

**CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL**

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	Planning		
<b>Report from</b>	Andrew Thomson - Thomson Planning		
<b>MEETING DATE AND TIME</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> June 2022	7.00 pm	Bridestones suite
<b>Agenda item Report Title</b>	<b>7 Neighbourhood Plan</b>		
<b>Background</b>	<p>Since we prepared the last version of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan there have been changes to National and Local Plan Policy as well as changes in planning legislation. We have liaised with Cheshire East and the summary of the Vision, Objectives and policies have been agreed with Cheshire East as the way forward considering all the changes referred to above.</p>		
<b>Topics in the Revised Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate Change and the Environment</li> <li>• Town Centre</li> <li>• Local Economy</li> <li>• Transport and Infrastructure</li> <li>• Health, Education and Well-Being</li> <li>• Heritage</li> <li>• <b>Design*</b></li> <li>• Housing</li> </ul> <p style="color: red;">*We have applied to Locality for free technical advice on Design Coding and are currently in discussion with their appointed consultants AECOM. This work will run concurrently with the consultation process on the Plan.</p>		
<b>Vision</b>	<p>The Vision for Congleton aims to reflect the residents aims and aspirations for the future of the town and seeks to identify the role that the Neighbourhood Plan should play in achieving this.</p> <p>The Vision for Congleton is set out below;</p> <p>‘The Congleton Neighbourhood Plan should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• take account of climate change.</li> <li>• protect the Town’s green and blue corridors.</li> <li>• ensure that the Town thrives economically and socially as an historic market town and a recognised service centre.</li> <li>• protect and enhance the Town’s heritage, character, variety of buildings and natural environment.</li> <li>• support and deliver the facilities and infrastructure the Town needs to grow and prosper.</li> <li>• maintain Congleton’s strong sense of community as it grows allowing it to remain an attractive, healthy and safe place to live work and visit.</li> </ul>		

**Key Issues for the Neighbourhood Plan**

**Climate Change**

- Develop a framework to tackle the growing impacts of climate change on the Town and surrounding area.
- Work with the local community and Cheshire East Council to tackle climate change.

**Protecting and enhancing the Environment**

- Congleton is a special place with a variety of green spaces as well as access into the surrounding countryside. All new development should protect the current green infrastructure and where possible create new green spaces for the enjoyment of local residents and for the role of green networks in climate change adaption.
- The existing green and blue infrastructure should be linked by easy and safe links through and across the plan area.
- All new development should be carbon neutral or provide compensation for unavoidable emissions and encouraged to incorporate renewable energy technology. Retrofitting of older buildings will be encouraged where feasible and practical.
- Natural floodplains and watercourses should be restored when opportunities arise, with no further development on floodplains

**Providing for an ageing population**

- Encourage the provision of a variety of accommodation across the plan area to meets the needs of the current and future population including health care and leisure facilities.

**Stimulating local employment**

- Support existing businesses and new opportunities for local employment including homeworking in the plan area

**Transport and movement**

- To promote sustainable travel for all residents by provision of new and improved footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths.

**Housing**

- Make sure that all new housing development is sustainable and meets the needs of existing and future residents.
- Ensure that new housing, commercial buildings, streets and spaces are of a high quality, sustainable and reflect the established character of the area as set out in the Design Code.

<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<p>To help realise this Vision the following objectives have been drafted for consultation. These objectives will be supported by the neighbourhood plan and the policies set out in the SADPD together with future actions of the Town Council which are set out towards the end of this document.</p> <p><b>Objective 1 To promote climate change and support sustainable development across the plan area.</b></p> <p>This will be achieved through policy CC1</p> <p><b>Objective 2: To conserve and enhance the quality and appearance of the built environment and its unique and valuable historic and architectural assets in order to protect the distinctive local character and biodiversity of the area.</b></p> <p>This will be achieved through the following Policies E1 – E7</p> <p><b>Objective 3: To ensure that any new housing developments meet the identified needs of Congleton and are in keeping with the character of the area, and do not negatively affect the important local landscape and environment</b></p> <p>This objective will be achieved by policies in the SADPD and policies H1 – H2</p> <p><b>Objective 4: To reduce the harmful impact of traffic through the town including a reduction in air pollution, noise and vibration and improve highway safety and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.</b></p> <p>This will be achieved through policies T1-T4</p> <p><b>Objective 5: To strengthen and support entrepreneurial economic activity, in the town and to encourage responsible appropriate and sustainable recreation and tourism</b></p> <p>This will be achieved through the following policy LE1</p> <p><b>Objective 6: To maintain and encourage community services and facilities</b></p> <p>This will be achieved through the following policy C1</p> <p><b>Objective 7: To preserve the architectural and historic character of the town</b></p> <p>This will be achieved through the following policies HE1-HE3 and the Design Code prepared by AECOM in conjunction with this Neighbourhood Plan</p> <p><b>Objective 8: To promote a range of retail, leisure, business, mixed-use opportunities and services within the town centre as well as improving pedestrian movement to meet the needs of residents and visitors.</b></p> <p>This will be achieved through policies TC1-TC6</p>
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**Objective 9: To ensure that Congleton’s green and open spaces together with the landscape setting of the town are protected, retained and enhanced.**

This will be achieved through policies E1 – E8

**Objective 10: To work with the relevant authorities to prepare a strategy to create a healthy town by reducing illness and improving the quality of life.**

This will be achieved by policies HEW1 – HEW3

## Policies

### Climate Change

#### **CC1 Climate Change**

Small scale, community led renewable and low carbon energy generation will be supported where they:

- Support reduced reliance on fossil fuels in the neighbourhood plan area
- Promote the efficient use of natural resources, the re-use and recycling of resources and the production and consumption of renewable energy
- Do not significantly harm local amenity, landscape or the natural environment.

### Environment & Green Infrastructure

#### **E1 Connections to the Countryside**

Development proposals, excluding householder applications, wherever possible and appropriate, must ensure that visual and physical links to the countryside are maintained and improved through sensitively designed footpaths, open spaces and landscape features,

New development should seek to reinforce connectivity to the town and countryside by:

- Finding opportunities to create new routes that successfully integrate the site into the urban form, footpaths and cycleways of Congleton; and
- Directly connect to existing public rights of way and green infrastructure corridors that link to the wider countryside

#### **E2 Green and Blue Corridors (see map)**

Wherever possible all development, must contribute to improvement of the network of ‘green and blue corridors as shown on plan X below.

This should be achieved through the incorporation and integration of landscape and design features within new developments and contributions towards enhancements and improvements elsewhere, including but not limited to:

- Provision of new open spaces within the site in line with policies HEW2 and E3 in this plan;
- New paths and bridleways which reflect the local character in line with policy T5 Walking in Congleton and T6 cycling in Congleton;
- Native planting within boundary treatments, verges, avenues of trees and front gardens which safeguard and improve wildlife permeability;
- Integration with walking and cycling routes in line with Policies T5 and T6;
- The use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to create new blue corridors and to benefit existing blue corridors in Congleton.

### **E3 Habitat Protection and Biodiversity**

Planning applications will be supported where they can demonstrate that they will not adversely affect designated wildlife habitats in Congleton (see plans 3 & 4 and any non-designated sites where this is relevant. All sites should seek opportunities to improve biodiversity.

Proposals should avoid habitat loss, mitigate impact on habitats where loss cannot be avoided and compensate for loss of habitat where mitigation cannot be achieved.

Where compensation is necessary, any off-site provision of habitat should first be focussed on opportunities within the neighbourhood plan area, unless a compelling case can be demonstrated that a significantly greater biodiversity net gain can be achieved elsewhere.

Development proposals should not create barriers to the movement of wildlife along wildlife corridors within the plan area. The major wildlife corridors are identified on the plan 3. Planning applications that enhance the connection between corridors and wildlife sites will be regarded as positive.

In areas of High Habitat Distinctiveness as identified on Map X bullet point 6 of the Local Plan Strategy Policy SE3 applies.

Development proposals adjacent to areas of High Habitat Distinctiveness should demonstrate that an appropriate 'buffer zone' is applied to protect these ecological assets.

In areas identified as being of Medium Habitat Distinctiveness (see plan 3) development will only be considered acceptable where, following a thorough ecological assessment, any harm is avoided, mitigated, or at last resort, compensated for.

#### **Biodiversity in large schemes**

Major developments should demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity through the use of appropriate evaluation methodologies and strategies. Compensation will be sought in accordance with Cheshire East councils Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document. (see appendix X).

Where offsite contributions are required to satisfy the requirements of Biodiversity Net Gain, such contributions should be used to improve local sites of habitat distinctiveness unless a compelling case can be made that demonstrates a greater biodiversity net gain can be achieved through investment in sites beyond the neighbourhood plan area.

#### **E4 Local Green Space**

The Neighbourhood Plan designates sites within Congleton as Local Green Spaces (LGS). These are identified in the list below and shown on plan 5.

(A list will be inserted in the plan with a justification of each space in accordance with the guidance in the NPPF.)

#### **List of Local Green Spaces**

LGS ID	Name	Category of Green Space
1.	Astbury Mere Country Park	Park
2.	Back Lane Playing Fields	Sports Facility
3.	Bankyfields Crescent	Neighbourhood Green
4.	Beech Close	Neighbourhood Green
5.	Biddulph Valley Way	Green Corridor
6.	Blackshaw Close	Neighbourhood Green
7.	Chestnut Drive/Laburnum Close	Neighbourhood Green
8.	Cloud View Play Area, Bromley Farm	Neighbourhood Green
9.	Congleton Cricket Ground West Street	Sports Facility
10.	Congleton Moss	SSSI with public access
11.	Congleton Park	Community Garden
12.	Congleton Tennis Courts	Sports Facility
13.	Dane Valley	Green/Blue Corridor*
14.	Derwent Drive	Neighbourhood Green
15.	Forge Wood	Ancient Woodland*
16.	Galloway Green Play Area	Neighbourhood Green
17.	Hankinson Field	Sports Facility
18.	Hillfield	Neighbourhood Green
19.	Hornby Drive Play Area	Neighbourhood Green
20.	Howey Lane Cemetery	Neighbourhood Green
21.	Howey Lane/Priesty Fields Allotments	Neighbourhood Green
22.	Howty Brook Valley/Lamberts Lane	Neighbourhood Green*
23.	Isis Close	Neighbourhood Green
24.	Kensington Play Area Buglawton	Neighbourhood Green
25.	Lady Warburton's Walk	Neighbourhood Green*
26.	Land off Bridgewater Close	Neighbourhood Green
27.	Lawton Street/High street Community Garden	Community Garden
28.	Lower Heath Play Area	Neighbourhood Green
29.	Mardale Close	Neighbourhood Green
30.	Margaret's Place/Antrobus Street Gardens	Community Garden
31.	Maskery Place	Neighbourhood Green
32.	Mill Pool Brook House Lane	Neighbourhood Green
33.	Moody Street Gardens	Community Gardens
34.	Mossley Cricket Ground	Sports Facility
35.	Severn Close	Neighbourhood Green
36.	St Johns Road/Scout Hut	Sports Facility
37.	Tamar Close	Neighbourhood Green
38.	Tamar Close/Isis Close	Neighbourhood Green
39.	Thames Close	Neighbourhood Green
40.	Timbersbrook Valley	Neighbourhood Green*
41.	West Road Play Area	Neighbourhood Green
42.	Windsor Place	Neighbourhood Green

## **E5 Macclesfield Canal**

Development proposals which are adjacent to or adjoin the Macclesfield Canal will be supported provided they address the following matters:

- Are of a high quality of design which enhances the character of the waterway and integrates the canal into the development in a way that creates a sustainable waterway neighbourhood where waterway and waterside community's area combined and the waterway is treated as an area of usable space with an appropriate focus for public activity
- Integrates the waterway, towpath and canal environment into the public realm both in terms of design and management of the development
- Improves access to, along and from the waterway for all users (where appropriate) and enhances and/or improves the environmental quality and green infrastructure of the waterway corridor area, providing a net gain for biodiversity
- Optimisation of views to and from the waterway to generate and improve natural surveillance of the water space through the siting, configuration and orientation of buildings, recognising that appropriate boundary treatment and access issues may differ between the towpath and the offside of the canal
- Avoidance of development that will have an adverse impact on the canal corridor by virtue of noise, odour or adverse visual impact
- Conserve and enhance wherever possible the distinct industrial and architectural heritage of the canal and its associated assets, and
- Maximise opportunities for reducing carbon emissions and to build in resilience, in particular by investigating the potential for use of the waterway in heating/cooling any new development.

## **Policy E6 Landscape Character**

New development should respect the landscape character of Congleton as described in the Congleton Landscape Character Assessment (Part 1 ) and the Character Area Profiles (Part2) March 2020 (see Appendix 4). New development should respond positively to the local landscape through appropriate scale, massing, features, landscaping and design of the development.

## **Policy E7 Allotments**

Where appropriate, and to reflect the aims of Policy GEN1 in the SADPD, where there is a shortage of local facilities in the plan area, such as allotments and/or a community orchard, land should be set aside to meet the expressed local need.

## **Town Centre**

### **TC1 Town Centre Streets and Spaces**

Where planning permission is required, proposals which seek to improve the pedestrian environment within the town centre will be supported. Pedestrian priority environments may be appropriate in some town centre locations in line with the proposals set out in the Town Centre Strategy Aspiration.

Public realm proposals for the town centre should:

- Positively contribute to the historic character of the town centre, its streets and buildings;
- Make use of materials, surfacing and street furniture that enhances the design and character of the town centre
- Be designed to ensure that the space can be used by all ages and abilities; and
- Fully consider durability, long term maintenance and management in the design process.

Schemes which demonstrate careful consideration of bin and servicing areas will be strongly supported. Developments which provide new bin and servicing areas should ensure that delivery times do not have a negative impact on the amenity of neighbouring and other town centre uses.

Schemes which propose environmental improvements to existing bin stores and servicing yards through screening or similar will be supported.

Regard should also be had to the Design Code for Congleton.

### **TC2 Local Needs shopping outside the Town Centre**

New and extended small-scale retail development to meet daily convenience shopping needs will be supported in the local centres of West Heath, Lower Heath, High Town and Buglawton shopping areas.

### **TC3 Active Frontages within the Town Centre**

Within the town centre retail uses will be supported in ground level units. Where it is sufficiently demonstrated through a formal assessment that use of a site or building is no longer viable or required for its current commercial or retail use the neighbourhood plan supports the re-use of these sites for a mix of market, affordable and elderly persons' housing in accordance with the housing policies in this plan and the local housing needs of Congleton.

Outside these frontages, residential uses at ground floor level will be supported where they can demonstrate enhancement of the vitality of the town centre, and if they do not threaten the overall retail identity and viability of the area.

### **TC4 Market Area within the Town Centre**

Proposals for the redevelopment of the existing market area in the town centre will be supported if provision is made to accommodate a range of appropriate town centre uses, including the retention or suitable relocation of the market space subject to the general requirements of this plan, the proposed town centre strategy and provision for the storage of the market stalls.

### **TC5 Employment in the Town Centre**

New employment in the town centre (Use Class E) will be supported subject to;

- Provision of good quality design and layout, highway access, car parking and wheelie bin storage
- Respect for the amenity and privacy of nearby residential properties
- The provision of good quality hard and soft landscaping
- Respect for the character, appearance and setting of any listed building and the conservation area

### **TC6 Leisure Developments in the Town Centre**

Support will be given for proposals which enhance existing leisure facilities in the town, particularly in High Street, Swan Bank, Mill Street, West Street and Lawton Street.

## **Local Economy**

### **LE1 New Business**

Proposals which extend existing or promote new employment opportunities within the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Area will be supported provided they do not impact upon residential amenity or the historic character of the surrounding area.

## **Transport and Movement**

### **T1 Parking**

Where appropriate, all new developments (including householder extensions where additional bedrooms are created) will be expected to provide parking (including cycle parking) to meet development needs in line with guidance set out within Appendix C of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and Design Guide. Garages provided as part of any new development shall be able to accommodate a standard family car and be a minimum of 2.7m x 5.5m to allow for access and egress by the driver when the car is in the garage. Off-site parking on roads adjacent to any developments, including visitor parking, should be avoided where possible.

### **T2 Walking in Congleton.**

Developments which include new footpaths, streets or spaces or improved or new links to the wider public footpath network should ensure that these are designed to cater for a wide range of ages and abilities, including but not limited to wheelchair users, parents with small children and pushchairs, and those with visual or hearing impairments. All new routes should be designed to be well overlooked to ensure they feel safe. Developments which enhance a footpath, public right of way or permissive route to ensure access for a wider range of ages and abilities will be supported.

Where appropriate The Town Council would seek contributions from eligible developments to deliver this policy.

### **T3 Cycling in Congleton**

All new development (excluding householder planning applications) will be required to demonstrate how it will seek to support cycling within the town for all ages and abilities. New development should provide appropriate cycling infrastructure and cycle parking and, where relevant, showering and changing facilities for staff. The design of all streets and spaces within developments should be cycle friendly and provide connections to shops, services and facilities as well as to existing cycle routes within the town and across the plan area.

### **T4 Fibre Optic Cabling**

The development of high-speed broadband and/or any subsequent future technology including 5G across the plan area will be encouraged and supported.

## **Health, Education and Well-Being**

### **HEW1 Community Health.**

Development proposals which provide additional health infrastructure and facilities, including but not limited to the following, will be supported;

- Improvements and diversification of existing NHS premises
- Improved provision/capacity for GPs
- Dentists

Development proposals leading to any net loss of existing healthcare facilities or service provision in the Town, even during a temporary period, will be resisted and any such proposal will require the submission of a Health Impact Assessment for any applications related to the closure/change of use of any health care services unless they result in new and improved facilities in the same location or elsewhere within the Town.

Congleton War Memorial Hospital will be protected for the expansion of existing health care facilities, or for the enhancement of healthcare provision for the wider catchment area. The reuse of this site for non-healthcare uses will only be acceptable where it is part of a scheme to improve the quality and quantity of healthcare facilities in Congleton commensurate with the town's growth it can be

demonstrated that it will form part of a wider strategy for improving the quality and quantity of healthcare facilities within Congleton.

All new healthcare facilities should be accessible by all ages and abilities by walking cycling and public transport in accordance with the sustainability objectives set by the Town Council and other policies in this plan.

### **HEW2 Provide for the sports and recreational needs of the local community**

All new developments will be encouraged to make contributions existing and future outdoor sports facilities within the Town in accordance with the Congleton sports Trust and Cheshire East Council's sporting strategy to include;

- All new and enhanced facilities must be inclusive (i.e. suitable for the elderly, residents with disabilities and those with mental health issues) and be accompanied by the appropriate level of car parking as well as being located on sites which are ideally accessible by public transport, walking and cycling
- The increased use of school facilities for multi-use by the local community will be encouraged including the provision of additional facilities at Eaton Bank Academy and Congleton High School
- The development of additional playing fields and support facilities such as car parks and changing rooms will be encouraged
- Existing playing field land will be safeguarded and preserved from development proposals unless alternative enhanced facilities of equivalent or greater scale and quality are provided in an appropriate location within the Town

### **HEW3 Cultural and Community Places**

When proposing new community buildings or contributing to provision elsewhere in the plan area the criteria set out below should be considered in addition to maintaining residential amenity:

- **Variety:** by promoting a diversity of community facilities located in different neighbourhoods across the Town.
- **Accessibility:** by ensuring all facilities are accessible by all ages and abilities by walking, cycling and public transport in accordance with policies T4, T5 and T6 of this plan
- **Suitability:** the provision of a community building will support the role of the area as a local centre

Planning applications which deliver new community facilities will be looked upon favourably, particularly schemes which deliver the following:

- Community Halls and meeting places
- Youth Community Facilities
- Music Venues
- Education
- Places of Worship

Where appropriate all proposed developments must supply sufficient car parking in accordance with policy T1 of this plan.

## Heritage

### **HE1 Landmarks, Views, Vistas and Gateways**

All new development should, where relevant, demonstrate how it protects and enhances key landmarks, views, vistas and gateways as indicated within the Congleton Character Assessment through meeting the following criteria:

- Views and vistas as identified should be protected from inappropriate development and landscape planting.
- The closing of views, excessive scale or mass at the edges of these views and planting of inappropriate species is to be avoided.
- Development which uses planting and buildings to frame key views will be looked on favourably.
- The loss or inappropriate alteration of landmark structures, as identified within the Character assessment, will be strongly resisted. Applicants must demonstrate how they have considered the local significance of such structures and seek to protect and enhance them.

### **HE2 Conservation Areas**

Planning applications within the Town's Conservation Areas must demonstrate that they aim to protect and enhance the defining characteristics of these areas, subject to other policies of the development plan.

All new development within the Town's Conservation Areas should comply with the following design principles where relevant:

- New development should respect its context in terms of scale, height and massing
- Facades should normally conform to the original building line
- Materials should blend with or compliment the materials used commonly in the Town; local brick and stone, Welsh Slate or clay tiles. (check)
- Roofs will normally be pitched
- Doors and windows should be made from timber and painted.

Extensions and major alterations to existing buildings within the Town's Conservation Areas should:

- Achieve a high standard of design
- Respect the height, bulk and general form of the original building
- Be secondary in character to the original building
- Roofs will normally be pitched and covered in Welsh Slate or clay tiles
- Chimneys should be provided where appropriate
- Details of matching materials must be specified
- External joinery details should match existing.

### **HE3 Re-use of Historic Buildings**

Planning applications which propose the re-use of historic buildings (designated and non-designated) will be supported where they contribute to their long-term use and safeguard the significance of the heritage asset for the public benefit and meet the following criteria:

- That the external alterations are minimal and do not significantly alter the appearance of the building
- The internal fabric of the building should be preserved where possible
- High quality materials, fixtures and fittings will be used
- The setting around the historic building is respected and preserved wherever possible through the use of a carefully considered hard and soft landscape scheme.

They conform to the guidance set out within the Conservation area character assessment, the Cheshire East Design Guide and Policy SE7 of the Local Plan.

## **Housing**

### **H1 Previously Developed and Infill Development.**

Planning applications for new residential development on previously developed land within the urban area of the town (including the redevelopment of large plots) which deliver the types of housing mix set out in SADPD Policy HOU1 will be supported where they are able to meet the following relevant criteria:

- Ensuring that the proposed scheme has a plot ratio, density, scale and height which is commensurate with the surrounding townscape
- The preservation of all mature vegetation, including trees, hedgerows and, where appropriate, woody shrubs, especially where these are part of the street scene or are part of a visually prominent boundary
- Providing appropriate on-site car parking (in accordance with policy T2) and servicing, including bin storage and refuse collection, which does not dominate the street scene

The construction of infill properties as part of side gardens will be supported where the new property is of a similar scale, mass, and design to the existing dwelling or is of exceptional and design quality. It should avoid the appearance of 'terracing' to adjacent properties unless this is part of the local character. The infill site should have a dedicated separate vehicle access point which provides appropriate parking in accordance with policy T1.

### **H2 Residential Extensions and Conversions**

#### Extensions and Sub-Divisions

Planning applications, including householder planning applications out with the scope of permitted development, which propose the extension or subdivision of an existing residential property will be supported where they can demonstrate that they meet the following criteria:

- Any extension or alteration remains subservient to the original dwelling when visible from roads and public rights of way
- Any extension or alteration reflects the local vernacular in terms of materials used in both built form and the landscape
- Appropriate parking and servicing, including cycle parking and bin storage, is provided (or retained) and maintains clear and appropriate boundaries which do not dominate the street scene
- That the development does not reduce the availability of single storey accommodation (bungalows) through the adding of an additional storey(s).

### **Conversions**

Where planning permission is required for the conversion of a non-residential building to residential use, this will be supported where it meets the following criteria:

- The development does not adversely affect the surrounding townscape or landscape character and makes careful use of the materials and consideration of the character of the proposed buildings and landscape design
- Any extension or alteration to the building is in proportion to the original building and respects local townscape and landscape patterns, including but not limited to boundary features and building lines
- Appropriate parking and servicing is delivered, in accordance with other development plan policies, which do not dominate the street scene

**Please note that design in the plan area will now be covered by the proposed Design Code**

<b>Proposal</b>	To approve, with any agreed amendments, the proposed Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Policies.
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