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12 March 2019

To whom it may concern

I am writing on behalf of Richmond Council to support the proposals to redevelop the site of Marble Hill Playcentres. Over recent years, reductions in government funding have restricted the Council's ability to provide a number of services, including those for children and young people between the ages of 0 to 16 years, and their families. Marble Hill Playcentres is an established and very valued voluntary sector provider that has offered a range of activities in this sector for many years, in part filling the gap left by the Council's financial constraints. The site is now in need of improvement because the buildings and wider facilities have reached an age that makes their ongoing maintenance financially unviable. From the Council's perspective however, the proposals represent an opportunity to do far more than simply replicate past / current provision, and if delivered would represent a significant increase in the range of services and activities offered. These would include:

- the provision of permanent premises for several established and valued local community organisations supporting children, young people and their families
- improvements to the quality of accessible play, (the provision of which is a statutory duty of the Council) including a sensory room for children and young people and accessibility improvements to the adventure playground.
- the delivery of provision throughout the whole year rather than the current situation, whereby much is not available during the winter months. This will be facilitated by the increased footprint of the building and is particularly important for children and young people with SEND and their families.
- opportunities for children centre provision which is currently lacking in this part of the borough

Working with partner organisations including the voluntary sector is a key aspect of the Children and Families Act 2014 and the associated SEND Code of Practice. The

redevelopment of Marble Hill Playcentres has the potential to be an example of where this can be done in practical terms to improve the experiences and outcomes for some of the most vulnerable children and young people and their families in the borough.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Thomas', written in a cursive style.

James Thomas
Director of Children's Services