

Background Paper Four - Gotham Parish Council response to RBC Preferred Options

Do you agree that the Local Plan should allocate greenfield land for housing development at Gotham for around 100 homes in total?

No.

1. Firstly a contradiction in the question: 'around' 100 houses 'in total'. It makes it sound as if there is a firm upper limit when there isn't.
2. This allocation is based on an analysis of the Gotham sites in a working paper that is confusing in some places and incorrect in others:
 - A. Education. *'There should be scope to increase local primary school capacity to support this level of growth, subject to appropriate developer contributions being received. Secondary Schools across the borough are at capacity. Contributions will therefore probably be required.'* This is not accurate enough. Gotham Primary School is at capacity with the library currently in use as an extra classroom. There is not room for expansion at all. East Leake Academy is swamped with the development of East Leake let alone the potential extra from South of Clifton. This statement understates the problem.
 - B. Healthcare. *'Therefore new residents would not be able to rely on accessing health facilities within the village itself.'* Not true. The local surgery had recently been expanded and has extra capacity in both rooms and doctors to cope with this size of expansion. The statement given shows a view consistent with West Bridgford and a lack of local understanding.
 - C. Community Facilities. Minor point but the dedicated butcher in Gotham closed in 2014.
 - D. Sewerage. The Moor Lane stage treatment plant is at capacity and occasionally untreated sewage overflows into the dikes leading to Fairham Brook. Any further development of Gotham must address this important lack of capacity.
 - E. Flooding. The devastating floods in 2016 showed the local issues with excessive rainfall. Any development must address the issue of drainage and not exacerbate the problem.
 - F. Access. Some sites show that the background paper has been edited from an original that analysed sites differently: in particular comments on GOT5a and 5b come from an analysis of the sites together as GOT5. This shows a lack of attention to important detail and casts doubt on the analyses made and the decisions based on them.
3. Why 'green field' only? There are brown field sites to be considered too. Indeed one of the Core Planning principles in the NPPF states: *'encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brown field land), provided that it is not of high environmental value'*. There is no attempt shown by RBC in this document to use brown field sites first before taking out green belt land. Across the borough RBC may argue that they handle brown field sites as a different resource but looking from the local community it is important to use our brown field sites first before losing our green belt. RBC do not do this. Our draft Neighbourhood Plan has identified brown field sites within Gotham that have potential for development and these should be analysed first.
4. At a recent informal consultation on the draft NP, the village voted 100% that 80 houses or fewer was right for Gotham: 100 or more is too many.

Do you support the proposed allocation form housing development of the following site in Gotham: Site GOT5a:

No. There are reasons why this site is attractive for housing development. However GPC on balance have to oppose it.

1. The overriding concern about this site is the potential for unwanted expansion well beyond the figure of 100 expressed by RBC. It is also above the number identified in our draft NP in which we have assessed a maximum of 80 houses spread over the whole planning period not just the next 5 years. This local need is laid down in the Core Strategy as being mandatory for villages like Gotham. GPC are very concerned that there is potential here for expansion into GOT4 in the near future and GOT5b beyond that leading to more than 300 houses.
2. Following from the comments made above about brown field sites, the access to this site comes from the NCT bus depot site: a brown field site. This should be analysed separately as a site on its own, and then RBC should look at the green field sites it leads to.
3. There are 5 separate land owners involved with GOT5a and there has to be a question therefore over its deliverability particularly with the logistics in moving the NCT bus depot.
4. The site is also not an easy distance from the village facilities of the Memorial Hall complex which includes the library and surgery, and the village shop. There are other potential sites much closer. This is important as much of the housing demand in Gotham is for the elderly. While GOT5a is close to the primary school footpath access would have to be ensured across GOT4 or using the old railway walk owned by Earl Howe.
5. The land to north of GOT5a, GOT4, is mentioned page 39: *In removing site GOT5a from the Green Belt in our view it is logical to also remove land to the north from the Green Belt. This land, which contains elements of medieval ridge and furrow, is, however, judged unsuitable for allocation as a housing site. The land would remain as a paddock.* An ill judged statement as it led directly to the GOT4 landowner attempting to plough up the ridge and furrow land in an act of heritage vandalism. There is no logic in removing the site from the Green Belt: logic states it should stay in as the green belt envelope follows settlement boundaries all around the rest of Gotham. What does follow is that if GOT5a was to be developed you would have a rectangular site at GOT4 surrounded on three sides by housing: a very difficult site to defend if the event of a challenge to build. There is not enough protection here. If RBC really mean GOT4 to be protected then simply leave it in the Green Belt. That is the correct logic to follow. There must also be concern that RBC with their history against legal challenges could not resist an aggressive attempt to develop GOT4 with GOT5a in any case.
6. Gotham Parish Council are not 'nimby' on housing. Our draft NP demands housing but insists on a more comprehensive assessment of potential sites. The two plans are being developed in parallel and the NPPG states: *They (NPs) can be developed before, after or in parallel with a Local Plan, but the law requires that they must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the adopted Local Plan for the area (and any other strategic policies that form part of the statutory development plan where relevant, such as the London Plan). Neighbourhood plans are not tested against the policies in an emerging Local Plan although the reasoning and evidence informing the Local Plan process may be relevant to the consideration of the basic conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is tested.*
7. We urge RBC to meet with the NP Advisory Committee to discuss a mutually acceptable way forward.