

LOCATION:	Wishmore Cross Academy, 55 Alpha Road, Chobham, Woking, Surrey, GU24 8NE.
PROPOSAL:	Erection of replacement 2.4m high weldmesh fencing to the north/north east and south boundary along with pedestrian and vehicle gates and 3m weldmesh fencing to internal basketball court and adjacent garden.
TYPE:	Full Planning Application
APPLICANT:	Academies Enterprise Trust
OFFICER:	Shannon Kimber

This application would normally be determined under the Council's Scheme of Delegation but is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee at the request of Councillor Tedder because of highway safety grounds and due to concerns over the impacts upon neighbouring amenities.

RECOMMENDATION: GRANT subject to conditions

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This application seeks planning permission for the erection of a 2.4 metre high weldmesh fence to the north/north east and to the southern boundary to replace the existing boundary treatment along with pedestrian and vehicle gates. Further development includes the erection of 3 metre weldmesh fencing to an internal basketball court and adjacent school garden.
- 1.2 It is considered that the proposed development would provide security for the school, whilst not resulting in harm to the character of the area or harm to the residential amenities of the surrounding properties. In addition, the proposal would not alter the access to the school and therefore would not result in an adverse impact on highway safety.
- 1.3 The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 Wishmore Cross Academy is a Special Educational Needs (SEN) secondary school comprising of a two-storey building to the south of the site, with a car park to the south and east, a basketball court and school garden to the west and playing fields to the north and south of the site. The school has existed since the 1950s and the site comprises 3.65 hectares.
- 2.2 The site's boundaries to the north and east are currently demarcated by the rear boundary treatments of the surrounding properties along Burr Hill Lane and Delta Road. This includes panel board fences (up to 2 metres in height) and hedges in excess of 2 metres in height. To the west, adjacent to the public footpath (no.49a) that runs along the western boundary of the site, there is an existing 2.4 metre high

weldmesh fence, rising to 3 metres around the existing gates. To the south the site's boundaries are demarcated by 1.8 metre high close boarded, timber fencing.

- 2.3 The site is surrounded to the north, east and south with residential dwellings. There are Chobham Rugby Club pitches to the west of the application site. There is an existing vehicle and main pedestrian access to the south, from Alpha Road.
- 2.4 The site is located within the settlement boundaries of Chobham and is washed over Green Belt land. The playing fields to the north and south of the school, as well as the rugby pitch to the west are designated green spaces within the settlement.

3.0 RELEVANT HISTORY

- 3.1 21/0664/CES Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for the erection of a 1.8m high steel 868 profiled weld mesh fencing, with vehicular and pedestrian entrance gates, following demolition of the existing wall. Approved on the 12th August 2021
- 3.2 04/0604 Consultation under Regulation 3 for the construction of a two storey extension to accommodate residential unit for pupils, remodelling of vehicle circulation within the site to layout car park and create new pupil dropping off area. No objection 8th July 2004

4.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Full planning permission is sought for the erection of a 2.4 metre high, weldmesh fence to the north/northeast and south boundary along with the erection of replacement pedestrian and vehicle gates to the south. It is also proposed to erect a 3 metre high, weldmesh fence to enclose an internal basketball court and adjacent school garden to the west of the buildings. The existing fencing along the western boundary would remain. The proposed fence would be moss green in colour (RAL 6005).
- 4.2 The proposed 2.4 metre high boundary fence would have a length of 53 metres along the northern-most section of the eastern boundary (i.e. parallel to the rear boundaries of 39 to no.47 Delta Road) and have a length of 127 metres along the entire northern boundary (i.e. parallel to the rear boundaries of 1 – 13 Burr Hill Lane). The proposed fence would have a length of 64 metres along the southern boundary (i.e. from the existing access point westwards and parallel to the northern flank boundary of 53 Alpha Road). Within the site the fence would continue by a length of 32 metres to link the school garden to the southern boundary.
- 4.3 The proposed fencing would be sited 1 metre from the existing fencing to the northern and eastern boundaries to allow for maintenance. There are two gates proposed to the northern and eastern boundaries (one apiece) which would allow access for maintenance. These would be permanently locked and only be for the use by caretakers.
- 4.4 The proposed 3 metre high fence would be erected around the east, north and western boundaries of the existing basketball court and garden, both to the west of the main school building and internal within the site.
- 4.5 The vehicle entrance gates would be relocated, set 1.8 metres further forward than the existing position, to be sited on the site boundary. The pedestrian access from Alpha Road would be relocated from the eastern side of the vehicle gates to the western side. This gate would retain the 1.8 metre set-back from the boundary.
- 4.6 The proposed development is sought for the protection and security of the pupils attending the school. According to the applicant the north boundary, as well as part of

the east and south boundaries comprise mainly of residential walls, fences, and hedges. These pose significant safeguarding risks as children or people from outside the school could potentially climb this fencing, compromising the security of the site. The applicant goes on to explain that some areas of the school boundary do not require new fencing, either because the existing fencing is sufficient to ensure the safeguarding of pupils on site, or new fencing has recently been installed.

4.7 The proposed works would be undertaken during the school summer holidays when no children are on site. The site compound area will be in the school's front car park, as close as possible to the areas of works with the remaining carpark used for parking for contractor and school staff as needed.

4.8 The following documents were submitted with this application and reference will be made to these documents in section 7 of this report, where applicable:

- Design and Access Statement,
- Arboricultural Method Statement,
- Arboricultural Survey.

5.0 CONSULTATION RESPONSES

5.1 The following external consultees were consulted and their comments are summarised in the table below:

External Consultation	Comments Received
County Highways Authority	No objections are raised. Please see Annex A.
Sport England	No objection.
Chobham Parish Council	<p>Raised the following objections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Height of proposed fencing, adjacent to residential gardens would lead to an overbearing effect and visual intrusion. <p><i>[Officer comment: The weldmesh design would allow for views into and out of the site and would not have a significantly enclosing visual affect].</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Height of fencing and gates with tighter spaced wires than existing would negatively affect the character of the street scene of Alpha Road with a prison-type appearance. <p><i>[Officer comment: The proposed weldmesh fencing would be of a suitable design and is considered an acceptable design for a school boundary].</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The scheme would compromise the safe and efficient flow of traffic movement on the highway by reason of there being no recess to allow a vehicle to be clear of the public highway during school security checks and whilst the gate is being opened. Access and egress to driveways of residential properties at the northern end of Alpha Road would therefore be blocked by waiting traffic.

[Officer comment: This is an existing issue and would not be affected by the proposed development which would not alter the staffing or pupil numbers at the school].

- The proposed scheme offers no turning head at the end of Alpha Road.

[Officer comment: There is no existing turning area and as such, the existing situation would be unchanged by this proposal].

- The vehicular entrance arrangements would pose a safeguarding risk and potential for crime, with drivers having to exit their vehicles to use the intercom, leaving students unattended in the vehicle.

[Officer comment: The gates would be automatically open at certain times of the day (pick up and drop off), so vehicles picking up and dropping off children at the start and the end of each school day would not use the intercom].

- The scheme fails to address vulnerable points where the proposed fencing joins to a brick shed (housing gas meter) and to an electric sub-station, which reportedly enables students to climb the fence and trespass onto neighbouring residential land, thus reducing the effectiveness

[Officer comment: The proposed fencing to the southern boundary would run over the brick shed].

- Noise nuisance from the intercom system.

[Officer comment: This proposal would not affect the intercom system].

- Vehicle fumes from vehicles waiting outside the school gates and congestion issues.

[Officer comment: The staffing or pupil numbers at the school would not be altered by this proposal, as such the existing levels of pollution would not be altered].

- The long runs of proposed fencing pose a threat to the local hedgehog population.

[Officer comment: The applicant has agreed to a condition to secure holes within the fencing to allow for hedgehog commuting]

- Main pedestrian gate is being relocated from the eastern side to the western side of the vehicle

	<p>gate, contrary to the positioning agreed by lawful development certificate 21/0664/CES</p> <p><i>[Officer comment: It is considered that a safe walking area to the front of the school to reduce the risk of conflicts with vehicles can be provided from the western side of the gate].</i></p> <p>- The plans are unclear regarding the two gates next to the rear boundary of dwellings in Delta Road and Burr Hill Lane.</p> <p><i>[Officer comment: These two gates would provide access to allow for maintenance only, and would not access to any private garden as the existing boundary fencing to the rear of each dwelling would remain unchanged.]</i></p>
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5.2 The following internal consultees were consulted and their comments are summarised in the table below:

Internal Consultation	Comments Received
Arboricultural Officer	No objection subject to a condition securing a site meeting prior to commencement and condition securing compliance with the approved arboricultural details.

6.0 REPRESENTATION

6.1 A total of 137 individual letters of notification were sent out on 6th February 2024. To date 9 letters of objection have been received.

6.2 The table below summarises the material planning reasons for objection:

Material Reason for Objection	Officer Response
Character and Design	
Oppressive style of the proposed fencing is not suitable in a residential street.	The proposed weldmesh fencing would be of a suitable design providing views in and out of the site and would not unacceptably enclose the site and is considered an acceptable design for a school boundary.
Amenity	
Intrusive to the dwellings which back onto the school grounds.	Due to the nature of the proposal, it would not have a significant bulk or mass. The weldmesh design would allow for views into and out of the site and would not have a significantly enclosing visual impact. The proposed fencing would be 0.4 metre taller than what could be erected under permitted development. The additional 0.4 metres due to the design of the fencing is considered not to result in harm to the outlook or result in an overbearing

	structure to the detriment of the neighbouring occupiers amenity.
Negatively affect outlook.	The proposal would be visible from neighbouring residential properties, but due to the separation distances and open style of the fence, it is considered not to result in an adverse impact on the outlook from these neighbouring dwellings.
Invasion of privacy.	No raised platforms are proposed, the fencing would not alter the existing level of overlooking.
Noise pollution from the intercom.	This proposal would not affect the intercom system. The gates will be automatically open at certain times of the day (pick up and drop off), so vehicles picking up and dropping off children at the start and the end of each school day will not use the intercom. In addition, the intercom would mostly be used by visitors during the day and any noise from the intercom would be during the hours which the school is open and would be intermittent. Furthermore, these visitors would be when traffic is expected to be lower. As such it is considered that the proposal would not result in noise and disturbance to the detriment of neighbouring occupiers' amenity.
Pollution from car fumes.	The proposal would not alter the number of pupils at this school, nor does it alter the existing school times or parking layout. As such, the proposal would not alter the existing pollution levels.
Highways and Parking	
Congestion at school pick-up time.	This is an existing issue and would not be affected by the proposed development which would not alter the staffing or pupil numbers at the school.
No turning circle at the end of Alpha Road.	There is no existing turning area and as such, the existing situation would be unchanged by this proposal.
Use of the intercom when the gate is shut leads to driveways being blocked.	The proposal would not alter this. This is the existing situation and SCC Highways has raised no objection to the proposal on highway safety grounds.
Increased risk of damage to parked cars.	There is no proposed increase in pupil or staff numbers, so no increase in the number of vehicles visiting the site, therefore, no increase to the existing levels of traffic or associated risk.
Biodiversity	
Blocking of access points for wildlife (hedgehogs).	The agent has agreed that hedgehog holes can be secured by condition.
Proposal would result in the loss of trees and shrubs with no biodiversity net gain.	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), at the time of the validation of this application, did

	not apply to minor applications and this type of application would be exempt from providing BNG.
Works are proposed over summer, which could affect nesting birds and bats.	Bird nesting season runs from February to August, it is expected that 'Best Practice' guidance will be followed by the developer. Both ground protection and tree protection barriers are proposed around the trees close to the southern boundary of the site. Manual excavations are proposed along the northern boundary where the fence would be close to trees.
Other Issues	
Proposal does not address known escape routes over the brick cupboard housing the gas meter.	The proposed erection of the fence to the southern boundary would improve the security of the site.
Insufficient information regarding the proposed gates which appear to directly access private gardens.	These two gates would provide access to allow for maintenance only, and would not access to any private garden as the existing boundary fencing to the rear of each dwelling would remain unchanged.
There has been no consultation with neighbours.	A total of 137 letters were sent for this application, notifying the occupiers of the adjoining properties of the application.

6.3 The table below summarises the non-material planning reasons for objection:

Non-Material Reason for Objection	Officer Response
Negatively affect house prices.	This is not a material planning consideration.
Pupils are allowed off-site during the school day.	This is not relevant to the consideration of the application.
The current entrance gates were recently erected and to replace again so soon would be a waste of money.	This is not a material planning consideration.
Noise pollution from the rugby club.	This is not relevant to the consideration of the application.
Better supervision of the children would be a better solution than higher fences.	The operation of the school is not a material consideration of this application.
Does the higher fence indicate an increase in the number of pupils in the future?	This application is solely for the boundary treatments and no increase in pupil numbers is proposed.

7.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATION

- 7.1 This application is considered against advice contained with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) where there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Regard will be given to Policies CP1, CP2, DM2, CP14A, DM9, DM11 and DM14 of the adopted Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document 2012 (CSDMP).
- 7.2 This SEN school has identified a need to improve the security of the site for safeguarding reasons and in principle there is no objection to this objective. This objection aligns with the NPPF's aim to promote safe communities. The main issues to be considered as part of the application are as follows:

- Impact on residential amenity
- Highway impacts
- Biodiversity and trees

7.3 Impact on the character and appearance of the area

- 7.3.1 Policy DM2 limits proposals in Chobham to appropriate Green Belt uses and small scale development. It allows for adaptations and alterations to community uses within the settlement. Policy DM9 of the CSDMP promotes high quality design. Development should respect and enhance the character of the local environment and be appropriate in scale, materials and bulk.
- 7.3.2 The proposed fence would be visible from the public realm at the northern end of Alpha Road, and be visible from the footpath running along the western boundary of the site. It should be noted that there are existing gates in the western boundary to the site which are surrounded by 3 metre weldmesh high fences.
- 7.3.3 Whilst there would be views of the proposed fencing from Alpha Road and the footpath to the west of the site, the fencing would be of a height and design which would be typical for enclosing a school ground and would not be visible from wider public viewpoints. Given the presence of existing weldmesh fencing of a similar design along the western boundary of the site, of a similar height it is considered that the proposed fencing would be acceptable and would not result in harm to the character of the site or surrounding area and would be in accordance with Policies DM2 and DM9.
- 7.3.4 It should also noted that there are permitted development rights for the erection of fences of up to 2 metres in height around a school (Class A of Part 2 of Schedule 2, of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended)). The proposed development, at the boundary of the site, would result in fencing 0.4 metres taller than allowed under permitted development rights. The additional 0.4 metres in height is considered not to result in additional harm to the character of the area to warrant refusal of the application.
- 7.3.5 There are also examples of similar boundary treatments around schools within the borough which are similar in design and height, including: Tomlinscote County Secondary School has a mixture of brick piers (in excess of 2 metres) with railings, weldmesh and chain fences; Cordwalles Junior School, Camberley and Ravenscote School, Frimley, both have 2 metre high palisade fencing and gates; and, South Camberley Primary and Nursery School has a 2 metre high palisade fence as well as a 2 metre high close boarded fence with a further metre of chain link fence where the playing fields border the public realm.
- 7.3.6 For the reasons above, it is considered that the proposal would have an acceptable impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and would comply with policies DM2 and DM9 of the CSDMP.

7.4 Impact on residential amenity

- 7.4.1 Policy DM9 (iii) of the CSDMP is relevant as this seeks to ensure that developments respect the amenities of the adjoining properties and uses.
- 7.4.2 The proposed fencing would be sited 1 metre from the site boundaries to the north and east and would retain a minimum separation distance of 14.5 metres from the rear elevations of the dwellings fronting Burr Hill Lane and 12.5 metres from the rear elevations of the dwellings fronting Delta Road apart from Willow End, Three Corners and 1 Burr Hill Lane.

- 7.4.3 For these three dwellings the minimum separation distances to the proposed fencing would be 3.9 metres, 6.2 metre and 3.3 metre, respectively. However, due to the design of the proposed weldmesh fence, it would have a relatively open nature providing views in and out of the site and would not project significantly above the existing fencing line. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal would not result in an adverse overbearing impact or loss of outlook. In addition, as mentioned in section 7.4 above, the proposal is considered an acceptable boundary treatment for a school. The design of the proposal fence also mitigates any significant overshadowing impacts and would not result in an overlooking impact.
- 7.4.5 The proposed 2.4 metre high fence would be sited approximately 2 metres from the side wall of 53 Alpha Road. This boundary is currently denoted by a 1.8 metre high close boarded, timber fence. The existing fence would remain, with the proposed 2.4 metre, weldmesh fence sited adjacent to it, within the school grounds. Similarly, there would be no adverse impact upon this neighbour's amenities.
- 7.4.6 Whilst there are remnants of a post and chain link fence along the northern boundary of the site, this no longer forms a complete means of enclosure. The existing boundary to the application site along the north and eastern boundaries is comprised of the rear boundaries of the residential properties, including brick walls, timber fence panels and vegetation/hedges. It is reasonable for a school to have its own boundary treatment. In addition, the height of the proposal would prevent balls and the like from landing the rear gardens of the neighbouring dwellings.
- 7.4.7 It is noted that vehicle fume pollution and noise complaints have been raised as a result of the neighbouring notification. Whilst these are material considerations, in this instance the proposed development is solely for boundary treatments. There would be no alteration to the existing levels of noise and pollution resulting from the proposed development.
- 7.4.8 The proposal would comply with policy DM9 of the CSDMP .

7.5 Highway impacts

- 7.5.1 Policy DM11 of the CSDMP requests that all development should ensure safe and well-designed vehicular access and egress and layouts which consider the needs and accessibility of all highway users.
- 7.5.2 It is considered that the proposal would not result in a net additional traffic generation and there would be no alteration to the existing parking provision. The relocation of the pedestrian access gate from Alpha Road, from the eastern side of the vehicle gates to the western side would not result in a significant alteration to the existing situation. The relocation of the vehicle entrance gates to be in line with the boundary of the site would result in the gates being 1.8 metres closer to the highway. There is insufficient space to the front of the existing gates for the full length of a vehicle to be off the adopted highway. As such, the relocated vehicle entrance gates would not result in a significant alteration to the existing layout. Following consultation with the Highway Authority, it is considered that the application would not have a material impact on the safety and operation of the adjoining public highway.
- 7.5.3 The proposed development would therefore have no adverse impact upon the highway and would comply with Policy DM11 of the CSDM.

7.6 Biodiversity and trees

- 7.6.1 Policy DM9 of the CSDMP seeks to protect trees worthy of retention. Policy CP14A seeks to conserve and enhance biodiversity within Surrey Heath.

- 7.6.2 It is noted that the proposed works, including works to trees would take place in the summertime, due to the use of the site as a school. This would be within the bird nesting season. However, all wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and developers must comply with this legal protection.
- 7.6.3 There are no trees covered by a tree preservation order which would be affected by the proposed development. The Council's Arboricultural Officer has reviewed the submitted arboricultural information and has raised no objection to the proposal subject to a condition securing compliance with the submitted information and a condition securing a site visit prior to any works taking place. It is therefore considered that the overall quality and longevity of the amenity contribution provided by the trees and vegetation within and adjacent to the site would not be adversely affected by the proposal.
- 7.6.4 The proposal would comply with policies DM9 and CP14.

8.0 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 8.1 Under the Equalities Act 2010 the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment or victimisation of persons by reason of age, disability, pregnancy, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation. This planning application has been processed and assessed with due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty. The proposal is not considered to conflict with this duty.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The proposed development would be acceptable in principle. It would result in an acceptable impact on the character of the area and retained trees on site and in respect to the residential amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings. Subject to conditions, the proposal would have an acceptable impact on biodiversity. The proposal would not result in a significant alteration to the existing situation in terms of highway safety. The proposed development would therefore comply with the NPPF, and the CSDMP.

10.0 RECOMMENDATION

GRANT subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: To prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions and in accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The proposed development shall be built in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:
Site Location Plan, Reference: BA/P23-1117.01, Received 30.01.2024
Proposed Site Layout, Reference: BA/P23-1117.03, Received 30.01.2024
Proposed Fencing Elevations, Reference: BA/P23-1117.04, Received 30.01.2024
Proposed Fencing Details, Reference: BA/P23-1117.05, Received 30.01.2024
Proposed Elevations of Vehicle Gate, Reference: BA/P23-1117.08, Received 30.01.2024
Proposed Elevations and Floor Plan of Vehicle Gate, Reference: BA/P23-1117.06, Received 30.01.2024
Logistic Plan, Reference: BA/P23-1117.02, Received 30.01.2024
Arboricultural Impact Assessment Plan, Reference: ARBTECH AIA 01, Received 17.01.2024

Tree Protection Plan, Reference: ARBTECH TPP 01, Received 17.01.2024
Design and Access Statement, Reference: P23-1117, Received 17.01.2024
Arboricultural Method Statement, Received 17.01.2024
Arboricultural Survey, Received 17.01.2024

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning and as advised in ID.17a of the Planning Practice Guidance.

3. The building works, hereby approved, shall be constructed in external fascia materials as stated in the approved Design and Access Statement.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the area and to accord with Policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012.

4. The building works, hereby approved shall be undertaken in accordance with approved arboricultural protection measures. All protection measures shall be erected before any equipment, machinery or materials (including demolition and all preparatory work) are brought on to the site, and thereafter maintained until all construction work, equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been permanently removed from the site.

Nothing shall be stored or placed in any area in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those protected areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavation be made, without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details until completion of the development.

Reason: To protect trees which contribute to the visual amenities of the site and surrounding area and to comply with Policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012.

5. A minimum of 7 working days before any development, including any works of demolition or site clearance, a pre-commencement meeting must be arranged with the Arboricultural Officer. The purpose of this meeting is to agree the extent of any facilitation or management tree works, tree and ground protection, demolition, storage of materials and the extent and frequency of Arboricultural site supervision. In all other regards the development shall proceed in accordance with the supplied BS5837:2012 - Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction compliant report prepared by Arbtech; and dated 11 December 2023.

Reason: To preserve and enhance the visual amenities of the locality in accordance with Policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012.

6. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, details of the placement of hedgehog holes in the proposed fencing shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details and retained thereafter for the life time of the development.

Reason: To ensure the proposal supports ecology and protected species in accordance with Policy CP14 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD.

Informative(s)

1. This Decision Notice is a legal document and therefore should be kept in a safe place as it may be required if or when selling your home. A replacement copy can be obtained, however, there is a charge for this service.
 2. Birds: All wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected under Schedule 1-4 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence to damage or destroy a nest of any wild bird. Birds are generally nesting between March and July.
 3. The decision has been taken in compliance with paragraphs 38-41 of the NPPF to work with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner.
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