

# INTERVIEWING THE INDUSTRY

## SIMON COLSTON: THE ANGEL, SHERSTON

by Carla McKenzie  
May 2020



A Q&A with Simon Colston; company secretary / operations manager at The Angel, Sherston.

**CM:** *Opening a café against a backdrop of Covid-19 is a bold move.*

**SC:** To be honest, the plan had been formulated a long time before we were aware of coronavirus. The previous owners of The Angel (which, at that time, was a larger property) closed their restaurant-with-rooms business in March last year and we had already indicated our interest in the building.

They then sought and obtained planning permission to split The Angel in half, converting the rear of the building (the newer bit) into residential and selling off the front half (the old 17th century coaching inn part) to us, to be run as a café with rooms.... and then coronavirus arrived!



*Pictured:  
Simon Colston of  
The Angel, Sherston*

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**CM:** *What is your vision for The Angel? How does the residential community in Sherston feel about the project?*

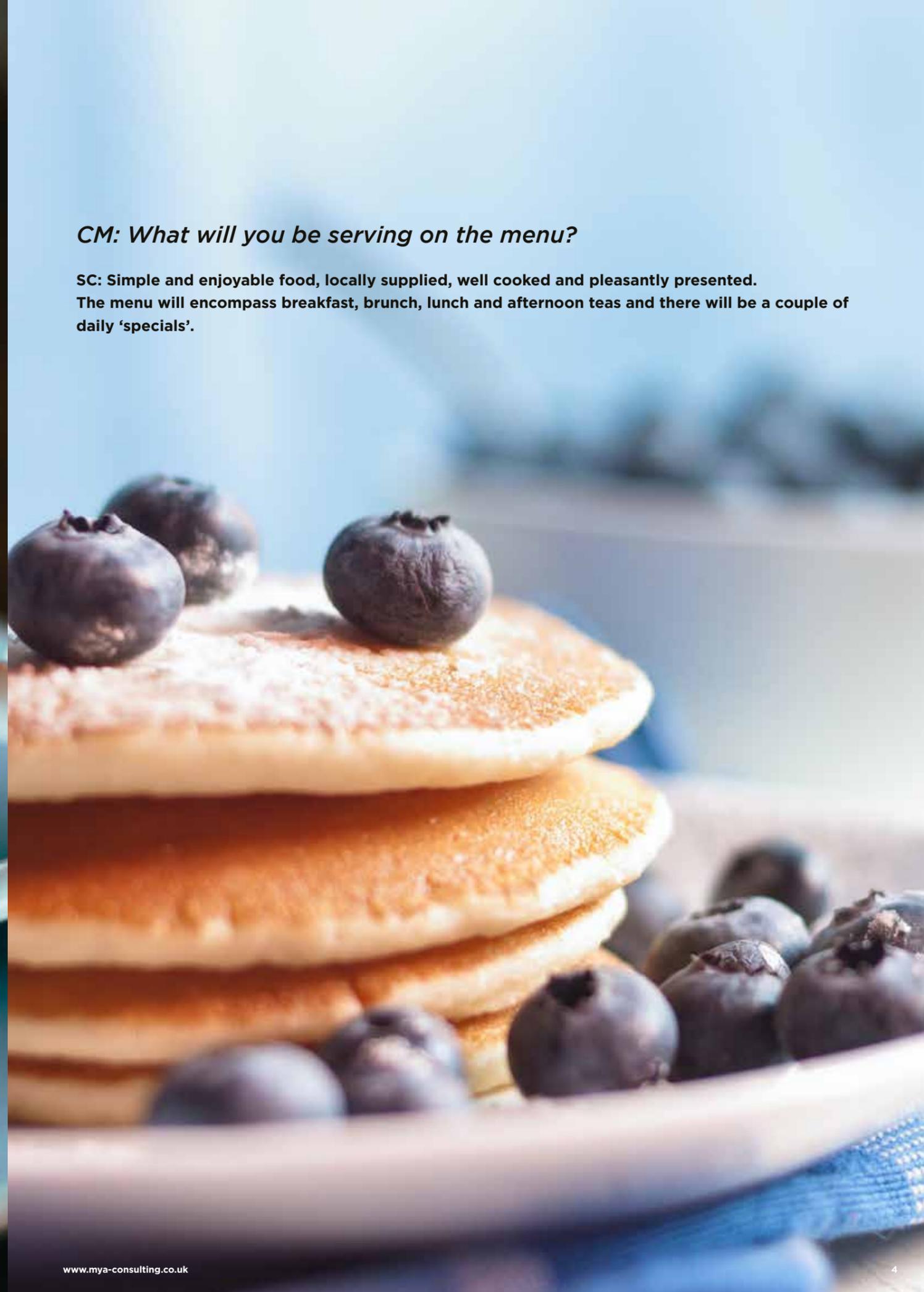
**SC:** Our vision for The Angel is tied up with the needs and wants of the community and where the owner lives – i.e. Sherston!

The previous business (the café part) was very popular with the locals as it served as a friendly and cosy meeting point and we know that its return is much longed-for. And in the spring and summer months it was very popular with cyclists of all varieties... so we won't be changing much in terms of the look and feel.



**CM:** *What will you be serving on the menu?*

**SC:** Simple and enjoyable food, locally supplied, well cooked and pleasantly presented. The menu will encompass breakfast, brunch, lunch and afternoon teas and there will be a couple of daily 'specials'.



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*CM: What do you want new customers to remember you for?*

SC: Friendliness, helpfulness, courteousness – and coffee!

*CM: What do you think the challenges will be for the high streets of small rural towns and villages, post-Covid-19?*

SC: Trustworthiness – businesses will need to demonstrate that they are safe to visit and re-visit. Repeat business is key to making this type of business successful.

*CM: What are your opening times?*

SC: Daily: 8.00am to 5.00pm.

*CM: Where will you recruit your staff?*

SC: Locally, as much as possible, but we may have to advertise for key staff.



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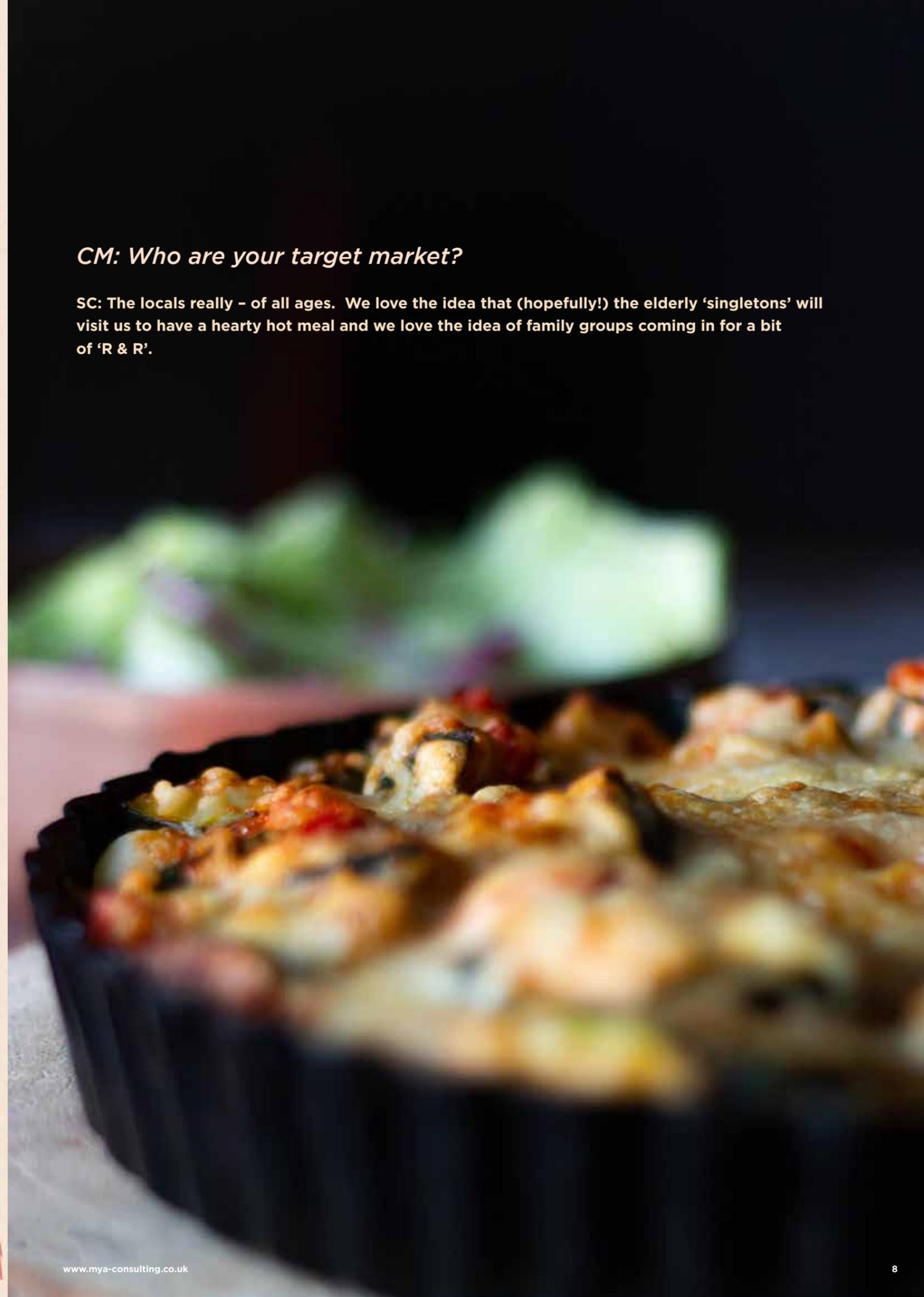
*CM: How will you manage social distancing in this historic building?*

**SC:** This is a challenge which we have yet to define. As a result of the coronavirus lockdown, we have been unable to access the property to resolve the potential issues of safe distancing but I believe that it is possible as long as we ensure that the solution is workable.



*CM: Who are your target market?*

**SC:** The locals really - of all ages. We love the idea that (hopefully!) the elderly 'singletons' will visit us to have a hearty hot meal and we love the idea of family groups coming in for a bit of 'R & R'.



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*CM: What can you tell us about your team?*

**SC:** The team: Tom is the 'chef patron' and has previously worked at The Old Bell in Malmesbury and, most recently, as production chef for the very successful 'Jolly Nice' in Frampton Mansell; Sam is our 'Front of House' manager, having previously worked at 'Jolly Nice' and, most recently, as the joint manager of Miserden café. As for myself, where do I start?! My portfolio career has included working on a tomato and mushroom farm (a very long time ago); financial director of a restaurant company; business manager of a girls' independent school and, more recently, freelance consultant at 'Jolly Nice'; interspersed with all of that, I am a semi-professional choral singer.



*CM: When are you planning to open?*

**SC:** Obviously, we have to wait until the government gives us the 'all clear' (with conditions I'm sure), but we are hoping sometime in July - fingers crossed!

*CM: Is this a stand-alone or the first of many operations?*

**SC:** Stand-alone - I think Tom's two-minute 'commute' is a clear reason!

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**CM:** How are you planning to make a difference to the community in which the café is based?

**SC:** Well, re-opening a much-loved community 'asset' is high up on the list. It's a great meeting point and is much sought-after during festival season.

**CM:** What are the wider economic benefits for the community? For example, the local procurement of produce?

**SC:** We are striving very hard to ensure that all our suppliers are 'local'; James Gourmet coffee is probably the furthest, in terms of 'food miles'. We've even approached Dyson for product placement.... still working on that one!!



The Angel



## AUTHOR BIO

*Carla McKenzie has led MYA for the past 26 years in some of the most challenging industry environments. She is renowned for her vision and industry expertise across all sectors; hotels, arts venues, education, healthcare, events, travel, leisure and retail.*

*When not at work, Carla puts her energy into supporting various charities, in a very personal way.*

*In 2015 Carla completed a ground-breaking adventure, when at the age of 50 she embarked on a journey to ride from John O'Groats to Lands End, mostly on unsurfaced roads, while raising money for British military charities: [jogler.wordpress.com](http://jogler.wordpress.com).*

*In September 2018, Carla undertook a pioneering journey, riding from London to Paris on green roads by electric motorcycle. The journey highlighted the importance of preserving the planet and raised substantial sums for Kent, Surrey, Sussex Air Ambulance and the Joan Seeley Memorial Trust.*

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