

# Decision day for town casino plan

Controversial plans for a multi-million-pound leisure and casino development on a prime town centre site will be discussed by Bournemouth councillors at a special meeting on Thursday.

Planning board members are being urged to approve proposals for the six-storey, GBP 60 million complex which will include a casino, at least eight restaurants, takeaways and 447 underground parking spaces.

Council officers had recommended approval when the board met in late February but members sought reassurances on a number of issues including traffic impact, car parking provision, crime and disorder and architectural issues.

Thursday's meeting will be told the issues have all been satisfactorily resolved and officers will ask members to approve the plans for the site in the Lower Gardens and adjacent car parks.

A report to members suggests a string of conditions including prior approval of all materials to be used, restricted construction hours, satisfactory tree works, landscaping, highways conditions and a crime prevention scheme.

But the scheme is still likely to attract criticism from many, including local residents who made their feelings clear at the last meeting.

One of them, Diana Mitchell, told the meeting: „It could be built in a less desirable, less prestigious location – the building is too big and too many sacrifices are being made for it.“

Mrs Mitchell said she also fears it will lead to more crime in the area and cause unhappiness.

The meeting also heard the scheme has many fans including the town's tourism department.

The board will meet at the town hall at 9.30am on Thursday March 29.