



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**FORD HOUSE, FORD LANE,  
FRILFORD, OXFORDSHIRE,**

**NGR SU 4446 9723**

*On behalf of  
Mr & Mrs T Murphy*

**MARCH 2016**

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**Site Code:** FFFL 14

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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at Ford House, Ford Lane, Frilford. The base for the orangery had already been installed before the planning conditions had been received and no archaeological watching brief was undertaken in this area during excavations. The driveway down to the pool/gym room had already been excavated ahead of any archaeological observance, and stone had been laid on part of the drive. The excavations of foundations within the ruins of a limestone rubble built barn revealed the foundations to that building and the fragmentary remains of a brick floor towards the north of the building. The demolition of the cottage, removal of foundations, and the subsequent excavations related to the new build on the plot were advanced without an archaeological presence on the site and the presence or absence of archaeology, revealed or removed, remains unknown.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The development site is located on the north side of Ford Lane, approximately 220m east of the A338 in Frilford (NGR SU 4446 9723). It lies at approximately 62m AOD and the geology is alluvium and Kingston sand.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

The Vale of White Horse District Council granted planning permission (P13/2484/HH) for removal of existing conservatory and erection of a new orangery, the demolition of an existing cottage, the replacement of this with a triple garage, and a proposed detached single storey pool/gym room partially within the ruins of a stone barn. In line with NPPF, Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) recommended that a watching brief was to be undertaken during all phases of the development in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (JMHS 2014) approved by (OHaNET) in advance of the development.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The development site lay within an area of archaeological potential. A spread of Romano British pottery and tile has been found to the west. A further spread of Romano British pottery has been found to the south which appears to correspond with a series of cropmarks that appear to form part of a farmstead of that period.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

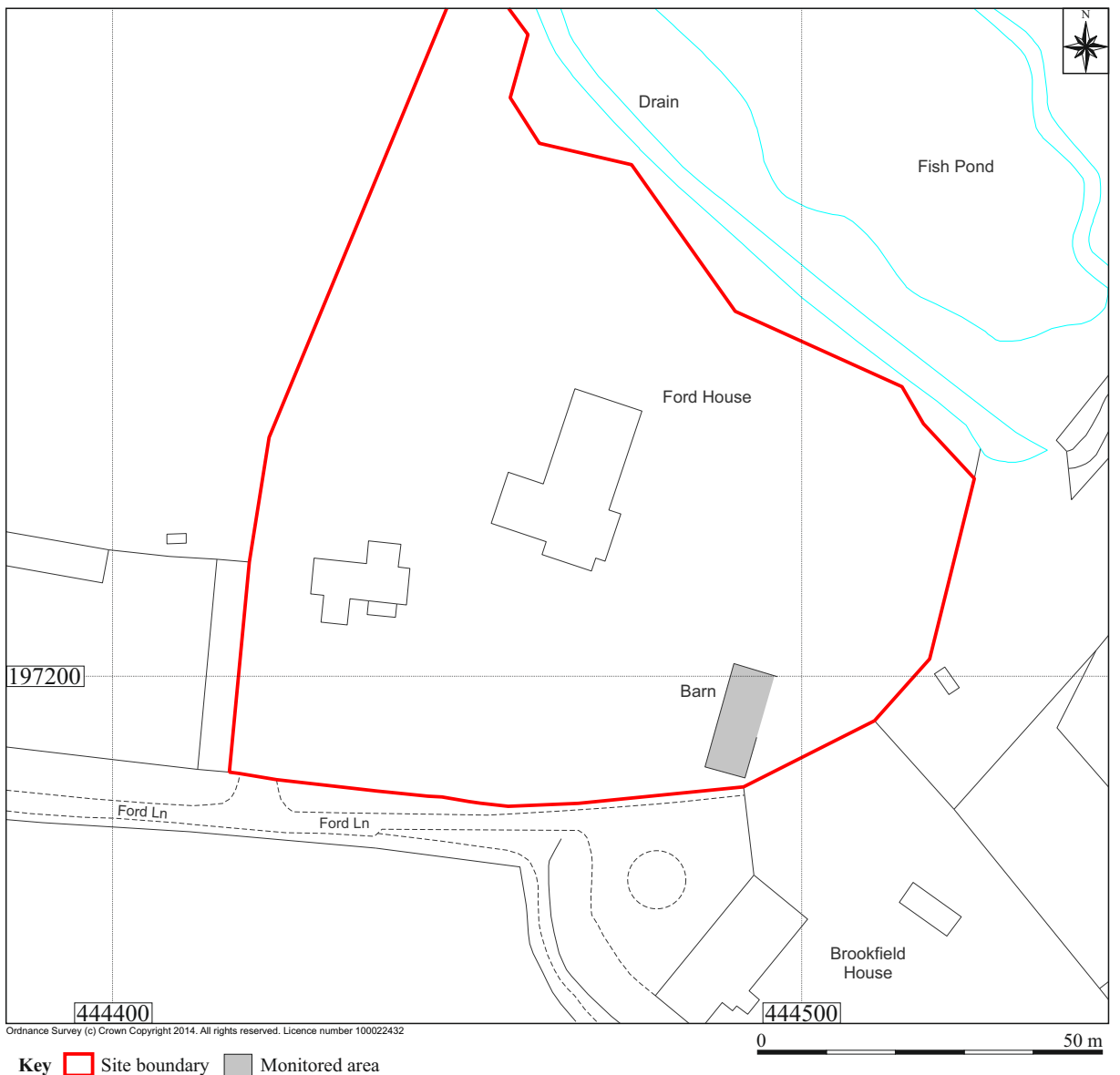
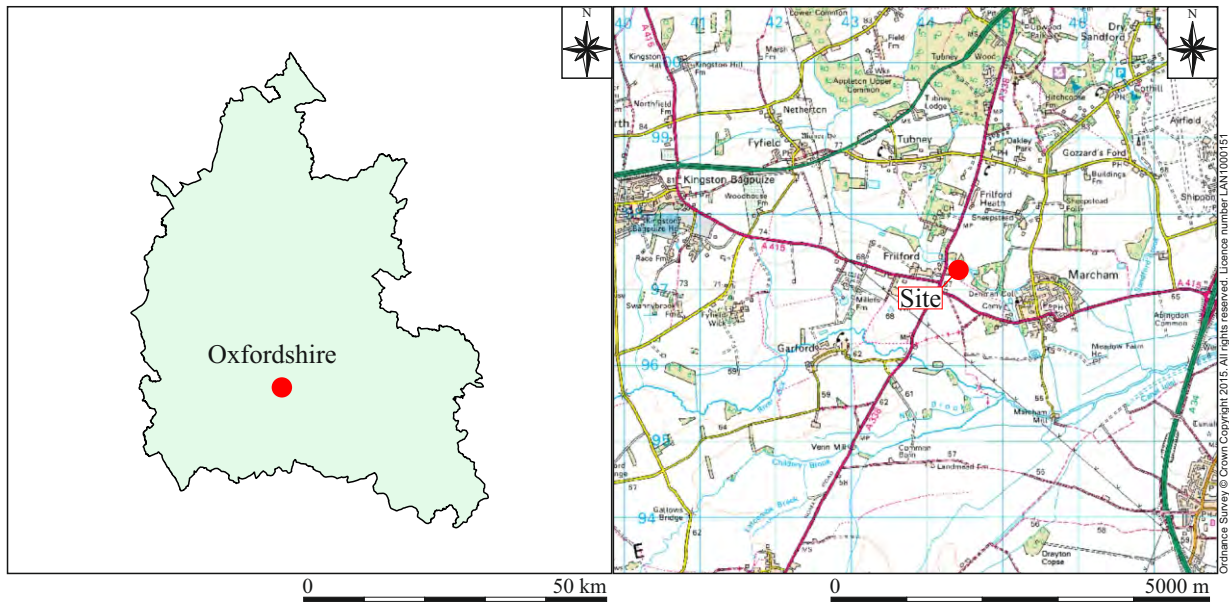


Figure 1: Site location

In particular to

- To record any evidence of remains relating to the Romano British activity in the area.

### 3 STRATEGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team, the archaeological advisors to the Vale of White Horse District Council.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1999).

#### 3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was to be present on site during ground works for the development. This was to include surface stripping, the excavation for new foundations (including underpinning) and services, and any other significant invasive works.

The base for the orangery had already been installed before the planning conditions had been received and no archaeological watching brief was undertaken in this area. On the first site visit the driveway down to the pool building/gym had also been excavated and stone laid thus no archaeological watching brief was conducted for this area. The sections in these already excavated areas were inspected for finds and features, where the sections were still extant. Further work was carried out with the presence of an archaeologist; ground reduction, underpinning and the excavations for the footings to the new build pool building/gym within the ruins of the old barn. Archaeological features and deposits were recorded by written, drawn and photographic record.

The demolition of the cottage and the ground works and excavations for the new triple garage on the site were carried out without the request being made for an archaeologist to attend site and so no archaeological watching brief was undertaken in this area.

### 4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts, numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material, while numbers in **bold** indicate structural features.

Excavations for the new orangery and the path down to the pool room/gym had already been undertaken prior to the visit by the archaeologist (Plate 1). It was, however, possible to make some observations of the soil horizons observed in the exposed section in the bank to the south of Ford House and in the sections along the pathway.

The lowest layer observed in this area was a mid-yellow brown and light orange sand with a frequent inclusion of angular platy limestone (2). This layer was observed in the exposed bank and was between 0.2m and 0.4m thick to the limit of the excavation. The layer was identified as the top of the geology and was overlain by a 0.2 to 0.5m thick layer of topsoil (1). This layer was very a dark brown, slightly loamy, silty sand. The layer was thicker towards the west of the site and there was evidence on the ground of landscaping which contributed to the difference in thickness. Towards the eastern end of the new pathway it was not possible to identify the full depth of the topsoil as the gravel had already been laid.



Plate 1. Excavated driveway/ path to Pool/Gym Room. West view.

Further excavations were conducted under archaeological supervision within the ruined barn (Fig 2. Plan). This involved, ground reduction, removal of the low standing remains of brick walls at the south end of the barn ruin and the excavation of foundation trenches for the new build.

The lowest layer identified was a solid layer of natural limestone (6). Deposited above this was a 0.15m thick layer of natural mid to light yellow sand with a frequent inclusion of platy yellow limestone (5). Above this was a 0.3m thick layer of dark brown and orange loamy sand subsoil (04) (Fig 2. Section 1). Above this was a very a dark brown, slightly loamy, silty sand (3); this layer was between 0.2 and possibly 0.4m thick. The stratigraphy of the site would identify this layer as two or more layers that were indistinguishable from each other. The lower layer maybe being part of the original topsoil and the higher layers, identified as context (15) being soil build up inside the interior of the barn over time. It was into layer (3) that the foundation cuts for the barn walls were most probably cut. Evidence for a possible backfill of dark sandy soil into the wall cut would indicate that it had been originally cut through layer

(03) or a layer similar to it. This cut extended onto and into layer (04) and it was onto this layer that the foundations were constructed.

Stylistically the west and east walls of the barn, **9** & **11** respectively, were similar and they are considered as contemporary. Wall **13** which was perpendicular to wall **9**, was structurally the same as wall **9** and was contemporary. To the north of the site wall **7** was a continuation of the build of the west wall, although wall **17** did not survive to the same height in elevation. These walls were also separated from the rest of the structure but were probably contemporary rather than a rebuild.



Plate 2. Section 1.

Excavations of the new foundations of wall **9** revealed a layer of white stone laid in a single course into a shallow cut into the top of (4) (Plate 2). Above this there were 12 courses of bricks with an elevation of 0.9m. The revealed cross section of this wall and wall **11** showed that this brick layer did not extend in depth for the entire width of the wall but instead was a facing on the interior of the barn (Plate 3 & 4). This facing was one brick wide and beyond it was a limestone rubble core. Wall **9** was 0.55m wide and was faced on its western face with roughly hewn limestone (Plate 5). Its eastern face was also faced with limestone above the lower brick courses (Plate 6).

The remains of the wall were 8.9m in length and its elevation on the western face was 2.6m above the present ground level (Plate 2). On the interior of the wall, it survived in elevation to a maximum height of 3m from the bottom of its foundations (Plate 6). The wall featured two arrow slit like openings. The east wall **11** was of similar construction and also featured an arrow slit opening. The eastward tilt of the wall had been secured at some point in the past by the construction of two limestone built buttresses (Plate 3). The surviving height of wall **11** was approximately between 2.7m and 3m above the present ground level. Below ground it extended for 0.45m in section (Fig. 2, section 2, Plate 7). Below ground the foundations to wall **11** only survived for another 1.2m from the north end of the above ground remains (Fig 2. Section 2, Plate 7). There was evidence for a robber cut for this wall, cut 21, and a backfilling with dark brown sandy soil (20). These layer were overlain by a mixed organic sandy topsoil (19).





Plate 3. North section of wall 11 and butress. South view

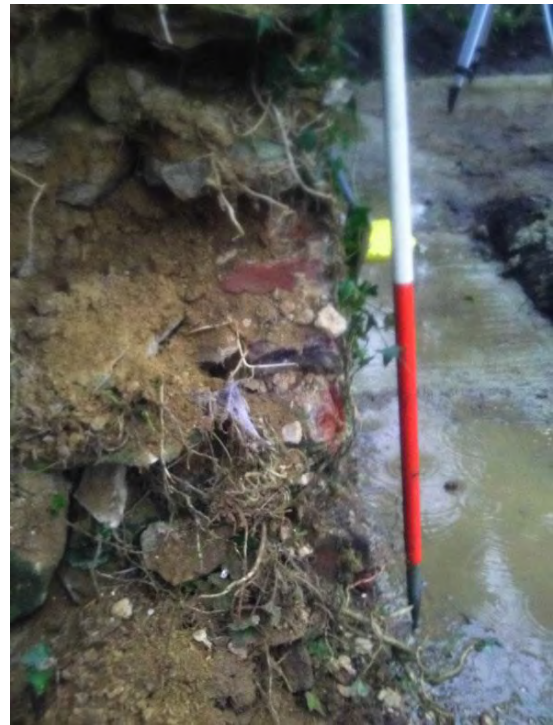


Plate 4. Close up of wall 11 section.



Plate 5. West face of Wall 9.

Towards the north area of the barn were the remains of north wall **7** and the continuation of the west wall **17** (Plate 8). These were the low lying remains of brick and stone barn walls. The surviving remains stood about 0.6m high above the ground but obtaining the exact measurements was difficult due to a large amount of plant growth over the walls. Both walls were demolished to the top of the current ground level but this was not observed by the archaeologist as it was carried out between



Plate 6. East face of Wall 9.



Plate 7. Foundations for wall 11. Section 2.

the second and first visits. The structural composition of the walls, that is brick and stone, was estimated from the remaining rubble and the remaining top of the foundations. On this available evidence it was considered that these walls were probably of the same construction as the higher standing remains.

At the south end of the barn the remains of the south wall were noted, wall **13** (Plate 9). The wall joined wall **9** at its southern edge and it was at this point where it survived to its highest elevation at around 1.8m above ground. The wall survived above ground level for about 1.2m before continuing underground for approximately 5m (Plate 9).

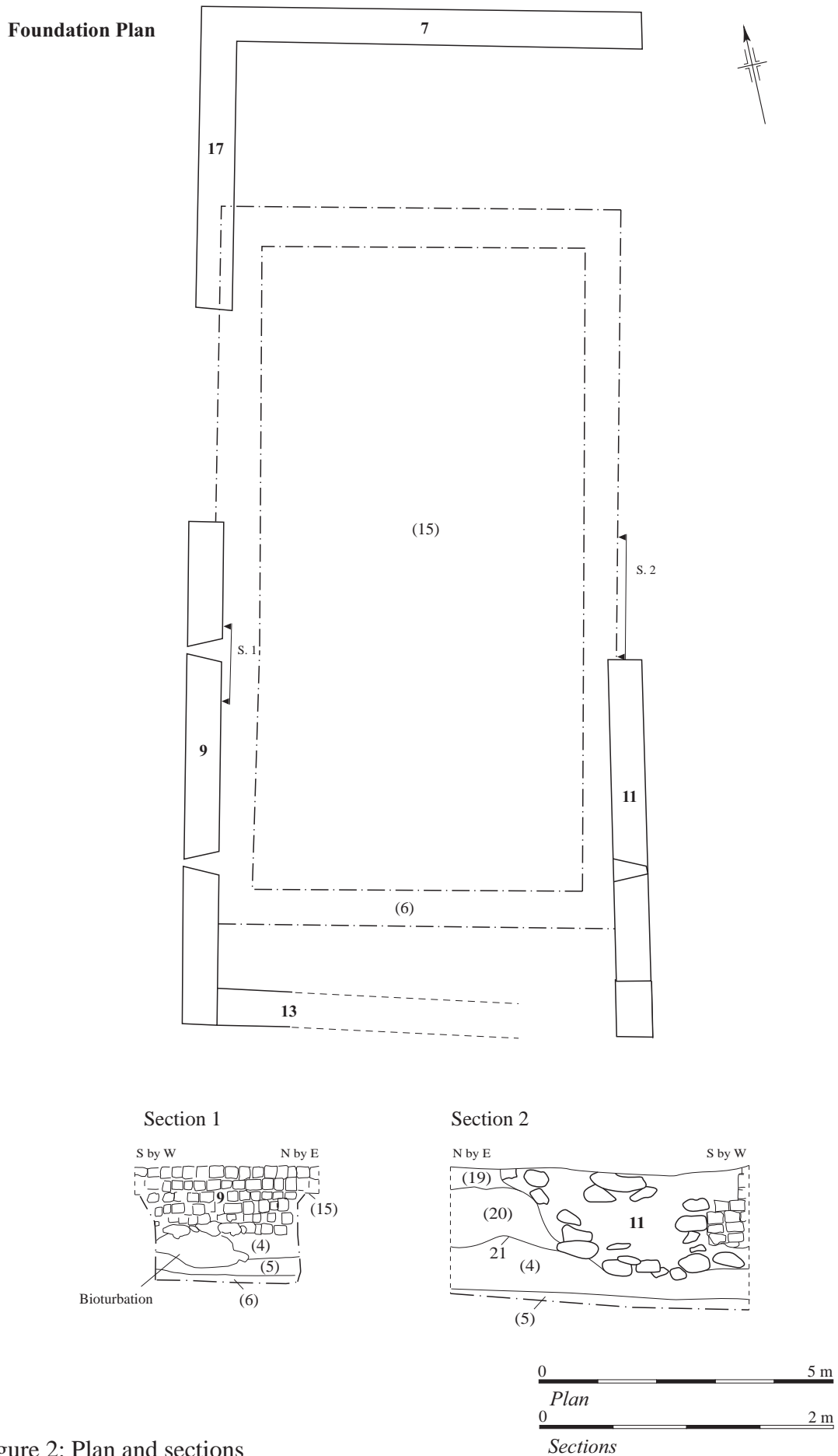


Figure 2: Plan and sections



Plate.8. Barn ruin. View southwards with Wall 7 in the foreground.



Plate 9. Corner of Wall 13 and Wall 9. NW view

In the north foundation trench to the new build the fragmentary remains of a red brick floor were noted at the west and east ends of the foundation trench. It was made of a single layer of bricks that were imbedded into a layer of dark brown sandy soil (3) and overlain by a soil that was identical in appearance and texture (15). At the east end of the foundation trench the brick floor was identified extending for about two metres towards the west. At the west end of the foundation trench the brick floor extended 1m eastward (Plate 10) and could be identified extending 0.4 south. Towards the north end of the barn, the full extent of the remains of the floor was not revealed by excavation but it was clear that the floor was missing from the central area in the north foundation trench (Plate 10).



Plate 10. Remains of brick floor. View eastwards.

## 5 FINDS

No finds were recovered from the site.

## 6 DISCUSSION

No finds or features relating to the Pre or Post -Roman Iron Age were recovered on the site. The only below ground features that were identified were the foundations to the upstanding walls of the ruinous barn and the fragmentary remains of a brick floor within the area of the barn. The archaeological potential in the areas where excavations had been carried out prior to the presence of an archaeologist on site cannot be identified beyond that which was observed post-excitation. No finds or features were identified post-excitation but as to whether any were removed by excavation could not be fully ascertained.

## 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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