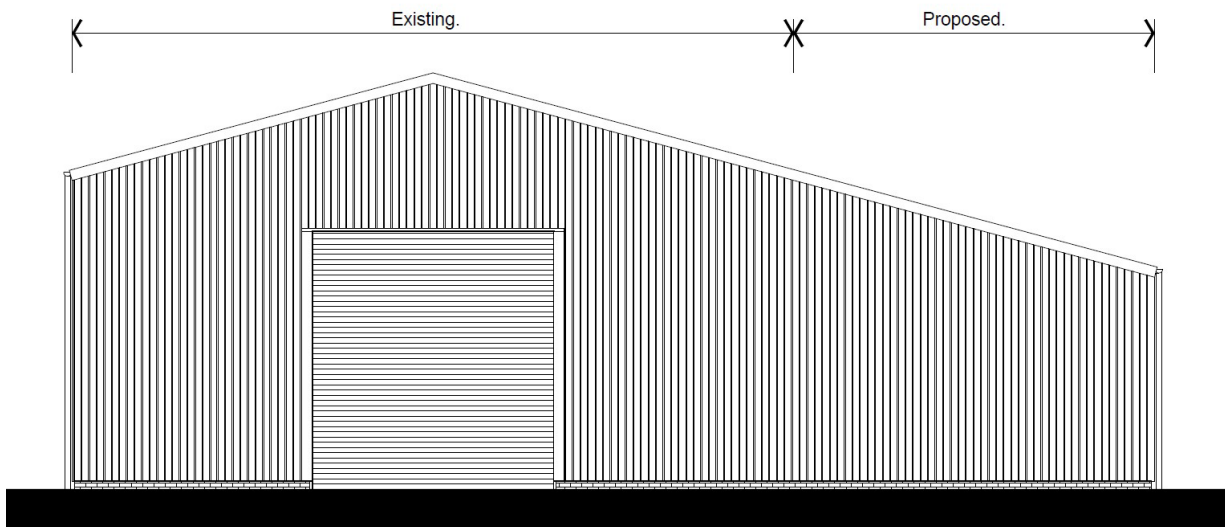


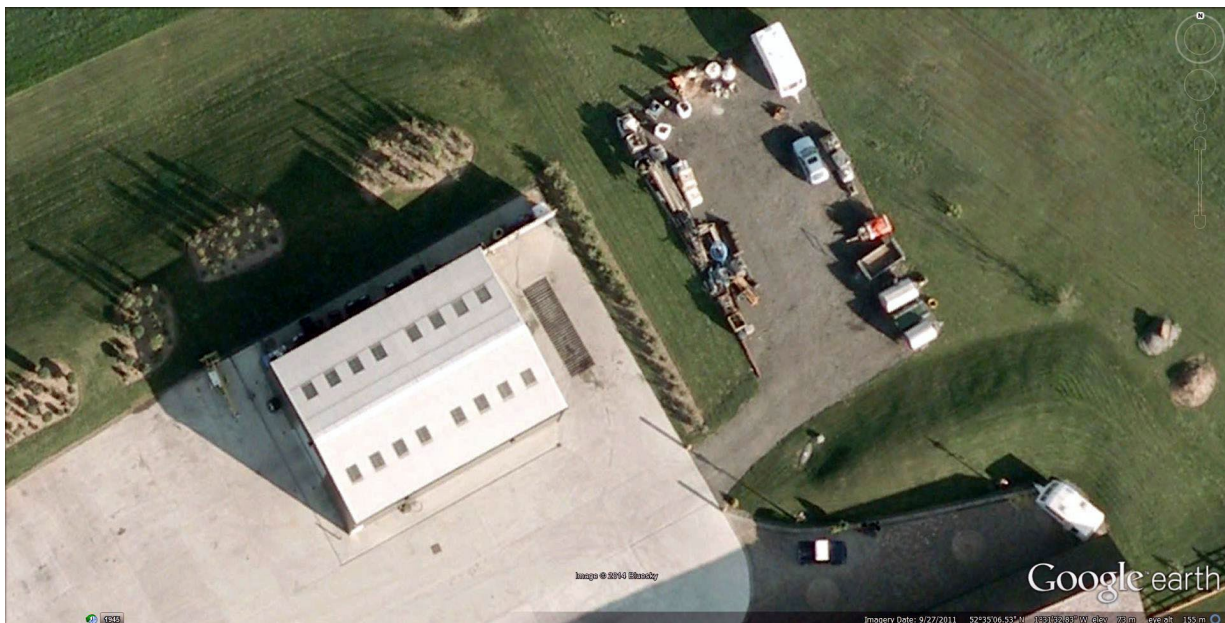
White Gate Farm

Mythe Lane, Witherley, Atherstone CV9 3NU



South West elevation.

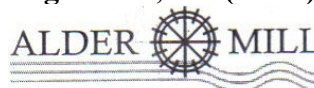
Scale 1:100



Design and Access Statement

Agricultural Prior Notification (Prior Approval)
Erection of Extension to Existing Farm Shed

Mark Singlehurst, BA (Hons), DipTP



April 2025

1.0 Introduction – Location, Site Description, Background to Application

1.1 White Gate Farm now consists of a modern farmhouse and attached and detached outbuildings, although it does have an historic site and appears with the same name on the 1889 first edition 1:2500 scale Ordnance Survey map. It may be assumed that it was in existence for some years prior to that date, although it has proved difficult to trace any earlier history, possibly due to a name change. Planning permission was granted in 1971 to demolish the historic farmhouse and replace it with a bland modern house. Comparison of the 1959 and 1974 Ordnance Survey maps would suggest that the farm building ranges were replaced to a different layout around the same time.

1.2 From 2011, the farmhouse and its attached single-storey ranges running northwards and from north-west to north-east were substantially remodelled and the north-west range extended westwards. Metal ranges to the far north-east and south-west were demolished, along with two metal Dutch barns to the north and a Nissen hut at the end of the attached north-west range. Another brick and tile range, which sat partly behind the existing north-west range but extended further to the south-west, was also removed in 2011. The numerous demolished structures have been replaced by a single modern farm shed to the north, which was permitted under application 08/00719/GDO. This is typical of its kind, with dark profiled metal cladding to its walls and lighter cladding to its shallow pitched roofs.

1.3 The farm is set back at the end of a long drive which runs north-westwards from Mythe Lane in the rural parish of Witherley, a short distance to the east of the market town of Atherstone in North Warwickshire. The nearest urban development on the edge of Atherstone's built-up area is just 0.3 miles away to the south-west. The immediate setting of the farm building complex is still rural in character, however, consisting of green pasture and arable fields of irregular size and shape, enclosed by hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees, with relatively straight country roads nearby to the north and west. The land is designated as open countryside but not as Green Belt. There are no listed buildings on or adjacent to the farm site and the nearest such structure is Mythe Cottage on Mythe Lane in Witherley village itself, some 0.67 miles away to the south-east. Witherley village begins 0.62 miles away to the south-south-east. The small village of Ratcliffe Culey is centred 0.6 miles to the north-east. An extensive tract of open fields and small patches of woodland stretches for nearly two miles to the east before the next road is reached.

1.4 The current building ranges, as remodelled or rebuilt in 2011, consist of a refaced brick-and-tile farmhouse with triple gables, to which a single-storey garage wing with similar facings is attached on the left (north) side. The south-western portion of a long single-storey range that joins this garage wing at right-angles at its north end was granted planning permission in May 2011 to be converted from an agricultural 'barn' to two holiday cottages, including an extension (11/00004/FUL). The brick facing, roof tiles and fenestration of this portion are again similar to those on the farmhouse. The continuation of this range to the north-east of the farmhouse has also undergone similar refurbishment. The resulting 'T' shaped grouping is supplemented by the large modern farm shed across the farmyard to the north. There is currently also an open yard or hardstanding to the north-east of the modern farm shed, which the previous owner used for vehicle parking and storage (see second title page image).

1.5 Although the previous occupant used the property primarily as a private home and office base for his various businesses, his wife kept a small herd of alpacas on the farm, alongside sheep and chickens. The new owner is keeping a small flock of sheep on the land (currently on the field to the north-west of the building group) and hopes to grow the flock over time.

1.6 Given the previous conversion of the brick farm outbuilding ranges adjoining the house into secondary dwellings and ancillary domestic storage spaces, the farm currently lacks suitable storage space for hay and straw and other products to provide winter feed for the sheep and also for horses kept on the site.

2.0 The Proposal

2.1 The proposal is therefore to provide a low extension for this storage to the south-east side of the existing farm shed or barn, which would continue the existing roof slope on that side and be constructed and clad using similar materials and colours to the existing structure. The extension would cover a small portion of the existing hardstanding area and would not include any additional doors or windows. The extension would measure 6.9 metres in length (added to the existing 13.8 metres) and 18.5 metres in depth (matching the existing building); it would be 8.8 metres high at the point where its roof merged with the existing roof, with the eaves at 4.3 metres from the ground. The added volume would be 666 cubic metres which, added to the existing building's volume of 1,806 cubic metres, would result in a new total volume of 2,372 cubic metres, or a 36.88% increase.

2.2 This would be a steel frame structure with vertical timber cladding placed over profiled metal cladding to the walls and profiled metal cladding to the roof to match the existing building. Its location would be around 170 metres away from Atherstone Road to the north-west and 136 metres from Mythe Lane to the south-west. Rainwater collection would be via an extension of the existing rainwater goods and the new downpipe would be connected to the existing underground drainage system, with inspection chamber (see site plan on drawing 627/225/03).

2.3 The entire land holding (including the building group) is 83,179 square metres, or 8.32 hectares. This has been indicated by the blue line on the location plan. The actual area within which we are applying to carry out the works, including the access route to it from Mythe Lane, amounts to 1,500 square metres or 0.15 hectares, and this is shown by the red line on the location plan (627/225/03).

3.0 Assessment of Proposal against Relevant Planning Legislation and Policies

3.1 By virtue of Schedule 2 attached to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, Part 6, Class A, works for the erection of a building on agricultural land comprised in an agricultural unit of five hectares or more and 'reasonably necessary' for the purposes of agriculture within that unit is permitted development, subject to a number of provisos and exceptions. 'Agricultural land' is defined as being land in [active] use for agriculture and so used for the purposes of a trade or business (i.e. not for 'hobby farming' or keeping/rearing horses). The whole White Gate Farm smallholding consists of three fields, plus the buildings and yards; and despite the sale of two parcels of land to the south in 2007, it still amounts to some 8.2 hectares (20.26 acres). This is well over the 5-hectare minimum. The agricultural usage has been described in paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6 above.

3.2 The GPDO requires that the development must not be carried out on a separate parcel of land (within the overall holding) of less than 1 hectare in area. The farm shed that is being extended sits close to the farmhouse and attached ranges and so forms part of the main, compact holding. Another requirement is that the building, as extended, must not exceed 1,500 square metres in ground area (footprint). The footprint of the existing building is 320 square metres and the proposed extension would add another 128 square metres, giving a total ground area for the extended building of just 448 square metres. This is well within the permitted limit.

3.3 Paragraph A.1 (h) of Part 6 does not permit any part of the development to fall within 25 metres of the metalled part of a trunk or other classified road. Mythe Lane and Atherstone Road, Witherley have neither an ‘A’ nor ‘B’ classification and are therefore presumably either a ‘classified unnumbered road’ (unofficially known as ‘C’ roads and, despite the terminology, usually numbered by local highway authorities) or just an unclassified local road (sometimes also numbered as ‘D’ roads by local authorities, for highway maintenance purposes). In any case, the proposed building extension is considerably more than 25 metres away from the site boundary adjacent to these roads (see paragraph 2.2 above).

3.4 The building is intended for the storage of tractors and other vehicles or machinery and the tools and other equipment required to repair and maintain them, now with the addition of hay and straw/feedstuff storage in the low extension. It is not designed for use as livestock housing, nor would it be used for the storage of slurry (animal faeces and urine, diluted or otherwise) or sewage sludge, so the rule at paragraph A.1 (i) requiring an agricultural building so used to be more than 400 metres away from the curtilage of any nearby ‘protected building’ (that is, any human dwelling, unless that dwelling itself forms part of an agricultural unit) is considered not to apply in this case. For the record, the nearest independent dwelling is ‘White Gate Cottage’ to the south-west; the main house on the White Gate Farm site itself would be at a variable distance of 68 to 78 metres away from the shed as extended in that direction.

3.5 The National Planning Policy Framework of 2024 (hereafter ‘NPPF’) supports a prosperous rural economy and therefore encourages local planning authorities to support economic growth in rural areas by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. This includes supporting sustainable growth and expansion of all types of rural business and enterprise (including well designed new buildings) and generally promoting the development of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses (paragraph 88). As this extension to an existing farm building is requested for the storage of winter feedstuffs, principally hay and straw, it clearly falls within the ‘rural business/enterprise’ category; it would use a typical, traditional form of construction for functional structures of this type. Although the current flock of sheep is small, that does not lessen the need for the availability of hay and other feedstuffs required for their care.

3.6 Relevant policies of the Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan 2006-2026 (as adopted in 2016) may be found in the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD. The following are considered to have some relevance to the current proposal: Policies DM10 (Development and Design), DM4 (Safeguarding the Countryside and Settlement Separation) and DM17 (Highways and Transportation). Policy DM10 seeks to ensure a high standard of design, in order to secure attractive development and to safeguard and enhance the existing environment. Among its relevant criteria are the need to complement or enhance the character of the surrounding area with regard to scale, layout, mass, design, materials and architectural features (c, d); and a requirement not to cause a nuisance to occupiers of neighbouring properties (a).

3.7 The current Local Plan contains no equivalent policy to the old Policy BE21 of the Local Plan 2001 which related specifically to new or extended agricultural buildings, including those constructed under permitted development rights. However, under Policy DM15, paragraph 14.58, the following guidance is provided:

“Any extensions or alterations [to buildings in the countryside] should respect the form and character of the existing building and not extend beyond the existing curtilage. Proposals for extensions and alterations to existing buildings in the countryside should be carried out in accordance with the requirements of Policy DM10: Development and Design.”

3.8 Policy DM4 covers development in the countryside and seeks to protect its intrinsic value, beauty, open character and landscape character against unsustainable development. Sustainable uses include the re-use or extension of existing buildings which lead to the enhancement of the immediate setting; or diversification of rural businesses. Any sustainable use or development must also not have a significant adverse effect on the intrinsic value, beauty, open character and landscape character of the countryside, or undermine the physical and perceived separation and open character between settlements, or create or exacerbate ribbon development. It is evident that the low-level continuation of the existing farm shed on its south-eastern side does not contribute to the merging of settlements or creation of ribbon development, or have any significant adverse effect upon a rural landscape where modern farm buildings of this type are clearly the norm. Whilst the extension cannot be said to enhance its immediate setting as such, this kind of modest extension to an existing agricultural building is permitted development where the requirements under the GPDO Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A have been met.

3.9 The proposed extension would be constructed on a very modest scale, well blended into the form and appearance of the existing building and of a low height, comparing favourably with its neighbours in the nearby brick-built former farm building ranges. The structure would be clad in timber and sited on an existing area of hardstanding, close to the existing group of farm buildings and dwellings. It would be an appropriate form of structure for a rural landscape and an agricultural purpose, no larger than necessary, and would therefore have minimal impact upon the surrounding open landscape. The surrounding area is a scattered agricultural district, which has seen much redevelopment and expansion of buildings on the various isolated farms. There is therefore no special character or distinctive architectural idiom that needs to be followed. Nevertheless, as a traditionally designed building, using natural cladding and other materials typical within an agricultural landscape, the extension would be both attractive and suitable for its environment, respecting its surroundings. It would complement the nearby brick-built outbuildings, which are modern, but constructed in a traditional form and style.

3.10 The extension would not adversely affect biodiversity, any existing natural habitats or the character of the surrounding landscape. Limited views of it that would be available from the nearby roads would be softened by the existing planting around the farmyard and mature hedgerows bordering the fields. It is not considered necessary to 'hide' the structure by additional screen planting, as it is merely a modest, low-level extension to an existing farm shed of the type one might expect to see in any modern farmyard and would be seen in the context of existing outbuildings of similar or greater height. There would therefore be no negative visual intrusion upon the existing open landscape surrounding the farm building group.

3.11 The small-scale storage of hay, straw and winter feedstuffs in the proposed extension would have no detrimental impacts upon the amenities of the few neighbouring dwellings.

3.12 Such a facility is clearly necessary to the success of any flock of sheep and the welfare of the animals. None of the existing outbuildings are vacant or of the right size or type to be suitable for hay and straw storage on any adequate scale. The existing open farmland would be unaffected and its extent would not be reduced by the proposal.

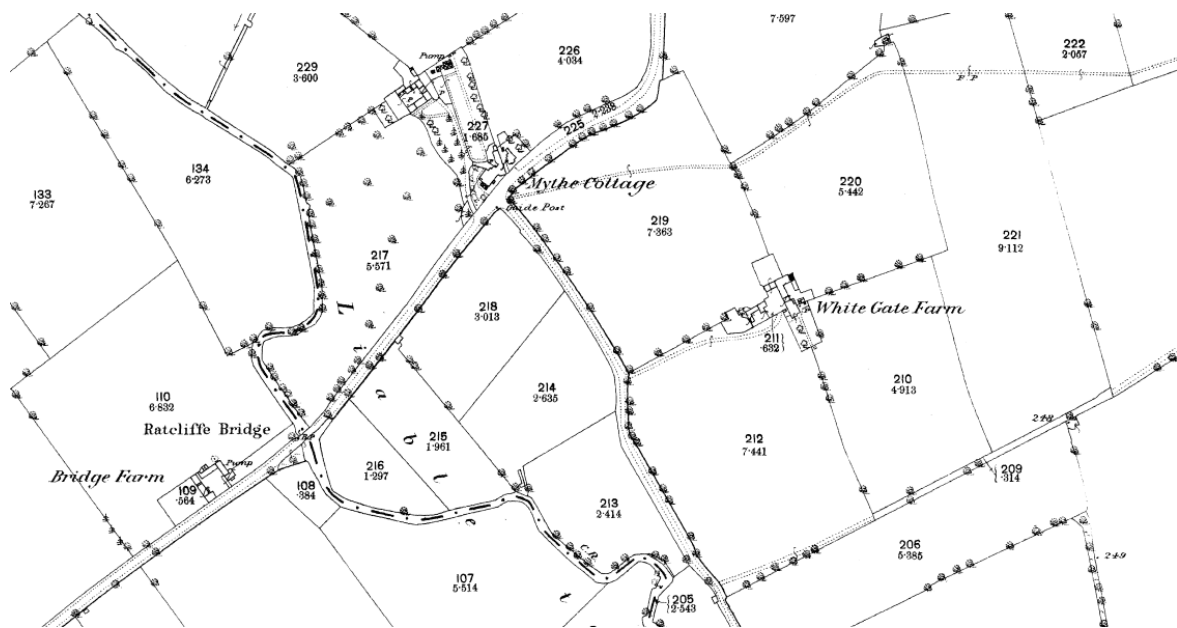
3.13 The site contains no listed buildings and the land is not designated as Green Belt and does not lie within a Conservation Area. The nearest listed building in Witherley parish is Mythe Lane Cottage, a timber-framed building lying some 1,115 metres south-east of the site for the proposed field shelter. All the listed buildings in neighbouring Atherstone lie south of the A5, so there are none near White Gate Farm.

3.14 The Heritage Gateway website reveals seven archaeological sites within 500 metres of CV9 3NU, of which two were investigations during the laying of a pipeline (Ratcliffe Culey Rising Main) – “no significant archaeological activity” was found in either case. The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record included three sets of finds in a field north of Mythe Lane Cottage, dating to April 2003. These are MLE 9941-3, consisting of prehistoric flint fragments (blades?) believed to date from the Late Mesolithic or Early Bronze Age (7000 to 1500 BC), together with four sherds of Roman, six of medieval and nine of post-medieval pottery. The Warwickshire Historic Environment Record mentions Ratcliffe Bridge (MWA 275), dating from somewhere between the late 18th and early 20th century, but possibly containing the remains of an earlier bridge; and the possible site of a ford or watering place on Ratcliffe Road, as rubble stone blocks and mudstone fragments were found close to the south bank of the River Anker there. No finds have been recorded any nearer to White Gate Farm, which does not appear to be ancient in origin. As the extension to the existing farm shed would stand upon an existing area of hardstanding, no archaeological disturbance would be involved.

3.15 An assessment of the existing landscape character of the farm reveals that, of the four roughly rectangular fields that surrounded White Gate Farm on the 1889 Ordnance Survey mapping, only that to the north-west has more-or-less kept its original form (then 7.36 acres). The north-east field has been enlarged on the north side (before 1992), losing its historic hedgerow plants and trees. The two fields to the south were divided into the present three fields during 2010-11, but the historic hedgerow that split the original two fields had been removed (except for two trees) before 1999 (Google Earth evidence). The now straight access drive once curved to go around a large farm pond (still there in the mid-1970s but gone by 1992). A comparison of the 1889 Ordnance Survey map with modern Google Earth ‘street view’ photography (see images on the next two pages) makes it clear that the once numerous hedgerow trees have now mostly gone, such that the landscape context of the farm has significantly changed over time. It can be seen from the photographs that fencing has replaced the internal hedgerows.

3.16 Though the farm is currently made up of a variety of modern buildings, its origins certainly go back more than 125 years. The layout of the farm buildings was then significantly different, with the linear layout of the main farm buildings changing from a NW/SE orientation in the 1880s to a SW/NE alignment by the 1990s and still more so by 2011. In 1890, White Gate Farm was farmed by W. E. Oakley, who reared home-bred cattle, Shropshire sheep, pigs and poultry (*Tamworth Herald*, 15/3/1890). In 1902, White Gate Farm was sold as a freehold estate comprising farmhouse, “premises” and over 66 acres of good quality arable and pasture land, for the surviving trustee of the late William Henton (*Tamworth Herald*, 21/10/1902). Thus, it is clear that the farm was then a mixed one, with both livestock and arable crops, and over three times its current size. It was subsequently run by James Upton (who died in March 1933) and then by Alfred Upton. In April 1936, Mr. Sutton of White Gate Farm was advertising for a labourer on his “all-grass farm”.

3.17 In summary, therefore, it may be said that whilst the general character of the wider landscape around White Gate Farm has retained most of its historic qualities, the subdivision of the land ownership and the creation of a modern farmstead and residential properties has significantly altered the character of both the building group and the surrounding fields. In the context of the other modern farm buildings described above, the proposed extension to one of the existing buildings should not greatly alter the present character of the landscape and it would be viewed very much in the same context as the building it would enlarge and against the backdrop of the other existing buildings. Currently obtainable views of the wider open landscape beyond the lane margins would not be obstructed by the proposed building extension.



Above top: extract from 1889 1:2500 (6'' series) Ordnance Survey map; below: the modern landscape



Above: view across the field from the beginning of the drive leading to Witherley Fields Farm; the mature trees on the right-hand horizon are those mentioned in paragraph 3.9 above. The proposed low-level extension to the existing farm shed would not be visible from the viewpoints shown here or noticeable from those shown in the two images on page 7.



Above: view of White Gate Farm building group from Atherstone Road (looking to the south-east); the proposed extension would be attached to the far side of the timber-clad modern farm shed and so would not be visible from this viewpoint, being entirely obscured by the taller existing building. It would thus have no impact upon existing open views beyond the farm building group.

4.0 Conclusions

4.1 The use of rural land for agricultural activities accords with national policy and is the preferred use for such land. Although the present flock of sheep at White Gate Farm is quite small, it will be necessary to provide adequate supplies of hay, straw and other feedstuffs for their care during the winter months. The provision of new farm buildings or extensions to existing farm buildings (within the defined limitations) is recognized by national and local planning legislation and policies as necessary and appropriate within the countryside. The proposed hay/straw/feed

store extension to the existing large farm shed falls well within the limits that would define it as permitted development, and the structure/use will not adversely affect any designated heritage assets or protected landscapes in the vicinity. It would be a typical structure of its kind, using traditional forms and materials, coloured and sited to minimize its impact on the surrounding open land. It would sit comfortably alongside and compare favourably with the other modern farm buildings (individually or in groups) in the immediate locality. It is therefore hoped that the development will be allowed to proceed without the need for full planning permission, but subject to the provision of any additional information that might be requested.



Above: Google Earth aerial photography of the White Gate Farmland holding in 2023 – compare with the 1889 Ordnance Survey map extract reproduced on page 7 above; below: the existing farm shed which is to be extended

Mark Singlehurst

For Alder Mill Planning & Design Consultants, Atherstone

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