

Comments for Planning Application 143413/FO/2025

Application Summary

Application Number: 143413/FO/2025

Address: Land Bound By Longford Road, Peveril Crescent, Rye Bank Road And Longford Park (commonly Referred To As Ryebank Fields) Manchester M21 9WW

Proposal: Change of use of former university playing fields to community woodland and meadow.

Case Officer: Robert Griffin

Customer Details

Name: Not Available

Address: Not Available

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Member of the Public

Stance: Customer made comments in support of the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment:1) Vital local amenity with importance to the community

As a parent, I regularly take my children to Ryebank Fields to observe and interact with nature and to play in the meadows and woods. Preserving this area would significantly benefit us and the surrounding community, as it is rare to find somewhere where you can freely walk-in and explore nature, that is also easily accessible to the public.

There is very little accessible green space/woodlands in South Manchester, and when you travel to other managed woodlands there are generally set paths which restrict your access and encourage you to walk along a route, rather than explore the area. Whilst parks are also an excellent amenity for children - and Longford Park is fantastic - the specific play equipment is designed for certain uses and encourages children to play in a limited number of ways. There is a huge importance and value in spaces that enable free play and for children to use and develop their imagination. As a parent, I am very aware of how few places there are that enable children to do this (let alone ones that you can access for free). Ryebank Fields is an incredible community asset in this respect.

When I take my children to Ryebank Fields the difference in them and their play is really noticeable. They suddenly have such freedom to run and explore where they like and to play imaginatively without constraints, which they do not experience anywhere else. For example, the last time we visited with our children (aged 5 and 3 years old) they immediately started running around exploring, excited to see what insects they could see and spotting birds' nests in the trees. They then started gathering sticks, which they then used the sticks to mark an 'X' on the ground and pretended there was buried treasure. As a parent, it is very rare to find a place that allows

your children this amount of freedom to play - let alone one that so many people can be accessed by so many local people for free.

Around 25,000 residents live within a 15 minute walk of Ryebank Fields (with this number set to increase significantly). Thousands of those people support the campaign to Save Ryebank Fields. The Local Plan consultation in 2020 received an overwhelming response from 100s of residents that Ryebank Fields should be protected as a Local Green Space, and council officers agree that it meets the required criteria of being 'demonstrably important to the local community on the grounds of its beauty, history, recreation, tranquillity, and wildlife value'.

It is also important to preserve the well used community garden at Rye Bank Road, which was built by residents and is registered as an Asset of Community Value.

2) Preserving nature and increasing biodiversity opportunities

Ryebank Fields is an ecologically significant area, which has naturally rewilded over 30 years and provides has a wide variety of natural habitats with significant environmental and ecological value. This range of habits is particularly important to biodiversity, as edges where two ecosystems meet, such as woods and meadows - as found in Ryebank Fields, have higher levels of biodiversity. It is therefore important that the variety of habitats in Ryebank Fields, such as the wildflower meadows and hedgerows, are protected to retain and promote biodiversity.

The rich diversity of the site means that Ryebank Fields is an important habitat for wildlife, supporting a rich diversity of flora and fauna, including protected species such as bats, hedgehogs, badgers and breeding birds. It is also home to a rare native black poplar tree and an ecologically significant hedgerow.

When I used to live near to Ryebank Fields, we used to regularly see bats flying around outside our window, which was an incredibly sight and something I had never experienced before. The combination of woodland, scrub and grasslands within Ryebank Fields provides excellent opportunities for commuting and foraging for bats by providing cover as well as the grass and wildflower habitats required to sustain the large numbers of insects they eat.

Protecting his variety of habitats will massively benefit the number of protected species living on Ryebank Fields, many of which are threatened within the UK. This habitat was created over decades and it would be impossible to replicate the same maturity that can support such rich biodiversity and wildlife by simply planting new habitats which would take years to mature. It is therefore imperative that the diversity of this site is protected for local wildlife.

According to the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal conducted by Stuart Spray Wildlife Consultancy(1), Ryebank Fields supports several Greater Manchester nature-based and green space initiatives, including The Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan, Greater Manchester

Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Manchester Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. Furthermore, the report finds that there are opportunities to further enhance this biodiversity through a "light touch conservation and management approach".

(1) Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Ryebank Fields January 2025 Final Draft

3) Mitigating climate change and reducing flood risk & air pollution

Ryebank Fields is home to over 1,400 trees. The trees and vegetation are not only essential to provide habitats and food for the range of wildlife they support, but they also provide important benefits in terms of acting as a carbon sink and natural floodplain, and combating the air pollution in this densely populated urban area. Trees also have a cooling effect, which is particularly important in cities which will only see increasing temperatures as a result of the climate crisis.

Given that the Council has acknowledged we are in a climate crisis and we are already experiencing the increasingly unstable impacts of climate change on our weather systems, the Council must acknowledge that we do not have decades to wait for carbon sequestration and climate benefits of new trees and must prioritise protecting existing trees.

The streets surrounding the Fields are already above the 85th percentile for pollution in the UK and exceed multiple WHO air pollution limits. The trees and vegetation on Ryebank Fields are essential to preserve due to their mitigating effect on air pollution for the local school and residents.

The trees and vegetation also provides a natural flood defence which limits the damage to local homes. Houses and leisure areas near to Ryebank Fields are subject to flooding when there is heavy rainfall. We are already increasingly experiencing the impacts of more severe rainfall and flooding as a result of the climate crisis, which will only increase in future years. The preservation of the natural flood defence provided by Ryebank Fields is essential as we face increased rainfall and more powerful flooding events as a result of climate change.