

Council bosses unveil super-casino mega-plan

Blackpool is pressing ahead with its supercasino dreams despite claims the Government has torn up proposals for Las Vegas-style gambling in the UK.

An outline planning application for two huge casinos, a conference centre, three hotels, offices and a Winter Promenade on the 20-acre Central Station site will be discussed by councillors on Monday.

It is being recommended the submission, made almost a year ago is deferred to Government for final approval because of the scale of development.

The move comes less than a month after Gordon Brown indicated the Government might not hand out a supercasino licence after all.

Doug Garrett, chief executive of regeneration company ReBlackpool which has made the application, said: „Whether or not the casino goes ahead there, we need to demonstrate the site can take serious mixed use development. Whether we can get a licence or not, it sets a marker.“

The new Prime Minister had called for other forms of regeneration to be considered instead.

But regeneration bosses in Blackpool say they have decided to forge ahead with the planning application in order to demonstrate the resort is geared up for large-scale leisure investment.

The application includes:

- A 35,750 sq m conference centre at the south end of the site able to cater for 1,500 delegates and an exhibition

hall with room for 150 stalls.

- A 12,556 square metre „central casino“ in the middle of the site including amusement arcades, nightclubs and some retail.
- A 12,247 square metre „north casino“ in the north eastern corner of the site including amusement arcades, nightclubs and some retail.
- A 300-bedroom four/five-star hotel in the south western corner of the site.
- A 324-bedroom three-star hotel on the eastern side of the site.
- A 145 bedroom five star hotel at the northern end of the site.
- 2,805 sq m of office space.
- A Winter Promenade on the Promenade frontage to include eating, drinking, retail and leisure such as a three screen cinema.

Mr Garrett added: „We believe it’s important to get some understanding on the capability of the site and that’s what this is about.“

Blackpool Council leader Coun Peter Callow said it was important to demonstrate Blackpool was still ambitious in its hopes of attracting large-scale investment.

He said: „This is a huge chunk of land in the middle of the town, near the beach, so it’s reasonable by any view to stake out a claim for the future.

We have to take steps to show potential investors Blackpool is on the move again.

„The town is not the kind of place that’s going to roll over just because of one setback. We’re alive and kicking and we have to show people this.“

A report to Blackpool’s development control committee says: „There remains the prospect of a regional casino being

licensed“ but adds the decision at this stage is „solely the land use.“