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ANNEX 1: LANDOWNER REQUIREMENTS
1. INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The Sixfields Area Action Plan has been prepared on behalf of Northampton Borough Council by planning and regeneration consultancy Urban Practitioners and property market advisors CB Richard Ellis.

The Sixfields area is strategically located in an area of major change, urban extension and residential intensification. In this context, the Council has decided to designate Sixfields as a District Centre, to meet the local retail and service needs of the existing and future residential population of this part of Northampton, whilst supporting a wide range of additional retail and leisure uses.

A hierarchy of centres within the town will be established, made up of the town centre, district centres and local centres. Sixfields, alongside existing centres at Kingsthorpe, Weston Favell, and Mereway, will provide district centre level facilities serving the south-west sector of the town and act as a public transport node.

AREA ACTION PLAN

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 establishes a new basis for local authority statutory plan-making, the Local Development Framework. The Act places an emphasis on public consultation and engagement, and establishes a new vehicle for developing planning policy for areas which will undergo major change, the Area Action Plan. Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12) states that:

Area Action Plans should be used to provide the planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation is needed. A key feature of area action plans will be the focus on implementation. They should:

i. deliver planned growth areas
ii. stimulate regeneration
iii. protect areas particularly sensitive to change
iv. resolve conflicting objectives in areas subject to development pressures; or
v. focus the delivery of area based regeneration initiatives.'

The process for developing and adopting an Area Action Plan is clearly set out in PPS12, and involves considerable informal and formal public consultation and participation.

The Borough Council considers that an Area Action Plan represents the most appropriate planning policy vehicle through which a new district centre designation for Sixfields should be made.

This document sets out a series of issues and alternative options for the establishment of a District Centre at Sixfields. These issues and options emerged directly from a comprehensive programme of community and stakeholder consultation and engagement as a detailed, comprehensive research base that is outlined in detail within the supporting document ‘Evidence Base for the Sixfields Area Action Plan’.

A full written account of this consultation process is set out in a separate document, the Sixfields Area Action Plan Consultation Report.

Following consideration of all of the issues and alternatives, Northampton Borough Council has identified a preferred option. The process of consideration and review of options is outlined in detail throughout the Area Action Plan.
1. INTRODUCTION

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SIXFIELDS

The following key objectives for Sixfields were set out in the consultation document ‘A proposal to designate an area at Sixfields/Weedon Road as a district centre’ produced by Northampton Borough Council in October 2003:

- To designate Sixfields/Weedon Road as a District Centre;
- To increase permeability of the centre for people on foot and cyclists;
- To broaden the range of uses within the centre;
- To increase opportunities for people to access the centre by means other than the private car; and
- To create a sense of place.

LOCATION

Sixfields lies on the south-western periphery of Northampton. Currently the Sixfields area accommodates a large number of retail, leisure, and industrial warehouse units. Levels of residential accommodation are low in the Sixfields area itself, although there is an established residential sector in the neighbouring areas of Upton and Duston. However, with the development of the South West District there will be an expanding local catchment area for Sixfields. There are three existing district centres within Northampton; Kingsthorpe to the north, Weston Favell to the east and Mereway to the south of the town.

ACCESSIBILITY

The area is readily accessible via the town’s road network. Journey times from Sixfields to the centre of Northampton are in the region of 10 minutes via the Weedon Road which leads to the A4500 (Spencer Bridge Road) accessing the North of the centre and the St. James’ Road accessing the south. Beyond the town centre Northampton has a good network of ‘A’ roads which provide access to all areas of the town. Despite the obvious advantages of this accessibility by road, access for pedestrians is compromised by the main roads that dissect the area, which have a limited number of safe crossing points.
1. INTRODUCTION

The M1 motorway is situated just to the south west of Northampton and this places Sixfields in an ideal position from which to access the national motorway network. The A45 and A43 provide fast access to junctions 16 and 15a of the M1, which in turn links Northampton to London (1.5 hours) and Birmingham (1 hour). Beyond the immediate vicinity, Northampton is close to the M6, M40 and A14 all of which increase accessibility and underline Northampton’s central location.

A number of bus routes provide public transport links between the Sixfields area and the town centre via Northampton Railway Station which is located between the Sixfields area and the town centre.

Bus services are operated by First Bus and Stagecoach and all depart from Northampton Bus Station which is situated on the northern fringe of the town centre approximately 10 minutes walk from Northampton Castle Railway Station and forms part of the Grosvenor Centre Shopping Centre complex.

Bus connections between Sixfields and the local area run every 20 minutes throughout the day. In addition, connections to areas such as Daventry, Land Farm and Nether Heyford are provided three times an hour in the morning and evening peaks and twice an hour in the interim period. An additional service links Sixfields with Old Duston, Harpole and Bugbrooke every two hours throughout the day, with an additional hourly service during peak times. Four bus services a day provide direct links between Sixfields and Bicester and Oxford. Services in the evening and on Sundays are extremely limited.

Northampton has only one mainline train station, with direct trains to London which can be reached in approximately 50 minutes, Birmingham in 50 minutes and Manchester in 2.5 hours (via Birmingham). This makes Northampton an accessible location, and attractive for commuters to London.

Furthermore, journey times have recently fallen due to the introduction of the fast Virgin Train service, thus further enhancing Northampton’s accessibility.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

According to the National Statistics website, Northampton as a whole has a population of 194,458 (2001 Census). This figure is 10,400 higher than 10 years ago which indicates the town has undergone considerable growth. This can be seen in the expansion of residential areas such as Wootton Fields and Grange Park.

The demographic structure of the town from the 2001 Census indicates that the male full-time employment rate in Northampton in 2001 was 58.2% which although considerably higher than the national average of 49.6% was down from its 1991 level of 67%. Female full-time employment was also well above the national average at 34.7% (national average 19.8%) but again down from its 1991 level of 41.1%.

Unemployment rates were low in Northampton at 1.8% in July 2004, the lowest level in the past four years. This compares with a national average of 2.3%.

In terms of economic activity, according to PROMIS 2004*, manufacturing, transport and distribution employment accounted for 22.3% of total employment in Northampton, financial and business services accounted for 22.6%, and public services had a 24.9% share.
1. INTRODUCTION

The level of car ownership in Northampton is significantly above the national average with a particularly high proportion of 2 cars per household. This is likely to be of benefit to retail destinations that are situated beyond the town centre such as Sixfields, although Sixfields also benefits from improving accessibility by public transport. High car ownership may also be of benefit to competing towns/cities such as Milton Keynes and Leicester.

*Promis (a property market industry-standard data report prepared by PMA).
2. POLICY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

This section sets out a summary of the planning policy context within which the Sixfields Area Action Plan is being prepared.

Key current and emerging national policy guidance is briefly considered. This is followed by a summary of regional policy. Please note that a detailed analysis of these documents is included within the supporting Evidence Base document.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

PPS6: Planning for Town Centres

Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres, issued in March, requires local authorities to consider the pattern of provision of different centres and the roles, range of facilities and degree of specialisation in these centres, in order to understand a centre's position in the hierarchy.

Local planning authorities are required to formulate planning policies which reflect the need to encourage higher-density, multi-storey development within and around existing centres, including the promotion of mixed uses, where appropriate.

PPS6 acknowledges the additional facilities that a district centre may contain. It considers that "district centres will usually comprise groups of shops, separate from the town centre, often containing at least one food supermarket or superstore, and a range of non-retail services, such as banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public facilities such as a library."

A more detailed analysis of PPS6 appears within the supporting document 'Evidence Base for the Sixfields Area Action Plan'.

Planning for Town Centres: Guidance on Design and Implementation Tools, March 2005

Planning for Town Centres: Guidance on Design and Implementation Tools was published alongside PPS6 as a supporting document.

In relation to design and the public realm, the Guidance suggests that development should adhere to the following principles:

- Orientation of development so that it fronts on to the street;
- Respect building lines of the existing urban environment;
- Maximise the amount of active street frontage;
- Avoid designs which are inward looking and which present blank frontages;
- Provide level access from the public realm; and
- In the case of development in edge-of-centre locations, provide good pedestrian access to the centre.

When considering parking, the guidance recommends that car parking and service areas should be carefully located within a development using means that minimise visual impact. In addition, it is suggested that car parking should normally be located to the rear, underneath, or, where appropriate, above new development.

PPG3: Housing

The priorities identified within Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 highlight the Government's aim to promote more sustainable patterns of development and make better use of previously-developed land. It considers that new housing and residential environments should be well designed and should make a significant contribution to promoting urban renaissance and improving the quality of life. Mixed uses with employment uses on the ground floor with retail above are identified as a means of introducing new life into towns and cities.
2. POLICY CONTEXT

In relation to the density of residential development, PPG3 considers that local planning authorities should seek to avoid developments which make inefficient use of land (those of less than 30 dwellings per hectare); encourage housing development which makes more efficient use of land (between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare net); and encourage greater intensity of development at places with good public transport accessibility such as city, town, district and local centres or around major nodes along good quality public transport corridors (Section 58, PPG3 Housing).

PPG13: Transport

Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 recognises the important role that land use planning has in delivering the Government’s integrated transport strategy. It considers that “by shaping the pattern of development and influencing the location, scale, density, design and mix of land uses, planning can help to reduce the need to travel, reduce the length of journeys and make it safer and easier for people to access jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking, and cycling”. In relation to Sixfields, the application of these principles will help to reduce some of the need for car journeys through the reduction of the physical separation of land uses, and the improvement of public transport facilities, enabling people to make sustainable transport choices.

EMERGING REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY

RSS8 Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands, March 2005

Northampton is situated within the Southern Sub-Area identified within RSS8 and the guidance notes “Northampton exerts considerable economic and social influence over much of the south west part of the region.”

The guidance identifies Northampton as one of the five Principal Urban Areas and aims to strengthen its role and function through new public transport infrastructure and facilities.

Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy, March 2005

The Milton Keynes and South Midlands sub-regional strategy provides strategic guidance on the scale, location and timing of development and associated infrastructure for the period until 2021.

The Strategy has amended the corresponding sections in the relevant RSS and forms part of the regional policy basis for the preparation of Local Development Documents.

Within the strategy, Northampton is identified as a ‘location for growth’ and it is anticipated that the district will accommodate an additional 30,000 new...
homes in the period until 2021 and a further 17,500 homes between 2021 and 2031. The strategy anticipates that to complement this housing provision, Northampton Borough and South Northants and Daventry Districts (for Northampton Town) should be able to accommodate net levels of employment growth to provide 37,200 jobs by 2021.

Finally, the Strategy states that the Local Development Framework for Northampton should ‘identify an appropriate number of existing and possible future District Centres (urban hubs) to form sustainable sub-centres for shopping and for the provision of commercial and social services, giving an emphasis to regeneration needs and opportunities for urban renaissance where relevant.’ (Northamptonshire Policy 2).

**EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY**

**Northamptonshire Structure Plan**

The Northamptonshire Structure Plan (1996-2016) was adopted in March 2001. The recently adopted RSS8 and Milton Keynes South Midland Sub-regional Strategy will provide the strategic context for the preparation of the Council’s Local Development Framework.

**Northampton Local Plan**

The Northampton Local Plan, adopted June 1997, covers the period between 1993 and 2006. It contains a number of general policies but these have largely been superseded by changes in government policy.

**Existing Allocations**

Under Policy B2 a considerable area to the north east of Weedon Road is designated as an Existing Business Area, where planning permission will be granted for the development of land for business, general industrial and storage and distribution uses (B1, B2 and B8). In addition, planning permission will not be granted for business development which extends beyond the boundaries of the business area and on sites in excess of 1 hectare outside the existing and proposed business areas (Policy B3).

The area is also subject to policy T15 which requires that in granting planning permission for the business areas identified on the proposals map, the Council will require the provision of road layouts that will allow the effective operation of bus layouts and the provision of bus facilities.

There are three areas within Sixfields identified as Large Scale Retailing Locations, subject to Policy R4. Apart from a parcel of land on Gambrel Road, these have largely now all been developed. In line with PPS6, the suitability of this site for retail development must be tested against the sequential approach which gives priority to locations in existing ‘designated centres’.

The land to the south east of Weedon Road is designated as a Development Site under Policy D11. The Plan considers that planning permission will be granted at Sixfields, Weedon Road for a mix of sports and leisure uses. Since the production of the Local Plan, the site has been largely occupied by Northampton Town Football Club, Sixfields Stadium. To the south of site D11 is an additional Development Site, D7 Duston Mill. This site is allocated in the Local Plan and planning permission will be granted for a hotel and leisure use so long as the proposals do not significantly detract from the character and appearance of the area beside the river.
2. POLICY CONTEXT

DESIGN GUIDANCE

Urban Design Compendium

The Urban Design Compendium, jointly prepared by English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation in 2000, provides extremely useful and relevant good practice for those involved in the delivery and assessment of new development.

Of particular relevance to Sixfields is the ‘Creating the Urban Structure’ section which provides strategic guidance on the mixing of uses and warns against the dangers of taking a zoned approach to land use planning. Emphasis is placed on the importance of walkable environments.

Considering the planning and design of centres, it is recommended that centres are focussed on public transport nodes. Mixed use centres are best located at crossroads and along main movement routes, within walking distance of homes.

The injection of housing into the mix of uses contained in centres is considered central to their success, enabling activity to be stretched beyond daytime office and shopping hours. Emphasis is also given to civic roles and functions, with public uses such as health facilities, libraries and police and fire stations all benefiting from central prominent locations.

The problems caused by inactive edges created by ‘big boxes’ are given some consideration. This is particularly important for the Sixfields area with Walter Tull Way being characterised by such buildings.

A full analysis of the Urban Design Compendium and its significance for Sixfields is considered in the chapter ‘Principles for Sixfields’.
3. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced the Local Development Framework to replace Local and Structure Plans.

The Local Development Framework will comprise a suite of Local Development Documents. Local Planning Authorities are obliged to prepare a Local Development Scheme through which the context of the Local Development Framework and the timetable for the preparation of each Local Development Framework component is agreed.

This draft Area Action Plan for Sixfields will become one of the Local Development Documents for Northampton.

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME, MAY 2005

The Local Development Scheme is a public statement that outlines the programme for the preparation of Local Development Documents. The scheme covers the preparation of the following documents:

- Joint Core Strategy for Northampton Implementation Area
- Development Control Policies
- Proposals Map
- Site Specific Allocations
- Sixfields Development Area Action Plan

- Central Area Action Plan
- South West District Urban Extension Area Action Plan
- Kings Heath Area Action Plan

The Sixfields Area Action Plan is being prepared in parallel with the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy will establish the principle of the designation, with the Area Action Plan providing the site-specific details of how the district centre will be created.

Part 2 of the LDS states that the Sixfields AAP must be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal. The Sustainability Appraisal of these initial stages of Area Action Plan production has been undertaken by Faber Maunsell and is available as a separate document.

Timetable for adoption

The LDS provides a detailed timetable for the three-year process of preparing the Local Development Documents. Preparation for the Sixfields AAP and the Core Strategy are being prepared in tandem. The timetable for submission of the draft Sixfields Area Action Plan and Core Strategy to the Secretary of State is anticipated in March 2006, with Public Examinations in September-October 2006. The Inspector’s Report is anticipated for January 2007 with adoption of the final Sixfields Area Action Plan and Core Strategy is scheduled for March 2007.

THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The development plan forms the starting point in the consideration of planning applications. It is made up of (i) the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS8), (ii) Development Plan Documents within the Local Development Framework, and (iii) until September 2007, saved policies within the adopted Local Plan and Structure Plan. The Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands and the Milton Keynes South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy will provide the strategic land use context for Northampton. These documents are prepared by the Regional Assembly and approved by the Secretary of State. The adopted Structure Plan will still continue in force for now, except where policies in the RSS/Sub-regional Strategy have updated and therefore superseded its policies. The Sixfields AAP will be a Development Plan Document and therefore will have

Existing residential areas in Sixfields
3. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Development plan status. The Sixfields AAP must be in conformity with the RSS and the Core Strategy.
INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides some background information about key local policy documents.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Northampton Community Strategy 2002-2012 establishes the objectives of the Local Strategic Partnership in creating a safe, clean and healthy town with good facilities and services and a good quality of life for all.

The strategy aims to create safer communities with safer homes, streets and shopping areas; less risk from crime; fewer drug and alcohol-related problems; less business crime; less vandalism and property damage; and less anti-social behaviour.

Aims for creating a 'better environment' include a cleaner, cared for town; attractive new buildings; well cared for public areas; better public transport, cycle and walkways; development on previously-used land; more recycling and less waste; a river valley that is a public amenity and nature reserve; and changes in lifestyle which will result in fuel savings and nature preservation.

To create 'good health, good housing and contented communities' the strategy identifies objectives such as bridging the gap between rich and poor; improved health and social living; available healthcare for all; improved health and social care for children and young people; and a decent home for all.

Objectives concerning the creation of a 'stronger economy' aim to make Northampton stronger in the region; reduce unemployment and poverty in the poorest areas; identify business needs and opportunities; and increase the provision of high-skill jobs.

'Leisure and culture' objectives seek to improve sport, leisure and cultural opportunities for children and young people; improve community facilities and parks; use the Arts to improve the look of the town; plan the future use of the Arts in public places; and make Northampton a tourist attraction.

Finally, in relation to community involvement, the objectives include boosting community involvement in local decision making; encourage organisations to consult communities more effectively; develop action plans to improve communities; and the promotion of electronic links between services and communities.

SOUTH WEST DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLANNING REVIEW, NOVEMBER 2003

The South West District Strategic Planning Review, prepared for English Partnerships by Halcrow, outlines land use and phasing proposals for the South West District.

The Review has been submitted to Northampton Borough Council as a representation to inform the preparation of the Local Development Framework. The Borough will take forward those aspects of the review which can be supported through the preparation of an Area Action Plan for the South West District. A report was taken to the Council’s Executive Committee in June 2004 whereby members noted the contents of the Review, agreed an interim planning policy statement and acknowledged the Halcrow report as a material planning consideration.

The South West District comprises 670...
hectares of land adjacent to the south west edge of Northampton’s urban area. The district is predominantly undeveloped, although some development has taken place at St Crispin and Upton as part of a sustainable community, promoted by English Partnerships.

The review considers that the future of the South West District should be focused upon the development of individual, self-sustaining communities with links to shared facilities and services. It is anticipated that six sustainable communities will be created in the district and together these communities will contribute 5,800 dwellings and 120 hectares (net) of employment development. The six communities will be St Crispin, Princess Marina, Upton Lodge, Upton, Upton Park and Pineham.

The proposed District Centre at Sixfields is identified as an opportunity to provide jobs and amenities for the residents of the South West District, although Sixfields itself remains outside the South West District boundary.

The strategy for the South West District involves six phases and seeks to enable early employment; anticipating that the first development at Pineham should be completed by 2007. The first instance of Greenfield housing is programmed for completion in 2010. In advance of the implementation of development proposals, the need to provide infrastructure is recognised and the need for a ‘lead in’ time for the implementation of infrastructure is identified.

The report recognises the importance of ensuring that each phase is supported by the provision of sustainable transport.

In order to take forward the proposals for the South West District, the review identifies the importance of a partnership approach between English Partnerships, landowners and statutory authorities.
NORTHAMPTON BROWNFIELD JOINT INITIATIVE

Led by Northampton Borough Council and English Partnerships, the Northampton Brownfield Joint Initiative seeks to bring forward three strategically important brownfield sites in Northampton.

The initiative is supported by funding from the ODPM Sustainable Communities Plan. Grant aid will fund the enabling infrastructure works necessary to bring the sites forward for redevelopment. Development Framework Masterplans for the three linked areas of Sixfields, Harvey Reeves Road and Ransome Road have been prepared by lead consultants Halcrow.

All three sites are located within the Nene Valley and are all former landfill sites. All also contain derelict, vacant or underused land and currently have an unattractive appearance.

Consultation has been undertaken with key stakeholders and key issues in each of the areas are outlined within the supporting evidence base.

A key element for the future development of Sixfields is the generation of a critical mass of activity and the creation of a new role for the area. Three sites and their key functions are identified in the proposals:

- North East Corner, Weedon Road retail and mixed use frontage;
- Central area, leisure and shopping focus; and
- South West Corner, residential and community facility.

The proposals recommend the reuse of vacant or under-utilised land. The relocation of the Recycling Centre to a purpose built site on Harvey Reeves Road is suggested as a means of making the land adjacent to Weedon Road available for retail and mixed use development.

Central to the success of the initiative is the provision of a new link road between the Sixfields area and the Harvey Reeves Road area. Detailed planning permission for the Southern Development Link Road (SDLR) has been obtained and construction of its western and eastern sections commenced in early 2005. The route of this road will follow the northern edge of Storton's Pit Nature Reserve.

The initiative seeks to create ‘an interface between the Northampton of today and tomorrow’ and establishes that Sixfields must be considered within the wider context of the future expansion of housing to the south west. Sixfields is considered to have the potential to become the interface between the existing and proposed developed areas of Northampton.

Almost 6,000 houses are allocated on land to the north and south of Weedon Road and Sixfields is considered to have the potential to become the interface between the existing and proposed developed areas of Northampton.
An outline planning application has been submitted to Northampton Borough Council in order to bring this land forward. This application has not yet been determined, but in relation to the Sixfields area, the Joint Initiative sets out an aspiration for the following:

- 7,750sqm retail
- 3,500sqm A3 uses
- 5,000sqm commercial leisure
- 5-a-side football centre
- 100 bed hotel
- Increased capacity of community stadium
- Community facility
- 80/90 dwellings

STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT
Northampton Borough Council
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment - Stage 2
Final Report, December 2004

The Phase 2 report of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment identified and mapped the areas of flood risk in the borough within the context of the categories identified within PPG25, undertook flood risk assessments for development areas within the borough (including Sixfields) and undertook an assessment of the potential extent of rapid inundation zones behind the existing raised flood defences. The report also provides an assessment of the effect on flood risk of large scale urban development in the Upper Nene catchment and provides some guidance notes for developers, recommending procedures to be followed to minimise flood risk in development.

A Flood Risk Assessment was undertaken for the whole of Northampton and for the eight development areas. In relation to the Sixfields development area, the report highlights that the area is situated near the foot of the sloping valley side of the Nene Valley. Together with the other ‘brownfield’ development sites of Harvey Reeves Road and Ransome Road, the report notes that the three sites have all been significantly modified by human activity.

The report notes that Sixfields is located on the northern slopes of the Nene valley and recent development has involved a considerable amount of regrading, particularly in the creation of level playing areas in the leisure complex. The area has a pronounced fall from north to south and levels along the Weedon Road boundary.
are between 75m and 80mOD, falling to around 60mOD along the elevated southern boundary. Beyond the boundary, the ground falls away steeply and within the south western extension levels along Duston Mill Lane fall from 65mOD at Upton Way to around 61mOD at the southern edge of the extension. The principle hydrological feature of the Sixfields area is identified as the Kislingbury Branch of the River Nene and associated flood alleviation works such as the Duston Flood Storage Reservoir (FSR). Beyond the southern boundary of the area, Storton’s Pits, the former course of the Nene, Duston FSR, the Duston flood relief channel and the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal are located (in this order). The elevated canal defines the southern edge of the floodplain.

Flood risk in the main part of Sixfields is assessed to fall within Flood Risk Category 1 (low to no risk). The regrading of the land surface along the southern half of the development area has raised the ground surface to a level well above the flood plain and as such there is little or no risk of flooding of the area from the River Nene. A 25 metre strip of land along the southern edge of the development area extension is considered to fall within Flood Risk Category 2 (low to medium risk). This is related to the fact that although the southern boundary of the small southwestern extension is consistent with the 100 year Indicative Floodplain envelope, floods of a higher return period will extend north along Duston Mill Lane and into this part of the development area. Potential flood risk sources are identified in the three large surface water sewers on the eastern, southern and western edges of the development area. The report considers it prudent to regard the whole of the southwestern extension as Flood Risk Category 2 until a detailed evaluation of the hydraulic capacity of the southwestern sewer, which serves an extensive drainage area and may pose a small potential flood risk, can be undertaken.

In relation to future development in Sixfields, the report notes that the area available for redevelopment is very limited and the only areas remaining for development are the capped landfill sites along the eastern edge and the undeveloped southwestern section. As a result, the report considers that the scope for the generation of substantial quantities of additional storm runoff is limited.

When considering the Joint Initiative, the report notes that the preferred mix of uses may result in the discharge of impermeable area run off to Storton’s Pits and this would provide an acceptable degree of attenuation. However, this may have implications as the lakes are of nature reserve water quality and as such it may be necessary to provide separate small scale run off peak flow and volume attention measures for each section of the proposed development.
CONTAMINATION CONSIDERATIONS

The following contamination advice was prepared for Northampton Borough Council by Halcrow. The research and advice was undertaken as an independent study and is not related to the Sixfields Area Action Plan or to the work of Urban Practitioners and CB Richard Ellis.

Site history

Formerly an ironstone quarry, the northern section of the site was subsequently infilled with landfill waste. The site was infilled with domestic waste from the 1960’s to mid 1970’s and following this period, the site was used for the controlled tipping of semi-inert waste. It should be noted that only inert material was tipped onto the site to complete the landfilling operations. There are a number of uses in close proximity to or within the site which may have a geo-environmental impact.

Contamination

Soil

The site is within an area where basic Radon Protection Measures are required for new dwellings and to date, no radon testing has been undertaken to establish the necessary degree of protection.

In 1991 a survey revealed that the ground exceeded ICRCL trigger levels for copper, mercury, nickel, chromium, arsenic and lead. Blue asbestos was also found on the site.

Contamination may also exist within the site as a result of historical uses and locally common forms of natural substance such as aresenopyrites and radon arising from historical uses including the railway line, ironworks, waste recycling centre and vehicle repairs/dismantlers.

Gas

Monitoring of ground gas between 1988 and 1992, indicated that levels of carbon dioxide, methane and landfill gas, as a whole were high although a general trend of improvement with time was discernable.

Concentrations of methane ranged from less than 1 to 64% which is within explosive range and the level of other gases was noted to be high. Gas flow from boreholes was tested and ranged from undetectable to 21/h.

Gas monitoring from just beyond the site provides evidence that some landfill gas may have been migrating laterally from the site.

Calculations of future landfill gas production undertaken in 1991 subsequently predicted that gas production had passed its peak and that by 2001 it would be less than 15% of its peak.

Implications

- Buildings would need to be founded on improved ground or piles and there will be differential settlement due to buried edges of former quarry high walls.
- Remediation of landfill gas will be required prior to development.
- The potential for the reuse of materials on the site is very limited and as this may contain putrescible material
- South west spur is most suitable for development, as shown in Figure 4.3. Development is considered possible of the remainder of the site although the cost of foundations for heavy and/or settlement structures (such as warehouse floors) would be high. Gas protection would be necessary as a matter of course. Residential development on the former landfill areas should be avoided.
- The existing capping of the landfill site should be enhanced where possible.
5. PROPERTY MARKET REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In this section, the property market sectors relevant to Sixfields are reviewed, namely:

- Retail;
- Residential;
- Leisure/Community;
- Office; and
- Industrial

In reviewing these sectors a picture begins to form of the opportunities and constraints that exist for Sixfields. In turn, this provides a solid basis for considering future improvements to the area and ensuring any developments are sustainable, viable and deliverable within a district centre.

(i) The Retail Market

At the national level, demand for retail investments in the UK is strong with prime yields for rack-rented High Street shop units at around 4.5%. This represents a reduction of 0.5% from the beginning of 2004. Since the start of 2004 the market for retail warehouses has also continued to strengthen, both in terms of the prices achieved and the depth of demand. Prime yields for these properties (rack rented*) are about 5% in prime fashion parks and 5.25% in non-fashion.

According to the National Survey of Local Shopping Patterns (NSLSP), Northampton has a catchment population of 1,416,805. This figure ranks the centre 49th out of the same 4,500 centres.

According to the PROMIS (an industry standard property market data report prepared by PMA) live Retail Market Report for Northampton the town centre’s retail floorspace is estimated to be 1.3 million sq ft, this is comparable with the PROMIS sub regional centre average and ranks the centre 44th of the PROMIS centres on this measure.

As a whole Northampton has a good mainstream retail offer with a broad range of national multiples accommodating units within the centre. Included within these are three department stores, Beatties, Debenhams and the Co-op.

On the PROMIS PMA Retail Provision Indicator, which ranks the top 200 retail centres in the country, Northampton is ranked 41st. On the PROMIS PMA fashion Provision Indicator the centre is ranked 46th and on the PROMIS PMA Anchor Stores Indicator the centre ranks 21st. This suggests that Northampton is currently performing well for a centre of its size.

In addition to the traditional shopping locations, Northampton town centre is also home to three managed shopping centres which account for 31% of the total retail floorspace. The Grosvenor Centre is the largest of these centres and is anchored by the Beatties department store. Peacock Place is the second largest and accommodates a range of high street fashion outlets including Next, Laura Ashley and Evans. The third centre is St Peters Way which provides a secondary shopping location which is home to six large retail units (anchored by Argos) connected to the main existing shopping centre via an open mall lined with small retail units.

Within the centre of Northampton prime retail rents, based on local agents’ advice are in the region of £130 per sq ft Zone A falling to £35-£40 per sq ft towards the periphery of the centre. Yields within the prime areas are circa 6% rising to 7.3% in secondary locations.

* Rack-rented means that the unit is let at market rent and is fully insured.
Retailer demand provides a useful insight into retailers’ interest in specific locations and as a result indicates whether a centre is likely to undergo future growth or struggle to find new tenants. In July 2004, there were 70 reported requirements for Northampton, against a national average of 51. Table 5.1 identifies the type of retailers with demand for space in Northampton and the amount of space they require. It should be noted at this point that not all these requirements are suitable for accommodation in a district centre.

As can be seen in Table 5.1 the highest level of requirement is from comparison retailers who require circa 35,536 sq m (383,407 sq ft) of retail floorspace. It is interesting to note that there is also a large requirement for floorspace from services, the majority of which are restaurants.

Sixfields’ existing retail offer is almost exclusively warehouse based. The retailers operating from these units are listed in Table 5.2.

Sixfields Retail Park, owned by University Superannuation Scheme, is currently one of the smaller retail parks in Northampton compared to the larger parks such as Towcester Road, St. James Retail Park and Nene Valley Retail Park. However, it does have open A1 consent and is therefore a potential site for large scale future development which will enable it to compete more with nearby parks.

Table 5.1: Retailer requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Minimum Requirement</th>
<th>Maximum Requirement</th>
<th>Average total Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>20,680 sq m (222,603 sq ft)</td>
<td>50,373 sq m (542,211 sq ft)</td>
<td>35,526 sq m (383,407 sq ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>1,905 sq m (20,500 sq m)</td>
<td>2,090 sq m (22,500 sq ft)</td>
<td>2,000 sq m (21,500 sq ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>11,892 sq m (128,000 sq ft)</td>
<td>15,236 sq m (164,000 sq ft)</td>
<td>13,500 sq m (146,000 sq ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34,711 sq m (371,103 sq ft)</td>
<td>67,699 sq m (728,711 sq ft)</td>
<td>51,205 sq m (649,907 sq ft)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vacancies in the Sixfields area are non-existent and all retail units in the Sixfields area fully let. This is a positive indication that the area is a viable location for retailers to locate and suggests there should be demand for further retail space in the area. A view supported by the high levels of retailer demand for floorspace in Northampton seen in table 5.1.

It is the Sainsbury’s unit which acts as the anchor for the area, serving a population that extends beyond the Sixfields area.

Although this store dominates the area there are a number of other convenience retailers beyond the Sixfields site whilst still in the same post code area - Aldi, Co-op and two Icelands. Furthermore to the south of Sixfields in the bordering post code area is a large format Tesco (90,823 sq. ft.).

Deals from 1999 indicate that rental levels in the Sixfields area were in the region of £1.15 per sq ft, a modest uplift on the rental levels of £1.12-£1.13 per sq ft, agreed at the park in 1998. The last rent agreed however suggests a large increase has
5. PROPERTY MARKET REVIEW

recently occurred with Next paying £21 per sq ft. for their unit in 2004. Local agents advise us that such a deal reflects an investment yield in the region of 6.5%. The increase in rents suggest an improvement in the retail warehouse market and, in particular, an increase in demand for this type of unit.

The dominance of retail warehouses and the lack of smaller units on the Sixfields site means that the area is unattractive to retailers which are more suited to traditional district centres, such as hairdressers, post offices and bookmakers and small scale independent retailers such as off-licenses and newsagents. The lack of residential accommodation in the immediate vicinity adds to this problem as the area currently attracts destination shoppers who don’t require these services.

Due to the ‘out of town’ nature of the study area and the non-existent residential accommodation in the immediate vicinity, the Sixfields area has been developed with car based users in mind. This makes accessing the site by foot difficult and dangerous due to the busy roads and lack of suitable crossing points and furthermore the lack of shop frontages means that there are no clearly defined pedestrian routes.

(ii) The Residential Market

To the east of Sixfields is the St. James End Estate which includes the new development in the vicinity of the Express Lift Tower. The area to the west of Sixfields is Upton, a relatively small estate which is expanding as a result of the proposed large scale development by English Partnerships. The proposed development will result in a comprehensive addition to the residential offer in the area.

The Upton development is the product of the revised East Midlands Regional Planning Guidance which identified Northampton as the major population and employment centre within the south of the East Midlands capable of accommodating household growth. Under the Upton Scheme, English Partnerships has begun development of up to 1,200 new homes.

Further English Partnerships development is proposed to the east of the Sixfields site which will extend the St. James End residential area to the border of Sixfields. Combined, these new developments will increase the population in the immediate vicinity of Sixfields which will strengthen the area’s viability as a successful retail location, by creating a critical mass, which will in turn require access to services such as hairdressers, newsagents, off-licenses and dry cleaners.

The majority of the residents in the areas surrounding Sixfields are living in family units. Agents suggest that residents in this part of Northampton are local families who locate in the area then remain there, moving up the property ladder.

Furthermore most of the area’s inhabitants work in the local area unlike other locations in Northampton which are becoming increasingly popular with London commuters, such as Grange Park, which is virtually adjacent to the M1. Conversation with local agents has provided an indication of local residential values and the performance of the market. Local agents advise us that the most popular homes are 4 bedroom properties which exchange for approximately £250,000 and 3 bedroom houses which achieve prices in the region of £260,000-£280,000. Although less popular, recent sales of 3 bedroom properties indicate prices are in the region of £200,000-£230,000. The number of 2 bedroom properties in the area around Sixfields is very limited and there is a considerable range in their condition. This leads to a large range in price with agents stating bottom of the range properties exchange for around £100,000 whilst the better standard attain up to £180,000.
5. PROPERTY MARKET REVIEW

Up-to-date data from Proviser, an online house price database suggests that house prices in the Sixfields area are marginally below the average prices that are achievable in Northampton. Despite this the area is popular with buyers and all agents spoke to highlighted the fact they were very busy which is unusual for the winter months. This high level of market activity has helped house prices rise in the area with Proviser reporting the house price rises in the area of 229% since 1995 compared with the national average of just 182.5%.

Recent residential developments in the area have all experienced considerable levels of interest with units selling very well. This strong performance leads local agents to state they believe any future residential developments will be successful. This is a view clearly supported by English Partnerships who would not risk undertaking the large scale development of Upton unless they were confident a market existed for the new properties. In addition to English Partnerships other residential developers are active in the Northampton area such as David Wilson, Bellway Homes, Barratt Homes and Henry Boot.

The valuation office figures indicate that land available for residential development in the Northampton area is worth around £2,100,000 per hectare.

It is clear that private residential development would offer a key opportunity to continue the development of the Sixfields area. Increasing the level of residential units in close proximity to the centre will reduce the out of town environment in the centre and push it towards a more genuine district centre.

(iii) Leisure and Community Uses
Leisure covers a wide variety of uses such as cinemas (multiplexes and more traditional town centre cinemas), bowling alleys, nightclubs, family entertainment centres, health and fitness studios, as well as various A3 use classes, such as pubs, bars and restaurants.

Leisure operators and developers are increasingly seeking to operate from town or district centre sites, in accordance with the “sequential test”, as set out in the Government guidance of PPG6. However, edge and out of centre sites are usually cheaper and can provide surface car parking, a typical requirement of commercial leisure operators.

Leisure operators have the potential to bring significant benefits to shopping centres. They have the potential to increase customer dwell times within a centre, as well as having spin off benefits to other uses and also assisting in the self policing of shopping centres and surrounding areas. Leisure uses are therefore increasingly viewed as an important and appropriate component of new development.

Presently, Sixfields has a very strong commercial leisure provision with a number of companies operating in the area as can be seen in table 5.3. Sixfields’ success with leisure operators is based on the highly accessible nature of the centre by car coupled with the extensive parking provision on the site.

Northampton Football Club Stadium is the predominant leisure facility on the site which on match days attracts a large number of people to the Sixfields area. Parking for large numbers of football supporters entering the site is provided through overspill match day parking towards the south of the site. Other important leisure facilities are the restaurants, cinema, gym and bowling alley which attract people to the Sixfields area beyond regular shopping hours. This improves the variety of facilities on the site and thus makes it a more attractive location to visit.
5. PROPERTY MARKET REVIEW

Just beyond the designated area is a second sports stadium which is home to Northampton Saints Rugby Club. Again, as with the other leisure facilities, the presence of the Rugby Club helps improve the vitality of the area, although it does have a knock-on effect on the roads/traffic on match days.

Sixfields has a very strong commercial leisure provision and it is considered that the area’s leisure market is approaching saturation. However, it should be noted that in the future, as new leisure pursuits come forward, new opportunities may arise and as such it is important to adopt a flexible outlook and ensure that these uses are accommodated.

Sixfields is, however, currently suffering from a severe under provision of community uses. It is without a dental practice, doctor’s surgery, health centre, school, library and public sports facilities. Health and community uses perform an important and vital function in the day to day role of district centres. The presence of community based services may also serve to attract residents to the centre, and, potentially, to use other facilities during their visit. Possibly, through cross funding from other uses, such as new residential development, there may be the opportunity to develop these facilities and provide a stronger community hub. Coupled with improvements to the retail offer, this could create a more mixed use centre, geared to meet local day to day needs.

Although the designated area currently has no educational facilities there are a number of primary and secondary schools nearby, including Duston Church of England Lower School, Chiltern Lower School, Duston Upper School and Millway Middle School.

However as the residential population grows in the Upton area more schools will be required in order to attract more families to the area.

The Northampton Primary Care Trust have plans for the development of a new one-stop primary and social care centre on the Sixfields site. Described in the local press as a “super surgery”, the centre will cost in the region of £10 million and will provide such services as diagnostics, medical care and dentistry alongside advice sessions. Plans are also underway for the construction of a veterinary clinic on the site of the Little Chef restaurant. Clearly, the development of a health centre and veterinary clinic would provide much needed community facilities and help with the creation of the aforementioned community hub.

(iv) The Office Market
Sixfields is extremely unlikely to attract any major office occupiers. Overall demand for office space in Sixfields is reflected in the fact there is virtually no office space on the site.

Northampton as a whole has no well defined office core. This has resulted in offices locating on out of town sites which are more accessible and have space for parking. In Northampton, Brackmills, Moulton Park and the Riverside estate have been the site for the majority of out-of-town office development most of which began in the 1980’s. Despite Sixfields’ out of town location it is unlikely to be a future site for large scale office development like that seen at Moulton Park and Brackmills which are dedicated commercial developments. However there is potential on the site for some small scale office provision for services such as small scale business.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Megabowl</td>
<td>Bowling Alley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannons Gym</td>
<td>Gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pizza Hut</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungry Horse</td>
<td>Public House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella Italia</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevys Music Bar</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonalds Restaurant</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCG Cinema</td>
<td>Cinema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankie &amp; Benny’s</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burger King</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TGI Fridays</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton Football Club</td>
<td>Football Stadium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3: Leisure uses
5. PROPERTY MARKET REVIEW

accountants, solicitors, and recruitment agencies. Such a provision at Sixfields may also help to meet local needs, through increasing employment/training opportunities in the area. Such development could also help to diversify the land uses in the area. However, any office development must be considered on a cautious basis and such units should be adaptable for a range of uses in order that the premises do not remain vacant for long periods due to lack of demand.

(v) The Industrial Market

Northampton’s location, on the M1 with junctions to the M6 and M45 to the north-west and Milton Keynes to the south, has over the last decade, made the town a key distribution location. Distribution locations are not driven by access to towns but by access to the motorway network and therefore it is out-of-town sites which have developed into the most popular locations. The most popular of these are Moulton Park and Brackmills in the immediate vicinity of Northampton and slightly further afield, Daventry, one of the major distribution locations in the UK.

Manufacturing, Transport & Distribution employment accounted for 22.3% of total employment in Northampton in 2002, above the national average of 18.8%. However there is some concern about the future of Northampton as a prime location for future development due to low unemployment and emerging labour shortages, although this may be offset by the increased population that will accompany the residential development proposals.

The provision of industrial space on the Sixfields site is limited. Units are small compared to those found at the larger industrial locations. Occupiers are varied with a number of mechanics operating from units in the centre as well as some small to medium size distribution centres. The units currently being used for industrial purposes are hidden from view and found in marginal locations in the centre. It is important that this remains the case as industrial buildings easily detract from an area’s appeal as both a residential and retail location. For this reason it is suggested that the relocation of some of the industrial units in Sixfields may be advisable in order to ensure these units are in a contained area and not mixed in with the retail and leisure uses.

Agents also advise us that there is an undersupply of small units (3,000-4,000 sq. ft.) available for freehold purchase in the area and therefore construction of such units is desirable. This is illustrated at the Lodge Farm Estate where 8 units have recently been sold and fully let from plan.

SUMMARY

- The residential market is vibrant in Northampton with a number of large scale development schemes either underway or proposed. Some of the largest schemes in Northampton are very close to the Sixfields site. This development is facilitating the growth of Northampton’s population which both supports the retail market and also strengthens the employment base.

- Analysis suggests Sixfields is a successful retail location - rising rental levels and full occupancy. However, the existing supply is not entirely suitable for a district centre and therefore a greater range of smaller, possibly independent retailers is required. At the same time, the increasing residential development in the area will generate increased demand for convenience foodstore floorspace.
5. PROPERTY MARKET REVIEW

- In order to add to the designated centre’s strength as a community hub development of community uses is required. To a certain extent this is being addressed with the proposed development of the health centre and the veterinary clinic although further community uses are required. With the local population growing the supply of schools, library and other community facilities will become increasingly important.

- Although it is acknowledged that Sixfields is unlikely to attract large scale office developments the benefits of some office supply have been outlined. It is suggested that the provision of a limited supply of small offices will generate a wider variety of jobs in the locality helping to improve its vitality.

- There is already a successful industrial offer in the designated area although it is somewhat dispersed throughout the site. These units are important to the area as they create a local employment base and add to the diversity of Sixfields. However it is suggested that some of the industrial uses be repositioned in order to create an industrial hub rather than have the somewhat unattractive units amongst retail, leisure and residential areas.

- The leisure provision at Sixfields is already strong, with a range of uses available in the area. As mentioned previously further community uses are required and this possibly includes the provision of more public rather than private leisure activities.
6. ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS

INTRODUCTION

A key role of the Sixfields Area Action Plan is to define the extent of the District Centre boundary.

Physical analysis in this chapter examines the urban design and legibility of the area and a SWOT analysis provides an insight into some of the key challenges and opportunities facing Sixfields.

Potential orientation options for a District Centre that have arisen from discussions and meetings with local stakeholders are also reviewed within this chapter.
6. ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS

URBAN DESIGN AND LEGIBILITY

The A45 (Weedon Road) is the most significant feature in the Sixfields area. The Weedon Road forms a dominant and very significant barrier between the land on its northern and southern sides. However, Weedon Road is the main artery to Northampton from the west and therefore benefits from very high levels of movement. These high levels of visibility and accessibility have led to the gradual displacement of traditional manufacturing uses by higher value retail uses more dependent on such prominent locations.

There is a marked point west of the junction between Weedon Road and Duston Road where the more traditional pattern of development ends and a far more dispersed pattern of development which characterises the Sixfields area begins.

Local topography is a significant feature of the area as land falls towards the River Nene to the south. As Walter Tull Way rises to the east it sits on a ridge between the higher land to the north and lower land to the south. The alignment of the northern part of the road provides good views east towards the town centre, the lift tower and the Saints rugby ground. From this elevated position, good views are also available south towards Briar Hill.

The Sixfields stadium itself which is visible from the A45 Upton Way and UCG cinema which is on higher ground are the most prominent buildings in the immediate area.
6. ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SIXFIELDS

In light of the significant plans for expansion in the South West district and in view of the analysis of the Sixfields area itself a clear case emerges for a new district centre in the west of Northampton. The Sixfields area is well located in this regard and whilst there are both a number of strengths which could lead to opportunities for improvement there are also a number of weaknesses which constitute threats relating to significant levels of new development in the area.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Storton’s Pits Nature Reserve

Now very well established, this former gravel pit has been reclaimed as a nature reserve and provides a genuine escape from Sixfields’ highly engineered environment. An important wetland site, the area is one of a number of managed natural habitats in the Nene Valley. Being so well located for Sixfields, this is one of the area’s key strengths and provides a number of opportunities of which new development could take advantage. The natural landscape provides a positive setting for new development but also provides the potential for water based recreation.

Figure 6.2: Opportunities plan for Sixfields

Key
- SDLR
- Medium to long term development opportunities
- Short to medium development opportunities
- Prime site
- Key views
- Pedestrian link
Sixfields Stadium and Athletic Track

The stadium, athletic track and associated land to the east are a valuable resource providing the Sixfields area with a niche role in the local market. With the potential of good links to the nature reserve, these more formal sport and leisure services and facilities could be complemented by the development of more informal water based recreational activities.

Topography

Local topography is a distinctive feature and land north of the stadium on Walter Tull Way benefits from good views east and south towards the lift tower and Briar Hill respectively.

Development potential

Generally, development densities are low at present with the predominant land use being surface car parks. Some sites are currently unused and constitute immediate development opportunities. These are shown in pink on the opportunities plan. This plan also identifies the site opposite the Cannons Gym on the eastern end of Walter Tull Way as having perhaps the most immediate development potential.

Residential market

The residential market in Sixfields is vibrant and a number of additional development schemes are underway or proposed within Northampton, in close proximity to the Sixfields area. These development proposals are important to the local economy through support of the retail market and by strengthening the employment base.

Retail market

Analysis has indicated that Sixfields is a successful retail location with rising rental levels and full occupancy. Increased residential development within Sixfields will generate a demand for convenience foodstore floorspace.

Office market

The provision of a limited supply of office small office space could generate a wider variety in the type of job in the area.

Industrial market

Existing industrial uses are dispersed throughout Sixfields and are important in creating a local employment base and add to the area’s diversity. In the future it may be beneficial to encourage industrial uses to locate around a central hub.

WEAKNESSES AND THREATS

Nature of roads and pedestrian linkages

At present, the Sixfields area is dominated by the A45 and the roundabouts which control its traffic at its junctions. The road has been designed specifically to move the highest volume of traffic as efficiently as possible. This is to the detriment of the pedestrian environment. Opportunities for crossing the A45 on Weedon Road are very limited. There is a danger that further highway improvements considered necessary to accommodate rising traffic levels will compound this severance. Pedestrian access to an area’s main food store is important to the success of a district centre.
6. ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS

Existing development

The quality of existing development in the Sixfields area is generally very poor and of an out-of-centre format. Priority in the design and layout of its buildings and facilities is given to the car. Given that this area will fall well within the planned urban extension of Northampton, this is considered a significant weakness which threatens to undermine the success of new district centre. In light of this, existing sites which have been developed, particularly those A3 uses on Walter Tull Way, should be considered longer term development opportunities.

Retail market

The existing retail provision within Sixfields is not considered entirely suitable for a district centre. A greater range of smaller retailers is required if the area is to fulfil its role as a district centre.

Community uses

Development of community uses is required if Sixfields is to fulfil its role as a district centre community hub. In addition to the proposed health centre development and veterinary clinic, further community uses are needed. This factor will become increasingly important as the amount of residential development increases.

Contaminated land

Part of the Sixfields area has previously been used as a site for landfill and as such it is important that issues of contamination are considered. A study undertaken by Halcrow, on behalf of Northampton Borough Council and separate from the Sixfields Area Action Plan identifies a number of requirements and remediation measures that must be taken into consideration when redeveloping this area of the site.

A summary of the study can be found in Chapter 3.
DISTRICT CENTRE ORIENTATION

OPTION 1

Weedon Road is the principal route to Northampton from the west. This main artery carries an extremely high level of traffic and is therefore used by a great number of people. As Northampton expands to the west, Sixfields will be a fully integrated district of Northampton. At present, it is considered that the nature of this section of Weedon Road, not benefiting from any development which directly fronts onto it and therefore serving only as a highway to move high volumes of traffic to and from the town, could significantly compromise the success of a district centre in this location.

One ambitious way of addressing this concern would be to change the nature of the Weedon Road by ensuring that development directly fronts this major road. The basis of this option is to enable Weedon Road to become a place in its own right, with wide pavements provided for pedestrians and active frontages to animate the public space. Replacing the roundabouts with light-controlled junctions would release land for development and enable the district centre to occupy a more appropriate urban form. A range of unit sizes could be accommodated and parking areas could be provided to the rear of some of the larger units.
Option 2

An alternative option would be to form the district centre on a road or roads other than Weedon Road. This would allow Weedon Road to continue to serve its current principal function of providing a fast and vehicular priority route to and from Northampton and the west of the town.

The option shown focuses the heart of the district centre south of Weedon Road in the vicinity of the Sixfields Stadium and the existing array of leisure and restaurant uses along Walter Tull Way. An alternative to this off-artery option would be to focus the commercial core of the new district centre around the existing Sixfields Retail Park. This would have the advantage of partially improving links between the retail park and Sainsbury’s.

This option is derived in response to the area’s more immediate opportunities and constraints. It is considered that a core area or ‘High Street’ could be centred around the eastern end of Walter Tull Way. Larger uses, some of the existing uses, can be accommodated on the land behind. An off-artery option such as this has the benefit of not having to address the heavily trafficked environment of Weedon Road, although good access and connections to it could be created.

The land to the south between Upton Way and the nature reserve presents the opportunity for an expansion to the district centre as phases of the South West District development generate increased demand for district centre services and facilities.

This option does not fully address weaknesses of the existing environment, rather seeks to present a pragmatic and immediately deliverable development scenario, in a way which maximises the advantages of Sixfields’ natural setting, and provides a context for the intensification of development in the surrounding area.
6. ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS

INITIAL INFORMAL CONSULTATION

INTRODUCTION

Having established some key local issues through physical analysis of the Sixfields area, the following pages review the significant stages of informal consultation that have taken place regarding the designation of a new District Centre at Sixfields. A review of the focussed 2003 consultation is followed by a summary of the issues raised by identified stakeholders and members of the general public during the Action Planning Day of 22 January 2005 and the issues raised during meetings with existing landowners in the Sixfields area.

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT, OCTOBER 2003
'A PROPOSAL TO DESIGNATE AN AREA AT SIXFIELDS/WEEDON ROAD AS A DISTRICT CENTRE'

The consultation document identifies the significant opportunities for growth that Northampton is anticipated to experience and discusses the main issues that are relevant to the Sixfields area. The purpose of the consultation document is to identify opportunities to improve connections in the area for pedestrians and cyclists and to provide a more comprehensive range of services and facilities that will support Sixfields' role as a District Centre.

The proposed designation seeks to achieve a number of important objectives to secure the future of Sixfields and these include:

- The designation of Sixfields Weedon Road as a District centre;
- An increase in the permeability of the centre for pedestrians and cyclists;
- To develop a broader range of uses within the centre;
- An increase in the range of opportunities for people to access the centre by means other than the private car; and
- The creation of a sense of place.

Responses were received from 38 parties; 20 from organisations and 18 from individuals. Of these responses 34 gave direct response to the scheme and or general support to the idea of improvements to the area.

The report revealed that the majority of respondents considered that the designation would result in wider improvements to and additional uses in the area that would benefit Sixfields and the surrounding area.

Priorities for the area were identified as:

- Improving pedestrian linkages within the site;
- More facilities for cyclists (including cycle storage);
- Linkages to areas such as St James and Duston Village;
- Improved bus services; and
- Extended community related facilities.

In addition, some respondents wanted assurances that adverse affects on nearby centres would be minimal.

The general perception of the proposals is that they will result in improvements through the creation of additional facilities, increased accessibility and better and safer pedestrian flows.

CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Consultation and research has revealed that the key issues that the Sixfields Action Plan must seek to address are the need to improve linkages between Sixfields and the wider area, improved co-ordination of land uses, an increase in the critical mass of the area. The dispersed nature of the plots and their orientation with car parking to the front, create a number of retail islands that are disconnected from the wider area with no frontage onto the road network. The poor pedestrian and cycle routes across Sixfields, another frequently discussed problem raised through the consultation process, exacerbate the perception that Sixfields is a fragmented collection of retail boxes that do not relate to the area beyond their boundary.

The key challenge of the Sixfields Area
6. ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS

Action Plan is to address these issues and to identify a solution that enables Sixfields to fulfil its role as a District Centre and to create an environment that accommodates the needs of all its users, including pedestrians, cyclists, car users and public transport users.
6. ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS

AREA ACTION PLAN CONSULTATION

The Sixfields Area Action Plan has been developed through an extensive informal consultation programme that has involved discussion with the Council, local stakeholders, land owners, retail operators (existing and potential) and other agencies with an interest in the Sixfields area.

The consultation programme has comprised a number of key elements:

Retailer survey
A survey has been undertaken to reveal the position of the retail market in Sixfields and the demand from existing and potential comparison and convenience goods retailers for sites in Sixfields.

Land owner and tenant survey
In December 2004, a questionnaire was distributed to 58 land owners and occupiers of units in Sixfields to identify perceptions about the area and future aspirations for their sites.

Officer workshop
A workshop was held in December 2004 with key officers of Northampton Borough Council to discuss the scope and content of the Area Action Plan.

Stakeholder meetings
A series of meetings and discussions have been undertaken with many of the land owners and agents in Sixfields to identify the future aspirations for these key sites.

Action Planning Day
The Northampton Sixfields Action Planning Day was held on Saturday 22 January 2005 and brought together members of the local community, local stakeholders, Council officers, land owners and representatives of local organisations. The event was an opportunity to discuss the particular issues in Sixfields and to review and suggest options for the future development of the area.

A full report presenting the outcomes of the consultation has been provided to the Council alongside this draft AAP.

CONSULTATION CONCLUSIONS

Issues of concern, problems and perceptions
The main issues in relation to Sixfields were identified as:
- car dominated;
- busy;
- few pedestrian routes;
- safety concerns;
- poor image;
- insufficient road crossing points;
- congestion;
- poor facilities for cyclists;
- poor linkages between sites;
- subsidence; and
- poor linkages to surrounding centres.

Main priorities
The main priorities for the creation of a District Centre at Sixfields were identified as:
- new linkages between sites in Sixfields;
- improved linkages to other local centres;
- a better environment for pedestrians and cyclists;
- co-ordination of land uses;
- improved public transport links and extended service;
- increase the critical mass;
- image
- a reduction in traffic flow; and
- promotion of Stortons’ Pits.

Facilities
The key facilities that would contribute to the creation of a District Centre in Sixfields were considered to be:
- youth facilities;
- play areas;
- a skate park;
- community centre;
- coffee shops;
- health centre;
- retail;
- police presence;
- library;
- hotel; and
- housing.
6. ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS

ACTION PLAN WORKSHOPS

During the Action Planning Day on 22 January 2005, local stakeholders were asked to define the area of Sixfields that they considered should form the core District Centre.

The plans on this page illustrate the range of options identified. [Full details of the Action Planning Day can be found in the separate Consultation Report.]

The area to the north of Weedon Road was most frequently included within the District Centre boundary. Walter Tull Way is included within the boundary only twice. None of the suggested boundary options extend beyond Sixfields Stadium/Upton Way to the south.

Group 1

The main uses of the District Centre should be located on the north side of Weedon Road. The area needs improved links to the north and south. The area to the south of Weedon Road should continue to develop as a sports/leisure centre.

Group 2

The District Centre should be located to the northern side of Weedon Road.
6. ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS

Group 3
The District Centre should traverse Weedon Road and include Sainsbury’s and extend to the site of the current waste transfer station. Sixfields Stadium should be excluded from the District Centre boundary.

Group 4
The District Centre should be focussed to the north and south of Weedon Road, extending to the junction with Upton Way to the west and to the edge of Northampton to the east.

Group 5
Sixfields District Centre should include the area to the east of Upton Way and Tollgate Way. In addition, it should include Sixfields Stadium and the area to the north of Gambrel Road.
6. ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS

LAND OWNER MEETINGS

Meetings with local land owners and occupiers were undertaken to discuss their interest in the area and aspirations for the future. Full details of the meetings are provided in the Consultation Report.

At each meeting, the District Centre boundary was discussed and plans were annotated to reflect each stakeholder’s preference. These plans are illustrated on this page.

Four main areas were identified through the meetings as an appropriate core for a new district centre: the new SDLR, the land to the north of Weedon Road, the area between Weedon Road and Walter Tull Way and the Weedon Road itself.

Northampton Town Football Club

The football club emphasised that any plans for the future of Sixfields should include the site of the athletic track adjacent to the stadium. In addition, it was considered that a site for a new hotel facility should be included on the west car park to support the range of conference facilities available in the area.

USS Ltd and Jones Lang LaSalle

Discussions with this stakeholder revealed that they considered that Sixfields District Centre should be focussed to the north of Weedon Road. It was noted that land to the south of Gambrel Road and to the west of Tollgate Way should form the District Centre.

Northampton Tyres/Lyndendown Ltd and Hadland Surveyors

Discussions with this agent revealed that it was considered appropriate to locate a District Centre to the west of Upton Way and Tollgate Way and to the north and south of Weedon Road.
Sainsbury’s and Indigo Planning

Discussions on behalf of Sainsbury’s identified a longstanding aspiration to extend their store recognised in an undetermined application for an 800 sqm store extension.

Sainsbury’s would be enthusiastic about a larger extension – and in the context of land ownership issues in relation to their site, it is considered that this may be the only mechanism by which a significantly larger store could be achieved here. They consider that such a store would be important in anchoring any district centre, and providing local people with the same level of provision that is available to the south and east of Northampton. It is important that the Sainsbury’s store falls within the new centre boundary.

Therefore, Sainsbury’s position is that the Area Action Plan for Sixfields should accommodate the possibility of an extended store - potentially significantly extended - and include the site as part of the defined centre.

English Partnerships and Halcrow

The Joint Initiative outlines a number of proposed options for the Sixfields area:

The existing Recycling Centre will be relocated to a new site in Harvey Reeves Road and will provide a new vacant site adjacent to Weedon Road that is proposed for new retail and mixed use developments.

The area to the east of Upton Way is proposed for housing and new leisure and sporting facilities will potentially be accessed from the new road that will link Sixfields and Harvey Reeves Road.

The Duston Mill Lane area is identified for residential and commercial(health) facilities.
COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

An important element in creating a District Centre at Sixfields is the provision of facilities over and above the retail offer that is available at present.

Discussions have taken place with key organisations who are interested in providing health and police services in Sixfields. These organisations have a vital role to play in the creation of a District Centre at Sixfields.

Health facilities

Through the work associated with the Joint Initiative the Northampton PCT has already expressed interest in locating a new health centre in the Sixfields area. The type of facility envisaged would be a ‘one-stop’ health centre providing traditional services such as GP’s, District Nursing and health visitors. In addition, it is anticipated that a wide range of other health services will be provided at this centre, enabling local people to access resources such as out-patients, x-ray and minor injury clinics without having to travel into Northampton. Other potential occupiers of a health centre may include chronic disease, podiatry, physiotherapy and intermediary care.

Importantly, a pharmacy is also planned as a key element of the ‘one stop’ centre and there is already considerable interest from pharmacists wanting to locate in the proposed centre. The centre is anticipated to be delivered thought the LIFT initiative and current funding streams and timescales could mean that a centre in Sixfields will be open in 2008.

When considering sites, the PCT has been offered one viable option in the Sixfields area, the site on Duston Mill Lane. The Northampton PCT was granted outline planning permission for a health centre on Duston Mill Lane in Spring 2005.

It was noted that the PCT has a duty of care to provide a health centre in Sixfields and the present site is the only viable option at present. A site must be acquired by March 2005 to accord with ODPM funding programmes.

Northamptonshire Police

Discussions with Northamptonshire Police have revealed that they have a requirement for a sector office in Sixfields. This would not be a police station but a facility to replace their existing rented site on Gladstone Road.

The sector office required would ideally be of a similar size and scale to their existing operation on Gladstone Road which comprises one large office with two/three smaller rooms and a kitchen and toilet. The existing office is 173 square metres in size and it was noted that the Police would be seeking new premises of around 200 square feet. The office would serve three shifts of four/five working officers and as such there would be a maximum of eight officers using the office at any one time.

It was noted that no specific partners have been approached in relation to meeting space requirements.

SUMMARY

There is potential to improve the range of community facilities within Sixfields. The PCT is actively seeking premises in the area to provide health facilities and the Police are keen to establish partnerships to enable them to relocate to the area.

It is important however, to ensure that such community uses are provided in accessible locations. Access to public transport services will be a particularly important consideration in where to site a new health centre.

In addition, PPS6 outlines a range of uses that are appropriate in a district centre environment. These uses are outlined in Policy SDC1 and include banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public facilities such as a library.
CONCLUSIONS

In accordance with Regulation 25, public consultation has been central to the early stages of Area Action Plan preparation.

The Action Planning Day held on 22 January 2005 provided the opportunity for identified stakeholders and members of the general public to raise issues and aspirations associated with the establishment of a new District Centre at Sixfields.

Weedon Road

Options for the focus of a district centre were explored through discussions with local landowners, and through the Action Planning Day. These revealed that there were four main areas that were considered to be an appropriate core: the new SDLR, the land to the north of Weedon Road, the area between Weedon Road and Walter Tull Way and the Weedon Road itself.

In addition to the views of key stakeholders, it is also important to draw on good practice in determining the preferred options for the district centre boundary.

The Urban Design Compendium, published by English Partnerships, provides a wealth of good practice in relation to the distribution of land uses and urban design principles for district centres.

The Urban Design Compendium provides guidance on the mixing of land uses and warns against the adoption of a zoned approach to development when creating ‘urban structures’. The existing format of Sixfields makes this guidance particularly relevant, as at present land uses are separated. In response to the Compendium, it is considered important to ensure that when planning for a District Centre, land uses should be mixed, as far as possible to create a sustainable and vibrant environment.

The principles promoted within the Urban Design Compendium provide a sound basis on which to examine the views of key stakeholders, and together these provide a sound basis for the determination of a preferred option.

The Compendium also places an emphasis on the importance of walkable environments; another frequent criticism of Sixfields is its poor provision for pedestrians, and consequently improvements to the District Centre recommended in the AAP must address this issue.

Well designed centres are focused on public transport nodes (Urban Design Compendium) and as such, Option 1, Weedon Road could potentially meet this criteria. Whilst Weedon Road is a busy car route, public transport operators also use the road and there is further potential to expand this. Walter Tull Way is less well served by public transport and as such Option 2 may be less desirable. In addition, the Compendium notes that moving local centres away from main routes deprives them of passing trade and this may be the case if the District Centre were to be focused on Option 2.

Within the context of informal consultation to date and recognised urban design guidance, it is clear that a District Centre focused around the main transport route of Weedon Road would be the most appropriate option for Sixfields.

In order to create a District Centre environment within Sixfields, new frontages onto Weedon Road must be created and public transport links improved.
6. ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS

The conclusions form a sound basis on which principles for Sixfields can be identified and will be carried through into a framework for their delivery.

Joint Initiative focus for development

The English Partnerships Joint Initiative proposals seek to focus development on Walter Tull Way and adjacent to the SDLR. Whilst these are local routes, neither of these roads are or may potentially become public transport corridors and as such, the proposals are inappropriate for the creation of a successful, vibrant District Centre at Sixfields. In addition, the proposals rely on the heavy zoning of uses which would also work against the creation a sustainable, vibrant environment.

Industrial uses

Representatives of land owners within the Tweed Road area have suggested that uses other than industry could be located on these sites. The SDLR will permit improved access to the industrial area and improve the quality of the sites for industry. The area also suffers from topographical issues, which combined with the improved access to the area that will be afforded by the SDLR ensure that it is appropriate for the industrial designation of the area to remain.

Gambrel Road

The area of Sixfields to the north Weedon Road, along Gambrel Road is not an appropriate location for retail development. The development of retail uses in this area does not accord with the key urban design principles that place the retail and commercial focus and frontage of Sixfields along either side of Weedon Road.

Healthcare

The PCT health centre should be situated at the key gateway to the District Centre from Northampton, providing visibility, and access to public transport services that use this route. The PCT is an important service that will bring local people into the District Centre and its importance should be reflected through its location on a prominent, easily accessible site.

Athletics track

The athletics track, adjacent to Sixfields Stadium, is in need of replacement in the short-term. The site will therefore be subject to redevelopment in the future.

Housing

Throughout the consultation process, discussions with land owners and other stakeholders did not generally recognise the need for housing provision in Sixfields. However, if Sixfields is to function as a district centre housing will be a key element in the creation of a sustainable local community by providing a local catchment for the services and facilities within the centre.

District Centre boundary

The district centre boundary preferred option has been identified following detailed discussions with local stakeholders and community consultation. The extent of the boundary takes account of the identified quantitative need for retail floorspace at Sixfields. The boundary has been drawn to include sites that are key to the development of a strong frontage onto Weedon Road. In this way, future investment can be focussed onto Weedon Road.

The western boundary has been drawn in alignment with Upton Way, which provides a clear break between existing residential and commercial uses. To the north and south of Weedon Road, the boundary has

Sixfields athletics track
6. ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS

been drawn tightly, taking into account existing retail uses, to ensure that development is focused on Weedon Road. The eastern boundary has been drawn to exclude existing retail warehouse operations, which represent a form of development that is at odds with the design principles set out in the AAP.
INTRODUCTION

A specialist review of the retail capacity and need in Sixfields has been undertaken to examine potential options for new provision in the area. In the context of creating a District Centre, the analysis identifies means of expanding the offer of Sixfields to complement and enhance the existing provision.

Scale and Character of Retail Provision in New District Centre

Defining a District Centre

National Planning Policy Guidance provides an indication of the type of retail provision expected in a “district centre”. PPG6 defines district shopping centres as;

“Groups of shops, separate from the town centre, usually containing at least one supermarket or superstore, and non-retail services such as banks, building societies and restaurants.”

Consultation Draft PPS6 provides a broader definition, encompassing the wider role of district centres beyond retail and private services. It states that district centres;

“...will usually comprise groups of shops, separate from the town centre, often containing at least one food supermarket or superstore, and a range of non-retail services, such as banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public facilities such as a library.”

These definitions are general, and are in practice applied to centres ranging from those that comprise a very small number of large units (e.g. Hulme and Sport City in Manchester) to those with a range and level of provision comparable to a small town (e.g. Shirley in Solihull and Erdington in Birmingham). The existing district centres in Northampton exhibit a similar diversity:

- Weston Favell - comprises some 65 units, including two supermarkets, a range of comparison goods operators including several national multiples, and a range of private and public services. Whilst the centre is visually unappealing and has an awkward configuration, it is popular and in practice appears to function well, meeting the day to day, and some higher order, needs of local people close to where they live.

- Kingsthorpe - comprises over 70 units, with three supermarkets, a range of lower order comparison goods retailers, and a strong private service sector provision. Again, Kingsthorpe meets the day to day, and some of the higher order, retail and service needs of its local population.

- Mere Way - with just seven units, the range of provision here is far more limited than the other centres, and is dominated by the Tesco Extra store, which carries an extensive comparison goods range alongside its core grocery offer. A parade of units comprising a restaurant, chemist, estate agent, hairdresser and two vacancies sits alongside Tesco, but the broader range of services and facilities evident at Kingsthorpe and Weston Favell is not present. Convenience and day to day comparison shopping requirements are therefore effectively met in a single store, but choice is limited and a broader range of needs is not met.

In overall terms, whilst Weston Favell and Kingsthorpe are very different to one another, they are both successful district centres. Mere Way, which presents a third model of provision might be considered less adequate in comparison. Our experience in Northampton and in a wide
range of towns and cities nationwide suggests that whilst it is relatively straightforward to identify centres that do not function well, it is not possible to identify a single paradigm that can be successfully applied in every circumstance. There is no “right” answer, and it would be unwise to seek to translate a model that works in one situation to another.

However, in simple terms, there are certain characteristics of retail and private service provision that should, ideally, be evident in a successful district centre capable of performing a full role in the local hierarchy of centres. These include:

- **Convenience retail** - local people should be able to meet almost all their convenience shopping needs, with a full range bulk offer available in overall terms, which may be complemented by a choice of outlets to provide differentiation with regard to, for example, price, quality, specialist and format.

- **Comparison retail** - local people should be able to meet their day to day comparison shopping needs. This may be complemented by a degree of higher order provision, but true “comparison” shopping (i.e. the ability to compare items across a range of retailers) need not be present, and the offer should not be of such a scale as to elevate the centre beyond its designated role and function, or place it in competition with higher order centres.

- **Private services** - local people should be able to meet their day to day service needs. Financial services (one or more banks or building societies) will be a key element of this, complemented by, for example, catering outlets, hairdressers, estate agents, travel agents, leisure facilities and other services of a local nature.

**Existing Offer in the Sixfields Area**

The retail and private service provision in the Sixfields area comprises a disjointed collection of “big box” uses. In terms of convenience retail, the offer is limited to Sainsbury’s, which is poorly integrated with the rest of the provision. The external appearance of the store is unappealing, and the offer is less extensive than that available at the Tesco stores at Mere Way and Weston Favell. The total supermarket floorspace in Kingsthorpe, with Asda, Waitrose (as extended) and Iceland is comparable to that at Sainsbury’s Sixfields, complemented elsewhere in the northern part of Northampton by the Morrisons superstore on Kettering Road. Equally, the choice of convenience outlets at Weston Favell (five operators) and Kingsthorpe (twelve operators) is far greater.

To function more fully and effectively as a district centre it is important that the convenience retail function of Sixfields is improved. There would be benefit in enhancing the bulk food shopping provision, potentially through an extension to the superstore offer, coupled with additional supermarket floorspace that offers an alternative in terms of, for example, price or quality. Equally, there would be benefit in enhancing the choice of provision, through the introduction of smaller, more specialist, outlets.

In terms of comparison retail, the offer includes a number of town centre type operators, albeit in larger format stores. These include Boots, JJB Sports, Next and Mamas and Papas. In addition, there are a number of operators more routinely associated with a retail warehouse format, including Wickes, Homebase, Halfords and Hobbycraft. In terms of the quantum of provision, the offer is therefore...
7. RETAIL CAPACITY - OPTIONS FOR MEETING NEED

comparatively extensive. The choice is less wide ranging, but the quality of operator is high.

There is scope to enhance the comparison provision to present a more rounded offer by strengthening and expanding the range of town centre type operators, providing local people with more choice and a greater ability to meet their day to day needs. It is not considered to be possible or appropriate to seek to create a conventional "high street" offer comprising a large number of small units at this location. Equally, with regard to the expected role and function of the centre and in preventing it competing at an inappropriate level with the town centre, a retail park environment should not be created. Rather, a hybrid offer comprising some unit shops and some larger outlets is more suitable in establishing the critical mass necessary to sustain the full range of district centre functions, and providing a range and type of retailing consistent with Sixfields performing a district centre role.

The service use offer in the Sixfields area is comparatively one dimensional. With the exception of First Choice (travel agents) it is dominated by leisure, fast food and the evening economy, with operators such as Megabowl, UCG, Pizza Hut, McDonalds, TGI and Frankie & Benny’s. There are no banks or building societies, hairdressers, estate agents or other services of a local nature and of the kind found at Kingsthorpe and Weston Favell. Local people are, therefore, currently unable to meet their day to day service requirements here, and it is important that this is remedied if Sixfields is to perform a fully rounded district centre function.

In seeking to enhance the level of provision in this sector it is important to recognise that the sustainability of a wider range of services relies on achieving a good level of pedestrian footfall and a high degree of interaction with surrounding residential areas. This will be a function of securing effective urban design within the centre, high prominence and visibility, strong linkages with local neighbourhoods, the right mix of additional retail facilities, and a positive physical relationship between those facilities.

Quantitative Need

It is important to emphasise that these figures should not be applied prescriptively, and do not represent rigid targets in terms of the level of retail floorspace that "should" be provided at Sixfields. They are the result of a central set of assumptions, and by applying a different set of assumptions that may be more appropriate for a specific type of retailing alternative and equally valid outcomes are possible. Rather, they should be used to establish the broad parameters of new retailing as a component of the overall mix in Area Action Plan options, to which the market can respond.

A specific assessment of the capacity for additional provision in the private service sector has not been undertaken, and indeed given the nature of this market such an assessment is not considered possible. Rather, it is considered more appropriate to make a broad allowance in floorspace terms, again to which the market can respond.

Options for Realising the Need

In assessing the provision of further convenience goods shopping, the range of types of retailer who might be attracted to Sixfields has been split into five unit size categories. These should be understood in broad terms as indicative of the approximate size of units that may be occupied by different types of retailer.
Clearly, the number of potential combinations of additional types of unit is very extensive. However, it is considered that the following three broad scenarios are worthy of further consideration at this stage:

- Scenario A: Extended superstore (say, 1,000 sq m gross) delivered to provide more comprehensive bulk food shopping. Supermarket (say, 1,500 sq m gross) delivered to provide choice in terms of price or quality, and alternative bulk food shopping option. Allowance made for some additional small units (100 - 300 sq m) for specialist and convenience markets.

- Scenario B: Superstore not extended. Two further supermarkets (say, 2,500 sq m gross in total) delivered to provide choice in terms of price and quality, and alternative bulk food shopping options. Allowance made for some additional small units (100 - 300 sq m) for specialist and convenience markets.

- Scenario C: Superstore not extended. Second superstore delivered (say, 5,000 sq m gross, with a convenience element equivalent to, say, 3,000 sq m gross) to provide more comprehensive bulk food shopping. Allowance made for some additional small units (100 - 300 sq m) for specialist and convenience markets.

It is important to emphasise that these are broad indicative scenarios illustrating the types of convenience goods retailing that may be appropriate in a district centre setting at Sixfields. They should be subject to consultation, and any preferred option assessed in more detail in both market and economic terms.

Similarly, in assessing the provision of further comparison goods shopping, the range of types of retailer who might be attracted to Sixfields has been split into three unit size categories. Again, these should be understood in broad terms as indicative of the approximate size of units that may be occupied by different types of retailer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Size (gross)</th>
<th>Potential Types of Operation</th>
<th>Market Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 sq m</td>
<td>Small specialist and independent food retailers</td>
<td>Interest from Greggs the Baker. Delivery of the right units at affordable rental levels likely to generate interest from independent operators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 sq m</td>
<td>National multiple small format stores (e.g. Tesco Express, M &amp; S Simply Food), general convenience stores, larger specialist and independent food retailers</td>
<td>Delivery of a well configured scheme, fully integrated with local residential areas, generating footfall and attracting car borne trips likely to be attractive to these types of operator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 sq m</td>
<td>Specialist supermarkets (e.g. Farmfoods, Iceland), larger small format stores (e.g. M &amp; S Simply Food), larger independent grocers</td>
<td>Specialist supermarkets may find this environment challenging. Size of unit falls between convenience and full supermarket offer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900 - 1,500 sq m</td>
<td>Deep discounters, superstore extension, specialist supermarkets (e.g. M &amp; S Food)</td>
<td>Strong interest from Lidl and Aldi. Represents a location of the type previously sought by M &amp; S. Interest from Sainsbury’s to extend their store.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 1,500 sq m</td>
<td>New superstore</td>
<td>Strong interest from Asda for representation in this market.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7.1: Range and type of retailer who may be interested in Sixfields (convenience goods.)
As discussed earlier, capacity for approximately 8,530 sq m gross of comparison retail space has been identified. In relation to a district centre type function this represents a relatively substantial level of provision. There is no particular imperative to provide this floorspace in its entirety, and indeed as detailed proposals emerge to accommodate further comparison goods retail at Sixfields they should be assessed in more detail in both market and economic terms.

It is not considered appropriate to develop alternative scenarios for the delivery of comparison goods retail space. Rather, options testing should be on the basis that an allowance is made for up to the level of floorspace identified, to be provided in flexible accommodation to satisfy a range of operator requirements, consistent with the district centre role and function of Sixfields. As discussed above, however, it is important that a pure retail park environment is avoided, and that provision is made to enable operators with smaller space requirements to be accommodated.

Appropriateness of scale in the provision of all new retail facilities will be an important consideration, and this is reflected in Policy SDC2 (chapter 9). New development must complement and relate directly to the district centre role and function envisaged for Sixfields. In the case of comparison goods, it is particularly important that the profile of provision is consistent with a district centre function, and the role of larger units should be carefully controlled.”

It should also be noted that Scenario C in terms of the provision of convenience goods retail (discussed above) assumes the delivery of a second superstore of 5,000 sq m gross, with a convenience element equivalent to 3,000 sq m gross, and a comparison element equivalent to 2,000 sq m gross. The level of supportable comparison retail alongside such a store should be reduced in this amount.

As discussed above, a specific assessment of the capacity for additional provision in the private service sector has not been undertaken. Rather, it is considered more appropriate to make a broad allowance in floorspace terms to which the market can respond. The retail demand survey showed that service sector operators are cautious about untested markets such as this. Whilst some interest was shown from Lloyds TSB, operators in this sector are susceptible to concerns over the currently somewhat peripheral and isolated location of Sixfields, its disjointed nature, lack of footfall, the perceived “out of town” atmosphere and lack of local identity.

If these concerns can be addressed through delivery of a well designed centre with a strong and attractive retail offer generating a good level of pedestrian footfall, then service operators are likely

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 sq m</td>
<td>Small specialist and independent non food retailers</td>
<td>Delivery of the right units at affordable levels likely to generate interest from independent operators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 - 400 sq m</td>
<td>Independent and some multiple retailers in a range of &quot;town centre&quot; type comparison goods sectors serving localised markets.</td>
<td>Some interest from Select (ladies' wear), Superdrug, Clinton Cards, Home Entertainment and Blockbuster. Delivery of a well configured scheme, fully integrated with local residential areas, generating footfall and attracting car borne trips likely to be attractive to these types of operator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 500 sq m</td>
<td>Multiple retailers in a range of &quot;town centre&quot; type comparison goods sectors, operating larger format stores.</td>
<td>Some interest from WH Smith, and Next thought to be seeking to expand their operation. Likely to generate interest amongst mixed / variety, fashion and value operators.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.2: Range and type of retailer who may be interested in Sixfields (comparison goods)
to respond positively. In this context, it is considered that a nominal allowance should be made for (say) five or six small units in the anticipation they would be occupied by private service sector operators.

CONCLUSION

Each of the suggested convenience retail options represents a potentially appropriate alternative in terms of the future food shopping provision in the district centre. There is no clear "preferred" option, as each offers its own benefits. However, our overall view is that Option A is the one with the most to offer in terms of deliverability and the resultant retail outcome. It should be noted that this is heavily dependent on the assumption that an effective urban design solution can be put in place to integrate the Sainsbury's store more effectively with the rest of the Sixfields area.

Option A would address all the key areas of need, by providing a comprehensive full range bulk food shopping option, an alternative differentiated by price or quality, and unit shopping. Equally, it seeks to make the most efficient use of the existing stock. Option B would provide a great deal of choice, but with three individual supermarkets would be relatively demanding in terms of the requirement for land, and equally assumes that two further supermarket operators could be attracted to the area, which may not be realistic. Option C is perhaps the second best option - whilst again it would require a large amount of land, and careful controls would be needed in terms of the exact scale and format of provision, it would also go some considerable way to meeting key areas of need.
INTRODUCTION

The creation of an attractive, viable and functional District Centre at Sixfields will be delivered through a clear framework of principles to guide future development.

This section establishes urban design and development principles that will act as a tool to guide the assessment of future development proposals for Sixfields. Sustainability is an intrinsic element of all of these development principles. However, it is useful to identify the key elements of sustainability in Sixfields:

- Avoid damage to wildlife sites, particularly the adjacent Storton’s Pits Nature Reserve;
- Value, protect and maintain biodiversity;
- Create safe, crime free, clean, pleasant environments;
- Increase inclusive access to preventative health care practice;
- Reduce water use by encouraging water conservation, and to reduce run-off;
- Limit air pollution from transport;
- Reduce travel by car and increase walking, cycling and use of public transport;
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by planning for energy efficiency;
- Create a high quality, diverse, durable place with a distinctive local character, with spaces and buildings that are human in scale and form and enhance the townscape;
- Improve the quantity and quality of publicly accessible open space;
- Ensure that opportunities for culture, leisure and recreation are readily accessible;
- Increase inclusive access to local employment opportunities and reduce unemployment; and
- Increase investment and business activity in Sixfields District Centre.

It is considered that new development associated with the establishment of a new District Centre at Sixfields should adhere to the principles of:

- active frontages onto Weedon Road;
- Weedon Road traffic management;
- good connectivity;
- a mix of uses;
- incorporation of residential development;
- a finer urban grain; and
- a sense of urban enclosure.

Active frontages onto Weedon Road

Wherever possible, new development in Sixfields District Centre will be designed to present an active development frontage to Weedon Road. This frontage will accommodate active uses at ground floor level, including shopfronts; entrances to residential or commercial properties; and windows to ensure passive surveillance of the public realm and an interesting and varied street scene.

Weedon Road Traffic Management

In the context of the urban extension of this part of Northampton, the role and function of Weedon Road will change over the next 15 years. Its current role as the major route to Northampton from the west will change as the nature of Weedon Road becomes a District Centre and a ‘place’ in its own right rather than a thoroughfare.

Weedon Road will be the heart of this new place and will serve a wide variety of needs. Therefore the traffic management of the area is the key to achieving a District Centre environment. Appropriate traffic management measures include at grade crossings, landscaping/street trees, generous pavements, on-street parking and the lowering of speeds as appropriate to a District Centre.
8. PRINCIPLES FOR SIXFIELDS

Connectivity
New development in Sixfields will be designed to improve connections into and through the District Centre, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, and where possible, create new public routes. A public transport interchange, principally comprising new bus stops on the Weedon Road will enhance connections across Weedon Road and between the District Centre and surrounding residential communities are particularly important.

A mix of uses
An appropriate mix of uses including community, health and commercial uses, will be encouraged both vertically and horizontally in Sixfields. It is the role of a District Centre to provide a full range of services and facilities for the community it serves. In particular, high density residential development above ground floor retail and commercial uses will be encouraged within the District Centre boundary. Through encouraging a mix of uses, a flexible approach can be adopted that will ensure that development can reflect changing market conditions.

Incorporation of residential development
To contribute to the targets defined in the Sub-Regional Framework, residential development will be encouraged within the District Centre. In addition to the key sites that have been identified for residential development within the Area Action Plan, residential development will also be encouraged on the upper storeys of new development, subject to considerations of residential amenity.

It is considered that, subject to satisfactory land remediation, there is significant scope for residential development within the Sixfields AAP area. Residential uses located within and district centre itself, and a walkable distance from it, are considered essential for the sustainable future of the centre and the successful establishment of the district centre. New residential uses in the immediate area will help provide local catchment for retail and other services provided in the centre and will provide activity and thereby enhance community safety outside normal shopping hours. This will enhance the vitality and viability of the new centre.

With the establishment of a district centre, Sixfields will be considered a sustainable location, providing new residents with a good range of shops and services and improved levels of public transport accessibility through the incorporation of a new public transport interchange on Weedon Road. The upper floors of new development within the district centre itself together with land along Walter Tull Way and, in the longer term perhaps, land on Gambrel Road as it comes forward for redevelopment, are all considered appropriate for housing development of relatively high densities subject to suitable ground conditions. Densities should...
8. PRINCIPLES FOR SIXFIELDS

generally increase on sites closer to the focus of the district centre.

Urban grain
Urban grain refers to the density and pattern of development, including not only the built form but the spaces between buildings.

Buildings in Sixfields should be designed to create a finer urban grain than at present. Single-use and overly-long blocks should be avoided. Existing street patterns should be respected and where possible extended in areas of new development.

Urban enclosure
Within the Sixfields area, public spaces - streets, greens and squares - should be strongly defined by the built edges that surround them. Within this context, groups of buildings should be designed to form unified urban 'backdrops' rather than collections of individual or unrelated objects.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE URBAN DESIGN COMPENDIUM

The principles for Sixfields have been prepared within the context of the Urban Design Compendium, a publication jointly prepared by English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation in 2000. The Compendium provides extremely useful and relevant good practice for those involved in the delivery and assessment of new development.

Of particular relevance to Sixfields is the 'Creating the Urban Structure' section which provides strategic guidance on the mixing of uses and warns against the dangers of taking a zoned approach to land use planning. Emphasis is placed on the importance of walkable environments.

Considering the planning and design of centres, it is recommended that centres are focussed on public transport nodes. Mixed use centres are best located at crossroads and along main movement routes, within walking distance of homes.

The injection of housing into the mix of uses contained in centres is considered central to their success, enabling activity to be stretched beyond daytime office and shopping hours. Emphasis is also given to civic roles and functions, with public uses such as health facilities, libraries and police and fire stations all benefiting from central prominent locations.

The problems caused by inactive edges created by 'big boxes' (large, bulky retail units with little distinctive character) are given some consideration. This is particularly important for the Sixfields area with Walter Tull Way being characterised by such buildings.
INTRODUCTION

General policies on new retail development are set out in the Core Strategy. These include policies relating to the retail hierarchy. Northampton is a sub-regional shopping centre although only a small percentage of the retail offer meets the day-to-day convenience needs of those who live in the town’s catchment. The Borough’s network of district centres meets a significant proportion of this convenience need. The Local Plan of 1997 included a network of three established district centres; Weston Favell, to the north west of Northampton; Kingsthorpe to the north; and Mere Way to the south. However, no district centre exists to meet retail and community needs to the south west of Northampton. In the context of the planned expansion of Northampton through the South West District initiative, it is considered that a new district centre is required on the western side of the town.

POLICY SDC1: SIXFIELDS DISTRICT CENTRE

A new district centre serving the west of Northampton town is designated at Sixfields. Centred on Weedon Road, the district centre will provide a broad range of facilities and services and act as a focus for both the community and for public transport.

Planning permission will be granted for a range of uses considered appropriate for a district centre, including a limited amount of additional convenience and comparison retail, office uses, community and health services and leisure uses.

The planned expansion of Northampton through the South West District initiative will see a rapid increase in the resident population of the town over the next 20 years. This growth will give rise to a wide range of retail and community needs. The new district centre at Sixfields will meet the retail and community needs of both the new and already established resident population in the area which do not currently benefit from a district centre on the western side of the town.

The District Centre will focus on and provide active frontage to Weedon Road itself. A wide range of uses are appropriate to a district centre as set out in Policy SCD1, including banks, building societies, a post office, a health centre, places of worship and a library. This is not an exhaustive list. For the centre to be sustainable, it is important that the services and facilities provided by the district centre are accessible to the widest range of people.

POLICY SDC2: NEW RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

There is a net requirement for 1,900 square metres of convenience goods sales space and 6,400 square metres of local comparison goods sales space in the period up to 2009.

There is a need for approximately 1,900 sq m of convenience goods sales space, and approximately 6,400 sq m of local comparison goods sales space in the period up to 2009. These figures are indicative of the broad order of retail floorspace needed to serve this part of Northampton through to 2009, and should not be applied prescriptively.

Any new retail development must be of a type, scale and function consistent with and appropriate to a District Centre setting, and will also be subject to the provisions of all relevant local, regional and national planning policies.

Government guidance provides that the need for additional floorspace should normally be assessed no more than five years ahead, and the time horizon for the 2004 analysis, which informs the figures set out above, is therefore 2009. As the AAP looks forward over a ten year period, the position in terms of the level of floorspace and its delivery relative to each phase of development will be kept under review.
POLICY SDC3: DEVELOPMENT/PROPOSAL SITES

The Council has identified, in the Proposals Map and associated proposals schedule, a number of key sites within the Sixfields district centre which it wishes to see developed. This proposals schedule indicates the uses that the Council considers appropriate on these sites. Other uses may also be appropriate, and will be considered against other policies in the Development Plan.

The Council wishes a high standard of design to be achieved. However, the key sites and other new development proposals that come forward should be developed in accordance with the following urban design and development principles which are specific to Sixfields:

i. Active frontages onto Weedon Road;
ii. Weedon Road as a place not a route;
iii. Improved connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists;
iv. Promotion of mixed use development;
v. Incorporation of residential uses in new development;
vi. A more fine urban grain, providing a range of unit sizes; and
vii. Urban enclosure.

There is significant pressure for new development in the Sixfields area. The quality of the existing environment at Sixfields is poor and the A45 Weedon Road represents a significant barrier to pedestrian and cycle movements between the restaurant and leisure facilities to the south of Weedon Road and the retail uses on the north of Weedon Road.

The proposals schedule provides guidance on uses considered appropriate by the Council for key sites in the Sixfields area. Development on each of these sites should be in accordance with the urban design and development principles for Sixfields established in Chapter 9 and should encourage the highest standards of design and sustainable development. A flexible approach to the mix of uses will be adopted, to ensure that the AAP can adapt to changing market conditions.

It is considered that the environmental success of a new district centre at Sixfields is dependent to a large extent on the Weedon Road environment. At present, Weedon Road is an extremely busy traffic route. For Sixfields to be a successful district centre, meeting the needs of the local community it serves, Weedon Road needs to be a people-friendly place, with wide pavements providing access to a wide range of shops and services typically found in a district centre.

POLICY SDC4: PUBLIC TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS

To ensure the services and facilities provided by the district centre are accessible to the highest proportion of people, new bus stops providing links to the town centre and surrounding residential areas should be located in the heart of the district centre, on Weedon Road.

New bus stops on Weedon Road should provide public transport links to and from Northampton Station, the town centre and the wider area. The location of these stops should facilitate easy access both to the full range of services and facilities provided in the centre and to interchange between different bus services running through the centre.

POLICY SDC5: NORTHAMPTON TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB AND ATHLETICS STADIUM

Sixfields stadium and the athletics track should be protected from future development that may lead to the loss of these facilities, which are of borough importance.

Sixfields stadium, which is home to Northampton Football Club, and athletics track are significant local facilities which are of extremely high value to the wider Northampton community. Future development will not be permitted if it...
9. POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

would detract from the existing uses on these sites. Development on the athletics track site may be permitted if:

a) It is to provide a new athletics track facility; or

b) If an alternative site for the athletics track, in an appropriate location is identified as part of any development proposal.

POLICY SDC6: BUSINESS AREAS

Planning permission will be granted for business, general industry and storage and distribution use within the existing business areas as shown on the proposals map.

Gambrel Road is a successful and popular business area. Over time, as sites have come forward for redevelopment, traditional manufacturing units have been replaced with good quality modern business facilities. The area and the local economy would benefit from this trend continuing. However, in the context of the establishment of a new district shopping centre focused on the Weedon Road, and in recognition of the need to ensure the centre is supported by local residents within walking distance of the centre, some sites in Gambrel Road may be appropriate for residential development in the longer term following the review of this Area Action Plan. Residential development would enable a finer grain of development to be introduced which would facilitate access to the district centre from housing to the north.

The development sites schedule identifies sites on the southern side of Gambrel Road known to be development opportunities and indicates that some residential development would be appropriate in this sustainable location. The area behind the retail warehouse units on the south side of Weedon Road between Ross Road and Tweed Road is an industrial area. Whilst the business units in this area are generally outdated and would benefit from redevelopment, the area will benefit from improved accessibility from the construction of the SDLR linking Sixfields with the Harvey Reeves Road area. This improves the quality of this area for business use.
9. POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

PROPOSALS MAP - SIXFIELDS

Key
- Sixfields Area Action Plan boundary
- District Centre boundary
- Retail frontage
- Development sites
- Hotel/conference facility
- Flood Risk Category 2 (low - medium risk)
- Flood Risk Category 3 (High risk)
- Southern Development Link Road (SDLR)
- Existing recreation/leisure (Policy SDC5)
- Existing Business Area (Policy SDC6)

Figure 9.1: Sixfields Proposals Map
## 9. POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

### DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITE NO</th>
<th>SITE NAME</th>
<th>USE ALLOCATION</th>
<th>JUSTIFICATION/REASONING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DS1</td>
<td>Corner Weedon Road/Tollgate Way</td>
<td>Mixed use Community/office</td>
<td>Opportunity for community/office use appropriate for a District Centre (such as health/education). Such a use would benefit from public transport services along Weedon Road and would generate significant levels of footfall and provide trade for the new retail facilities provided within the District Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS2</td>
<td>Site between Tollgate Way and Weedon Road</td>
<td>Mixed use Retail and housing</td>
<td>A retail/commercial frontage to Weedon Road should be provided. Such a frontage is suitable for a range of small to medium sized convenience retail/commercial units with flats above. The land behind this frontage could provide a limited amount of complementary larger commercial units which would benefit from the existing shared public parking. Subject to employment policies set out in the Core Strategy, there may be scope for the introduction of some housing development into along Gambrel Road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS3</td>
<td>Land to the north of Weedon Road, west of Upton Way</td>
<td>Mixed use Retail and housing</td>
<td>The replacement of the pedestrian underpass with at-grade crossings on Weedon Road presents the opportunity for retail frontage and enclosure to Weedon Road. This site could form part of comprehensive redevelopment or remodelling of the Sainsbury’s site. Residential accommodation should be provided on upper floors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS4</td>
<td>Land to the south of Weedon Road, gateway from the east</td>
<td>Mixed use Retail and housing</td>
<td>This site presents an opportunity for retail unit(s) fronting Weedon Road to mark the entrance/endpoint of the district centre. There is an opportunity to utilise the level changes across the site to provide parking. Housing development is considered the most appropriate use on the Walter Tull Way frontage. This housing should be of a relatively high density to take advantage of the amenities provided by the district centre and the good levels of public transport accessibility along the Weedon Road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS5</td>
<td>Land to the south of Weedon Road and north of Walter Tull Way</td>
<td>Mixed use Retail and housing</td>
<td>Infill development. May be an opportunity for smaller convenience retail floorspace typical of a District Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS6</td>
<td>Corner site at the junction of Weedon Road and Tollgate Way (south)</td>
<td>Mixed use Retail and housing</td>
<td>Important corner building with a key role in making the transition between the retail frontage of Weedon Road and residential/leisure environment immediately to the south along Walter Tull Way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 9. POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DS7</td>
<td>Corner site at the junction of Weedon Road and Upton Way</td>
<td>Mixed use Retail, leisure and housing</td>
<td>A long-term development opportunity. Retain the cinema although redevelopment should present an active edge and provide enclosure to Weedon Road. There is an opportunity for housing and leisure related development fronting onto Walter Tull Way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS8</td>
<td>Land to the north of Walter Tull Way</td>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Good, long views to the south. The site benefits from good public transport links to Northampton and services within the new District Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS9</td>
<td>Land to the south of Walter Tull Way</td>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Good, long views to the south. The site benefits from good public transport links to Northampton and services within the new District Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS10</td>
<td>Land to the south east of Walter Tull Way</td>
<td>Community/leisure</td>
<td>An opportunity for district scale community/sports/leisure uses accessed via the new SDLR with southerly aspect towards Storton’s Pits. The new link road will provide good quality access to this site thereby creating this development opportunity. Community/sports/leisure uses are considered appropriate because of the relationship the site has to both the Pits to the south-east and the athletics track and Sixfields Stadium to the south-west. New built development should provide a strong active frontage to the new road, taking advantage of the good southerly aspect. However, given the area’s open setting, the majority of the site should be used for open formal or informal recreation associated with any new built development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS11</td>
<td>Land to the west of Storton’s Pits Nature Reserve</td>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>These sites present an opportunity for a mixed housing development. Located adjacent to Storton’s Pits and Duston Mill Meadow Local Nature Reserves, the site benefits from good access to the Nene Valley and good views to the south and east. Development proposals should provide family housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS12</td>
<td>Land to the west of Storton’s Pits Nature Reserve, adjacent to Upton Way</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>This site benefits from outline planning permission for a health centre. Such a facility will be a valuable community resource for the area and will enhance the range of services provided by the district centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS13</td>
<td>Corner site, Gambrel Road</td>
<td>Mixed use Employment and housing</td>
<td>There may be an opportunity for the integration of some housing in this area as sites become available. Good public transport links and access to employment opportunities and retail/community facilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 9. POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

#### DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DS14</td>
<td>Existing Stadium car park</td>
<td>Hotel/conference facility</td>
<td>Complementary facilities to those provided at Sixfields Stadium should be sited in this area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS15</td>
<td>Area to the south east of Sixfields District Centre</td>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>This area will benefit greatly from the improved accessibility provided by the construction of the SDLR. This site, on low ground and located some distance away from the heart of the district centre, is well suited to business uses. This large area presents a significant opportunity for a range of modern business uses which would benefit vastly improved vehicular accessibility and a good southerly aspect towards Storton’s Pits. Development should present an active frontage to the new road with parking areas located to behind this road frontage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Figure 10.1: Sixfields District Centre Development Framework
10. DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Area Action Plans are intended to focus the delivery of area based regeneration initiatives. PPS12 states that “in areas of change, area action plans should identify the distribution of uses and their inter-relationships, including specific site allocations, and set the timetable for the implementation of the proposals. Further guidance, such as the layout of uses within these allocations and design requirements etc, may be provided in the relevant area action plan or in one or more supplementary planning documents in the form of a master plan.”

This section seeks to set out a development framework through which a new district centre for Sixfields might be delivered. This development framework represents the Council’s preferred option for how the draft policies and proposals for the Sixfields area might be implemented. In accordance with the policies and proposals set out in the previous chapter, it seeks to establish a distribution of uses considered to be appropriate for the establishment of a new district centre. Following an explanation of the rationale underpinning the proposals for Weedon Road, advice on the timetable and phasing is given.

Traffic and transport related improvements to Weedon Road

1a Public transport interchange
Weedon Road is the main artery to Northampton town centre from the west. It provides a direct vehicular link to the motorway network. Public transport accessibility is central to the sustainable growth and development of Sixfields District Centre. The services and facilities provided in the centre should be fully accessible to all sectors of the community. A new public transport interchange on Weedon Road should provide good quality bus links to the centre from a variety of locations and should provide the opportunity for interchange between these routes. Bus stops should be conveniently located on Weedon Road itself and priority should be given to bus movements on the carriageway.

1b Junction improvements
In recognition of the future role of Sixfields as a district centre at the heart of a new community in west Northampton, replacement of the existing roundabout with signal controlled junctions is supported. This would release some land for development and enable stronger corner buildings be developed to more easily provide enclosure and structure to the retail heart of the centre.

1c Improvements for pedestrians
The pedestrian underpass should be replaced with at-grade crossings with dedicated pedestrian phasing. The replacement of roundabouts with traffic controlled junctions also afford pedestrians with a greater deal of safety and priority when moving around the area.

Land north of Weedon Road

2a Corner of Weedon Road and Gambrel Road
It is considered that this site should mark the beginning of the district centre. This site is considered suitable for an office, community, place of worship or health use which would benefit from the good public transport links offered along Weedon Road.

2b Weedon Road frontage
The stakeholder consultation has revealed that several sites benefiting from a Weedon Road frontage on the north side of Weedon Road have development potential. The development of these sites, the placement of buildings on them and their relationship with Weedon Road will play a fundamental role in the establishment of a successful district centre for Sixfields. The development framework shows commercial buildings with flats above presenting an active commercial frontage to Weedon Road. The accesses to these units and the flats above them would be gained direct from a generous, tree lined pavement along Weedon Road itself. The flats and units may vary in size but which would include some smaller units capable of accommodating the range of
10. DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

retail, services and community uses typically found in district centres.

2c Improvements to Sixfields Retail park

In order to meet current retailer requirements, it is considered that a limited amount of additional retail floor space, with units similar in size to the existing centre, could be accommodated behind a new commercial frontage to Weedon Road. Service access could be gained via the eastern end of Gambrel Road. Breaks in the commercial frontage to Weedon Road would provide good quality pedestrian access to the retail park.

2d Industrial uses on Gambrel Road

Successful district centres have a rich supply of residents living in or very near the centre. At present, very few residents live in the immediate environment in and around Sixfields. In order for the centre to succeed, it is considered that new residential development should be developed within and very close to the commercial heart of the centre. The industrial uses along Gambrel Road are generally successful and vacancies are low. However, in the long term, as opportunities arise for redevelopment, it is considered appropriate that new residential development be introduced, with the southern side of Gambrel Road considered the most appropriate location as this is the area that will be subject to the most significant changes. Sites on the southern side are also closest to the proposed district centre and the services, facilities and public transport connections it provides. New development, including residential development if appropriate in the longer term, should provide an active frontage to Gambrel Road.

Sainsbury’s Site

3 Highways land south of Sainsbury’s car park

The pedestrian underpass is unfriendly and firmly places priority on the car at the expense of the pedestrian experience and pedestrian safety. In addition, the underpass is extremely land hungry in order to navigate the level changes required to grant adequate access under the Weedon Road. If the underpass were removed and replaced with at-grade crossing, this would release a significant parcel of highways land for development.

It is acknowledged that Sainsbury’s has an aspiration to increase its existing floor area on this site. This land may provide an opportunity for Sainsbury’s to meet this objective in a phased way thereby enabling the store to remain trading during construction. It is important that any such development presents an active edge and enclosure to Weedon Road. The area of Gambrel Road in the vicinity of the petrol filling station does not benefit from any development frontage and this is a significant weakness in the urban environment.

Land south of Weedon Road

4a Land on the corner of Weedon Road and Tweed Road

It is considered that this parcel of land would be suitable for a medium to large retail use. The land to the rear falls away and there may therefore be scope to utilise this level change to accommodate some parking. The presentation of an active frontage to Weedon Road is essential, and care would need to be taken on the treatment of the Tweed Road frontage, to ensure this route, which, subject to the satisfactory treatment of significant level changes, has the scope to provide a direct route between Weedon Road and the planned SDLR route.

The site is considered as an appropriate location for an anchor store to balance a large (and potentially expanded) Sainsbury’s store. In addition, the change in levels makes it particularly appropriate for a single, large format store, incorporating parking as part of the development rather than requiring separate surface parking.
10. DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

4b Weedon Road frontage around the leisure/cinema uses
The existing leisure use (cinema), currently accessed from Weedon Road, is an important and valuable facility to the area. However, currently it presents its back to Weedon Road. By building around the perimeter of this block, there is scope to accommodate this bulky facility within a reconstituted urban block, thereby avoiding exposing its blank edges to the public realm. Surface public parking areas, important to the success of a district centre, can also be accommodated within this structure. Over time, there may be scope for the building to respond positively to the development of a district centre in Sixfields and ultimately reorientate its entrance to address Weedon Road.

Either side of the leisure centre (cinema), as land comes forward for redevelopment, the focus should be, like the land opposite, for commercial uses with flats above to provide an active frontage and enclosure to Weedon Road. Entrance to these buildings, which would typically be approximately four-five storeys high, should be gained direct from Weedon Road.

Similarly, the cinema is an extremely valuable asset for the Sixfields area. As redevelopment opportunities arise, the creation and enclosure of Weedon Road is of paramount importance.

Walter Tull Way

5a Upper end of Walter Tull Way
This area represents a significant, immediately deliverable development opportunity. The lack of existing residential areas to support the establishment of a district centre at Sixfields is one of the area’s most significant drawbacks. The land at the upper end of Walter Tull Way is therefore considered to present a wonderful opportunity for high quality residential development, benefiting from the wide range of services and facilities that will be provided in the district centre, the good public transport links to Northampton town centre, Northampton railway station and the surrounding area, and the good southerly aspect and views across the Nene Valley.

5b Land on western side of Walter Tull Way
A comprehensive range of restaurants are currently sited in this parcel of land, opposite the Sixfields Stadium. These buildings do not typically present a positive edge to Walter Tull Way and it is considered that, as opportunities arise, redevelopment should seek to address this. It is also considered that, over the long term and subject to satisfactory ground conditions, this area would be suitable for the incorporation of residential uses in order to further support the commercial heart of the district centre on Weedon Road.

5c Hotel/conference facility
Through the Joint Initiative, a significant amount of public parking for the stadium is being provided on the Harvey Reeves Road site. In order to make better use of the land taken by the existing surface car park in front of the stadium, it is considered that a hotel and conference facility would complement the services and facilities provided by the stadium. In addition, such a development should provide some frontage and enclosure to both the southern end of Walter Tull Way and SDLR route.

Land east of athletics track

6 Land east of athletics track
The development of the SDLR route linking Sixfields Harvey Reeves Road will provide much improved access sites to the north, including the existing industrial uses in the Tyne Road/Tweed Road area. Access will also be provided to the land to the far east of the athletics track. It is considered that this site may provide a medium to long term development opportunity for a sports and leisure centre to complement the athletics track and the other leisure related uses in the area. It is considered that leisure uses, focussed on the Sixfields Stadium itself, represent one of the area’s unique assets. Of primary importance in the development of this site is the relationship new development would have to the Nene Valley. New development must therefore make a positive contribution to the river valley and the setting of Stanton’s Pits Nature Reserve.
10. DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Land at Duston Mill

Storton’s Pits provides a wonderful context for new development. Whilst some distance from the district centre and located outside its suggested boundary, it is considered that, subject to the views of the Environment Agency, the land at Duston Mill is appropriate for residential development and community facilities. A positive edge to the nature reserve would have to be presented, but the arrangement of the development should maximise the good views that could be enjoyed. There is scope to improve the standard of visitor facilities at Storton’s pits. Such improvements should be provided through the development of these sites through the allocation of S106 monies arising from new planning permissions.

Outline planning permission has been granted for a new Northampton PCT integrated health facility on the northern area of the land at Duston Mill, in closest proximity to Storton’s Pits. The inclusion of community uses within a the district centre will broaden the range of uses within the district centre and act as a valuable community facility.

Car parking

In addition to the on-road car parking discussed on page 63, it is anticipated that the majority of medium-stay car parking will be situated to the rear of the retail frontages on Weedon Road. These areas of parking will be accessed via a new link to the north of Walter Tull Way. This parking will be shared between all retail and leisure uses, and it is therefore not expected that individual developments will provide separate dedicated parking areas.

Figure 10.2: Aerial view of Sixfields Proposals Map
10. DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

WEEDON ROAD RATIONALE

Figure 10.4 illustrates a potential configuration for Weedon Road and figure 10.5 provides a perspective sectional view of how a remodelled Weedon Road could look.

The following numbered features relate to the numbers on figure 12.4.

1. The Weedon Road widening is required by the development of Upton phase 1.

2. This area is the break in commercial/retail frontage providing potential access to the existing leisure development. This area has the potential to be a pleasant space, providing relief from the traffic of Weedon Road.

3. The changes in levels across the site could be accommodated through a stepped pavement. The widest part of the pavement can therefore be higher than the carriageway thus creating a more pleasant pedestrian environment. Ramped access to the pedestrian crossings would be provided.

4. The existing alignment of Weedon Road enables the provision of wide, generous, tree lined pavements. These will be important for the success of the centre as the volumes of traffic on Weedon Road will be very significant.
10. DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

5 The change in levels between the pavement and the carriageway provides the opportunity for a dedicated cycle lane.

6 Flexible and available parking will be important to the success of the centre. On-street parking will help to calm traffic passing through the centre and provide the opportunity to retailers and services providers to benefit from passing trade.

7 New commercial development with flats above accessed directly from Weedon Road would provide an active ground floor to the heart of the district centre.

8 It is considered that between the two entrances to Gambrel Road, an at-grade pedestrian crossing should be provided. A central reservation is likely to be required to facilitate this crossing. The carriageways should narrow at this point.

It is important to note that the County Council have commissioned Halcrow to undertake design work in relation to dualling of the Weedon Road between Upton Way (A45) and Duston Road. As well as carriageway widening, the study will consider junction improvements and could potentially involve realignment of the existing carriageway.
11. IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

A key feature of Area Action Plans is their focus on implementation. This section seeks to review the context for and provide guidance and advice on the implementation of a new district centre at Sixfields.

IMPLEMENTATION CONTEXT

Having set out a series of policies and proposals for the designation and establishment of a new district centre at Sixfields, the development framework seeks to set out the Council’s preferred option for how these draft policies and proposals might be implemented. A number of current initiatives, projects and programmes are relevant to the implementation and development of a district centre at Sixfields. In particular, these include the recent establishment of the West Northamptonshire Urban Development Corporation, the English Partnerships supported Joint Initiative which is seeking to bring vacant and underused land back into productive use in the Sixfields area and the progress being made by Northamptonshire County Council on their Local Transport Plan.

In addition, a number of key landowners in the area are known to have development aspirations for land in Sixfields in the knowledge of the prospect of the designation of a district centre at Sixfields.

These initiatives, projects, programmes and landowners will all play a key role in the implementation of a new district centre at Sixfields.

West Northamptonshire Urban Development Corporation

Government has established the West Northamptonshire Urban Development Corporation (UDC) following consultation with local partners to drive forward regeneration, improved infrastructure, investment and sustainable growth. The UDC has the potential to play a central and critical role in the implementation and establishment of a new district centre at Sixfields.

The UDC has been established to provide local delivery support and strategic leadership for regeneration and growth in West Northamptonshire. The housing growth underway and envisaged in the South West District forms a significant part of this growth. The establishment of a new district centre at Sixfields is required in order to meet the retail and community needs of new residents in the Northampton’s south west district and therefore is also directly linked with this growth.

The AAP, though its development principles, policies, proposals and indicative preferred development framework, has sought to demonstrate the importance of the provision and incorporation of new residential development in and immediately adjacent to the new district centre. It is considered that Sixfields has the potential to provide a significant number of homes that can both contribute to the current and planned housing growth in the area and in turn help support the vitality and viability of the new district centre.

However, much of the land in the area is contaminated and is not currently suitable for residential development. Whilst commercial uses do not require the same levels of remediation as residential uses, it is considered a priority that residential uses are located within and around the district centre. Where residential development proves uneconomic because of onerous remediation costs, the UDC may have a role in leveraging in gap funding accordingly. It is considered that such an approach would assist the Council and its

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Northamptonshire Local Transport Plan

Northamptonshire County Council as highway authority has to produce a Local Transport Plan (LTP) every 5 years. The first LTP was published in July 2000 and covers the period 2001/02 - 2005/06. The County Council are now working on a new LTP, to be published in July 2005, which will cover the period 2006/07 - 2010/11. An initial draft for consultation was presented to the County’s Environment and Transport Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in March 2005.

The LTP sets out the county council’s transport policies, objectives and vision for the long-term, with detailed proposals of what they intend to do over the five years of the plan. In addition the LTP is a funding document, in response to which the Department for Transport allocates money to help the County Council implement the Local Transport Plan based on their needs, the quality of the County’s plan and their performance to date. There is a parallel bidding process for funding major local transport schemes (over £5 million).

The County Council has considerable freedom through the LTP to find local solutions to local problems. But government expects to get good value from the funding it provides and expects LTPs to contribute towards meeting national targets in the four key priority areas of:

- Congestion;
- Accessibility;
- Safety; and
- Environment.

The initial draft of the second LTP recognises the challenges set by the designation of Northampton as part of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands growth area in seeking to address the housing problems of the wider south-east of England. In order to meet these challenges, the LTP must take account of national and regional transport policy, including the advice contained in the Regional Transport Strategy which sits within Regional Planning Guidance (RSGB) for the East Midlands where there is a much greater focus on reducing traffic growth and promoting sustainable modes of transport.

The March 2005 draft LTP, in seeking to deal with congestion west of Northampton, indicates that major road improvements for the A45 will be considered. In order to tackle congestion, the draft LTP states that the County will deliver freer flowing roads and associated economic and quality of life benefits. It is considered that there is a potential policy tension here as the Sixfields/Upton area is the focus for a significant number of new homes and the Weedon Road in this location is already recognised as an area of significant traffic congestion. It will be important for the highway authority and its LTP to ensure that future traffic management measures undertaken on Weedon Road are consistent with the creation of a successful district centre at Sixfields where greater priority needs to be given to pedestrian movements across the Weedon Road and improved public transport links to Northampton and the surrounding area.

The Northampton Brownfield Joint Initiative

The Joint Initiative will play a major role in the establishment of a district centre at Sixfields. Much detailed work continues to be done on bringing underused parcels of land in the area back into productive use.

Work is already underway on the construction of the SDLR which is required to free up land in Sixfields for...
development. In terms of the establishment of a commercial heart for the district centre, land parcels benefiting from a Weedon Road frontage will be critical. However, much of the land within the Joint Initiative lies to the south of Weedon Road and it is considered that this land, particularly along Walter Tull Way, would be most suited to residential development in order to help provide the footfall and patronage to support the range of services and facilities provided by the district centre. It is acknowledged that this land is contaminated and will require remediation work in order to ensure the land is suitable for residential development. Residential uses in close proximity to the focus of the district centre are considered vital for the successful establishment of a sustainable centre and resources should be directed to achieve this objective.

Outline planning permission has recently been granted for Northampton PCT to develop a new integrated health centre on a site south-west of the Sixfields. Whilst located a little distance from the preferred focus of the district centre on Weedon Road, this facility will provide vital health related services on a district scale to this part of Northampton.

**Land ownership**

There is a mixed pattern of land ownership across the area with the majority of land in commercial use being privately owned. English Partnerships, due to their central role in progressing the Joint Initiative, own most of the undeveloped land in the Sixfields area which lies to the south of Weedon Road. The existing retail uses of Sainsbury’s and the Sixfields Retail Park and all adjacent land are in private ownership. In addition, the swathe of land on the western side of Walter Tull Way is occupied by a series of restaurants and take-aways in private ownership and is subject to a number of leases. Sixfields stadium and athletics track are in the leasehold control of Northampton Town Football Club on a long lease from Northampton Borough Council.

Following consultation with key landowners in the area during the preparation of this draft AAP it is clear that these landowners have significant development aspirations for their respective landholdings. These aspirations have been reviewed in the consideration of issues and options. Whilst the Council’s preferred option for a district centre at Sixfields cannot meet all these aspirations, it is clear that these private landowners and developers will play a significant role in the implementation and establishment of the new centre.

The controls contained in the development principles, policies and proposals and the guidance contained in the development framework provide a framework through which development proposals will be judged.
11. IMPLEMENTATION

PHASING OF DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Area Action Plans should set the timetable for the implementation of proposals. The development framework set out above is a comprehensive framework making many assumptions about land availability. It is not possible to predict with any certainty the order in which land will come forward for redevelopment in the Sixfields area. However, it is possible to set out a broad approach to the phasing of development, based on an understanding of current land availability, the known aspirations of landowners in the area and, in the longer term, the more general aspirations for an improved district centre environment at Sixfields.

Short term opportunities: 2006 - 2011

Land currently in the ownership of English Partnerships represents the most immediate development opportunity. Residential uses are considered to be the most appropriate for much of this more immediately available land. In addition, the highways improvements to Weedon Road are likely to be implemented. Retail uses on available land on the south-western side of Weedon Road will help anchor the initial establishment of the district centre.

Figure 11.1: Short term opportunities
Medium term opportunities: 2011 - 2016

Land on the northern side of the Weedon Road is central to the sustainable establishment of a district centre at Sixfields. This land, currently in a variety of ownerships, is anticipated to come forward in the medium term. This phase of development will deliver the majority of retail uses necessary for the establishment of the district centre. This phase of development can also deliver a significant number of homes, both above new commercial development fronting Weedon Road, and behind the focus of the centre, on Gambrel Road.

Figure 11.2: Medium term opportunities
Long term opportunities: 2016-2021

Land currently occupied by a variety of commercial premises accessed from Walter Tull Way and subject to a variety of leases is unlikely to come forward in the foreseeable future. However, as the district centre becomes more established, opportunities for intensification of these sites and the incorporation of residential uses within them are likely to arise.

This phase of development can also deliver further residential development on Gambrel Road.

Figure 11.3: Long term opportunities
11. IMPLEMENTATION

QUANTUM AND DENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT

Retail

The development strategy set out above seeks to provide a quantum of retailing within that set out in Policy SDC2. The majority of retailing floorspace is sited to create an active retail frontage to Weedon Road providing a range of large, medium and smaller units to meet the full range of district centre retailing requirements. At this level of detail, it is not possible to geographically differentiate between convenience and comparison floorspace. The total gross retail floorspace requirement set out under Policy SDC2 is 11,700sqm up to 2009. The development framework provides approximately 14,000sqm retail floorspace gross although this is over a period up to 2021 and therefore well beyond 2009.

Housing

It is considered that the Sixfields area presents a significant opportunity for residential development. In the context of an improving retail offer, new community facilities in the form of the Northampton PCT integrated health centre and improving public transport facilities, it is considered that the Sixfields area constitutes a sustainable location for relatively high density residential development. Estimates suggest that to 2021 up to a maximum of approximately 750 residential units may be accommodated across the Sixfields AAP area. Densities would generally increase on sites closer to Weedon Road.

In particular, it is considered that there is an immediate opportunity for high density residential development along the east-west axis of Walter Tull Way to the south of Weedon Road. In the longer term, it may be possible to introduce residential uses along Gambrel Road to the north of Weedon Road as sites become available and subject to relevant employment policy. Some of the more suitable sites on the southern side of Gambrel Road have been identified for residential development in the development sites schedule, however, it is recognised that Gambrel Road is currently a successful business area. Lower density housing more suitable for family housing is considered most appropriate on the land at Duston Mill adjacent to the new health facility.
12. NEXT STEPS - FUTURE CONSULTATION

INTRODUCTION

The Draft Sixfields Area Action Plan has been prepared within the guidelines of PPS12 Local Development Frameworks, within the Pre-Production stage.

Informal consultation has been undertaken with the local community and key stakeholders and full details of this process is outlined within the accompanying consultation document.

Future stages of statutory consultation are set out in PPS12 and are discussed in this chapter.

FORMAL CONSULTATION PROCESS

Following the publication of the Draft Sixfields Area Action Plan, a six week consultation period will take place in accordance with Northampton Borough Council’s Statement of Community Involvement. The document will be available on the Northampton Borough Council website and for inspection at the council offices and local people will be invited to comment on the draft.

Once the consultation on preferred options has taken place the revised draft Area Action Plan will be prepared for submission to the Secretary of State, for independent examination. A public notice will be published notifying that the Council intends to submit the draft Area Action Plan to the Secretary of State and representations will be invited over a six-week period. An independent examination of the draft Area Action Plan will be undertaken by an Inspector on behalf of the Secretary of State to review the ‘soundness’ of the document.

An Inspector’s Report will be published following the examination that outlines recommendations for changes to the Area Action Plan. The recommendations will be binding and once incorporated, the Area Action Plan can be adopted and incorporated into the Local Development Framework.