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12 March 2019

### **To whom it may concern**

I am writing on behalf of Achieving for Children, the community interest company responsible for providing children's services in Richmond upon Thames, to support the proposals to redevelop the site of Marble Hill Playcentres.

The proposal has the potential for Marble Hill Playcentres to make a much enhanced contribution to one of the Council's and Achieving for Children's shared strategic priorities of the next three years, specifically the transformation of the services and support we are able to provide to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families. The redevelopment proposals include several elements that are fundamental to our transformation strategy, including:

- Local provision that will support the identification of SEND at the earliest possible opportunity
- Opportunities for children and young people within SEND to develop resilience through the challenges presented by an accessible adventure playground; considerable evidence exists to support the fact that such activities develop physical and emotional resilience and aid emotional health, an area of significantly increased need in children and young people.
- Opportunities for children and young people within SEND to develop a wide range of life skills (e.g. cooking) and employability (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh volunteering).
- Diversification of opportunities available to children and young people with SEND via the school curriculum through schools using the facilities during and after the school day.
- Improved facilities for voluntary organisations supporting children and young people with SEND and their families.
- Specific new facilities for two well-respected local voluntary sector organisations supporting the families of children with SEND - MeToo&Co and Otakar Kraus Music Trust - as well as much improved SEND provision offered by Marble Hill Playcentres themselves. The Inclusive Play Project (on Saturdays for families with children with additional needs (no charge for access)), is currently not possible during winter months due to the absence of heating. Additional activities for SEND children after school, at weekends and during the school holidays, alongside the mainstream

offering, would exemplify the enhanced inclusion opportunities for children and young people with SEND, central to the SEND strategy in Richmond.

- Installation of specialist equipment so that children with physical disabilities be included in activities alongside their peers who do not have additional needs
- The inclusion of a Changes Spaces facility, part of a national initiative to increase the number and quality of accessible (toilet) spaces for parents and carers to change disabled children and young people.
- Re-provision of the One O'clock Club for 0 to 5 years and families three mornings per week and to include accessible equipment
- Provision of a sensory room for children and young people with SEND
- Problem solving and (minor) risk taking that children are able to practice in an adventure playground, which are valuable in developing physical and emotional resilience and aiding mental health.

Community consultations over recent years have provided significant evidence that expansion of this type of provision is strongly supported by families in the borough. These are exemplified in the table below:

<b>Date of consultation</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Example of response</b>
October 2018	Are there any existing services or opportunities you would like to see strengthened?	Music therapy and opportunities to learn to play an instrument
May 2018	What could improve for you at school? (To a young person with SEND at a secondary school).	I learn more about work at a children's play centre than at school
March 2017	What things would improve your child's experience outside school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased access to affordable, accessible activities after school and during holidays, including sports (swimming, trampolining, fishing, dance, yoga); creative groups (art, drama, cookery), gardening and soft play.</li> <li>• More opportunities to join local community provision or mainstream clubs</li> <li>• Improved and accessible local facilities, including inclusive play areas with</li> </ul>

		<p>appropriate equipment, and communal areas for children and young people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A greater understanding and tolerance in the community of SEND. A befriending or buddying service, specifically including male buddies.</li></ul>
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Additionally, recommendations from the Review of Education Provision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Kingston and Richmond published in May 2017 included:

*"Achieving for Children should work with partner agencies, families and the local community to promote greater inclusion towards children and young people with SEND, so that they are able to access more leisure and social opportunities in the community. Achieving for Children should consider how agencies and families can work together to promote greater awareness of SEND within our local communities, and of the mutual benefit of greater inclusion. There should be a collective effort to mobilise local skills, expertise and energy in order to develop and promote more activities, clubs and opportunities for young people with SEND."*

The proposals for the redevelopment of Marble Hill Playcentres are closely aligned to the sentiment of this recommendation and would be of significant benefit to those in the local SEND community.

I wholly support the proposal.

Yours faithfully



**Ian Dodds**  
**Managing Director**  
**Achieving for Children**