1. Purpose of Statement

The Sixfields area of Northampton, as shown on the attached plan, is expected to be subject to additional development in the future in order to provide new facilities and services to meet the future growth of the town, particularly on its western side. The Draft Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub Regional Spatial Strategy proposes that Sixfields be developed as an “urban hub” in association with future expansion of Northampton. The Council has already carried out a public consultation exercise into proposals to define part of the Sixfields area as a District Centre which would have the effect of permitting and promoting additional retailing and other services and facilities. It is proposed that an Action Plan covering the area will be part of the new Local Development Framework for Northampton. This statement follows from the Development Framework for Sixfields prepared on behalf of the Borough Council and English Partnerships by Halcrow plc and approved by the Executive in September 2003.

It confirms the preferred type of development that the Council wishes to see in the area prior to further developing any Action Plan. It provides guidance to developers and collects together the issues, which those submitting development applications will need to take into account.

2. Site evaluation

The Sixfields area including the Football stadium and surrounding entertainment, sports and restaurant uses together with Sainsbury’s food store and the non-food retail developments surrounding Weedon Road are well described in the Council Issues Paper “Sixfields – Proposals for a District Centre”. The area is characterised by individual developments with little integration and overall design and by much under used land. The EP/NBC Joint Initiative Development Framework seeks to address these issues on the part of the site owned by the Borough Council to the south of Weedon Road. It promotes improved cycle and footpath links, new sites for retailing and leisure at the eastern end of Walter Tull Way, and residential and commercial sites near Upton Way at the southwestern corner.
This statement covers the wider area of land to the north of Weedon Road. The Council will shortly consider the responses to its consultation on District Centre designation carried out in October and November 2003. This designation will be pursued further in the new Local Development Framework for Northampton. The Council is also shortly to commission an updated Shopping Study to examine further the need for additional shopping in Northampton to serve the expected household growth proposed in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Strategy and this will help to determine questions about further retail development. Notwithstanding this issue there is a growing body of evidence to support a specific role for Sixfields in light of anticipated development of the South West District. This statement confirms the strategy, which the Council wishes to pursue in relation to the role of Sixfields.

3. Proposals

General strategy

The Sixfields area to the north and south of Weedon Road should be developed to increasingly provide district level retailing, leisure uses, business, transport interchange facilities and a residential development to support the sustainable urban extension of Northampton. The site should continue to provide facilities for the Football and Athletics Clubs. Proposals that are considered to be detrimental to the emerging development at Upton or to established centres at Duston village or St James will be resisted. Additional development should be accompanied by an improved network of pedestrian, cycle and bus links.

Retail

Until such time as District Centre designation is adopted in the forthcoming Local Development Framework process, applications for additional retail floorspace or to change conditions on permissions should be regarded as out of centre development and be accompanied by statements of retail need and the sequential examination of alternative sites.

The proposed Action Plan for the Sixfields Area will be the document for defining the District Centre and will provide further guidance as to the type and extent of retailing anticipated. It can be expected that the Plan will seek to ensure that proposals meet an identified need for retailing by providing appropriate facilities to serve the western Northampton and the South West District whilst not harming town centre development or those at St James, Duston or being created at Upton.

Sports and Leisure Provision
Future development of Sixfields must ensure continued provision of a stadium for Northampton Town Football Club and Phoenix Athletics Club. Additional development to foster the wider use of this facility such as hotel development, conference centre, or additional sports uses will be supported., and pending clarification of the planning status of the Sixfields area, subject to satisfactory assessment which indicates that sites associated with town and district centres are not available and the role of recognised centres would not be undermined.

**District Offices and Services**

The accommodation of key public services to serve the growth of Northampton will be important. Land should be safeguarded to provide for a centre for primary health care services and other needs and requirements (such as for policing and other emergency services) will be established prior to the Action Plan being prepared. The Sixfields area could also offer opportunity to accommodate facilities for renewable energy generation and this will be further explored in the preparation of an Action Plan.

**Residential use**

The development of an element of residential use is supported in the south western corner of the site. This development should have regard to the design codes prepared for the Upton development, west of Upton Way and provide homes built to an agreed environmental standard.

**Transport strategy**

It is intended that Sixfields will operate as a focus for south west District development and also as a hub in the towns transport network. Provision for bus circulation and waiting facilities will be important. Development should provide for a new road between Walter Tull Way and Weedon Road to enable bus services to circulate efficiently through Sixfields. Traffic calming measures within the Sixfields stadium internal roads will be needed to prevent traffic using the site as a shortcut and maintain a safe environment for pedestrians.

**Development on land used for car parking and household waste recycling**

Applications for development of land presently used for car parking or the civic amenity site (the household recycling facility) will need to demonstrate that satisfactory alternative traffic management and parking facilities for visitors to Sixfields are provided (together with measures to protect surrounding residential streets) and an alternative recycling centre is established with appropriate capacity to provide for additional household growth in the western side of Northampton.
4. Required information to support future planning applications

- Retail impact assessment and sequential test;
- Travel impact assessment (including parking management strategy for adjoining residential areas);
- Environmental statement;
- Flood Risk assessment;
- Urban Design statement;
- Detailed development specific contamination risk assessment and remedial scheme.

5. Section 106 planning obligations

It is intended that obligations will be sought in relation to such matters as the following, dependant upon the nature and scale of proposals. Contributions will be pooled to achieve:

- Improved local pedestrian links, signage and location boards;
- Traffic calming of routes away from Weedon Road and public transport interchange facilities;
- Provision of high quality crossings (potentially major bridge links) spanning Upton Way and Weedon Road for cyclists and walkers;
- Works required in connection with any re-alignment of the Nene Way Long Distance Footpath;
- Appropriate measures to foster a safe and secure environment.

Planning Policy and Conservation
Northampton Borough Council

December 2003