

PRESS RELEASE



21st June 2026

For Immediate Release

Today's Summer Solstice Photos by Jay Clarke

Press Release as Word Doc attached

Ryebank Fields Community Group Calls for Clarity and Action on Delayed Planning Decision

"Our application was submitted to MCC almost 12 months ago on 11 July 2025 and all issues raised by statutory consultees and the council's highways services team were resolved to their satisfaction in February of this year, so why are we still waiting?" (Dr Rhetta Moran, Chair of Ryebank Fields Community Group (RFCG))

I am calling on Manchester City Council to list this application for the Committee immediately, and to explain publicly why their own target has been missed." (Chorlton Ward Councillor Chantal Kerr-Sheppard)

We have been delighted to help them with this application that has so many public and wildlife benefits. It is truly grassroots planning. (Bob Phillips, Director of Urban Imprint)

Ryebank Fields Community Group's (RFCG) community-led and funded planning application to retain Ryebank Fields as a Woodland and Meadow was submitted to Manchester City Council's Local Planning Authority on 11 July 2025 and validated on 28 August 2025.

The application has now been awaiting determination for almost a year since submission. RFCG states that all matters raised by statutory consultees and the council's highways services team were satisfactorily resolved by February 2026. Four months later, however, the application has still not been scheduled for consideration by the Planning Committee.

In an Open Letter to Manchester City Council's Planning Department, RFCG has called on the authority to provide a clear timetable for how and when the application will be determined.

[Open Letter to Manchester City Council's Planning Department](#)

Responding to the letter, Mark Dickens, Deputy Director of Planning and Building Control, stated: *"I cannot say definitely which Planning Committee any application will be reported to until the agenda is set, which is 5 working days before the Committee."*

RFCG argues that this response does not address the central concern: why an application that has been technically complete for several months has yet to be brought before the Planning Committee.

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Support for the community's position has also come from Chorlton Ward Councillor Chantal Kerr-Sheppard.

"The community's application to protect Ryebank Fields as a woodland, meadow and nature-rich space was validated by Manchester City Council on 28 August 2025 with a target decision date of December 2025. Nearly six months past that target, no Planning Committee date has been set despite repeated requests to do so."

"The residents who submitted this application did so in good faith and, by the council's own timetable, the application should have been presented to the Committee months ago. I am calling on Manchester City Council to list this application for the Committee immediately, and to explain publicly why their own target has been missed."

The planning application has also received support from experienced planning consultant Bob Phillips, Director of Urban Imprint, who has advised the project team throughout the process.

"This planning application has been submitted by Ryebank Fields Community Group who are keen to support the health and wellbeing of their local community through allowing Ryebank Fields to formally benefit from a community greenspace use. Evidence from Manchester City Council identifies that there is a shortage of semi-natural green space within this area of the city. The project team have sought to work closely and diligently with officers at the local planning authority to resolve matters of technical concern raised by consultees, especially on matters of contamination and highways. We have been delighted to help them with this application that has so many public and wildlife benefits. It is truly grassroots planning. We hope that the Planning Committee will support this application and the community's aspirations when they consider it in the near future."

For RFCG, the issue is now one of transparency, accountability and action. Having addressed all technical matters raised during the consultation process, the group is seeking a clear explanation for the delay and a firm commitment from Manchester City Council on when the application will finally be determined.

ENDS

For further information please email ryebankfieldscommunity@gmail.com or call Tom Butler on 07833 358703

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; it then became an unregistered tip and was remediated in 1972 under the publicly funded 'Operation Eyesore' to make it safe to walk and play on. The University abandoned Ryebank Fields in 1996, since which time this Local Green Space has naturally re-wilded into a richly biodiverse wildlife 11-acre haven tended, over four generations, by local people. Developers acting on behalf of MMU, want to destroy the land for expensive housing. Local residents and their supporters are determined to stop this attempt to cash this public land in at the expense of wildlife and humans.