

Operational statement for proposed use of former playing fields and existing open space as a community woodland and meadow at Ryebank Fields, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester, M21 9WW

1. Introduction and purpose:

- a. This statement has been prepared to support a planning application which seeks a change of use of land at Ryebank Fields, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester, M21 9WW.
- b. This statement is designed to ensure that there is a shared understanding of how it is proposed that the land is and will be used in the future. This will also help to ensure that the fields are used safely, in a manner that enhances local biodiversity and nature recovery.
- c. It is intended that this statement will be tied to the planning permission by way of a condition and will remain in force unless modified or otherwise agreed with the LPA.

2. Nature of the proposed use:

- a. The land will be open to the public and accessible for community use at all times, with some public access restricted within specific areas of the land in order to maintain natural wildlife habitats.
- b. It is envisaged that the land will continue to be used by walkers, dog walkers, runners, cyclists, nature lovers and as a play and exploration space for children.
- c. The land will continue to be used for planned small scale community activities and events to enhance community cohesion, such as guided walks, litter picking, singing, drumming, mindfulness, arts and creative activities, and for celebrating festivals and events, such as International Women's Day, Earth Day, Summer Solstice and public holidays.
- d. The land will be used as an educational resource to enable visitors and local residents to learn about nature, biodiversity, wildlife, heritage, conservation and the climate crisis. In association with relevant organisations, the culture and heritage of the land will be preserved, shared, celebrated and honoured.

3. Ongoing and future management and maintenance:

- a. The land will be managed and maintained by the Ryebank Fields Community Group, who as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, will seek grant funding and coordinate volunteers from the local community to support them in this. The land will be used to support and enhance community leadership and ownership by enabling residents to have agency and a voice over the use of the land. To achieve this, we will seek advice from and work together with advisory groups, local conservation groups and academics.
- b. Where appropriate, online ticketing systems such as 'Eventbrite' will be used in order to manage the number of visitors to organised activities.
- c. It is not intended that the land be used for any organised large-scale gatherings or events of over circa.30 people however, where this occurs a Temporary Events License will be sought from Manchester City Council to allow for proper consideration and management of the event.
- d. In accordance with the recommendations within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal prepared by Stuart Spray, annual surveys and habitats will be conducted, and a central database of ecological data will be maintained to monitor, review and manage biodiversity on site. Existing habitats will be enhanced by planting native trees, extending hedgerows, introducing wildflower species, and leaving some parts to the grassland uncut. Maintenance

programmes will be implemented, such as rotational cutting wildflowers and periodically coppicing hedgerows, to manage and support growth.

- e. In order to promote and manage the conservation of valued and protected species, bat boxes will be installed, areas of long grass, log and leaf piles will be maintained for hedgehogs, and badger sets protected from disturbances through the creation of a buffer zone within which public access will be prohibited.
- f. The land will not be unnecessarily disturbed or dug up to ensure it remains safe for public use.
- g. A suitably licensed consultant will conduct a visit to the site every 3 months to check site conditions and remove any potentially hazardous materials from the ground surface in publicly accessible areas.
- h. Site walkovers will be undertaken by volunteers before and after any activity in order to check that spaces and routes are safe, and to collect litter.
- i. A risk assessment will be carried out and the appropriate protective measures will be provided for carrying out any excavation work related to any future tree planting related to the potential loss of trees over time.
- j. To maximise safe community use of the fields, the community group will seek expert advice relating to whether the ground is suitable for growing edible plants and foraging. Such activities will be discouraged until there is sufficient evidence of this.
- k. Wildlife will be protected and managed by creating wildlife only zones which will restrict public access to areas inhabited by priority/protected species.
- l. Areas of restricted public access will be achieved using 'dead hedges', laid on the surface of the land or roped off between existing trees or stakes.
- m. We will establish working relationships with the landowner, the local police, and the city council to ensure that issues such as anti-social behaviour or fly-tipping are addressed and managed.
- n. The biodiversity of the land will be managed with the aid of conservation volunteers.

4. *Modification of this statement:*

- a. This operational statement has been prepared by the applicant. It is to be conditioned as part of any planning permission granted on this site. As a result, this operational statement is tied to the use of this land and not the present owners.
- b. It may be that the use and circumstances surrounding this use will change over time (especially if the land changes ownership), however, the provisions of this operational statement will remain in force unless agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.
- c. A modification / variation of this operational statement may be achieved by a submission to discharge or vary the relevant condition, including full details and justification of the changes proposed.