

Overview of the Project

It is our intention to convert Unit B, Meadow Street, Barnsley, S71 1DR to a children's indoor play area in order to provide a safe environment for children and their families to play. The accommodation is designed for children of all ages and abilities, and their families, and access for the less-abled has been taken into consideration throughout the design process. The accommodation will be used for individual play sessions, out of school and craft based activities and children's parties.

The design of the centre has taken into consideration all age groups and abilities and areas are also available for other, less strenuous activities such as crafts, story time and more tactile activities. Please see JJ/04 and JJ01/05 for the proposed internal layout of the centre. We also intend to provide a relaxing, area where parents can comfortably supervise their children whilst enjoying our more parent focused facilities such as television, magazines and WiFi access.

It is now understood how children can benefit from the time they spend playing. Our play centre focuses on maximizing these benefits by encouraging interaction, child safety and play. Our ultimate aim is to offer play which stimulates a child's imagination and encourages both physical and mental development in a safe environment. Our plans incorporate dedicated facilities for the disabled and also dedicated toddler areas will be provided for the younger clientele. Physical, intellectual and social development are important in creating both healthier and more positive outlooks for the children of Barnsley, whilst encouraging parents to play an active role. We also intend to establish links with local community groups and services such as Sure Start and the NHS to raise awareness and develop cross agency links.

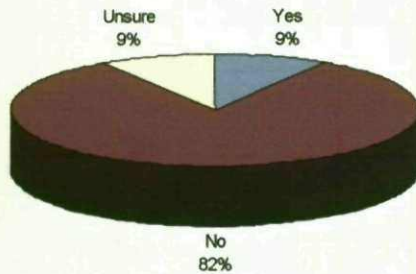
As well as providing play facilities for children we also intend to provide drinks, both hot and cold, and light meals and snacks for visitors. We will provide catering for in-house parties offering a variety of hot and cold party food, fruit and desserts. We aim to provide good quality food at affordable prices which is healthy, nutritious and where possible sourced from local businesses

Local Requirement

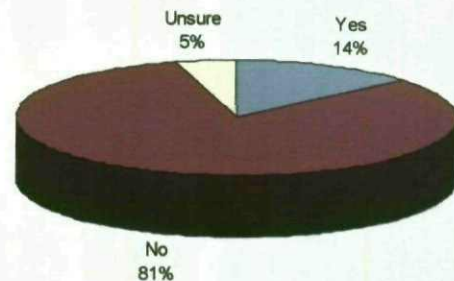
Whilst other indoor play areas are available in the Barnsley area, there are no facilities available in the town centre vicinity, so access to such facilities requires traveling to out lying areas, often accessing more than one bus service to reach the venue. For some this isn't a feasible option as the cost implications are too great. As the propose facility is based in the town centre, and is located within a five minute walk of the bus and train station, accessibility is a key advantage.

We have undertaken extensive research within the local area to ascertain both need and local requirement and have determined that there is clearly both a need and a desire for such a facility both to provide a safe, accessible play structure for children and families and also to provide a wider choice of facilities available. As part of our research we undertook a questionnaire of local residents to determine both need and scope for such a facility. Of the 88 people who undertook the survey 100% said they would definitely use such a facility in Barnsley town centre. Some of the other results are shown below:

Is there sufficient choice for children's indoor leisure activities in Bamsley town centre?



Is there sufficient choice for children's parties in Bamsley town centre?



When asked what kind of activities they would like to see held within the play centre some of the responses included: Arts and Crafts, Nature classes, Fitness, Music, Drama, Story time, Dancing/kids disco evenings and Facilities for parents. These suggestions all fit in with our ethos for the play centre as described above.

Accordance with Public Policy

As outlined in Planning Policy Statement 6, the Government is committed to developing and supporting successful, thriving, safer and inclusive communities. Our proposed facility can only assist in this vision as it provides a safe environment, which children and families can access, and where they can establish and maintain relationships with other members of their community.

Another key aspect is the encouragement of 'a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all', where a 'diversity of uses in centres makes an important contribution to their vitality and viability.' We feel that the introduction of an indoor play area to the Bamsley Town centre area will help to fulfill these criteria as it will provide a wider range of services available to the exiting communities and also increase the vitality and viability of the centre as well. The introduction of a facility, which is currently only offered in outlying areas, can only be a benefit to the community as a whole and make Bamsley Town centre more attractive to local residents and visitors whilst also fulfilling the identified need that 'planning authorities should encourage diversification of uses in the town centre'.

As well as providing an innovative and accessible play space for the use of the community it will also play a part in improving the communities sense of well being, encouraging children to actively participate in exercise, whilst also providing a safe environment in which they can do so. The facility can also be used as a meeting point for members of the community and 'bring together members of deprived communities and provide opportunities for people for social interaction,' as identified in Planning Policy Guidance 17. The centre would also tie in with the Council's Local Development Framework 'Core Strategy' and offer a variety of activities, promote healthy living and well being and generally improve the lives and well being of the Borough's children and their opportunities to 'enjoy life and seize opportunities'.

Site Location

It has taken a considerable amount of time to locate an appropriate building for this venture, however, we believe the intended building is both of the right dimensions and in the perfect location to accommodate the widest possible audience, both for town centre residents and those living in outlying areas.

The site itself is currently vacant and we have the full backing of the owners of the building. We feel both the location of the site and the intended purpose will be both beneficial and advantageous for the local community, providing both employment and community interaction, whilst raising the profile of Barnsley Town Centre and the facilities it provides. Access is a major advantage, as previously outlined, due to the centrality of the site. As we will be opening after the peak hour traffic and closing after the rush hour ends we envisage no major impact on the normal flow of traffic around the site.

We have had a pre-application discussion with Alex Cotter on 23rd April 2009, in which she identified the area of land, on which the unit we are seeking planning permission is located, is designated as Residential Use. She stated that she saw no evident problems with the change of use for the site and referred our enquiry on to a colleague, Steve Kirkham, to further assist with our application.

Sustainability and Highways

Access to the site will be a key advantage in the sustainability of the project, due to its town centre location. The site is easily accessible by both members of the public on foot, by car, by bicycle, by public transport, with the bus and train stations being only a short walk away. As part of our marketing strategy we intend to clearly identify the location of the venue and provide clear directions to its location. To coincide with, and promote the Governments 'Change for Life' campaign we will actively encourage walking or cycling to the facility or the utilization of public transport incorporating a short walk from the main stations. An area will be allocated within the unit for the safe storage of bicycles and pushchairs whilst patrons are using the centre.

It is anticipated, on the grounds of other models and research undertaken, that there will be a ratio of 2 children to 1 adult accessing the facility. As such adequate parking facilities have been made available to patrons, using the specified ratio of 1 space per 22 m², along with adequate space for children to be dropped off and picked up for activities such as children's parties and out of school activities, please see JJ01/03.

Employment

It is our intention to open the facility seven days a week with specific opening times for general public use and also dedicated times for private, party use. It is anticipated that initially we will require 1 manager, 1 supervisor, 4 part-time staff and 2 casual staff, to accommodate demand for private parties.

All members of staff will be given training in First Aid, Basic Food Hygiene and any further training as identified through interview/employment. We aim to provide opportunities for members of staff to develop new skills and ultimately maximize their employability status. We will ideally aim to assist staff in attaining the minimum national requirement of a full

level two qualification by sign posting them to the relevant learning facilities to achieve this standard and assisting them in the achievement of this. Assisting staff in their own personal development will not only provide benefits for the company, but also help in staff retention and hopefully job satisfaction.

Conclusion

As identified by our research, there is need for a wider diversity of activities for children in the Barnsley Town Centre area. The introduction of an indoor play facility would provide a beneficial solution to this as it would provide a safe environment in which children could play, exercise and build relationships in a social arena. The facility would provide opportunities for employment and ultimately the achievement of new skills and qualifications for employees. As well as providing a social, accessible meeting place for parents, guardians and children, it would also raise the profile of Barnsley Town Centre and illustrate that children and their well-being are an important, and integral part of the development of Barnsley as a whole.