Future Changes to the Gambling Act 2005

Gambling Impact Assessments and the “Aim to Permit” principle

Licensing Committee | 26 November 2026
For information

Key message: proposed reforms could strengthen local control, but they are not yet in force.



Executive summary

What Members need to take away from the briefing

1. Reform direction

Proposals would give licensing authorities a stronger evidence-based role in managing the location and concentration of gambling premises.

2. Two central changes

Gambling Impact Assessments (GIAs) and a material change to the practical effect of Section 153, the “aim to permit” duty.

3. Current legal position

The briefing states the relevant provisions are not yet commenced. Existing Gambling Act 2005 provisions continue to apply.

Member focus Note the direction of travel now; do not treat the proposed GIA powers as available decision-making tools until commencement, secondary legislation and guidance are in place.

Current framework: Section 153

What “aim to permit” means today

Current duty

Licensing authorities are required to “aim to permit” the use of premises for gambling where applications satisfy the statutory criteria.

Demand or market saturation is not generally a basis for refusal.

1 **Codes of practice**

Application is in accordance with relevant codes of practice.

2 **Licensing objectives**

Application is reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives.

3 **Commission guidance**

Application follows Gambling Commission guidance.

4 **Statement of Principles**

Application accords with the authority’s Statement of Principles.

Proposed Gambling Impact Assessments

A locally evidenced approach to areas of concern

A GIA could identify geographical areas where additional gambling premises may contribute to local harm or undermine the licensing objectives.

Concentration

of gambling premises

Harm

gambling-related harm

Deprivation

local deprivation

Vulnerability

presence of vulnerable populations

Community

local impacts

Cumulative effect

of additional premises

Premises expected to be affected

Betting shops • Adult Gaming Centres • Family Entertainment Centres • Bingo premises

How the proposed decision framework would shift

From a strong presumption to evidence-led local control

CURRENT

“Aim to permit”

Where statutory requirements are met, the framework generally favours grant. Existing concentration and resident objection alone do not provide a general saturation-based refusal route.



PROPOSED

GIA-backed presumption

Where a GIA has been adopted, the briefing anticipates a presumption against certain new gambling premises in the covered area, with applicants needing to demonstrate consistency with the licensing objectives.

Important: this is an anticipated future framework, not a current power.

Implications for local authorities

More leverage, but a higher evidential and governance burden

Manage clustering	Potential to address concentrations where evidence shows additional premises may contribute to harm.
Use broader evidence	Public health, local area profiles, vulnerability mapping, community safety and socio-economic indicators.
Tailor local policy	Identify areas where additional premises may be inappropriate based on local circumstances and evidence.
Resource the evidence base	Develop and maintain profiles, mapping, consultation and cumulative-impact analysis.
Prepare for challenge	Policies and evidence will need to be robust, proportionate and capable of withstanding appeal.

What this could mean for Haringey

Practical opportunities and dependencies highlighted in the briefing

Potential opportunities

- Develop a borough-wide Gambling Impact Assessment
- Strengthen the response to gambling-related harm
- Better manage premises location and concentration
- Support wider public health and community safety objectives

Key dependencies

- Robust local evidence base
- Appropriate policy framework
- Officer resource and partnership working
- Government commencement, secondary legislation and guidance

Suggested preparatory focus

The briefing supports early consideration of data, mapping, public-health evidence and partnership arrangements, while keeping formal licensing decisions within the existing statutory framework until the new provisions are commenced.

Legal status and Member takeaways

What remains unchanged until commencement

NOT YET IN FORCE The briefing states that the relevant GIA and Section 153 changes have not yet been commenced.

Continue under the Gambling Act 2005	Applications must continue to be determined under the existing legislative framework and current Statement of Principles.
Do not rely on a GIA to refuse today	The briefing expressly states that licensing authorities cannot currently refuse an application on the basis of a Gambling Impact Assessment.
Await implementation detail	No implementation date is stated in the briefing; further regulations, secondary legislation and Gambling Commission guidance are expected.
Return to Committee	A further update should follow when guidance and commencement regulations are published.

Committee position: note the proposed reforms and the current legal status.