

1. Introduction.

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to layout the short, medium, and long term thoughts of Misson Parish Council with regard to the community asset owned by it, known as Misson Community Centre and sited on Vicar Lane in the village of Misson.
- 1.2 This thinking was first aired at the Parish Council meeting of 5th October 2022, where members of the public were in attendance and observed the transparent debate of the parish councillors present. The council resolved to produce a green paper¹, for discussion with other interested parties.
- 1.3 This is version 1.6 of the paper, having been shared between Parish Councillors, and iteratively amended until this final version was agreed.

2. Context.

- 2.1 The Community Centre is presently leased by Misson Parish Council (MPC) to Misson Community Association (MCA) for a rent of £5 a year. The MCA may then sublet the building and raise funds for its own purposes in doing so, and also by using the building for community events which the MCA leads. The current lease was signed by both parties in September 2020 and runs for ten years, with an annual review at which point either party can trigger a break clause.
- 2.2 It is described as a full repair and maintenance lease. This means that the MCA, as tenant, agrees to fully maintain and repair the building and its immediate surroundings at its own cost. A building repair and maintenance survey was undertaken prior to the lease being signed so that both parties could agree the burden of repairs and maintenance known to be borne by the tenant.
- 2.3 The lease also includes that, when emergency repairs of more than £400 are to be made, the MPC as landlord and owner, must be consulted. Additionally, no alterations or additions to the property can be made without MPC consent. The intention in these clauses is that the building and its surroundings are repaired and maintained in a way that is sympathetic to this heritage asset which sits in the heart of the conservation area; a responsibility that is the owners to ensure.
- 2.4 Minutes of MCA meeting September 2022 indicate that repair and maintenance costs from 1st January 2022 amounted as follows; "Woodworm treatment for floor is estimated to cost £2,500; contribution expected from Parish Council of £500. Painting (£2,000) deferred until flooring issue resolved. Other issues to consider include the list of maintenance requirements based on the condition schedule of the building at the inception of the lease. Major spends on front roof £4,140, drain survey £1,234, plumbing repairs £577 are 'one-off' items totalling £5,955 within total repair and maintenance spend of £8,250 to date".
- 2.5 Since the lease was signed, repairs and maintenance to the building have been greater and more costly than expected. In Autumn 2022, MCA asked MPC to consider amending the lease to remove the annual review. MCA said this element of the lease prevented MCA as tenant, applying for any grants towards repair and maintenance, as grant agencies viewed the lease as a series of ten consecutive leases for one year rather than a single ten year lease. At its 7th September 2022 meeting, the Parish Council resolved to publish an agenda item for the 5th October 2022

¹ The term 'green paper' refers to (national, county, district, or parish) government consultation on policy or strategy. It typically outlines thinking, but seeks views from interested parties before proceeding to action that thinking. The term 'white paper' refers to a published statement of government policy or strategy. A 'green paper' is often, but not always, followed by a 'white paper' on the same subject, as ideas are developed and firmed up.

meeting where a wider discussion about the Community Centre, and the request to review the lease, could be held and transparently observed by members of the public in attendance.

3. The Conservation Area.

3.1 The Community Centre is sited within a designated Conservation Area and is listed as an important Heritage Asset.

3.2 Unlike listed buildings, which are designated by central government, Councils designate Conservation Areas locally. The Local Planning Authority has a duty to designate Conservation Areas where it identifies places of special architectural or historic interest. In September 2017, Bassetlaw District Council designated Misson a Conservation Area and published a comprehensive Appraisal and Management Plan (see figure 1) compiled by its Senior Conservation Officer, Michael Tagg.

3.3 Designation does not prevent change, but enables BDC Planning Authority to positively manage and protect areas against neglect, decay, or inappropriate development.

3.4 The report of September 2017 includes the following comment; “ To the north of St John the Baptist Church is the former village school, now the village hall. This was built in 1860 and is typical of the period, being L-plan with a red brick construction, yellow brick detailing, slate roof and timber windows. Although 20th Century alterations have been harmful to the building’s character² (especially the front extension, the pebbledash render covering, and the loss of the chimney stacks), the building still retains its overall form and is identifiable as a former school”.

3.5 This remark is important to note because it identifies the restoration potential of this significant heritage asset within a designated Conservation Area, and is an attractive prospect for agencies who offer grants towards such projects, which on completion, increase the amenity value of the whole area (see paragraph 7.2). As owner of the building, Misson Parish Council has a duty to protect its restoration potential.

4. History of the building.

4.1 In 1693, one of the first schools in Nottinghamshire was founded in Misson. Maps of 1754 and 1844 show the school’s location, immediately north west of the church. This building was replaced in 1860, when a new school was rebuilt on land just to the north of the newly extended churchyard, and the former school (within the churchyard) was eventually pulled down. The school was added to in 1874 with a further classroom. This new school building is known today as Misson Community Centre.

4.2 The original building, bounded by a brick wall, dominated Vicar Lane, as can be seen from the mid-20th century photograph at figure 2 overleaf. The field and farm buildings seen in the



² From a conservation point of view.



Fig. 2

photograph, are now Manor Close. The farmhouse remains on Top Street. The large window was removed, along with all the other original windows, when the building ceased to be a school and was modernised, according to the fashion at the time of the late 1970s and early 1980s, to create a community building. The porch is still in place and, when standing on Vicar Lane facing the Community Centre today, it can be seen on the left hand side. The back of the building currently contains a playground exclusively utilised by Misson Pre-School (to whom MCA currently sub-let the building for specified sessions).

4.3



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Figures 3 & 4 show the building as captured by photographs c1920 whilst Figures 5 & 6 show the building photographed in 2014. Compare Figures 3 & 5 (which show the building from the

front), and 4 & 6 (which show the building from the car park side), to appreciate changes to the building which took place in the late 70s and early 80s.

4.4 Photographs taken through the centuries of pupils lining up outside school for the annual picture also clearly show the original yellow against red brick 'feathering' which was a feature of the Victorian building.

4.5 The building passed into the ownership of MPC when the new school on Dame Lane was opened, Nottinghamshire County Council gave MPC the opportunity to purchase the building through a loan made possible by Bassetlaw District Council. Other locally held artefacts include a press cutting from the early 1980s, when the building was re-purposed as a Community Centre, owned by Misson Parish Council and managed by Misson Community Association on behalf of MPC.

4.6 It is the view of the conservation professionals who have viewed the building and the historic artefacts, that many original features are likely to still be present underneath the pebbledash render.



Fig. 6

5. The short term view of Misson Parish Council at October 2022.

- 5.1 In the short term, options with regard to the current lease (with MCA) are identified as;
- MPC and MCA re-negotiate the lease such that the annual review is removed,
 - MPC and MCA agree to live with the lease as it is,
 - MCA decide to surrender the lease and give management of the building (including the responsibility for repairs and maintenance) to MPC, or
 - MPC decide to sever the lease with MCA and take management of the building (including the responsibility for repairs and maintenance) itself.
- 5.2 With regard to option a); the appetite amongst individual counsellors is small. It is felt that negotiation of the lease had been both costly and time consuming (for both parties) in the first place, and re-negotiation after only two years was unnecessary. The annual break clause suited both parties at the time of signature, and remains useful to the needs of MPC.
- 5.3 With regard to option b); the Parish Council wished to "stick with the lease and make it work for all of us". At the time of discussion, the Parish Council resolved that, where MCA identified grants that could be bid for that would benefit the community centre and its usefulness to the community and MPC agreed with the intended spend, MPC would be willing to make the application as owner

of the building³, and then spend any grants gained in the way identified by MCA and agreed with MPC.

5.4 Option c) is a matter only for the MCA.

5.5 With regard to option d); the Parish Council wished to continue the current lease to MCA and has no current intention to take back management of the building. MPC further praised MCA for the care they have taken over the building in recent years to enable it to remain a useful community asset.

6. The medium term view of Misson Parish Council at October 2022.

6.1 If MCA chose to surrender the lease before the end of the agreed term, or indeed, if at the end of the current term, MCA did not want a further lease or MPC did not wish to offer a new lease, then Misson Parish Council would become both the owner and manager of the Community Centre.

6.2 In the event of paragraph 6.1 being the case, the Parish Councillors of October 2022 agree their collective strategic objectives would be to;

- a) Create the conditions for the community to use this community asset in the way it needed,
- b) Make it available to the widest number of groups and individuals in the Parish,
- c) Seek to make it a wider part of the established community used by both the Church and the School as usefully needed,
- d) Recognise and promote its usefulness as a community safe and warm space which could offer tea, coffee and sandwich making facilities, photo-copying and wi-fi services, and make regular use as a Parish Office where residents might meet with the Parish Clerk and/or the District Councillor. Potential uses could then extend to a safe parcel drop space, community health drop-in, post office or banking drop-in, as the need and opportunities both emerge and are practicable.

6.3 In the discussion in public on 5th October 2022 Parish Councillors said, if MPC became manager of the Community Centre it would seek to give notice to Misson Pre-School to vacate the premises and support re-location at Misson School. Subsequently, MPC learned at its November 2022 meeting that talks were underway to move Misson Pre-School to the Misson School site. At the time of publication of this Green Paper, the moving of Misson Pre-School to Misson School has been formally announced. It remains useful to record the reasons for the view MPC expressed.

- i) The Parish Councillors believe Pre-School is a critically important asset to the community, but is in the wrong location, and limits the use of the Community Centre for other potential users during daylight hours,
- ii) They argue; being part of Misson School will be better for the children, better for parents (who have to navigate parking on the very narrow Vicar Lane), better for the staff (who currently have to pack away all equipment at the end of the school day, so the hall can be used by others in the evening), and better for Misson School which will have the opportunity to demonstrate to potential Primary School parents why they might prefer their child to enter Misson Reception at the conclusion of Pre-School rather than remove their child from a familiar environment and go elsewhere,
- iii) Freeing up storage space both internal and external to the building will help other users of the hall both now and in the future, and free up much needed archive space for Parish Records,

³ Subsequent to the discussion in public on 5th October 2022, MPC is informally advised that the annual break clause precludes either party from making successful grant application. This has not been formally tested by MPC at the time of writing this paper.

- iv) Relocation of the outside play-area (at the back of the Community Centre) will once again make space available for community barbecues and hog roasts which were a regular feature of village life in the past,
 - v) The cost of heating the building for use by Pre-School is likely to soon significantly surpass the rent collected by MCA from it, and will then become a cost to MCA rather than an income generator. Whilst this is entirely the business of the MCA in the present day, Parish Councillors noted that Misson School is heating its building anyway and if MPC was the manager of the Community Centre, this economic and environmental argument would be made.
 - vi) Return of use of the car park to the community will aid parking on Vicar Lane, and will potentially enable a couple of electric car charging points to be fitted to the building for use of the paying public.
- 6.4 At this medium term distance, it is not possible to truly gauge how the Community Centre may be of future use to the community. However, a survey of over 65 year olds some five years ago indicated that residents (then) would welcome activities during the day; a Buttie and Bingo Club, Soup and a Sandwich club, an afternoon quiz with tea and biscuits, keep fit for the older years, a gardening club etc. The over-riding feedback (then) was that older residents did not wish to venture out in the dark, but would support activities during daylight hours. Misson Parish Council (today) concluded that, in the event it became manager of the Community Centre, it would act to free up use of the hall during the day for as many groups as might seek to use it for as many different activities (within the law) as the community desired.
- 6.5 There was also recent discussion about potentially changing the name of the Community Centre to something like 'Misson Parish Hall', 'Old School Hall', 'Village Hall', 'St. John's Hall', or even 'Earl Tostig Hall'⁴. This was thought to have three potential benefits;
- a) It would make the point that local people are the centre of our community and not the building on Vicar Lane. Misson Community Association is sometimes mis-referred to as Misson Community Centre Association, which does it a disservice as the volunteers involved deserve to be associated with the wider service they bring to the community rather than by particular association with the Community Centre.
 - b) There is a wider bank of grants available for Village Hall projects.
 - c) The name 'Community Centre' was very fashionable in the 1980s but is arguably an outdated descriptor in the present day. A name change could therefore potentially be linked to a new building related project launch in the future.

The matter was debated by MPC on 5th October 2022 and it was concluded that, whilst there is merit in considering a name change, now was not the time to do it.; new signage for a community asset during a cost-of-living crisis being less important than diverting funds to support a food bank, for example. Nevertheless, MPC thought this was worthy of debate in the medium term, which would also give time for consultation with residents about potential new names.

7. The long term view of Misson Parish Council at October 2022.

- 7.1 In the longer term, the view of Misson Parish Council at October 2022 is that the Community Centre should be restored where possible, to the way it looked before the 1970/80s modernisation, using contemporary double glazing and insulation materials. This should

⁴ Earl Tostig, brother of King Harold, was made Lord of Misson Parish following the Battle of Hastings in 1066_{AD}. 20 years later, Misson was first recorded, in the Domesday Book of 1086_{AD}.

incorporate an upgrade to the existing modern extension and restoration of the roofs and associated stonework. Such a project would require the ingenuity and vision of a conservation architect, working in conjunction with BDC conservation officers, to create something of a comparable quality to the restored core yet clearly seen as later additions. Any original features that have survived would be retained, conserved and repaired using heritage materials and techniques.

- 7.2 Doing this would increase the value of it both as a community asset (the intrinsic value of the building owned by MPC), as an amenity asset (being the increase in value such a project would bring to other properties in Misson), and as an environmental asset (because residents would enjoy seeing and using a beautiful building, with a restored side arched window framing the Church of St John the Baptist as the original window did in 1860, and was once again a building that emphasised the link with Misson in the past and Misson in the present day).
- 7.3 MPC recognise that a restoration project would require rigorous planning and many grant applications. This being the case, this matter is treated as a longer term ambition for the Parish Council that debated this in October 2022. Nevertheless, the desire is real and alive today, and affects the on-going attitude of the Parish Council in terms of repairs and maintenance proposed in the present.

8 Summary Remarks.

- 8.3 At the time of publishing this Green Paper, Misson Parish Council does not wish to renegotiate the lease and prefers to find a way to make the current lease work for all parties.
- 8.4 It is important to say that the current lease was agreed by both parties as recently as September 2020, but has presented difficulty to MCA since the building has re-opened following the Covid-19 shut down⁵; note the situation reported earlier (paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5) that, since the lease was signed, repairs and maintenance to the building have been greater and more costly than expected and MCA would like to be able to bid for money from third parties to help pay for the necessary repairs to and maintenance of the building.
- 8.5 The Parish Council's reluctance to amend the lease comes from the experience of accidental damage done to the historic value of the building in the past and unsympathetic changes to the look of this important heritage asset; the unintended consequence of these, has contributed to a gradual degradation of the aesthetics and heritage value of the asset which the Parish Council is concerned to stem. Further, the annual review enables MPC to guard against decisions being made about the use of the asset which are detrimental to the wider community, such as the action to permit the back of the Community Centre to become an exclusive play area for use of the Pre-School without formal agreement of MPC.
- 8.6 Like other community groups, the volunteers who serve Misson Parish Council change over time, and those carrying out service in the present are not necessarily the same as those who were councillors in the past nor those who will serve in the future. The primary purpose of this Green Paper is to capture the corporate thoughts of Misson Parish Council in October 2022 as owner of the Community Centre, and share the thinking with other interested parties.

Compiled on behalf of Misson Parish Council by Dr Mandy Walker, Chair of MPC

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⁵ Note the situation reported earlier (paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5) that, since the lease was signed, repairs and maintenance to the building have been greater and more costly than expected.