

# **EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 12 DECEMBER 2016**

## **EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PUPIL PLACE PLANNING PROCESS**

**Report by the Director for Children's Services**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. Oxfordshire is experiencing rapid growth and this is having a significant impact on the demand for, and supply of, school places. Effective pupil place planning is essential to ensure the needs of Oxfordshire families are met, and a crucial component of strategic planning for growth across the county.
2. This report sets out the pupil place planning process in Oxfordshire, summarises current pupil planning data, and comments on specific issues relating to pupil place planning.

### **BACKGROUND: OXFORDSHIRE'S SCHOOLS**

3. As of September 2016, Oxfordshire is home to:
  - 237 state sector mainstream schools providing primary education, two of which also provide secondary education (with a third due to start offering secondary education from 2017). Two new primary schools are due to open in September 2017.
  - 38 state sector mainstream schools currently providing secondary education, including three recently opened schools providing for the 14-19 age range: Banbury Space Studio (2014), UTC Oxfordshire in Didcot (2015) and Bicester Technology Studio (2016). In 2017, when year groups at the Europa School (Culham) reach secondary age, and Aureus School opens at Great Western Park in Didcot, the number of schools providing secondary education will increase to 40.
  - 13 state sector schools providing specialist provision for children with special educational needs, one Pupil Referral Unit and one Hospital School.
  - 7 local authority maintained nursery schools (other early education and childcare provision in Oxfordshire is delivered through a mixed market of private and voluntary providers, including pre-schools, day nurseries and childminders, and through schools, including academies and free schools).
4. In Oxfordshire, over 80% of secondary schools, nearly 30% of primary schools and over 30% of special schools are currently academies.

### **PUPIL PLACE PLANNING**

5. The Pupil Place Planning function within Oxfordshire lies within the Education Sufficiency & Access team, and includes:

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- Maintaining information on school capacities: the council is responsible for assessing non-academy school capacities (using a set government methodology) and keeping up-to-date records on academies' capacities;
  - Monitoring pupil numbers through census data collected three times a year from all state-funded schools;
  - Close working with the School Admissions team to monitor emerging pressures on school places;
  - Annual pupil forecasts based on demographic data and housing growth plans;
  - Reporting to the Department for Education on school capacities and pupil forecasts, which then informs the annual "Basic Need" funding the council receives for the purposes of increasing school capacity;
  - Responding (through the council's "Single Response" process) to housing development planning applications for 10 or more dwellings, advising on the expected impact on school capacity and making the case for developer funding for any consequent expansion of school capacity;
  - Responding to Local Plan and similar consultations, advising on where school capacity may present a constraint on housing growth and identifying where new or expanded schools will be necessary;
  - Liaising with district councils and housing developers on the planning of school capacity to meet the needs of housing growth;
  - Collating an overview of housing growth pressures in each area, especially where this post-dates the housing feed in the latest available pupil forecasts;
  - Working with existing schools to plan their expansion, when this is necessary as a result of population growth (including housing growth);
  - Planning new schools, including securing sponsors through the Local Academy "Presumption" process or through working with bidders to the Department for Education "Wave" process (see below).
6. The county's Pupil Place Plan provides an annual snapshot of school planning in the county, and is published on the county council's website. The Plan is updated each year with revised pupil forecasts and other data, and circulated to schools for comment before being approved by the Cabinet Member for Schools.
7. A School Organisation Stakeholder Group, with representatives from county and district councillors, schools, governors and the dioceses providing education in the county, meets three times a year to provide advice and comment on school planning and organisation issues.

### **PLANNING FOR NEW SCHOOLS**

8. While in many circumstances, additional school places can best be provided through temporary or permanent expansions of existing schools, increasingly new schools will be required to meet the needs of Oxfordshire's growing population.

9. Under the Education Act 2011, nearly all new schools will now be established as academies, and since May 2015, all new academies are classified as free schools. New academies can be established through two routes:
- Proposers can apply directly to the DfE to establish a free school, through twice-yearly application waves. These are often referred to as **“wave” schools or promoter-led proposals**. The free school application process includes studio schools, and there is a parallel process for University Technical Colleges. Other similar application processes may be launched periodically by the government to foster specific types of school. Europa School (2012), Tyndale Community School (2013) and Heyford Park Free School (2013) were opened through the wave route, which will also provide a new secondary school (The Swan School) for Oxford; in addition two studio schools and a UTC have been opened.
  - If the need for a new school has been identified but there have been no suitable “wave” proposals, the county council runs a competitive process to invite potential academy sponsors to run the new school. These are often referred to as **“presumption” schools or LA-led proposals**. This presumption process has in Oxfordshire been used to identify sponsors for two primary schools and a secondary school in Didcot, as well as for planned new primary schools in Bicester, Banbury and Oxford, and a secondary school in Bicester.
10. Once schools are open, there is no difference between wave academies and presumption academies for the purposes of pupil place planning; all academies form part of the mixed economy of schools within Oxfordshire.

**Table 1: Schools scheduled to open over the next three years.**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of school</b>	<b>Opening date</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>
<i>Gagle Brook Primary School, North West Bicester</i>	1 form entry primary school, growing to 2 form	2017	White Horse Federation
<i>Longford Park Primary School, Banbury</i>	1.5 form entry primary school, growing to 2 form	2017	GLF Schools
<i>Aureus School, Didcot Great Western Park</i>	1200 place 11-16 secondary school	2017	GLF Schools
<i>Chalkhill Primary School, Didcot Great Western Park</i>	2 form entry primary school	2018	GLF Schools
<i>The Swan School, Oxford</i>	“Wave” secondary school	2018 (tbc)	River Learning Trust
Oxford Barton	1.5 form entry primary school	2019 (tbc)	Cheney School Academy Trust
South West Bicester	Secondary school, 600 places, 11-16	2019	White Horse Federation
Banbury, Southam Road	1 form entry primary school	2019 (tbc)	To be decided

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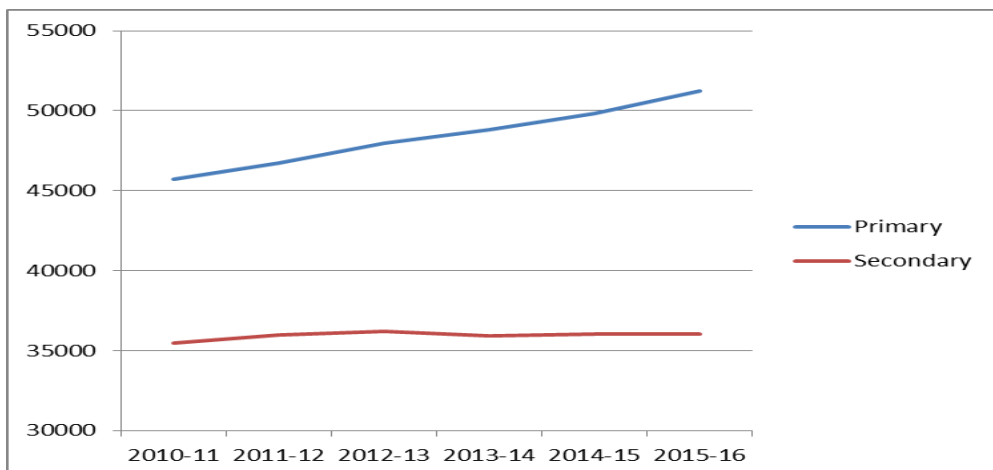
Bicester, Graven Hill	Up to 3 form entry primary school	2019 (tbc)	To be decided
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11. In total, these new schools will add over 5,000 new school places, in addition to over 11,000 new school places being provided through the expansions in the county's current capital programme.
12. Based on current district Local Plans, up to a further seventeen primary schools and five secondary schools, as well as at least one new SEN school, are expected to be opened by 2030 in Oxfordshire. This number may rise as a result of the higher levels of housing growth now proposed in Local Plans, and in response to plans to address Oxford's unmet housing need.

### DEMAND FOR SCHOOL PLACES IN OXFORDSHIRE

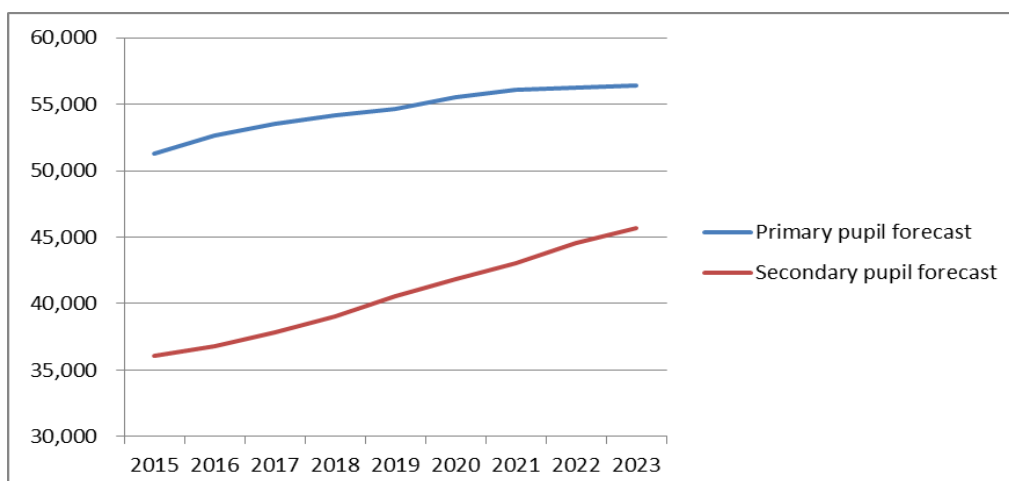
13. Primary school pupil numbers have been growing rapidly in Oxfordshire for several years; secondary school pupil numbers have been broadly stable, but have now also started to grow:

**Chart 1: total pupil numbers 2010/11 – 2015/16**



Pupil numbers at both primary and secondary level are now forecast to increase:

**Chart 2: forecast total pupil numbers 2015/16 – 2023/24**



14. Current pupil projections show an 8.6% increase in primary pupil numbers, and for secondary school pupils a 14.6% predicted rise, between 2015/16 and 2020/21. However, there is a significant amount of planned/proposed housing which is not yet included in these forecasts, so actual growth is expected to be higher.

### **PUPIL PLACE PLANNING PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

#### Meeting parental preference

15. As a result of effective school place planning, close working with all schools and carefully targeted investment, the proportion of Oxfordshire residents allocated their first preference and/or offered a place at one of their three preferred schools is consistently high, and above the national average:

**Table 2: school preference data 2014-2016**

<b>Primary applications</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
% 1 <sup>st</sup> preferences met - Oxon	89.0	88.0	91.4
%1 <sup>st</sup> preferences - England	87.7	87.8	88.4
% top-3 preferences met - Oxon	96.8	96.0	98.0
% top-3 preferences met - England	95.7	95.9	96.3

<b>Secondary applications</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
% 1 <sup>st</sup> preferences met - Oxon	90.6	90.9	92.1
%1 <sup>st</sup> preferences - England	85.2	84.2	84.1
% top-3 preferences met - Oxon	97.8	97.8	98.4
% top-3 preferences met - England	95.5	95.0	95.0

#### Spare places

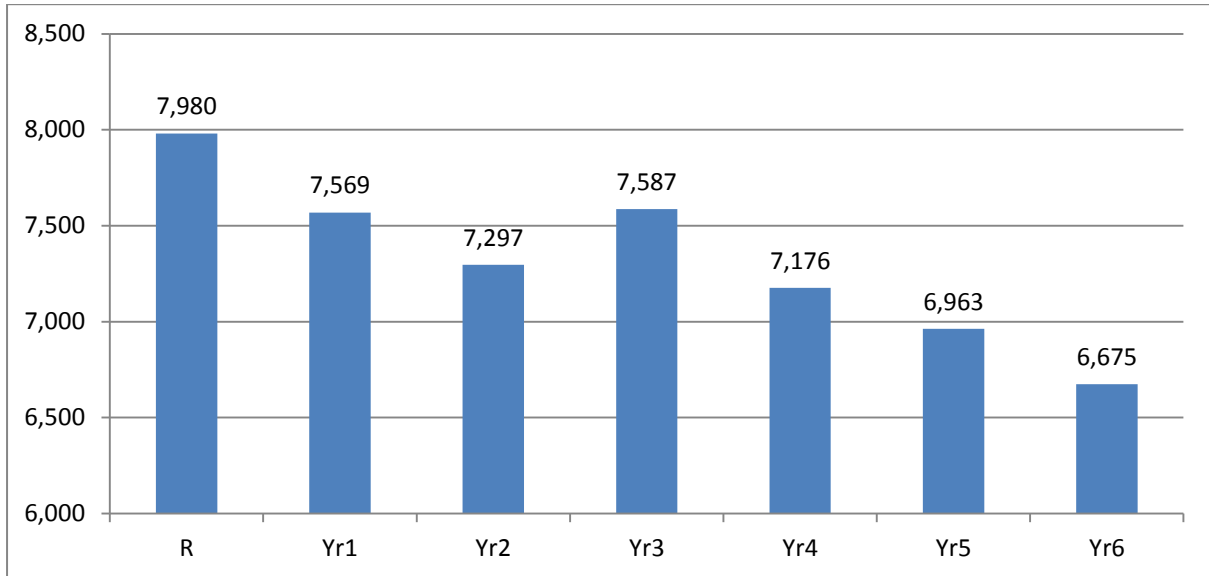
16. In general, more parents are able to secure their preferred school if there is some spare capacity in the system; this benefit needs to be balanced against the financial risks for schools of maintaining too high a level of surplus places. The Audit Commission advises that a level of 5-10% spare places is reasonable to provide some flexibility for unexpected influxes of children and enable parents to have some choice of schools. Oxfordshire has a target of 10% spare places overall.

**Table 3: spare school places across Oxfordshire, May 2016**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>
<b>Total capacity</b>	56946 places	46456 places
<b>Total number on roll</b>	50501 pupils	34595 pupils
<b>Spare capacity</b>	11%	26%

17. While the level of primary school spare places is just above the county’s target, spare places are not evenly spread across areas and age groups. Across the areas used for planning school places, only the Sonning Common area has less than 5% spare primary school places overall. Across the county, the oldest primary cohorts are significantly smaller than the younger ones, reflecting the rising birth rate in recent years.

**Chart 3: primary school cohort sizes in Oxfordshire, May 2016**



18. Although there are currently surplus secondary school places, this reflects the demographic dip in this age range. The higher birth rate is now starting to feed into secondary schools, and will reduce the level of spare places.

**Table 4: forecasts secondary pupil numbers and spare places**

Year	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Total secondary pupil forecast</b>	36,787	37,826	39,035	40,553	41,797	43,040	44,554
<b>Forecast spare places without capacity growth</b>	21%	19%	16%	13%	10%	7%	4%

19. Without any increase in secondary school capacity, current forecasts indicate that Oxfordshire as a whole would not fall below 10% spare places until 2021. However, at the local level, spare places will be eroded more quickly in some areas; in addition, pupil growth will lead to a shortage of Year 7 places while there may still be sufficient capacity overall. Additional secondary school

capacity (either through school extension or new schools) will therefore be needed before 2020 in many areas: for example, the secondary schools in Cumnor, Faringdon and Wallingford already have less than 5% spare places overall, and these schools are planned for expansion over the next two years.

**PUPIL PLACE PLANNING - ISSUES**

In-year and late applications

- 20. As well as the annual applications/admissions rounds for primary school, secondary transfer, and transfer at 14-plus to UTCs and studio schools, there have been a growing number of applications outside the standard process. This includes late applications for primary and secondary school, and in-year applications – either children transferring from one school to another, or moving into Oxfordshire after starting school age.
- 21. In the period between 18 April and 16 September 2016, the following applications were received:

**Table 5: In-year applications**

Primary applications	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
	566	478	362	408	351	293	218
Secondary applications	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11		
	186	229	217	210	100		

- 22. In-year and late applications cause particular difficulties for place planning. In many cases, families might apply to their designated school, but find that the specific year group has filled up with children from outside the designated area.
- 23. Some areas are more affected than others. MoD personnel redeployments can lead to significant in-year applications, particularly around Carterton, Bicester, Abingdon and Didcot. The impact can also be felt more widely, for example with the relocation of personnel from RAF Lyneham to RAF Brize Norton, where, due to insufficient military accommodation being available in Carterton, families were dispersed over a wider area, causing pressure on school places in towns such as Faringdon and Watchfield.
- 24. Likewise, there are some other major employers whose activities might result in locally significant fluctuations in school population. Where the School Admissions team has been notified by employers of planned employee relocations, they have been able to provide advice on applying for school places.

Academisation

- 25. The academisation agenda has made less difference to the pupil place planning process than perhaps might have been foreseen.

- All academies in Oxfordshire are part of the coordinated admissions scheme, with allocations working in the same way as non-academy schools.
- Good working relationships with academy trusts have enabled joint planning of school capacity changes.
- The county council cannot require an academy to expand against its will; it does have the power to require controlled schools to expand, but the council has used these powers very rarely.
- Entitlement to free transport relates to the nearest available school, whether that school is an academy or not. In general, an increase in the number of schools within Oxfordshire as new free schools open would be expected to reduce the average travel distance to school, and reduce the need for school transport to be provided.

Births

26. Oxfordshire has experienced a significant increase in births over the last 10 years. Births registrations indicate that a particularly large cohort started primary school in September 2015, and numbers are now expected to subside, excluding migration and housing impacts.

**Table 5: births registered 2009-2013**

Year of birth	Sep09- Aug10	Sep10- Aug11	Sep11- Aug12	Sep12- Aug13
Due to start primary school (Reception)	2014	2015	2016	2017
Births registered in Oxfordshire	7107	7841	7456	7200

Housing growth

27. The county council uses a bespoke population calculation tool to estimate the pupil generation expected from housing developments, taking into account the type and size of new homes, and the speed of delivery. This is based on a 2008 survey of new housing, and work has been commissioned to update the survey. However, housing growth will always present challenges to pupil place planning:
- It is impossible to exactly predict what age of children will move into new homes, and while the estimate of total primary pupils may be accurate, if children are concentrated in a few year groups then school capacity for those ages can be exceeded.
  - The build rate of houses can vary significantly from that indicated at the outset, resulting in pupils being generated much slower than expected, leaving schools with surplus places, or faster than predicted, outrunning the expansion of school capacity. This is particularly an issue with new schools, where the school may be opened too soon if housing delivery slows down.
  - School capacity which is created ahead of housing growth will result in surplus places either at that school, or at surrounding schools, which is financially destabilising.



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- School capacity which is created at very popular schools ahead of housing growth is likely to attract families from outside the catchment area, and fill up before families can move into the new homes.
28. In addition, Oxfordshire's component district councils are at different stages in their Local Plan processes, and precise housing plans are still to be confirmed in many areas. In some areas the Local Plan and housing supply situation is resulting in significant housing growth on smaller sites which cumulatively will have implications for schools provision across the County.

### Cross-border movement

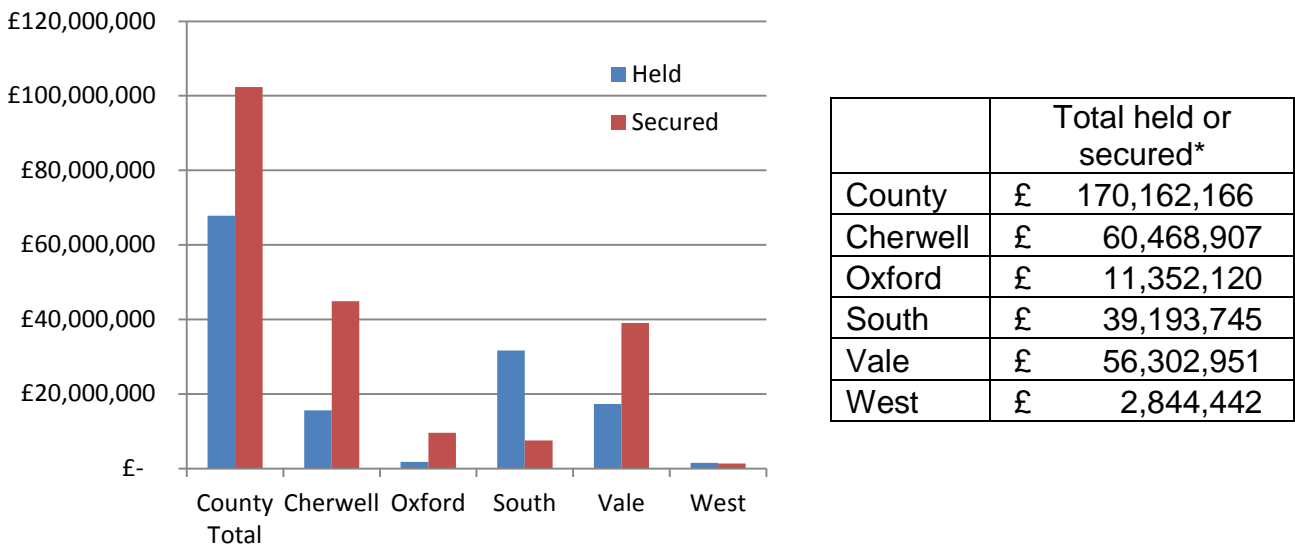
29. Patterns of parental preference can lead to both Oxfordshire pupils attending non-Oxfordshire schools, and non-Oxfordshire pupils attending Oxfordshire schools. In some cases the designated school for a settlement is in a different county – for example, some Buckinghamshire villages feed to Lord Williams's School in Thame.
30. At primary level, imports and exports of pupils broadly balance. 714 non-Oxfordshire resident children attend Oxfordshire primary schools and 646 Oxfordshire resident children attend schools in other local authorities. Most outward flow of primary pupils is to Northamptonshire; most inward flow of primary pupils is from Reading.
31. At secondary level, Oxfordshire is a net importer to the extent of 1.9% of the school population. 1514 non-Oxfordshire resident children attend Oxfordshire primary schools and 935 Oxfordshire resident children attend schools in other local authorities. Most outward flow of secondary pupils is to Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire; most inward flow of primary pupils is from Buckinghamshire and Reading.
32. These flows complicate pupil forecasting, as factors outside the county will have an influence. Contact is maintained with school planning colleagues in surrounding authorities to ensure a flow of information.

### Funding

33. Government funding for school places is mainly through annual "Basic Need" allocations, which is allocated on the basis of a comparison of forecast pupil numbers with school capacity in each planning area, with shortfalls in capacity attracting funding. Adjustments are made to account for school places for which central government funding has already been provided, including through free schools, or which will be funded from developer contributions.
34. In recent years the government has moved to a rolling 3-year allocation of funding which has helped provide more certainty for planning, but each annual allocation can be difficult to predict. For the 3-year period 2016/17–2018/19, Oxfordshire has been allocated £21,002,166 in Basic Need funding.

35. Significant additional funding for school buildings is also secured through developer funding. New residential developments are expected to contribute towards increasing school capacity where this is required as a direct consequence of housing growth. This may be through direct delivery of new schools, or through financial Section 106 (S106) contributions or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

**Chart 4: developer funding held or secured\* towards education provision**



\*Secured means contributions in signed Section 106 Agreements which have yet to be received. The contributions might not be received if the development does not reach the required trigger. Further funding will be at different stages of being negotiated, but not yet secured in a signed Section 106 Agreement.

36. Changes in the regulations governing developer contributions have made it more challenging to secure sufficient funding for school places. There is still uncertainty over how much funding will be available for school infrastructure from CIL.
37. In addition to capital funding, the county council is required to maintain a revenue growth fund, which provides additional revenue funding to support expanding school until the higher pupil numbers feed into the school’s annual budget, and start-up grants for new schools. This is top-sliced from the Direct Schools Grant by agreement with Schools Forum, and therefore reduces the funding which can be paid out to all schools.

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