



Planning in the South East

Berkshire. The Royal Borough has approved plans to relocate Oldfield Primary School into the green belt, though the final decision will rest with Eric Pickles [BBC](#). The borough has also released a list of 23 potential development sites in the green belt, which it says are needed to provide 12,627 households before 2030. The council currently lacks a five year land supply. It will consult on its preferred options for the local plan in January [L](#) [LG](#). Holyport Residents Association is challenging the plans [C](#). Eric Pickles has rejected appeals for retrospective planning permission for five gypsy and traveller pitches at Old Windsor, saying the unmet need for traveller sites does not outweigh the substantial harm they are causing to the green belt. The site must now be cleared and reinstated [C](#). A Berkshire fruit grower has failed in the appeal court to overturn a tree preservation order covering a 100-metre row of trees. It is the latest of several planning battles over the fruit farm. The owner said: "Rich people have a mission to destroy us" [Gr](#) [C](#).

Buckinghamshire. The planning inquiry into Pinewood has concluded [BFP](#) [BFP](#) [BFP](#) [BFP](#) [C](#) [T](#). Another inquiry into three housing schemes totalling 3,000 homes on the outskirts of Aylesbury has also finished [BFP](#). Plans for 2,450 greenfield homes near Bierton, north east of Aylesbury, have been given outline planning permission [BFP](#) [BFP](#). More than 430 homes have been approved at Daws Hill, Wycombe, a former RAF site [BFP](#).

Hampshire. Telegraph journalist Jake Wallis Simons said: "The threat to Winchester's green space should be a wake-up call for us all." Campaigners say the green lungs of the city are under threat by an "inept, short-sighted and blundering" council [C](#). Yapton village has consulted on its draft neighbourhood plan. It aims to encourage small-scale residential developments that are sympathetic to their surroundings and protect existing green spaces [C](#).

Surrey. A teenage campaigner has told Guildford council that the green belt is not theirs to give away. She said: "It seems to me that this very attractive countryside... is being treated as if it's a commodity. It's not" [GS](#). CPRE Surrey has described the Guildford Local Plan Issues and Options report as "flawed". It said: "The plan over-emphasizes housing above other community priorities such as infrastructure needs, and its proposals are in direct conflict with national and local policy on protection of the Green Belt" [RE](#). A petition, signed by 1,149 residents and calling for protection of the green belt has been handed to Guildford council [GS](#). The Wildlife Aid Foundation voiced its "grave concerns" over Mole Valley council's plans to release green-belt land for housing development [L](#).

South Downs National Park. After pleas from MP Norman Baker, the park planning committee rejected plans for a Premier Inn in Lewes on design grounds, against their officers' advice [SE](#). Controversial plans for a boarding school for inner city children at Stedham have been thrown out by the park's planning committee [MAP](#) [C](#).

Sussex. Lewes council is consulting on locations for housing outside the national park. Half the 1,450 homes it needs to build by 2030 will be in Newhaven [SE](#) [LG](#). The Linfield Preservation Society is objecting to the draft neighbourhood plan for the area, which it says contains "a dangerous acceptance of further green-field development" [C](#). Hassocks parish council is the latest to begin neighbourhood planning [WSG](#). Herstmonceux is consulting on its neighbourhood plan. It plans for 100 homes, with a focus on first time buyers and elderly people downsizing. It is proposing a Community Right to Build Order to permit a housing development by a new Herstmonceux Community Land Trust. Closes 24 January [SE](#) [C](#) [LG](#).

Brighton & Hove city council has agreed to review the housing strategy in its City Plan after a planning inspector said its proposal to find sites for 11,300 new homes in the period to 2030. The inspector wants a figure close to 20,000 homes, with more of them delivered early in the plan period. She said the council must consider sites on the urban fringe and redeveloping employment land and threw doubt on the council's plans to designate a number of sites on the urban fringes as Local Green Space [LG](#) [P](#).

Oxfordshire. Yarnton Nurseries in the green belt north of Oxford, is pursuing plans for twelve homes on its car park [OT](#). The planned height of The Magnet science centre adjacent to Oxford castle mound has been reduced after opposition from heritage groups [AJ](#).

Port Meadow, Oxford

Report. The report into the Port Meadow planning scandal was first leaked, then published. It clears the city council of malpractice, saying the council fulfilled its statutory duties. The report concludes that: "inter-related individual decisions, assumptions and judgements made at each stage of the planning process... resulted in inadequate consultation on the proposals; and a less detailed assessment of the proposals than there could have been." It said consultation over the student flats had failed to reach some of those most affected by the scheme. The report recommends the council strengthens its assessment of the visual impact and design of new development. The city council said it will accept the recommendations of the report and promised to improve consultation on planning matters. Oxford University said it had yet to read the report [OM](#) [OM](#) [OM](#) [OM](#) [BBC](#) [OM](#) [LG](#).

Reaction. CPRE Oxfordshire said the review contains very damning findings but fails to address issues including why an Environmental Impact Assessment was not carried out. "Even with the most positive spin the city council can put on it, this still adds up, at the very least, to severe organisational incompetence and a lack of checks and balances in the current planning system." In an excoriating editorial on the planning disaster, the Oxford Mail said: "It was always the case that Oxford City Council mishandled the whole process badly." It added: "It sticks in the craw that instead of expecting our council planning officers do their jobs properly, the city has to wheel in outside experts at the taxpayers' expense to prevent bungling."

Planning Reform

Labour's plans for housing. In a speech in Stevenage, Ed Miliband said councils will be able to compulsorily purchase land or charge fees if developers fail to build on land for which they have gained planning permission. He accused developers of hoarding land to push up its value and said the profits of the four biggest housing developers have soared by 557% this year. He declared he would order the planning inspectorate to give priority to local authorities whose expansion plans are blocked by neighbouring councils – authorities such as Oxford and Stevenage. He said these four Labour-controlled councils have joined Luton and York and Stevenage in signing up to become “Right to Grow” local authorities, and they have “immediate potential” to build 40,000 homes [g](#) [BBC](#) [i](#). The New Statesman gives a useful summary of Labour's housing ambitions [i](#).

Housing Commission. Miliband also announced an “independent” housing commission which has been asked to draw up a plan for increasing the supply of new homes in England to more than 200,000 a year by the end of the next parliament. The group will be chaired by Sir Michael Lyons, and members will include Kate Henderson of the Town and Country Planning Association and Ed Turner, deputy leader of Oxford city council [IH](#).

Reaction. CPRE Oxfordshire said Labour's Right to Grow plans pose a “serious threat” to the city's green belt. Helen Marshall said: “The point of the green belt is its permanence. It protects the surrounding villages but also preserves the historic setting of Oxford... The city council has been frustrated that it can't get what it wants through the normal democratic processes, so is now looking to move the goalposts” [OT](#). CPRE president Andrew Motion condemned the “gung-ho” way in which all three main political parties have put development ahead of protecting Britain's green spaces [H](#). Planning minister Nick Boles said Labour's plans are a “land grab”. He added: “Do people of Herts, Beds, Oxon not deserve a say about spread of Stevenage, Luton & Oxford into surrounding countryside? Miliband says no.” Nick Clegg said Miliband's speech was: “a populist, gimmicky policy pronouncement.” Eric Pickles said Ed Miliband would: “Allow Labour councils to forcibly rip up green belt protection in neighbouring councils” [T](#).

Lib Dems. The party has published a series of papers on localism and planning ahead of the 2014 election. Andy Boddington called for new right to localism to control ministers' interference in local decisions; a community right to appeal – English Heritage and Nature would have the same rights; removal of the planning inspectorate to an arm's length from the government; and clarification of the distinction between planning policy and guidance [S](#).

Planning reform – coalition. Rural planners said that government proposals to limit S106 agreements for affordable housing to schemes of ten or more houses would mean “waving goodbye to affordable housing in the countryside” [P](#). Planning lawyers say the government's intention to give payments to householders to stave off objections may fall foul of the principle that planning permission should not be bought or sold. One expert suggested households might get less than £20 each under the proposals [P](#).

Planning

Planning policy exchange. The Policy Exchange's Alex Morton has been appointed David Cameron's planning adviser. Morton is an arch-critic of the green belt, believes in paying householders to accept new development and a proponent of self-build as a solution to the housing crisis. The Telegraph says Morton will write the planning and housing section of the Conservative 2015 election manifesto. Shaun Spiers commented: “His appointment is deeply worrying for all who care about the countryside... There is a risk that we will waste the next few years in acrimonious battles over development in the countryside – battles which will take up the energy that should be going to building decent homes in the right places” [P](#) [T](#) [H](#) [IH](#).

Garden cities. The FT reported that prime minister has forbidden ministers from identifying any sites for potential new towns during this parliament, fearing a backlash from voters in the 2015 election [FT](#) [i](#).

Local plans. Planners in Central Lincolnshire have been told by a planning inspector to find land for 42,800 homes in the local plan. It currently identifies sites for just 17,850 homes [L](#). Another inspector has questioned whether the joint West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland plan allows for sufficient housing and meets the duty to cooperate with neighbouring councils. The inspector also asked why the councils say they cannot deliver enough affordable housing [P](#) [LG](#). Four councils in central Lancashire have been told to withdraw their joint core strategy. The inspector said the plan only identifies a 3.5 year supply of housing land rather than the five years plus 20% required by the NPPF [O](#) [P](#).

Special measures. Exmoor National Park, Bromsgrove and Worthing in Sussex are set to join Blaby in special measures for not processing major planning applications quickly. Developers will be able to bypass the councils and apply directly to the planning inspectorate [P](#).

Land supply. A planning inspector threw out an appeal for 100 greenfield homes in Sandbach, Cheshire despite the council not having a five year land supply. He said the development: “Would result in severe and irrevocable damage to the landscape, the countryside and the character of this clear edge to the settlement” [L](#). In Cleckheaton, West Yorkshire, 54 greenfield homes were approved by a planning inspector because Kirklees lacks a five year land supply [L](#).

Housing. The government released £2 billion to local councils under the New Homes Bonus as a reward for delivering 550,000 new homes and conversions, and bringing 93,000 empty homes back into use. The total includes more than 160,000 affordable homes [C](#) [IH](#) [C](#).

Legal. The appeal court has upheld a high court decision to reject 116 homes and a care home in the green belt outside St Albans. The decision now goes back to the planning inspectorate. The judges recognised the importance of the green belt and complained that paragraph 47 of the NPPF on five year housing supply is unclear: “Unhappily, as this case demonstrates, the process of simplification has in certain cases led to a diminution in clarity” [LGI](#) [P](#) [O](#). A parish council has lost a high court battle against planning permission for a 20-hectare housing and sports site on green fields and orchards outside Hereford [P](#).

Green Belt

Brownfield use falls as green belt threatened. A report from the National Trust and the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) said the proportion of new houses built on previously developed land fell from 80% to 72% between 2009 and 2011. The area of brownfield land which was converted to residential use also declined from 69% to 62%. The National Trust said that half of England's councils with green belt land are ready to earmark some of it for development. It commented: "If this trend continues we could see the unnecessary loss of green space." Trust chairman Simon Jenkins said protected green corridors have been the "star feature" of the planning system for half a century but they were now under threat from a "let rip" attitude. The LGIU said its analysis of the draft National Planning Practice Guidance due early next year suggests that local authorities could be forced to release more land than is necessary for development in the countryside, including in the green belt. Ingrid Samuel, Historic Environment Director at the National Trust, said: "We are calling on the government to amend its new guidance to ensure the planning system delivers on the promise to deliver a 'brownfield first' policy, and to reaffirm its commitment to protect valued green spaces" [C](#) [FT](#) [M](#) [LG](#) [G](#). David Cameron claimed that green belt protection had been strengthened by the NPPF [L](#).

Development roundup. Letchworth Garden City is proposing 1,000 homes in the green belt, claiming garden city principles "are not undermined" by the plans [L](#) [M](#). Sheffield council has warned it will be considering setting aside greenfield sites and reviewing the boundaries of the green belt to accommodate new housing [L](#). Basildon council is aiming for 12,500 homes in the green belt [L](#). More than 3,000 residents have objected to 1,150 houses in the green belt in Thurrock [L](#). More than 600 people are protesting over plans for 178 homes in the green belt at Benfleet, Essex [L](#). Over 1,350 people have signed a petition against green belt development around Bath [L](#). Developers are planning a large zero carbon housing development between Northaw and Cuffley in Hertfordshire [L](#).

Landscapes

Protected landscapes. Natural England is considering a proposal from the South Hams Society to extend the South Devon AONB and redesignate it the South Devon National Park [L](#) [M](#). Another proposal would see the Exe Valley declared an AONB [L](#).

Town greens. Campaigners have succeeded in their bid for town green status for Ely Common [L](#). Ministers confirmed they will further restrict opportunities for registering town greens, limiting bids to two years after a draft local plan is published for consultation [C](#) [M](#).

Allotments. Eric Pickles has approved development on allotments in Watford. Campaigners are to fight on saying alternative allotments are not a "like-for-like" replacement. [BBC](#) [I](#) [P](#) [f](#).

Marine. The Royal Navy has adopted plans to minimising its impact on the marine environment [M](#). CPRE Dorset is objecting to rushed plans for a 600-berth marina and 200 car parking spaces on an island in Poole Harbour [BBC](#).

Pollution. Thanet Earth, a 90-acre greenhouse site in Kent, has admitted that it is responsible for the "eerie yellow skies" that pervade the area when there is a low mist [M](#) [M](#). Hong Kong children may never have seen a star due to the sky being 1,200 times brighter than a normal dark sky [FT](#). The FT looked at the growing dark skies campaign [FT](#). The EU is proposing new laws to force states to cut air pollution by 20% by 2030 [BBC](#).

Heritage. Loyd Grossman slammed the consultation on English Heritage's future as "shoddy" [M](#). The government is consulting on simplification of listed building rules, aiming to reduce the instances for which listed building consent will be required. Closes 27 January [M](#) [C](#).

Farming and Food

CAP. After pressure from the farming industry, which wanted 9%, and environmentalists, who wanted 15%, Owen Paterson compromised and set the green and rural subsidies at 12% of CAP payments – £3.5 billion a year. Defra's intention is to move to a 15% transfer rate in 2018, after a review into the demand for agri-environment schemes and the competitiveness of English agriculture in 2016 [M](#) [M](#) [FWI](#) [FWI](#). Ian Woodhurst for CPRE said: "We have serious concerns that the new green farming scheme will be severely limited in its scope; particularly when it comes to improving the quality of our much loved landscapes that are so vital to the rural economy" [M](#). The RSPB said the deal falls short of what nature needs for recovery [RSPB](#) [M](#). The Independent said: "If the Government does not pay farmers to protect birds nobody else will" [I](#).

Agri Tech. On Christmas Eve, Defra published its agricultural technology strategy. It complains that the EU is acting as a barrier to introduction of GM foods [M](#). Defra has also published a code of good agricultural practice for farmers, growers and land managers, with the aim of protecting water, soil and air [M](#).

Biodiversity offsetting. Commercial companies, the Environment Bank and AB Sustain are calling for landowners to come forward to "potentially benefit from £20 million" of funding from biodiversity offsetting, even though offsetting is not yet government policy [M](#) [M](#).

Town Centres

Town centres lose. A campaigner has failed to persuade the high court to quash a decision by Eric Pickles to grant planning permission to a Tesco on Margate seafront [P](#) [C](#). The high court has also thrown out a challenge by three London councils to the new permitted development rights that allow offices to be converted to housing without planning permission [M](#) [M](#) [P](#).

Out of town schemes win. A report from the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS) said 76% of all new retail space granted planning permission since March has been to out-of-town sites. Of the 43 of 50 developments permitted, five were in town centres, seven were edge of centre and 31 were out of town. The report said: "The sequential and impact tests in the NPPF are not being applied as pass or fail 'gateway' tests, but as only two of the factors to be taken into account." ACS said the report: "Paints a disturbing picture of planning decisions being driven by developers rather than local people, and destroying high streets up and down the country. The NPPF is not being applied properly" [M](#) [M](#) [KO](#).

Town centre roundup. High streets minister Brandon Lewis said the membership of the Future High Streets Forum will in future include representatives from the hospitality, leisure, food and services sectors . The appeal court upheld a decision by the high court to block plans by Peel Holdings to redevelop the Whitebirk Retail Park near Blackburn. Peel had claimed that because it had changed many of the retail units with individual planning consents, the original prohibition of [A1 retail use](#) no longer applied. Hyndburn feared the impact of an expanded Whitebirk Retail Park on nearby town centres   .

Energy in the South East

Solar. Two solar farms totalling more than 250 acres are planned near Wantage, Oxfordshire. Helen Marshall of CPRE Oxfordshire said: “We are concerned at its proximity to the Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal and rights of way... There are thousands of roofs and industrial buildings that can be used for solar panels before we need to start building over our valuable agricultural land” . The local Herald newspaper said the “need for energy can’t be a blank slate to allow developers to start coating the countryside in black panels” .

Wind. The MoD has objected to the proposed Bullingdon windfarm in Hampshire, as did MPs during a Commons debate  .

Fracking. Balcombe residents took their protest to the gates of Downing Street . Brenda Pollack, Friends of the Earth South East campaigner visited the Fernhurst and Wisborough Green sites. She said: “The new techniques have caused real and serious problems in other countries... Dangling financial sweeteners in front of communities to get them to accept dirty fracking schemes, which will keep the nation hooked on climate-changing fossil fuels, is a disgrace”  . Campaigners opposed to fracking met with West Sussex council leader Louise Goldsmith .

Energy, Water and Recycling

Water. Defra has launched a consultation on water abstraction reform. Closes 28 March  .

Fracking. The government published plans to open up large parts of the UK to oil and gas exploration, including for shale gas. It hopes to issue between 50 and 150 exploration licences. Its report acknowledges communities could be disturbed by increased lorry traffic, noise from drilling equipment and reduced air quality. The industry is unhappy that green groups were able to increase the report’s estimates of water use and the negative impacts of fracking       . People living close to fracking sites could suffer health effects, American researchers say . Planning minister Nick Boles said planning laws will be changed to allow gas companies to submit fracking applications without telling people about plans to drill beneath their properties. Greenpeace said: “The government is hoping that no one notices that fracking companies are firing chemicals and water at high pressure into the ground beneath their homes”     . The Local Government Association said local communities should receive 10% of the money made from fracking schemes . Cuadrilla has pulled out of its Preese Hall site in Lancashire .

Onshore wind. The wind industry said that sudden changes in wind speed and direction can on occasion lead to a partial stall of a turbine, known as Other Amplitude Modulation, resulting in a “whumph” noise, which some people are particularly sensitive to. Around 3% of windfarms in the UK are likely to produce these low-frequency sounds, which can be heard up to a kilometre away. RenewableUK is suggesting planning authorities set a threshold in decibels above which windfarm operators will be required to immediately act to change blade angles to minimise the noise    . A 67-metre wind turbine at a farm south of the Exmoor national park was rejected by a planning inspector because it would make living conditions at a nearby bungalow unbearable  . Three 46-metre wind turbines in the green belt in Ribbles Valley, Lancashire were approved by an inspector despite concerns that they would have a serious impact on the enjoyment of local footpaths  . Eric Pickles has rejected the Nun Wood windfarm at Bozeat on the border of Northants, Beds and Bucks. He said: “Although the scheme addresses climate change and renewable energy considerations, this is outweighed by the inadequate protection of the character and quality of local landscapes”      .

Offshore wind. The £450 million Able Marine Energy Park, which covers nearly 800 acres off the south bank of the Humber, has been approved by the government . The backers of the Navitus windfarm off Dorset and the Isle of Wight continue to consult the public .

Coal. Power company SSE is to close its stations at Ferrybridge, West Yorkshire and Uskmouth, Gwent, though Ferrybridge will not fully shut down until 2023 . Coal may be burnt under the sea to generate gas  .

Solar. Climate change minister Greg Barker warned that poorly sited “monster solar farms” run the risk of ruining the good reputation enjoyed by the rest of the industry. He said he wanted to see solar farms developed on old industrial sites, former air fields or shielded from view by hedges . The largest solar farm yet to receive planning consent is to be built at Wroughton Airfield within the North Wessex Downs AONB, unless Eric Pickles vetoes the decision   . Chorley council rejected a solar farm as inappropriate development in the green belt  .

Nuclear. The EC is to investigate government subsidies to the new Hinkley Point station  .

Plastic bags. Shoppers face a 5p charge for every plastic bag they use after owners of small stores announced that they would start charging .

Recycling. The recycling industry and environmentalists said they are disappointed that the government’s National Waste Prevention Programme for England, which aims to reduce business and people to reduce waste, lacks targets    .

Transport

Varsity Line. The DfT is to develop proposals for a new railway line between Bedford and Cambridge. Linked the existing East-West rail project, it will provide high speed trains between Oxford and Cambridge. A new station will be built at Chesterton in Cambridge, connected to the science park and Oxford city station will be rebuilt with a new bus terminal added  .

Bexhill Hastings Link Road. With work so far having cost £29.7 million, including £2.6 million for security, the Bexhill Observer asked if the scheme is “the road to ruin for the area” [L](#) [L](#).

Buses. The Campaign for Better Transport said cuts to bus services are reaching “critical levels”, with half of local authorities planning to cut back services in 2014 [S](#) [BBC](#) [b](#) [CBT](#).

Airports Commission

Heathrow Hub, whose plan to extend Heathrow’s north runways to the west has been shortlisted by the Airports Commission, has patented the plans and may sell them to Heathrow Ltd [C](#).

Luton. Plans to expand London Luton Airport have been backed by the borough council, though Eric Pickles may call the scheme in. The plans involve a new access road, an expanded terminal and a new taxiway. Hertfordshire Against Luton Expansion said: “They are proposing 60% more planes... Let’s not carry on too far and start turning this into a blighted area” [BBC](#) [C](#).

Roundup. CPRE Protect Kent said it is disappointed with the Airports Commission recommendations, saying it believes that there is already sufficient capacity in the system [RE](#). Our December special eBulletin reviewed the Airports Commission report [RE](#). Airport Watch has also published a newsletter on the Airports Commission report [L](#). Tonbridge MP Sir John Stanley said he wants to put a stop to plans to build a second runway at Gatwick while Eastbourne Tory hopeful Caroline Ansell welcomed the proposal [TK](#) [L](#).

High Speed 2

MPs say ‘get on with it’. The transport select committee said that the risks of not going ahead with the high speed line significantly outweigh the risks of doing so. It said without HS2, the West Coast main line will become increasingly overloaded and road freight will increase. The committee thinks the £50bn cost is exaggerated. It wants the line to be built from north to south as the same time it is constructed northwards from London [P](#) [C](#) [BBC](#) [M](#). Stop HS2 said: “The recommendations effectively told the DfT to ‘spin harder’ to promote the project” [I](#).

Waste. The line will generate 4.5 million tonnes of inert waste and 0.5 million tonnes of contractor waste, all destined for landfill. That could require up to 200,000 truck movements to the tip. So where will the disposal sites be? HS2 Ltd is not saying. It told this eBulletin: “Identifying which individual landfill sites we intend to utilise could prejudice our position and adversely influence the waste disposal market. Such work relates to the detailed design phase that will occur post royal assent.”

Roundup. All barns owls within 1.5 km of the line will be wiped out, campaigners claim [L](#). The Woodland Trust said more than 40 ancient woods would be affected and the environmental impact assessment of the HS2 rail project demonstrates “a shocking disregard” for England’s woodland and wildlife [B&G](#) [BBC](#) [P](#).

Communities and Campaigning

Natural England. The environment, food and rural affairs select committee has given the thumbs up to the appointment of Andrew Sells as chairman of Natural England [M](#). After blocked footpaths on Sell’s farm were opened up, Kate Ashbrook of the Open Spaces Society said: “Since telling MPs last Wednesday it would be ‘a very great concern’ if he had obstructed paths on his land, [Andrew Sells] has removed three chunks of fencing which were blocking one path” [G](#).

CPRE. President, Andrew Motion is now on Twitter [@motionandrew](#). CPRE is seeking a new chairman to replace Peter Waine, who steps down in 2014 [L](#). CPRE Sussex is conducting an online survey on priorities for campaigning in 2014 [RE](#). CPRE Cornwall’s new chairman, Harold Tamworth has called for new Trelawney’s Army to help protect the Cornish landscapes and its building [L](#). Stanley Allen, a campaigner for nature and conservation in in Sussex, and a former CPRE activist, has died at the age of 95 [L](#).

Localism. The Community Right to Bid and to Challenge are underused and have been oversold, according to a report from Local Government Lawyer [LGI](#).

The CPRE eBulletins

CPRE South East eBulletin is independently written and edited by Andy Boddington: cprenews@andyboddington.co.uk. Views expressed in the eBulletin and its editorial approach are those of its editor and not any part of CPRE.

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