



30/05/2022

Comments on Planning Application 21/0847/FUL

Dear Councillors,

We are writing as trustees of Marble Hill Playcentres (MHPC), the **current occupant** of the site which is subject to the planning application 21/0847/FUL. We have the following comments on the application:

- The current buildings occupy 187 square metres of the site. We understand that the proposed building will occupy 677 square metres, which will dominate the site and encroach on the available space for **outdoor adventurous play**, provision of which is fundamental to MHPC's mission.
- The Adventure Playground currently offers six large wooden play structures including rope swings, a zip slide and a basket swing, as well as versatile areas of tarmac and grass furnished with a host of loose items (planks, tyres, barrels and pipes etc) for the children to use collaboratively in any way they choose for den-building, walkways, etc. The Adventure Playground is parent-free, with a team of playworkers to ensure safety, and the freedom of this unique environment stimulates creativity, independence and rich social interactions between unacquainted children. In this way, visiting an Adventure Playground is associated with a range of social development and mental health benefits, **in addition to the physical health benefits of an ordinary playground.**

The application dedicates the remaining outdoor space to heavily landscaped gardens and fixed playground equipment, so **eradicating the versatile environment and adventurous play which is fundamental to the Adventure Playground's ethos.** Marble Hill Adventure Playground is one of only a handful remaining in West London - the only one in Richmond borough - and indeed many of the letters in support of this planning application attest to its beloved status to the local community.

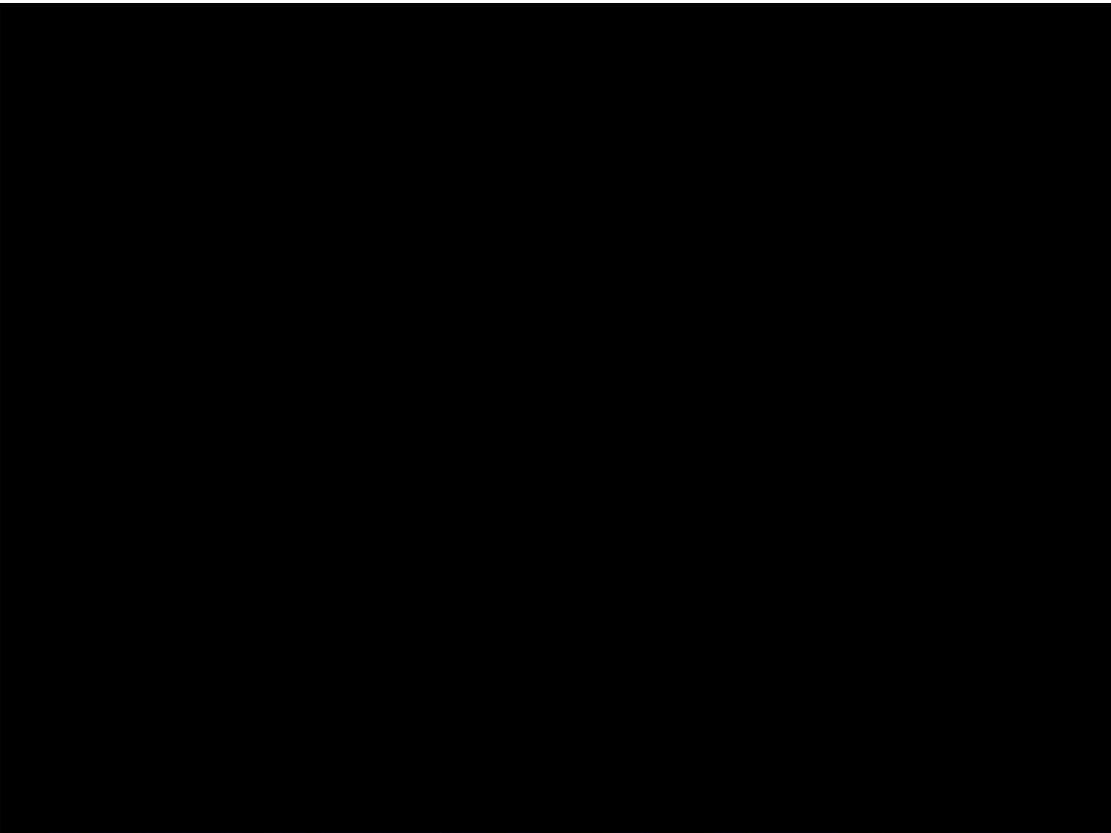
- The application anticipates **destruction or removal of three out of six of the wooden play structures.** The structures, originally erected in 1975 with input from local children, add archetypal character and are held in high affection by the local community. The three rope swings threatened by this application, including "Big Davy" and "Cuddly Duddly", play a part in formative memories of local residents now in their 30s, 40s and 50s, as well as their own children now, and **should be protected for their communal and heritage value.**

In summary, the planning application in its current form threatens the character and value of this site to the community, reduces the scope for outdoor play, and eradicates the Adventure Playground offer. We would be glad to see further refinement of the plan to significantly reduce the scale of the building, preserve our heritage structures and retain adequate outdoor space for loose items play. We share the vision of improved facilities and collaboration with the wider community, but believe a much more modest and sustainable building programme could fulfill this brief, along with preservation of the outdoor space and unique play opportunities that local children need now more than ever.

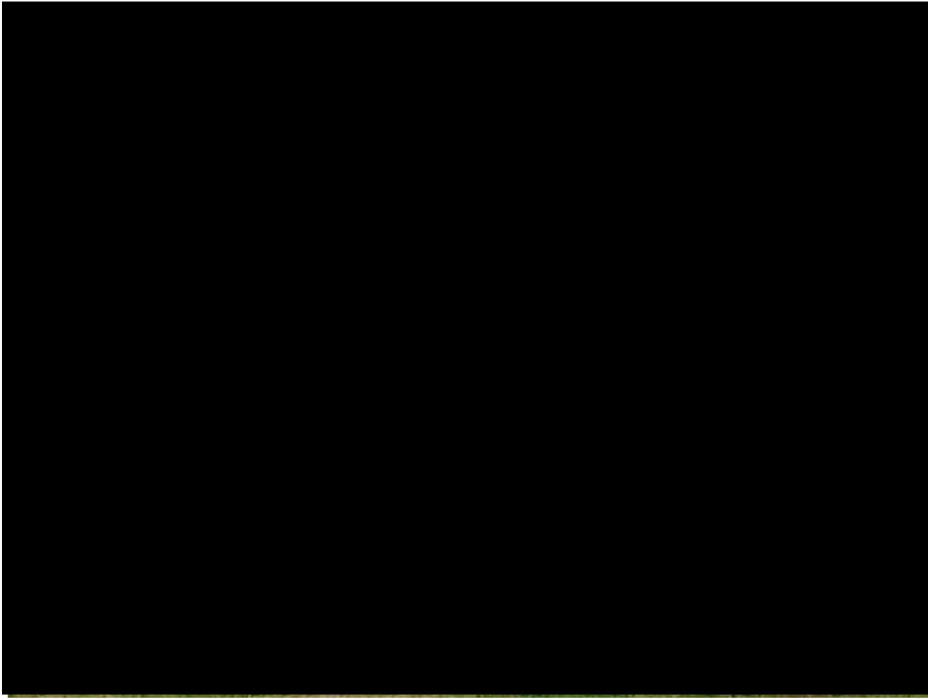
Yours sincerely,

Charles Hamilton (Chair), Robert Ivens, Stephen Cooper, Gozde Turney, Siobhain Schofield, Phiona Torregiana Okim, Kate Heywood, Caroline Powell and Reine Wong

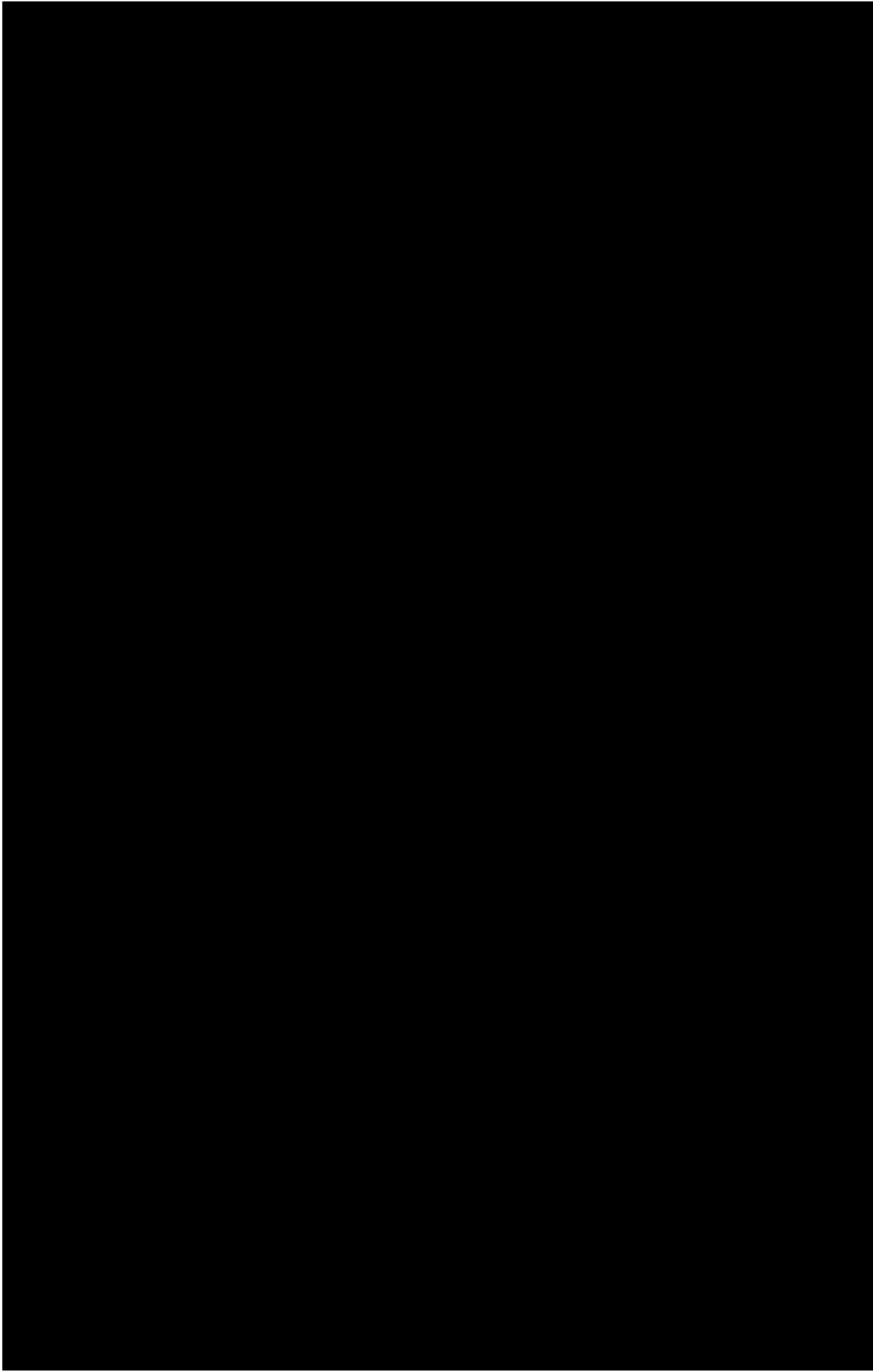
Trustees of Marble Hill Playcentres Charity



Swing 1 for removal according to the current planning application



Swing 2 for removal according to the current planning application



Swing 3 for removal according to the current planning application