

„Supercasinos would have damaged society“

British bookmaker and entrepreneur Victor Chandler says the government was right to scrap plans for a Las Vegas-style super-casino in Manchester.

Chandler reckons a huge multi-million pound supercasino – with 1,250 unlimited stake and jackpot machines – would have provoked gambling addiction.

“The biggest damage I’ve seen to society is in South Africa’s casinos,” says Chandler, who moved his entire bookmaking business to Gibraltar in the late nineties to escape betting tax. „They target the wrong kind of people.

„People walk into casinos straight off the street, with their pay packets in their hand – and they fritter away the lot.

„I don’t think the British government properly thought through its plans for supercasinos. It could have created something wonderful – exclusive entertainment venues with dress codes – but instead it opted for awful arcades.“

Gordon Brown eventually killed off plans for supercasinos in February this year, after deciding they were not the best way to regenerate run-down areas.

Chandler takes the problem of gambling addiction seriously. This year, he’ll spend in the region of GBP 10m on software – a chunk of his IT budget goes on monitoring customer behaviour online, flagging up any signs of potential addiction.

“We have to be responsible,” he says. “If we notice a customer’s gambling pattern has changed, we’ll contact them to make sure everything is okay.”

“With online betting, you have to have a computer. You have to

have a credit or debit card. So we're automatically targeting people with some degree of cash and responsibility."