

List of Petitions to be presented at Full Council - 15 September 2025:

(1) Retain the heritage Victorian villa, Altamira, as part of redeveloping 1 Morland Gardens.

Lead Petitioner - Irina Porter (on behalf of Willesden Local Historical Society). Petition contains 251 signatures. NB Petition to be presented by Mr Philip Grant.

Statement:

We the undersigned petition the Council and its Cabinet, when considering the regeneration of 1 Morland Gardens, as part of the Hillside Corridor proposals, to retain the beautiful and historic locally listed Victorian villa, Altamira, as part of the redevelopment of that site for affordable housing and youth facilities. The 150-year-old landmark building is part of the original estate which gave Stonebridge Park its name, and its sense of place can be an inspiration to local young people who would use it, while there is plenty of space behind the Victorian villa to build a good number of genuinely affordable homes.

Justification:

Between 1872 and 1876, the noted Victorian architect, Henry Kendall Jnr, developed an estate of middle-class homes on a field beside the Harrow Road, just to the west of Harlesden. He called the estate Stonebridge Park, and that was the origin of the name for the area which grew up near it.

Although there are other late 19th century houses in Brent which are described as being of Italianate style, numbers 1 and 2 Morland Gardens, originally “Altamira” and “Hurworth”, are the only surviving examples with distinctive belvedere towers. Seen from the crossroads at the top of Hillside, and with the trees of the community garden in front, they provide one of the best streetscape views in the area.

“Altamira” remained as a private house until around the time of the First World War, then became a members’ club for many decades. In the 1990s, this beautiful Victorian villa was chosen by Brent Council, and sympathetically restored and extended, with funding from Harlesden City Challenge, to become the home of the Brent Adult and Community Education Service, in an inspirational Stonebridge setting.

In 2018, it was decided to upgrade the facilities for what is now the Brent Start college, and an architect was chosen, through a competition, with experience of combining heritage and modern buildings. Sadly, at an early stage, a planning officer wrongly advised that the locally listed building could be demolished, without taking into account Brent’s adopted heritage planning policies or the heritage significance of the Victorian villa.

As a result, the scheme which was given the go-ahead by Brent’s Cabinet in January 2020, and received planning consent later that year, despite numerous valid objections, would have seen the heritage asset demolished and a new concrete building of up to ten storeys constructed over the site and the adjacent community garden, providing a new college facility and 65 homes.

That scheme saw a number of problems and even though an award was made for the first stage of a two-stage design and construct contract in the summer of 2022, no actual construction had begun on the site when the planning consent expired at the end of October 2023.

A review of what to recommend for the future of the 1 Morland Gardens site was begun in November 2023, and a year later the outline of “affordable homes and community facilities” was included as part of a large consultation exercise on Bridge Park and the Hillside Corridor. The second consultation in March 2025 has refined this further to “affordable homes and youth facilities” for 1 Morland Gardens, but without giving any indication over whether Council Officers will recommend retaining the heritage building, “Altamira”, as part of their proposals.

This locally listed Victorian villa is a much loved and much valued part of the Stonebridge streetscape, and this petition has been set up by Willesden Local History Society so that people who live, work or study in Brent can express their support for it to be retained as part of the Council's latest proposals for redeveloping 1 Morland Gardens.

Altamira & community gardens



(2) Save the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre for future generations

Lead Petitioner - Martin Francis currently contains 399 signatures but due to close on 5 September 25

Statement:

We the undersigned petition the Council to scope out all opportunities to maintain primary provision at the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre following the withdrawal of Thames21 as a provider.

Justification:

We, as residents and people who work or study in Brent, call on the Council to undertake a full scoping exercise to enable the work of the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre (WHEEC) with primary age children to continue. This work, which has been going on for more than half a century is even more important at a time of a climate and ecological emergency. It is imperative that the generation that will be dealing with this emergency in the future are enabled to experience and appreciate the natural world that is now under threat.

The scoping exercise should include talks with Careys, the local groundworks company that previously made a bid for the Centre and other local companies, organisations or charities that wish to make a commitment to children's education and combatting climate change.

The Council should also revive the Consortium who were interested in a shared resource that would be based at the new build 16-25 Skills Centre to be used at times outside school hours including evenings and weekends.

A primary classroom with separate entrance and toilets should be provided within the new 16-25 Skills Centre for use by the WHEEC during school hours and school term times (60 primary pupils per day) as envisaged in the current plans. Thames21 withdrew from the WHEEC in July 2025 because they could no longer sustain the losses. Running costs should be less in a shared 16-25 new build Skills Centre compared with the dilapidated wooden classrooms that are due to be demolished.

Rental income could be earned both from letting out space at the Centre at evenings, weekends and during school holidays and from letting out the grounds for activities such as camping for guides, scouts, and Woodcraft Folk.