

Bedford shows its hand on casino bid

Bosses at the Town Hall have expressed an interest in bringing a new casino to Bedford.

Under The Gambling Act recently passed by parliament, three new types of casino will operate in Britain. The plans are for one regional casino, eight large casinos and eight small casinos.

Bedford Borough Council wrote to the Casino Advisory Panel (CAP) detailing its interest in housing one of the eight small or medium casinos for the town last month.

The Government has stated the casinos would not only offer a range of gambling facilities, but could include hotel accommodation, conference facilities, restaurants, bars and other leisure attractions.

Opponents of the idea include Coun Peter Hand (Con, Brickhill).

He said: „Places which house these types of casinos fall into high-level unemployment areas and low incomes. We do not want to fall into this category.“

A Bedford Borough Council spokesman said: „We have registered an interest in obtaining a gambling licence in order to keep our options open.

„A decision on whether to formally apply for a licence will be made in March.“

Professor Stephen Crow, chairman of CAP, said: „We know there has been a great deal of speculation about where the 17 new casinos are to be located.

„We have published detailed guidance setting out the criteria

we are using.”

All authorities have been given until Friday, March 31 to present their proposals.

CAP will recommend its preferred areas to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport by the end of 2006.