

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Date: 26 July 2006

Subject: **Advice to Casinos Advisory Panel**

Report of: Planning Strategy Director

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Committee endorse the response to the Casinos Advisory Panel as set out in the annex.

**Purpose of Report:**

The Casinos Advisory Panel has requested any information, data or opinion the Regional Assembly - as Regional Planning Body (RPB); has on the proposals by local authorities for one of the 17 new casino licences. An informal interim response, approved by the Chairman, was sent to the Panel on 28 June 2006 in accordance with their deadlines (please see attached annex). However, it was agreed with the Panel Secretary that a member endorsed response would be provided following consideration by the Regional Planning Committee.

**Key Issues:**

The Casinos Advisory Panel has requested any information, data or opinion the Regional Assembly - as Regional Planning Body (RPB); holds on the proposals by local authorities for one of the 17 new casino licences. Six proposals from the South East for large and small casinos have been short-listed by the Panel. In order to meet the Panel's deadline for a reply, it was necessary to send an informal officer response, approved by the Chairman, prior to this Committee. The Assembly's response seeks to clarify the relevant policy considerations in the draft South East Plan which should be taken into account by the Panel in formulating their recommendations. It does not seek to provide an opinion on the merits of any of the proposals.

## **I. Background**

- 1.1 The Casino Advisory Panel (chaired by Professor Stephen Crow) has the duty to advise the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport on the geographical distribution of casino licences in England, Scotland and Wales. The Gambling Act 2005 sets out the overall initial limits for casino premises licenses as no more than one regional casino, eight large casinos and eight small casinos.
- 1.2 The Gambling Act 2005 provides for 3 categories of casino, as follows:
- **Small Casinos** - minimum area for table gambling of 500m<sup>2</sup> and a minimum non-gambling area available to customers of 250m<sup>2</sup>;
  - **Large Casinos** - minimum area exclusively for gaming tables of 1000m<sup>2</sup> and a minimum non-gambling area available to customers of 500m<sup>2</sup>;
  - **Regional Casinos** - minimum area exclusively for casino gaming tables of 1000m<sup>2</sup> and a minimum addition gambling area of 2500m<sup>2</sup>. They will also require a minimum non-gambling area available to customers of 1500m<sup>2</sup>. (Total minimum customer area of 5000m<sup>2</sup>).
- 1.3 The Panel's Terms of Reference state that the primary consideration will be to ensure that locations satisfy the need for the best possible test of social impact. Subject to this, the criteria will also be:
- to include areas in need of regeneration (as measured by employment and other social deprivation data) and which are likely to benefit in these terms from a new casino;
  - to ensure that those areas selected are willing to license a new casino.
- 1.4 A 2004 Ministerial Statement commits the Panel to consulting Regional Planning Bodies in England in developing their advice.

## **2. Process and Timetable**

- 2.1 The Panel will undertake its work in four phases as follows:
- i) Scoping (Oct - Dec '05)  
The Assembly responded to consultation during this phase, setting out existing and emerging RSS policies towards Regional Casinos.
  - ii) Call for Proposals (Jan - Mar '06)  
Proposals were received from 68 authorities nationally, including 13 in the South East as follows:
    - *Regional (27)* - Southampton, Dartford
    - *Large and Small (41)* - Brighton, Canterbury, Dover, Dartford, Hastings, Maidstone, Milton Keynes, Sevenoaks, Shepway, Surrey Heath, Woking.

- iii) Examination and Testing (Apr - Oct '06)  
Using Government Policy and the set criteria (see paragraph 2.3 above); the Panel sifted the long list to a shorter list of suitable for testing.

The shortlist announced on 24 May 2006 identified eight authorities for hosting a regional casino. Neither of the two proposals for Regional Casinos in the South East (submitted by Dartford Borough Council and Southampton City Council) has been short-listed for regional casinos. The Panel also short-listed 31 proposals for large and small casinos, including the following in the South East:

- Brighton and Hove;
- Canterbury;
- Dartford;
- Hastings;
- Milton Keynes;
- Southampton.

Copies of the bid documents can be downloaded from the Advisory Panel website at [www.culture.gov.uk/cap](http://www.culture.gov.uk/cap).

The Panel will conduct a detailed examination of the short-listed proposals over the summer. Small and large casinos will be dealt with through written representations. Examinations in Public will be limited to the consideration of Regional Casinos. These will take place in September 2006.

- iv) Decision and Reporting (Oct to Dec '06)  
This is expected to include further consultation with Regional Planning Bodies. The Panel will report by end of December.

### **3. Request for Advice from the Regional Assembly**

- 3.1 In late May 2006, following the initial short-listing of submitted proposals, the Panel wrote to the Assembly requesting any additional information, data or opinion. The Panel has made it clear that they do not expect any opinion in relation to the specific location of individual proposals, but rather the suitability of the area for a casino development in terms of its fit with the Regional Spatial Strategy.

### **4. Proposed Response to the Panel**

- 4.1 The draft response to the Panel identifies three policies in the draft South East Plan which have a direct relevance to any proposals for casino and related leisure developments.

- 4.2 TSR4 defines regionally significant tourism attractions as those which receive more than 250,000 visitors per annum. It requires all tourism attractions over this threshold to adopt a sequential approach to site identification, whereby locations within the less economically prosperous sub-regions should be sought in the first instance. The supporting text to Policy TSR4 explicitly states that the policy applies to proposals for Regional Casinos.

The need for the South East Plan to provide such guidance was identified by the Secretary of State in the adopted alterations to RPG9 in relation to tourism and related sport and recreation (adopted in November 2004).

- 4.3 It is highly likely that a large casino (most of which are likely to be developed as part of a wider mixed use scheme) would exceed this threshold. If this were the case Policy TSR4 would apply to such developments. In terms of conformity with the draft South East Plan this means that any proposal for a regionally significant casino should be based upon a sequential approach to site selection, whereby a location is first sought within the sub-regions of Kent Thames Gateway, East Kent and Ashford, Sussex Coast, South Hampshire and the Isle of Wight or the Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale Growth Area. All of the six short-listed proposals in the South East fall within one of these sub-regions.
- 4.4 The draft response also emphasises the role of casinos as a town centre leisure use, in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 6 (Planning for Town Centres). To this end the response clarifies that large scale leisure development should be focused in the strategic network of town centres identified in Policy TC3 of the draft South East Plan; and states that all casino proposals would need to demonstrate that a sequential approach had been taken in selecting the appropriate location (in line with Policy TC4 'Creating and Supporting Town Centres').

## **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 In response to the request from advice from the Casinos Advisory Panel on the short-listed proposals for large and small casinos in the South East, the opportunity should be taken to clarify the relevant policy guidance set out in the draft South East Plan to assist the Panel with their deliberations. It is not considered appropriate for the Assembly to take a view on the merits of any particular proposal at this stage. The appropriate time to do so will be through the Assembly's statutory role as consultee on development plan documents and major planning applications.

**Catriona Riddell**  
**Planning Strategy Director**  
7 July 2006

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Jane Bransby  
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28 June 2006

Dear Jane

**REQUEST FOR FURTHER ADVICE ON SHORT-LISTED CASINO PROPOSALS**

Further to your email to my colleague John Pounder, dated 26 May 2006, I would like to provide further clarification on the spatial policy approach taken towards casino development in the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East (the draft South East Plan). Please treat this letter as an informal officer level response which is subject to endorsement by the Assembly's Regional Planning Committee on 26 July 2006.

As you know John Pounder wrote to the Panel on 6 January 2006, setting out the content and status of the emerging South East Plan policy (TSR4) in relation to Regional Casinos. Policy TSR4 of the draft South East Plan has been drafted to provide guidance on the location of regional casinos, in accordance with paragraph 14.32 of the adopted alterations to RPG9 in relation to Tourism (as adopted in November 2004).

The draft South East Plan was submitted to Secretary of State on 31 March 2006, and will be the subject of an Independent Examination in Public between November 2006 and March 2007.

In April, the Advisory Panel announced its shortlist of casino proposals in the South East to be subject to further testing through the examination process. These comprise:

Brighton and Hove (large and small)  
Canterbury (large or small)  
Dartford (large)  
Hastings (small or large)  
Milton Keynes (large and small)  
Southampton (large)

Proposals from Southampton and Dartford for regional casinos have not been short-listed.

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Although the emerging RSS contains no specific policy guidance on small or large casinos, the key spatial policy considerations for the Assembly as far these are concerned, would be as follows:

When does a casino become regionally significant?

Policy TSR4 was drafted specifically in relation to regional casinos; however as neither of the two South East local authorities' proposals (Dartford and Southampton) have been short-listed for regional casinos, this raises the wider question of how the proposals for large and small casinos would fit with the emerging RSS.

Policy TSR4 defines regionally significant tourism attractions as those which receive more than 250,000 visitors per annum. However, the supporting text specifically states that the policy applies in particular to regional casinos as defined in the Gambling Act 2005. If a proposal for a small or large casino were part of a larger mixed use attraction, it is likely that it could exceed 250,000 visitors per annum and as such Policy TSR4 would apply. There is also the issue of possible future expansion of a casino, in the light of any future relaxation of the limits placed on the number of regional casinos following the initial pilot phase. This would suggest that those locations identified for large casinos, may need to be considered in terms of their suitability for possible future expansion to regional scale.

Policy TSR4 requires that any proposal for a regionally significant casino should be based upon a sequential approach to site selection, whereby a location is first sought within the sub-regions of Kent Thames Gateway, East Kent and Ashford, Sussex Coast, South Hampshire and the Isle of Wight or the Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale growth area. All of the six short-listed proposals in the South East fulfil this criterion.

Please note that since January, the policy wording of TSR4 has changed slightly in accordance with the refined spatial emphasis in the final draft South East Plan as set out in Policy CC9 (the revised wording in TSR4 - highlighted - is attached as an annex to this letter). This revision seeks to bring greater clarity to the geography of inter-regional disparities in the South East.

How do the casino proposals support the spatial strategy for tourism?

Extant RPG9 (as amended November 2004) and the draft South East Plan (Policy TSR7 in both documents) both identify priority areas for tourism development and management and tourism hotspots. All of the casino proposals short-listed by the Panel fall within one of these areas.

Priority Areas for Tourism include, among others, the Thames Gateway, Coastal Belt and the Isle of Wight and the Growth Area of Milton Keynes. The specific policy emphasis provided for each of these areas is summarised below:

- Thames Gateway (Dartford) - RPG9 and the draft Plan emphasise the potential for realising growth in business and attraction based tourism as part of the regeneration strategy for the area adding value to the existing tourism market.

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- Coastal Belt (Brighton and Hove, Hastings, Southampton and Canterbury) - identified priorities are to upgrade facilities, promote diversity, reduce seasonality and improve access.
- Growth Areas (Milton Keynes) - to make appropriate provision for tourism, sport and recreation within their context as regional growth areas.
- Tourism Hotspots (Brighton and Hove and Canterbury) - emphasis on managing demand and encouraging longer stays through promotion of linked trips to surrounding areas.

RPG9 and the draft South East Plan (Policy TSRI) also promote the consolidation and upgrade of tourism facilities in coastal resorts in ways which promote higher value activity, reduce seasonality and support urban regeneration. They also encourage resorts to establish a vision and strategy for the future of tourism in their area and its contribution to wider regeneration objectives.

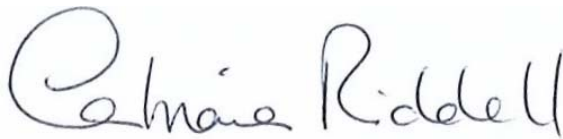
#### Casinos as a town centre use

As leisure uses, casinos are identified as town centre uses in Planning Policy Statement 6 (Planning for Town Centres). The draft South East Plan supports the sequential approach to new development as set out in PPS6, and stipulates (in Policy TC3 'New Development and Redevelopment in Town Centres') that the strategic network of town centres (identified in Section D8 of the Plan) should be the prime focus for large scale leisure development. (Large scale leisure developments are defined as 10,000sqm gross floor space).

As an identified town centre use, even where a casino proposal (on its own or as part of a larger mixed use scheme) does not exceed this threshold, the authority would need to demonstrate that a sequential approach had been taken in selecting the appropriate location (to be in line with Policy TC4 'Creating and Supporting Town Centres').

Please find enclosed a copy of the draft South East Plan for your information. If you require any further clarification do not hesitate to contact my colleague John Pounder.

Yours sincerely



**Catriona Riddell**  
**Planning Strategy Director**

## **Policy TSR4: Tourism Attractions**

**Priority should be given to improving the quality of all existing attractions to meet changing consumer demands and high environmental standards in terms of design and access.**

**i Local authorities and partners should:**

- 1 Encourage the enhancement and upgrade of existing visitor attractions.**
- 2 Include policies in development plan documents for determining applications for all new and changes to existing visitor attractions that are likely to have a significant impact locally. In developing such policies local authorities should incorporate the following criteria:**
  - Do they help reinforce the distinctiveness of a locality?**
  - Are they accessible by public transport?**
  - Do they provide wet weather facilities and help extend the season?**
  - Will they facilitate regeneration?**
  - Are they complementary to existing attractions (or will they displace existing activity)?**

**ii. New, regionally significant tourism attractions should only be developed where they will expand the overall tourism market and can be easily accessed by public transport. A sequential approach to site identification should be adopted for all new regionally significant attractions (those generating more than 250,000 visitors per annum) unless there are overriding requirements related to that site or sectoral reasons linked to cluster development. A suitable location should be sought:**

- Within the sub-regions of Kent Thames Gateway, East Kent and Ashford, Sussex Coast, South Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Special Policy Area, in the coastal belt or the Milton Keynes / Aylesbury Vale Growth Area**
- Only where it can be demonstrated that no suitable sites are available in the above areas should other locations be considered.**