



Community-led and funded planning application (ref: 143413/FO/2025) to retain Ryebank Fields as a community resource

In partnership with planning consultants Urban Imprint, between January and July 2025, we prepared a formal planning application to retain Ryebank Fields as a Community Woodland and Meadow. Prior to submitting our application, we ran a public consultation on our plans from the 3rd of May until the 17th of May 2025.

We had 600 leaflets printed to advertise the consultation period, delivering these to the houses bordering Ryebank Fields. Leaflets were also made available in various local businesses including Unicorn, Chorlton Bookshop, and the Phoenix Deli. We held two public consultation events at Unicorn Grocery on the 3rd and the 11th of May to provide information on how to comment on our application. We received a total of 731 positive responses to our consultation.

Our application was submitted to Manchester City Council on the 9th of July 2025 and was validated by the council on the 12th of September 2025. The council planning officer allocated a formal consultation period for comments on the application which ended on the 2nd of October 2025.

On the advice of our planning consultants, we commissioned Environmental, Ecology and Arboricultural reports to inform the application process. We'd like to thank Friends of Ryebank Fields (FORF) for helping in this process.

e3p, the environmental consultants working for Manchester Metropolitan University, challenged our own environmental

consultants, Sladen Associates, regarding potential intellectual and copyright issues with the Sladen Associates' environmental report. Sladen Associates made some minor redactions, and their revised report was sent to the council on the 9th of October 2025.

The council advised that a report from the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) confirming 'Important Hedgerow' status for the hedgerow in Ryebank Fields bordering Longford Park, could not be used as a supporting document as "*given the date of its production this report is no longer valid.*" We argued that whilst an older version of a report may carry limited weight within a planning decision, it should not invalidate a planning application. As the council would not accept our argument and the GMEU is an advisory body responsible to local councils, we had to remove this report from our application.

We then had to deal in turn with issues raised by some of the statutory consultees to our application, namely the Environment Agency, United Utilities and MCC's Highways Services team. The issues raised were:

The Environment Agency required specific details of how we proposed to restrict access to known wildlife areas.

United Utilities wanted assurances that no ground disturbances were required for any planned enhancements to Ryebank Fields such as log seating, natural play areas, the labyrinth etc.

The council's Highways Services team required us to do additional work to create an Event Management Strategy and Transport Note regarding the impact of travel to events. These documents were submitted on the 2nd of February 2026 and have now been accepted. Should the council approve our planning application, RFCG will undertake official responsibility for managing events in Ryebank Fields.

The last communication received from the council's planning officer was on the 17th of February 2026 and confirmed that:

“The council will now need to take into account the various consultee and notification responses to determine the reporting timescales for the application. It is likely that the application would need to be considered by a future meeting of the Council's Planning Committee, but I am not as yet in a position to confirm which meeting it will be reported to. I will update you in due course.”

Once again, we would like to thank the community for all your generous support, this has enabled us to get to this stage. If our Planning Application is approved, it would be a huge step forward for the campaign to Save Ryebank Fields. We would then urge Manchester City Council to make a historic decision and designate Ryebank Fields as Manchester's first Local Green Space in their Local Plan. We will also contact the Greater Manchester Combined Authority with an updated application for Ryebank Fields to be included in their Local Nature Recovery Strategy list of sites.

Tom Butler

Secretary

RFCG

14th March 2026