

Application Number	Date of Appln	Committee Date	Ward
143413/FO/2025	28 Aug 2025	24 Sept 2026	Chorlton Ward

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

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

Applicant Dr Rhetta Moran, Ryebank Fields Community Group

Agent Bob Phillips, Urban Imprint, 16-18 Park Green, Macclesfield SK11 7NA

Executive Summary

This application proposal relates to land located in a position adjoining the Council's administrative boundary with Trafford Council within the Chorlton Ward. As will be set out in the main body of this report, the application site has seen a number of historic uses including clay extraction and subsequent infilling, playing fields associated to Manchester Metropolitan University and more recently has been accessed and used by members of the public for a range of outdoor activities up until 2020.

It is understood from a review of the planning history of the application site that the land has had no formal outdoor sports use since at least the mid-1990s with part of the site to the south being understood not to have been used for formal outdoors sports use since 1980.

The application proposals have been subject to notification of nearby properties, site notice and press notice together with notification of other consultees. This notification process has resulted in a high level of responses, 742 in total, with 675 of these being in support of the proposals. The landowner has also made a representation objecting to the application proposals and a summary of the comments that have been made is also set out within the consultation section of this report. Irrespective of the comments of the landowner, matters relating to landownership, permission to use and access the site lie outside of the consideration of these planning application proposals.

This application seeks to change the use of the site to a community woodland and meadow with no proposals for physical works. The submitted supporting information indicates that the future aims and ambitions for this change of use are:

- Harness the potential of the uniqueness of Ryebank Fields to support and enhance community health and wellbeing, by enabling the local community to engage with nature;
- Protect and enhance biodiversity and encourage local nature recovery;
- Contribute to mitigating the impact of the climate crisis;
- Encourage community cohesion, leadership and ownership; and to

- Celebrate cultural and community heritage.

Consideration of the proposals and matters raised through the notification process are fully set out and considered within the main body of this report below.

Members of Committee are requested to note that a planning application for an alternative proposal for the site in the form of a residential led redevelopment (application reference 142223/FO/2025) has also been submitted to the City Council as local planning application for determination, these proposals will be subject to a separate report to Committee for its consideration.

Members of committee are informed that whilst the Council as local planning authority has two separate applications for differing end uses of the application site it is entirely acceptable in planning terms for both proposals to be considered for determination with either the same or differing recommendations.

Description of site

The application site comprises approximately 4.59 hectares of land bounded by Longford Road to the south, the rear of properties located on Peveril Crescent and Copley Road to the east, Rye Bank Road to the north and Longford Park to the west. The application site is bounded to its north, western and southern boundaries by groups of trees with other areas of trees of varying age, size and condition within the site. The site is not subject to a statutory designation for its nature conservation value; however, the remainder of the site contains locally valuable semi-natural habitats including neutral grassland, scrub and hedgerows. The applicants supporting information states that the unmanaged nature of the site has provided an opportunity for the site to establish local habitats with the site now containing a variety of plant and animal life contributing to the local ecological network. The applicant states that the site provides an important and scarce natural green space within south Manchester stating it is within a 15 minute walk from 25,000 people.

Historic mapping and aerial photographs provide evidence of the sites past use for clay extraction during the early part of the 20th century in the form of clay pits associated with a brickworks which was sited to the east of the application site where St Johns primary school is now situated. A row of terraced properties was also located in the south eastern corner of the site, being demolished at some point between the 1930s and the end of the second world war. By the late 1960s the former clay pits on the site had been infilled and in the mid to late 1970s the site became used as sports pitches for the Manchester Polytechnic - now Manchester Metropolitan University - with the sport pitch use having ceased by the mid-1990s. An outline planning application for residential development of the site was refused permission in 1996 and a subsequent appeal was dismissed in 1997.

It is understood that following the identification of asbestos containing materials on the surface of the site the current landowner closed the site in 2020, prior to this the landowner had permitted limited public access to the site for lawful sports and pastimes use.

The site is not located within a Conservation Area although it is acknowledged that the adjacent Longford Park which shares a boundary with the application site is designated as a Conservation Area by Trafford Council. This designation is due to the significance of the park and its association with the Longford Hall estate and John Rylands. The application site does not contain any designated heritage assets but there is archaeological interest at the site which has the potential to contain the remains of an ancient boundary or defensive feature which is referred to as Nico Ditch. Nico Ditch is a linear boundary of the Anglo-Saxon period. There is a section of the ditch in Platt Fields, approximately 4.3 km to the east of the application site which survives as one of very few sections of the Nico Ditch which remains identifiable. The section of the ditch in Platt Fields is listed as a Scheduled Monument on the National Heritage List for England.

Parts of the application site are located within flood zone 2 (having a medium probability of flood risk) as designated by the Environment Agency. The area of the site falling within flood zone 2 is generally located within a linear area in the centre of the site and around the sites northern and eastern boundaries, the rest of the site falls within flood zone 1 (having a low probability of flooding).

The application site is accessible by foot from Longford Road to the south, Rye Bank Road in Trafford to the north with three other direct pedestrian connections to Longford Park in Trafford to the west. It is evident from site visits that the site appears to be regularly accessed with other routes crossing the site. There are a set of wide access gates to the southern access point from Longford Road which forms what appears to be a maintenance route and access to an area of hardstanding in the southern area of the site. Access from Rye Bank Road to the north is through an area that is identified as a community garden and an asset of community value which is located within the Trafford Council area and outside of the application site.

Beyond the application site and the recreational and sporting areas associated with Longford Park to the west, the surrounding areas to the north, south and east are ones of a predominantly residential nature but also include buildings and external spaces associated with St Johns Primary School. Further photographs of the site are contained within Appendix 1 to this report.



Figure 1 – Aerial view of the application site identified within the red edge

Description of application proposals

The applicant seeks permission to formally change the use of the site to a community woodland and meadowland. The application does not include or propose any operational development.

The applicants supporting information indicates that since the last formal use of the site and the movement of the Metropolitan University's sporting facilities to different premises in Carrington in the mid 1990s the use of the site has evolved and is now a valuable community resource used by local residents as a space to meet, walk, exercise and reflect with local community groups working collaboratively over a number of years to preserve the qualities of the site and resident's access to them.

The supporting information sets out that the applicant seeks to:

- Harness the potential of the site to support and enhance community health and well being through the engagement with nature;
- Protect and enhance biodiversity and encourage local nature recovery;
- Contribute to mitigating the impact of the climate crisis;
- Encourage community cohesion, leadership and ownership; and to
- Celebrate cultural and community heritage

Land ownership

The applicant does not own the land subject of this planning application. The planning system entitles anyone to apply for permission for any plot of land, irrespective of ownership as long as the correct notice has been served on the landowner and that the correct certificates of ownership have been completed on the application form. The correct information has been supplied alongside this application.

In this instance the granting of any planning permission does not overrule or circumvent the landowners rights and interests in relation to the site. It would be for the applicant to seek and enter into the requisite permissions or rights with the landowner in order to use the land in accordance with any planning permission granted.

The current landowner, the Manchester Metropolitan University, has submitted comments objecting to the application proposals and these are summarised in the following section of this report.

Consultations

The applicant indicates that they undertook pre-application consultation with the local community and general public prior to the submission of the application this took place over a two week period and included: Online questionnaire, in-person consultation events; delivery of leaflets to properties bordering the site and at other events. The applicant has indicated that as a result they received 725 positive responses with no objections to the proposals.

The proposal has been subject to the following notifications: site notices have been displayed at the site and notification letters have been sent to 1547 nearby addresses.

In response to this notification process 675 representations have been received in support of the proposals, 3 neutral comments and 64 objections have been received. It should be noted that of the 64 objections received, 41 of these were of a nature that set out objections to the other development proposals for the site that are subject to a separate planning application, as referenced above.

The comments received are summarised below.

Comments made in support of the proposals:

Biodiversity, Ecology and Nature Conservation -A high proportion of comments made highlight the site's ecological value and the benefits of protecting and enhancing it as a natural green space. Respondents note that the site contains a diverse range of habitats and supports at least 281 species, including protected species such as bats, breeding birds and hedgehogs. The site's meadows, scrubland, mature trees and hedgerows are considered important for pollinators, birds and small mammals, while also contributing to wider wildlife corridors. Supporters consider the proposal an opportunity not only to safeguard existing ecological assets but also to enhance them through sensitive conservation and rewilding measures.

Green Space Protection and Environmental Benefits - Respondents to the notification process emphasise the importance of retaining the site as undeveloped greenfield land. Comments highlight the increasing need for accessible green space as Manchester continues to develop, particularly in areas experiencing urbanisation and air pollution. The site is viewed as an important local environmental asset that provides carbon storage, urban cooling, natural drainage and flood attenuation benefits. Several representations also indicate that South Manchester experiences a deficit in green space provision and that protecting the site would help address this.

Recreation, Health and Wellbeing - A common theme is the site's contribution to public health and wellbeing. Respondents describe the site as a valued destination for walking, dog walking, informal recreation and experiencing nature. Comments identify physical health, mental health and wellbeing benefits arising from access to natural green spaces.

Community Value and Social Benefits - Many commentators refer to strong community support for the site and ongoing local involvement in its care and management. Representations highlight regular volunteering, educational activities and community-led stewardship, which are seen as promoting local pride, social cohesion and community resilience. The proposal is viewed as aligning with place-making objectives and supporting opportunities for residents to engage with and care for their local environment.

Heritage and Historic Interest - Some respondents reference the historic significance of the Nico Ditch, noting that the feature would be preserved under the proposals.

Land Status and Development Constraints - Several comments argue that the site's existing greenfield designation should be retained and that there is no justification for a change in status. Some respondents also reference contamination issues, including asbestos, suggesting these constraints make the site unsuitable for development. The site's current use as a natural green space is therefore considered the most appropriate long-term future.

Planning Policy Considerations - A number of representations acknowledge that previous planning frameworks identified the site for residential development. However, respondents indicate that this position is now outdated and pre-date more recent strategic planning policies, including those within the Places for Everyone plan. It is suggested that the environmental, ecological, recreational and community benefits of the proposal carry significant weight in the planning balance and support approval despite earlier development aspirations for the site.

Comments raising objections to the proposal:

Housing Need and Loss of Development Opportunity - A number of representations object to the proposal on the basis that the site should be used to help meet Manchester's housing needs. Respondents refer to the national and local housing crisis and the need for additional housing, including affordable, social and specialist accommodation. It is argued that the site represents a suitable development opportunity that could deliver new homes without a significant loss of local recreational provision given the existence of other nearby green spaces. Concerns

are also raised that the proposal conflicts with the Council's objective of increasing housing supply.

Conflict with Adopted Development Framework – Respondents state that the proposal is inconsistent with the approved Development Framework for the site. Objectors contend that the application runs counter to previous planning ambitions for residential development and therefore does not accord with the adopted planning strategy for the area.

Existing Green Space Provision - Some respondents argue that there is already a substantial amount of green space in the locality, including Longford Park and its associated gardens and woodland areas, Turn Moss, the canal corridor and other open spaces. As a result, it is suggested that the site is not essential to meeting local green space needs.

Biodiversity and Public Access Concerns - While some acknowledge the site's ecological value, concerns are raised that the wide-ranging objectives of the proposal may create tensions between nature conservation and public access. In particular, it is suggested that facilities, activities or events could have adverse impacts on biodiversity. Specific concerns are raised regarding any formal access through the western tree belt into Longford Park, with objectors arguing that increased footfall could damage sensitive habitats and wildlife.

Contamination, Public Safety and Site Remediation – Objectors raise concerns around land contamination and the proposed use. Comments refer to the presence of asbestos and other contaminants. Concerns are raised that the application does not provide a detailed, funded or deliverable remediation strategy and does not adequately demonstrate how the site would be made safe for long-term public access.

Specific concerns include:

- Risks to members of the public from asbestos exposure.
- Potential disturbance of contaminants through erosion, burrowing animals, dogs or unauthorised activities.
- Potential risks associated with mercury and contamination of groundwater.
- Failure to demonstrate compliance with national requirements for contaminated land assessment and remediation.
- Alleged shortcomings in the submitted ground condition and contamination reports.

Objectors argue that any future use of the site should only occur following comprehensive remediation and a clear allocation of legal responsibility for managing risks.

Management, Funding and Long-Term Viability - Representations question the practical delivery of the proposal. Concerns are raised that the application does not contain a comprehensive management plan, business plan or funding strategy. It is argued that managing the site as an accessible community resource would require ongoing financial resources, insurance, security arrangements and long-term maintenance commitments, none of which are clearly addressed by the applicant.

Consultation and Engagement - The landowner raises concerns regarding the consultation process. It is stated that no meaningful engagement took place before submission of the application and that claims of extensive consultation are disputed. Additional criticism relates to the publicity of public consultation events, with responses suggesting that consultation was not adequately promoted or representative.

Site Ownership and Landowner Objections - The landowner objects to the proposal and raises concerns regarding the absence of discussions relating to ownership, transfer arrangements or implementation of the scheme. The landowner also questions the deliverability and governance of the proposals given the lack of agreement with those who control the land.

Quality and Accuracy of Submitted Information – Comments have been raised relating to the adequacy of the submitted documentation. Concerns raised include:

- Alleged deficiencies in the ground condition and contamination assessment.
- Claims that the application does not meet Environment Agency contaminated land guidance.
- Inconsistencies between red-line boundaries shown on different plans and documents.
- Concerns that the tree survey does not identify all trees present on the site.

Other comments submitted:

An alternative compromise is suggested where the southern third of the site be used for new housing, but that the remaining part of this open space be used as a re-wilded public open area.

In addition, it is proposed that the historic Nico Ditch, which bisects this site, should be fully restored and protected.

Consultee comments

Environment Agency – Have reviewed the submitted information and have no comments. The works on site do not appear to include any that are intrusive, therefore the ground is unlikely to be disturbed except where it is necessary to introduce above ground improvements. They raise no concerns with the standard of the submitted preliminary ground conditions report.

Manchester City Council Environmental Health – Have accepted the applicants submitted Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Report. Further information was requested due to the potential risks from asbestos containing materials in some parts of the site. This was to be in the form of a risk assessment to include measures to restrict public access to certain areas of the site, a justification was also requested for the reduction in site checks for asbestos containing materials at the site.

The applicant subsequently provided further information to include the use of measures such as: 'dead hedges' as natural barriers to define wildlife only spaces where necessary; site monitoring on a three monthly basis by a suitably qualified consultant to assess any change in the presence of contamination at the sites

surface; and on-site volunteers to conduct walkovers both before and after any organised walk or other activity, reporting any potential findings to consultants. These measures have been reviewed by the Council's Environmental Health team and are considered acceptable subject to attaching suitably worded conditions to any decision to secure these whilst the site is in the use applied for.

MCC Environmental Health further noted that if the land is to be used for the planting of edible plants in the future, then a site investigation and risk assessment would be required to determine if the site soils are suitable for use. The findings would need to be submitted and approved prior to these types of activity taking place.

Manchester City Council Flood Risk Management Team – Have no comments to make on this application.

United Utilities – Identify that the site contains a number of United Utilities (UU) assets including a large diameter water main and a public sewer. They indicate that there is an easement across the northern access to the site which is in addition to their statutory rights for inspection, maintenance and repair, the applicant would need to adhere to the provisions within that easement. They confirm that they would not permit the building over of the water main or public sewer and would require an access strip for maintenance.

They raise some concerns around the proposed masterplan submitted by the applicant and proximity of some elements of these to the UU assets on the site including play areas or future tree planting which have the potential to damage on the identified onsite assets. They recommend that a condition be attached to any approval to identify measures to protect the onsite assets prior to any construction taking place.

The applicant has responded to the points raised by UU to confirm that the application proposals subject of this application do not propose any construction activities or operational development and there is no desire for extensive further tree planting on the site.

Manchester City Council Highway Services – The application proposals have been supported by a Transport Note and Outline Event Management Strategy following a request for the applicant to provide further information. This information has been fully assessed and no objections on highway or pedestrian safety have been raised.

It is noted that events at the site are expected to account for less than 5% of overall site use. The Transport Note confirms that the existing trip generation associated with the site is minimal, with most attendees travelling on foot or by bicycle from the surrounding community. The applicant advises that the majority of events would attract an average of around 30 attendees and there are typically 2–3 larger events each year, accommodating up to 200 attendees. The applicant confirms that arrival and departure times for these events would be staggered. A separate outline Events Management Strategy has been prepared and is discussed below.

The Transport Note states that the community group actively encourages walking, public transport use and car-sharing for events, with attendees directed to park at

Longford Park where required. Minibuses are instructed to drop off and pick up at the Longford Road entrance and then wait in the Longford Park car park.

A mode survey was undertaken for an event in early January 2026, although attendance was estimated at around 200 people, arrival and departure were staggered as noted above. Approximately 78% arrived on foot and around 9% travelled by car (1 person driving alone and 5 people car-sharing).

The applicant confirms that the proposals do not include an increase in the number of events or attendees. As such, no change to existing travel patterns is anticipated.

The Transport Note confirms that regular travel mode surveys would be undertaken, an Event Management Strategy would be implemented, and all future social media posts and event advertising would include travel advice and/or a link to the Travel Advice webpage. Following the review of this information MCC Highway Services consider this acceptable in principle.

Longford Road

The Transport Note identifies approximately 20 parking spaces available.

Rye Bank Road

Would be promoted as a pedestrian and cycle access only.

Three car parks are located within a three-minute walk of the site:

- Longford Park Car Park (accessed via Ryebank Road, south of the site)
- Car park accessed from Cromwell Road
- Car park accessed from the Quadrant roundabout

All car parks provide disabled parking, and Longford Road car park includes EV charging.

The Transport Note confirms that attendees to events are encouraged to park at Longford Park.

It is noted that the proposals do not include any additional car parking; therefore, parking provision would remain unchanged.

The Transport Note confirms that a cycle stand is currently provided at the Longford Road entrance with additional cycle parking being available within Longford Park.

The proposals do not include further cycle parking provision.

An Outline Event Management Strategy has been submitted, the purpose of which is to minimise any impact on the local highway network during organised events at the site. The Strategy states that events would be scheduled to avoid clashes with regular local activities such as school drop-off/pick-up periods, Stretford Park parkrun, events at Stretford Stadium, football fixtures at Old Trafford, and cricket matches or concerts at Lancashire County Cricket Club. This approach is welcomed by MCC Highway Services.

The Strategy confirms that platforms such as Eventbrite would be used to record expected attendee numbers, enabling the appropriate level of marshals to be assigned.

Events would be advertised on local social groups and sustainable travel to events promoted. For those travelling by car, directions will be provided to Longford Park car park, and car sharing will be encouraged. Traffic marshals would be in place to direct drivers to Longford Park car parks.

MCC Highway Services recommend that the Outline Event Management Strategy is subject of an appropriately worded condition attached to any planning permission that may be granted. And that this should be in place for when the use of the site commences and whilst the site is in use.

Manchester City Council Arboriculture Team – No objection to the proposals subject to the arboricultural method statement being strictly adhered to.

Cadent Gas – No objection providing the Cadent Tree Planting guide is adhered to and no level changes are made to the ground.

Greater Manchester Archaeology Advisory Service - The proposal site does not contain any designated heritage assets but is of considerable archaeological interest as it is traversed by a large negative earthwork that may represent the remains of an ancient boundary or defensive feature referred to as the Nico Ditch (HER ID 19116.1.0). This curvilinear earthwork is believed to be of pre-Norman Conquest origin and extends for c.5km around the southern edge of Manchester city centre from the border with Audenshaw / Denton in the east to Platt Brook in the west, although is only visible as a feature of the modern landscape in a small number of places.

The application is supported by a comprehensive and authoritative account of the Nico Ditch and assesses the likelihood that a large ditch that traverses the application site represents the remnants of this significant historic and somewhat enigmatic landscape feature. It is concluded that the feature across Ryebank Fields is certainly of some antiquity and in all probability is likely to be part of the Nico Ditch, although intrusive archaeological investigation is required to confirm this interpretation. GMAAS agrees with this conclusion.

As the proposed change of use requested by the application does not require any ground-breaking works, however, any below-ground remains of archaeological interest (which is limited exclusively to the ditch and the material it contains) will be unaffected and preserved in-situ. GMAAS welcomes this outcome. GMAAS also welcomes the aspiration to provide information boards at some point in the future this could usefully explain the historic interest in the Nico Ditch and raise awareness amongst local communities of its presence. However, for the purposes of the current application, GMAAS is satisfied that no further consideration of archaeological matters is warranted.

Policy

The Development Plan consists of: Places for Everyone (2024); The Manchester Core Strategy (2012); and Saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan (1995). Planning applications in Manchester must be decided in accordance with the Places for Everyone, the Core Strategy and saved UDP Policies as directed by section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026) must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and is also a material consideration in planning decisions.

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE)

The Places for Everyone Plan is a Joint Development Plan Document, providing a strategic plan and policies, for nine of the 10 boroughs which make up Greater Manchester. PfE forms part of the development plan and planning applications must be decided in accordance with its policies. The relevant policies in PfE in this instance are as follows:

The relevant sections in the Plan relating to these application proposals are:

Objective 8: Improve the quality of our natural environment and access to green spaces.

Objective 9: Ensure access to physical and social infrastructure including ensuring new development is properly served by amongst other things recreation facilities.

Objective 10: Promote the health and wellbeing of communities including maximising the health benefits of access to the natural environment and green spaces.

Policy JP-Strat9: Southern Areas - The economic competitiveness, distinctive local neighbourhood character and environmental attractiveness of the southern areas are to be protected and enhanced. The proposals would retain the existing open space on the site and the trees, shrubs, hedgerows and grassland that are present on it.

Policy JP-Strat13: Strategic Green Infrastructure – Sets out the protection and enhancement of key strategic green infrastructure assets complemented by a suite of policies to protect and enhance the network of green infrastructure, including protecting and enhancing sites of ecological value. This is intended to enable residents to access and maximise the benefits of green infrastructure on their health and well-being.

The key features to be protected and enhanced are identified as:

- 1) River Valleys and Waterways
- 2) Lowland wetlands and mosslands
- 3) Uplands
- 4) Trees and woodland.

The application site is not identified as one of these key features, the closest being the area coinciding with the green belt within the Mersey Valley to the south of the application site.

Policy JP-G1: Landscape Character – Development within one of the 10 identified landscape character types within PfE, should reflect and respond to the special qualities and sensitivities of the key landscape characteristics of its location. The interface of new development with the surrounding countryside/landscape is of particular importance. In implementing this strategic policy regard is to be had to the guidance within the Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment.

The application site is not identified within a PfE landscape character area, the closest being the 'Broad Urban Fringe' character area that follows the Mersey Valley which is located approximately 430 metres to the southern edge of the application site to the south of Edge Lane.

Policy JP-G2: Green Infrastructure Network – This policy sets out that a strategic approach is to be taken in order to protect and enhance the ecosystem services which the Green Infrastructure Network provides.

The Mersey Valley in Manchester and Trafford with connections to Stockport, High Peak and Cheshire East is identified as an opportunity area which amongst a number of other opportunity areas are indicated in PfE as underpinning the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Nature Recovery Network for Greater Manchester. PfE indicates that the opportunity areas are not constraints on development and developments within them may facilitate the delivery of improvements in some areas.

PfE does not identify the application site within a Greater Manchester priority Green Infrastructure area or a key component of the Green Infrastructure Network. It is understood that the adjacent Longford Park has been identified as an opportunity area for nature recovery.

Policy JP-G6: Urban Green Space: It is recognised in PfE that urban green spaces are of greater significant to many residents on a day-to-day basis and are areas with which they have the greatest contact. Urban green infrastructure includes parks, playing fields and other sports and recreation facilities, but they also include nature reserves, woodlands, allotments, cemeteries, former rail corridors, and other undeveloped land.

This policy states that to ensure there is an appropriate scale, type, quality and distribution of accessible urban green space that can support a high quality of life and other important green infrastructure functions:

- existing urban green space will be protected and enhanced in balance with other considerations; and
- will work with developers and other stakeholders to deliver new high quality urban green spaces.

Development is to be designed to support the positive use of nearby green spaces, such as by offering a high-quality setting, providing natural surveillance, and facilitating easy access by walking and cycling.

Policy JP-G7: Trees and Woodland – Seeks to increase tree cover, protect and enhance woodland and connect people to trees and woodland around them.

Policy JP-G8: A Net Enhancement to Biodiversity and Geodiversity – Developments are expected to:

a) follow the mitigation hierarchy of:

- i. Avoiding significant harm to biodiversity, particularly where it is irreplaceable, through consideration of alternative sites with less harmful impacts, then
- ii. Adequately mitigating any harm to biodiversity, then
- iii. Adequately compensating for any remaining harm to biodiversity

b. Avoid fragmenting or severing connectivity between habitats;

c. Achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity of no less than 10%

d. Make appropriate provision for long-term management of habitats and geological features connected to the development;

e. Where appropriate, development should: mitigate air pollution impacts on Manchester Mosses SAC; mitigate urban edge, functionally linked land and recreation disturbance impacts on the South Pennine Moors SAC/SPAs; and assess and potentially mitigate boat movement, water pollution, and light spillage and shading impacts on the Rochdale Canal SAC; and

f. Development proposals should be informed by the findings and recommendations of the appropriate biodiversity/ecological assessment(s) in the PfE evidence base and/or any updated or appropriate biodiversity/ecological assessments submitted as part of the planning application process.

Policy JP-P1: Sustainable Places – Sets out the approach for the conurbation to become one of the most liveable city regions in the world with a number of key attributes that development, where appropriate should be consistent with:

- 1) Distinctive with a clear identity
- 2) Visually stimulating the use of green space, public art and quality design
- 3) Socially inclusive
- 4) Resilient
- 5) Adaptable
- 6) Durable
- 7) Resource Efficient
- 8) Safe
- 9) Supported by critical infrastructure
- 10) Functional and convenient
- 11) Incorporating inclusive design
- 12) Legible
- 13) Easy to move around for those of all mobility levels
- 14) Well connected to other places
- 15) Comfortable and inviting
- 16) Incorporating high quality and well managed green infrastructure and quality public realm
- 17) Well served by local shops, services and amenities

Policy JP-P2: Heritage – The intention through this policy is to positively conserve, sustain and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets and their settings. Opportunities are to be pursued to aid the promotion, enjoyment, understanding and interpretation of heritage assets.

Policy JP-P6: Health – New development will be required, as far as practicable to maximise its positive contribution to health and wellbeing, whilst avoiding any potential negative impacts of new development.

Policy JP-P7: Sport and Recreation – Indicates that a network of high quality and accessible recreation facilities are to be protected and enhanced including: locating and designing recreation facilities in relation to housing so as to ensure that they are accessible but also minimise the potential for complaints due to disturbance to residential amenity from recreational activity; enhancing public rights of way network and provide everyday options for green travel, and providing safe and attractive routes to sports and recreation facilities.

Policy JP-C6: Walking and Cycling – This policy sets out a range of measures to support a higher proportion of journeys to be made by walking and cycling including: creating safe, attractive and integrated walking and cycling infrastructure; ensuring routes are direct, easily navigable and integrated with the street and public transport network; creating active neighbourhoods that are more permeable to walking and cycling than to the private car; and utilising and enhancing green infrastructure to create opportunities for walking and cycling.

The application proposals are considered to be in general accordance with the policies and objectives of Places for Everyone plan. It is noted that as the proposals do not included for any operational development, they alone would not give rise to improved or enhanced accessibility by virtue of the way in which the site is currently accessed and its current condition and topography and nor would the proposed use on its own enhance or investigate the understanding of potential heritage assets that may be on the site.

Manchester Core Strategy (2012)

The Core Strategy contains Strategic Spatial Objectives that form the basis of the policies contained therein, the relevant objectives and policies to consideration of this application proposal are as follows:

Spatial Objective S06 – Environment – Seeks to protect and enhance both the natural and built environment of the City and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources, in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change, support biodiversity and wildlife, improve air, water and land quality, recreational opportunities and provide networks of high quality green infrastructure, ensuring that the City is inclusive and attractive to residents, workers, investors and visitors.

Policy SP 1 - Spatial Principles: The key spatial principles which will guide the strategic development of Manchester to 2027 include the City's network of open spaces that will provide all residents with good access to recreation opportunities.

The River Valleys (the Irk, Medlock and Mersey) and City Parks are particularly important, and access to these resources will be improved. The application proposals seek planning permission for the use of an area of open space for the community and is considered to accord with spatial objective S06 and policy SP1.

Policy T1 – Sustainable Transport – Seeks to support proposals that improve choice by development alternatives and encourage modal shift away from car travel.

Policy EN3 – Heritage – Proposals that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods are to be encouraged. The applicant's information states that Nico Ditch has been identified within the site and forms a unique archaeological and landscape asset. The applicant's information states that the ditch is understood as a non-designated heritage asset.

Policy EN9 - Green Infrastructure – Anticipates that new development will maintain existing green infrastructure in terms of its quantity, quality and multiple functions. Where the opportunity arises and in accordance with current Green Infrastructure Strategies the Council will encourage developers to enhance the quality and quantity of green infrastructure, improve the performance of its functions and create and improve linkages to and between areas of green infrastructure. The application proposals seek to maintain the site as it is currently and does not propose any operational development.

Policy EN10 - Safeguarding Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities – This policy sets out that the Council seeks to retain and improve existing open spaces, sport and recreation facilities. Proposals are to be supported that:

- improve the quality and quantity of accessible open space, sport and recreation in the local area;
- provide innovative solutions to improving the network of existing open spaces, increase accessibility to green corridors, and enhance biodiversity
- improve access to open space for disabled people.

Policy EN11 – Quantity of Open Space, Sport and Recreation – This policy indicates that as opportunities arise, new open space, sport and recreation facilities will be created across Manchester.

Policy EN12 - Area priorities for Open Space, Sport and Recreation – This policy sets out the priorities for open space, sport and recreation in the City set out in Manchester's Strategic Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study and within the regeneration areas include the following:-

South area: enhance the quality of existing provision and using opportunities to address deficiencies.

Policy EN15 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Indicates that efforts are to be made to seek to maintain or maintain or enhance sites of biodiversity and geological value throughout the City. In this instance the applicants supporting ecology appraisal indicates that the application site supports priority species within the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan

In respect of policies EN10-EN12 and EN15 the proposal seeks planning permission for the use of an existing area of open space for use by the community with no operational development on the site proposed. The application documents indicate that the applicant proposes light touch conservation and management approaches to be used to contribute towards the enhancement of the site in terms of biodiversity.

As such the application proposals are considered to be in accordance with these adopted planning policies.

Policy EN18 – Contaminated Land and Ground Stability - The Council will give priority for the remediation of contaminated land to strategic locations as identified within the Core Strategy. Any proposal for development of contaminated land must be accompanied by a health risk assessment.

The application is accompanied by a Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Report which has been fully assessed. Consideration of the proposed use and ground contamination are considered within the issues section of this report below.

The Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (1995)

The Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester was adopted in 1995. However, it has now been largely replaced by the Manchester Core Strategy. There are some saved policies which are considered relevant and material and therefore have been given due weight in the consideration of this planning application. The relevant policies are as follows:

Saved UDP policy E3.4 The Council will create a network of safe and attractive major linear recreational open spaces by linking and making better use of river valleys, canals, disused railways and other appropriate areas of open space. Within these areas measures will be taken to:-

- a) achieve widespread environmental improvements;
- b) protect the natural environment;
- c) improve water quality;
- d) improve access for pedestrians, disabled people, cyclists and, where appropriate, horse riders;
- e) protect and enhance wildlife corridors

The Council will ensure that, in developing these recreational routes, adequate measures are taken to safeguard the privacy of nearby residential properties.

Whilst it is recognised that there are specific saved UDP policies to protect the line of Nico Ditch from the effects of harmful development (saved policies LL4 GO4, and RF4) these relate to specific parts of the Nico Ditch identified on the UDP proposals map in Longsight, Levenshulme, Gorton, Rusholme and Fallowfield. There are no corresponding specific policies covering Chorlton or the application site.

Saved UDP policy DC20.1 states that the Council will give particular careful consideration to development proposals which affect scheduled Ancient Monuments and sites of archaeological interests, to ensure their preservation in place. In particular:

- a. Applications for consent to alter scheduled Ancient Monuments or sites of archaeological interest or their settings should be accompanied by an evaluation and assessment of the implications of the proposal.
- b. The Council will have special regard to the desirability of securing the preservation of Ancient Monuments and other sites of archaeological interest and their setting in place. It will not permit development that, in its opinion, would adversely affect scheduled Ancient Monuments, or other sites of archaeological interests, and their settings, In exceptional cases where development is inevitable, the Council will look at the scope for combining preservation in place with limited investigation and recording.
- c. Where the preservation of scheduled Ancient Monuments and sites of archaeological interest in place is not appropriate, the Council will seek to gain full and proper recording of the site through early consultation between the applicant and approved archaeological organisation.

The supporting information submitted alongside this application sets out that Nico Ditch has been identified within the application site and that this forms a unique archaeological and landscape asset. This feature is not a scheduled ancient monument although it is acknowledged that there is archaeological interest in respect of the potential for remnants of the ditch to be present on the site.

Saved UDP policy DC22.1 deals with impacts on footpaths and states that in considering proposals, the Council will have regard to the effect on existing pedestrian routes and will not normally allow development which would result in unacceptable inconvenience to local pedestrian movement.

The application site does not contain any definitive public footpaths or public rights of way but does contain a number of paths and routes that cut across the site connecting north/south, routes around the site including through areas of vegetation and trees and with a number of other routes connecting into Longford Park. There is a short stretch of tarmac path from the southern Longford Road access it is presumed that this is related to buildings that were present in this part of the site until the early 2000s prior to their demolition. The application proposals would not alter or amend any of these existing routes.

Saved UDP policy DC26 indicates that the Council intends to use the development control process to reduce the impact of noise on people living and working in, or visiting, the City. It is noted that the Council accept, as an example, that the occasional use of outdoor facilities such as sports stadia for concerts can be acceptable in certain circumstances. Any such proposal will be considered in the light of consultation with local residents and others, and the practicability of appropriate conditions on any approval.

The proposals seek the change of use of land to form a community woodland and meadowland such a use could generate gatherings of people on the land that could potentially impact on neighbouring residential properties. Further consideration of this matter is set out within the issues section of this report.

National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF (August 2026)

The National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026) is a material consideration of critical importance in making decisions on development proposals. The NPPF sets out a number of national decision-making policies and these are set out as a material consideration to be read alongside the policies in adopted development plans. A summary of the matters within the NPPF relevant to consideration of this application are set out below.

The national decision-making policies are to be read as a whole with some indicating how much weight the government would expect a particular consideration to be given, including cases where it is appropriate to give substantial weight to certain benefits, and the limited circumstances in which it is expected that permission would be refused.

A series of thematic chapters are contained in the NPPF containing both plan-making policies and national decision-making policies so that the approach to particular topics can be seen in the round. The plan-making policies should not be used when making decisions on development proposals.

The NPPF sets out the purpose of the planning system which is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development by managing the use and development of land in the long-term public interest.

The 'objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (paragraph 16).

In order to achieve sustainable development, the planning system has three overarching objectives in providing for the homes, commercial development, facilities and infrastructure which society needs. These objectives are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across all three). These three objectives are:

- An economic objective - to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- A social objective - to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places; and with accessible community facilities, public service infrastructure and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- An environmental objective – to support efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy; and to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, and minimising waste and pollution.

The following specific areas and policies of the NPPF are considered to be particular relevance to the proposed development:

Section 3 (Decision making policies)

DM1 – Preparing development proposals

Proposals for major development are expected to:

- Be informed by early engagement with neighbours and the local community, the LPA, statutory consultees, infrastructure providers, registered providers of social housing and other relevant bodies where appropriate, and
- Be accompanied by a concise planning statement.

DM2 – Information requirements

Sets out the expected level and types of information to be submitted to support certain types of planning application and what local validation lists should look to include in addition to the national list.

DM3 – Determining development proposals

When considering proposals Local planning authorities are expected to:

- a) Work with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner, where necessary seeking solutions to problems arising from initial proposals;
- b) Take a proportionate approach to the consideration of the planning matters raised by the proposals, in a way that reflects their scale, complexity and potential impact;
- c) Take account of planning matters raised during any pre-application engagement, including any positive responses to this engagement, as well as representations on the proposals;
- d) Consult statutory or internal consultees only where it is necessary to do so. Decisions on development proposals should not be delayed in order to secure advice from a statutory or internal consultee beyond their statutory deadlines unless there is insufficient information to make the decision, there are public safety risks from proceeding without advice, or more detailed advice may enable an approval rather than a refusal;
- e) Consider whether otherwise unacceptable development proposals could be made acceptable through the use of planning conditions or planning obligations; and
- f) Not refuse applications for development which should clearly be approved, having regard to their accordance with the development plan, the policies in this Framework and any other material considerations.

DM4 - Emerging development plan proposals

When preparing and considering development proposals, relevant policies in emerging development plans may be given weight according to:

- a. The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- b. The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- c. The degree of compliance of the relevant policies in the emerging plan with the policies for plan-making in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging

plan to the policies in this Framework, the greater the weight that may be given to them).

DM6 - Use of planning conditions and obligations

This policy defines that planning conditions should only be attached to planning permissions where they are:

- a. Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- b. Relevant to the development and to planning considerations generally;
- c. Sufficiently precise to make them capable of being complied with and enforced; and
- d. Reasonable in all other respects.

Conditions should not be used to:

- a. Require payments of money; or
- b. Require that land is formally given up to another party (such as highways to the local highway authority); or
- c. Restrict national permitted development rights unless there is clear justification to do so.

Planning obligations should only be used where it is not possible to address potential unacceptable impacts through a planning condition.

Section 4 – Achieving sustainable development

S3: Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Sets out the basis for decisions on development proposals applying a presumption in favour of sustainable development for those within settlements and that development proposals that accord with both an up-to-date development plan and the decision-making policies in the Framework.

S4: Principle of development within settlements

Looks to ensure that development proposals within settlements are approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in the Framework.

Section 5 - Meeting the challenge of climate change

CC2: Mitigation of climate change

Seeks to ensure developments contribute to climate change mitigation and the transition to net zero

CC3: Adaptation to climate change

Development proposals are expected to take into account the current and potential impacts of climate change over the lifetime of the scheme, and to minimise vulnerability to these impacts.

Section 14 – Achieving well-designed places

DP3: Key principles for well-designed places

Development proposals should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings; such as through the arrangement of development plots and buildings, the use of materials and architectural features, and the restoration, reuse and integration of heritage assets.

Section 15 - Promoting sustainable transport

TR3: Locating development in sustainable locations

Development proposals which could generate a significant amount of movement, in the context of the area within which they would be situated, should be in locations that are sustainable.

Any significant adverse impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, should be mitigated to an acceptable degree using a vision-led approach.

Following response from consultees the application has been supported by a proportionate Transport Note and Outline Event Management Strategy prepared by the applicant. These have been fully assessed, and this issue is considered within the issues section of this report.

TR8: Public rights of way

This policy indicates that development proposals should protect and enhance the network of public rights of way, including through suitable diversions and take opportunities to: extend, link or improve the quality of existing routes where this enables improved access to green spaces and the countryside; provision of accessible, safe and convenient links to services and facilities; improved connections with public transport stops and interchanges.

Section 16 - Promoting healthy communities

The following national decision-making policies under this section of the NPPF are considered of particular relevance.

HC7: Development affecting existing recreational land and facilities

Development proposals should not result in the loss of existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, other formal and informal play space and allotments, unless:

a. An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or

- b. The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality, in a location which offers comparable or improved accessibility for the community it serves; or
- c. The development is for public service infrastructure, and the resulting loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and/or quality; or
- d. The development is for alternative open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

The proposals seek to use the land for community woodland and meadowland open space from its former formal use as playing fields. That former use is indicated as having been abandoned in 1996 after the current landowner moved the previous uses to different premises.

HC8: Development affecting Local Green Space

Development proposals for land which has been designated as Local Green Space should be determined in a manner consistent with the relevant national decision-making policies for land in the Green Belt, excluding provisions relating to grey belt and previously developed land.

The policy is not engaged, however, as the land is not designated as Local Green Space.

Section 17 - Pollution, public protection and security

P2: Ground conditions

Sites proposed for development should be suitable for their proposed use taking into account ground conditions, including any risks arising from land instability or contamination (whether due to natural hazards or current and former activities such as mining or fuel storage); and the extent to which any such risks can be mitigated, and the potential impacts on the natural environment arising from remediation.

Adequate site assessment information, prepared by a competent person, should be available to inform these considerations.

Where a site is affected by contamination or land stability issues, responsibility for securing a safe development rests with the developer and/or landowner.

P3: Living conditions and pollution

Development proposals should be appropriate for their location, taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, whether these effects are on or off-site; and whether this is as a result of the development itself or the product of preexisting conditions in its vicinity. In assessing the potential effects of pollution, consideration should be given to the potential sensitivity of the site, and its intended occupiers and users, as well as that of the environment and population in the surrounding area (including where certain groups could be particularly vulnerable to its effects, such as children and older people).

The proposals seek a change of use of the application site for community woodland and meadowland and the applicant has indicated that there would be events hosted on the land that could give rise to noise and impacts on nearby residential properties. As such further consideration of this matter is set out within the issues section of this report.

Section 18 - Managing flood risk and coastal change

F4: Assessing flood risk for decision-making

In order to inform the assessment of flood risk and, where relevant, appropriate mitigation, a site-specific flood risk assessment should accompany all development proposals in Flood Zones 2, 3a, and 3b.

F6: Development in areas at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea

In areas falling within flood zones 2, 3a, or 3b development proposals should be refused if the use is incompatible with the risk from river or sea flooding; and in certain other circumstances, in addition to satisfying the sequential test where applicable, development will only be appropriate where an 'exception test' is satisfied. The exception test involves demonstrating that the development would:

- i. Provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh the flood risk;
- ii. Be safe for its anticipated lifetime; and
- iii. Not increase flood risk elsewhere and, where possible, reduce flood risk overall.

The application of the exception test should be informed by a site-specific flood risk assessment.

F7: Ensuring development is safe from flooding

Development proposals should not present a risk from flooding to potential occupiers, users, or visitors, and should not increase flood risk elsewhere.

Where development is proposed in a location known to be at risk from any form of flooding, now or in the future, it should be refused unless:

- a. Within the site, the most vulnerable development is located in areas of lowest flood risk, unless there are overriding reasons which justify a different arrangement;
- b. The development will be safe throughout its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users;
- c. Any residual risk can be safely managed, and safe access and escape routes are included where appropriate, as part of an agreed emergency plan;
- d. The development is appropriately flood resistant and resilient such that, in the event of a flood, it could be quickly brought back into use without significant refurbishment; and
- e. It can be demonstrated that flood risk will not be increased elsewhere

In this instance the application has been considered to be accompanied by a proportionate flood risk assessment by virtue of part of the site being identified within Flood Zone 2 which relates to risk of river flooding. A sequential test is not required for this change of use as identified within policy F5 and consequently the exception test is also unnecessary under policy F6. However, consideration is required to policy F7 outlined above and this is considered elsewhere in this report.

Section 19 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

N2: Improving the natural environment

Expects development proposals to contribute positively to the natural environment, and support nature's recovery

N6: Areas of particular importance for biodiversity and geodiversity

This policy sets out how to deal with development proposals affecting a range of international, national and local sites of importance. In respect of sites of local importance i.e ones designated as a Local Nature Reserve or identified as a local wildlife site, local geological site or equivalent in the development plan, proposals should only be supported if: There would not be a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the site; or the benefits of development in the location proposed clearly outweigh the likely impact on the features which make the site valuable for nature conservation.

Irrespective of a site's status in nature conservation terms, development proposals which would entail the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

Section 20 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

HE4: Securing the conservation of heritage assets

Heritage assets, as an irreplaceable resource, should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Development proposals which would affect the significance of heritage assets, including any contribution made by their setting should:

- a. Maintain or secure a use consistent with their conservation, taking into account the importance of maintaining the assets, the positive contribution they can make to sustainable communities including local economies, and the positive contribution they can make to local character and distinctiveness; and
- b. Avoid (or if that is not possible, minimise) harm to the significance of heritage assets, and instead conserve this significance.

HE5: Assessing effects on heritage assets

Where a development proposal involves, or has the potential to involve, a heritage asset with archaeological interest, an appropriate desk-based assessment should be undertaken and, where necessary, a field evaluation. These should be used to help

understand the asset's significance and the potential effect of the proposal on this, which should inform the design, mitigation and implementation of the development.

HE7: Decisions on non-designated heritage assets

Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the benefits of the proposal and a balanced judgement made, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.

Where a development proposal would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, it should only be supported where the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefits of the proposal, having regard to the scale of the harm or loss and the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.

HE9: Conservation areas

Development proposals within or affecting the significance of conservation areas should:

- a. Retain and conserve buildings and other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area where possible; and
- b. Consider the area's special architectural or historic interest (as identified as part of the designation of the conservation area) in the design of development.

The NPPF states that development plan policies (or parts of those policies) which are materially inconsistent with national decision-making policies in this Framework should be given very limited weight.

The application submission indicates that the Nico Ditch has been identified within the site and forms a unique archaeological and landscape asset. The applicant's information states that the ditch is understood as a non-designated heritage asset. Further consideration of this matter is set out within the issues section of this report.

Other Material Considerations

Ryebank Road Development Framework June 2019 (Manchester Metropolitan University) – At its meeting in July 2018 the Executive Committee of the Council approved the final version of the development framework for the application site prepared by the landowner and that the framework be a material consideration in the Council's decision making as local planning authority.

The final version of the development framework was subsequently approved and published in June 2019. The framework identified the application site for delivering a housing development to meet a range of requirements of differing tenures, sizes and values, including affordable housing. As indicated earlier in this report the application site is subject of another planning application with the landowner as joint applicant for a residential scheme for the site.

Whilst the development framework is capable of being a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for the residential development of the site the current proposals do not seek any operational development on the site but to permit the use of the site as a Community woodland and meadowland. The current application proposal would not prevent other applications being brought forward for residential development of the site which would be considered against adopted planning policies and other material considerations including the development framework.

Manchester Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2030 – The strategy sets a number of key objectives and priorities to deliver the overall ambition to improve places for nature in Manchester. This includes: managing and understanding biodiversity through the development of a Nature Recovery Network Strategy; involving people and new audiences with nature and the natural environment in the City; and, embedding the biodiversity strategy and local nature recovery network objectives into the Council's policies to protect and enhance nature.

A Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater Manchester – Adopted by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, as the responsible authority to co-produce the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), it sets out a long-term 10 year vision to work towards a resilient network for nature across Greater Manchester by connecting and enhancing wild spaces so that people and nature can thrive. It is a strategy that is intended to guide the most effective actions for nature recovery and set out the best locations for nature recovery across the city-region.

The requirement for the preparation and adoption of the LNRS is derived from the Environment Act 2021 which provides a Biodiversity Duty on public authorities. The LNRS is intended to help inform public authorities in Greater Manchester on how to meet this legal duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity. In planning terms, the LNRS is indicated as being a guide or evidence base to inform decision making.

The LNRS identifies: Core local nature sites which contain nationally designated sites, locally designated sites and irreplaceable habitats; and, nature recovery opportunity areas (areas identified to enhance, restore or create different types of habitats) to expand and better connect the core local nature sites.

Draft Manchester Local Plan – The draft Local Plan has reached the regulation 19 consultation stage and was published for consultation for a 6 week period from 17th August to 28th September 2026. The policies within the draft Local Plan are capable of being a material consideration within the decision-making process the weight that can be attributed to relevant policies is dependent on a number of matters including the extent to which there are unresolved objections for example the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given.

In this instance the relevant elements of the draft Local Plan are as follows:

Objectives – (Paragraph 4.3)

- Protect and enhance the quality and function of both the natural and built environment of the city.

- Use existing assets to define and improve the character and sense of place within neighbourhoods.

Policy SP1 Spatial Principles – Indicates that the City's network of green and blue infrastructure including open spaces will provide all residents with good access to recreation opportunities. The River Valleys, (the Irk, Medlock and Mersey) canals and City Parks are particularly important, and access to these resources will be improved.

Policy SP2 Development Principles – Development across the city is expected to amongst other things: making a positive contribution to the health, safety and wellbeing of residents; take account of the local character and history, including the surrounding built and natural environment.

Policy EN1 Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure – Proposals are expected to: Maintain and enhance existing green and blue infrastructure in terms of its quality, quantity, accessibility and multifunctionality; Seek to maximise the benefits that high quality green and blue infrastructure can bring to the local community and beyond, such as improving health, increasing biodiversity, enabling nature recovery and connecting people with nature, and adapting to climate change and reducing flood risk; incorporate links to existing green and blue infrastructure to improve the accessibility of Manchester's open spaces and increase the potential for wildlife corridors; ensure that improvements to green and blue infrastructure are consistent with other relevant Local Plan policies; in accordance with the latest Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and with the priorities and actions set out in the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (GM LNRS).

Policy EN3 – Trees and Woodlands – Proposals are expected to provide additional and/or improve the management of existing trees.

Policy EN4 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity – Developments are expected to expand, where appropriate, and enhance existing habitats.

Policy EN6 – Urban Green Factor – All proposals are required to incorporate provision of urban greening and include high quality greening indicated within a submission.

Policy EN9 – Flood Risk – Indicates that all developments should minimise surface water run off and where required by Planning Practice Guidance site specific flood risk assessments will be required.

Policy EN10 – Proposals relating to contaminated land should be accompanied by relevant risk assessments and surveys.

Policy SI 1 Protection of Existing Open Space, Sport and Recreation Land and Facilities - The Council will seek to retain and improve existing open spaces and indoor and outdoor sport and recreational land and/or facilities.

The development of existing open space, sport or recreational land or facilities for uses other than sport, open space or recreation will only be permitted where:

- The development is for alternative sports, play or other recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use; or
- It has been clearly demonstrated, through an up-to-date open space or sports needs assessment, that the site is surplus to requirements, and is not capable of helping to meet a deficit in the provision of any other type of open space, sport or recreation use or facility in the local area; or
- Replacement open space, sport or recreation provision of at least the equivalent quantity and quality, including community benefit and management level, is made in a suitable location having regard to accessibility to its catchment population; or
- The site is within a key location identified for alternative purposes in the development plan, and the overall development will deliver an equivalent replacement or net improvement in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility, in the City's open space, sport or recreation resources.

Policy SI 2 Provision of New Open Space, Sport and Recreation Land and Facilities - Proposed new and/or enhanced open space, sport and recreation land and facilities, both indoor and outdoor, will be supported in principle where they are evidenced by an appropriate, up-to-date needs assessment, and subject to consideration of any impact on neighbouring uses.

Major residential developments may be expected to contribute, through financial contributions, to new or improved open space, sports or recreation areas or facilities, subject to viability and in line with Policy DC 1 Developer Contributions.

Consideration will be given to the extent to which development would increase the demand for such areas or facilities and whether there is a recognised shortage in the locality.

Policy SI 3 Local Green Space – Identifies and designated 6 sites as Local Green Spaces to be managed in accordance with Green Belt policy within the NPPF and PfE.

Policy D4 – Heritage - Non-designated heritage assets including local buildings and structures of merit, archaeology, and open spaces will be conserved. When assessing proposals affecting NDHAs a balanced judgement will be made regarding the scale of any harm or loss of the asset and the public benefit of the development.

Policy DM1 – All development must have regard to amongst other things: Effects on amenity, including privacy, light, noise, vibration, air quality, odours, litter, vermin, birds, road safety and traffic generation; Community safety and crime prevention; Effects relating to biodiversity, including habitat and species protection, landscape, archaeological or built heritage; Green Infrastructure including open space, both public and private.

Planning Practice Guidance

A summary of government guidance that is relevant to the consideration of this application proposal is set out below:

Land Affected by Contamination – This PPG makes it clear that failing to deal adequately with contamination can cause harm to human health, property and the wider environment.

To ensure a site is suitable for its new use and to prevent unacceptable risk from pollution, the implications of contamination for development should be considered through the planning process to the extent that it is not addressed by other regimes.

The PPG indicates that where there is a reason to believe contamination could be an issue, applicants are required to provide proportionate but sufficient site investigation information (a risk assessment) prepared by a competent person to determine the existence or otherwise of contamination, its nature and extent, the risks it may pose and to whom/what (the 'receptors') so that these risks can be assessed and satisfactorily reduced to an acceptable level.

To help secure necessary mitigation, the PPG indicates that planning permission can be granted subject to conditions and/or planning obligations.

In this instance the site does contain contaminated land and the applicant has provided a desk top study to accompany this application to support the proposed change of use of the land. This information has been fully assessed and this matter is considered in more detail within the issues section of this report.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) – This PPG sets out the statutory framework for considering BNG which is a way of creating and improving biodiversity by requiring development to have a positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity.

Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, subject to some exceptions, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met ("the biodiversity gain condition"). This objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat. This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits. In this instance the applicant has indicated that the proposals are exempt from the statutory requirements through the de minimis exemption as the proposals do not impact or change any existing habitats on site. The application proposals are therefore not required to deliver a 10% increase in biodiversity.

Historic Environment – This PPG notes that the NPPF identifies two categories of non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest:

1) Those that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments and are therefore considered subject to the same policies as those for designated heritage assets. They are of 3 types:

- those that have yet to be formally assessed for designation.
- those that have been assessed as being nationally important and therefore, capable of designation, but which the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport has exercised his/her discretion not to designate.

-those that are incapable of being designated by virtue of being outside the scope of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 because of their physical nature.

2) Other non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest. By comparison this is a much larger category of lesser heritage significance, although still subject to the conservation objective. On occasion the understanding of a site may change following assessment and evaluation prior to a planning decision and move it from this category to the first.

Decision-making regarding such assets requires a proportionate response by local planning authorities. Where an initial assessment indicates that the site on which development is proposed includes or has potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, applicants should be required to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

In this instance the applicant has submitted a Heritage Research document to accompany this application, and this matter is considered in more detail within the issues section of this report.

Natural Environment – This PPG sets out the approach to green infrastructure, its importance and how it is to be considered in planning decisions. It acknowledges that green infrastructure will require sustainable management and maintenance if it is to provide benefits and services in the long term. Arrangements for funding need to be identified as early as possible, and factored into the design and implementation, balancing the costs with the benefits. Local community engagement can assist with management and tailoring provision to local needs.

When planning for biodiversity, local planning authorities must have regard to Local Nature Recovery Strategies, as these are prepared, because they will establish local priorities for biodiversity and other environmental benefits and identify locations where biodiversity enhancement would be particularly beneficial.

Noise – States noise needs to be considered when development may create additional noise, or would be sensitive to the prevailing acoustic environment (including any anticipated changes to that environment from activities that are permitted but not yet commenced). The PPG notes that it is important to look at noise in the context of the wider characteristics of a development proposal, its likely users and its surroundings, as these can have an important effect on whether noise is likely to pose a concern.

Open space, sports and recreation facilities – Open space is required to be taken into account for proposals that may affect existing areas of open space. The application site whilst private owned and with restricted access is considered to form open space. The PPG indicates that such spaces can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to green infrastructure, as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development, and an important component in the achievement of sustainable development.

Issues

Principle – The principle of the change of use of former University playing fields into a Community woodland and meadowland is considered to be acceptable in principle. The application proposals do not seek to undertake any operational development in order to facilitate the change of use. Whilst the principle of the use is considered to be acceptable further consideration is required of a number of matters and these are set out below.

Open Space – The NPPF defines open space as being “all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity. As such the application site falls within this definition.

Given the proposals seek to use the land as a formal area of open space for as a community woodland and meadowland and associated activities associated with such a use it is considered that this is consistent with its current land definition within NPPF. As there is no operational development proposed to facilitate the change of use there would be no alteration to the level or amount of open space available save for elements where members of the public would be excluded in the interests of public health as set out within the ground contamination section of this report below.

As such the proposals are consistent with national planning policy and the adopted planning policies for the City.

Local Green Space – The application site is not designated as local green space in the adopted Core Strategy and is not identified within the emerging Local Plan that is currently being consulted on prior to submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination.

This issue and lack of designation of the site as local green space within the emerging local plan has been raised in representations made on this application and the other planning application for a residential development of the site. As such the emerging policies and designations of local green space within the draft local plan have no weight in the determination of this application.

Ground contamination – The application proposals are accompanied by a Phase 1 Geo-Environmental report which has been fully assessed.

Concerns have been raised with the quality of the report prepared to support the application and that this does not meet the guidance published by the Environment Agency or British Standards. As set out within the consultee section of this report no objections or concerns have been raised from consultees in respect of the quality or level of submitted information.

The submitted Phase 1 report identifies the potential for ground contamination of the site due to historic uses and activities that have taken place at the site. Users of the site are not anticipated to come into contact with contaminated soils or groundwater and therefore risks are indicated as being very low. The report does acknowledge that there are some localised areas where potentially contaminated materials,

including asbestos appear to have been brought to the surface by burrowing mammals. It is recommended that arrangements are in place for a suitably qualified licensed contractor to be appointed to regularly visit the site and remove any potentially hazardous materials from the ground surface in areas accessible to the public.

Following the request for further information relating to this matter the applicant has identified further measures in relation to ground contamination within an amended operational statement, this commits the applicant to the following:

- The use of dead hedges (an upright structure of woody cuttings woven between vertical stakes) as a natural barrier to clearly define wildlife only spaces where these are necessary;
- Site monitoring to be undertaken on a three-monthly basis by a suitably qualified consultant to assess any change in the presence of contamination at the site's surface; and
- On-site volunteers to conduct walkovers both before and after any organised walk or other activity, reporting any potential findings to consultants.

The submitted information has been assessed and is considered to be acceptable. It is necessary, given the identified ground contamination and risk associated with activities of on-site wildlife, that the measures identified by the applicant are secured by an appropriately worded condition whilst the site is in use and that this includes a reporting mechanism to the Council.

Residential Amenity – The application site is located adjacent to residential properties to the north and east. Further residential properties are located on Longford Road and Ryebank Road in close proximity to the site. The application proposals would lead to wider use of the application site for local residents and visitors to the area as such there is the potential for the use to generate activity associated with this use throughout the day and evening period. No objections or concerns have been raised by consultees in respect of the proposed use of the site in relation to impacts on residential amenity.

The applicant has prepared an operational statement; this sets out the intended management and maintenance of the site through a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Where organised events and activities are planned these would be, where appropriate, organised through an online booking system in order to manage and organise these activities. The applicant indicates that it is not the intention for large scale gatherings, but where these are planned then temporary events licenses would be sought from the Council to allow proper consideration and management of the event. The statement also sets out that they would work with the Council and Police to manage and address potential anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping.

The application site lies adjacent to Longford Park a significant public park in Trafford that provides access to a variety of open spaces and recreational facilities. It is also adjacent to outside play space associated with St Johns RC Primary School. These uses already attract public access and/or outdoor activities and associated comings and goings and noise adjacent existing residential properties. As such the introduction of an additional area of community accessed open space is not

considered to give rise to significant impacts on residential amenity in terms of noise and activity that would differ significantly to the existing uses in the immediate area. The proposals impact in terms of highways is considered in more detail below but the proposal is expected, given the site's catchment area, to be accessed by the local community predominantly by active travel modes rather than private motor car.

The preparation of the Operational Statement is welcomed and would allow active management of the site to reduce the potential for misuse of the site that could give rise to complaints from adjacent residents and the wider community. It is considered necessary that the measures outlined in the Operation Statement are formalised for the proposed use of the site and an appropriately worded condition is proposed in this instance.

Visual Amenity – As set out throughout this report the applicant proposes no operational development, buildings or other built facilities or features. As such the site would appear from public vantage points much the same as it does currently. The main entrance to the site within Manchester from Longford Road to the south does not present a particularly attractive frontage to this street comprising a range of historic fences and gates.

Given its prominence it is considered that the entrance from Longford Road would benefit from improvements and enhancements given this would be the main entrance to the site from within Manchester. As such it is proposed to attach a condition for proposals for improvements to the entrance and boundary treatments to the Longford Road entrance to be submitted for approval.



Existing entrance arrangement to the site from Longford Road

Highways and Transport – Following discussions with the applicant a Transport Note and Outline Event Management Strategy was submitted to accompany the planning application. This note and strategy has been fully assessed.

The submitted information outlines the general size of the majority of events to be held at the site to be around 30 attendees with the potential for between 2-3 larger events per year accommodating up to 200 attendees. Events would be managed to avoid clashes with other regular local activities such as school drop/off and pick up, Stretford Parkrun, events at Stretford Stadium and sporting fixtures or events at Old Trafford football and cricket stadiums. Active travel modes (by foot and cycle) are to be actively encouraged by the applicant together with public transport use and car-sharing for events. The submitted information indicates that regular travel mode surveys are to be undertaken and an Event Management Strategy is to be implemented other measures such as advertising on social media to include travel advice are also proposed, and the use of traffic marshals. These measures are acceptable.

The proposals do not include for provision of any additional cycle parking beyond the existing Sheffield stand on Longford Road entrance (see photo above for existing provision) and the existing cycle parking within Longford Park.

Existing car parks including that at Longford Car Park and on street parking on Longford Road are identified in the submitted Transport Note as being available with no additional proposed car parking as part of the proposals. The submitted information indicates that attendees at events arriving by car would in the first instance be directed to the public car park at Longford Park within walking distance from the site.

As set out within the response of consultees following the receipt of further information from the applicant the proposals do not give rise to concerns in respect of impacts on highway safety or capacity of the highway network. In order to ensure that the site is accessed by sustainable modes of transport and that parking of vehicles takes place in the manner set out within the submitted information it is considered that a formalised final Events Management Strategy be subject of an appropriately worded condition for the submission and approval prior to the first use of the site.

Heritage and archaeology – The application site is not located within a conservation area and does not contain any designated heritage or archaeological assets. The site lies adjacent to the boundary with the Longford Park Conservation Area to the west which is within the Trafford Council administrative area.

The application proposals do not include construction or installation of any buildings or structures or alterations to trees or hedges that form a boundary to the Conservation Area and are therefore not considered to give rise to impacts on the Longford Park Conservation Area. No response has been received from Trafford Council raising any concerns with the application proposals or impacts on the Conservation Area.

The applicant has provided a 'Heritage Research' statement relating to the site and its relationship to Nico Ditch. The statement sets out research into the feature which is protected as a Scheduled Monument in two sections elsewhere along its route at Denton Golf Club in Tameside and Platt Fields in Manchester.

Nico Ditch is identified within the research statement as a curvilinear earthwork running for approximately 5km from east to west across the southern part of the City of Manchester from the Audenshaw/Denton border in the east to Platt Fields in the west. The research indicates that the ditch is believed to be Early Medieval in origin and where it survives as an earthwork it comprises a U-shaped ditch 2m to 3m wide and 1.5m to 2m deep, with a low bank on its northern side. The research statement indicates that although not absolutely dated, it has been inferred to be of Pre-Norman Conquest in origin.

The site is considered to be of archaeological interest as it is traversed by a large negative earthwork that may represent the remains of an ancient boundary or defensive feature referred to as Nico Ditch. The submitted research statement is considered to be an acceptable supporting statement for the application proposals. The statement indicates that in order to confirm its interpretation of the feature intrusive archaeological investigation of the feature would be required.

The application proposals do not include any operational development nor any ground breaking works and as such any below ground remains of the feature of archaeological interest would be unaffected and preserved in-situ and as such would not give rise to any direct impacts on the ditch. In respect of archaeology matters the proposals are considered to be acceptable.

Ecology and Trees – The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) that sets out the findings of the habitat and protected species survey and data search undertaken to inform the appraisal and makes a series of recommendations to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the site. The application is also supported by a Tree Survey and Arboricultural Method Statement which confirms that no works to trees on the site are proposed.

The site is described as containing a mosaic of woodland, hedgerow, grassland and scrub habitats. The site is identified through the PEAs data search as containing 80 species of bird, 10 terrestrial mammals, two amphibians, 90 flowering plants, 59 insects, 26 trees and shrubs, 12 fungi, one moss and one lichen. The site is identified as contributing significantly to the biodiversity of the area including supporting a number of protected species (bats, hedgehogs, badgers and breeding birds) along with rare native black poplar tree and ecologically significant hedgerow.

The PEA sets out that objectives for the management of the site should include: conservation of biodiversity, community engagement, preservation of treeline boundary, sustainable land management (best practices for habitat restoration and long-term maintenance without use of harmful chemicals), climate resilience (through woodland conservation and habitat management initiatives), and mammal conservation. The PEA also recommended ongoing monitoring and evaluation of on-site biodiversity and habitats. The application proposals Operational Statement indicates that the recommendations contained within the PEA would be pursued

together with other measures to enhance biodiversity on the site including the installation of bat boxes.

As the proposals would not introduce built form on the site in the form of operational development it is considered that the application proposals would not give rise to unacceptable impacts on ecology or trees within the site. The active use of the site as a community open space could lead to an intensification of the use of the land particularly by residents, dog walkers etc and visitors to the area. Such activity could disturb and impact on the ecology and habitats identified on the site and the introduction of the measures to manage the site as set out within the supporting documents including the Operational statement would assist to manage and monitor such impacts.

The application proposals would not impact on site habitat and as a result are identified by the applicant as being exempt from the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain condition.

The proposals are considered to be acceptable and accord with the principles of adopted national and local planning policies and legislation relating to biodiversity and ecology.

Flood Risk – Part of the application site is located within flood zone 2 (at risk from river flooding) as such the application proposals are supported by a proportionate Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) which has been fully assessed. It is noted that the submitted information incorrectly identifies that the flood risk is as a result of surface water flooding but the Environment Agency flood maps indicate the risk of flood relates to river water risk. The area at risk of flooding is generally located across the northern half of the site.

The submitted FRA identifies the flood risk at the site and sets out that the proposed use of the site falls within the definition of 'water compatible developments within the NPPF. The introduction of more informal use by local residents and visitors of the site resulting from the application proposals would change the way the site is used and accessed. As a result, the FRA indicates that mitigation measures could be used to ensure safe use of the site from a flood risk perspective including:

- use of social media to communicate flood risk warnings and any flooding that might exist;
- temporarily removing access to certain parts of the site in the event of flood.

These measures are considered proportionate to ensure that the use can be managed safely.

The proposals are not considered to increase the likelihood or severity of flooding within the site or elsewhere and therefore are in accordance with national and local planning policies.

Accessibility – As the proposals do not include for any operational development, access to the site would be via existing entrances and paths. As indicated above there is a requirement for improvement to the boundary treatment to the Longford

Road access to the site and this would be anticipated to include appropriate access for all user groups on to the site. There are some limited paved paths and areas of hardstanding accessed from Longford Road although these do not extend throughout the site as they relate to the previous use of the site and buildings that were present towards the southern end of the application site. Beyond these paths routes generally follow the form of the land and are of a natural state which would restrict access to some user groups.

Other matters – Whilst the proposals have been provided with significant support through the notification process a number of concerns and objections to the proposal have also been raised, these have largely been considered within the sections of the report above but there are others not explicitly considered and these are now set and considered.

Delivery of new housing – The site is subject of an adopted development framework for the redevelopment of the site for housing and is also identified in the Councils Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. These documents do not set statutory designations, and all applications must be determined in accordance with the adopted Plans in place as directed by section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance the granting of planning permission for the proposed use is considered to accord with adopted planning policies in place and the NPPF. The granting of planning permission would not restrict consideration of other proposals for the site which would also need to be determined in accordance with adopted planning policies, the NPPF and other material considerations.

Accuracy of Application information – The application site location plan identifies the site in which the proposals relate to. This reflects the ownership boundary of the site and omits areas that are owned by other third parties such as the electrical substation in the south-western corner of the site. This location plan corresponds with other indicative drawings provided by the applicant. It is noted that some supporting documents provided by the applicant such as the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and the Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Report have a slightly differing site boundary identified within them. However, these minor variations around third party land not included within the site edge red application site are not considered to invalidate the conclusions or recommendations of these documents given the scope of the application proposals.

Conclusion

The proposal conforms to the development plan taken as a whole as directed by section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and there are no material considerations which would indicate otherwise.

The use of the site for open space for the community in the manner set out within the applicant's submission is considered to be acceptable.

Consideration has been given to the impact of proposals on the local area including nearby residential properties. The applicant has adequately demonstrated that there would be no unduly harmful impacts on noise, ecology and trees, traffic generation,

flood risk, heritage and archaeology, or ground contaminated. Where harm does arise, it can be appropriately mitigated and would not amount to a reason to refuse this planning application.

A number of conditions have been recommended by consultees and others following assessment of the proposals, these are necessary to make the proposals acceptable and to mitigate identified impacts as set out within this report.

The applicant is not the owner of the application site but the correct information and notifications on the landowner have been undertaken and submitted alongside these proposals. The granting of permission in itself does not override the need for the consent of the landowner in order to facilitate the proposed use or to lawfully access it for the use proposed together with the management of the site in the way in which has been laid out within the applicant's submission.

Other Legislative Requirements Equality Act 2010

Section 149 (Public Sector Equality Duty) of the Equality Act 2010 requires due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act and; Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The Equality Duty does not impose a legal requirement to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. Compliance with the Equality Duty involves consciously thinking about the aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making.

Human Rights Act 1998 considerations – This application needs to be considered against the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. Under Article 6, the applicants (and those third parties, including local residents, who have made representations) have the right to a fair hearing and to this end the Committee must give full consideration to their comments.

Protocol 1 Article 1, and Article 8 where appropriate, confer(s) a right of respect for a person's home, other land and business assets. In taking account of all material considerations, including Council policy as set out in the Core Strategy and saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan, the Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing has concluded that some rights conferred by these articles on the applicant(s)/objector(s)/resident(s) and other occupiers and owners of nearby land that might be affected may be interfered with but that that interference is in accordance with the law and justified by being in the public interest and on the basis of the planning merits of the development proposal. She believes that any restriction on these rights posed by the of the application is proportionate to the wider benefits of and that such a decision falls within the margin of discretion afforded to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

Recommendation APPROVE

Article 35 Declaration

The application has been determined in a positive and proactive manner. Issues were raised with the applicant following consultee responses and, in this instance,

further information was provided by the applicant for consideration and appropriately worded conditions are proposed.

Conditions

1) The development hereby approved must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason - Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2) The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents:

Location plan and Existing Site Plan reference 25-007_DWG_001 A

Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Report October 2025 reference 25 2778 Rev C
prepared by Sladen Associates

Flood Risk Assessment June 2025 prepared by Urban Imprint reference: 25-007-rpt_003_Flood_Risk_Assessment_June25

Operational Statement for proposed use of former playing fields and existing open space as a community woodland and meadowland at Ryebank Fields, Chorlton-Cum-Hardy, Manchester M21 9WW as received by the City Council as local planning authority on the 11th November 2025

Outline Event Management Strategy received by the City Council as local planning authority on the 2nd February 2026

Reason - To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the submitted plans and documents pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy.

3) Prior to the first use of the site hereby approved, details of the type, materials, finishes, position, and timescales for the installation of the boundary treatments and access arrangements into the site from Longford Road shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason – In order to ensure a satisfactory appearance in the interests of visual amenity and adequate access arrangements into the site in accordance with policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

4) Prior to the first use of the site hereby approved, the following shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the City Council as local planning authority:

i) Identification of the areas of the site in which public access is to be restricted together with the method statement used to inform the identification of these restricted access areas;

ii) Details of the type, heights, locations, long-term maintenance arrangements and timescales for the installation of appropriate barriers to define areas of restricted public access identified through point i) of this condition;

- iii) The arrangements and details of suitably qualified expert(s) employed to undertake checks of the site every 3 months for potential hazardous materials at the site;
- iv) The method statement for undertaking checks of the site as identified under point iii) of this condition together with details of the way in which the discovery or reporting of any hazardous materials found at the site are to be managed, treated and disposed of; and
- v) The reporting arrangements to the City Council as local planning authority of the findings of the site checks undertaken under point iii) of this condition.

The use of the site shall be subsequently carried out in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason - To ensure that the presence of, or the potential for any contaminated land/materials is detected at the site and appropriate remedial action is taken in the interests of public safety, pursuant to policies DM1 and EN18 of the Core Strategy.

5) In the event of reporting the findings of the site checks under condition 4) of this decision or at any time after the approved use commences, ground contamination, groundwater contamination and/or ground gas, not previously identified, are found to be present on the site, then the use of the site shall cease until, a report outlining what measures, if any, are required to remediate the land is submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with these details.

Reason - To ensure that the presence of or the potential for any contaminated land and/or groundwater is detected and appropriate remedial action is taken in the interests of public safety, pursuant to policies DM1 and EN18 of the Core Strategy.

6) The use of the site for events shall be carried out in accordance with the measures set out within the approved Outline Event Management Strategy detailed in condition 2 of this decision.

Reason – In the interests of highway and pedestrian safety and residential amenity pursuant to policy DM1 of the Core Strategy.

7) The site shall be operated in accordance with the flood risk mitigation measures set out within paragraph 3.4 of the approved Flood Risk Assessment reference: 25-007-rpt_003_Flood_Risk_Assessment_June25.

Reason - In order to manage the risk of flooding in the interests of public safety pursuant to national policies within the NPPF and NPPG and policy EN14 of the Core Strategy and policy JP-S4 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan.

8) The use of the site hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Operational Statement as set out within condition 2 of this decision notice.

Reason - In the interests of residential amenity, public safety and the ongoing maintenance and management of the site pursuant to policies DM1, EN9, EN15 and EN18 of the Core Strategy and policies JP-G7, JP-G8 of Places for Everyone.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

The documents referred to in the course of this report are either contained in the file(s) relating to application ref: 143413/FO/2025 held by planning or are City Council planning policies, the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester, national planning guidance documents, or relevant decisions on other applications or appeals, copies of which are held by the Planning Division.

The following residents, businesses and other third parties in the area were consulted/notified on the application:

**Highway Services
Environmental Health
Neighbourhood Team Leader (Arboriculture)
MCC Flood Risk Management
Greater Manchester Police
United Utilities Water PLC
Environment Agency
Greater Manchester Ecology Unit
Wildlife Trust
Chorlton Civic Society
Electricity Northwest
Cadent Gas Ltd
Friends Of Longford Park
Caroline Hilton
Trafford Council
Friends Of Ryebank Fields
Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service**

A map showing the neighbours notified of the application is attached at the end of the report.

Relevant Contact Officer :	Robert Griffin
Telephone number :	0161 234 4527
Email :	robert.griffin@manchester.gov.uk



Appendix 1 – Site Photographs



View looking east along Longford Road application sites southern boundary to the left



View north of site from Longford Road entrance



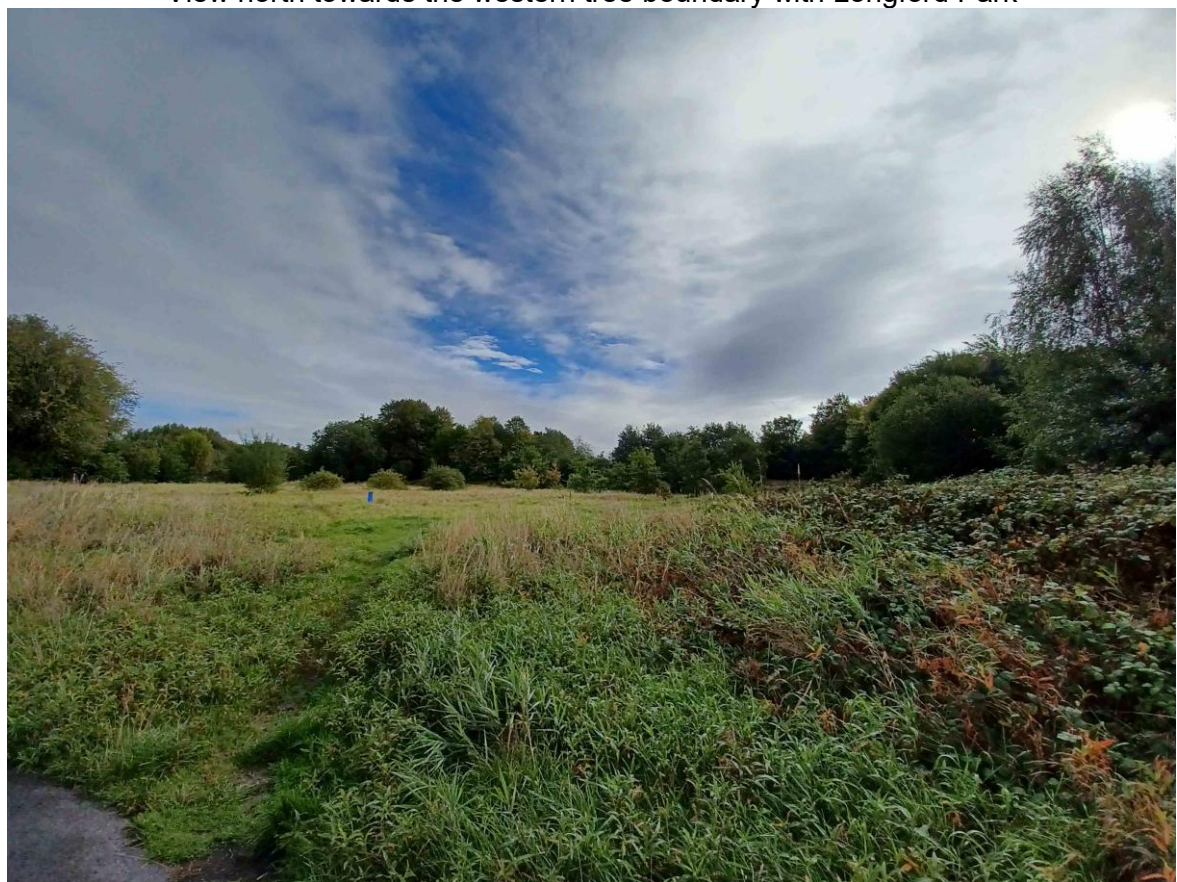
View of area of hardstanding in the southern end of the site



View toward northern end of Ryebank Road and Longford Park running track



View north towards the western tree boundary with Longford Park



View north-east towards central area of woodland



Path within the site



View looking south along paved path towards Longford Road entrance



View from within the site



View east towards the rear of properties on Peveril Crescent in the distance



View from within the site looking north



View from within the site looking north



View west towards western tree boundary with Longford Park



View north-east towards rear of properties on Copley Road



View east towards properties on Copley Road



View south east across the site



View east along path within the northern wooded area



View north towards properties on Rye Bank Road, Trafford



View north towards properties on Rye Bank Road, Trafford



View east along footpath, northern boundary of the site to the right



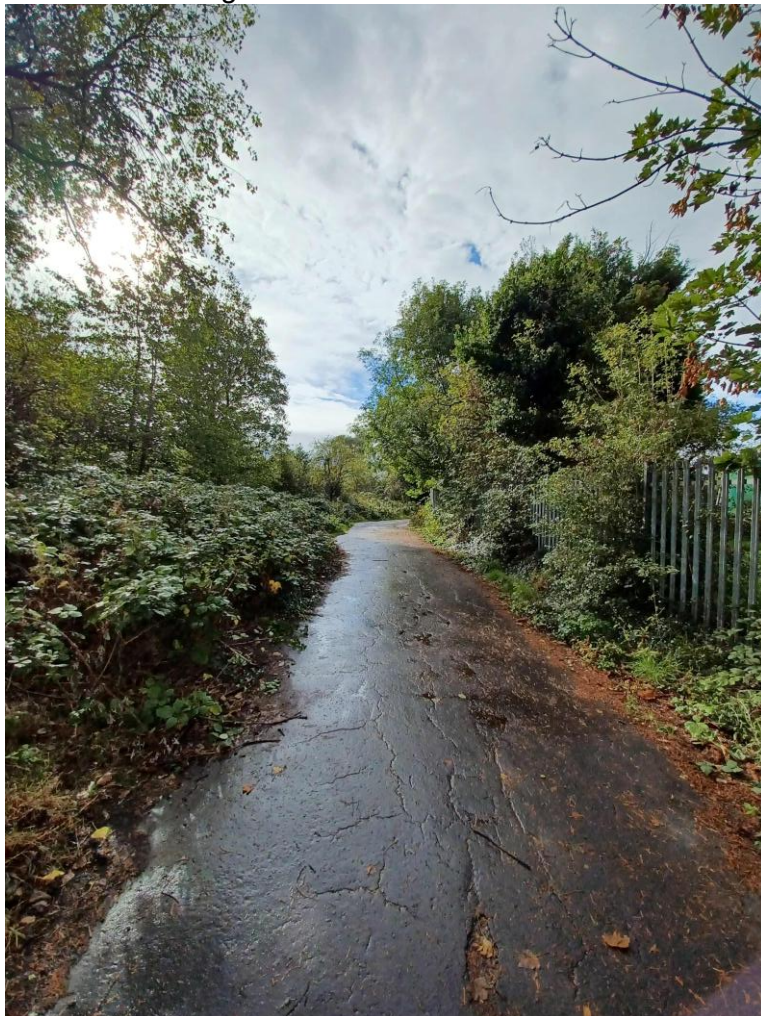
View east across Longford Park towards the sites western treed boundary



View east across Longford Park towards the sites western treed boundary



View southeast across Longford Park towards the sites western treed boundary



View of footpath from Longford Park site to the left and Longford Park area of running track to the right



View north along the sites western boundary with Longford Park to the left