



# Planning Statement

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United in Purpose

## Pump Farm, Weston Longville – Planning Statement

### Document information

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 Norfolk County Council (NCC) Children’s Services is seeking to change the use of Pump Farm, Weston Longville from a residential property to a temporary care home and will require no external works requiring planning permission. The property is a six bedroom house and two bedroom converted barn known as Pump Farm, Weston Longville.
- 1.2 In summary, it is proposed the site will be used as a temporary children’s residential care home to support the Future Ready Property Enhancement Initiative, which will see all of Norfolk children’s homes undergo some level of fabric, energy efficiency, maintenance and aesthetic improvements to make them suitable for long term sustainable use. In order to minimise the disruption and impact on the children and young people, which can be caused by having construction underway in their homes, the decision has been taken to temporarily relocate them to a tranquil rural setting. Each existing care property will likely decant into Pump Farm for between 3-12 weeks depending on the level of work required. Once the work is complete, they will then vacate Pump Farm and return to their usual residence. It is anticipated that Pump Farm will be used as a temporary care home until 2030 whilst the Future Ready Property Enhancement Initiative is completed.
- 1.3 The temporary care home will have a wide remit to provide care for groups and individuals with a range of care needs. Some will be semi-independent children who have minimal supervision, some children may have physical or mental health conditions which are managed by care staff.
- 1.4 The number of staff and residents will vary depending on which properties have been decanted to the site. The maximum anticipated occupancy is 5 young persons, 3 in the main house and 2 in the barn. They will be accompanied by staff numbers between 1-6 in each property, however this will likely fluctuate throughout the day depending on whether the young people attend school or have particularly challenging care needs. A premises manager will be specifically Ofsted registered to the Pump Farm site and when the properties decant, their usual staff team will move with the young people they support.
- 1.5 In terms of staffing, there would be at least a registered team or assistant manager, a senior residential worker, and a team of up to eight residential children’s practitioners. They would operate on a shift system and there would be up to six members of staff daily starting at 9.30am, who would remain in the home performing a ‘sleep over’ until the end of shift at 10am the following day. At times depending on the group of children, they may be also two night waking staff from 9pm to 8am. There would always also be an ‘on call’ manager available.

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- 1.6 Appendix 1 details the compelling reasons for the accommodation and further justification regarding need; the value of a rural environment, how Pump Farm will operate and be managed; details of the site search, search criteria and properties considered; details of vehicle movements, parking and other amenity considerations.
- 1.7 This Supporting Planning Statement has been prepared to accompany the planning application and outlines the background to the proposal, current use, relevant development plan and other planning policy (including national guidance). It then provides a proportional and objective assessment of the proposed development against these considerations. Appendix 2 also outlines the other supporting documentation required to meet local validation requirements.

## 2. The Site and its Surroundings

- 2.1. Pump Farm is a two-storey house, single storey converted barn and garden with access off Weston Green Road. It is located to the east of Weston Green to the south east of RAF Attlebridge. To the east, west and south of the building area agricultural fields and to the north is Weston Green Road with a single storey bungalow beyond. See aerial photograph showing the site and area below.



Figure 1 – Aerial photo (Google Maps)

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### 3. Planning Policy Considerations

3.0.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 carried forward the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, giving statutory force to a planning led system of development control. Under Section 38 of the 2004 Act, the determination of planning applications must be in accordance with the approved Development Plan for the area, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) last updated in December 2023 has reinforced this.

#### 3.1. Development Plan Policy

3.1.1 The site falls within the Broadland District Council area. In terms of development plan provision, this is provided by;

- *Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) – Adopted March 2024*
- *The Development Management DPD (DM DPD) - adopted in August 2015*

3.1.2 The Greater Norwich Local Plan outlines the vision and overall objectives for development in the Greater Norwich area which includes Weston Longville. The detailed development control policies are provided in the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document for the purposes of the determination of planning applications. Weston Longville has no Neighbourhood Plan.

3.1.3 The Broadland Local Plan Interactive Proposals Map shows the site as falling outside of the development boundary in the open countryside. The site has no other landscape, conservation or environmental protection designations.



Figure 2 - Broadland Local Plan Interactive Map extract

3.1.4 The following strategic policies of the Greater Norwich Local Plan are considered relevant and supportive of this proposal:

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- Policy 1: Sustainable growth strategy;
- Policy 2: Sustainable communities;
- Policy 5: Homes;
- Policy 7.3: Key service centres.

3.1.5 In addition, the following Development Management Policies are relevant;

- Policy GC1 – Sustainable development;
- Policy GC2 – Location of new development;
- Policy GC4 – Design;
- Policy EN1 – Habitat and biodiversity;
- Policy EN2 – Landscape;
- Policy TS3 – Highway safety;
- Policy TS4 – Parking guidelines;
- Policy CSU1 – Additional community facilities;
- Policy CSU5 – Surface Water Drainage;
- Policy CSU4 - Provision of waste collection and recycling facilities.

### 3.2 Central Government Advice

3.2.1 Relevant Central Government advice is provided in the 2023 NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance. The NPPF represents a material consideration in determining applications and introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development (and identifies three dimensions of sustainable development; economic, social and environmental).

3.2.2 In decision making on planning applications the NPPF outlines a proportionate level of information needs to be submitted. Paragraph 44 states:

*Local planning authorities should only request supporting information that is relevant, necessary and material to the application in question.*

3.2.3 The NPPF has no specific provisions in relation to children’s’ homes however paragraphs 87, 88 and 89 recognise the importance of maintaining a strong economy and meeting specific locational needs.

*Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors.....*

*Planning policies and decisions should enable:*

- a) *the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas*

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both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, beautiful new buildings;

b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;

c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and

d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

3.2.4 Paragraph 97 seeks to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, in particular decisions should take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community.

*Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.*

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## 4. Assessment of Key Planning Considerations

- 4.0.1 This application relates to a single dwelling and converted barn to be used as a temporary children's residential care home to support the Future Ready Property Enhancement Initiative, which will see all of Norfolk children's homes undergo some level of fabric, energy efficiency, maintenance and aesthetic improvements to make them suitable for long term sustainable use. Children at each existing care property will decant into Pump Farm whilst works are completed and will then vacate and return to their usual residence.
- 4.0.2 In view of the location of the site and the policy context, the key considerations in relation to this proposal relate to the suitability of the site to accommodate the proposed use, traffic movements and impact on residential amenity.

### 4.1 Principle of Development

- 4.1.1 The starting point for the determination of this planning application should be that it be determined in accordance with development plan policy unless material considerations dictate otherwise. In this case, there is no specific development plan policy regarding care home provision, however, policy GC1 of the Development Management DPD suggests where there are no specific policies that apply, the Council should grant planning permission unless any adverse impact significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 4.1.2 In relation to the need for a rural location, it is considered that strong justification has been advanced in this case (as summarised in section 1.0 and detailed in Appendix 1). As part of the range of care provision for vulnerable children in the county, there are compelling child welfare and protection reasons for this temporary children's home provision to be away from urban areas to provide intensive wrap around care and support in a safe environment where the risk to child criminal exploitation is at the lowest.
- 4.1.3 Whilst planning policy generally seeks to concentrate development in the towns and larger villages rather than in the countryside, wider NPPF advice supports development that support the rural economy. The NPPF also recognises the need for planning decisions to meet locational needs (paragraph 87). As this temporary care home requires a more rural location (in the countryside), it will support the local economy with care home support staff drawn from the nearby area creating job opportunities for local residents.
- 4.1.4 It should also be recognised that paragraph 97 of the NPPF supports development to meet community needs in rural locations and suggests decisions should take into

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account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community.

- 4.1.5 Based on justification advanced, it is considered that sufficient explanation has been provided for this children’s home use in Weston Longville and the material benefits of NCC having such a home in this rural location would not conflict with the thrust of planning policy.

## 4.2 Traffic Considerations

- 4.2.1 The application site is located in a rural location with good access to Fakenham Road and the A47, with an existing access onto Weston Green Road.
- 4.2.2 The proposed use of Pump Farm for a temporary placement care home use would result in a similar number of movements (although more concentrated during daytimes) as with a six-bedroom family home with additional 2-bedroom annexe in a rural location as explained further in the supporting statement appendix 1. The proposal would not therefore result in an intensification of use of the existing access and property.
- 4.2.3 In addition, the application site itself has a large area of hardstanding within the site which can, and has, been used for parking. The site plan accompanying the application identifies the access and hardstanding area where car parking for the care home will be concentrated. There are no dwellings close to this parking area as it is located centrally within the large plot and there is sufficient parking to meet the care home needs in accordance with NCC Parking Standards.
- 4.2.4 The proposed use of Pump Farm as a care home would therefore be in accordance with policies T3 and T4 of the Development Management DPD.

## 4.3 Residential Amenity

- 4.3.1 In relation to considerations noise and disturbance from activities, it is not considered that the change of use would materially alter the profile of activities associated with the property or have a detrimental impact upon the residential amenity of the neighbouring properties for the following reasons;
  - The property is a six-bedroom house and two bedroom converted barn capable of accommodating 10+ residents and the children’s home use will not exceed this number of residents;
  - The site occupies a rural location and will not increase noise and disturbance above the level already associated with the individual dwellings in the area;

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- A typical four-bedroom dwelling and two bedroom barn would generate a significant number of car-borne movements and the profile of movement of carers will not be materially different and will not place additional strain on the local road network (detailed further in Appendix 1).

The proposed use would therefore be in accordance with policy GC4 of the Development Management DPD.

- 4.3.2 The operation of the care home will be managed by NCC staff that are trained to a high standard and would always be on site proactively managing any child in their care. Furthermore, all NCC in-house residential facilities are rated 'good' by OFSTED and have not generally experienced complaints from members of the local communities residing in proximity of our other residential facilities. When care homes are established, NCC proactively work with the local community to listen to any views and take seriously any concerns and take action where this is considered appropriate.

#### 4.4 Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.4.1 The proposed temporary change of use of the buildings and garden to a care home would not result in any changes to the layout of the site, including all open garden land hedgerow and vegetation (4176sqm) or hard surfaced areas as illustrated on the existing and proposed site plan. The proposal would therefore meet the de minimis criteria in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain as no habitat will be impacted.

#### 4.5 Other

- 4.5.1 The proposal is only to change the use of the building and land and does not require any external works to the building or curtilage. Therefore, there would be no impact upon the landscape, biodiversity, trees, surface and foul water drainage on the site and the proposal would accord with policies EN1, EN2 and CSU5 of the Development Management DPD.

### 5. Conclusions

- 5.1. The proposed change of use of Pump Farm to a temporary care home will support the Future Ready Property Enhancement Initiative, which will see all of Norfolk children's homes undergo some level of fabric, energy efficiency, maintenance and aesthetic improvements to make them suitable for long term sustainable use. The proposal will therefore assist the Councils journey to Net Zero Carbon emissions by 2030.
- 5.2. The rural location of the property will deliver social benefits, providing a range of care provision for vulnerable children in the County in a safe environment and can be

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accommodated without any harm to the residential amenity of neighbouring properties or highway safety. The proposal will also provide jobs to support the local economy.

- 5.3. The proposed use of the site as a temporary care home would, therefore, provide a sustainable form of development which would be supported by Local Plan policy and Government guidance in the NPPF.

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## 6. Appendix 1 - Supporting Statement

Address: Pump Farm, The Green, Weston Longville, Norwich, Norfolk, NR9 5LA

Background Statement from client in support of application

### Background

NCC have responsibility to provide accommodation for vulnerable children in Norfolk. NCC Children’s Services (the applicant) provide homes in a variety of locations and the proposal will provide an important part of the network of support required in Norfolk to meet best practice, in a cost effective way, to secure improved outcomes for children by placing them in such facilities centrally in the County.

In support of the application, outlined below are the following details:

- Justification / Need
- The Value of a Rural Environment
- How will Pump Farm Home will operate
- Details of the site search, search criteria and properties considered
- What length of time did the search take place over
- Parking and amenity considerations for adjacent residents
- Details of expected vehicle movements (numbers of cars per day and times)
- Community integration
- Similar Care Home provision and Ofsted rating

### Justification / Need

As part of the Future Ready programme of property improvement works, all of the Children’s Services residential and supported accommodation homes will need to vacate their existing properties and relocate temporarily to a decant property, ideally centrally located within Norfolk. Pump Farm has been identified as a potentially suitable property for use by Children Services.

Without the use of Pump Farm our current accommodated children would need to be found different external provisions which are difficult to source and will have additional cost implications.

There are currently approximately 22 NCC Children’s homes that will be required to move to Pump farm. This will be done in stages in line with the plans of work required within the different properties in the future ready programme.

The use of Pump Farm, as a Children’s Homes has been agreed with NCC Norfolk Highways Division until Autumn 2025.

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### The Value of a Rural Environment

A rural location is considered necessary to initially remove and at times isolate young people from existing negative relationships. Experience is that the rural setting helps to break cycles of criminality and exploitation, where access via public transport for example is not readily available. Having access to nature and the outdoors has in NCC's experience been positive and the rurality of this property will ensure this is safely accessible to achieve the best possible outcomes. Various research has been conducted on the positive impact of outdoor environments for children and young people, for example the Bringing Children Closer to Nature report by the Sylva Foundation 2018. The Attention Restoration theory also states that "with increased contact with nature the brain can be restored from fatigue and so reduce many unwanted symptoms such as impulsive behaviour, irritability and aggression. Studies point to 50% less crime and domestic violence in families with views of increased vegetation in a poor housing estate compared to identical blocks with no vegetation" (Bird, 2007). Furthermore, reforms to improve children's residential care in England were announced by the Children's Minister in 2013, intending to make sure children's homes were located in safe areas and that local authorities were effectively safeguarding children at risk of going missing.

### How will Pump Farm Home operate?

The property will provide a home for various young people during the time that their normal property/home is closed for refurbishment. We envisage that there will be up to a maximum of 5 children at any time residing at Pump Farm. This will include children who are accommodated and also for children receiving short breaks.

Matching young people will be crucial and a risk assessment will be completed by current registered managers on ensuring that there are compatible groupings of children.

Staff will also remain on site 24/7, with additional professionals, such as clinical psychologists, and speech and language therapists also attending at times to support with the care of the young person. The size of the Pump Farm and surrounding area makes this ideal for a temporary home.

A locality risk assessment is completed for each home and risks to children and young people from the local area must also be considered. For example, it may pose additional risk for a residential home to be placed in close vicinity of a hostel for recently released criminals. The rurality of this location minimises potential sources of exploitation, allowing staff to work with the individual to make safe and stabilise their situation as soon as possible.

The home would provide temporary accommodation for children or young people. Dependent on the individual, the young person may be home schooled in the property, or they may attend their current school placement externally.

Children or young people residing at the home would be entertained in the usual ways a child or young person living in a village may find entertainment. This could include walks and bike rides in the local area, computing, films, reading and board games in the home and being encouraged and supported to participate in hobbies, for example football, horse riding, music, or other interests.

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Details of the site search, search criteria and properties considered.

The search criteria that needed to be met to find a suitable property for a temporary placement home is extensive. The criteria most notably includes:

Location – As previously explained in application details, rural sites are required which are not too accessible in terms of public transport or infrastructure which may encourage or increase the likelihood of external influences or risks to the child or young person(s);

No of bedrooms - Minimum of five (or potential to create) ground floor bedrooms with a further two bedrooms for onsite staff;

No of bathroom – Minimum of two (or potential to create) disabled accessible bathroom and shower facilities for staff;

No of reception rooms – 2 reception rooms or open plan

Off road parking – An area to accommodate seven cars on site;

State of repair – Good state of repair required to limit the costs for any adaptations;

Local support – Once a property is identified, the client seeks to engage with Parish Councillors and Local Member to ascertain an initial view of suitability and support.

In searching for suitable accommodation for the proposal, NCC has carried out a search for properties across Norfolk, with physical enquiries made for properties in Reymerston and Necton, however these have been discounted due to offers being declined, price or the difficulty in reconfiguration. Multiple other options have been proposed, however all the properties identified were either in excess of the approved budget or did not meet the criteria to be considered suitable for the needs of the children / young people and the service.

NCC Corporate Property Team regularly searched the market extensively for suitable properties and have limited viewings to only properties which closely met our search criteria.

What length of time did the search take place over

The site search commenced in Summer 2023, following the Council commitment to upgrade its existing children’s and young people’s homes. The main site search took place in summer 2023, at a time which coincided with a significant downturn in the housing market (following a spike in interest rates driven by the cost-of-living crisis). This led to a significant drop in market demand and value, resulting in considerably less supply to the market.

As a result of the site search criteria, coupled with this significant lack of supply to the market, it has been very challenging to identify and secure properties suitable for the housing of children and young people.

The market has started to improve, however interest rates remain high and there is still a lack of supply to the market.

Parking and amenity considerations for adjacent residents.

The site has a large parking area to the front of the property which can, and has, been used for parking and can accommodate up to 10 cars. The site plan accompanying the application

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identifies the access and hardstanding area where car parking for the home will be concentrated. There are no neighbouring dwellings close to this parking area as it is located centrally between the main house and separate annexe.

The applicant also would highlight that the property is situated in a rural location, with one neighbour on the opposite side of Weston Green Road. The site location has convenient access to the Fakenham Road and A47.

Whilst it is clearly not possible to guarantee that noise would not ever be generated from any property, NCC staff are trained to a high standard and would always be on site proactively managing any behaviours expected at the property. Furthermore, all NCC in-house residential facilities are rated 'good' by OFSTED and we have not generally experienced complaints from members of the local communities residing in proximity of our other residential facilities.

NCC have highlighted that an assessment would be made for each individual child or young person around the suitability of the placement before they were moved into the property. In addition, NCC would proactively work with the local community to listen to their views and take seriously any concerns they have relating to any resident and take action where this is considered appropriate.

It is not proposed to change the boundary treatment associated with the proposed home use.

Details of expected vehicle movements (numbers of cars per day and times).

As a six-bedroom family home with additional 2-bedroom annexe in a rural location, any residential use would generate several movements each day associated with normal activities including travelling to and from work, school, shopping and social activities.

In relation to the proposed temporary placement home use, there would be a similar number of movements (although more concentrated during daytimes). As with C3 family home, there would not be a consistent pattern of movements and visitors, however, on a typical day this may include the staff changeover (4 vehicles in, 4 vehicles out daily) and the school run. On some days, there may be individual vehicle movements to access amenities, or to attend routine medical appointments. Dependent on the individual plan for the child, contact with friends and family may result in a vehicle moment at the property. It is unlikely that there would be more than seven vehicles at the property at any given time, but we consider there is ample room to allow for more than this, should this ever be required, with space for vehicles to move around others without the need to wait on the road. It will be likely there will be a daily occurrence of a short period of around half an hour at handover where seven cars will be parked at the property. Again, the applicant does not envisage any issues with space to allow this to be logistically comfortable.

For a six bedroom family home with two bedroom annexe such as this, some 10-12 vehicle movements per day would not be uncommon (5-6 in and 5-6 out per day), and the proposed temporary placement home use will result, on average, in a similar level of movements.

Due to the layout of the site and the distance to other properties, there is not considered to be any risk of overlooking or creating a disturbance to neighbouring properties through any of the activities taking place at the proposed provision.

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Community integration

The rurality of the location means that community integration is much more likely to be successfully managed in a planned and measured way. The location of this property is particularly well located for the purpose; whilst it retains the rurality crucial to the model, it is within reasonable balanced distance to Norwich, Dereham, Fakenham and other areas, which by car will support staffing and contact logistics.

Similar Care Home provision and Ofsted rating

NCC have a good proven track record of providing high quality and successful residential care. All Norfolk owned residential homes have achieved a Good Ofsted rating for which they are annually inspected. Staff are trained to a high standard, with a minimum of Level 3 Diploma being required as well as attachment, safeguarding, health and safety and other training. An extensive range of training to manage individual needs is also considered and mandated where appropriate. Additionally, there is close monitoring of the quality of the services internally, with monthly performance indicators monitored and reported back to Ofsted.

Care home inspections consider safeguarding matters and therefore are not published in the same way as School Ofsted reports due to the sensitive nature of information contained in such report. Therefore, they are not available for public inspection.

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## 7. Appendix 2 - Local Validation Requirement List.

Local List Requirement	Required	Addressed by
Airport Safeguarding Statement	No	
Air Quality Impact Assessment	No	
Archaeological Assessment (below ground heritage)	No	
Biodiversity Surveys and Assessments	No	No external works – BNG de minimis exemption
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Statement / Assessment	No	Change of use of building, no external works - BNG De minimis
Climate Change, Energy Statement, Renewable Energy, Sustainability Statement	No	
Construction Management Plan / Construction Consideration Statement	No	
Daylight / Sunlight Assessment	No	
Environmental Impact Assessment	No	
External Materials Sample Board	No	
Flood Risk Assessment	No	
Foul Sewage and Utilities Assessment	No	
Health Impact Assessment (HIA)	No	
Heritage Statement (above ground heritage)	No	
Land Contamination Assessment	No	
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	No	
Landscape Scheme	No	
Lighting Scheme	No	
Mineral Resource Assessment	No	
<b>Net Zero Carbon Statement</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Separate Statement</b>
Noise Impact Assessment	No	
Nutrient Neutrality Statement / Assessment	No	
Odour Details / Assessment	No	
Open Spaces and Playing Field Assessment	No	
Parking Provision Assessment	No	
<b>Planning Statement</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>This document</b>
Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Statement	No	
Travel Plan	No	
Statement of Community Involvement	No	
Structural Survey	No	
Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) (FRA and Drainage Strategy / Statement)	No	As existing, no external works
Transport Assessment / Statement	No	See Planning Statement
Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) and Tree Protection Plan (TPP)	No	No external works required.

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