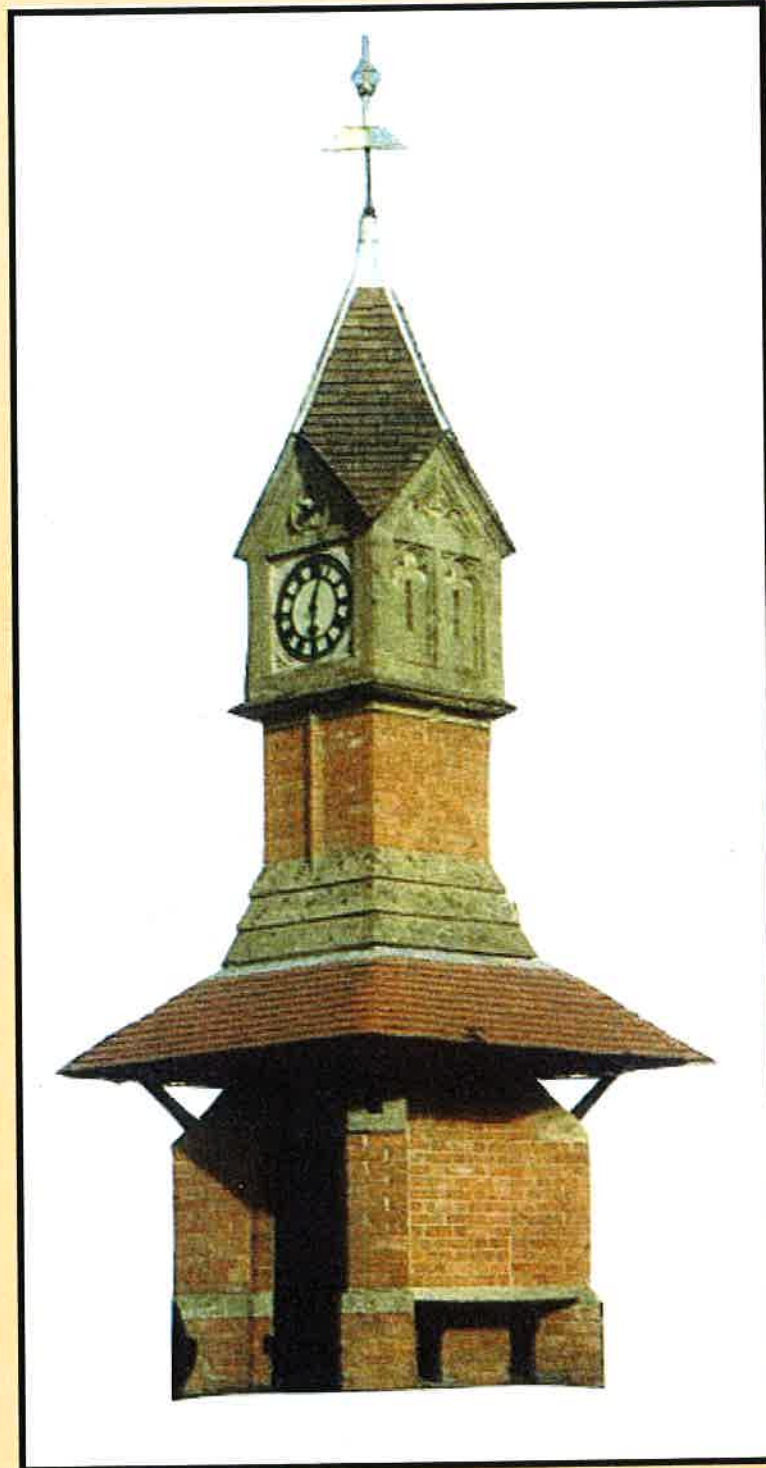


NORTH TAWTON



Village Design Statement

VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

A Village Design Statement is a document which describes the visual character of the town and the surrounding countryside. It shows how the character of the town can be protected in any new building and lays down guidelines for the design of any new buildings. It is about managing change in the town, not preventing it. It is not about whether building should take place – that is the job of the Local Plan – but it is about how the planned building should be done, so that it contributes to the conservation and enhancement of our town.

A Village Design Statement reflects the opinions of the townspeople, so it is our way of having a say in what our town looks like for future generations. Once the Village Design Statement has been accepted as supplementary planning guidance then the Local Planning Authority and any builders will have to take notice of it in any new development proposals.

This Design Statement has been compiled by the North Tawton Village Design Statement Group, volunteers who consulted with the residents of the town at two, well attended, exhibitions of photographs of various aspects of North Tawton and one presentation of the draft document. In addition, a questionnaire was also undertaken to ascertain what the community believe to be the inherent character of our town and how best to ensure that it survives and is enhanced in future periods of growth and development.



The purpose of this Statement, together with the North Tawton Conservation Area Character Appraisal, is to provide guidelines for us all – residents, builders, architects and planners – to enable us to work together to make sure that future development of the town is in keeping with the fundamental character of the area in which we live and which we call home.

HISTORY / HERITAGE

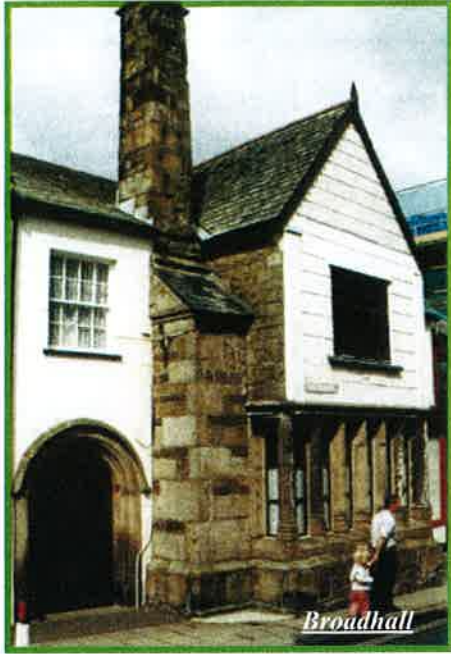
Although artifacts found in the parish confirm that Stone and Bronze Age people had a presence here, the earliest significant settlement was probably centred around the present-day site of the church and nearby earthwork. It is thought to have been associated with the Druids who are known to have been located in the vicinity.

The Romans set up camp here in about 50AD. The Roman Fort, on the south west edge of the parish (not far from the former railway station) was their last major encampment on their supply and trade route to the far south west. Its inhabitants may well have outnumbered the current North Tawton population. Nothing of this habitation is now visible on the ground, and neither the fort itself, nor any of the other sites, which have been identified between it and the edge of the existing town, have ever been properly excavated.

The oldest existing building in the town is *St. Peter's Church*, which dates from the 13th Century, and this is followed chronologically by some of the outlying manor houses and farms, which date from the late 15th Century.



From those early trading days to this, North Tawton has remained a working community. It was on a major coaching route, and would have provided a service centre for surrounding communities.



When horse drawn transport was the norm, the Gostwyck Arms, in The Square, would have been the focal point of the town centre. The building was destroyed in a fire in 1917. A number of other listed buildings surround The Square, the most important of which is **Broadhall**, which dates from the late 15th or early 16th Century (1467 is claimed).

Remnants and features of the commercial and agricultural influence on the viability of the town create its essential character. The most significant of these trades has probably been the woollen industry which is believed to have existed from the 1500's. **The Wool Mill** complex (now virtually derelict) is the most significant and obvious reminder of North Tawton's industrial heritage, and it is particularly important that architectural and historically significant features of these buildings are preserved along with the identifiable integrity of the whole site.



The nearby 15th Century **Taw Bridge** is another particularly noteworthy historical feature. Its historical importance and Grade II listing do not provide protection against the ravages of modern transport and this should be addressed in development plans for the town.



In 1374 North Tawton was granted a Market Charter, confirming its established commercial activity at that time. Moving on to the more recent past sees a number of businesses forming the backbone of the community.



Devonshire House, (a school from 1867 to 1895) was a tailoring and clothing business, sending quality clothing across the world and employing at least 40 tailors. The 'Devon Serge Warehouse' closed in 1930 and later became the offices of the North Devon Water Board. In the mid 1980's it was converted to provide a Medical Centre and some residential properties.

A ginger beer manufacturing and bottling industry was situated at the bottom of Essington Lane, again from the late 1800's into the 20th Century. The company patented a unique kind of 'marble' bottle stopper.



These and other prosperous businesses – including a tannery which employed 100 people in the early 1800's – supported the rest of the infrastructure of the town and ensured that it retained its central role in the area.

They also helped produce the variety of period houses, with distinctive construction and detail, reflecting the needs of workers, managers, owners and the gentry over the centuries.



North Tawton is still identified as a Local Centre, servicing a large catchment area. For a small community it remains unusual in the number and size of the major industries which it supports. The historically important businesses mentioned above have now been superseded by Gregory's Transport, the Cheese Factory (Glanbia) and Vital Dog pet supplies.



Guidelines

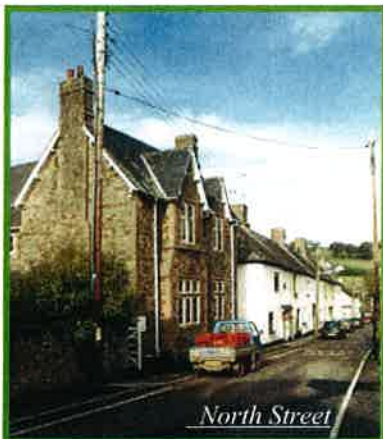
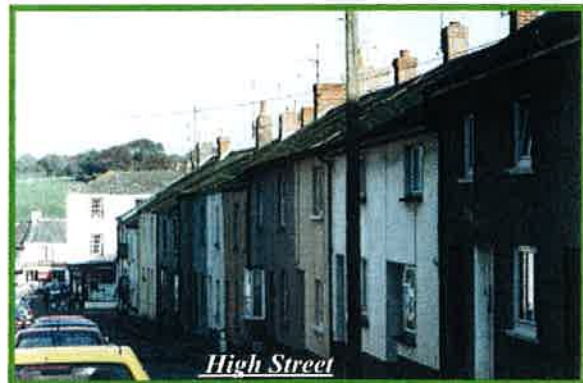
- To retain the character of a working town by encouraging light industrial/commercial enterprise and housing to meet the needs of the local community.
- The character and identity of the town is seen as depending heavily on the visible remnants of its history. These should be protected and enhanced by preserving, for example, the integrity of the wool mill site and buildings, whatever their subsequent uses.

CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

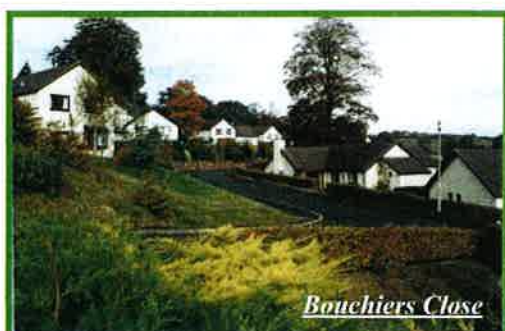
Ribbon development borders the roads radiating from The Square, this being the hub of our town. Most of the town is within the Conservation Area and the houses here are predominantly terraced cottages. Most of these dwellings face the street and their front doors open directly on to the pavement. They have no front gardens or garages and their occupants park their cars in the road outside.



Fore Street and High Street are lined by terraced housing, but in North Street the frontage is more irregular.



Interspersed with the original cob and stone buildings are newer housing and small housing estates with open plan front gardens and garages. These comprise a fairly equal mix of bungalows and two storey homes and vary in age from 35 years to less than one year. Architecturally, they are a complete contrast to existing buildings, adding variety to the townscape.





There are long lengths of stonewalling lining the streets, particularly by the Church, Cemetery, Barton Street, Essington and North Street. Some of this is drystone walling and is over a hundred years old.



Looking down on the town, it has evolved as a jumble of different styles throughout time. There are small areas of backland development, a terrace of houses here, a cottage tucked away there, a detached property in isolated splendour, all constructed in a myriad of designs and colours. These building styles and periods echo the history and typical character of OUR town and provide its unique character which must be preserved for future generations.



From almost anywhere in the town, the surrounding countryside can be glimpsed, be it local fields or a panoramic view of the majesty of Dartmoor to the south.





The retail centre consists of a post office, a bank (mornings only), a fish & chip shop, a chemist (mornings only), two hairdressers, a grocery shop and a larger supermarket outlet, a butchery, three public houses, a general clothing store and an outlet for building supplies.

The community also supports a medical centre, a primary school, and pre-school, a dentist, three churches (St. Peter's parish church, Lakeway United URC / Methodist and a Gospel Hall). There is also a commodious Town Hall in The Square, used as a meeting place by local clubs and organisations and for many social events throughout the year.



Guidelines

- The character of the buildings must be safeguarded by referring to the existing layout and styles.
- The views as described contribute to our town's character, these should be preserved in the design and layout of any new development.
- The development of local facilities, shops, healthcare and education to cope with any future population increase.

ROADS, FOOTPATHS AND TRAFFIC

The heart of the town is The Square, a triangular(!) road pattern with buildings around its outside edge and the Jubilee Clock tower, an important local feature, in the centre.

From The Square a network of roads radiate out in all directions, most of these roads have, in turn, roads which lead off from them. The result is a haphazard straggle of narrow streets which cannot cope with modern lifestyles. Visibility from these side roads into The Square is less than adequate for today's traffic density and the demands of future development.



Although the whole town is within a 30 mph zone there is concern about the speed of vehicles, particularly because the width of most of the streets are further restricted by on-street car parking.

Conversely, there is also concern that clearing the parked cars will lead to an overall increase in the speed of through traffic.

There is frequently severe traffic congestion within the town, particularly at school time. There are calls to encourage people to walk more but in some places a lack of pavements and street lighting makes this a hazardous occupation. There are no designated cycle ways, and no obvious places to create any, but cycling on the main roads amongst the traffic is both dangerous and unpleasant.



North Tawton is well served by public transport with regular bus services to Okehampton, Barnstaple and Exeter, but it is these buses, as well as lorries delivering to local businesses, which contribute significantly to the traffic congestion. The number of HGVs using the town centre is also a cause of concern with the resultant noise and vibration considered damaging to people and property. Clearly, provision must be made for these vehicles so it is important that traffic management is addressed. At present there are no off-street car parking facilities anywhere in the town and thoughtless or inappropriate parking regularly brings the town to a standstill. The rural location of the town fosters high car dependency and North Tawton is the only market town in Devon to have no off-street car parking provision. Work has just begun on an off street, 33 space car park on the west side of the square which is due for completion in 2004. In some parts of the town bollards have been erected on the edges of the pavements to prevent cars parking or driving on pedestrian areas and although they serve a useful purpose, they are unsightly and are regularly damaged by traffic.

There are over ten miles of public footpaths and bridle paths within the parish, established over the centuries as a means of access from farm to church. Now serving a recreational purpose the paths can be linked together to provide pleasant walks of varying length to suit all abilities. Outside the built-up area the roads quickly turn into quiet leafy lanes lined by trees, grass verges and Devon hedge banks.



Guidelines

- A large central car park and several smaller ones, should be provided to address the problems of traffic congestion.
- More bollards could be erected to prevent cars parking on the pavements. If more are needed, care should be taken to achieve a design that is as locally distinctive and discreet as possible.
- A traffic management scheme should be implemented to reduce the speed of through traffic in residential areas.
- There should be tighter control on parking in congested areas to prevent inappropriate parking.
- HGVs should be banned (except for deliveries to businesses) to prevent further damage to pavements and property.
- Original local place names should be adopted in any new development to retain the sense of continuity and community.

ENVIRONMENT – HUMAN AND NATURAL

Some enhancement schemes have already been undertaken at Taw Bridge and Butts Way, with the help of community involvement and some external funding, and another has recently commenced at Devonshire Gardens. Other enhancements have been suggested for the entrance to Moorview, De Bathe Cross, the edge of the Memorial Park by Barton Street and around the Chapel of Rest in the Cemetery. There are other small areas and forgotten corners that could be improved with some tidying and a tree planted or a flower border dug. These enhancements will, however, require maintenance once completed and residents should be encouraged to become involved with caring for their local patch.



The Taw, of course, gives our town its name, and is of high water quality and aesthetic appeal. It also supports valued species such as otter and kingfisher and its surrounding wetland landscape offers interest to those following the Tarka Trail. The North Tawton stream also winds its way through the urban fabric of the town and forms a considerable wetland habitat in the bottom of Lakeway Meadow behind North Street.

More tree planting should be encouraged in the town area, especially in green areas and open spaces. Gardens in the parish play an important role in providing a diversity of habitat, with several mature and rare amenity tree specimens. The centre of town is unfortunately devoid of trees, and any new development should encourage tree planting (using native species where possible) as part of the plan.



Hedges are important and are often historic boundaries in the parish, full of wildlife interest. Where near roads or walkways, they should be kept neat as necessary.

Environment (Continued)

Important green areas and open space sites in the town include St. Peter's Church with its large yew, ash and lime trees; the Memorial Park with mature conifers of various types; the Cemetery which has a mature beech and lime boundary; the Primary School grounds; the allotments behind Fore Street and the footpaths leading out into the town fringe and countryside beyond.



Guidelines

- There should be adequate provision for green spaces and tree planting schemes in new developments.
- There should be conservation of existing enhancement schemes.
- Open views to surrounding countryside must be retained by good design layout.

SETTLEMENT

North Tawton is situated in wonderful rolling West Devon countryside, bordered on the west by the River Taw, part of the Tarka Trail, some seven miles north of the Dartmoor National Park.



Road access from the west is over Taw Bridge, a listed 15th Century, five arch, construction. This ancient crossing is now subject to the ravages of 40 tonne vehicles using the recommended entrance to Gregory's Transport at the lower end of Fore Street.

The majority of 17th to 19th Century properties are built of stone and cob, rendered and colour washed, with small windows, often in a six to eight pane pattern, using either sash or traditional opening casement. There are about 18 non-rendered stone properties throughout the town and, although the vast majority would have originally had thatched roofs, following several fires in the 18th and 19th Century, few now remain thatched.



Brick has been used for some of the newer housing and this stands out against the more traditional render. Some of the larger picture windows in the more recent properties are inconsistent with the older styles that predominate in the town. The older properties nearly all have chimney stacks whereas the new ones do not.

Guidelines

- To preserve the character, there should be no development outside the designated development boundary (WDBC Local Plan).
- Cables etc. to be underground on all developments.
- Original features such as windows, doors, railings, boundary walls, hedges and Devon banks which contribute to the character of buildings, and the area around, to be retained on any redevelopment or other proposed plans.
- The scale, design and materials of any new development must be appropriate to the area in which it is located.
- Red or coloured brick and coloured roof tiles to be avoided where possible.
- Street furniture to blend in with the existing within the conurbation.
- Open spaces; the largest feasible area is to be incorporated in any development.
- Chimney pots, stacks and porches should be encouraged to alleviate 'boxy' designs, with varied roof lines and staggered frontages where the terrain allows.
- Traditionally constructed small-paned windows, excluding patio doors, should be used on traditional style houses.
- Variation of house design to be encouraged to enhance the visual effect of any new residential scheme.
- Due to the town's existing traffic problems, all new development must be designed so as to minimise any detrimental or adverse impact in this respect. In particular, where it is possible without conflicting with Government Planning Policy Guidance, all new development should incorporate at least 1.5 parking places per household or additional parking places within the development.

STREET FURNITURE



Street furniture, unobtrusive and often unnoticed, adds character and illustrates the history of a settlement as well as helping to blend original and new parts of the town. Matching street signs, litter bins and street lights all combine to give a sense of unity to the townscape. Letter boxes indicate population pockets within the overall settlement and their design indicates the history and permanence of the community.

Telephone boxes still perform a vital function for those without their own phone, and their distinctive design and colouring is recognised throughout the world as quintessentially British.



Some older properties still have railings fronting the streets and these form an attractive feature to the building line.

Public seats are a snapshot of social history in the town as most of them are donated in memory of a noteworthy event or citizen, as well as providing a valuable resting place from which to admire the fine views of the countryside which surround the town.



Boundary stones, marking the parish borders provide another snapshot of social history, these being connected with a 'sense of place' at a time when people needed to know where they belonged. It is still important for people to know where they belong and to this end four new stones were provided during the Millennium year to supplement existing ancient stones.

Guidelines

- Uniform street signage helps to integrate the old and new development in the town.
- A common theme/type of street lights should be provided to unite the old and new development in the town. The Victorian style used in The Square should not be the standard for the rest of the town.
- Litter bins should be of an appropriate design for the development .
- The red telephone boxes in The Square and at Taw Meadow add character and merit to the streetscape and should be retained.
- The ER letter boxes which are currently situated at the Station, the Copper Key, Arundell Road and The Square and the GR letter box at Bouchiers Hill add character and emphasise the history of the settlement and should be retained.
- Public seats should continue to be provided wherever a suitable venue can be identified.
- Railings should be encouraged where they would enhance a suitable building and add to the townscape.
- Parish Boundary Stones should be maintained and preserved.
- Satellite dishes are visually intrusive and should be sited as inconspicuously as possible. This should be a key criterion wherever planning permission is required.
- Wherever possible, the community would expect / want the Local Planning Authority to influence the installation of telecommunication masts so as to minimise any risks to health.



CONCLUSION

Guidelines for all future development:

- To retain the character of a working town by encouraging light industrial/commercial enterprise and housing to meet the needs of the local community.
- The character and identity of the Town is seen as depending heavily on the visible remnants of its history. These should be protected and enhanced, for example, by preserving the integrity of the wool-mill site and buildings, whatever their subsequent uses.
- The character of the buildings must be safeguarded by referring to the existing layout and styles.
- The views as described contribute to our town's character, these should be preserved in the design and layout of any new development.



- The development of local facilities, shops, healthcare and education to cope with any future population increase.
- A large central car park and several smaller ones should be provided to address the problems of traffic congestion.
- More bollards could be erected to prevent cars parking on the pavements. If more are needed, care should be taken to achieve a design that is as locally distinctive and discreet as possible.
- A traffic management scheme should be implemented to reduce the speed of through traffic in residential areas.
- There should be tighter control on parking in congested areas to prevent inappropriate parking.

Guidelines (Continued)

- HGVs should be banned (except for deliveries to businesses) to prevent further damage to pavements and property.
- Original local place names should be adopted in any new development to retain the sense of continuity and community.
- There should be adequate provision for green spaces and tree planting schemes in new developments.
- There should be conservation of existing enhancement schemes.
- Open views to surrounding countryside must be retained by good design layout.
- To preserve the character, there should be no development outside the designated development boundary (WDBC Local Plan).
- Cables etc. to be underground on all developments.
- Original features such as windows, doors, railings, boundary walls, hedges and Devon banks which contribute to the character of buildings, and the area around, should be retained on any re-development or other proposed plans.
- The scale, design and materials of any new development must be appropriate to the area in which it is located.
- Red or coloured brick and coloured roof tiles to be avoided where possible.
- Street furniture to blend in with existing within the conurbation.
- Open spaces. The largest feasible area is to be incorporated in any development.
- Chimney pots, stacks and porches should be encouraged to alleviate 'boxy' designs, with varied roof lines and staggered frontages where terrain allows.
- Traditionally constructed small-paned windows, excluding patio doors, should be used on traditional style houses.

Guidelines (Continued)

- Variation of house design to be encouraged to enhance the visual effect of any new residential scheme.
- New developments should include adequate off-road parking, including garages and garden plots.
- Due to the town's existing traffic problems, all new development must be designed so as to minimise any detrimental or adverse impact in this respect. In particular, wherever it is possible without conflicting with Government Planning Policy Guidance, all new development should incorporate at least 1.5 parking places per household or additional parking places within the development.
- Uniform street name signs helps to integrate the old and new development in the town.
- A common theme/type of street light should be provided to unite the old and new development in the town. The Victorian style used in The Square should not be the standard for the rest of the town.
- Litter bins should be of an appropriate design for the development.
- The red telephone boxes in The Square and at Taw Meadow add character and merit to the streetscape and should be retained.
- The ER letter boxes which are currently situated at the Station, the Copper Key, Arundell Road and The Square and the GR letter box at Bouchiers Hill add character and emphasise the history of the settlement and should be retained.
- Public seats should continue to be provided wherever a suitable venue can be identified.
- Railings should be encouraged where they would enhance a suitable building and add to the townscape.
- Parish Boundary stones should be maintained and preserved.
- Satellite dishes are visually intrusive and should be sited as inconspicuously as possible. This should be a key criterion wherever planning permission is required.
- Wherever possible, the community would expect/want the Local Planning Authority to influence the installation of telecommunication masts so as to minimise any risks to health.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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2004



