

**REFERENCE RELATING TO THE ANTICIPATED ACQUISITION
BY SPORTECH PLC OF THE VERNONS FOOTBALL POOLS BUSINESS OF
LADBROKES PLC**

**Notice of provisional findings made under Rule 10
of the Competition Commission Rules of Procedure**

1. On 3 May 2007, the Office of Fair Trading, in exercise of its duty under section 33(1) of the Enterprise Act 2002 (the Act), referred the anticipated acquisition by Sportech plc of the Vernons Football Pools business of Ladbrokes plc to the Competition Commission (CC) for investigation and report within the period ending on 17 October 2007.

Provisional findings

2. The CC inquiry group (the Group) appointed to consider the reference has made provisional findings on the statutory questions to be decided pursuant to section 36(1) of the Act. The Group provisionally finds that:
 - (a) arrangements are in progress or in contemplation for the acquisition by Sportech plc of the Vernons Football Pools business of Ladbrokes plc which, if carried into effect, will result in the creation of a relevant merger situation; and
 - (b) the creation of that situation may not be expected to result in a substantial lessening of competition within any market or markets in the UK for goods or services.
3. The Group's reasons are set out in full in the report of its provisional findings which will shortly be published. Those reasons are summarized in the executive summary of its report (see note (i)).

The next steps

4. Sportech plc, Ladbrokes plc and other interested parties are now invited to provide the Group with their reasons in writing as to why these provisional findings should not become final (or, as the case may be, should be varied) (see note (ii)).
5. These reasons should be received by the Group no later than 21 September 2007.
6. The Group will have regard to any such reasons provided in making their final decisions on the statutory questions and actions.
7. The parties are referred to rule 10 of the CC's *Rules of Procedure* dated June 2003.



Peter Davis
Group Chairman
31 August 2007

Notes:

(i) A copy of this Notice the summary and the full provisional findings report will be placed on the CC website on 31 August 2007. The published version of the provisional findings report will not contain any information which the Group consider should be excluded from the report, having regard to the three considerations set out in section 244 of the Act.

(ii) Comments should be made in writing to:

Edwin James, Inquiry Secretary,
Victoria House,
Southampton Row,
London WC1B 4AD

or by email to: Edwin.james@cc.gsi.gov.uk