

By email

21 October 2025

Planning Service
Place Directorate
West Northamptonshire Council
One Angel Square
Angel Street
Northampton
NN1 1ED

Dear Sir/Madam

**Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
Standard Consultation Planning.**

Land to the Northwest and East of Sixfields Stadium, Edgar Mobbs Way Northampton

Application No. 2025/2265/MAF

Northampton Town Supporters Trust thanks the council for granting it the status of a non-statutory consultee in respect of the NTFC planning application referenced above.

The Supporters' Trust objects to the planning application for the reasons set out in this response.

The Development Land

When the football club moved to Sixfields in 1994 it was granted a long-term lease of the newly built Sixfields Community Stadium, as it was termed, which included the surrounds of the stadium and also included land behind the East Stand comprising an athletics track and football pitch.

This clearly reflected the wish of the council that this area of land be used by, and for the benefit of, not only of the football club but the wider Northampton community.

In the years since the creation of the original leasehold tenure the land behind the East Stand - always referred to in WNC's communications as the "Running Track Lease land" (3.61 acres) - was allowed to fall into disuse, stand empty and become overgrown and an untidy eyesore.

The Supporters' Trust has always advocated that use of the Running Track Lease land be safeguarded and utilised for the future benefit of the football club, its supporters and the residents of Northampton.

To our great disappointment this has not happened. The council, past and present, has failed to act to protect the land concerned.

However, there were signs of the former Northampton Borough Council (NBC) listening when, on the application of the Supporters' Trust, the original footprint of leasehold land granted by the council in 1994 was listed as an Asset of Community Value (ACV).

Please see the Listing Map (Appendix 1), from which you will see that the successful nomination included all of the original Running Track Lease land despite the fact that for reasons which have never been explained the previous owners of NTFC surrendered to NBC the leasehold interest in the area of land comprising the eastern half of the actual athletics track. By that time the athletics track and football pitch had fallen into disrepair and disuse but NBC nonetheless determined at the time (February 2019) that this land was part of the designation as an ACV. The nomination was not at any point objected to by NTFC, its owners or any other party.

It has become self-evident that it was the conscious decision of NTFC's owners, upon their arrival in November 2015, to continue the same approach of the previous owners in allowing the Running Track Lease land to remain empty and overgrown.

When the 2019 ACV Listing expired last year the inclusion of the Running Track Lease land in the new application was declined by WNC on the grounds that the land in question had not been in community use. Whilst this may have been a correct decision in law, the determination was made in effect by the same authority that had previously approved the 2019 Nomination but had allowed the land to fall into a poor state.

From the NTFC owners' perspective, doing nothing with the land served their long-term interests well. The loss of the ACV listing for the Running Track Lease land cleared the way of any impediments to the acquisition of the freehold title to the land and, as can be seen by this planning application, its commercial development.

As we will outline, these interests are not one and the same as those of the football club as a separate entity, its supporters or the wider community of Northampton.

As we understand it, the Northampton Development Plan is still an emerging document and given that the Sixfields area has always been referred to as "Sixfields Leisure" the Supporters' Trust questions how it has transpired that this same area looks to be designated as one that, if this planning application is granted, will become a light industrial estate with a football stadium situated at its western end.

This is being allowed to occur almost by stealth supported by planners, apparently on the grounds that what is proposed accords with planning policy for employment use development.

The Supporters' Trust has asked council officers when the Running Track Lease land became land which would become available for light industrial development but we have never received an explanation or even a response.

We consider the council has been reluctant to reply to this important point which remains unexplained and, therefore, opaque.

As mentioned, the Running Track Lease land is 3.61 acres. The NTFC planning application provides for the largest by far of 11 warehouse units to be constructed on the Running Track Lease land with a square footage of 156,797 sq. ft.

To accommodate this prospective building, it appears that the owners of NTFC have redrawn the internal boundary of the Running Track Lease land to reduce the area to be owned in future by the football club to a narrow strip of land immediately behind the East Stand which provides only 100 car parking spaces.

Not only is the reduction of the area of land available for parking singularly unhelpful to solving the issue of parking demands, which will escalate with the closure of the North Gravel Car Park, but also by permitting the construction of a giant warehouse on the land this will permanently prevent any expansion of the stadium and its facilities to the Running Track Lease land.

The club will be hemmed in on its eastern side and any opportunity for expansion of the stadium site at a later date would be severely limited.

Since car parking is emerging as a major concern with this application, the minimisation of the car parking behind the East Stand demonstrates the intention of the applicants to maximise land profits and not to cater adequately for the needs of supporters.

It has been reported by BBC Northampton that the Chairman of NTFC, Kelvin Thomas, claims that the warehousing scheme could "significantly strengthen" the club's finances.

Such a consideration may be outside the immediate remit of the Strategic Planning Committee but as a council it cannot be ignored. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The apparent intention of the controlling interests of NTFC is to clawback the debt from the development of warehouses on the newly acquired c. 21 acres of freehold land, part of which land, the 3.61 acres of Running Track Lease land, was always intended for community use for the benefit of the people of Northampton.

[REDACTED]

The Supporters' Trust, which is a shareholder in NTFC, has asked the owners privately and subsequently publicly about their intentions but no response has been received. This is a highly unsatisfactory situation.

[REDACTED]

And then the question will inevitably arise of what happens next after the family silver has been sold? The Supporters' Trust has major concerns.

We have focused our comments so far on the land falling within the original footprint of land granted by NBC. The large area of land referred to as the Main Site Lease land is also owned by NTFC through CDNL. Northampton is almost unique in the country in being the venue for first class rugby, cricket and football but there seems to be no thinking or strategy as to how to maximize the benefits. It may be reasonably considered that 21 acres of development land not far from the town centre would present an opportunity for some creative thinking on the part of the council and councillors, but seemingly not.

We would ask councillors and planning officers to take a step back and consider whether approval of this application for light industrial use misses a clear open goal in exploring options for this land that include community and leisure developments that have synergy with the football club and the town's sporting community with the potential of adding value to and growing the local tourism and visitor economy.

Following the delivery of the successful Women's Rugby World Cup, Northampton is keen to upgrade its offer around hosting more major sporting events in the town.

However, such an aspiration can only meet with success if the town has a stadium or arena capable of hosting many more people than Sixfields, Franklin's Gardens and the County Ground presently do.

So, we question what thought has been given to developing this area of Sixfields along these lines for the benefit of the town's sporting communities and visitor economy. There seems to us to be little or no creative thinking as to what is best for the town of Northampton.

It seems that warehousing is being allowed to dominate all strategic thinking as regards Sixfields.

The county is not suffering from a shortage of warehousing developments but the demand seems almost insatiable within the "Golden Triangle".

But all markets peak and fall and often dramatically. Is the point of saturation being reached? In terms of employment, NTFC claims that c. 450 jobs will be created. We question the figure given the increasing automation of warehouse operations and the impact of AI technology on such operations. Consider the giant Amazon warehouse nearby in Milton Keynes and the low number of employees there.

We also question if the level of jobs to be created will serve the needs of the Northampton economy well in that the majority of jobs are likely to be unskilled and at the lower end of the market.

For many years the thinking of WNC and its predecessor council was determined by the controlling Conservative group. Perhaps the arrival of Reform as the controlling party will bring about a re-think on this proposed development. We submit that this should happen.

Car Parking Issues

Although match day car parking is not part of the planning application it is a subject which is giving rise to many questions and comments from local residents and also football supporters. It cannot be ignored.

The Statement of Community Involvement presented by NTFC attempts to assuage concerns but, in our opinion, it is an extremely inadequate and unsatisfactory document as regards car parking.

If the planning application is successful as submitted, supporters will be faced with the closure of the North Gravel Car Park referred to in the Statement of Community Involvement as the "Top Plateau".

This car park provides 425 spaces.

With the East Stand having 100 car parking spaces, then on the face of it this means 325 drivers will be looking for a parking place on what is currently a busy match day.

That is not necessarily a correct assessment because it does not follow that 100 people who have been used to parking in the North Gravel Car Park are going to relocate to the East Stand.

It may well be that the users of the East Stand Car Park are principally the Executive Box holders and their guests.

Our earlier comments about the minimal area of land allocated for car parking behind the East Stand apply.

Reference is made by the club to the Duston Mill Car Park (“Location 1”) being a future “replacement” car park. This land can accommodate about 200 cars but is privately owned with its use entirely at the discretion of the owner, not the football club. We understand that there is no agreement in place which provides an obligation to provide parking and that the owner has no intention or desire to enter into any such arrangement.

Understandably, the owner wishes to keep his options completely open and that must include future commercial development and/or sale to a developer. We understand from well informed sources that the owner has told NTFC it should make its parking arrangements based on his land being unavailable.

“Location 2” in the Statement of Community Involvement is said to be a 10-15 minutes’ walk from Sixfields Stadium.

Although termed the “Claret Car Park” it has not been used by NTFC or football away supporters in the past and is operated by the Saints Rugby Club and is currently used by that club on match days. It is said to accommodate up to 750 vehicles.

Ownership of the Claret Car Park was acquired by WNC in July this year. Its current arrangement with the Saints looks to be a loose one and that in turn can provide no comfort to the football club or supporters as regards anything more than possible short-term use.

It is thought that WNC is intending to build “temporary” housing units on part of the Claret Car Park to accommodate homeless people and the vulnerable. In the region of 260 car parking spaces will be lost.

Mention is also made by NTFC that the proposed warehousing development will provide 314 car parking spaces with reference being made that there may be opportunities for supporters to park in these spaces. This seems to the Supporters’ Trust to be somewhat fanciful. Owners and occupiers of units may be unwilling for their own reasons, including operational, insurance and security reasons to allow access. Further, planning decisions cannot be based on “if and maybe” situations.

Residents in the Sixfields and Upton areas are already complaining about the anti-social parking on match days at Franklin’s Gardens and Sixfields Stadium.

The approval of the NTFC planning application will only add to an already difficult situation. The approach and thinking of the club’s owners is ill-considered and flawed.

The status and condition of the roads at Sixfields are not satisfactory at present and will be placed under further pressure if the planning application is approved. Wholesale upgrading will be required.

The overriding concern and obligation of the Supporters' Trust is to seek to protect the assets of the football club and to help to maintain professional football in Northampton at the highest level attainable.

The successful outcome of this planning application will see a very significant depletion in the assets of NTFC for no ascertainable benefit to the club, its supporters or the people of Northampton. The main beneficiaries will be the club's owners.

Yours faithfully
The Board of Directors
NTFC Supporters Limited

APPENDIX 1

ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE LISTING MAP (2019)