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: 5 November 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.

The report has been updated following Manchester City Council's Planning Committee resolution on 24 September 2026 to approve the community-led and community-funded planning application 143413/FO/2025, subject to conditions, which provides a planning framework for the retention of Ryebank Fields as community woodland and meadow.

Current Position

Manchester City Council announced the fourth consultation (third reconsultation) on the proposal for 120 homes at Ryebank Fields (142223/FO/2025) on 4 November 2026. The stated closing date for comments is 4 December 2026. Residents can use the application reference to view the latest documents and submit comments through the Council's planning register.

The latest consultation includes an October 2026 E3P statement concerning the Longford Brook culvert. Section 1.1 sets out the outstanding questions about access, condition and flood risk.

Executive Summary

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

The latest reconsultation runs to 4 December 2026. RFCG has also submitted a Regulation 19 representation (LP38) seeking the designation of Ryebank Fields as Local Green Space.

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 approval of a separate community-led planning application providing an alternative future for the site as community woodland and meadow; and
7. The dependence of the development on a separate Trafford access application (115688/FUL/25), including the impact on a recognised community asset.

The approval of 143413/FO/2025 is a significant change in circumstances since this report was previously prepared. It means that the community-led proposal is no longer simply an alternative application awaiting determination. Manchester City Council has approved a planning framework for Ryebank Fields to remain as community woodland and meadow.

The future of the site therefore now involves a community-led proposal that the Planning Committee resolved to approve, alongside the outstanding residential development proposal.

The Trafford access position has also changed. On 22 September 2026, Trafford Council's Planning Committee did not agree to delegate the matter to Manchester City Council, and consideration of the associated "no objection" item was deferred pending Trafford Council's consideration of the access application. The access proposal therefore remains unresolved.

Taken together, these matters raise important questions as to whether Application 142223/FO/2025 can be determined without full consideration of the changed planning circumstances, including the approved community-led alternative and the unresolved Trafford access arrangements.

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.

1.1 Longford Brook Culvert, Drainage and Flood Risk

The Longford Brook culvert runs beneath the northern part of Ryebank Fields. E3P's October 2026 statement says that "the culvert is not currently accessible within the site boundary". The statement raises questions about where access can be obtained, what inspection has taken place, and how the culvert's condition and capacity have been established.

RFCG considers that the Council should establish the culvert's route, condition and capacity, assess the consequences of blockage or failure, and clarify arrangements for inspection and maintenance before determining the housing application. The assessment should explain how these matters affect the proposed layout, drainage strategy and flood risk at Ryebank Fields and in the surrounding area.

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.

The position is now also materially affected by the approval of planning application 143413/FO/2025, which provides an approved community-led alternative framework for the site based on its retention as community woodland and meadow.

Where significant environmental uncertainties remain unresolved, and where an approved alternative land-use framework now exists, the justification for developing a greenfield site requires particularly careful assessment.

3. Local Green Space Designation

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

The Council's Executive Committee has resolved to exclude Ryebank Fields from the list of proposed Local Green Space sites. The emerging Local Plan is subject to independent

examination following submission.

RFCG submitted a Regulation 19 representation (LP38) through the Council's consultation for consideration at independent examination. It challenges the omission of Ryebank Fields from the list of proposed Local Green Spaces and asks for the emerging Local Plan to be modified to designate the fields as Local Green Space. RFCG requested to participate in the examination hearings.

An addendum submitted on 24 September 2026 drew attention to the Planning Committee's decision on the community woodland and meadow application (143413/FO/2025).

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. The approval of 143413/FO/2025 does not itself determine the separate Local Green Space issue.

The relationship between the emerging Local Plan position and the Planning Committee's decision on the community-led application should therefore be properly understood when considering the future of the site and the determination of any competing development proposal.

4. Community-Led Alternative Proposal

A separate community-led planning application, 143413/FO/2025, was submitted seeking to retain Ryebank Fields as community woodland and meadow.

Manchester City Council's Planning Committee resolved to approve this application on 24 September 2026, subject to the conditions set out in the officer's reports.

The approved proposal provides a planning framework for the retention of Ryebank Fields as community woodland and meadow, with a focus on:

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

The significance of this proposal has therefore changed since the previous version of this report.

It is no longer simply an alternative application awaiting determination. It is an approved planning proposal providing an established alternative framework for the future use of the site.

The approval demonstrates that the future of Ryebank Fields is not limited to a choice between residential development and no use. There is now an approved community-led land-use framework which provides for the retention and enhancement of the site's environmental,

recreational and community functions.

The existence of this approved alternative should therefore be taken into account when considering the overall planning balance and the justification, need and deliverability of the proposed residential development under Application 142223/FO/2025.

The approval also represents a significant change in circumstances from the position described in the earlier version of this report and should be considered alongside the other outstanding planning issues affecting Application 142223/FO/2025.

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.

The position has changed following consideration by Trafford Council's Planning Committee on 22 September 2026.

The Committee did not agree to the proposed delegation to Manchester City Council, and the associated "no objection" item was deferred pending Trafford Council's consideration of the access application.

The Trafford access proposal therefore remains unresolved.

If Trafford Council refuses the 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.

The current position therefore represents an outstanding matter requiring resolution and assessment in the context of Application 142223/FO/2025.

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.

The fact that the Trafford access application remains unresolved reinforces the need for the effects on the community garden and surrounding communities to be fully considered before the access arrangements can be regarded as settled.

This issue also forms part of the wider concern that the development could result in the loss or alteration 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;
- outstanding questions about the Longford Brook culvert, drainage and flood risk;
- uncertainty regarding remediation feasibility;
- development of a greenfield site;
- potential conflict with brownfield-first objectives;
- the omission of Ryebank Fields from the proposed Local Green Space designations and RFCG's Regulation 19 representation (LP38);
- an approved community-led planning framework for retention of the site as community woodland and meadow;
- reliance upon a separate and currently unresolved 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 questions regarding whether the proposed development has been fully justified, properly assessed and demonstrated to be deliverable, particularly in light of the changed circumstances since the earlier version of this report.

The approval of Application 143413/FO/2025 is particularly significant because it establishes an approved community-led planning framework for the future of Ryebank Fields. The MMU/developer application therefore needs to be considered against a materially changed planning context rather than against a situation in which the community proposal was merely awaiting determination.

The principal planning questions for Manchester City Council are therefore:

1. Whether sufficient environmental information exists to make a lawful and informed decision, including on the Longford Brook culvert, drainage and flood risk;
2. Whether unresolved contamination matters can properly be deferred to conditions;
3. Whether the development remains acceptable and deliverable given the unresolved Trafford access application;

4. Whether the loss of a valued greenfield site is justified when alternative brownfield opportunities and an approved community-led planning framework for Ryebank Fields now 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, Application 142223/FO/2025 requires careful scrutiny before determination. Any decision should clearly demonstrate how all material planning considerations have been assessed and balanced, including the changed circumstances arising from the approval of the community-led planning application and the continuing uncertainty surrounding the proposed Trafford access.

RFCG asks the Council's officer report on the housing application to explain how it has taken the community-led woodland and meadow proposal into account and what weight it has given the Planning Committee's decision.

Planning Records

Manchester City Council planning register: housing application 142223/FO/2025, including the October 2026 E3P statement.

Manchester City Council Planning Committee, 24 September 2026: item 49, community-led application 143413/FO/2025.

Manchester Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation: RFCG representation LP38 and addendum dated 24 September 2026.