



As most people are aware TWO planning applications have been submitted for Ryebank Fields:

The first, by developers Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) in conjunction with Step Places, Southway Housing and Manchester Intergenerational CoHousing (MICO), seeks to destroy green space and natural habitats by building 120 expensive houses on Ryebank Fields. This application was submitted in March 2025, reference: Manchester/142223/FO/2025

The second, our community-led alternative plan, will retain Ryebank Fields as a Community Woodland and Meadow. This application was submitted by Ryebank Fields Community Group (RFCG) in September 2025, reference: Manchester/ 143413/FO/2025.

It is well known that there are concerns regarding contamination of the land due to Ryebank Fields' historical use as an unregistered tip. We know that the majority of the land beneath the surface consists of 'made ground' i.e. landfill and the former clay-pits were up to 40 feet deep and came to within 6 feet of the boundaries of the fields.

In recent years much of the concern raised about contamination has centred on asbestos. Our Ryebank Fields Community Group (RFCG) Geoenvironmental Stage 1 report (commissioned to inform our planning application with the help of funds raised by public support) concludes that any asbestos being brought to the surface is the result of animal activity. Our proposals to contain this include creating 'wildlife only zones' in areas where wildlife make their dens and burrows. None of our methods will be invasive or require the need to disturb the ground. Coupled with regular inspections of these areas, by trained professionals, these methods will significantly mitigate any risk to the public and protect wildlife habitats.

However, the greatest concern expressed by our environmental consultants is the presence of non-aqueous phase liquids (NAPLs) or HYDROCARBONS in groundwater. Put simply, these are contaminants from toxic substances within the landfill that over time have infiltrated the ground water. These substances could potentially leach out into the surrounding environment. In order for this to happen there needs to be a pathway and a receptor. Pathways are likely to be created by ground disturbance. The risk is therefore increased if the ground is disturbed. All of this is especially concerning as Ryebank Fields is situated adjacent to a primary school, residential housing and a public park that is a listed conservation area.

When any planning application is submitted, it is subject to scrutiny from “statutory consultees”. In the case of the applications for Ryebank Fields, the statutory consultees include the Environment Agency (EA); the Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA); United Utilities (UU); the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU); the Greater Manchester Archeological Advisory Service (GMAAS); Highways; Natural England; Trafford Council (TMBC) etc.

Manchester City Council (MCC) has confirmed that our Ryebank Fields Community Group (RFCG) alternative planning application, to retain Ryebank Fields as a Community Woodland and Meadow, is ready to be determined by the Council’s Planning Committee. This means that all the statutory consultees have assessed the application, any questions they have raised have been answered to their satisfaction, and there are no concerns as to its suitability.

Conversely, the planning application put forward by Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) in conjunction with Step Places, Southway Housing and Manchester Intergenerational CoHousing (MICO), has received various unresolved challenges from the statutory consultees.

A Freedom of information request made by the Friends of Ryebank Fields (FORF) shows that the Environment Agency (EA) has raised similar concerns to our own environmental consultants.

The EA states:

“The submissions to date show that the land has been subject to historic waste disposal which based on the ground investigation which has been undertaken, indicates the introduction of adverse concentrations of contamination to the ground which are very likely to pose an unacceptable risk to controlled water receptors.”

“We note from the ground investigation that a non-aqueous phase liquid has been identified at a variety of locations across the site which is indicative of contamination which will require remediation. This is in direct contradiction of the detailed risk assessment which suggests no remediation is required.”

As the EA points out, the MMU commissioned risk assessment (Controlled Waters Report) submitted to inform the developers' planning application states that no remediation is required. This is deeply concerning.

The Environment Agency go on to list conditions that must be met before any development could be considered, including further detailed site investigations. As a result, we understand that the developers are now having to reassess their plans.

Our conclusion is that the only way to ensure the safety of the land and the local community is to say NO to development and preserve Ryebank Fields as a Community Woodland and Meadow.

NO development = NO disturbance = NO danger.

Links to the documents referred to in this report can be found in our Contamination Findings website section.