



# Lichfield Shopfront Improvement Scheme Consultation Statement

April 2026



# Lichfield Shopfront Improvement Scheme

## Community Engagement

April 2026

### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 This document

This document summarises the community engagement undertaken to inform the development of a shopfront design code in Lichfield. It captures the views of residents, businesses and stakeholders, highlighting shared priorities around quality, heritage and usability. The findings have directly shaped the code, ensuring it reflects local character while supporting a vibrant, accessible and economically resilient city centre.

### 2 Summary

The community engagement programme consisted of two days of in-person discussions with businesses, two online surveys, promoted by the council, local press and local stakeholders. In addition Lichfield District Council's Town Centre Manager has extensively liaised with local business groups, historians and business networks, capturing the views of landlords and tenants and raising stakeholder awareness of the code city-wide.

- **Public response from online surveys showed overwhelming support** for the code and a desire to see shopfronts in Lichfield improved: 73% of 156 respondents agreed shopfront improvements were urgently needed and 91% in favour of adopting the design code.
- **Business and shop owners showed significant support for improving shopfronts** with the grant scheme and the code. Of 51 businesses spoken to in person, all had a positive response to the scheme and were keen to see it developed. Out of ten business respondents on the online questionnaire, nine agreed that the design code will improve the attractiveness of the city centre.
- **80% of respondents agreed that the design code will improve the attractiveness of the city centre**, while 83% agreed or strongly agreed that the code will support businesses in the centre.



- **There's a clear public preference for heritage-informed shopfronts.** Restoring heritage features was the second most important issue for survey respondents. In a visual preference survey online, out of 46 responses, traditional shopfronts received overwhelmingly positive responses, between 80% to 100% of respondents indicating support. In contrast contemporary retrofits of shopfronts received almost entirely negative responses.
- **The key concern for businesses was on the mechanism of the scheme,** and that it should be transparent, easy to engage with, apply and undertake shopfront renovation process.

Based on this, the code has ensured its requirements are strongly supportive of Lichfield's historic shopfront qualities, while giving scope to apply contemporary interpretations of those qualities. This will ensure Lichfield's shopfront ensembles are coherent, attractive and popular with residents and businesses.

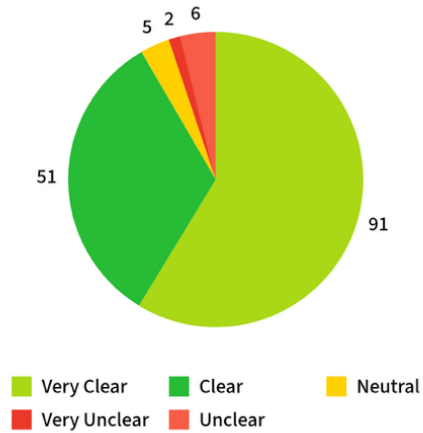
### 3 Findings

#### Lichfield District Council Statutory Consultation

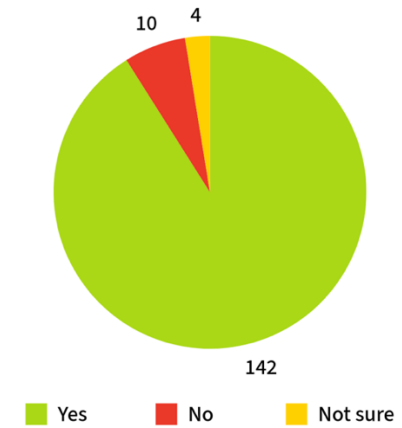
Residents and businesses were invited to answer 17 questions about the shopfront improvement scheme, via a questionnaire hosted on the scheme's council web page. Some questions consisted of directed answers ('agree' 'disagree' etc.) while others were open questions. For the directed questions, responses were as follows:

**Response breakdown (total number from 156 respondents)**

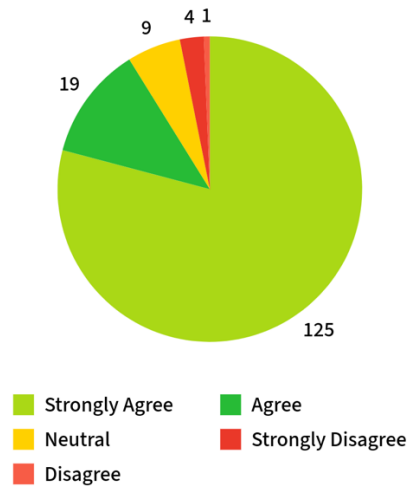
How clear do you find the shopfront design code?



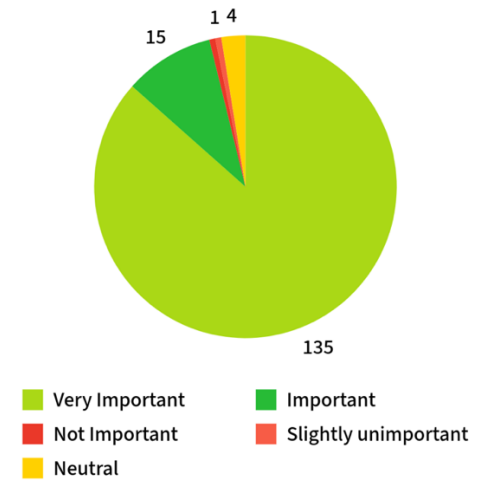
Do you support adopting the code as an SPD?



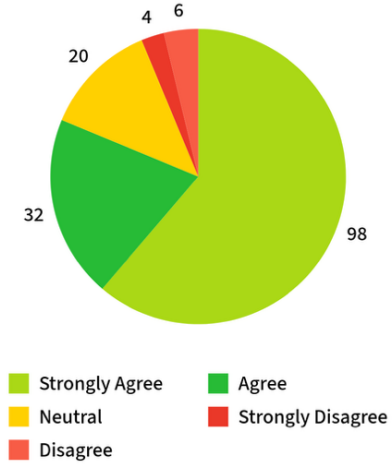
Do you think the Design Code will improve the attractiveness of the city centre?



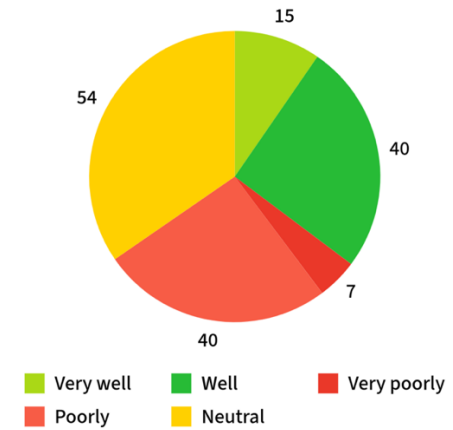
How important is Lichfield's historic character to your experience of the city centre?



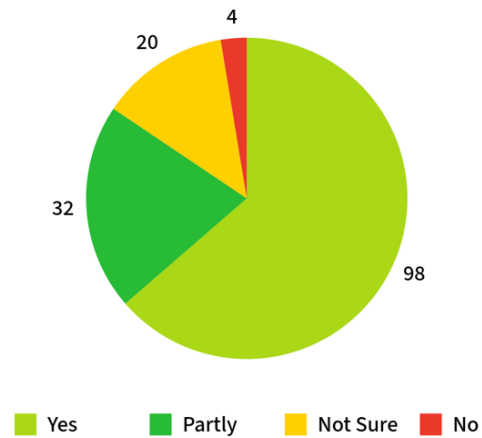
Do you think it will support local businesses?



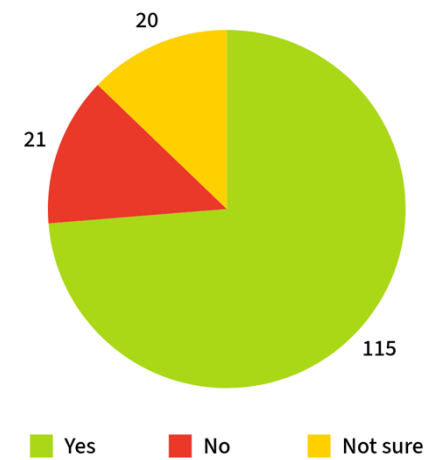
In your view, how well are historic shopfronts in Lichfield currently protected and cared for?



Does the design code support accessibility improvements appropriately?

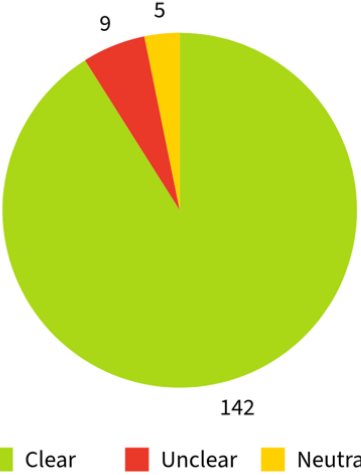


Do you feel shopfront improvements are urgently needed in parts of the city centre?

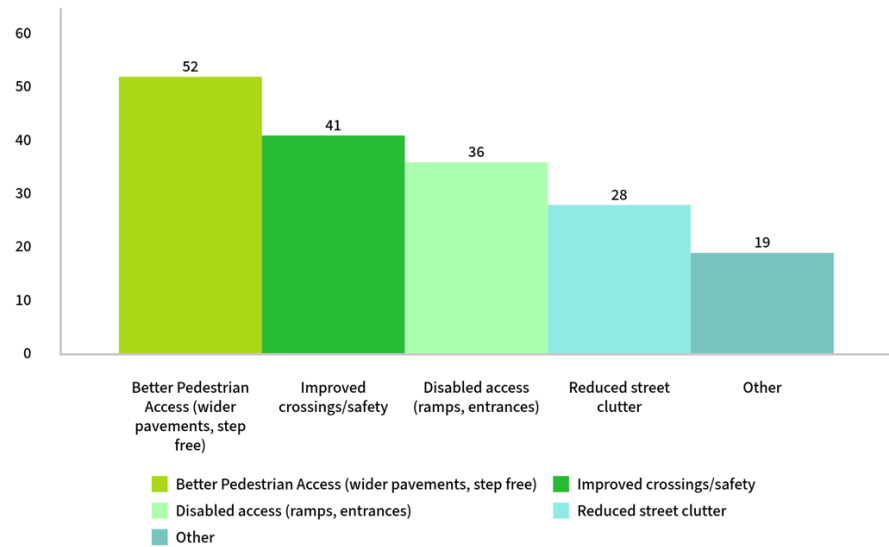


Respondents were also asked if they were a resident or a business owner. 10 respondents said they were business owners. Out of these 10, nine businesses said the code was 'clear' or 'very clear' while eight said they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that the code will support local businesses.

Respondents were also asked a series of qualitative questions about the shopfront scheme. The most frequently cited issues were the need to improve shopfront quality and maintenance (81 responses), achieve greater design consistency (74 responses), and preserve the historic character of the area (68 responses). Concerns were most commonly raised regarding if there could be financial burden on businesses (47 responses) and the wider challenges facing the town centre (52 responses), indicating that respondents view design improvements as part of a broader regeneration agenda.

Response breakdown (total number)	Quotes								
<p data-bbox="163 834 309 938"><b>Is anything missing or unclear?</b></p>  <table border="1" data-bbox="913 866 1272 1342"> <caption>Response Breakdown Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Clear</td> <td>142</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unclear</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Neutral</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Count	Clear	142	Unclear	9	Neutral	5	
Category	Count								
Clear	142								
Unclear	9								
Neutral	5								

**What accessibility improvements should be considered?**

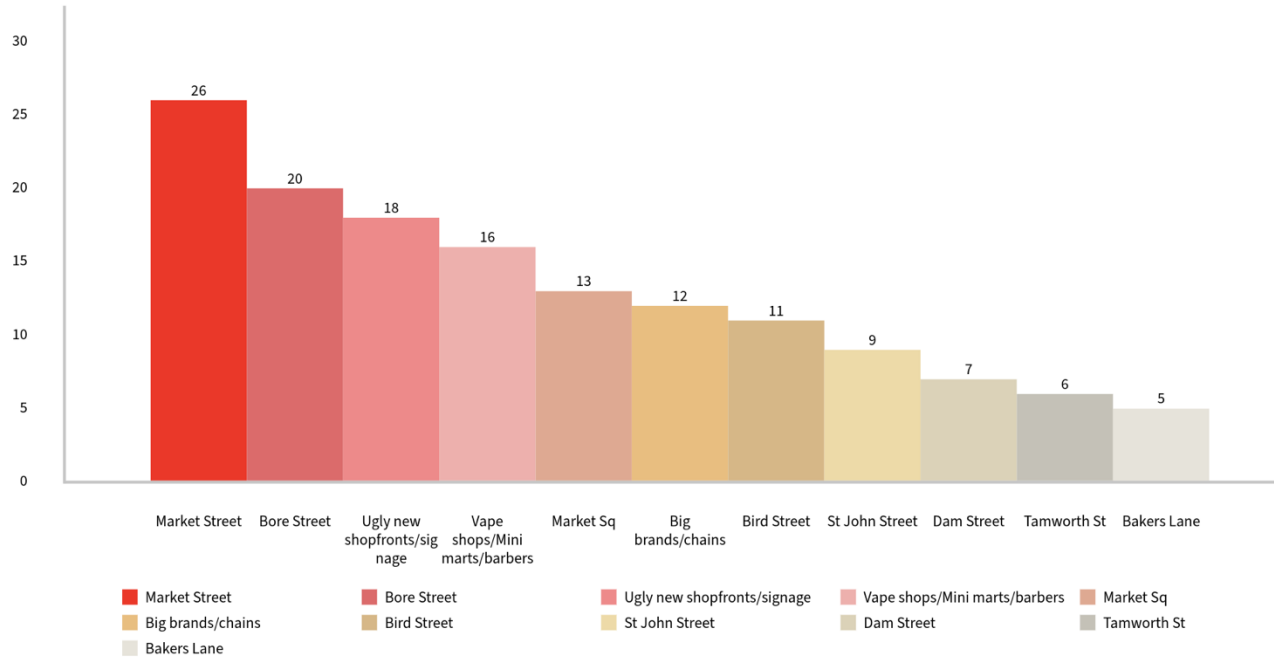


*"The key accessibility requirement I see is to ensure that wherever possible the primary entrance to a shop is accessible to all members of the public."*

*"Ensuring doors are wide enough for wheelchair access/ramps over stairs if needed."*

*"Inclusion as a bigger bracket, not just accessibility for disability. As well as embracing the beautiful history, we need to promote Lichfield as an inclusive city."*

Are there any particular buildings or shopfronts you feel need repair or enhancement? Which Streets or areas need the most attention?



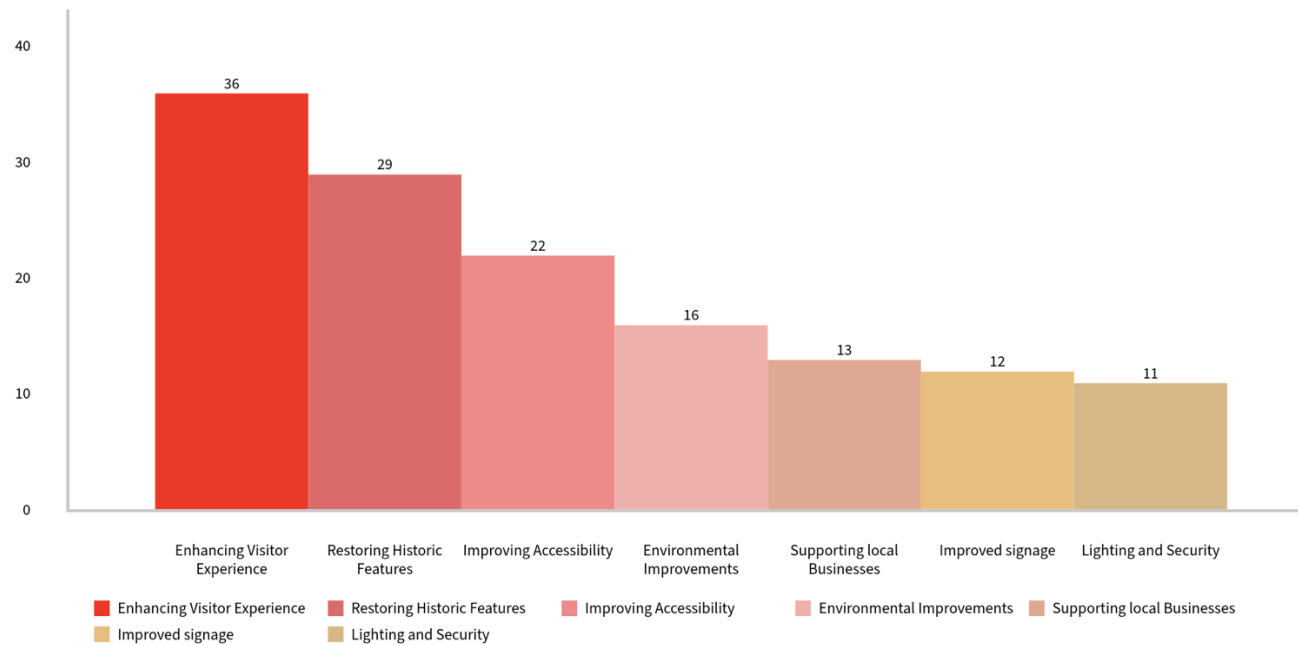
*"The myriad of vape shops, euro markets etc opposite old friary and by boots are not in fitting with the city. The tattoo shop on market square is just ugly."*

*"Many of the new ones such as savers are ugly"*

*"Phone shops and vape shops are often noticeable by their not fitting in, and bigger high street brands could be blended in with more sympathy."*

*"Marked increase in cheap shops like mini marts and vape shops that do not fit the historical nature of the buildings."*

If funding were available, which outcomes should be prioritised?



*Online questionnaire 2: Create Communities platform*

Residents were also shared an online map of Lichfield, asking them to give their views on Lichfield’s shopfronts, as well as assess differing typologies of shopfronts, based on their preferences. These images showed a sample of traditional-type shops, made of timber and glass with typical elements such as a fascia, pilaster, stall riser etc, alongside shopfronts with contemporary features or retrofits, such as box fascias, plastic or metal-based materials, without traditional detailing. The images were AI generated shopfronts that were derived from real Lichfield shopfronts.



■ Yes (4) ■ Mixed (1)

### Shopfront 1: Traditional

*"Classic, lovely example of old window."*

*"Very much in keeping with period and traditional Lichfield. More of these shop fronts would enhance visitors and residents experience."*

*"Classy"*



■ Yes (5)  
■ No (0)

### Shopfront 2: Traditional/Contemporary

*Nice colour and detailing*

*Looks aesthetically pleasing*

*Tidy clean and inviting.*

*"Good balance of glass v wood, use of attractive mouldings, visibility of shop interior good, find the colour makes it sombre. Doorway suitable for disabled visitors?"*



■ No (7)  
■ Yes (0)

### Shopfront 3: Contemporary retrofit

*"Feels generic, modern materials, overt logos Looks aesthetically pleasing."*

*"Ugly plastic signage."*

*"Blocky, and overheavy fascia, industrial style metal window frames. 'Corporate'."*



■ Yes (1) ■ No (3)

### Shopfront 4: Contemporary

*"Nice aesthetic but not complementary to the wider older feel. Maybe a district with this new industrial feel."*

*"Very plain, has horrible plastic signage. No character."*

*"Stark, monochrome, too much glass, industrial window framework, no distinctive feature apart from the word 'Bread'."*



■ Yes (3) ■ Sort of (1)

**Shopfront 5:  
Traditional\contemporary**

*"Sympathetic materials, old world colour scheme."*

*"Looks smart and high-end."*

*"The colour is good and more traditional frontage. Looks inviting and looked after."*

*"Good proportions, light and airy 'feel', pleasant colour, nameboard somewhat plain."*



■ No (4)  
■ Yes (0)

**Shopfront 6: Contemporary retrofit**

*"Generic."*

*"Looks cheap and not cohesive with other shopfronts."*

*"Stark. Heavy corporate fascia has no merit, industrial metal window frames in an unsympathetic colour."*

*"Awful."*



■ Yes (6)  
■ No (0)

**Shopfront 7: Traditional**

*"Has a traditional look while still being clear and showing the store interior."*

*"Fits in with the more historic feel of the city."*

*"Pleasing architectural features. Projecting sign attractive. Good visibility into shop."*



■ Yes (1) ■ Mixed (2)

**Shopfront 8:  
Traditional/Contemporary**

*"Nice mix of old and new, logo is maybe a little overbearing."*

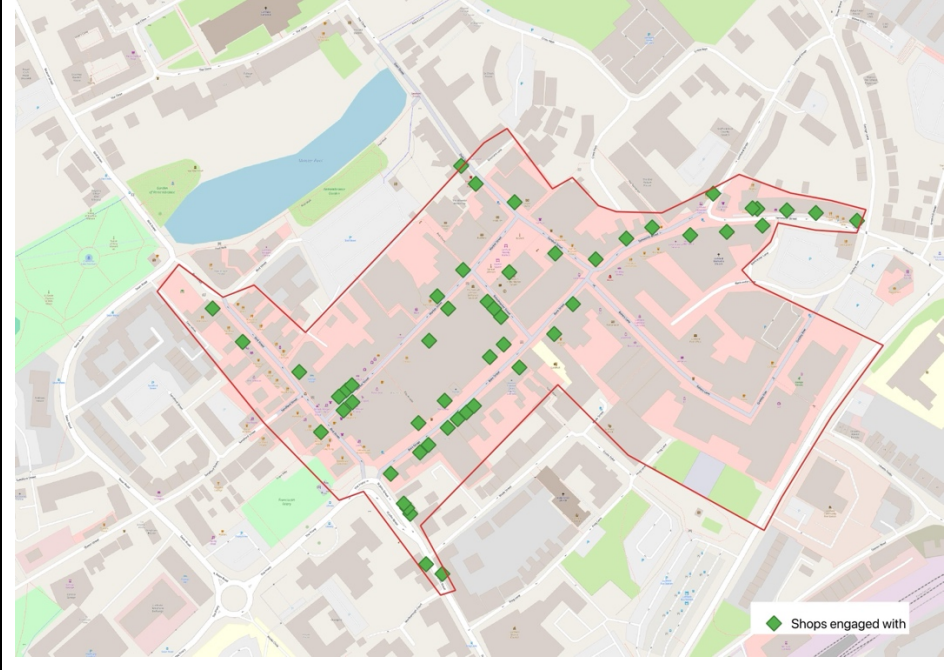
*"Wide aspect used well, with double doors, projecting sign attractive. However shop appears dark and uninviting."*

*"Has kept some traditional frontage and unassuming. Looks tidy."*

*In person business engagement*

As part of the engagement programme, in-person discussions and awareness raising with shops and business owners was deemed crucial. The council and Create Streets spent two days talking to businesses about the code and grant scheme.

In total 52 businesses were spoken to over two days. The businesses were largely tenants of the building, while some were also freeholders. Of the businesses spoken to, all had a positive response to the prospect of the design code to improve Lichfield’s shopfronts. The key business concern from discussions focused on the mechanism for the grant scheme, ensuring it would be simple, transparent and fair.

Businesses engaged with (green positive/red negative/orange neutral)	Quotes
	<p>“Aesthetics is really important to us”</p> <p>“Bad shopfronts affect us as it brings the look of the area down for everyone”</p> <p>“I couldn’t agree more with this scheme”</p> <p>“Takeaways aren’t worried about the look”</p> <p>“I think this would help massively”</p> <p>“Important that [the code] includes signage”</p>



### *Stakeholder engagement*

The following consultees were identified and invited to engage to ensure engagement with statutory bodies, community interests, heritage organisations, accessibility groups, and local businesses, alongside wider public engagement through social media, press coverage, and website-wide publication:

Historic England	Lichfield Civic Society	Cherry Orchard Disability Group	Phoenix Networking Group - The Owl
Natural England	Lichfield Cathedral	Liberty Jamboree	We Love Lichfield
The Environment Agency	St Mary's Church – The Hub	Age UK (local branch)	Lichfield Bower
Staffordshire County Council	The Garrick	Lichfield Chamber of Trade & Commerce	Rotary Club of Lichfield
- Highways & Transport	Lichfield Trust	Lichfield Radio	Lichfield, St. Chad Rotary
- Archaeology & Historic Environments	Local History Groups	Business First Network	Lichfield, Sutton & Tamworth CAMRA
Lichfield District Council	Local Employers and Retailers	BusinessB4Work	
Lichfield City Council	AccessAble Disability Support		
Ward Councillors (Stowe Ward)			
Lichfield District Council Residents Newsletter			

### *Statutory consultees*

As statutory consultees, Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency were consulted on the draft SPD. Historic England welcomed the guidance set out in the Design Code. Natural England confirmed that they had no objection to the document but did not provide further comment. The Environment Agency said there is nothing within the SPD they wish to comment on. All three consultees responded confirming no concerns or objections were raised.

#### 4 Recommendations for the code based on engagement

Having collated and assessed all the qualitative and quantitative data from our engagement, we incorporated the following code points in response to public and businesses' main talking points:

- **Building on Lichfield's historic character.** The key takeaway from the engagement work is the love and attachment residents and businesses have for Lichfield's historic qualities, and its built qualities. The code has accordingly delivered design requirements which will deliver shopfronts that directly draw on Lichfield's historic features while allowing for novel typologies that will still harmonise and rhyme with Lichfield's historic shopfronts.
- **Importance of coherency and coordination.** Residents clearly felt that shopfronts in Lichfield lacked harmony and aesthetic relationships between each other. The code will support a greater coherency of shopfronts by setting defined parameters, while allowing for variety within a shared pattern.
- **Better quality signage.** 'Garish,' 'gaudy' or 'cheap' looking signage was a repeated dislike for respondents. This was seen as prominent within vape shops, off-licenses, mini marts and barber shops. Getting the fascias, lettering, hanging signs, and decluttering right in the code will be crucial to meeting this concern.
- **Better quality and natural materials.** People frequently referred to 'cheap', 'generic' or 'plasticky' materials used in contemporary retrofitted shops, while expressing a desire to see natural materials, such as timber and glass.
- **Ensure the design code and improvement scheme are well communicated and easy to engage.** A central concern of the businesses themselves was on how clear the code was communicated, and the scheme to navigate. It is currently anticipated that the dedicated webpage for the shopfront improvement scheme will continue to serve as an accessible site, with digital options such as QR codes and online guidance being explored.