

## Design and Development Brief for the Market and Central Car Park Area, South Molton

**Adopted November 2004** 

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## DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT BRIEF FOR THE MARKET AND CENTRAL CAR PARK AREA, SOUTH MOLTON

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this design and development brief is to provide a planning and transportation framework which will ensure that the strategically important town centre site, comprising the livestock market, central car park and land to the rear of Broad Street, East Street and South Street, within the heart of South Molton, are developed in a co-ordinated and comprehensive manner. The extent of the site is shown on the plan contained in **Appendix 1.** This Design and Development Brief supplements the Planning Policies contained in the North Devon Local Plan and the County Structure Plan. It also supplements the proposals contained in the Devon Local Transport Plan.

The Brief highlights the development opportunities and constraints presented by both the aspiration to maintain a vibrant livestock market within the vicinity of South Molton alongside development pressures to provide improved retail facilities and community based developments. Based on these opportunities and constraints, the Brief also outlines the type of development that would be considered acceptable in principle, as well as indicating how such development could be provided in a phased manner. The Design and Development Brief focuses on the planning issues relevant to the land and does not set out a commercial assessment of the potential of the site, nor does the Brief promote any particular commercial interests for the area.

The development of this Brief recognises and builds on the extensive work undertaken in the local community by Molton Area 2000 as part of the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative.

### 2. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

This Design and Development Brief was adopted by Full Council as supplementary planning guidance on 3 November 2004 and will complement policies and proposals in the North Devon Local Plan and County Structure Plan. It was subject to a formal six-week public consultation period from 3 June to 15 July 2004 and the document has been amended as a result of the representations received.

In accordance with Government guidance the Brief has been the subject of a consultation exercise in order to take account of the views of a wide range of individuals and organisations. Extensive public consultation and community development has already been carried out within the community under the auspices of Molton Area 2000 and this document has been presented to that forum for comment and will become jointly accepted as the strategy within which to co-ordinate development.

The livestock market, car park and land to the rear of Broad Street/East Street, South Street, and Mill Road are all subject to site specific policies in the North Devon Local Plan Revised Deposit. Proposal SMO6 (Town Centre Expansion) identifies that there are significant opportunities to improve the vitality and viability of the town centre by a phased redevelopment of this parcel of land.

The North Devon Retail Study produced by G L Hearn in December 2000 has identified the need to provide a new food store of up to 1,000 square metres net sales, in order to address a qualitative need to improve the provision of convenience shopping within the town centre. However, the delivery of this town centre expansion is inter-linked with the future of the livestock market, which is located to the eastern part of this development area. There has also been identified a pressing need for new medical facilities, a new library and a youth centre.

In addition to the site specific requirements of Proposal SMO6, any initiative relating to the redevelopment of this area will also need to comply with a range of policies at national, county and local level to ensure that the necessary physical and social infrastructure is provided to support the development. The fundamental planning policy issues applying to this site are summarised in **Appendix 2.** 

#### 3. **CONTEXT**

The land identified for retail expansion comprises three key elements which are namely the existing livestock market, the town centre car park and under-utilised land to the rear of properties which front Broad Street/ East Street and South Street. The aim of this Design and Development Brief is to ensure that the re-development of these sites is integrated physically, visually and commercially with the rest of the town centre in order to enhance its vitality and viability.

### • The Livestock Market Site

The existing livestock market comprises two key elements divided by an unadopted access road, which connects Southley Road to New Road. To the north of this road are the sheep pens and two associated storage buildings that are used for young stock. To the south of the road is the main livestock market operation and auction buildings. A plan of the market area is contained in **Appendix 1**. The operation of the livestock market has been seriously affected by the foot and mouth outbreak that occurred in 2001. Currently the only part of the site that is operational are the cattle pens. In order to operate effectively the livestock market

relies on the availability of the lorry parking area in order to maintain an operational effectiveness. The access road is also used for loading and unloading which can result in congestion on the through route.

Whilst the North Devon Local Plan (Revised Deposit) recognises that the livestock market could be relocated to Pathfields (see proposal SMO3a), it acknowledges that if the livestock market is to remain in the town centre, then it will need to be upgraded to meet new regulations relating to health and safety and the environment. The dissection of the site by the distributor road has resulted in bio-security issues in terms of contamination of the operational area by vehicles not associated with the market. There are practical difficulties securing the site due to the position of the lorry wash on the western edge of the market. Lorries using the wash area have to transverse New Road, Mill Street and the car park access road once they have left the market due to the operation of a one way system.

When the market is fully operational, the many HGVs, cars and trailers utilising both the lorry park and the circulation routes presents a major constraint in achieving an appropriate design solution for this key part of the town centre.

#### Town Centre Car Park

The existing town centre car park is owned and managed by the North Devon District Council and provides car parking for approximately 350 vehicles. The site comprises an open area of tarmac accessed from two points along an unadopted access road leading from either Southley Road or Mill Street. Whilst the surface of this car parking area has been routinely maintained, the environment is poor, with no pedestrian facilities. The meagre landscaping on the road edge neither screens the car park nor provides any qualitative aspect.

The car park itself provides both vehicular and pedestrian access to a range of facilities within the central park area. The swimming pool and Hollyoak Nursery and the Playgroup in the Park building (PiP Centre) are themselves significant generators of both vehicular and pedestrian movements. Access into these buildings as well as the Central Park, which provides the town centre's area of public open space, is neither legible nor particularly safe.

The car park site is also constrained by a significant change in levels from Mill Street dropping down to Southley Road. The difference in levels does however, provide extensive views across the site to the rear of the Pannier Market and the properties which front both Broad Street and East Street.

## Underused land immediately to the rear of the Town Centre

The remainder of the land allocated within Proposal SMO6 for redevelopment comprises a mixture of derelict sites and under-utilised rear areas. To the north of the unadopted road leading from Southley Road to New Road are a series of long, narrow plots historically dating back to the old burghage system. This series of long narrow parcels of land have not been comprehensively redeveloped due to their awkward shape and separate ownership's. One parcel of land has however been developed as a shopping 'arcade' and indicates how commercial uses can be developed to link the primary shopping street to its surroundings.

The primary function of these parcels of land has been to provide car parking and servicing for the properties that front onto East Street and Broad Street. As is common in many town centre locations, a range of small-scale businesses such as vehicle repair workshops operate from these backland areas. Several of these areas however, provide key pedestrian access points from the car park into the town centre. particular the walkway leading through the George Shopping Arcade directly accesses onto Broad Street. Market Street, which is a public footpath adjacent to the Pannier Market, is underused lacking any direct uses providing either an attraction or natural surveillance. There are opportunities to significantly enhance these routes as part of redevelopment proposals. It should also be noted that there are a series of private walkways which also facilitate access north/south. To the west of the car park are three key sites. Immediately adjoining Mill Street is a small garage building that has previously been identified for up grading and redevelopment. Its longevity is questionable as a result of its physical This building encloses Mill Street and is of a very traditional condition. form utilising stone and cob. To the rear of this building is the former Norringtons Huxtable yard which has remained derelict for many years. The final part of the site comprises a mixture of small scale industrial and storage buildings which contribute little to the character of a town centre location but again meet a need for ancillary activities associated with a town centre but which cannot warrant a prime site. A key example would be South Molton Recycle.

## Relationship to the Town Centre

Whilst the description of the redevelopment area indicates little that is remarkable in terms of townscape quality, what is significant are the visual linkages and quality of the townscape and streetscape that lies immediately beyond this area. From Mill Street the vista across to the town centre comprises a traditional townscape, dominated by the Grade II\* Pannier Market. The quality of the townscape is recognised along East Street and Broad Street by its designation within a Conservation Area. The area comprises traditional two/three storey buildings under slate roofs, all of which contribute to an attractive townscape with quality architecture.

This quality is also apparent along South Street which is the continuation of the Conservation Area, and comprises a significant number of Grade II Listed Buildings. It is recognised that buildings of historic importance should wherever possible be retained and reused. The redevelopment area has in many ways turned its back on the historic core and has very few visual links or references with this area.

## 4. **PLANNING ANALYSIS**

A planning analysis of this core area indicates a number of development opportunities which are summarised as follows:

- The site adjoins the commercial core of South Molton.
- The site functions as a key part of the town centre by providing long term car parking for employees and short stay parking for shoppers.
- The site comprises a significant area of undeveloped, under utilised space, which does not have a readily identified use.
- There is extensive public ownership of the land scheduled for potential redevelopment.
- One significant HGV operator has already secured and developed a site at Pathfields, which lessens the pressure on this town centre site to provide facilities for lorry parking.
- There is a strong community desire to see a comprehensive redevelopment of this site and viable community proposals need to be facilitated as part of the redevelopment of the area.
- Sustainable access for pedestrians and public transport can be readily facilitated.

The planning analysis of the site also reveals a number of development constraints which can be summarised as follows:

- The continued operation of the livestock market could potentially preclude the wider redevelopment of the locality.
- There is a long established aspiration to protect the functioning of the livestock market until such time as an alternative site has been developed, potentially at Pathfields.
- The need to safeguard the market has operational constraints on car parking, access and circulation throughout the site.
- The town centre car park is the only facility available to serve the town centre. On-road car parking on Broad Street, East Street and South Street is strictly time limited and hence, in order to maintain the vitality and viability of the town centre, adequate short and long stay car parking spaces are required to service the myriad of activities that occur within the town centre. There is a need to reflect the extensive rural catchment area. The continued health of the town is therefore dependent on car borne users and visitors. It is recognised that due to the constraints re land availability that a wider area of search may be required to facilitate long stay car parking.

- A requirement to maintain access to service existing properties adjoining the site.
- Limited physical and visual connections with the town centre.
- The townscape quality of the existing town centre, including the requirement to preserve and enhance the character and setting of the Conservation Area and various listed buildings within the adjoining sites. This requirement is particularly important with regard to the Grade II\* Pannier Market building which adjoins the Grade I listed Town Hall.
- A number of activities and uses including vehicle repair service yards
  which back onto the site and require access from the approach roads,
  which make it more difficult to provide a coherent and cohesive urban
  design response to the comprehensive redevelopment of the area.
- A significant levels difference which means that the circulation route through the site is effectively at is lowest point with the land rising to the north and to the south.

### 5. **DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES**

Redevelopment proposals for this area will be expected to be contribute towards meeting the following broad objectives defined within the North Devon Local Plan. Development proposals must:

- Enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre. It has been
  identified that a new food store of up to 1,000 square metres net sales
  space to reflect the recommendations the North Devon Retail Study.
  This identified a "fundamental need for service convenience provision in
  the town centre" which would compliment the functioning of the town
  centre by retaining retail sales within South Molton, preventing leakage
  outwards to Barnstaple or Tiverton.
- The retention of a significant amount of short stay car parking either at ground level, or decked to serve the town centre and well related long stay car parking.
- New premises are required for the library, medical centre, youth resource centre and police station. Other community uses including the museum, tourist information centres and the PiP centre have aspirations to develop their services. Consideration should be given to combining complementary community uses where appropriate, in new purpose built premises as part of the comprehensive redevelopment of this area. However, consideration should also be given to utilising existing buildings such as the Pannier Market and Amory House.
- A range of retail and leisure uses incorporating an element of residential development above ground floor level.
- An environmental enhancement scheme incorporating soft and hard landscaping indigenous to the town and the provision of public art.
- The provision of a bus interchange facility.
- Enhanced vehicular access between New Road and South Street.
- Pedestrian and cycle links through the site connecting to the existing shopping frontages.

### 6. **DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT STRATEGY**

The development and transportation strategies for this redevelopment area are based on proposal SMO6 of the Revised Deposit North Devon Local Plan.

The development and transport strategies for this site are intended to provide ground rules which any scheme should address. However, there may be scope for flexibility to ensure that any scheme is commercially viable and is an appropriate response to market conditions at the actual time of development.

In addition to the ground rules contained in this Brief, all new development should be sustainable by utilising natural resources more efficiently in their design, construction and future use. To ensure that new development embraces these principles, they should be accompanied by a sustainability appraisal in accordance with Policy DVS1a of the Revised Deposit Local Plan.

The strategy for the site is summarised below. Indicative plans for the area illustrate the key development and transportation measures.

In view of the development constraints and opportunities and in accordance with Proposal SMO6, the area must be redeveloped in a comprehensive and co-ordinated manner to an agreed masterplan. Development proposals which have been identified through the community involvement work of Molton Area 2000 indicate that differing sectors (commercial and community), are working to different time scales and financial programmes. A masterplan will therefore allow for separate elements to be delivered independently but ensure the comprehensive redevelopment of the site is not compromised.

It is acknowledged that retaining an active livestock market within the locality poses the greatest challenge for the redevelopment of the area. Key decisions need to be taken relating to the livestock market which are outside of the terms of reference of this Brief. In view of the uncertainties facing the future of the livestock market the implementation of the development and transport strategy will vary depending on the following scenarios:

- 1. The livestock market is retained in its current form and remains fully operational, or
- 2. The livestock market is contracted to the southern side of the access road, or
- 3. The livestock market is removed altogether.

In light of these three scenarios the following guidance would be appropriate

# 1. The livestock market is retained in its current form and remains fully operational

If the development area is constrained by the retention of the market, only a limited amount of development could be accommodated. Priority needs to be given to extending the commercial area of the town centre. A new supermarket will facilitate and anchor the retail expansion of the town centre and its provision is considered a strategic priority. Within the overall development area, a major retail development could be provided on a range of different sites. The selected site needs to be closely located next to the commercial core and to ensure that there are linked trips be readily accessible to existing pedestrian routes and footpaths. Maximising car parking and its accessibility to all town centre users is another key consideration. For bio-security reasons and in order to minimise noise, smell, and other disturbance, ideally it should be located as far as possible away from the active livestock market. The marked difference in site levels and the desire to retain an open aspect into the town centre from Mill Street would preclude development to the south on the site. This would also minimise large areas of dead frontages. Similarly the potential impact on existing residential properties needs to be considered. These siting constraints alone would indicate that a location to the west or northwest of the site is preferred.

A full Design Statement will be needed to justify the massing and detailed appearance of any proposed retail building. New supermarkets tend to be 'clad sheds'. It will be important therefore to ensure that the scale and massing of the external envelope respects the local context. In this respect, it is considered that a design based on a modern interpretation of the 'pannier market' (the supermarket of its day) would ensure the scale/grain/townscape quality of the adjacent town centre is complemented particularly in respect of materials and detailing. The palette of materials needs to build on the qualitative aspects of the Conservation Area rather than introduce discordant or unsympathetic textures and finishes. The roofscape will need particular design attention in that the levels changes across the site will make this a prominent aspect. The existing roof forms are primarily slated and ridges and provide cohesion to the townscape.

South Molton has striven to take a lead in the sustainable built form agenda with the PiP Centre and Livarot walk incorporating energy efficiency and sustainability principles. A major retail use should incorporate such measures in its design. If feasible, the redevelopment of the site should also incorporate renewable energy, heating or power systems, in accordance with Policy ECN15. Where the introduction of sustainable measures into a scheme raises issues of financial viability, the Council will expect 'open book' negotiations and may seek independent verification in accordance with the Best Practice Note on Developer Contributions. Financial viability should be assessed on a 'whole of life' cost basis.

A Transport Assessment will be required in accordance with Policy TRA1A of the Revised Deposit Local Plan and carried out to the satisfaction of the County Council. This assessment must address a range of issues including traffic generation, access, parking, servicing and the development of a travel plan. The supermarket will need to provide an access road to an adoptable standard from Mill Street to Southley Road and New Road. The access design will need to provide safe and attractive pedestrian facilities, which run both north south and east to west. It will be particularly important to encourage access into the town centre. The Southley Road to New Road link which will need to be retained for access purposes, will need to be upgraded/traffic calmed/managed for parking etc to provide an enhanced environment in which the pedestrian has priority. links will need to be developed and enhanced through the Pannier Market/Market Street/George Arcade. The quality of the public realm will be dependent on the use of appropriate materials for surface treatments, walling and signage.

Car park numbers will need to be maximised and managed to ensure it benefits the vitality and viability of the town centre. The whole area will need to be landscaped incorporating both hard and soft treatments and planting indigenous to the town in order to provide a quality public realm using locally distinct materials and patterns of enclosure. Secure lighting and CCTV provision should be designed into any scheme from the outset.

Lorry parking will need to be secured elsewhere in substitution for the redevelopment of the town's only established lorry park.

In order to develop the use of sustainable transport measures a public transport facility – bus stop and covered waiting area - will also need to be provided. This will need to be planned from the outset and hence not simply added onto any revised road layout as an afterthought in order to ensure that routes through the site prioritise pedestrian movement.

Once the floor area of a supermarket and the car parking demands of the town centre have been taken into account and the access parking and servicing demands of the Livestock Market are considered this provides limited scope for wider developments. The under-utilised plots to the rear of Broad Street/East Street are likely to remain available for redevelopment. Their disparate ownership would make comprehensive community development difficult. Priority should be given to servicing existing uses to enable the expansion of existing businesses and the creation of new small-scale commercial/residential schemes.

Each proposal would need to provide additional car parking to meet the needs of the town as a whole. Strong pedestrian links, building on existing

routes need to be integral to any proposal. The scale of development should be small to reflect the historic grain and should comprise primarily modest two storey blocks running at right angles to the main road which safeguard privacy and are designed to minimise noise but encourage natural surveillance. Not all individual land parcels will be able to support a development proposal alone and will need to work with adjacent landholders to provide comprehensive solutions. A further major retail proposal is not considered acceptable in respect of the character and form of these backland areas.

## **Development opportunities alongside livestock market:**

- Supermarket
- Enhanced shoppers and town car park
- Access road from Mill Street to New Road is upgraded
- Pedestrian facilities are enhanced
- Public transport facilities are provided
- Lorry park is relocated
- Small scale town expansion schemes can be accommodated

# 2. The livestock market is contracted to the southern side of the access road

This scenario immediately frees up land but replacement buildings for storage/young stock will be needed to allow the Auctioneers to function on a smaller site. These would need to be accommodated on either the car park or on land adjacent the livestock market or alongside the service road which is also in public ownership. Operationally car parking in the town centre would still be constrained on market days and the servicing requirement of a market would still dominate the access road and significant parts of the town car park. There would be limited scope to address vehicle priorities. Given the scale of new housing development that is occurring in the town the next priority should be to provide enhanced community facilities to include a health centre/library etc.

The contraction of the market would allow for the northern edge of the access road to be upgraded to provide a continuation of the street along New Road with an active frontage, designed to have a visual quality. Consideration could be given to the alignment of the road. The route and alignment of the access road is in part dependent on the junction design and impact on New Road. This brief does not dismiss the idea that the road could be realigned provided quality streets are created and highway safety is not affected. Design principles should include vertical rhythm, traditional and locally distinct materials and design features as well as the creation of new public spaces and circulation routes to encourage a vibrant 'community quarter'. This block of land would be highly visible from the car park and any scheme would need to include strong pedestrian links. The potential provided by Amory House could allow direct pedestrian access onto East

Street. Links could also be provided via existing private routes. This would build on the presence of the extensive range of community services offered within the Baptist Church and newly acquired Manse and Public Park as a focal zone of community use.

Additional car parking including allocated disabled parking will be needed to service these facilities as an enhancement to the existing car park and should be made available and managed as public provision. Vehicular access will also need to be included for servicing and deliveries.

Indicative plans showing the road either in its current position or realigned are contained in **Appendices 3a and 3b**.

## **Development opportunities alongside contracted livestock market:**

- Supermarket
- Enhanced shoppers and town car park
- Access road from Mill Street to New Road is upgraded
- Pedestrian facilities are enhanced
- Public transport facilities are provided
- Lorry park is relocated
- Small scale town expansion schemes can be accommodated
- Continuation of 'streets' New Road and the Access Road to improve the townscape
- Expansion of Community facilities
- Improved pedestrian links onto East Street

## 3. The livestock market is removed altogether

The redevelopment of the remainder of the market including the lorry wash would remove a series of poor quality buildings and allow for the creation of a new streetscape which would build on the development of the community facilities quarter on the opposite side of the road. A mixed use of commercial/community uses with residential would help develop a vibrant town centre adding additional security and surveillance from an enhanced resident population. Access into the park should be enhanced.

The removal of the market allows for traffic management issues to be fully addressed and provide scope for wider priority changes to be considered within the town centre as a whole.

Limitations on future development include limits on car parking spaces within the town centre. This is likely to preclude any further major retail development. Visually this site has few links with the more traditional streetscape of the town centre and more innovative design solutions could be utilised to build on the designs approaches if the Pip Centre and Swimming Pool. Detailing and materials need to be consistent with other redevelopment areas in order to unify the centre and build up a localised identity.

**Appendix 4** contains an overall indicative masterplan which provides an optimum layout solution but does not address detailed design issues.

## **Development opportunities if no livestock market:**

- Supermarket
- Enhanced shoppers and town car park
- Access road from Mill Street to New Road is upgraded
- Pedestrian facilities are enhanced
- Public transport facilities are provided
- Lorry park is relocated
- Small scale town expansion schemes can be accommodated
- Continuation of 'streets' New Road and the access road to improve the townscape
- Expansion of community facilities
- Improved pedestrian links onto East Street
- Mixed use development with an element of residential to provide surveillance and vibrancy
- Opportunity to rationalise access/egress to allow traffic priorities on Broad Street to be reviewed
- Wholesale qualitative enhancement.

#### Other Issues

### **Public Art**

Public art should be incorporated into the redevelopment of the site in order to enhance the quality of the built environment and help create local distinctiveness and a sense of place and to integrate the site into the quality townscape beyond. Public art should be integrated into the design of any scheme in collaboration with the local community. Public art should be used to provide interest, focus and coherence at critical junctions and vistas, to reduce the visual impact of public car parking and improve the visual and physical connections with the town centre.

To ensure that any public art is fully integrated into any scheme, a lead artist(s) will need to be appointed to collaborate with the architects and community in redeveloping the site. Public funding may be available through, for example, the Lottery Heritage Fund and Objective 2.

## Archaeology

A full assessment of the area will be required.

## **Site Drainage**

The use of Sustainable Urban Drainage schemes is advocated by the Environment Agency.

## **Traffic Management**

A wider traffic study is required in respect of the routing of vehicles in and around the town centre and which explores wider options for long stay traffic provision.

### 7. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The adoption of the planning brief does not mark the end of its role in guiding development interests on both of these sites. The document should provide guidance throughout the timescale of the development plan and, in this respect, the Brief should be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it remains up to date, or is otherwise required should circumstances change.

The test of effectiveness of the brief will be whether the objectives have been met. This will entail monitoring the development process beyond the granting of planning permissions for the site, through to the completion and occupation of the development. It will also include compliance with conditions and/or legal agreements.



### **APPENDIX 2**

- Design and the Historic Environment
  - ◆ Government Guidance (PPG1, PPG3, PPG15 and the documents 'By Design.. Urban Design in the Planning System – towards better practice' and 'Urban Design Compendium'
  - ◆ Devon Structure Plan (Policies C9, C10, C11)
  - North Devon Local Plan (Revised Deposit) (TVS1, DVS2, ENV16. ENV17, ENV18)
- Sustainable Development
  - ◆ North Devon Local Plan (Revised Deposit) (DVS1A, ECN15)
- Travel and Transport including public parking
  - ◆ Government Guidance (PPG3, PPG13)
  - ◆ Devon Structure Plan
  - ◆ Devon Local Transport Plan
  - North Devon Local Plan (Revised Deposit) (Policies TRA6, TRA7, TRA8)
  - Vehicle Parking Strategy for South Molton?
- Amenity Considerations
  - ◆ Government Guidance (PPG1)
  - ♦ North Devon Local Plan (Revised Deposit) (Policy DVS3)
- Physical and Social Infrastructure
  - ♦ Government Guidance (Circular 1/97)
  - ◆ Devon Structure Plan (Policies S5, S6)
  - ◆ North Devon Local Plan (Revised Deposit) (Proposal SMO6, and SPG Code of Practice on Developer Contributions).
- Public Open Space
  - ♦ Government Guidance (PPG17)
  - North Devon Local Plan (Revised Deposit) (Policy REC5 and the SPG Code of Practice on Public Open Space, Sport and Recreation)
- Town Centres
  - ◆ Government Guidance (PPG6)
- Housing
  - ♦ Government guidance (PPG3)
  - ◆ Devon Structure Plan (Policy H6)
  - ♦ North Devon Local Plan Revised Deposit (Policies HSG2, HSG5, HSG6, HSG7 and SPG Code of Practice on Affordable Housing)





