St Helens.
- 2.2.3 In this regard, the opportunity to be considered as a location for a large casino has been weighed within the overriding need to regenerate St Helens, its economy and its local communities.
- 2.2.4 The St Helens Local Area Agreement for St Helens has at its heart three main themes to tackle levels of worklessness, (poor) health, and liveability in the Borough. All have a negative social impact on the Borough and its inhabitants. St Helens is the 36th most deprived Borough in the country and is in receipt of its third tranche of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, which is set to bring a further £11 million to deprived communities between 2006-2008. NRF intends to help narrow the gap between the worst neighbourhoods (SOAs) and the rest, by narrowing the gap of disadvantage they suffer across the indices of Multiple Deprivation. Whilst not a measure for NRF as a national floor target, the levels of debt within deprived communities is of concern, here and elsewhere and this appears to be part of the issue surrounding the views expressed about the social impact any casino will have.
- 2.2.5 Whilst not a Regional development and seen in the hierarchy of casinos as 'Large', with an estimated 400-600 jobs to be created, the scale of such a development in St Helens will bring with it important and significant local opportunities, alongside the other prospects for a new stadium and, potentially Destination St Helens.
- 2.2.6 We are also aware of displacement issues, and it is possible that a new casino may include a number of activities that could displace activity from elsewhere – not just gambling but retail, bars, restaurants etc in our town centre. We understand that this may be an issue and will seek to license a premises only where we are convinced that these impacts have been thoroughly assessed. The maximum economic benefits will result where a new scheme adds a new and differentiated product to the marketplace and whilst it will be possible to stipulate this at the license competition stage It could also be built into our LEGI Strategy.
- 2.2.7 St Helens has regeneration strategies in place which address the social impacts of deprivation, including worklessness, health and liveability, along with the wish to realise ambitions expressed in the City Growth Strategy. Worklessness in St Helens, and elsewhere, has a social impact beyond not having employment which brings in money and the ability to participate in more mainstream life. It affects health, self esteem and well being.
As such we believe the Social Impact of gainful employment in a diversified local economy with a responsible casino operator linked into wider regeneration programmes can be judged to be more positive than negative.
- 2.1.8 We would therefore intend to work closely with any operator and ensure that meaningful employment is created for St Helens residents and to put in place, most likely through St Helens College, any further range of training in hospitality, leisure / casinos which will be required. We would also intend to work with any operator and with partner agencies in the Local Strategic Partnership to consider relevant strategies and involvement to combat 'problem gambling' which might affect, for instance, levels of family debt. This approach to joint working is already intended at an SOA / Neighbourhood Level with individuals / families and communities to address issues which the LAA has identified.

3.1 The Need for Regeneration in St Helens and the Contribution of a Casino to Regeneration Locally

- 3.1.1 Any proposal for a large casino in St Helens will be expected to assist in the regeneration of the Borough, and to make a contribution to regeneration efforts of a wider area which are to helping address growth in the local economy. The principle needs for regeneration have already been given in this submission, (Page 3) and as already stated, St Helens Council is committed to a strategy of diversifying its economy, and tourism and leisure in one area where there as been significant growth in the Borough in recent years. The development of a large casino, and associated leisure schemes, probably including an hotel, would provide much needed job opportunities and would, it is envisaged, assist efforts to reduce the high number of people in the Borough classed as workless. It is also believed that such a scheme could provide financial support for the proposed new stadium for Saints Rugby League Club, and that there is a high probability there would be direct benefits through growth in businesses which would provide services to such a facility.
- 3.1.2 It is intended that a large casino development would contribute to our Neighbourhood Renewal, LEGI, LAA and other regeneration strategies where ‘need’ is the reason behind receiving Government funds for programmes operating in the Borough.
- 3.1.3 St Helens is in receipt of its third allocation of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, currently £11.3 Million for 2006-2008, including SSCF and Neighbourhood Pilot funding. NRF funding has been targeted at the Boroughs most deprived wards and neighbourhoods, with funding for 2006-2008 to be specifically focused on SOA’s in the top 5% nationally. NRF programmes address the national floor targets and the LSP priorities of tackling worklessness, health and liveability. In addition, the Borough will be a ‘Pathways to work’ area from October 2006, and work more closely with Job Centre Plus, in targeted locations within St Helens. These include SOA’s close to the Town Centre and in Parr, which will be the area for our Neighbourhood Management Pilot.
- 3.1.4 St Helens recently won Local Enterprise Growth Initiative Funding, £13.4 million, which will be invested initially over the next 3 years specifically in deprived areas to support sustainable rate of locally owned businesses.
- 3.1.5 The table below demonstrates the LEGI priorities and outcomes.

LEGI Outcome	St Helens LEGI Priority Targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase total entrepreneurial activity among the population in deprived areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase our self employment rate, particularly among women, to at least national average levels, enabling at least 2000 people to move into self employment by 2016.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support sustainable growth and reduce the failure rate of locally owned business in deprived areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase our business stock to at least national average levels, closing the current gap of 2,200 VAT registered businesses by 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To attract appropriate investment and franchising into deprived areas, making use of local labour resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To have an employment rate of at least national average levels, removing at least 5000 people from economic activity by 2016

- 3.1.6 The LEGI bid stated “St Helens is underperforming and, when ranked with comparative areas, our business base does not contain enough small and medium sized enterprises, we have too few people in employment and we have too many people claiming benefit. In short, we have low levels of enterprise and high levels of worklessness. Beyond these headlines, St Helens has some additional challenges, such as particularly low levels of female self employment and high levels of deprivation concentrated in certain neighbourhoods. Progress is being made, but we need to do more and do it quickly”.
- 3.1.7 Our LEGI programme is about lifting the local economy through enterprise and entrepreneurship. It is intended that, by 2016, St Helens will be at least an ‘average’ economy, no longer featuring in ‘Special Measure’ Government programmes such as NRF. We will have more businesses, more self employed people, especially women, and people from our most deprived areas, and more people in work – a self sustaining economy.

- 3.1.8 LEGI proposals, which build on CGS, have been developed by a private / public working group comprising St Helens Chamber and St Helens Council, working through the LSP (representing the private and public sector, regional agencies, voluntary sectors and representatives from the local community). The Chamber Board and CGS Board have also endorsed LEGI. Proposals have also been discussed at an early stage with GONW, NWDA, Job Centre Plus, Business Link and the LSC.
- 3.1.9 Some of the LEGI proposals to tackle barriers and relevant to the establishment of a new large casino investment, include helping people in jobs and supporting businesses to grow, by enabling them to win more business locally, nationally and internationally, through developing supply chains, and removing barriers to business growth, creating increased productivity and new job opportunities.
- 3.1.10 St Helens has faced a tough time over the last few decades, particularly during the 1980's as large industry either disappeared or adapted new technology which increased productivity but reduced the workforce. This has left us with a difficult legacy. In summary, the key trends and current situation are as follows
- A very low level of business stock – 58% of the national average business density
 - Low rates of self-employment – especially for women, at half the national rate
 - 29,000 economically inactive residents, including over 13,000 on incapacity benefits
 - low skill levels, especially basic and employability skills
 - an employment rate of 70.6%, compared to 73.5% North West and 74.9% nationally
 - an economic inactivity rate of 25.2%, compared to 23% North West and 21.3% nationally
 - physical and environmental difficulties, especially a shortage of starter units for new and fledgling businesses.
- 3.1.11 One of the most startling findings of the exhaustive analysis of the local business base ever conducted, as part of the research undertaken in 2002 for our City Growth Strategy, was the recorded 'shortfall' in the number of local businesses, the prime gap being in micro-businesses. Whilst there has been some growth in the business base in St Helens over the last few years, the extent of this 'enterprise gap' remains significant. Levels of business density are currently only 58% of the national average, equivalent to a local shortfall of over 2,200 VAT registered businesses. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this sits alongside very high levels of worklessness; over 30,000 people not working and claiming Job Seekers Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Income Support etc.
- 3.1.12 For the purpose of LEGI submission St Helens has updated our existing baseline economic data and carried out new primary research with the support of Ecotec Research and Consulting Ltd. In summary, the evidence shows St Helens as a place of opportunity with 'green shoots' emerging, but coming from such low starting points across a range of measures, that we remain at the bottom of the 'enterprise league'.

3.2. Level of Additional Economic Value, Including GVA and Employment Levels

- 3.2.1 The Pion Economic Report 'Casino's in England's North West – An Assessment of Market need. June 2005, commissioned by the NWDA and jointly steered by NWRA and GONW shows that the North West has the Capacity to sustain a number of regional casino structures, and has within its analysis a range of options, including large casinos at both Southport (Sefton) and St Helens.
- 3.2.2 It makes various assumptions in coming to its conclusion on economic value including that overall casino participation is assumed to rise to 10% (from the current 3%), in line with assumptions previously made by the Gambling Sector Cross Industry Group, with actual visitor numbers assessed across for gambling types – non gamblers, minimal interest, moderate interest and multiple interest gamblers.
- 3.2.3 It applied this protocol to each Local Authority in the North West to establish a resident 'gambling envelope', that inevitably places the two city conurbations of Liverpool and Manchester at the higher end of the spectrum owing to their population concentration, along with an overall estimate of an annual 13 million potential casino visits across the region. The report assesses tourist demand, adding just over 5 million additional casino visits to the residential profile for the region and it looks at Casino Accommodation and Economic Impact, assessing the potential of the region to accommodate development of different types of casinos. Using visitor thresholds supplied by the industry, the industry preferred 45 minutes drive time / catchment and, setting to one side catchment conflicts, the Pion analysis

suggests that around 21 large, and 5 regional casinos input be viable. Adding tourists, raises these numbers to 29 and 7 respectively.

- 3.2.4 The report also assesses the potential impact of casino structures on the North West economy. The (Pion) impact model is based on a 'multiplier' structure that separates impact into the direct, indirect, and induced effects of operation.
- 3.2.5 Impact simulations also contain both 'gross' and 'net' components, allowing for the fact that 'new' resource expanded on casino gambling following deregulation may be diverted from spending elsewhere in the gambling sector and spending on other goods and services both locally, regionally and beyond regional boundaries. The Pion Economics Study estimated that regional casinos may typically generate somewhere around £38 million of GVA for the North West, with large and small casinos generating some £9 million and 15 million. Employment figures are placed at around 2000, 500 and 220 respectively.
- 3.2.6 These broad fundings and figures have been applied to a large casino operation in St Helens, based on a stand alone basis. They do not take into account the concentration of development, and job creation which may be applied for any 'Destination St Helens' or Stadium proposal with associated operations.
- 3.2.7 A large casino is expected to be 'mini' revisions of regional operations with 'scaled down' ancillary and entertainment services and (possibly) some hotel facilities.
- 3.2.8 Desired visitor numbers are around 1500 to 2000 visits per day on average, although some building of activity at weekends is to be expected. Small scale hotel facilities might be considered appropriate but it is likely that many will be considered appropriate but it is likely that many will not contain a maximum of 150 gaming machines and construction costs may be as low as £8 million to £10 million, but increasing in line with specification; Major Towns are feasible locations. The scale of impact for the three types of casino are given in the Pion report and acknowledges considerations with regard to the interaction between local and regional tourist and leisure visits that can substantially alter 'net' impacts.
- 3.2.9 The Pion Impact model is based as a 'multiplier' structure that separates impact into the direct, indirect and induced effects of operation.
- Direct effects, are primarily the jobs and incomes that accrue to the everyday operation of casinos.
 - Indirect effects, relate to flows of income (other than labour income / client spending) arising from the operations of casinos; and
 - Introduce or multiplier effects, represents the process through which the spending of staff, clients and casinos (i.e. both the direct and indirect income flows) helps to support other businesses, contributing to the wages and salaries of employees and covering material overheads.

3.3 Direct Effects

- 3.3.1 The direct effect of large casino who are attributed, primarily to jobs and incomes that accrue to everyday operations for a large casino are some 400 staff (1500 for a regional and 200 for a small casino).
- 3.3.2 Staff numbers are distributed across work groups reflecting the types of casino operation. Given that a large casino is a scaled version of a regional casino, the following work groups given by Pion, include: -
- Casino staff: table and machine, sports book, VIP and 'cage' staff
 - Service staff: food, beverage and entertainment stall
 - Other staff: finance, human resources, IT, purchasing, security, surveillance, sales, promotion and facilities staff
- 3.3.4 From the CIG Gambling Deregulation Impact Study, (2003), Pion Economics assess differing casino structures. In the context of regional, large and small casinos the operating indirect spend figures used are £46m, £9m and £6m respectively.
- 3.3.5 Local retention factors for material / service purchases are calculated in a similar manner to those for the direct analysis above. Anticipated spend is allocated across industry sectors via input-output tables with

employment shares and with the sum of money retained as a proportion of the total expenditure providing an estimate of retained spend.

3.4 Economic Impact

3.4.1 It is estimated that, at local level, regional casinos may typically generate somewhere in the region of £50m of GVA per annum with large and small casino generating some £12m and £7m. Employment figures are placed at around 1,471, 377 and 181 respectively.

'Generic' Economic Impact Assessment			
	Regional	Large	Small
	Local Impact		
GVA Contribution	£50m	£12m	£7m
Jobs Created	1471	377	181
	Regional Impact		
GVA Contribution	£38m	£9m	£5m
Jobs Created	2117	513	223
	Multipliers		
Local Employment	1.85	1.49	1.24
Regional Employment	1.41	1.28	1.12

3.4.2 Regional level estimates are also produced for each casino structure. These entail a reduction in GVA contribution since part of the GVA generated locally will be sourced from displaced expenditure elsewhere in the region.

3.4.3 In contrast, job numbers increase. The explanation lies in the fact that when constructing local job estimates, only part of the direct jobs in casinos are assumed to be filled by local residents – some are filled from commuters and are thus a regional as opposed to local gain – constraining induced / multiplier effects. For the regional level estimates' however, all of the direct jobs are assumed taken by residents within the region.

It is estimated that, at regional level, regional casinos may typically generate somewhere in the region of £38m of GVA par annum with large and small casino generating some £9m and £5m. Employment figures are placed at around 2,117, 513 and 223 respectively.

3.4.4 Beyond the GVA and multiplier effects which a large casino would have in St Helens much discussion has been around of the social impact and benefits to deprived communities which a casino may, or may not, be perceived to bring:

3.4.5 This document has already set out the various economic related strategies for St Helens, but the Pion Economics Study also examines the benefits and the extent to which casino developments help to address the difficulties faced by groups from deprived communities by providing access and opportunities for employment. It acknowledges that developing a mechanism for assessing the benefits of casino development to deprived communities is clearly complex. The Pion approach has taken, account in the first instance, of the proportion contained in the most deprived 'quartile'; then it takes account of the number of jobs created; and lastly it takes account of the number of those potential jobs likely to be captured by local residents rather than communities.

3.4.6 The 'gravity' model takes into account the pattern of skills anticipated to be required in casinos against the pattern of skills available in local unemployed / economically inactive groups, as defined in the Local Labour Force Survey.

3.4.7 This approach, it is considered by Pion, effectively considers potential benefits to deprived groups in the immediate locally (i.e. the Local Authority area) of a casino development. Adopting a broader approach, and looking at benefits across a wider area, would tend to reduce differences between areas.

3.4.8 The Pion report does make the point however that it is possible that there may exist a counterbalance to casino development benefiting deprived groups through employment opportunities if such groups also prove more amenable to gambling participation and associated social impact risks.

3.4.9 In this regard, it has been noted elsewhere that St Helens intends through its LAA, LEGI, NRF and LSP activities including working pilots and Neighbourhood Management Pilot, to tackle the problems faced by its most deprived communities in a co-ordinated way, focusing on its worst performing SOA's and groups of people.

3.4.10 The option for two large casinos in the North West Wide Pion report, sets out an economic impact assessment in the two locations, with tourism visits for the two together assessed at 19.9 million and with job creation of just short of 1000, with 47% average potential job capture. If this model took employment at (say) 500 for a large casino, something of the order of 235 local jobs would accrue.

4.1 Willingness to Licence

4.1.1 During 2005 the (St Helens) Council was approached to see if it wished to be invited to submit a bid for a casino in the Borough. At this stage there was no firm commitment, simply an indication that the appropriate time, the Council would wish to have the opportunity to consider such a proposal.

4.1.2 The Council's Executive on 15th March 2006 resolved that. (Minute 132)

- 1) the Council advise the Casino Advisory Panel that it wishes to be considered as a location for a large casino in accordance with agreed procedures constituted under the Gambling Act 2005; and
- 2) that, in the event of St Helens Council being allocated as a suitable location, there will be a full public consultation on any detailed scheme and any proposals will be judged on the added economic benefits that such development will bring to the Borough, in particular, the delivery and / or enhancement of proposals for a new stadium for St Helens RLFC.

4.1.3 The justification for this decision is that the Council is committed to a strategy of diversifying its economy and tourism and leisure development is one area where there has been significant growth in recent years. The development of a large casino and associated leisure schemes, probably including an hotel, would provide much needed job opportunities and would fully assist the Council to reduce the very high number of people in the Borough classed as workless. It is also believed that such a scheme could provide financial support for a proposed new stadium for Saints and there is a high probability that there would be direct benefits through growth in businesses which would provide services to such a facility.

4.1.4 The Councils report also drew attention to the Councils City Growth Strategy including the proposal 'Destination St Helens' – a large leisure development which in concept at least includes among other things a stadium for Saints and a casino. It stated:

4.1.5 "In support of Destination St Helens and mindful of the first trache of approvals, the initial response indicated an interest in a large casino – a format to have a minimum customer area of 1500 m² and be permitted to have upto 150 category B gaming machines with a maximum jackpot of £4,000, offer bring and offer betting. It is well known that such developments can provide substantial financial support to associated development projects, including stadia, and attract substantial associated investment and create large numbers of jobs".

4.1.6 "With regard to the Councils Anti Poverty strategy it is noted that the proposal will provide new job opportunities and should support the Councils Anti Poverty Strategy with regard to other strategies it is noted that the proposal supports the Economic Development Strategy, The Tourism Strategy and the City Growth Strategy".

4.2 Testing Local Opinion

4.2.1 There has been no existing polling or market research done locally by the Council to establish the extent of support among the areas population for a large casino, either as a stand alone development or one which will be linked with the delivery of the Saints Stadium.

4.2.2 There have been no local consultations because, as set out in the Council report of 15th March "that in the event of St Helens being allocated as a suitable location there will be a full public consultation on any detailed scheme...". The St Helens LSP is aware of the intentions for St Helens to be considered as a

location for a large casino and has not been asked to pass a formal resolution of support, in the absence of any detailed proposal to consider.

- 4.2.3 The relevant tourism and leisure strategies have been detailed elsewhere in this submission and fully demonstrate the extent of consideration and commitment at this stage.
- 4.2.4 With regard to contact from organisations or individuals who have expressed issues / support or disagreement for proposals of St Helens the following is relevant.
- 4.2.5 The NWDA, NWRA, GONW, Mersey Partnership and others involved in regional and sub regional regeneration have expressed broad support through the Pion Economics Study through the Merseyside 'Cluster' development proposals and through support for St Helens City Growth and LEGI Strategies.
- 4.2.6 London Clubs International has written to St Helens Council inviting it to make a contact, should it so wish, to discuss casino development. No response to London Clubs International has been made.
- 4.2.7 The hall aitken consultancy has produced a broad report on the social and economic impacts of regional casinos in the UK, and, although it gives a 'downbeat' view of perceived benefits from casino developments generally, it has not been specifically targeted to St Helens nor expressed an opinion on any development within the Borough of St Helens.
- 4.2.8 There have been some letters in the local press from Churches and local church leaders (SHINE) about gambling and the anti gambling stance they take in principle, applied to St Helens.
- 4.2.9 There has however, been no formal engagement yet with the faith community on the possibility of a large casino in St Helens as set out in this submission. It is intended that as part of the full public consultation the fuller engagement of the faith community, through its Church Leaders will be undertaken. The faith community, and the Voluntary and Community Sector, are both full participating members of the St Helens Local Strategic Partnership Structures.
- 4.2.10 The Borough has an (LSP) Communications Group made up of LSP Partners and is charged with and reporting on issues upon which have been consulted upon and responses sought / forthcoming. The Council has Peoples Panels / Community Forums and regular liaison meetings with the faith and other groups. It has a 'St Helens First' magazine which is distributed to every household. Local Councillors also provide a conduit for concerns or support for local proposals. All will be engaged in any public consultation undertaken.

5.1 Probability of Implementation

- 5.1.1 As already detailed, the opportunity to integrate a private sector led development of a large casino with the proposed Saints Stadium / Destination St Helens, is being taken forward on a 'step by step' basis and, for St Helens, will require definite private commitment, backed by their own detailed analysis of viability, linked with the policies and strategies the Borough has for economic development / investment CGS and the well being of its communities. Commitment to these strategies has been documented in this submission and it has been noted that there exists a presumption by the Private Sector in favour of developing a large casino in St Helens; sufficient for the Council to wish to be considered as a location for one.
- 5.1.2 No in depth consideration has been given to any one individual operator, based on St Helens individual circumstances, although, as already set out, the moves towards the realisation of the Saints Stadium are progressing well and general interest has been forthcoming. We anticipate detailed interest from private sector operators if an allocation is given to St Helens. The Council would expect a full feasibility study to include impacts, both positive and, potentially, negative on the economic and social well being for St Helens as a place and community. Certainly the 'critical mass' of development intended at and around the preferred identified location for Destination St Helens will be such to bring national (and possibly international) interest to the Borough.

5.2 Possible Locational Criteria

- 5.2.1 The precise and final location for any new casino in St Helens is yet to be determined but, given the indices of deprivation, need for regeneration and associated job creation in our most deprived SOA's closest to the town centre, and the developments in the United Glass site set alongside new developments in the Southern Corridor, then a leading location would be at / alongside the new Saints Stadium. Outputs beyond job creation would include land brought back into economic use, business growth and supply chain opportunities locally and an additional boost to tourism and visitor strategies to help make St Helens a Leisure Borough for the region. This aspiration would be harnessed to dedicated land structures, local labour, training and employer framework (such as already in place for new and existing businesses) to maximise the regeneration benefits to St Helens and its community.
- 5.2.2 The criteria used to identify an appropriate and sustainable location for a large casino is within the St Helens City Growth Strategy (for Destination St Helens), the Strategic Investment Area Integrated Development Plan and most latterly, in the Local Development Framework, which sets out the rationale for locating the stadium / Destination St Helens at the former United Glass Site. It is adjacent to the Town Centre, easily accessible by private and public transport (including the new St Helens Central Station and bus routes), and is alongside the former colliery site, now the Ravenhead Retail Park, and within walking distance of the Town Centre, which in itself currently undergoing extensive public realm improvements linked with ongoing private sector investment. The opportunity for bringing a large, derelict and Brownfield Site back into use has already been detailed.
- 5.2.3 At the other end of the Borough, Haydock Race Course is already a very well established location for the considerable numbers of horse racing enthusiasts throughout the country. It is the UK's most attended racing venue throughout the year. It also has conference facilities within its grandstands and two hotels (Thistle & Holiday Inn) adjacent to it or the M6 motorway intersection (junction 23) with the A580 Manchester to Liverpool road. Other positive criteria here would be that it already attracts significant visitors from outside the Borough whose interests include beyond horses and their success, is betting.
- 5.2.4 Notwithstanding any displacement of leisure or betting considerations, Haydock Race Course could be considered as a suitable location for a large casino.

5.3 Current Gambling Provision in St Helens

- 5.3.1 The current provision for gambling in St Helens includes Haydock Racecourse and two main Bingo venues (Hippodrome and Mecca both in St Helens Town Centre), Bookmakers and the Lottery account for the remainder within the Borough other locations identified and these which for casinos exist at Manchester, Liverpool, Blackpool and Southport. are within 30-60 minutes drive from St Helens Boundaries.
- 5.3.2 The Pion report has set out the anticipated impact on competition for the range of casinos in the North West, as set out in its report, and this submission has trailed the benefits of any critical mass of a cluster of casino and leisure based activities with Destination St Helens / Saints Stadium.

5.4 Public / Private Funding

- 5.4.1 It would be difficult to justify any public sector funding going into a casino of any size as a direct input to its build or operation. We would envisage that public sector support related to land reclamation for a larger, comprehensive scheme would be possible, given the desire to achieve a new sports stadium and associated development on contaminated / derelict land. We also have used public funding to develop and deliver learning, skills and job creation in deprived areas and across the Borough with new investors. This would be a positive use of public regeneration funding. Beyond that, the NWDA and English Partnerships have expressed commitment to help deliver the Saints Stadium in St Helens and have assisted elsewhere with major projects in St Helens.

6.1 Regional and Local Context

- 6.1.1 Locally the emerging Local Development Framework places the Saints Stadium and associated leisure developments at the former United Glass Site. The LDF states (Para 4.5.26)

“In addition to the stadium and retail development, other facilities such as an hotel, casino, or a sports centre could also be located on the United Glass site, which would be consistent with proposals in the St Helens City Growth Strategy”.

6.1.2 The LDF Options and Issues were consulted on during August / September 2005 and included development issues opportunities around the Town Centre, including the opportunity for redevelopment of the United Glass Site for a stadium and associated uses. The timetable for submission of the LDF is that it is submitted to GONW in March, with preferred options to St Helens Council (Executive) in November 2006. Six weeks of Public Consultation will take place starting in January 2007; with further public consultation and an examination in Public in 2008, following submission to ODPM in February 2008.

6.1.3 Attention has been drawn to the Tourism and Visitor Strategies for St Helens and the sub region earlier in this submission, as has the cluster development for tourism in both the Merseyside, St Helens and Wider Regional context. The policy context for Objective One, Pathways and NRF has also been recited. The North West Regional Economic Strategy includes within it ‘Tourism’ “Attack Brands” and “Signature Projects” locations and key arrival points as part of both Culture and Image, and Environmental Strategies. It also has ‘transformational’ activities which chime with local strategy implementation of Neighbourhood Renewal (e.g. deliver employability activities and reduce the number of people on incapacity benefit; encourage employment creation in or near deprived areas; deliver skills required by Priority Sectors and skills required to maximise the economic impact of key growth sectors). It has targets for GVA to get above the national average – our LEGI bid is a push towards this aim; as is the increase in the number of people in the workplace; dealing with levels of deprivation; qualifications; and business formation etc. There is also a strong focus on sustainable development, communities and economy. The RES notes the key assets and opportunities for the Liverpool City Region Economy, which includes St Helens, as well as the challenges of: -

- “the need to continue to accelerate economic recovery and urban renaissance, given a continuing gap in underlying economic performance”;
- High concentrations of economically inactive people;
- High concentrations of those with low levels of qualifications;
- Delivery of major transport and infrastructure investments;
- Need to drive up productivity – including accelerated actions on Skills and Business formation;
- Imperative of balancing growth with creation of sustainable communities.

6.1.4 The Regional Assembly, As Regional Planning body as recently submitted a draft regional special strategy to the Government. The document contains a draft policy position on Regional Casinos (Policy W8).

6.1.5 The North West Regional Assembly has provided the following text (letter to St Helens Council 14th March 2006) to be included in all submissions made to the Advisory Panel.

6.1.6 “The North West Regional Assembly, as Regional Planning Body for the North West, supports the development of regional casinos in the following locations – Blackpool, Manchester and Liverpool, with the preferred location for a single regional casino pilot being Blackpool”.

6.1.7 “Outside of these locations the Regional Assembly would expect casino development to be located within the key towns and cities identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG13), and to be within town centre locations in accordance with PPS6, and in accessible locations in accordance with PPG13”. The United Glass Site in particular is most appropriate for the location of a casino and in an accessible location in accordance with PPG13.

6.1.8 The Pion report has been supported by the NWDA, GONW and NWRA and has set out the opportunities associated with a range of casino options in the North West including large casinos in Sefton and St Helens.

7.1 Community Benefits

7.1.1 In general terms the authority expects Community Benefits in the shape of sustainable employment opportunities and a positive contribution to local regeneration and economic objectives to accrue from the licensing and town planning processes.

- 7.1.2 The involvement with a responsible operator will bring training and jobs for local people who will be assisted to gain the skills and range of employment opportunities. Work with the operator will also address social impact concerns surrounding problem gambling, and we would expect the operator to be involved in local regeneration activities and strategies.
- 7.1.3 We would expect the operator to work with and alongside local agencies involved in addressing the needs of deprived communities and will monitor employment and levels of debt etc.
- 7.1.4 We will seek to work our way through the issues and intend to consult with local people as we progress. Our findings over the next coming months will be incorporated within a series of evaluation criteria to be adopted to assess any applications for a licence in 2007. They will form the basis upon which we call for premises through a licence competition. We are also aware that the Gambling Commission is about to issue guidance to Local Authorities regarding their duties as premises licensing authorities, including the expectation that authorities will be expected to establish three year licensing strategies.
- 7.1.5 We anticipate from the Town Planning process there exists a greater local community benefit in the shape of the link with the Saints Stadium / Destination St Helens as well as the remediation and beneficial use of a derelict, brownfield site; then there would be with a 'stand alone' development. However, the capital investment and potential economic return to the operator would indicate that a significant contribution to the physical regeneration of land would be forthcoming. This we would expect to link with accessibility links too the Town Centre and sustainable transport measures in and around the area. There is also the prospect of direct sponsorship of local community activities by the operator.
- 7.1.6 The community benefits of new developments in St Helens link to sustainability, both economic and for its inhabitants. The development of a new World Class Saints Stadium brings with it not only a physical manifestation of a building realised, but of pride and achievement of the town. The Destination St Helens proposals, as part of City Growth, build on sustainable development principles and the strengths of the local area and economy. The 'renaissance' of St Helens continues with its community at heart and their involvement in the continuing growth and success must be maintained if the many strategies which impact on the Borough are to be realised in a positive way and bring the effects and benefits intended.
- 7.1.7 The opportunity and introduction of a large casino is, in some ways no different from any new investment, with job creating prospects, and has the added benefit of being an integral part of what St Helens wants to achieve with a new 'statement' stadium. However, it is understood that with a casino come balancing factors which must be taken into account, with regard for instance to social impact, and levels of deprivation in communities which cannot be let to decline further. It is with this balance out positive approach to new opportunities that we expect not only job creation and a ladder of opportunity to be provided by this proposal (as with others), but a social responsibility to accrue from it should it be implemented, so that operators and local organisations work closely together to address and deal with sensitivities and / or any opposition to the matters of principles which it arouses. This process is already underway with LEGI, the LDF and through the workings of the LSP and Council as Community Leader.

8.1 Unique Characteristics

- 8.1.1 To deliver a diverse, modern and distinctive Borough and local economy, as set out in the Boroughs Community and other plans, is the test against which any new development will be assessed including a large casino, for which St Helens wishes to be considered as a suitable, and appropriate, location. In summary we believe: -
- That St Helens has a strong and enviable track record in delivering in partnership with the private sector; the identification, establishment and monitoring of a large casino would be undertaken with the benefit of these experiences.
 - That the Council has been reviewing the industry, engaging with operators and stakeholders for some time regarding the issues of a Large Casino in the town, and therefore understands the complexity of the issues and hasn't come to this late as a catch-all answer to its employment needs

- That a casino can deliver part of the economic benefit needed to take the town forward but that it can only do part of the job and will need to be integrated both with existing town centre facilities and other proposed leisure activities if it is to have maximum beneficial impact.
- That the Council recognises the significance of its responsibilities as the premises licensing authority for such a facility, and the potential value of such a license, and will use these powers to extract maximum commitments from operators to delivering economic benefit and identifying, measuring and eradicating any negative social impacts.
- That a casino development could have a significant impact on the skills agenda in the Borough – St Helens falls below the national baseline in NVQ3 and 4 and a (casino operators do have active skills training programmes and will work with local training agencies and others to deliver the required skills base for their operation).
- That schemes such as the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) and City Growth prove that St Helens has an ‘appetite’ and reputation for taking new initiatives and making them work. The Council believes it can be trusted to get it right. These initiatives will help the Borough secure the maximum possible supply chain linkages from a new casino, (which could be substantial) for local businesses.
- That St Helens represents a highly accessible market place, with strong market credentials underpinning its catchment, we do not seek to compete with higher value offers in Manchester or Liverpool, but, have our own well developed strategies, including tourism, designed to deliver sustained economic growth. In this regard, it is significant that St Helens is the largest centre in the sub region outside Liverpool.
- That St Helens has latent tourism potential and is currently under-developed in this respect, a high quality casino as part of a mixed use leisure environment would have a transformational impact rather than just adding to the existing well established leisure offer. We have promising ‘green shoots’ to grow our Tourism potential to become a Leisure Borough for the Region.
- That St Helens has accurate and up to date baseline information (from LEGI) which will be critical in measuring the impacts of a new casino.
- That St Helens has sites ready to go and has established operator interest, which will mean a pilot can be off the ground sooner rather than later.