



PRESS RELEASE

23rd September 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Release PDF attached

Picture of campaigners yesterday, attached

Images Credit: Jay Clarke

Ryebank Fields and Longford Park: A Love Story in the Making

Tomorrow is Manchester City Council's opportunity to APPROVE its Planning Officer's recommendation

"The Friends fully endorse this application, not least for the protection it gives to the woodland area with its special trees, by far the most biodiverse part of the Park and a known wildlife corridor."

Richard Bond, Chair, Friends of Longford Park

"I hope with all my heart that the right decisions are made, and that Ryebank Fields will be protected so that future generations can enjoy all the natural wonder and beauty it has to offer."

Juliette Tomlinson, author of *Longford, A Manchester Love Story*

"We are delighted that this planning application is finally getting its day before the Planning Committee."

Sarah Benjamins, Chair, Friends of Ryebank Fields

"Your planning team and the council will be celebrated now and for many generations in the future for taking an active stance to preserve the precious little green and wild space there is in the city of Manchester."

Anonymous submission from a member of the public to Manchester City Council's planning portal

"We understand that this is the first application of its kind to be determined in England... engaging constructively with the planning system and developing our own vision for where we live and how we live into a formal planning proposal."

Dr Rhetta Moran, Chair, Ryebank Fields Community Group

Tomorrow, **Thursday 24 September at 2pm**, Manchester City Council's Planning Committee is scheduled to consider **Ryebank Fields Community Group's (RFCG) planning application, 143413/FO/2025**, to retain Ryebank Fields as a **community woodland and meadow**. The City's Planning Officer is **recommending that the application is APPROVED**.

As far as RFCG is aware, it is the first community-led, participatory application of its kind to be determined in England.

Last night, following a lobby attended by approximately 100 local people, and speeches from Trafford Residents Association, Friends of Longford Park and two local councillors



representing the Green and Labour parties who spoke on behalf of their constituents, Trafford Metropolitan

Borough Council's (TMBC) Planning Committee **voted unanimously to retain control over decisions concerning the Trafford-side access to Ryebank Fields.**

During her speech, Lisa Thomason from Trafford Residents Association highlighted the scale of local concern, pointing out:

"Trafford Council received 786 representations on this application, from 565 addresses. 4,250 people signed the petition... showing you how many Trafford residents this affects."

RFCG's approach to developing its planning application demonstrates how communities can engage constructively with the planning system, developing their own vision for where and how they live into a formal planning proposal. Its intensive production process has fostered community cohesion between all groups and individuals who have cared for and about Ryebank Fields for over 30 years.

Tomorrow is a wonderful opportunity for Manchester City Council to encourage Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), the nominal landowner, to drive through on the promise it made in the 1970's when Manchester Polytechnic, as was, accepted Ryebank Fields as a 'gift' and a 'covenant' was made for the Fields to be an educational resource into posterity. Retaining the Fields as a community woodland and meadow provides an opportunity for MMU to honour this legacy alongside us.

ENDS

For further information:

Email: ryebankfieldscommunity@gmail.com

Dr Rhett Moran: **07776 264646**

Tom Butler: **07833 358703**

A Lobby is called for 1.15 in Albert Square in front of the Town Hall steps cordoned off area.

Ryebank Fields is public land that was gifted to Manchester Polytechnic, now Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), as a sports facility in the mid-1970s. The area was formerly a clay pit for Jackson's Brickworks and subsequently became an unregistered tip. It was remediated in 1972 under the publicly funded 'Operation Eyesore' programme to make it safe to walk and play on. The University ceased using Ryebank Fields in 1996. Since then, the site has naturally rewilded into a richly biodiverse 11-acre green space and wildlife corridor, cared for over several generations by local people.

Developers acting on behalf of MMU have submitted proposals for housing on the site. Ryebank Fields Community Group has submitted an alternative, community-led and community-funded planning application, 143413/FO/2025, proposing its retention as a community woodland and meadow. The application is scheduled for consideration by Manchester City Council's Planning Committee on 24 September 2026. Local residents and their supporters continue to campaign for the Fields to remain a community green space.