

Professor Malcolm Press
Manchester Metropolitan University
Lower Ormond Street
Manchester
M15 6BX

5th August 2025

Dear Professor Press

Please see attached a redacted version of a letter from the Environment Agency dated 31st March 2025, only recently made public as a result of a Freedom of Information request submitted by the Friends of Ryebank Fields. The residents of Chorlton and Stretford are entitled to be informed of issues which could adversely affect their health and well-being.

The Environment Agency has blocked the planning applications for Ryebank Fields unless comprehensive assessments, reports and a management plan to remediate the site are prepared and submitted for approval. There are known sub-surface hazardous and toxic materials, as the site was previously used for many years as an unregistered tip. Any further surveys would uncover hazardous and toxic materials. Removal of excavated contaminated material from the site through densely populated and narrow roads would pose significant health risks to the residents of Manchester and Trafford.

A letter dated 8th May 2025 from your institution to Ryebank Fields Community Group stated that "the University does not support your proposed planning application to keep the land as a Community Woodland and Meadow". For the record, our alternative planning application (APA) received an unprecedented level of support from both local and wider communities during the pre-planning consultation period, and has been submitted to Manchester City Council.

Given the extensive scale, complexities and costs of the remediation works required, we wish to know if MMU will proceed with this scheme. We believe Ryebank Fields is not suitable for housing development. Since MMU abandoned the land almost 30 years ago, Ryebank Fields has been reclaimed by nature. It should remain as a rewilded, local green space in accordance with the GMCA Local Nature Recovery strategy. Manchester City Council's own planning officers have confirmed that Ryebank Fields meets all the criteria for Local Green Space designation. We maintain our view that the reputation of MMU as a green and sustainable institution and your own reputation as an eminent ecologist will be damaged should a decision be taken to pursue this scheme.

Yours sincerely

Ryebank Fields Community Group

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We are a National Council Voluntary Organisation member