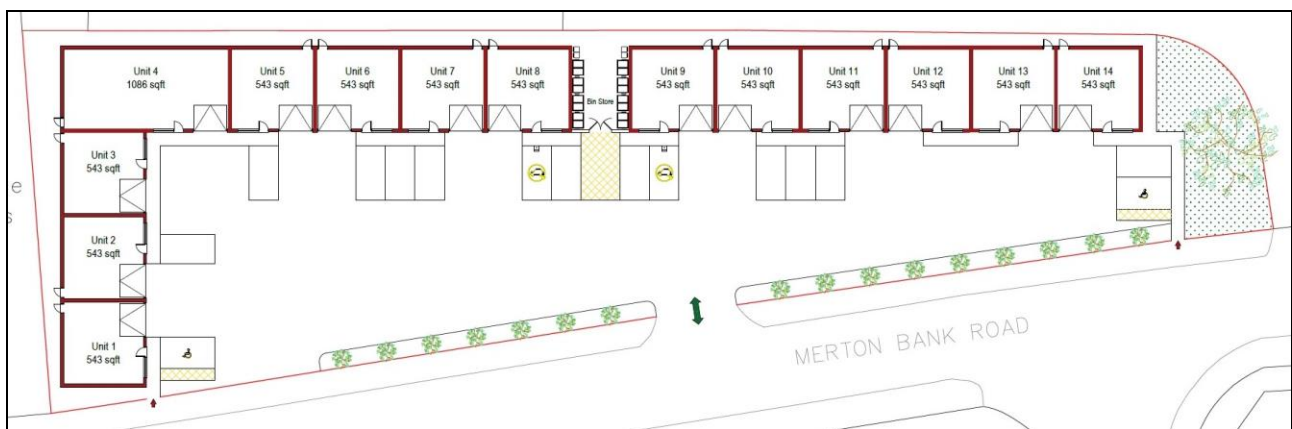


# PLANNING STATEMENT



**PROPERTY ADDRESS:**

Former Suregrow Garden Centre, Collins Industrial Estate, Merton Bank Road, St. Helens, WA9 1HY

**PROPOSED WORKS:**

Construction of 14no. commercial/light industrial units comprising 13no. 543ft<sup>2</sup> units and 1no. 1,086ft<sup>2</sup> unit

**APPLICANT:**

Mr. John Martlew (JMBC Ltd)

**DATE:**

November 2023

## PLANNING STATEMENT

### 1.00 INTRODUCTION

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#### 1.01 APPLICANT DETAILS:

**MR. JOHN MARTLEW**  
**JMBC Ltd**  
Unit 1  
Collins Industrial Estate  
Merton Bank Road  
St. Helens  
WA9 1HY

#### 1.02 DEVELOPMENT SITE:

**FORMER SUREGROW GARDEN CENTRE**  
Collins Industrial Estate  
Merton Bank Road  
St. Helens  
WA9 1HY

#### 1.03 AGENT DETAILS:

**CHRIS COUSINEAU BSC(HONS) MRICS**  
Lynwoods Building Consultancy  
44 Hanford Avenue  
Orrell Park  
Liverpool  
L9 3BW  
  
Tel.: +44(0)7913 238 176  
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**1.04** This Planning Statement has been prepared by Chris Cousineau BSc(Hons) MRICS of Lynwoods Building Consultancy, Liverpool, on behalf of the site owner and applicant - Mr. John Martlew of JMBC Ltd. This Planning Statement has been prepared to accompany a planning application for the proposed development described below:

#### 1.05 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

**1.05.1** The proposal made under this planning application is to construct 14no. commercial/light industrial units comprising 13no. 543ft<sup>2</sup> units and 1no. 1,086ft<sup>2</sup> unit, together with ancillary external works, within the existing site use class - Use Class E (*Commercial, Business and Service*). The units are to be arranged in two separate blocks: a block of 8no. units at the north of the site, and a block of 6no. units at the south of the site.

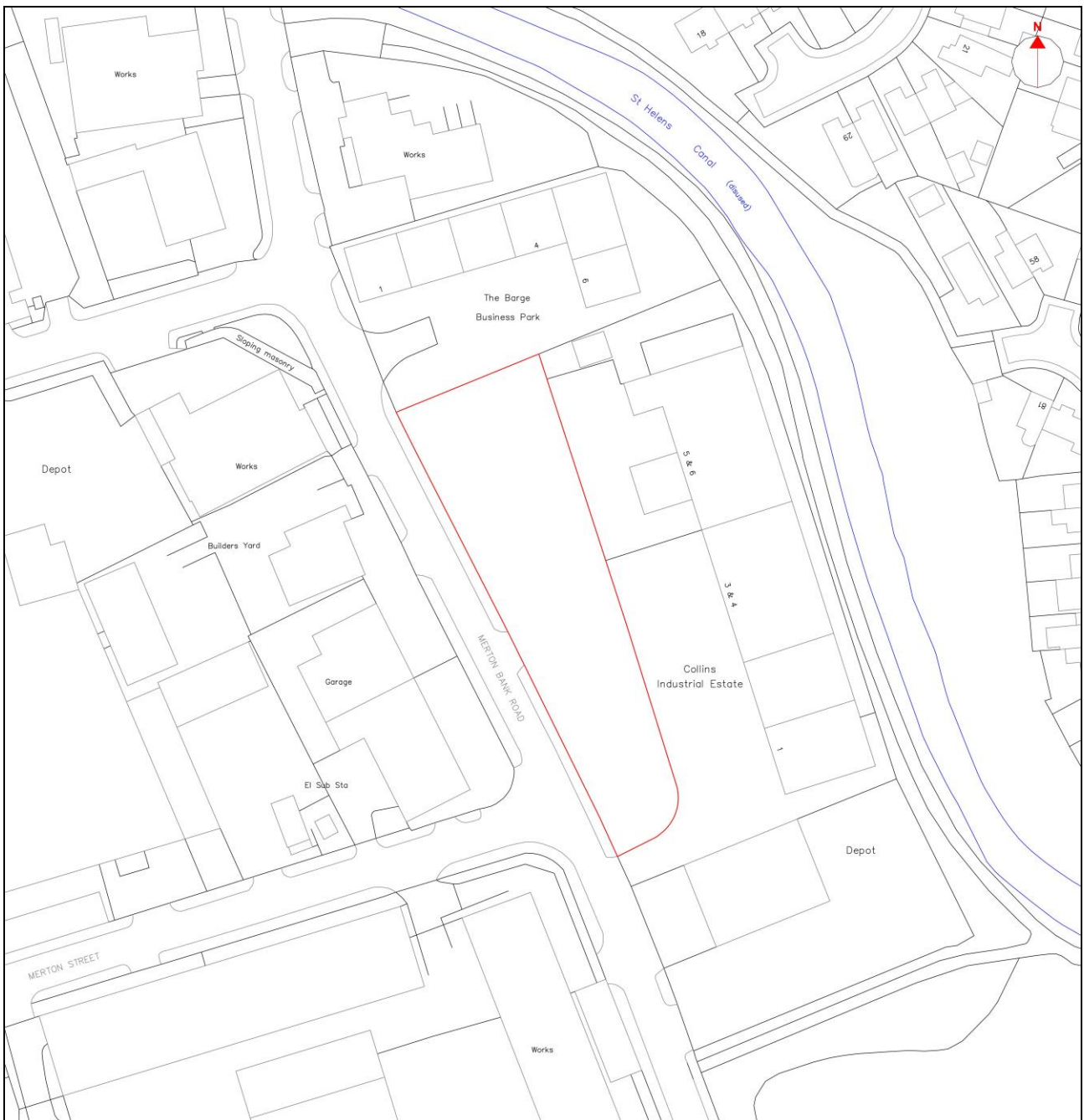
**1.06** This Planning Statement provides a general description and overview of the proposed development against the relevant national and local planning policy guidance. This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the planning application documents and the drawings numbered:

- Existing Location Plan (1:1250) - 022-043-MRS-JM 001,
- Proposed Location Plan (1:1250) - 022-043-MRS-JM 002,
- Proposed Site Layout Plan (1:200) - 022-043-MRS-JM 003,
- Proposed Elevations and Site Layout Plan (1:200) - 022-043-MRS-JM 004, and
- Proposed Elevations (1:100) - 022-043-MRS-JM 005.

**1.07** Pre-application advice was sought for the proposed development from St. Helens Council in June 2022 and following subsequent discussions with the Council and publication of their Pre-Application Advice in November 2022, a number of recommendations were absorbed into the proposal. (This is discussed further in Section 3.00 of this report).

## 2.00 ASSESSMENT OF THE SITE

**Fig. 1:** Existing site location map with the proposal site edged in red (not to scale).



- 2.01** The proposal site is situated off Merton Bank Road in St. Helens, in a predominantly commercial/industrial use area. The site is approximately centred on coordinates Easting 352284 and Northing 39206. The frontage of the site faces in a westerly direction directly onto Merton Bank Road.
- 2.02** The site is approximately 2,724m<sup>2</sup>, or 0.2724 hectares, in total area. The site perimeter is currently demarcated by 6ft steel palisade fencing on all sides and a small run of concrete panel and post fencing on the front (south west) boundary in the south corner of the site. There is a palisade steel vehicle access double gate on the front perimeter to Merton Bank Road, and a separate personnel access single gate in the south corner of the site - also leading directly onto Merton Bank Road. Most of the front perimeter fence line is set back from the true boundary line, with the boundary line being the edge of the public pavement.
- 2.03** The site is partially surfaced with areas of in-situ concrete hardstanding and other areas of gravel/unmade ground. There are no buildings on the site. The former Suregrow Garden Centre comprised a mixture of temporary polytunnel buildings and steel shipping containers. These were taken down and removed by the previous site owner prior to the applicant acquiring the site in May 2023.
- 2.04** The site is located within an area of commercial and industrial buildings; with Collins Industrial Estate directly to the east, The Barge Business Park directly to the north, a stand-alone commercial unit directly to the south; and a mixture of vehicle maintenance garages, commercial units and light industrial units across Merton Bank Road to the west.
- 2.05** The site is located approximately 1.3 miles north east of St. Helens town centre. The East Lancashire Road (A580) lies approximately 1.1 miles to the north of the site, which provides access to Junction 23 of the M6 motorway approximately 4.4 miles from the site. Junction 7 of the M62 motorway (the Rainhill Stoops Interchange) lies approx. 4.5 miles to the south of the site.
- 2.06** The site is located approximately 0.9 miles north east of St. Helens Central train station, which is approximately 20 minutes walking distance. The Merton Street Bus Stop (Stop ID: *meradtpw*) is located on the south-bound carriageway of Merton Bank Road on the front boundary line of the site. This bus stop provides daily bus links to St. Helens Bus Station in the town centre off Bickerstaffe Street, St. Helens.
- 2.07** The existing established use class of the site is Use Class E (*Commercial, Business and Service*).
- 2.08** Attached below is a selection of site photographs of the proposal site and the surrounding area, taken on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023, as well as Google Earth 3D renders of the site for illustrative purposes.

Photo 01



General view of the proposal site, looking towards the north from the south corner end.

Photo 02



General view of the proposal site, looking towards the east - with Collins Industrial Estate in the background.

Photo 03



General view of the north end of the proposal site, looking towards the north.

Photo 04



General view of the proposal site, looking towards the south from the north west corner.

Photo 05



General view of the front of the proposal site, as seen from the west side of Merton Bank Road, looking north.

Photo 06



General view of the front of the proposal site, as seen from the corner of Merton Street, looking north.

Photo 07



View of the personnel access gate through the front palisade fencing around the south corner of the site.

Photo 08



View of the front vehicular double access gate and splayed entrance from Merton Bank Road.



Photo 09



View of the bus stop along the front perimeter of the proposal site.

Photo 010



General view of the palisade fencing along the east perimeter of the proposal site with Collins Industrial Estate.

Photo 011



General view of the front elevation of the units comprising 1-6 Collins Industrial Estate, to the east of the site.

Photo 012



View of the stand-alone unit directly to the south of the proposal site.

Photo 013



General view of The Barge Business Park directly to the north of the proposal site.

Photo 014



General view of the commercial/industrial buildings to the west of the proposal site across Merton Bank Road.

Photo 015



General view of Merton Bank Road, looking south from the proposal site vehicular access gate.

Photo 016



General view of Merton Bank Road, looking north from the proposal site vehicular access gate.

Photo 017



View of the entrance to the recently-resurfaced Ravenhead Greenway cycle path, approximately 50m south of the proposal site.

Fig. 2: Google Earth 3D render of the proposal site, with the approximate site boundaries edged in red, looking toward the west. Note: the temporary buildings shown in the image have now been removed.



**Fig. 3:** Google Earth 3D render of the proposal site, with the approximate site boundaries edged in red, looking toward the east. Note: the temporary buildings shown in the image have now been removed.



### 3.00 PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE AND PLANNING POLICY

**3.01** Pre-application advice for the proposal was sought from St. Helens Council in June 2022. Following subsequent discussions concerning certain aspects of the proposal, the pre-application advice was issued in written form to the applicant in November 2022 under reference PRE/2022/0082/PREC. This pre-application advice contained information and recommendations on the following:

#### POLICY

**3.02** The adopted development plan for St. Helens is the *St. Helens Borough Local Plan to 2037*, and, the *Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (2013)*.

Note: if viewing this document on a .PDF file with an internet connection, please click the following links to be redirected to the above local plan documents:

- ⇒ [St. Helens Borough Local Plan to 2037](#)
- ⇒ [Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan \(2013\)](#)

**3.03** The following policies within the *St. Helens Borough Local Plan to 2037* were deemed relevant to determination of the proposal:

- Policy LPA01: Spatial Strategy.
- Policy LPA02: Development Principles.
- Policy LPA03: A Strong and Sustainable Economy.
- Policy LPA06: Transport and Travel.
- Policy LPA08: Green Infrastructure.
- Policy LPC06: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation Policy.
- Policy LPC08: Ecological Network.
- Policy LPC09: Landscape Protection and Enhancement.
- Policy LPC10: Trees and Woodland.
- Policy LPD01: Ensuring Quality Development.
- Policy LPD09: Air Quality.

#### **ASSESSMENT**

**3.04** The pre-application advice received advised that the outline proposal to redevelop the site for commercial employment use, without a change in the existing planning Use Class of the site, is deemed acceptable and therefore complies with the requirements of *St. Helens Borough Local Plan - Policy LPA03: A Strong and Sustainable Economy*. The amended proposal seeks to support the Council's local plan policy by:

- Providing local businesses with modern commercial/light industrial facilities to enable the creation of start-up enterprises and/or the expansion of existing, established businesses, and
- Providing businesses with modern facilities that would provide local employment opportunities and job growth.

**3.05** (Our initial research and enquiries made prior to the pre-application advice informed us that in the local area there is demand for smaller, flexible commercial/light industrial units in the 500-1,000ft<sup>2</sup> range as businesses adapt to changing working patterns and the current economic climate).

#### **DESIGN AND APPEARANCE**

**3.06** *St. Helens Borough Local Plan - Policy LPA01: Spatial Strategy*, requires new development to maintain or enhance the character and appearance of the local environment, with a focus on the importance of local distinctiveness, as well as using good design to improve the quality of areas that may have become run down and be in need of regeneration. The policy also requires that development should avoid causing unacceptable harm to the amenities of the local area and surrounding residential and other land uses and occupiers etc.

**3.07** The pre-application advice received advised that the outline redevelopment proposal would not likely have any greater impact on the appearance of the area than the temporary buildings that were previously on the site. The pre-application advice advised that the proposed 'L-shaped' block of units to the north end of the site is typical of other developments in the area - for example, The Barge Business Park directly to the north of the site - and would therefore not be considered out of character for the area.

**3.08** The pre-application advice further advised that opportunity should be taken to improve the site frontage, including the provision of landscaping along Merton Bank Road. Taking these recommendations on board, the proposal has now been altered as follows:

- The block of units to the south end of the site - comprising Units 9-14 - has been rotated so that all of the units now face onto Merton Bank Road, and the block of units has been moved back to the rear (north east) boundary of the site in order to provide more depth at the front perimeter with Merton Bank Road for landscaping.
- A landscaped border has now been added to the site frontage with Merton Bank Road, which will allow the provision of landscaping as recommended in the pre-application advice. In addition to this, a new area for landscaping has been added to the south end of the site to help improve the visual appeal of the site along Merton Bank Road.
- (Appended to this application is an *Arboricultural Impact Assessment* report - dated 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023, and a *Method Statement* report - dated 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023 by Lally Tree Management, Manchester; detailing proposals for retaining and protecting some of the existing trees to the landscaped area at the south end of the site. Please refer to these reports for further details.)

**3.09** The elevation drawings of the proposal now show the units as being clad with a mixture of modern, thermally-insulated steel cladding profiles to the roofs and external walls, to reflect the general appearance of the surrounding buildings - particularly The Barge Business Park to the north of the site.

**3.10** Being in a predominately commercial/industrial area, and considering the proposed development being single-storey and relatively low-rise in proportions, the pre-application advice acknowledges that the development will not have any impact on residential amenities with regard to overbearing or overlooking impacts.

**3.11** Similarly, being no more than 6m in height to the apex of the roof ridges, the proposed units will sit approx. 2.25m lower than the existing units to Collins Industrial Estate at the rear of the site and will therefore not dominate the existing street scene.

## HIGHWAYS

**3.12** The pre-application advice received advised that, having reviewed the proposals, there would not likely be a significant variation in the number of trips to the site when compared to the previous use of the site as a garden centre; though the proposed development may create a more tidal profile of visits to the site with employees arriving and leaving the site within set times rather than sporadically throughout the day.



**3.13** The pre-application advice received advised that the existing vehicular access to the site from Merton Bank Road would be acceptable.

**3.14** The pre-application advice received advised that an additional pedestrian/cycle access should be provided at the south end of the site near to Unit 1 of Collins Industrial Estate in order to improve accessibility. Taking these recommendations on board, the proposal has now been altered as follows:

- The existing personnel access to the south end of the site will be retained to enable pedestrian/bicycle access to the south of the site from Merton Bank Road. This personnel access will provide a closer link to the nearby Ravenhead Greenway cycle path, which is located approximately 50m to the south of the site. This cycle path provides bicycle links to the site from the residential estates to the east and to the north of the site.
- An additional personnel access gate has been added to the north end of the site, enabling pedestrian/bicycle access to the north of the site from Merton Bank Road. This personnel access will provide a closer link to the residential estates at the north of the site; and, via the Ravenhead Greenway cycle path - which runs around the east and north of the proposal site - will provide bicycle links to the residential areas north of St. Helens town centre, which are located approximately 1 mile to the west of the proposal site.

**3.15** The pre-application advice received advised that the provisional 32no. parking spaces allowed for around the site on the draft development proposal was deemed to be excessive as based upon the approximate overall floor area of the development being 757m<sup>2</sup>. It was advised that, under *Supplementary Planning Document - Ensuring a Choice of Travel (June 2010)*, the maximum number of parking spaces for a comparable B2 Use Class should be 16no. spaces, or a maximum of 19no. spaces for B1 Use Class. It was advised that the car parking allocation should not exceed these limits.

Note: if viewing this document on a .PDF file with an internet connection, please click the following links to be redirected to the above supplementary planning document:

⇒ [Supplementary Planning Document - Ensuring a Choice of Travel \(June 2010\)](#)

**3.16** Furthermore, it was advised that the provision of electric vehicle charging spaces on the site would also be welcomed. Taking these recommendations on board, the proposal has now been altered as follows:

- In conjunction with rotated the block of units to the south end of the site and moving this block of units back to the rear boundary; the car parking layout has been altered to provide a maximum of 15no. parking spaces, as follows:
  - 2no. accessible parking bays.
  - 2no. electric vehicle charging bays.
  - 11no. standard parking bays.

- (Should it become necessary during day-to-day use of the site, overspill parking would be possible on the aprons in front of the loading bays of each of the units - thereby providing the option of an additional 9no. temporary parking spaces).

**3.17** (The previously-proposed parking bays in front of Unit 12 and Unit 13 have now been removed in order to suit the vehicle tracking advice provided by JG Highway Design Ltd, Helston. The vehicle tracking and swept path information is shown on drawings numbered JG01, JG02 and JG03 - these drawings are now attached to this planning application. Please refer to these drawings for further information.)

**3.18** Each speculative unit will be fitted with suitable internal bicycle storage facilities in order to encourage sustainable travel to the site. The applicant acknowledges the pre-application advice given and confirms the bicycle storage facilities will include lockers for staff use.

### AIR QUALITY

**3.19** The pre-application advice received advised that the development does not lie within an Air Quality Management Area and so is unlikely to cause a significant negative impact on air quality. The pre-application advice also advised that provision for electric vehicle charging should be incorporated into the proposal. 2no. electric vehicle charging points have now been added to the proposal.

### OTHER

**3.20** In accordance with the pre-application advice given, the planning application now encloses the following requested information:

- a) *Arboricultural Impact Assessment* report - by Lally Tree Management, Manchester. Ref. LTM0948.AIA.01, dated 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023.
- b) *Method Statement* - by Lally Tree Management, Manchester. Ref. LTM0948.MS.01, dated 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023.
- c) *Phase 1 Desk Study Report* - by Demeter Environmental Ltd, Liverpool. Ref. 23-10-01 Revision 0, dated October 2023.
- d) *Vehicle Tracking/Swept Path Drawings* - by JG Highway Design Ltd, Helston. Drawings numbered JG01, JG02 and JG03.

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e) (At the time of preparing this statement, the *Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report* and the *Construction Environment Management Plan: Biodiversity* report had been prepared by Collington Winter Environmental Ltd, Bolton, in draft form. The final versions of the reports have been requested and will be issued shortly.)

f) (At the time of preparing this statement, the *Noise Impact Assessment Report* had been commissioned by Omnia Consulting Ltd, Preston, and the survey work is scheduled for completion on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The report(s) will be issued shortly.)

#### 4.00 CONCLUSION

**4.01** Following the positive pre-application advice received from the Council in November 2022, the proposal has been reconsidered and amended to incorporate the main suggestions made by the Council, and we acknowledge the improvements that these have made to the overall proposal.

**4.02** We trust the amendments made to the proposal, and the new information supplied, builds upon the Council's initial positive outlook on the scheme. We believe the proposal satisfies the Council's stated development requirements and will make a positive impact on the local area in terms of visual aspect and business and employment growth.

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Planning Statement prepared by:

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Chartered Surveyor



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