

PRESS RELEASE

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ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY-LED AND FUNDED PLANNING APPLICATION VALIDATED BY MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Manchester and Trafford residents fighting to save a city green space from development to provide 120 expensive houses have submitted their own planning application to retain Ryebank Fields as a community woodland and meadow. The alternative plan has been validated by Manchester City Council, the planning application reference is: 143413/FO/2025 and can be viewed online by visiting the council's planning portal at: www.manchester.gov.uk/planning/publicaccess.

A pre-planning community consultation for the alternative plan returned over 700 positive responses, delivering a clear message that the community is determined to fight to preserve Ryebank Fields for public use and to protect the wildlife, trees and plants that already live there, including rare, priority and protected species.

Development plans by Manchester Metropolitan University, Step Places and Southway Housing, submitted in February this year, would decimate this naturally rewilded and biodiverse local green space which has been at the heart of the community for four generations. Development would also negatively impact the adjacent Longford Park Conservation Area and would result in a biodiversity net loss to this area of at least 40% which the developers claim would be off-set elsewhere.

If successful, the community-led planning application submitted by Ryebank Fields Community Group will preserve Ryebank Fields for current and future generations. South Manchester is the only area of the city where current provision of green space is below the minimum standard, with the shortfall equating to 45.17 hectares. Maintaining Ryebank Fields as an open green space will help to alleviate the biodiversity crisis and will improve access to nature.

Rhetta Moran, Chair of Ryebank Fields Community Group said: "The community response to our consultation is overwhelming and shows the strength of feeling against development is extraordinarily strong as it has been for many years. We are determined to fight every step of the way to protect our fields. We are in a biodiversity crisis, and we must seek to retain any existing areas of natural green spaces, especially in urban areas."

Find out more about the campaign:

<https://www.ryebankfieldscommunity.co.uk>

About Ryebank Fields:

The area was formerly used as a clay pit for Jackson's Brickworks; it then became an unlicensed tip and was remediated in 1972 under the publicly funded 'Operation Eyesore' to make it safe to walk and play on. Ryebank Fields was then gifted to Manchester Metropolitan University by Manchester City Council for use as a sports facility. The University abandoned Ryebank Fields in 1996, since when the land has naturally rewilded into a richly biodiverse wildlife haven. Developers, Step Places and Southway Housing, acting on behalf of MMU, plan to destroy the land for expensive housing. A previous planning application to build 90 houses was rejected in 1996 due to issues of traffic congestion and the loss of open public green space. The previous grounds for refusal have not been addressed as part of this latest planning application by MMU, Step Places and Southway Housing.

The Save Ryebank Fields campaign was launched in 2017 and a proposal was submitted to Manchester City Council in April 2020 to designate Ryebank Fields as a Local Green Space. Ryebank Fields meets all the criteria for Local Green Space designation, which, if approved, would provide further protection from development. This marks the third occasion in thirty years that Manchester Metropolitan University has attempted to sell public land that was gifted to them. Their behaviour indicates a preference for profit over environmental and ecological issues, which contradicts their assertion of being a green and sustainable organisation.

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