



## Indoor Children's Playground & Party Rooms

The Marsh Farm Community Enterprise & Resource Centre (CERC)  
Northwell Drive, Marsh Farm, Luton, Beds, LU3 3QB

## Executive Summary

Melanies Little Farmers (MLF) will be an action-packed, undercover indoor playground which is full of play activities including scramble nets, rope bridges, ball pools, a near vertical drop slide and 4 party rooms for children's birthday's and other occasions. The equipment is unique in its ability to be accessible to all ages, including adults, thereby making the centre a 'Family Adventure Zone' rather than a run of the mill soft play area.

There are many organisations in the UK who already operate very successful modular indoor playgrounds, either as standalone businesses in their own right or as an integral part of a larger theme park or open farm.

On Marsh Farm we plan to pioneer a brand new concept for use of an indoor playground that we are sure will see levels of use soar to new heights. MLF will be very different to other indoor playgrounds in the following ways:

1. all play supervisors will be fully registered childminders rather than just 'attendants' meaning parents can leave their children at the playground for 2 hour sessions whilst doing other things like shopping, training, housework - or just taking a much needed break
2. NVQ training in childminding and associated qualifications will eventually take place on site
3. located in the middle of a housing estate within walking distance for its main intended beneficiaries (families with young children on Marsh Farm)
4. play supervisors will be sourced by purchasing hours from the existing pool of 38 registered childminders living on Marsh Farm
5. includes a sensory area for free use by children with special needs
6. not for private profit business with any operating surpluses re-invested back into the Marsh Farm community
7. subsidised rates for children who live in or go to school in Marsh Farm

These differences will mean the project makes a number of significant contributions towards the overall community and economic development objectives of the Marsh Farm Community Development Trust by:

- making a crucial contribution to the sustainability of the new CERC building
- radically increasing the number of people visiting Marsh Farm
- increasing footfall for all of the other businesses, projects, the market and other services based in the CERC and in the Central Shopping Area
- increasing take up (by parents) of training and education packages delivered by MFCDT
- improving the general perception of the estate (a place to go rather than one to avoid)
- creating a training base for childminders
- increasing caseload for Marsh Farm based childminders
- helping to tackle childhood obesity
- improving the general health and fitness of younger people on the estate
- maximising partnership and interaction with other health or children related projects and services throughout Luton and Bedfordshire

In resident surveys carried out to measure levels of support for the idea 80% of the 625 residents surveyed fully supported the project, with 52% stating that they would make regular use of the playground.

**Full installation of this project into the Marsh Farm CERC will require an investment of £433,000 which will be more than recovered within 3 years of start up. Projections show that sustained use at maximum capacity (100 children) would turnover £546,000 by end of year 3 leaving a surplus of £228,000 for re-investment in the business and/or the MFCDT legacy vehicle.**

## Business Name

'Melanie's Little Farmers' Indoor Childrens Play Park

## Description of Business

A purpose built, high energy indoor playground play area incorporating:

### *Main Play Area*

A really exciting multi floor play space that will keep children aged between 2 – 16 years occupied for hours containing:

*Ground Floor* - Astra Slide Exit, Fireman's Pole, Swinging Steps, Pull Up Ramps, Over Under Hurdles, Padded Corner Climber, X-Changer, Spinning Poles, Bish Bags, Net Traverse, Stairs to First Floor, Gladiator Challenge, Corner Stairs to First Floor, Tumble Tower, Zig Zag Net Climber, Roller Pole, Elephants Foot Climber, Stair exit from Double Drop Slide, Double Drop Slide Finish, Drop Slide Finish, Stairs to Slides, Straight Tube Slide, Tight Spiral Tube Slide,

*First Floor* - Spinning Steps, V-Net Bridge Climb, Fireman's Pole Entry, Pull up Ramp, Slither Chicane, Padded Corner Climber, X- Changer, Swinging Snakes, Fireman's Pole Entry, Spinning Discs, Swing Over Nets, V-Net Bridge, Stair Exit First Floor, V- Net Bridge, Elephants Foot Climber, Spinning Pole, Ratchet Doors, Zig Zag Net Climber, Tumble Tower, Corner Stairs, Gladiator Challenge, Straight Tube

*Second Floor* - Padded Corner Climber, Tight Tube Slide, Astra Slide, Ladder Climb, Netted Rollerway, Horizontal Squeeze Roller, V-Net Bridge, Vertical Squeeze Roller



***Toddler Area (under 5's)***

*Ground Floor-* Ramp Climber, Bish Bags, Corner Climber, Over Under Hurdles, Spinning Steps, Tumble Tower, Padded Corner Climber, Padded Shapes, Slide Exit, Ball Pool, Ball Fountain

*First Floor -* Ramp climber, Corner Climber, Slide Entry, Roller Pole, Swinging Snakes, Tumble Tower, Slide Entry, Padded corner Climber



***Padded Area - under 2's***

Padded shapes and padded slide, Ball pool and Ball Fountain, Padded seating surround, Interactive panels of Mellie the Elephant, Peggy the Pig, Clunk the Cog Panel and 4 Mirrors

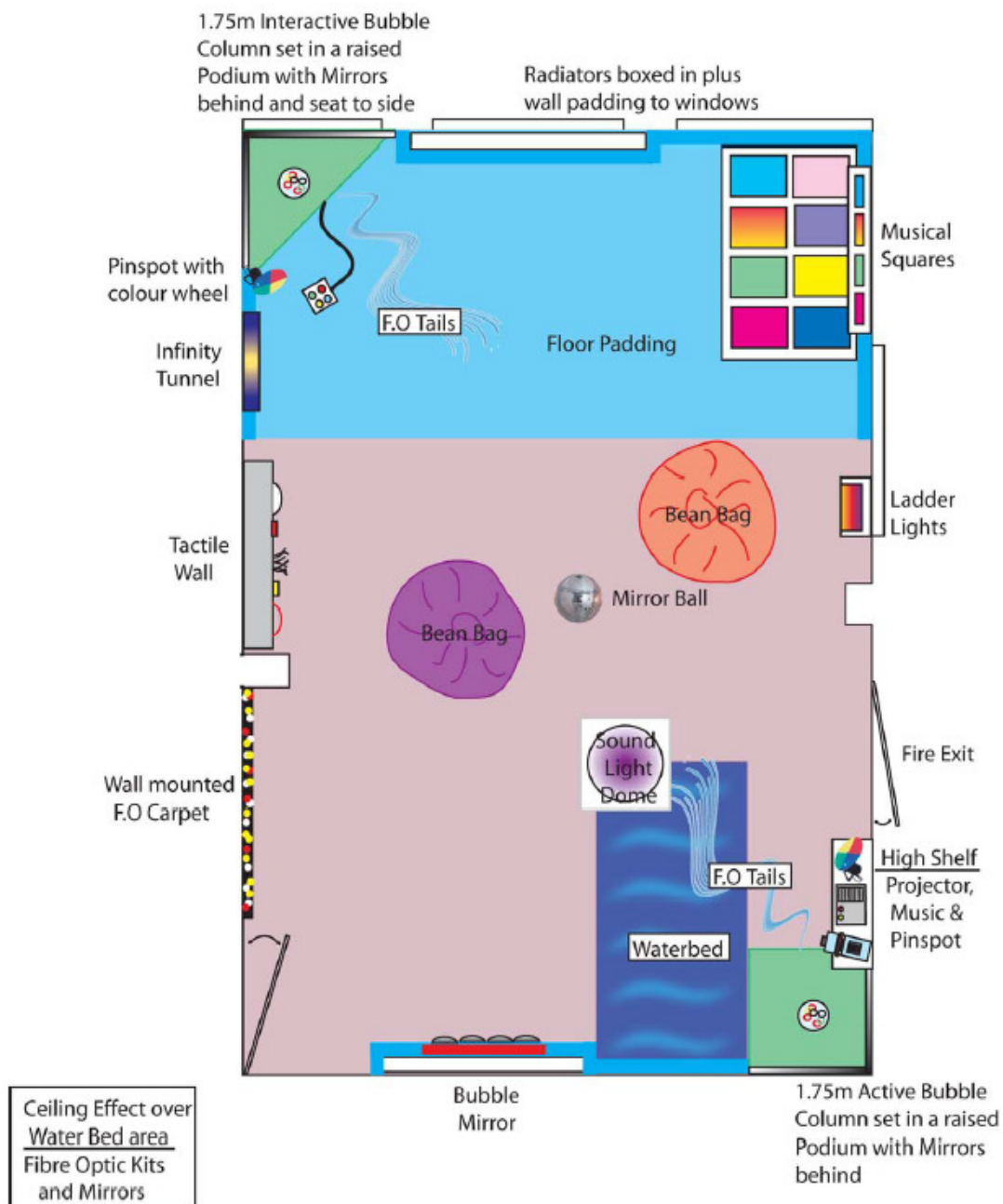


## Multi Sensory Room

A Multi-Sensory Environment is a fascinating space that encourages a relaxed exploration and provides a safe sensory adventure. A Multi-Sensory Environment is controllable, to find the right level of stimulation, and the effects will often carry over outside the space and into other activities, reducing agitated behaviour, stimulating conversation and acting as a reward.

The concept is widely accepted as an effective therapy for special needs populations and the staff who care for them.

The Marsh Farm sensory room will be available free of any charge for use by children with special needs who are accompanied by parents, teachers or carers.



## Seating

20 x 4 Seat Tables with Fixed Seating



## Party Rooms

2 Themed Party Rooms with each including 2 x (6' x 2'8") Table and 4 x (6' x 1') bench



## Mezzanine Floor

Mezzanine 25m x 11.2m with fire cladding suspended ceiling below platform and suspended ceiling above mezzanine, partitioned into 2 party rooms overlooking the play area.

## Toilets

The facility is fully equipped with toilets and wash basins

## Accommodation

The project will be based within the newly redeveloped Marsh Farm Community Enterprise and Resource Centre which will benefit from:

- free parking adjacent to the facility
- 24 hr security
- CCTV
- Cafe/Restaurant
- Members Social Club
- Training and education opportunities for parents

### 3 - Target Market

The project will be run primarily for the benefit of Marsh Farm based families with young children but will be marketed throughout the whole of Luton and Dunstable.

### 4 – Market Research

*Marsh Farm Users-* According to the United Kingdom National statistics office Marsh Farm Estate (Northwell Ward) has:

- 681 children aged 0-4
- 393 children aged 5-7
- 271 children aged 8-9
- 684 children aged 10-14

All of these children and their families are potential users of MLFPP

The Local Economic Survey discovered that out of 625 residents surveyed

- 245 have used a play park previously
- 167 used the Houghton Regis Park
- 47 use parks monthly
- 33 use parks quarterly
- 48 use parks six monthly
- 69 use parks annually.

Out of the **625** residents surveyed **462** would support a local play park with **330** residents saying they would use it (52 %).

#### *Luton and Dunstable Users*

No research into the market potential as yet

#### *Schools*

No research into the schools market as yet

### 5 - Marketing strategy

#### 1) *Blocks of use*

Access to the playground will be available for use in the following blocks:

Day	Time	Name of Session
Mon - Fri	10 am – 12 pm	School bookings and general public access
Mon - Fri	12 pm – 2 pm	School bookings and general public access
Mon - Fri	4pm – 6pm	After School Experience
Mon, Thu, Fri	6pm – 8pm	General Public Access
Tue, Wed	6pm – 8pm	Marsh Farm Kids Club
Sat - Sun	8am – 8pm	General Public Access

1)

During school terms the playground will be open on all weekdays between 10am – 4pm but will be restricted for use by

- School classes (up to 30 children per class - accompanied by teachers).
- We will negotiate rates for use by schools which are affordable in order to open the playground for high energy play sessions as part of the physical education curriculum
- general public use by mums n dads with tots aged 5 or under

'The Marsh Farm Kids Club' allows for regular access to the facility by children living or going to school in Marsh Farm on Tuesday and Wednesday between 6-8pm for just £1

2) *Affiliation to OW Sales and Marketing enterprise*

Affiliation to a pro-active sales and marketing team who will produce high quality marketing material promoting the playground, and conduct pro-active customer recruitment campaigns

3) *Affiliation to the Marsh Farm Buyers Co-operative (MFBC).*

The idea for the MFBC emerged during the market research which was carried out for the Organisation Workshop project (an innovative business start up project designed to launch a number of new community businesses in Marsh Farm). In order to maximise the chance of survival for the new businesses (beyond the 20 week kick start provided by the OW) MFO team will conduct an intensive campaign in the months prior to the start of the OW to recruit members of a buyers co-operative.

A Buyers Co-operative would provide the new businesses with a localised customer base who understand and support the social and economic rationale behind the project, holding a 'loyalty card' for discounted access to services provided by the businesses, including membership of the Marsh Farm Kids Club which enables access to the Play park for just £1 for a two hour session.

The concept of a buyer co-operative on Marsh Farm was tested in 2008 when MFO team knocked 100 doors and held a 1 day promotion/consultation in the Purley Shopping Centre. The results of this research were very encouraging with more than 200 Marsh Farm residents expressing their support for the idea in just 1 day.

- 4) *Promote the Health benefits* - The health and fitness advantages of high energy play will form an important part of our marketing message, with emphasis on countering childhood obesity
- 5) *Use of supermarket vouchers* - We will make partnership arrangements with traders in the Purley Shopping Centre and the local Sainsbury's supermarket at Bramingham to encourage use of the playground whilst parents do the shopping. This will be of mutual benefit to the play area and to the shops and services concerned.
- 6) *Mellie The Elephant* - Most playgrounds create a named character to assist with the marketing of the facility. We have chosen 'Mellie the Elephant' in honour of the late Melanie Watt Roy (who was the originator of the Marsh Farm play park project)



## Pricing Policy

At £2.50 per hour (£5 for a 2 hr session) the playground will cost much less than the usual fees charged by competitors. This hourly rate is cheaper than the cost of hiring a childminder or paying for attendance at after school clubs.

The tables below show the revenue raising potential at usage levels of 25, 50, 75 and 100%. Maximum capacity of the play ground is (150 – 100 children at any one time with up to 50 adults in attendance)

***Entrance for just £1 is available for all members of Marsh Farm Kids Club on Tuesday's and Wednesday's (only open to children living or going to school in the Marsh Farm NDC area).***

### Term Time - Monday to Friday 4-6pm (After School Experience)

% use	No of children	Total no of children	Daily Income £	Total weekly income £
100	100	100	500	2500
75	75	75	375	1875
50	50	50	250	1250
25	25	25	125	625

### Monday, Thursday and Friday 6-8pm (General Public Access)

% use	No of children	Total no of children	Daily Income £	Total weekly income £
100	100	100	500	1500
75	75	75	375	1125
50	50	50	250	750
25	25	25	125	375

### Tuesday, Wednesday 6-8pm (Marsh Farm Kids Club)

% use	No of children	Total no of children	Daily Income £	Total weekly income £
100	100	100	100	200
75	75	75	75	150
50	50	50	50	100
25	25	25	25	50

### Saturday and Sunday sessions

% use	No of children	Total no of children	Daily Income £	Income per Weekend £
100	100	600	3000	6000
75	75	450	2250	4500
50	50	300	1500	3000
25	25	150	750	1500

### Total Annual – all activities combined

% use	Total no of children	Total revenue £
100	78,000	390,000
75	58,500	292,500
50	39,000	195,000
25	19,500	97,500

## 8 - Competition

There is no other playground we know of in the whole country which employs child minders to enable parents to take a 2 hr break. Most playgrounds are staffed by unqualified attendants meaning parents must remain in the playground rest area whilst children play

The only local competition is a much smaller indoor play facility in Houghton Regis which is approx 4 miles away. Being based as it is in an industrial estate non car owners in Marsh Farm are very restricted in their ability to visit this playground and the equipment is only suitable for children up to the age of 9 years old, whereas this playground will use high energy equipment popular with children aged up to 15 and even older.

For car drivers the nearest similar facilities are Bedford (20 miles away) Mead Open Farm (14 miles away) or Woburn Safari park. However these playgrounds are a component part of a full day experience and not stand alone venues as proposed here.

## 9 - SWOT Analysis

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supported by vast majority of residents in local surveys and a referendum</li> <li>- Not for private profit community business means all surpluses are re-invested into the project for improvements and/or used for community development purposes by the MFCDT legacy vehicle</li> <li>- Based in the centre of a housing estate (rather than on industrial estates or within theme parks as is the norm) it is within easy walking distance for local residents</li> <li>- Will radically increase visits to Marsh Farm by non residents, thereby increasing footfall for locally based shops and services</li> <li>- Easy to access with regular and reliable buses from Luton and Dunstable stopping directly outside the facility</li> <li>- Wide variety of play equipment</li> <li>- Facility to leave children – parents can leave their children to go and use other facilities in CERC and surrounding area</li> <li>- On site Training facilities for parental use whilst kids are in the playground</li> <li>- Staffed by local people</li> <li>- Lower cost than any other playground locally or regionally</li> <li>- Affordable rates for use by Marsh Farm children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negative perception of Marsh Farm could deter some external users</li> <li>- Brand new as yet untried concept for use of a facility of this kind</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Free use of sensory area for local schools, carers and parents of children with special needs</li> <li>- Free soft drinks for children using the playground and use of competitively priced cafe/restaurant for parents (most playgrounds seek to raise extra funds via sale of fairly expensive food and drink)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Major contribution to Marsh Farm CDT's sustainable community agenda</li> <li>- Quality jobs for MF residents</li> <li>- Access to childminder training courses</li> <li>- Corporate hire</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Master Planning process has been really disjointed leading to a failure to properly assess the benefits of inclusion of the project in final plans for the new CERC</li> <li>- Tied as it is to the new CERC development means the play park depends on the viability of the CERC itself</li> </ul>

## 11 Health & Safety at work

All staff will also undergo a full health and safety induction as part of the training programme provided by mentors

## 12 Financial requirements

### Staff and employees

The staff will consist of 5 FTE posts:

- 1 administrators
- 4 Operations Managers

Operations managers will be fully trained by mentors who have several years experience managing and operating a similar facility.

Also, the playground will employ play supervisors from the pool of 38 MF based childminders. Use of existing Marsh farm based childminders to staff the project as play supervisors has many benefits including:

- reduces on costs due to purchase of hours rather than using permanent employment contracts
- allows the playground manager to buy hours on an 'as required' basis, giving them flexibility to fit staffing needs around 'quiet' and 'busy' times of the day and saving wasted labour time during quieter periods
- creates extra earning opportunities for childminders, many of whom have lots of spare hours on their registers

A single childminder can care for:

- up to six children under the age of eight years old
- three children under the age of five (which can include a baby under twelve months)
- At maximum capacity (100 children under 8) we would need 17 childminders on site, which reduces according to numbers using the facility

### **Financial Information**

See spreadsheets attached to this document.

### **Capital costs**

Play areas are constructed using a unique new modular design – System 21 – that is padded and netted in the factory to leave only straightforward assembly on site.

Full compliance with HSE rules on working at height.

The total cost of installation is **£429.136**

### **Business protection costs**

We will ensure that appropriate insurance protection is arranged for the business

