



Ryebank Fields: Key Planning Issues and Current Position – Community Information Report

Planning Application 142223/FO/2025

Assessment of Key Planning, Environmental, Community and Deliverability Issues

Date: 11 July 2026

Purpose of this Report

This report has been prepared by Ryebank Fields Community Group to provide residents and the wider community with a clear overview of the key planning issues affecting Ryebank Fields. It summarises publicly available information and highlights matters that the Group believes require careful consideration by the relevant planning authorities.

The report is intended as an information resource to help answer questions, improve understanding and support informed community engagement. It does not replace the formal planning decision-making process.

Executive Summary

Planning Application 142223/FO/2025 is affected by a number of significant and interrelated planning issues. Whilst each issue would need to be considered on its own merits, collectively they create substantial uncertainty regarding the suitability, deliverability and overall planning balance of the proposed development.

The key areas of concern are:

1. Outstanding contamination and controlled waters issues identified by the Environment Agency;
2. The ability to rely on planning conditions where further investigation and risk assessment remain outstanding;
3. The development of a greenfield site in the context of Manchester City Council's stated preference for prioritising brownfield land;
4. The potential impact on green infrastructure, biodiversity and community value;
5. The unresolved status of Ryebank Fields as a potential Local Green Space;
6. The existence of a separate community-led planning application seeking retention of the site as community woodland and meadow;
7. The dependence of the development on a separate Trafford access application (115688/FUL/25), including the impact on a recognised community asset.

Taken together, these matters raise important questions as to whether the application should be determined before all relevant environmental, policy and deliverability issues have been fully resolved.



1. Contamination and Controlled Waters

The Environment Agency has withdrawn its objection to the application subject to conditions. However, its consultation response identifies a number of significant unresolved contamination issues, including:

- The likely presence of persistent organic pollutants which have not been included in the sampling undertaken;
- The need for additional ground investigation and a more comprehensive groundwater sampling programme;
- The identification of non-aqueous phase liquid contamination across the site;
- Apparent inconsistencies between the submitted risk assessment and contamination identified through site investigations; and
- The requirement for a revised remediation strategy supported by further investigation and risk assessment.

The Environment Agency has also advised that contamination arising from historic waste disposal is likely to pose an unacceptable risk to controlled waters and that additional investigation is required to properly assess impacts on the aquatic environment.

These matters raise a fundamental question as to whether sufficient information is currently available to conclude that the site can be safely remediated and made suitable for residential development.

A key planning issue is whether the outstanding investigations relate merely to detailed implementation matters, or whether they concern the fundamental question of whether the development is acceptable in principle. Where further investigation is required to establish the extent of contamination, risks to controlled waters and the feasibility of remediation, there is a legitimate concern that these matters should be resolved before determination rather than deferred entirely to planning conditions.

2. Greenfield Development and Brownfield First Approach

Ryebank Fields is a greenfield site with existing environmental, recreational and community value.

Manchester City Council has published policies supporting the prioritisation of previously developed (brownfield) land for development where possible. Whilst this does not create an absolute prohibition on greenfield development, it requires consideration of whether the release of undeveloped land is justified.

The proposed development therefore raises an important planning balance between:

- the claimed benefits of housing delivery; and
- the loss of an undeveloped site with environmental, recreational and community significance.

Where significant environmental uncertainties remain unresolved, the justification for developing a greenfield site requires particularly careful assessment.



3. Local Green Space Designation

Ryebank Fields has been proposed for designation as Local Green Space as part of Manchester City Council's Local Plan process.

The Council's Executive Committee has currently resolved to exclude Ryebank Fields from the list of proposed Local Green Space sites. However, this position is not final, as the Local Plan remains subject to independent examination by a Planning Inspector.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires Local Green Space proposals to be assessed against specific criteria, including whether a site is demonstrably special to the local community, holds particular local significance and is suitable for designation.

Concerns have been raised that the Executive Committee's decision to exclude Ryebank Fields did not adequately address the relevant NPPF considerations or provide a sufficiently clear explanation of how the site failed to meet the criteria for designation.

If the Planning Inspector concludes that the Council has not properly applied national policy or has not undertaken a sound assessment, the Local Green Space position may be reconsidered.

Consequently, there remains uncertainty regarding the long-term policy status of Ryebank Fields. Determining a major residential development application before these issues have been fully examined may give rise to concerns that the planning process has not fully considered the emerging policy position.

4. Community-Led Alternative Proposal

A separate community-led planning application (143413/FO/2025) has been submitted seeking to retain Ryebank Fields as community woodland and meadow.

This proposal represents an alternative vision for the future of the site, focused on:

- biodiversity enhancement;
- protection of green infrastructure;
- community access and benefit; and
- retention of the site's landscape and ecological value.

The existence of this alternative proposal is a material planning consideration because it demonstrates that the future of Ryebank Fields is not limited to a choice between residential development and no use.

It provides an alternative land use option delivering potential environmental and community benefits which should be considered as part of the overall planning balance.

5. Trafford Access Application (115688/FUL/25)

The proposed development relies upon a separate planning application to Trafford Council for the creation of a vehicular access serving the development.



This access appears to form an important part of the overall transport and construction strategy, including:

- construction vehicle access and egress;
- distribution of traffic movements;
- reducing pressure on existing routes through Chorlton; and
- improving the operational accessibility of the site.

If Trafford Council refuses this application, important questions would arise regarding whether the Manchester development remains deliverable in the form assessed.

In particular, MCC would need to consider whether:

- construction traffic arrangements remain acceptable;
- highway impacts have been properly assessed;
- transport modelling remains valid; and
- the development can operate without unacceptable impacts on surrounding communities.

A refusal by Trafford Council before determination of 142223/FO/2025 could therefore represent a significant change in circumstances requiring further assessment.

6. Asset of Community Value – Rye Bank Road Community Garden

The proposed Trafford access route would affect the Rye Bank Road Community Garden, which is understood to have been recognised as an Asset of Community Value (ACV).

Although ACV status does not prevent development, it is a material planning consideration because it recognises the importance of the site to the local community.

The loss of this community asset would require careful assessment against the claimed benefits of the access proposal and the wider development.

This issue reinforces the wider concern that the development would result in the loss of valued community and environmental assets.

7. Overall Assessment

Ryebank Fields is subject to a complex range of planning considerations extending beyond the delivery of housing numbers.

The application involves:

- unresolved contamination and controlled waters issues;
- uncertainty regarding remediation feasibility;
- development of a greenfield site;
- potential conflict with brownfield-first objectives;
- unresolved Local Green Space designation issues;
- an alternative community-led land use proposal;



- reliance upon a separate access application;
- and potential loss of an Asset of Community Value.

None of these matters alone necessarily determines the outcome of the application. However, collectively they create significant uncertainty regarding whether the proposed development has been fully justified, properly assessed and demonstrated to be deliverable.

The principal planning questions for Manchester City Council are therefore:

1. Whether sufficient environmental information exists to make a lawful and informed decision;
2. Whether unresolved contamination matters can properly be deferred to conditions;
3. Whether the development remains acceptable and deliverable if the Trafford access application is refused;
4. Whether the loss of a valued greenfield site is justified when alternative brownfield opportunities and community-led proposals exist; and
5. Whether the future policy status and community value of Ryebank Fields have been adequately considered.

Given the number of outstanding and interconnected issues, there is a strong argument that the application requires careful scrutiny before determination and that any decision should clearly demonstrate how all material planning considerations have been assessed and balanced.