



### **Friends of Ryebank Fields' statement on the environmental impact of the proposed plans for Ryebank Fields:**

We note that the five questions in the consultation are carefully engineered to produce the response the developers want, two of them refer to general principles rather than this specific development and none of them address the all-important issue: **Do you think Ryebank Fields should be protected as a rewilded green space?**

Many people in the local community care deeply about the climate emergency and nature and would in general support low-carbon housing with community facilities - if it was on brownfield land. However, **Ryebank Fields is classified by Manchester City Council as greenfield land** and it is clearly **impossible to create an environmentally friendly development by destroying a rewilded natural space that is home to a rich variety of species**. What appears in the developers' plans to be the provision of eco-friendly facilities in fact entails wholesale destruction of the most important ecological aspects of the fields. Residents should also be given the opportunity to answer: **Do you think housing in Manchester should only be built on brownfield (previously developed / not greenfield) land?**

Some aspects of the plans that the community may want to consider:

- The “**retained parkland**” marked on the plans is mostly in the wooded area that borders Longford Park so seemingly **none of the rare and precious grassland would remain**.
- The plans show provision for a handful of **bee / bug hotels**. While bee hotels may be useful as an additional resource in eg a paved yard, **they cannot possibly begin to compensate for the loss of two large fields full of wildflowers** that currently provide essential food and shelter for pollinators and insects.
- The plans boast “exciting new habitats - green roofs...and community greens to support local biodiversity”. The **amount of space allocated to green roofs and community greens** (presumably grass lawns, which have very little wildlife value) is **absolutely tiny in comparison to the amount of wild grassland, mix of old and new trees and scrub that provide essential habitat** for a wide variety of species at the moment. These ‘community greens’ are likely to become a muddy mess with the amount of footfall they would get, and end up being paved over.
- The plans state that habitats / wildlife will be surveyed to ensure “**no adverse impact**” on **wildlife** from the development. How can this possibly be true when **the majority of the habitat used by the wildlife resident on the fields will be destroyed?**
- The plans state that the development will provide “**ample space to walk, run, cycle and enjoy**”. In reality, **the space in which people are able to do this currently will almost all be built on**, so the community’s ability to do all those things on the fields will be severely reduced.
- **1:7 tree-planting policy** across the whole area - there is no space to do this with large mature trees so presumably these will be **dwarf trees** which are recommended in housing developments, with **much smaller carbon absorption potential and much lower biodiversity value**.

- “Community hub that can be used by residents and the wider community for learning, exercise, enjoyment” - **local residents already use the fields as a community hub, and we have a much wider space in which to do it and the wild environment to learn from and enjoy.** The potential for exercise in the community hub building and with one boardwalk and a couple of community greens is greatly reduced from the opportunities for exercise that currently exist. **The opportunities that exist currently on the fields for free, adventurous play will be non-existent.**

- The plans show **footpaths and cycle paths** which “connect into the local active travel network and create safe routes to local shops, services, schools and public transport” - **these ‘safe routes’ don’t exist** so this is pure greenwashing. In fact the development would create a **large amount of extra traffic on the surrounding roads**, making walking and cycling journeys to schools and other local amenities **significantly more dangerous.**

- The plans specify Passivhaus buildings to **reduce carbon emissions** - these are environmentally friendly when built on brownfield land but on greenfield land like Ryebank Fields **the carbon cost of removing hundreds of mature trees and valuable grassland habitat would be huge.**

- The **“School growing wall”** features edible planting and bee hotels. However, St John’s School already has vegetable beds and could choose to incorporate bee and bug hotels in their grounds without the development taking place. The provision of these **can’t possibly compensate the school’s children for the loss of wild green space on their doorsteps, the increase in air pollution and dangerous traffic or the risks of toxic gases and chemicals being dug up next to the school** - in addition to almost two years of remediation and building work next to their playground.

- Creating the **site for the electric car club** and some of the housing would involve the **destruction of the aspen grove - the only copse of aspen in Manchester.**

- The proposals for the **Nico Ditch** are unclear, but would seemingly involve the **removal of an important wildlife corridor**, filled with dense scrub and two ancient Elder trees, which connects the woodland on the Western boundary to St John’s natural woodland play area and the gardens beyond. The planned footpath above it also cuts through the north south wildlife corridor which will **impact more sensitive species** who need continuous cover and minimal disturbance to survive.

- **Rye Bank Road Community Garden** would have a road driven through it. The developers have offered to ‘move it’ into the centre of their development - completely disregarding the **spirit of the garden being created by the community, for the community.**