

Index

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. A Brief History of Gotham**
- 3. Geography and Government**
 - 3.1 Geography
 - 3.2 Local Government
 - 3.3 Information, websites and the internet
 - 3.4 The Police and Neighbourhood Watch
- 4. Housing and Planning**
 - 4.1 Introduction – Existing Situation/Housing Survey
 - 4.2 Housing
 - 4.3 Planning Policy
- 5. Transport and Roads**
 - 5.1 Public Transport
 - 5.1.1 Bus and Coach Services
 - 5.1.2 Rail Services (Passenger)
 - 5.1.3 Rail Services (Freight)
 - 5.1.4 Air Services (Passenger/Freight)
 - 5.2 Road System
 - 5.2.1 Roads within the village
 - 5.2.2 Parking issues
 - 5.2.3 A453
 - 5.2.4 Street Furniture
- 6. Education & Youth**
 - 6.1 Primary & Secondary
 - 6.2 Adult Education
 - 6.3 Pre-School/Playgroup/Nursery Facilities
 - 6.4 Playscheme
 - 6.5 After School Care
 - 6.6 Youth Facilities
- 7. Leisure**
 - 7.1 Village Facilities
 - 7.1.1 Outdoor Pursuits
 - 7.1.2 Indoor Sports/Organisations
 - 7.1.3 Gotham Gala
 - 7.1.4 Gotham British Legion
 - 7.1.5 Public Houses
 - 7.2 Borough Facilities
 - 7.3 Conclusions

8. Shopping

- 8.1 Village Shops
- 8.2 Other Local Services
- 8.3 Library Services
 - 8.3.1 The Library
 - 8.3.2 Books on Wheels
- 8.4 St Lawrence Parish Church
- 8.5 Cemetery

9. Health and Care Services

- 9.1 The Village Surgery
- 9.2 Chiropody
- 9.3 Dental Services
- 9.4 Hospital Services
- 9.5 Meals on Wheels
- 9.6 Home Care

10. Businesses and Employment

- 10.1 Current Situation
- 10.2 Commuting
- 10.3 Conclusion

11. Environmental Matters

- 11.1 Environmental Background
- 11.2 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- 11.3 The Railway Walk
- 11.4 Rights Of Way Network
- 11.5 Aircraft Noise
- 11.6 Recycling

References

Acknowledgements

Appendices

A1 Focus Group reports

1. Introduction

The Government, through the Countryside Agency, has implemented a Vital Villages Strategy to:

- help small rural communities take stock of their village;
- identify what they need to revitalize;
- implement some improvements needed locally.

To this end, Gotham Parish Council has undertaken to produce a Parish Plan, which will cover social, economic and environmental issues for the village.

As part of the production of the Parish Plan, a group of parishioners have taken an objective look at their parish and attempted to define who we are, where we want to be and how we may be able to get there. We have taken as our start point the Gotham Village Study first written by a similar group of villagers in 1976 and updated in 1985. The broad headings of the study have been retained, although the detail within them has changed to reflect changes and current thinking. The group held a number of focus meetings to elicit the specific views of key village groups, and this led on to a house to house questionnaire based on these views. At the same time a Village Design Statement was undertaken to act as subsidiary planning guidance for the borough authority. The results of these enterprises and the ideas generated were then used to formulate an action plan.

The broad outcome from the questionnaire, to which a staggering 58% of households responded, was that Gotham has a relatively aged population, that when people move here they tend to stay, they live here for a long time and they are very happy.

There has been a broad input to this plan, from the children in the village primary school through to the elderly, and it cannot be said to be the product of any one particular interest group. Many individuals have given up many hours to produce it and it is beyond the scope of this document to thank them all individually. Just let us say that we are proud of our village in Gotham and this document stands as statement of this pride and our hopes for maintaining a flourishing community in the future.

John Anderson, Chairman, Steering Group

2. A Brief History of Gotham

Gotham is a small village situated midway on the original road between the major towns of Nottingham and Loughborough. The river Trent passes 2 miles to the north, the river Soar 4 miles to the west, whilst the Fairham Brook meanders lazily by, about 1 mile to the east. The village sits inside a semicircular amphitheatre of mainly wood covered hills which rise to a height around 100 metres above sea level.

The village is first recorded in the Domesday Book survey in 1086 when about twenty families resided here. Since that time the population has gradually increased over the centuries from 224 in 1601, 475 in 1801, 1009 in 1901 to around 1800 today.

The village is still surrounded by fields and its perimeter has not expanded too significantly. As in other parts of the realm, the Enclosure Act of 1804 divided up the larger estates into more manageable fields with wider ownership and as a result in Gotham, the Lord of the Manor was not required to keep a bull or the Rector a boar for breeding purposes. Agriculture naturally remained the main occupation of the residents sometimes supplemented with basket making using reeds and rushes from the swampy ground to the east. Additionally in the mid 1800s the framework knitting business grew and reached a peak with some 87 knitters in 27 workshops being recorded, in various village houses. As large knitting factories were built elsewhere this trade gradually fell away by the end of the century.

It was fortunate that about this same time the local farmers during their ploughing were uncovering gypsum rock which, when collected and sold, could supplement their meagre incomes. However it was not until the late 1800s that after some ownership changes and consolidation, 3 separate drift mines were dug into the hills on the outskirts of the village. It should be mentioned here that similar situations arose in the adjacent villages of Barton, Thrumpton, Kingston and East Leake where their drift mines headed into these same hills from the opposite direction. Production of gypsum products rose rapidly with Gotham mines supplying at one stage one third of the country's requirements. At their peak some 400,000 tons of rock and plaster products were being despatched annually. The round the clock noise from the crushing machines and the combined smoke and dust from the three mills were a constant reminder of their presence.

The effects of this industry on the village were considerable. There was an influx of labour from other areas and ancillary trades developed, e.g. brickworks, soap works, blacksmiths, carters, wheelwrights, saddlers, bag makers, etc. To cater for the coal required for the mills' boilers and the amount of gypsum being sold, a railway branch line from the main line at Ruddington was introduced in 1900. Many attempts to persuade the railway company to include passenger traffic were rejected. .

However with the improvements in lorry traffic and rationalisation of the railway system the branch line was eventually closed in 1965.

As a direct result of the above, house building for the workers gathered momentum following World War I, specifically creating Leake Road including Ridgeway and also houses on the north side of the Nottingham Road. These significant additions required changes to street names and some houses being renumbered. Inside the village many thatched cottages were either pulled down or their roofs retiled (only one now remains). Immediately prior to World War II some 16 Council houses were built on Moor Lane, and then following World War II a succession of council houses were built on Wodehouse Avenue (65), and Bidwell Crescent (24). Subsequently, private estate houses were built on Kegworth Road (55), Curzon Street (88), Grasmere Gardens (10), St. Andrew Close (17), Foredrift Close (5), Monks Lane (6), Home Farm (5), and more recently Chapel Close (5). Regular planning applications by developers to build further estates on the outskirts of the village, thus violating the green belt status, have so far not been approved.

Other post World War II businesses which thrived during this period included the glove factory, Joywully knitwear, the South Notts Bus Company and various lorry companies. There were many shops and sometimes two on each street. At one time there were 5 businesses selling petrol to a rapidly increasing number of car owners. The four public houses together with the Royal British Legion have always benefited from visitors wishing to hear about the Tales of Gotham folklore stories, and still continue to be well patronised.

However with the rundown of the 3 gypsum mines due to the underground rock being exhausted (2 closed in 1960 and the final one in 1990) together with the shut down of the knitwear factories, the occupations of the residents changed permanently. The villagers were forced to commute to work places further afield, eg the Nottingham East Midlands Airport, the Ratcliffe on Soar power station, and various workplaces in towns where they could also do their shopping in supermarkets. As a result many village shops and all petrol outlets were closed down. Meantime the lorry traffic through the village, mainly to and from the M1 motorway, continued to increase and eventually after significant lobbying a new bypass road was built in 1996.

During these past 200 years there have been links between the religious establishments and the schooling of the growing number of children in the village. The church built in the centre of the village in 1180 continues to this day. A village school was built and paid for by Earl Howe in 1829. This establishment continued until 1879 when it was replaced by the Board School on Kegworth Road to accommodate 200 pupils. The two main chapels, one Methodist and one Wesleyan were built around the 1870s to satisfy the particular religious needs of the knitting and mining families. Both these chapels extended their buildings to provide additional educational teachings at weekends. However, with

the decline of the Methodist movement in the village, the chapel on Meadow End has now been converted to a private dwelling, whilst the Wesleyan Chapel on Nottingham Road has been demolished to provide the new Chapel Close Estate. Members of the non-conformist chapels now hold their services in the church and discussions are presently in progress to consider complete amalgamation.

In 1956 Gotham children over 11 years of age together with those of surrounding villages were moved to Harry Carlton Comprehensive in East Leake to complete their education. Later, in 1965, Gotham School size was increased by the construction of prefabricated buildings on the opposite side of the road to the main school to cater for infants from Barton, Thrumpton and Kingston schools which were closing. Plans to replace the existing two part school with a new building are about to come to fruition.

The village has always had a strong community spirit no doubt due to the original mining culture plus the need for all wise fools to stick together. The St Lawrence Football Club, the cricket club, the Temperance Band, all started before 1900, and are well documented. The generosity of mine owners Derbyshire and Sheppard in donating eleven acres of land to the village for a Memorial Hall and recreation ground in 1921 continues to be appreciated. Bowls, tennis, playground equipment, and more recently a sports complex have been added and are, envied by outsiders. Today there are some twenty active organisations covering a wide variety of interests. Included on the ground are the village library and health facilities which link with the County and Borough organisations

Gotham people are proud of their village and long may they continue to be so.

3. Geography and Government

3.1 Geography

Gotham is situated in south west Nottinghamshire about 7 miles south west from the centre of Nottingham and 6 miles from Loughborough. The outskirts of Nottingham are just 1 mile away, and the nearest larger village is East Leake 2½ miles towards Loughborough. It lies close to the main trunk road access from Nottingham to the M1, and Nottingham East Midlands Airport is 5 miles away. Two smaller villages, Barton-in-Fabis and Thrumpton, lie between Gotham and the River Trent to the North.

3.2 Local Government

The local councils are:

a) Nottinghamshire County Council, which has been in Labour hands for years. Our constituency is Soar Valley which is held by the Conservatives. The County Council are responsible for footpaths, roads, education amongst others.

b) Rushcliffe Borough Council. This has been mainly Conservative run over the years though not with a large majority. Our Liberal Democrat councillor has sat for 20 years and also covers the surrounding satellite villages. Rushcliffe are responsible for services like refuse collection, environment and leisure.

c) Gotham Parish Council. There are 13 places on the council which is strongly non-political. The places have always been filled but not necessarily with an election. The current clerk is the latest in a long time of local residents who have admirably filled the job. Since 1953, an unusual responsibility of the Parish Council is to be trustees for the village hall and recreation ground, left to the village as a war memorial in 1922. This has been an extra drain on the parish rate, and therefore the village precept is one of the highest in the borough. The council meets on the first Tuesday of every month in the library room of the Memorial Hall.

3.3 Information, the internet and websites

Information from the larger councils is satisfactory and in Rushcliffe's case is good with frequent publications being delivered to each household. The Parish Council produces a newsletter every four months which is also delivered to every household, publicising its own activities and those of other village organisations. Additionally St Lawrence Church delivers a monthly newsletter. There are several notice boards around the village: in particular the one by the Post Office has a Parish Council section where meeting agendas and important public notices are

displayed. There is also a wide selection of leaflets and notices in the Library.

An unofficial village website exists constructed by a keen and helpful resident and this is used by some organisations for information: also some organisations have their own websites. There is no doubt that with much of the village being of interest to historians, tourists and other outsiders, as well as its own residents, that a more comprehensive 'official' website needs to be constructed.

For internet access, the village landline telephone network is shortly to be upgraded to broadband by British Telecommunications. Many residents already have the benefit of this via the cable network.

3.4 The Police and Neighbourhood Watch

Like many rural villages, Gotham has seen changes in the level of policing. The old police house on Kegworth Road has been sold and is now a private dwelling and the lack of a visible police presence is a serious cause of unease, particularly amongst the elderly. There are also tiresome cycles of vandalism which plague the village in particular around the Memorial Hall complex. While some originate from our own population there have been disturbing incidences where the instigators have been outsiders.

On the plus side, the strong village community and the efforts of many working with the youth in Gotham have undoubtedly served to reduce this problem and we have young people to be proud of.

The Parish Council has a good dialogue with Nottinghamshire police but there have been so many reorganisations and changes in personnel that to define a proper plan is virtually impossible. No doubt we have to accept the problems that Nottinghamshire Police have with their commitments within the city, but we must continue to stress that rural policing must not be forgotten and resourced appropriately. We have joined with other rural communities to pool information and plans.

Neighbourhood Watch is organised within the village with 20 coordinators.

Key issues

- People like living in Gotham. Many of the population have lived in the village a long time and family units are strong.
- The government of the village and the Memorial Hall and Recreation Ground.
- Content and coverage of the notice boards and newsletters.
- Implement a comprehensive "official" village website.
- Liaison with the police authorities to ensure a feeling of safety and security within the parish.

4. HOUSING AND PLANNING

4.1 Introduction - Description of existing situation

The historic core of Gotham is concentrated along the main road and around St. Lawrence Church, a listed building, together with the Manor House, The Pump and the Old Rectory. The rural character of this area is re-inforced by a few barn/farm conversions located in the surrounding area of the church and it is therefore important that this low density environment is protected to preserve the character and identity of this part of the settlement. Throughout Gotham at least 50% of the properties overlook either countryside and or the hills.

Outside the core of the village there is a mixture of development styles and densities. In the north east of the village there is an area of high density terraced housing, indicative of Gotham's early growth as a result of the nearby Gypsum Mining Industry.

In the north of the village, there is a compact development of semi-detached properties, probably dating from the inter-war period. Within the south east of the village and on its western edge and southern tip there are more modern semi-detached properties and bungalows set on regular patterned housing estates, symptomatic of how villages have expanded due to post war pressure for housing.

Character of Our Area:

Taken from Countryside Appraisal – Nottinghamshire Landscape guidelines (NCC 1977)

South Nottinghamshire Farmlands.

A prosperous lowland agricultural region with a simple rural character of large arable fields, village settlements and broad alluvial levels.

Closely associated with a belt of Triassic rocks which lie south of the River Trent between Gotham and Newark. The main rock type of this formation is the Mercia Mudstone Group, comprising a considerable thickness of reddish mudstone containing occasional bands of hard sandstone or 'skerries'. Gypsum also occurs in quantity.

The alluvium of Fairham Brook occupies much of the open expanses of Ruddington, Gotham and Bradmore Moors. Mottled clayey soils have developed in the greyish and brownish alluvium. There are now only small remnants of the peat which once covered the surface. Topsoils are humous clay loams or sandy clay loams with sandy silt and sandy loam subsoils. Soils are often gypsiferous.

By the late 18th Century a start had been made on draining the moor between Gotham and Ruddington, although substantial areas of open common pasture remained until 1836.

The levels of the Ruddington Moors area are confined to a low basin. To the south it is framed by rising and often wooded ground. The lands were enclosed by the beginning of the 19th Century, with the exception of Clifton Pastures and Barton Moor.

Field hedges and ditches have now been almost entirely removed, amalgamating fields so that modern large machinery may be deployed.

The open character of the land is distinctive and further compounded by the absence of roadside hedgerows. The central parts are devoid of features making the traversing pylon lines from Ratcliffe on Soar Power Station more visible.

4.2 Housing

Gotham is one of the smaller villages in the Borough of Rushcliffe. The quality of life for the residents is good with a very pleasant environment ensuring that the village is a safe and healthy place in which to live.

The existing housing provides decent homes by being in good repair, warm with adequate facilities, although not always providing parking space within the curtilage.

The housing stock comprises 683 properties of which the majority (620) are privately owned.

On 20th January 2003, Rushcliffe Borough Council transferred all the Council housing stock to a not-for-profit housing organisation known as Rushcliffe Homes.

This was achieved after a vote had been taken by the Council tenants, the result being 52.1% for and 47.9% against. A benefit to the Rushcliffe community is that 80% of the net receipt has been set aside, to be made available to fund new affordable housing projects in the Borough. Any tenant having the 'Right to Buy' before the transfer date has retained that right. In addition transferring tenants will gain the Right to Acquire. All new tenants will only have a 'Right to Acquire' their homes.

Rushcliffe Homes will continue to allocate housing according to needs assessment on a points basis. A benefit of the transfer is that applicants seeking re-housing in their existing Parish will gain extra points to assist them be re-housed locally. In addition points will also be awarded for time spent on the Housing Register.

There remains a significant waiting list for accommodation within the Borough, currently standing at 2,000 applications, of which 398 people will consider being housed in Gotham.

65 requests are for pensioner accommodation, though those seeking warden-aided facilities are eligible for Tutin Court in East Leake.

144 people have requested general needs flats and a further 189 are seeking family accommodation.

Rushcliffe Homes has responsibility in Gotham for:

- 3 x 4 bedroomed houses
- 16 x 3 bedroomed houses
- 28 x 2 bedroomed bungalows
- 8 x 2 bedroomed flats
- 8 x 1 bedroomed flats

New building since the 1985 report has consisted of 'in filling' , a conversion from barns or redundant chapel buildings eg Chapel Close and Meadow End Chapel.

The conversion of the old Board School (1879) on Kegworth Road, to 5 self-contained units is currently before planners.

Further housing on the footprint of the Junior School kitchen is also being proposed, if and when a new school is built.

On 1st April 1993, when the old rating system was abandoned and Council Tax was brought in, each house was categorised in an A-H band, based on its market value as at 1st April 1991.

There is likely to be a general re-valuation in 2005, as new Council tax values will be imposed on 1st April 2007.

This is necessary to accommodate rising property value, eg Band 'A' category is for dwellings worth less than £40,000 of which there are now very few.

In the year 2002, Rushcliffe house prices have rocketed at the fastest level in the East Midlands. High land values make it difficult to secure really low cost affordable housing.

It has long been the ambition of the Parish Council to have some affordable housing available (and even a sheltered housing scheme), to meet the existing and future needs of the residents of Gotham. To that end a scheme involving Rushcliffe Housing and Gotham Parish Council to provide two small developments in the village is underway. Currently (Autumn 2004) a housing needs survey is being undertaken to try to prove the need for such housing. We are told that if the need is proven and a suitable piece of land is available then the necessary finance is in place at Rushcliffe Borough Council. A long way to go on the project, but Gotham Parish Council is very hopeful of a successful outcome.

4.3 Planning Policy

The Regional Planning Guidance for the East Midlands covers the period up to 2021 and sets the regional spatial planning framework for the longer term future.

From April 2003 the East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) became the Statutory Planning Body, taking over from the EMRLGA the East Midlands Regional Local Government Association.

The existing Nottinghamshire Structure Plan (1996) is being reviewed, and the current Rushcliffe Local Plan has reached the Deposit Draft Review stage and will be 'saved' under the new legislation for up to 3 years, meaning that when the review process has been completed the Plan will almost certainly be adopted and be in force for the foreseeable future. The Green Belt 'wash' over Gotham is still extant and is currently not being challenged by anyone.

There is a new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, before Parliament and the office of the Deputy Prime Minister is already asking local authorities and Regional Planning Bodies to move towards the new system.

Regional Planning Guidance became Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) with statutory force as part of the development plan from April 2004.

Key issues

- Review housing needs and liaise with appropriate outside agencies, particularly the proven need of the existing population.
- Improved planning guidance (Village Design Statement).
- The visual aspect of the village buildings and open spaces.
- The preservation of Gotham as a free standing village surrounded by green fields.

5. TRANSPORT AND ROADS

5.1 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

5.1.1 Bus and Coach Services

Gotham enjoys an enviable and somewhat unique position, compared with most rural communities, with regard to bus services, as the Nottingham – Loughborough service of Nottingham City Transport continues to operate from the old South Notts. Depot in the village. The national network of Inter-City express coach services is readily accessible from either of the above destinations, as are the local services of other operators serving the surrounding districts. Nottingham City Transport have increased the frequency of daytime services on the Nottingham – Loughborough route and maintained the late evening service since they took over from South Notts. The village is linked to the Soar Valley Villages Community bus route.

5.1.2 Rail Services (Passenger)

In common with most rural areas we have long-since ceased to enjoy direct local access to the remnants of British Rail's once vast network of services. However, mainline passenger connections are still available at both Nottingham and Loughborough, together with vestigial local services to a few selected destinations. The Great Central Railway conservation society have in recent years extended their operations to the north of Loughborough as far as Ruddington, where they have now established an operating base on the old M.O.D site adjacent to the transport museum. Ultimately they intend to introduce a passenger service from Ruddington along the old Great Central line via East Leake to Loughborough linking with their existing route to the outskirts of Leicester.

Nottingham Electric Trams have also indicated a desire to extend their new system south of the city to Clifton and possibly Ruddington, which may utilise the remaining part of the old Great Central Railway corridor from Ruddington to Nottingham via Wilford and a reinstated bridge over the River Trent.

A new 'Park and Ride' Parkway Station is planned for the Midland Mainline at Ratcliffe on Soar, together with parking for over a thousand cars and a possible link to the N.E. Tramway extension to Clifton. This would provide us with a very convenient additional access to the main line rail network, although plans for the much vaunted electrification of the Midland Mainline to London seem unfortunately to be receding ever further into the future.

5.1.3 Rail Services (Freight)

Surprise! Surprise! Despite all their protestations to the contrary with regard to cost and operational difficulties, British Gypsum were finally forced to reinstate a rail freight handling facility at their East Leake works to cope with the influx of D.S.G from Drax Power Station. This apparent 'u' turn on the part of the company was brought about by planning constraints placed on the export of D.S.G from Drax by road at the insistence of South Yorkshire County Council on environmental grounds. It is a great shame that Notts. County Council did not show the same concerns when they approved the planning consent for the D.S.G plant at Ratcliffe on Soar. However, the 'send Gypsum by Rail' campaign orchestrated by Gotham Parish Council has finally been vindicated, in part at least, if somewhat belatedly. Consequently, we have been saved from the effects of countless thousands of H.G.V movements around our village which would have been the inevitable alternative.

We are not currently aware of any other rail freight operations utilising this section of the old Great Central Railway. However, rail orientated developments at the Ruddington Business Park are now a possibility for the future. It is important therefore that this option is protected by the current use and future preservation of our railway link to the mainline network at Loughborough.

5.1.4 Air Services

Nottingham East Midlands Airport, which has become a provincial airport of some standing, lies just a few miles to the west of Gotham. The volumes of both passenger and in particular freight traffic, have increased substantially in recent years. This has been accompanied by major infrastructure developments at the airport including a much extended and revamped passenger terminal and a massively enlarged freight handling facility. The main runway has been extended and controversial plans are a foot to build a second runway.

The principal passenger service operators, for instance British Midland, provide a comprehensive network of flights to many destinations in the United Kingdom and Europe, giving direct access to the intercontinental flights of the world's major airlines. A substantial hotel is also included within the airport facility for the benefit of travellers.

The freight terminal operated by D.H.L is now reputedly the second largest in the United Kingdom after Heathrow Airport and serves as a national European and transatlantic distribution hub. The Royal Mail also use the airport as a distribution hub for their air delivery service as do many smaller freight transport companies.

A direct rail link to the airport is projected in the near future utilising a connection to the nearby rail freight line which passes through Castle Donington.

There are environmental implications of having the airport so close and these are discussed in section 11.5.

5.2 ROAD SYSTEM

5.2.1 Roads within the village

The road system in Gotham is largely adequate for the needs of residents and other road users, with the exception of a few awkward bottle-necks on some of the older, narrower back streets.

There are at present three unadopted roads in the village: Hill Road, Monks Lane and Orchard Street. Monks Lane was finally given a tarmac surface in 1995 at the expense of the adjoining property owners (including Rushcliffe Borough Council on behalf of tenants), by their mutual consent. The County Council have a long standing policy of refusing to adopt roads which do not conform to an acceptable minimum standard of construction and repair. This remains their current policy today.

The road markings and yellow lines in the village are subject to occasional amendment and review, although there are limits to the improvements that this can achieve. A number of additional new road signs have been erected on Ridgeway, together with the imposition of a 40 m.p.h. speed limit, the provision of a properly paved bus stop and the erection of numerous, long overdue extra street lights. These measures were widely acclaimed and have done much to reduce the accident rate at this notorious former black spot, although speeding is still an issue and a recent fatality proves the problem has not gone away. The larger chevrons erected some time ago at the Legion corner appear to have taken care of the problem there as well.

Repeated request for pelican and/or other zebra crossings at various locations in the village continue to be ignored, on the grounds that neither the numbers of pedestrians nor the volume of traffic is sufficient to fulfil the criteria laid down by the County Council and considered necessary for their provision. The traffic calming measures introduced at the school when Gypsum Way was under construction were, however, much welcomed and have proved to be highly effective.

There is widespread and deep felt concern that the levels and speed of traffic through the village is too high. Many drivers, including heavy vehicles who flaunt the restriction signs, use Gotham as a 'rat run' from the A453. A focus group within the village has identified the following points:

- Vehicle weight restrictions and speed limits should be enforced throughout the village in conjunction with the local police authority
- Traffic has to be slowed down at the entries to the village to protect pedestrians particularly children and the elderly. Anecdotally, the “30 mph” painted on the road at the Nottingham end of the village has slowed traffic down as it enters the village. This could be replicated at every entrance to Gotham or alternative measures could be considered with help and advice from the Highways and the Police; eg changes of road surface, other entry features such as flashing speed signs.
- In co-operation with Nottingham City Transport, Rushcliffe Borough Council and the police, review the siting of bus stops and gain understanding of the philosophy and requirements of same.
- Identify signs that need to be respected at all times, note their location and monitor adherence.

5.2.2 *Parking issues*

Not all of the many car owners in Gotham have off road parking for their vehicles. There is no public car park in the village, and parking space for users of the Memorial Hall and Recreation Ground complex is commonly insufficient. Many homeowners have taken therefore to converting their front gardens to tarmac and others to parking on the verges or at the kerbside. This can have the beneficial effect of slowing traffic down through the village, but can sometimes unfortunately give rise to issues of visibility for other road users and pedestrians.

The cul-de-sac at Meadow End joins Nottingham Road at a junction where visibility for emerging drivers can be severely restricted by parked cars. Nearly directly opposite the entrance to the Memorial Hall and Recreation Ground complex and two shops, this is also busy for pedestrians crossing the road, many of whom are children. This is a significant hazard and despite many requests to Police and County Council there are no measures to restrict the car parking, nor provision of a road crossing. There have been accidents in the past including one fatality: we hope that it will not take another one to make a change.

5.2.3 *A453*

As can be seen on the attached map, the A453 is the main arterial route to the south west, west and north of Gotham. It serves the essential, southerly link from the M1 junction 24 to the city of Nottingham and is the main contributor to the traffic flowing over Clifton Bridge in a northerly direction and Nottingham’s Ring Road in an Easterly direction. Currently, despite the enormous weight of traffic, it is constructed as a

single-carriageway with very few places in which faster moving vehicles can overtake slower ones. It has an appalling safety record and is a constant source of traffic congestion. As a result the road has been under revue by the Department of Transport for many years (at least 20!) to be upgraded to a two-lane, each way, dual carriageway.

Ratcliffe on Soar, Kingston on Soar and East Leake all have 7.5 Tonne weight restrictions for through-traffic and so all vehicles trying to avoid the congestion on the A453 have traditionally passed through Gotham. In recent years Gotham, too, managed to get a similar weight restriction but in the event of the, all too frequent, accidents blocking the trunk road the police have had no choice but to route the traffic through our village. It is for this reason that Gotham Parish Council has taken a very close interest in the outcome of the revues of the DoT when concerned with the A453.

1995 saw the first major Public Inquiry into a plan by the Highways Agency (an agency of the DoT) to dual the road from Junction 24 all the way to the Clifton Bridge. This Public Inquiry became necessary when objections were raised by some Clifton residents to the proposals of dualling the road through their locality.

The result, after three months of open debate and a further six months of deliberation by the Inspector, was that the plan, in its entirety, should be built. This was to take place over two years starting in the spring of 1999 and completing by autumn 2001. Unfortunately, in the view of Gotham Parish Council at least, the incoming Minister of Transport (following the General Election of 1997) decided to 'pull' the scheme for further review. He then instituted a series of Multi Modal Studies throughout the nation including one for the A453 and one for the M1 from Junction 24 to Junction 29. Gotham Parish Council was invited to take part in those Studies and did so as part of the 'Wider Reference Group'. The Studies were completed by spring 2002 and reported to the Minister by the autumn of the same year. They confirmed the general findings of the previous Inquiry with the variance that the road through Clifton should be a four lane undivided highway on the grounds that it would cause less visual intrusion to Clifton and be equally safe as witnessed by a similar arrangement on Wilford Road into Nottingham.

The plan is currently going through the initial phases of review before being adopted by the Minister. It is widely expected to go before a Public Inquiry sometime in 2006 and be built starting 2008.

5.2.4 Street Furniture

A focus group has proposed the following actions:

- There should be a uniform style of litter bin throughout the village and preferably one with a lid to avoid wind displacement of litter (as at the Post Office).
- Traffic signs should be kept to a minimum and looked at as an overall concept and rationalised after proper consultation with Nottinghamshire County Council Highways department.
- Redundant signs should be removed and all signs reviewed on a frequent and regular basis
- Bus stop signs and timetables should be discussed during the review of bus stops ensuring that where there is only one timetable, both journeys to and from Nottingham should be displayed.
- Continuation of the program of installation and maintenance of seats.

Key issues

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A453 redevelopment as a direct benefit to villagers and the resultant traffic levels through the village. • Maintenance of the weight restrictions and speed levels. • The Parkway railway station, the NET and other public transport services; the benefits and effects on villagers. • Maintenance and development of the bus services, particularly to local villages, hospital and airport. • Implement the focus group points on transport and street furniture mentioned above. • Transport for the elderly and disabled. |
|---|

6. Education & Youth

6.1 Primary & Secondary Education

Although numbers on school rolls have been falling generally, there has been an increase in the number of children attending Gotham Primary School through the 1990s. There were 163 children on the roll at the beginning of 2003 rising to 171 by the end of the school year. There are now six classes, two Key Stage 1 (Infants) classes, and four Key Stage 2 (Junior) classes.

The Head Teacher is Mrs Sue Lymn-Brewin, who is a former pupil of the school. There are 6 full-time class teachers and each class also has a Learning Support Assistant for part of the day. In addition, a part-time supply teacher is employed as required, providing additional literacy and numeracy lessons for some children in Year 6 during the preparation for Key Stage 2 SATS.

The school has been inspected by OFSTED twice and on both occasions received a good report. Standards of attainment in the SATS tests at the end of Year 6 continue to rise.

Both OFSTED reports commented on the appalling condition of the school buildings, particularly the 'temporary' buildings referred to in the 1985 study. They are still standing – but only just! We eagerly await the new school anticipated in 1985. For a number of years the school was included in the Private Finance Initiative planning which has led to a rebuilt secondary school in East Leake. Gotham was dropped from this scheme because of budget problems and the Local Education Authority has put forward its own plans for a new school. Building of the new school is due to start in February 2005 for completion by Christmas 2005.

Apart from a few children who go to independent schools, the majority of village children go on to attend Harry Carlton Secondary School in East Leake. The school moved into its new accommodation in September 2003. Standards of attainment in both GCSE and A Levels are very high and the school has an excellent reputation. The school is currently applying for specialist maths and science status, reflecting its outstanding performance in these fields.

6.2 Adult Education

There continues to be a wide variety of courses available for adults at a number of locations.

South Nottingham College offers courses at GCSE, A and AS level, BTEC, GNVQ, Key Skills and NVQ standards to students over the age of 16. Subjects include traditional academic studies such as English and Mathematics, vocational training in Childcare, Beauty and Media as well as Business Studies, Computing and Information Technology, Multimedia, Sport and Leisure Studies. Studies can be undertaken during the day and in the evening and there is childcare available.

A basic computer course runs at the Memorial Hall, an internet training course runs at Gotham Primary School, and other similar courses are available in East Leake and Sutton Bonington.

Traditional university education is available locally in Nottingham, Derby and Loughborough. In addition The Open University has a Regional Study centre in Nottingham.

6.3 Pre-School/Playgroup

There are two main providers of pre-school care within the village. Gotham Pre-school Playgroup offers play and pre-school learning opportunities for children from age 2 ½ to school age. The playgroup runs each weekday morning in the Memorial Hall complex.

For parents who want full day-care provision there is a private nursery in Wallace Street. The Old Co-op Day Nursery takes children from 6 months and also provides before and after school and holiday care for older children.

There is currently no state nursery provision within Gotham, although a few children obtain places in the nursery class at Lantern Lane Primary School in East Leake. An Early Years Education class (taking both nursery age and the youngest school age children) is one of the possibilities being considered as part of the Primary School rebuild, although there are no definite plans to date.

There is also a Mother and Toddler group which meets on a Friday morning in the vicarage garden in the summer months and the church hall in the winter months, and a second group which meet on a Tuesday morning in the same hall.

6.4 Playscheme

During the summer holidays there is a village playscheme, which runs for six sessions over three weeks. The playscheme offers a wide variety of art and craft activities, as well as a number of different sports and outdoor games. On average 70 to 90 children attend each session. Children of primary school age can be left in the care of the playscheme workers but many younger children also attend with their parents or carers.

6.5 After School Care

The Old Co-op Day Nursery provides after school care for primary school age children.

In addition there are a number of after school clubs available. At school children can stay and take part in football and cricket coaching (depending on the time of year). There is a Games Workshop club and a computer club. During the summer term year 6 children can take a course in cycling proficiency.

On Wednesday afternoon the church runs an after school club in the church hall for children of school age.

6.6 Youth Facilities

There are a number of youth organisations and clubs available for younger children. There are thriving Scout groups for boys in three age ranges, Beavers (age 6 – 8), Cubs (age 8 – 10) and Scouts (age 11 – 15). For girls there is a Rainbow group (age 5 – 7) and a Brownie pack (age 7 – 10). There is a Guide pack in East Leake that older girls can attend.

A number of sports clubs offer coaching to young people. The Netball club meets at the Arena and trains girls to a high standard – providing the majority of players in the Harry Carlton netball teams! There are two football clubs, one of which runs junior coaching sessions and has several youth teams. The tennis club arranges coaching in both mini and lawn tennis. During the summer the Cricket Club provides hard ball coaching for some older children. Kwik Cricket coaching is available in Thrumpton during the summer and the club also arranges sessions at Trent Bridge over the winter months.

Once a week there is a Karate class in the Memorial Hall, attended by a number of primary age children, and a boxing club meet several evenings a week in the Memorial Hall complex offering training for youths and adults.

The outdoor play equipment at the Memorial Hall recreation ground provides enjoyment for many of the younger children. It has unfortunately proved difficult to provide very much to attract the teenagers, although a football kickwall and basketball hoop are popular. Several attempts have been made to run a youth club in the Memorial Hall but none has lasted very long and there is currently nothing available for this age group.

Nevertheless, for a village of this size, the range of activities on offer is remarkable.

Key issues

- Recognition that Gotham Primary School plays a significant role in the social structure of the village.
- The rebuilding of Gotham Primary School and the maintenance of a vibrant and popular village primary school.
- Assess and review the provision of viable facilities for pre-school age children.
- Review of out of school care for children and teenagers.
- Outdoor play facilities

7. Leisure

The village is fortunate to be served by many excellent sporting and recreational facilities. Also in the nearby areas ie East Leake the Borough and County Councils provide a fuller curriculum of various events and activities.

For the purpose of this report the activities have been split into different parts: firstly those provided within the village itself and secondly those within a distance of three miles and within reach by use of public transport. While it is realised that a large number of activities are also available in surrounding Loughborough and Clifton areas, these have not been listed.

7.1 Village Facilities

7.1.1. Outdoor Pursuits.

The War Memorial Trust Playing Fields provide –

a) Cricket

Senior and Junior Cricket are both catered for within Gotham. Saturday - two teams, Sunday - one team, and week-day nights as well as regular training sessions for both Senior and Junior teams. Now added to their facilities are an artificial grass wicket, practice nets and the club also runs a licensed bar within their pavilion.

b) Football

Football is played by the Star F.C. on Sunday mornings.

Gotham Rangers (Junior Football) consists of several highly successful teams of different age groups. These play Saturday/Sunday Matches and some weekdays. Regular practice sessions are undertaken on the newly acquired Floodlit Multi-sports Arena (see later)

c) Bowls

A thriving Bowls Club operates, playing both week-end and weekday matches. Their new additional pavilion facilities have enabled the Bowls Club to incorporate a tea room and ladies changing facilities which has enabled the ladies side of the club to expand. Of note is the growing interest by younger people in this sport.

d) Floodlit Multi-Sports Arena

This has replaced the original tennis courts. The Sports Arena now encompasses a **Tennis Club** with both designated playing times for Club members and ad-hoc bookings for casual users.

5 a-side football is played every week day evening with the young Gotham Rangers booking three evenings per week regularly throughout the winter months.

Netball Club: With the advent of the Sports Arena both Senior and Junior Netball teams are continuing to flourish.

Sports Pavilions

Bowls/Cricket/Tennis/Football Clubs each have their own designated Pavilion with some shared facilities, which are jointly administered by the Trustees and the Clubs.

e) Riding

Although there are no organised equestrian events a riding school is situated on Cheese Hill which offers riding and hacking lessons. There are many people of all ages interested in horse riding and the extensive bridle path network throughout our area provide good and varied riding opportunities with several excellent stabling facilities obtainable locally.

f) Walking

There is an active local walking club and other organised groups use the footpaths and bridleways throughout the area. There are easy walks to Barton, Thrumpton or over the Golf Course to East and West Leake. In another direction they extend as far as Ruddington.

g) Gardening

There are about 50 garden allotments in the village which are owned by the Church Commissioners and are let with no difficulty mainly to local villagers. The allotments are centrally administered by Escritt and Barrell, a firm of solicitors in Grantham.

There is an active Gardener's Club in the village which meets monthly. Speakers attend and it is often possible to buy unusual plants. Outings to interesting gardens in and around Nottinghamshire are arranged during the summer months.

h) Play Area

The Recreation Ground has a number of items of play equipment for children ranging from a fenced off area for under 9s with for instance bucket swings and a small slide, to a wooden trail of planks and chains, larger swings and a multi-activity football goal and basketball hoop for older children and teenagers. There is also a grass mound that is built over rubble from an extension to the Memorial Hall. The range of equipment, its maintenance and safety are the responsibility of the Trustees who over the years have tried to meet the changing demands and expectations of the younger people in the village within its limited budget.

7.1.2 Indoor Sports/Organisations

The Memorial Hall provides facilities presently for **Boxing, Badminton and Kung Fu** which run week-day evenings throughout the year.

There are various other events in the Memorial Hall which, although not sport, constitute leisure activities.

a) Senior Citizen Luncheon Club

- b) Women's Institute
- c) Playgroup
- d) Wednesday Club (formerly Good Companions)
- e) Cubs
- f) Computer Courses
- Gotham British Legion Premises*
- g) Young Wives
- h) Local History Society
- Gotham Church Hall*
- i) Gardening Club
- j) Patchwork
- k) Brownies
- l) Rainbows
- m) After School Wednesday Club, run by the Church
- n) Art Club
- o) Mothers and Toddlers

7.1.3 Gotham British Legion

The Royal British Legion provides a number of leisure interests, these mainly comprising -

- a) Dancing and social gathering
- b) Darts
- c) Cabarets/Shows
- d) Quiz Evenings
- e) Discos

7.1.4 Public Houses

The village has four public houses, all of which provide various leisure pursuits, these mainly being darts, dominoes, computerised games, quiz nights, meals etc.

7.2 Borough Facilities

It is fair to say that all major sports are actively represented and heavily duplicated within a five mile area of Gotham. For instance, cricket is played at East Leake, Thrumpton, Ruddington, Sutton Bonington, etc. Therefore, it seems only necessary to point out those facilities that are available which are not duplicated in the village.

a) **Swimming**

The nearest swimming pools are those at East Leake, Clifton, Keyworth Leisure Centre and Rushcliffe Leisure Centre, where both organised and play swimming is available. East Leake and Clifton are better for the teaching of learner swimmers.

b) **Hockey**

The nearest hockey facilities for men are at West Park, Loughborough Road and the West Bridgford Hockey Club.

c) **Water Sports**

Are actively covered at Holme Pierrepont which, of course, is Britain's leading international centre for these activities.

d) **The Leisure Centres**

At East Leake, Keyworth and Rushcliffe provide a vast selection of various indoor sports including -

Squash, weightlifting, karate, cricket nets, roller disco, archery, keep-fit etc.

e) In addition to these public services, there are **squash clubs** at Keyworth, and Trent Bridge.

f) **Golf**

The nearest golf course is Rushcliffe at East Leake and there is a municipal course at Edwalton.

a) **Indoor Cricket**

The Derek Randall Indoor Cricket centre is at Wilford.

h) **Line Dancing**

Line Dancing sessions are held at Kingston Village Hall on Wednesday evenings, and on Monday afternoons in East Leake.

i) **Girl Guides**

Girl Guides meet at Brookside School in East Leake once a week.

j) **East Leake Amateur Players**

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday in the month at the East Leake Village Hall.

7.3 Conclusion

We therefore feel that we are fortunate to be in an area where so much sport and so many different activities are being offered. In conjunction with the very good public transport service we have there seems no reason why anybody interested in any leisure activity cannot participate in their chosen interest within a five mile area, or at the worst within ten miles radius.

Key issues

- Review leisure activities on offer for all age groups.
- Advertise activities on offer on noticeboards, in newsletters and on websites.

8. Shopping

8.1 *Village Shops*

There is no longer a general store in Gotham although the specialised shops listed below supply a limited range of fresh foods, packaged goods and convenience foods. The nearest supermarket style shopping available is in Clifton and East Leake. For most household items, white goods, furniture, clothing and DIY supplies, Nottingham and Loughborough provide a wide range of chain stores and specialised shops. There are several large garden centres within a 5 mile range.

The following businesses have visible presence on the village:

Butcher – Melvin Adcock

Carries on the family tradition, supplying fresh and cooked meats as well as some groceries, green grocery and filled cobs.

Newsagent – Jane Sansom

Sells and delivers newspapers 7 days a week. Also stocks some groceries, frozen foods, ice cream, confectionary, soft drinks, greetings cards and non-prescription medicines. Licensed to sell beers, wines and spirits. Is an agent for dry cleaning and shoe repairs.

Post Office – John & Sue Birtles

As well as normal post office services, bills for most utilities can be paid and TV and fishing licences issued. Banking services (cash withdrawals and cash and cheque deposits) for several of the major banks can be made. Lottery instants are sold, as are cards, stationery, sweets and other goods.

Frydays – Elaine Lawton

Fish and chips and a range of other hot take away foods are served on Tuesday to Saturday evenings and Thursday to Saturday lunch times.

Gotham Car Sales and Service Station

Sales of used cars and spares and accessories. Service and repair of vehicles. Also sells bedding plants in season and barbecues. Petrol is no longer sold although the pumps remain. The nearest available petrol is sold at Clifton.

Anita's Flowers – Anita Sumner

Flower arranging service for weddings and funerals and other special occasions. Also sells fruit and vegetables and bedding plants in season

and greeting cards. Cat and dog food and other items are available to special order.

Carolean Hairdressing – Norma Jones

A ladies hairdressing salon.

The Moors Cattery – Vera & John Guy

A full boarding service for cats is provided.

Field House Nursery

Specialist growers of Auriculas and Primulas. Holders of three National Plant Collections and the largest grower of Auriculas in the world. Retail plants locally, at specialist plant sales (Chatsworth, Warton etc.) and world wide via mail and e-mail.

Trevor Vennett-Smith, Auctioneers and Valuers

Specialising in memorabilia, particularly sporting.

Gail Weightman, Physiotherapist

There are a number of tradesmen and craftsmen resident in the village providing services which include building work, plumbing, roofing, painting and decorating, kitchen and bedroom fitting, gardening, tree work and landscaping, functional and ornamental ironwork, upholstery, carpet and upholstery cleaning and home hair dressing.

There are many other businesses in Gotham than these and to provide an exhaustive list would be out of date just as soon as it was written.

8.2 *Other Local Services*

The Co-op in Clifton will deliver to Gotham.

A mobile fish van calls on Thursdays.

There is now only one independent milkman (Derek Litchfield) who delivers milk to the village. He also has a range of other food including bread and potatoes.

8.3 *Library Services*

8.3.1 *The Library*

The County Library Service maintains a library in the Memorial Hall complex and is open on Mondays from 2.30pm-7pm, Wednesdays from 2.30 to 4.30 and Fridays from 10.30am to 12.30pm and 2pm to 6pm. Books not in stock can be ordered. There are also computer facilities available with free access to the internet: there is a small charge for printing.

Gotham has one of the smallest, most poorly equipped and least well attended library in the county, and has in the past successfully fought off attempts to close it. The current trend however is for expansion and to make the library more inclusive. The Parish Council, acting as Trustees, is planning redevelopment of its facilities to extend the space available to the library to facilitate such expansion and development.

8.3.2 *Books on Wheels*

This service is run jointly by the Notts. County Council Community Services and the W.R.V.S. through a rota of local volunteers. There is a free service to people who would have difficulty through age or infirmity in using the normal library services. A number of books, videos and talking books are delivered to people's homes for them to make their own selection.

8.4 *St. Lawrence Parish Church*

The Priest in Charge is the Rev. Steven Osman who is also responsible for the parishes of Barton in Fabis, Thrumpton, Ratcliffe-on-Soar and Kingston. These churches are also part of the 'cluster' which includes Normanton-on-Soar and Sutton Bonington.

The church has an open policy for Baptism. Marriages can be arranged for residents of the parish and or people who have been on the church electoral role for at least six months.

Services are held in the church on every Sunday at 11am except for the 3rd Sunday of the month when it is at 9.30am. The service on the 2nd Sunday is a Methodist service. There is an evening service on the 4th Sunday of the month. In addition there are a number of special services throughout the year.

There are several groups that meet under the auspices of the church, including monthly meetings of the Sewing Group, Julian Prayer Group and Discoverers Social Group and weekly meetings of the Explore Study Group (midweek), After School Club for primary school age children on Wednesday and Toddlers Group on Friday mornings.

On display in the Church is a framed tapestry completed by residents of the village to celebrate the millennium in 2000. It depicts notable village architecture and organisations, and scenes from its folklore and

history. It is a superb celebration of the village and of the workmanship of some of its residents.

8.5 *The Cemetery*

The cemetery on Leake Road is bordered by residential properties to the west and south, a private road to the north and the main through road through the village to the east. The railings on this east side incorporate a stone gateway that was once surmounted by an arch, but this was removed for safety reasons in 1947. There is a body of opinion that would like to see it reinstated. The apron of the cemetery is visible to the road and is currently laid to grass with a flower border and some trees. There are a dozen or so 120 year old yew trees within the cemetery itself.

Maintenance of the cemetery is the joint responsibility of the Parish Council and the PCC, who are also the burial authority. There are a limited number of spare plots available and a decision about the future needs to be made: whether to re-use part of the existing cemetery or church yard, seek a site within the village for a new one, or to refer burials to the Borough Council, though this last option is deeply unpopular with the residents. Whatever future path is taken, the current cemetery remains an important village feature and must be maintained to a suitable standard as befits a rural village cemetery.

Key issues

- Promote the use of local facilities where possible.
- Recognition that local shops are valuable to the village as a community.
- The value of the Post Office to all sections of the community, particularly the elderly.

9. Health and Care Services

9.1 The Village Surgery

The village GP surgery is situated in the Memorial Hall complex. There are four doctors who are based at Kegworth but who run a branch surgery in Gotham twice daily on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, and a morning only surgery on Thursday. There are also Practice Nurses providing a range of services including wound dressing, health advice for overseas travellers, blood sampling and injections, well person checks and many more.

There is no pharmacy in Gotham, but the practice runs a dispensary for prescriptions.

There is a practice manager and administrative staff based in Gotham who organise the day to day running of the practice, which has an appointments system for both doctors and nurses.

A team of Midwives and District Nurses are attached to the practice.

The practice provides an excellent booklet detailing all the relevant services and information.

9.2 Chiropody

This is not available as an NHS service in Gotham but one private practitioner operates from the village; otherwise the nearest surgery is in East Leake.

9.3 Dental Services

The nearest dental practices are in East Leake and there are many available in Nottingham.

9.4 Hospital Services

These are mainly provided by the Queen's Medical Centre and City Hospital in Nottingham, but there are also some referrals to Loughborough and Leicester hospitals.

Patients needing hospital transport for outpatient appointments have to arrange this with the hospital concerned. There is no direct bus route to the QMC but one can change in Clifton. Public transport to the other hospitals is difficult.

9.5 Meals on Wheels

These are provided by Notts. County Council Social Services who also provide transport for people to attend day care centres in the area and for the Wednesday lunch club at the Memorial Hall.

9.6 Home Care

Social Services will arrange for care workers for anyone who is assessed as in need of this service. Hospitals, doctors and district nurses refer people for assessment.

9.7 Residential Care Homes

There are no residential care homes or nursing homes within the parish, but there is provision within the surrounding villages and Clifton.

Key issues

- Support for local medical services and their enhancement within the village.

10. Businesses and Employment

10.1 Current Situation

There is no longer any predominant employment in Gotham. Since the last survey undertaken we have seen the closure of the British Gypsum Works at Gotham which had employed 291 males and 45 females. Although the remaining industrial site has been 'let' to several operators in recent years, it has afforded little permanent employment to local residents. However the disused Kingston Gypsum Mine on the western parish boundary now employs an increasing number of villagers with its 160 lorry fleet and motorway barrier business. The sale of the South Notts. Bus Company to Nottingham City Transport has seen drivers now being employed from different areas. Agriculture/Farming is still strong but has had to diversify into different areas as is common throughout the country. Small local shops are struggling to survive and offer little employment opportunities. The village has five Public Houses which create part-time employment mostly during the busy evening hours.

Gotham has one small light industrial site with small individual outlets to rent mostly to local family businesses. The position of the site within the village and proximity to local housing does not allow for expansion.

The other small businesses and services located within Gotham, which offer employment opportunities are:

Gotham Car Sales/Motor Repairs/Maintenance
 Old Co-operative Day Nursery
 T.Vennett-Smith Auctioneer
 Local Primary School/Pre-School Playgroup
 General Practitioner Surgery

The recent census (reference 1) show the following tables which outline employment figures, type of employment and mode of transport.

Actively Employed:

	Part-Time	Full-time	Self-Employed
Males (16 – 74)	27	409	115
Females (16-74)	176	255	57
Manufacturing:	178	Wholesale/Retail/Vehicle Repair	182
Public Admin/Admin/Sec:	181	Education	107
Health/Social	106	Construction	68
Transport/Storage/Commun:	57	Agriculture/Forestry	39
Financial	35	Hotels/Catering	34
Utilities	10	Mining/Quarry	5
Other	37		

These figures break down into the following categories:

Managers/Senior Officers	171
Professional	135
Technical	144
Admin/Secretarial	137
Skilled Trade	149

10.2 Commuting

Type of Transport used to access Employment:

Car/Van:	623	Car Passenger:	61
Bus:	13	Bike/Moped/Motor Cycle:	30
Train:	9	Foot:	52
		Work from Home:	132

Gotham has good access/links to road, rail and air communications

The 'Work from Home' figure of 132 covers all the local 'Sole Traders' that deliver a service within Gotham and the surrounding areas: Builders/Plumbers/Painters and Decorators/Kitchen and Bathroom Fitters/Gas/Electricians/Landscaping/Gardening/Accountants/Computer Services/Photography. This is particularly valuable to the 'vulnerable residents' as almost all home requirements can be met by 'known' local people and they do not have to resort to 'Yellow Pages'.

10.3 Conclusion:

There is scope for expansion of light industrial businesses/office space on redundant brownfield sites, though beyond that there is a lack of appropriate available land. The widening of the A453 through Clifton towards Nottingham would possibly encourage more residents to consider travelling to employment in that direction as at present the 'travel time' has become extremely burdensome. The 'Work from Home' style of employment will probably remain in line with national trends.

Key issues

- Recognition that local industry and commerce is valuable for the balance of the village community.
- The support and development of local industry for local jobs

11. Environmental Matters

11.1 *Environmental background*

Gotham is a relatively compact settlement set amidst gently undulating agricultural landscape in an area identified as South Nottinghamshire Farmlands. The village itself occupies relatively flat land and is surrounded by a horseshoe range of hills, flattening out to moorland to the east.

In terms of environmental designations the core of the village is classed as being of archaeological importance. There are two identified District Wildlife corridors, one to the north of the village and one to the south. Areas of mature landscape are identified in the countryside to the north of Gotham and on the South Western edge. The majority of the land surrounding the settlement in the north, south and west, is classed as Grade 3 agricultural land, whilst the land to the east is a mixture of 2 and 3 (reference 2).

The rural setting of the village is of great value to the residents and it is important that certain views of the hills are preserved. The condition of the verges, the grassed areas and the more visible architectural features are constantly the source of concern and debate. These matters will be described more fully in the Village Design Statement, but this Plan must stress how important the visual aspect, the rural character and setting of the village are to its residents.

Gotham is indeed fortunate that, during a period of environmental decline as man has encroached on natural habitats, it has remained in a planning “Green Wash” situation. There is now more grassland around the village than there was at the end of the second World War.

11.2 *Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)*

A grade 1 SSSI lies in the countryside to the north-west of the village. This land is currently owned by British Gypsum but has been the subject of intensive volunteer maintenance effort and the Parish Council has a plan for future preservation in partnership with Rushcliffe Borough Council and the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, (reference 3). A Grade 2 SINC has been identified along the road to the south west of the village whilst a Grade 1 SINC is identified to the north-west of the village, alongside a potential SINC Grade 0. (reference 4).

11.3 *The Railway Walk*

The Parish Council owns and maintains a Nature Walk adjacent to the village school, which was created on the now disused railway branch line.

11.4 *Rights Of Way Network*

Gotham is extremely well served by an extensive network of footpaths and bridleways radiating from the centre of the village to all points of the compass. See attached plan.

Having an extensive Rights of Way Network, Gotham has for many years been a popular area for both walkers and horse riders and is justly proud of its many paths.

In 1996 the Parish Council entered into the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme and since that time, working with the County Council and the local landowners, there has been a marked improvement in the overall condition of the footpaths and bridleways. Gone are many of the old stiles, replaced by Kissing Gates, and both finger and marker posts define the whole network.

Because of the unusually high ratio of bridleways to footpaths (9 bridleways and six footpaths) Gotham has become one of the most popular horse riding areas in the County.

There are several seats around the paths and bridleway network that are the responsibility of the Parish Council to maintain and develop. Some of the money earned by the Council from paper recycling is ploughed back into the development and maintenance of the seats.

The Gotham Heritage group have introduced a walk around the parish that includes some display boards installed at places of significant interest.

11.5 *Aircraft Noise*

Gotham lies close to a regular flight path to Nottingham East Midlands Airport, and many residents are concerned about the noise from overflying aircraft. This has its peaks, particularly at night, during the summer holiday season and when there are training flights. There is also the potential for expansion of the airport and the redirection of flights to be more over the village so many residents are deeply concerned and have their lives disrupted by it. To mitigate the problem, the village through the Parish Council is in touch with the relevant airport bodies and has a constant dialogue with them. Individuals can also make representations to the bodies as well.

As has been stated earlier, there are transport benefits from having the airport so close and just as there are many who dislike the noise, there are those who on balance prefer the benefit of the cheap flights, and there are also those who are not bothered by the noise at all.

11.6 Recycling

With the introduction of wheelie bins by Rushcliffe Borough Council in 2004, the village has adopted more measures for recycling of rubbish. Paper recycling has been available for some years at the Recreation Ground with the Parish Council using the income for environmental and other projects. This had been extended for glass, clothing, plastic bottle and metal can recycling from Rushcliffe Borough Council. It is also possible to recycle paper at Gotham Primary School.

Key issues

- The development of flight paths from Nottingham East Midlands Airport and the anti-social noise that might arise.
- Maintain the high standard of the rights of way (footpaths and bridleways), including the expansion and enhancement of the Village Heritage Trail
- The quality of street verges and footpaths
- Expand the use of the village recycling facilities.

References

1. <http://www.nottsccc.org.uk/infostore>
2. Countryside Appraisal – Nottinghamshire Landscape Guidelines (1997)
3. <http://www.english-nature.org.uk/special/ssi/>
4. <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/...taryandoverview/conditionofnotts-environment.htm>

Acknowledgements

The Parish Plan Steering Group would like to thank the following for their assistance in producing this document:

The Countryside Agency
Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council
Rushcliffe Borough Council
Gotham History Society

Appendices

A1. Focus Group reports

Report from the Focus group on Youth in Gotham, 3rd July 2003

The group considered the issues facing long term planning for the youth of the village with the following assumptions.

1. That the village would grow in size by 10% over the next ten years and that this would give rise to an increase in youth population of 10 children per year group. This took into account the projections used by the LEA in estimating the size of the Primary School and the likely mix of new houses built.
2. That for secondary age children, the remit was to provide a framework for an open meeting of youth, whereas for the younger children this focus group was the only input.
3. To consider issues 10 years hence.

Under Fives

Day care/nurseries/childminders:

The group considered it almost certain that the rebuild of Gotham Primary School would include an on site nursery that would be able to take all children from 4 years old. If built, then parents would be almost certain to use it as it would not only ensure a place at the Primary School, but also be self-contained, convenient and cost effective. The implication for Playgroup in the Memorial Hall was that it would then cater for the age group 2 ½ to 3 ½ only. With this reduction in numbers, and a perceived trend that there is a reduction in demand for the Playgroup places from working parents, the group considered it unlikely that Playgroup would then be financially viable. There would however be increased demand for day care for the hours of 8am to 6pm. The group felt it unlikely that the existing private nursery in the village would be able to cope with this demand in its existing premises, and that a new private village nursery would be set up, possibly with a strong link with the school. The group did not feel that there would be enough residual demand for childminders, nor that many people wish to become childminders in any case.

For children under 2 ½, the group felt that provision would continue to be volunteer based much as it is now. A Parent & Toddler group provides a much needed social environment for young parents, particularly if they are new to the village, but always needs a motivated organiser to keep it going. The Group also identified that social contacts between parents often start at baby clinics and ante-natal classes, and that these are unfortunately not viable in Gotham due to low numbers.

Recreation & leisure:

Recreational facilities for younger children are available within easy reach at East Leake and Clifton which both lie on a bus route. The new Sports Centre and swimming pool at East Leake could provide exciting new opportunities for this age group. Within Gotham, the obvious focus for provision of recreational facilities is the Memorial Recreation Ground and the

playground (see later). The library is underused in Gotham, and if redeveloped could provide opportunities for linked activities.

Primary Age children

Generally the group felt that children of this age group were relatively well served for amenities, but that take up could be improved by increased advertising through the local media.

Education and school based activities:

The significant change on the horizon for this age group is the rebuilding of the Primary School. This should be a focus for new activities. There would be an increased need for pre- and post-school care, and this might be supplied by volunteers or a private concern, possibly on the school premises.

Sports:

The group felt that sports clubs in Gotham are particularly rich in opportunities for this age group: summer and winter sports and for both boys and girls, and that existing development plans should ensure continued provision in the long term.

Scouts & Guides:

The scouts and guides have a long tradition in the village, and despite being vulnerable to short term bouts of unpopularity are institutions worth continuing. The group felt that long term plans for the groups should be coordinated or even merged. To continue to provide these activities, a building with a discrete outside area was needed, a need currently met largely but not entirely by the leased Scout Hut on Malt Street. The current Scout Hut lease expires in 2010, and the group felt that an aim should be to replace it with a suitable building and land within that timescale.

Other minority interests:

A community of our size can never provide for all interests. Within an easy bus ride there are larger population centres that can offer a wider choice.

Secondary Age children (Framework for open meeting)

- Do teenagers like living in Gotham? Why (not)?
- Do they like the position of Gotham between Clifton and East Leake or not?
- Are they well provided for sports? Would a new pavilion complex as a social centre help?
- How do they see the new Harry Carlton school improving their life?
- How well are they served for transport? Cycle ways? Mini bus?
- Where are the shops they like? Can they get there?
- What facilities around the village would they like, given that they must be cheap to provide and run? Tea bar? Meeting room? Youth shelter? Football wall? What youth club features are worth instituting?
- Would they like liaison with the police?

Playground

The group considered for some time the equipment and situation of the Gotham playground. Within a short car ride is the large adventure playground at Rushcliffe Country Park, but this remains off the direct bus route and cannot easily be reached by bicycle. East Leake has a large recreation area

with a playground and a planned skateboard park, and this can be reached conveniently by bus. Despite these local facilities, the group felt the provision of a village playground to be vitally important and that the current equipment was unexciting and underused. Hidden away behind the Memorial Hall, it is not visible: a feature that would promote use and cut down on vandalism. It is also not easily accessible on foot by younger people, as it is necessary to cross an increasingly busy road. The group felt it unlikely that a pedestrian crossing would ever be installed, and that instead some form of traffic calming measures should be put in place to deter through traffic and make road crossing a less hazardous proposition.

The group accepted that with the current funding arrangement through the Parish Council that it was unlikely that the playground equipment would be able to keep up with modern developments in safety surfaces and equipment and that an alternative funding regime should be considered.

Transport

As has been mentioned already, a convenient bus service to nearer larger centres exists and should be preserved. There are other alternatives though:

Cycling:

The group felt that the village was relatively poorly supplied with cycle routes, and that an extension of the cycle ways from Clifton out through Gotham to East Leake would be an important step forward. This applied to children and adults alike.

Mini bus:

The group also identified a need across all age groups including the elderly for a mini bus. Options for this should be considered.

John Anderson
Rowena Barnett
Brian Guerin
Penny Howick
Bob Plant

July 2003

Report from the Focus group on Youth in Gotham, 22nd July 2003

Present: 12 young people from Gotham aged 12-17, mainly in the 12-14 age range, equally boys and girls. Three adults: John Anderson, Emma Wakefield, Peter Inskeep, acting as facilitators.

The discussion was broad in scope starting from the framework discussed at the meeting of 3rd July.

All but 2 of the children had lived in Gotham all their lives, and those 2 had lived here since the age of 2 and 4.

Living in Gotham: They enjoyed living in the village, respecting the quiet and safety of village life.

Shops: They liked the village shops but felt the range to be limited and would like the goods that a supermarket offered: they were thus attracted to East Leake. This was where most of them went to school and they were therefore familiar with what was on offer there.

Transport: While most had the benefit of parents with cars, the bus route was important to them for social transport to shops, leisure activities and, for the older ones, the nightlife offered by the larger towns of Nottingham and Loughborough. While the service was accepted as good, the reduction of the route 1 service to once every half hour was an inconvenience, but their main complaint was the cleanliness of the buses. They expressed a social need for buses to Sutton Bonington.

Cycling was important around the village and they were happy that the Recreation Ground was a safe place to leave a bike. The thought of cycling further a field had not occurred to them but on discussion, cycled access to the Rushcliffe Country Park at Ruddington was attractive.

Sport & Leisure: It was agreed that the village provided excellent facilities for organised sports and that the clubs served the needs for all age groups and both sexes. The new facilities at the rebuilt Harry Carlton School offered exciting new opportunities. They also felt that the wider community offered a rich variety of other activities that were not available in the village eg drama and less mainstream sports. They felt that the older they got, the more they were interested in larger events and gatherings.

Playground: The group were critical of the age and quality of the play equipment and that it did not meet the needs of their age group. More swings were mentioned, along with items that had existed in the past and been removed on safety grounds like the Witches Hat and the large slide. They did accept the cost of new items and the difficult balance that had to be struck between safety and excitement. The football goals were very useful but new nets were needed.

Meeting Place: There was a need for a meeting place where young people could gather in evenings and during holidays. The Youth Club was discussed but it was accepted that with the reliance on adult assistance that this was unlikely to be resurrected. As a compromise, a “tea bar” opening from the Hall complex out onto the Recreation Ground was considered a good idea. They accepted that there would always be differences between age groups within the community using such a facility and that this made provision difficult. They would be happy that such a meeting point would provide a contact point with adults as well such as community police.

Holidays: There was a demand for youth activities during the summer school holidays along the lines of the Playscheme provided for younger children.

John Anderson

Report from the Focus group on Elderly in Gotham, 21st August 2003

Present: 11 older people from Gotham, all women, members of a social group meeting regularly on a Wednesday afternoon for tea, games and chat. Three adults: John Anderson, Eunice Pank, Peter Inskip, acting as facilitators.

Some of the women had lived in Gotham for 50 years or more, some had family living in the village, some had only recently moved.

The discussion was broad in scope covering all aspects of Gotham life. There was a general feeling of happiness in Gotham but they did feel that generally their age group was forgotten by others and relatively poorly provided for.

Living in Gotham: They enjoyed living in the village, feeling it to be rural and friendly. Importantly for a commonly vulnerable age group, they also felt safe, despite the lack of a visible police presence, something they would like to see return.

Housing: The most important local issue was that of the lack of appropriate housing for their age group, in particular the provision of warden aided accommodation and bungalows. Those that had extended families in the village felt that there was a knock on effect of this in reducing the housing available to first time buyers and those with young families, which caused them to seek accommodation outside the village.

For those in rented accommodation, there was some criticism for the regularity and quality of the garden maintenance offered by the management company.

Shops: They were concerned that the few village shops that are left would close as they were dependant on them. This was particularly true of the Post Office. For some, supermarket shopping was an expensive option, even if it were practically possible. They were aware of some buses being provided by the supermarkets themselves and this could be of use. Some might need special lifts on the buses.

Transport: Like the youth group, these older villagers valued the bus service to Nottingham and Loughborough and regretted the reduction in frequency to a half hour service. Some had used the recently withdrawn Runway 5 service that ran directly to the local hospital and were now concerned that this journey was going to be more complicated. Indeed the details of the replacement two step journey was unknown to them. One or two of them had use of a car.

Leisure: There was a feeling that there was a lack of entertainment in the village for their age group, especially frustrating as the main village hall had a very suitable stage. They felt that they would like more free delivered newspapers other than the Parish Council & church newsletters.

Traffic: There was a strong dislike of the speed of traffic passing through the village making road crossing hazardous. They would ideally like two crossings: one at the Post Office and one to the Memorial Hall complex. The state of the footpaths was poor throughout the village with several instances of the elderly tripping.

John Anderson