



Solihull
Town
Centre

Solihull Town Centre Public Realm Improvement Scheme

Public Consultation Summary Report

Consultation Date

9th June 2023- 24th July 2023

1. Introduction

A public engagement exercise was held between 9th June and 24th July 2023 with two key objectives. Firstly, it sought to share and consult on the emerging Public Realm Strategy (PRS), and secondly, it sought to share and gain views on a Phase 1 Concept Design (concept design) that takes the principles set out in the PRS, into a series of more detailed design ideas for a specific area.

The concept design focuses on Solihull High Street, New Road and the access to Malvern Park via Park Road. This area forms a key route through the heart of the town centre and incorporates Solihull's primary public realm space. Improving this area will strengthen links between the town's retail and recreational offer.

Consultation material was produced which provided an overview of the PRS and detail on the initial design ideas for the area covered by the Phase 1 Concept Design. The concept design shows an example of how our vision for the area could be achieved. The example presented during the public engagement wasn't intended as a fixed or final design, and there are other options for how a scheme could be designed. We engaged with the public at this early stage to get views on what people like and dislike about the concept design presented.

2. Consultation Method

Several methods were used to carry out and promote the consultation, including:

- Consultation material, including exhibition boards, was developed which explained the key features of the PRS and the concept design. 3D images of the concept design were produced along with a fly through video which helped people to visualise the scheme.
- The consultation was promoted widely through several channels including social media, press releases, new bulletins including Solihull Connected and by direct mail to key stakeholders.
- The exhibition boards were on display in The Core throughout the consultation period.
- Face to face events were held on the High Street and in The Core during the daytime on a weekday and at the weekend.
- An online engagement website was created where consultation material could be viewed, and a survey was produced which could be completed to gather feedback.

3. Consultation Response

- There were 3,100 visitors to the engagement web page during the 6-week consultation period.
- 1,500 visitors to the website went on to download documents or images and videos.

- 167 visitors completed the survey.
- Approximately 150-200 people engaged with the project team at the face-to-face sessions. These sessions were 3 hours long each and four members of the project team were present.
- Representations were received from Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), Solihull Business Improvement District (BID), and the Royal British Legion.

4. Consultation Results

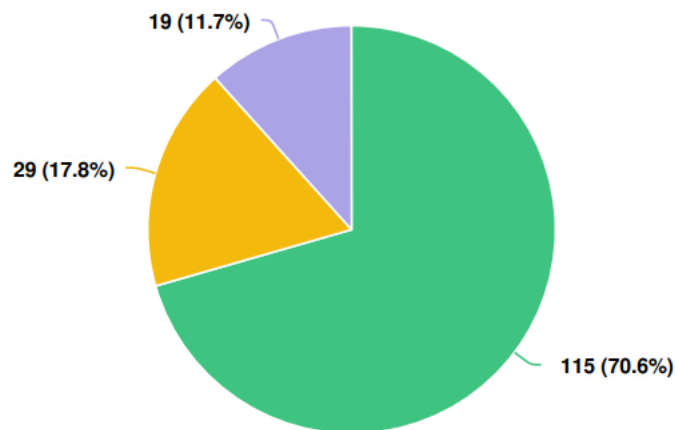
A survey comprising 15 questions was produced to capture feedback on the PRS and the concept design.

Quantitative Results

Questions 1,2,4,8, and 12 of the survey asked respondents to indicate their level of support for the PRS design principles and each element of the concept design. A score of 5 indicated a high level of support and a score of 1 indicated a low level of support.

A summary of the responses where respondents were asked to indicate a level support is provided in the charts that follow.

Question 1: Do you agree that a ‘public realm strategy’ is needed to help ensure a coordinated approach and continuity across future developments in the town centre and to identify opportunities for potential improvements?



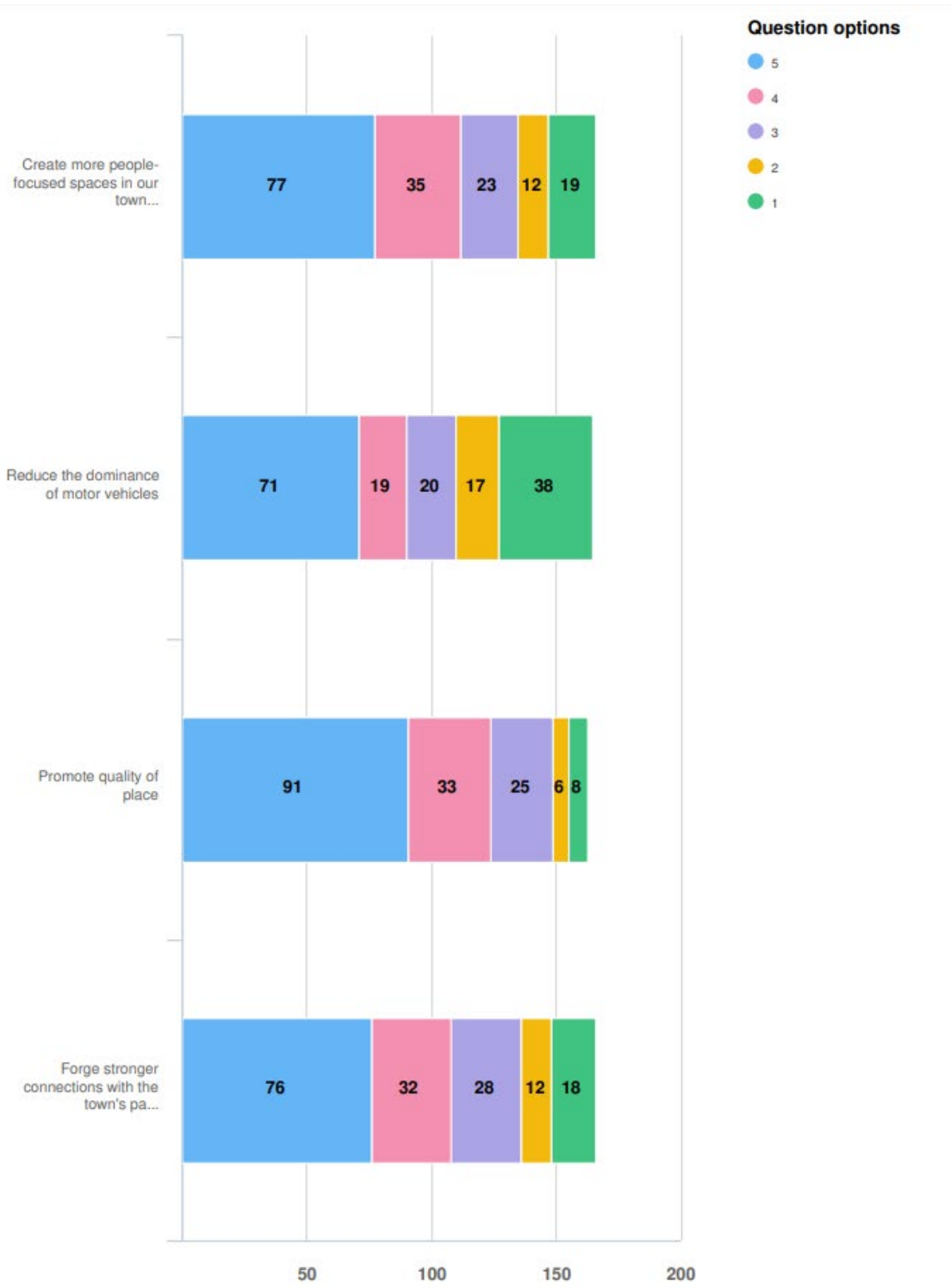
Question options

● Yes
 ● No
 ● Not sure

Optional question (163 response(s), 4 skipped)

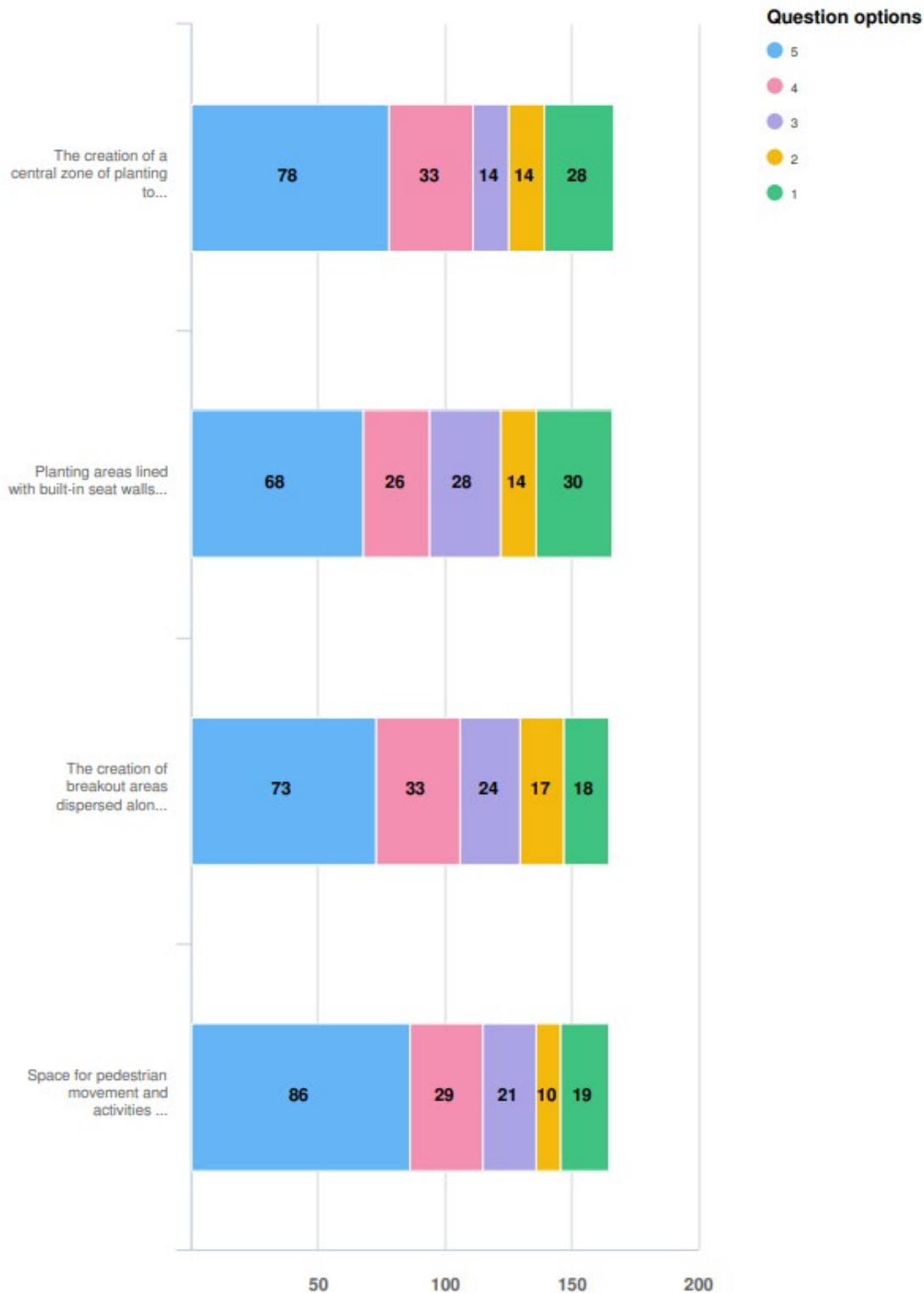
Question type: Dropdown Question

Question 2: The 'Phase 1 Concept Design - Illustrative Plan' section presents the design statement for the town centre. To what extent do you support each of the design principles? Please indicate the extent to which you support each of the design principles design principles described (1: do not support – 5: strongly support)



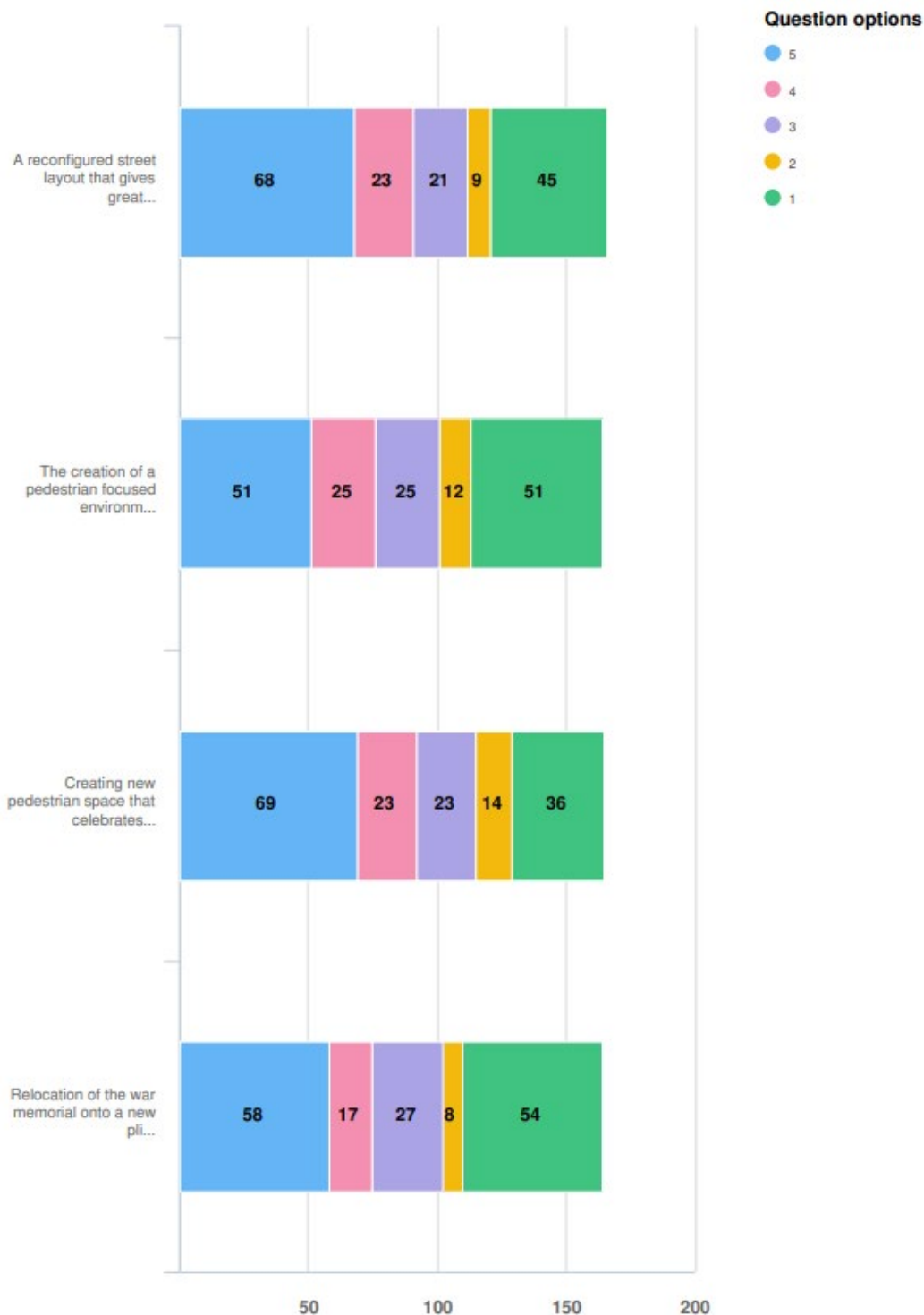
Optional question (166 response(s), 1 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question

Question 4: The 'Phase 1 Concept Design – High Street' section shows proposals for the High Street. There are various aspects to this proposal on which we would like your views. For each of the following, please indicate your level of support or otherwise. (1: do not support - 5: strongly support)



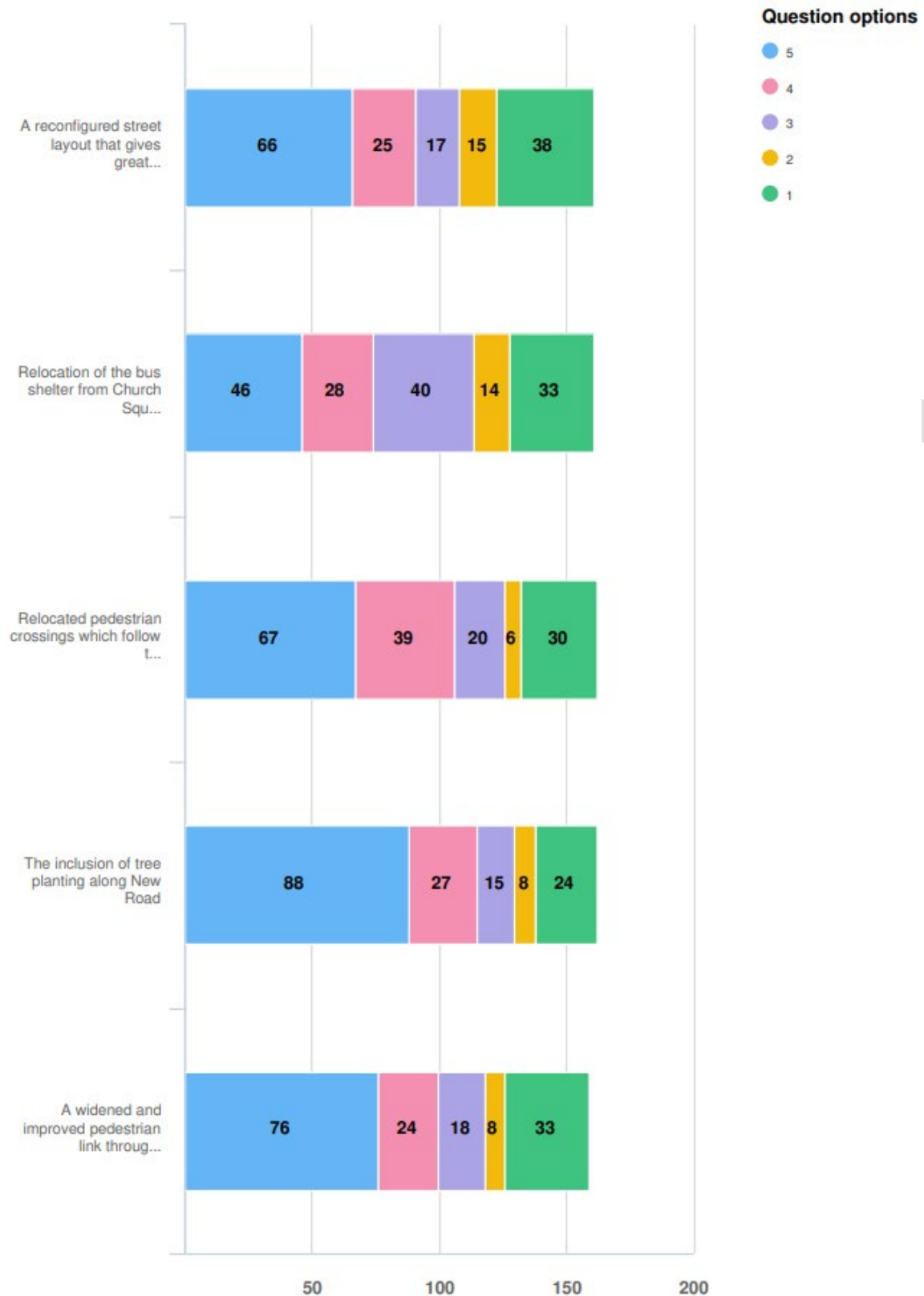
Optional question (167 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question

Question 8: The 'Phase 1 Concept Design - Church Square' section shows the proposals for the creation of a new 'Church Square' outside St Alphege's Church. There are various aspects to this proposal on which we would like your views. For each of the following, please indicate your level of support or otherwise. (1: do not support - 5: strongly support)



Optional question (166 response(s), 1 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question

Question 12: Looking at proposals for the Park Road / New Road area, in the 'Phase 1 Concept Design - Park Road / New Road' section, please indicate your level of support for each of the following: (1: do not support - 5: strongly support)



Qualitative Results

Respondents were also asked to provide feedback on what they considered to be the advantages and disadvantages of each element of the concept design (questions 3,5,6,7,9,10,11,13,14 and 15).

These responses have been analysed and some key themes have been identified.

Public Realm Strategy

The majority of those engaged agreed with the need for a PRS and supported the design principles set out in the strategy.

An average of 80% of respondents supported each of the design principles.

Several respondents commented on the appropriateness of investing money in public realm when there is pressure on wider public finances. It was helpful in the face-to-face engagement sessions to discuss this view with people and make them aware that external funding would be sought to contribute to the delivery of the scheme. We were also able to explain how investment in public realm could deliver positive benefits in terms of encouraging private investment in vacant units and ensuring the town centre remains prosperous.

Concept Design – High Street

In relation to the concept design, the overall response to the proposals for High Street was strongly positive, with an average of 75% of respondents supporting the key features of this section. Three common themes emerged from the feedback which should be considered as the scheme develops as follows:

- Concerns over people damaging the new public realm, dropping litter, loitering and general anti-social behaviour was the most common concern raised. Of the comments received very few identified features specific to the scheme which would encourage anti-social behaviour and it appeared to be a concern that could be applied to any investment in public realm.
- The importance of ensuring that a plan is in place for ongoing maintenance of the new public realm, to ensure that the benefits of the new space are realised well into the future.
- Ensuring that the central landscaped area and raingardens do not divide the High Street and make it difficult for pedestrians to cross from one side to the other or leave inadequate space for pedestrians to move around.

Concept Design – Church Square

In relation to the proposals for Church Square, most respondents supported the key features of the design, but the average level of support, at 65%, was slightly lower than for the High Street proposals. Support for creating new pedestrian space that celebrates and helps people enjoy the history and heritage of this part of the town centre was highest, at 70%. The removal of road markings and use of paving to demarcate pedestrian priority received the lowest support at just over 60%. This is reflected in the common themes that emerged which were:

- Concerns over the impact of the proposals on vehicle traffic. Most of the comments in relation to this however appear to be due to a wrongful assumption that the proposal is to fully pedestrianise the space or make it one way for vehicles, which was an option initially considered but later discounted.

- Concern over the relocation of the war memorial. Specifically, the concerns here were around the appropriateness of relocating a war memorial as most people seemed unaware that it is not uncommon for them to be relocated, and that the proposal would place the memorial closer to its original position than its current location.
- A general concern over the safety of shared spaces.

Concept Design – New Road/Park Road

In relation to the proposals for New Road and Park Road, again the majority of those engaged support the proposals of the concept design in section. On average 75% of respondents to the survey supported the key features of this section, with the highest support for inclusion of tree planting on New Road and relocation of crossings to match desire lines for pedestrians and cyclists travelling between Malvern Park and the town centre. The key themes that emerged, which should be considered as the scheme develops, were:

- The potential impact any changes to New Road would have on the ability for people to park temporarily when dropping and collecting children to and from St Alphege Infant school.
- Concerns that the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are being prioritised over those of car drivers.
- The potential impact of the proposals on traffic and congestion.

Individual Representations

In addition to the survey, feedback was also submitted in the form of direct representations from the following organisations:

Transport for West Midlands

A formal response was submitted from Transport for West Midlands, the key points to highlight being:

- Overall, the PRS complements TFWM's West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP5), and they would like this referenced in the strategies and policy context section of the PRS.
- The PRS could include stronger demand management measures which are critical for reducing traffic.
- TFWM's cycling and walking team support the strategy overall, but they feel there may be more opportunities to segregate cyclists from vehicles than is identified in the strategy and they would like to work with us to define where the cycle hubs and hire facilities could be best located.
- Micro mobility options including e-scooters aren't referenced in the PRS, and with their seemingly likely legalisation, the PRS should consider how these options could be provided and designed for.

Solihull BID

A formal response was submitted from Solihull BID, the key points to highlight being:

- Highlighting the need for ongoing maintenance to be considered and funding to be committed if the concept design is delivered.
- Ensuring that access, seating, power points and bins are well considered in the design.

The Royal British Legion

A formal response was received from the Royal British Legion confirming they do not have any objection to the principle of relocating the war memorial, but they have requested they are involved in the future design stages on more detailed elements of this proposal.

5. Next Steps Post Consultation

It is recommended that the Public Realm Strategy is approved subject to minor amendments as proposed by Transport for West Midlands

The feedback received in the public consultation in relation to the concept design has been recorded and will be used to inform the next stage of design development if funding is secured.

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