

## **RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET – 20 MARCH 2023**

### **QUESTION A**

**Mr Dean Richards to ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lowe:**

“The Supplementary Planning Document which was approved for Rugby South West contains provision for, as laid out by ‘Natural England’ and the ‘Forestry Commission’ in its standing advice for ancient woodlands, a minimum buffer zone of 15 metres around Cawston Spinney. The buffer, widely reported at 15 metres only, has caused an amount of consternation locally with the local council criticised for approving a buffer zone of 15 metres. Having studied this matter in detail I would like to seek clarity on this issue. It would appear from the recommendations included that 15 metres is an absolute minimum and will likely be larger. The ‘Natural England’ and ‘Forestry Commission’ standing advice to which you refer in the SPD outlines the criteria which would lead to a larger buffer zone being required. It states: ‘Larger buffer zones are more likely to be needed if the surrounding area is: 1. Less densely wooded 2. Close to residential areas 3. Steeply sloped.’

It is clear that Cawston Spinney meets criteria 1 and 2 having no further woodland around it and with plans to surround it with additional housing. With this in mind can the council clarify how it plans to assess the level of buffer zone required in future planning applications and can the council also confirm that it agrees with the assessment that a buffer zone of more than 15m will likely be required.”

**Councillor Lowe, Leader of the Council, to reply as follows:**

“Every planning application is determined on its own merits depending on the individual circumstances of the site. Each application received on South West Rugby will be subjected to consultation with statutory consultees and residents and these views will be taken into account in the determination of the planning application.

The Supplementary Planning Document follows this approach and allows for flexibility of the size of the buffer depending on the individual circumstances of the site. To date only one outline planning application for residential has been approved on the main allocation for South West Rugby which does not include the Ashlawn Road site. Planning Permission for this site was issued in December 2022. The application included a Landscape Strategy Plan which requires that all built development will be at least 30 metres from Cawston Spinney and 50-150 metres from Fox Covert. Natural England was consulted on this application and raised no objection.”