

North Paddington High Streets Engagement Report

April 2024



Executive summary

Why are high streets so important?

High Streets are essential for the **economic, environmental and social well-being** of communities. They provide convenient access to a range of essential goods and services, promoting entrepreneurship and innovation in growing a **resilient local economy**. Well-designed high streets support **sustainable, accessible** and active travel to improve air quality and health for all. Grounded in the unique character and history of a community, high streets create **safe** and welcoming public spaces for people to connect, fostering a sense of belonging, **social cohesion** and **local pride in place**.

Against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Cost of Living Crisis, the climate emergency and loneliness epidemic, high streets play a vital role in ensuring the vitality and longevity of our neighbourhoods.

What are we doing to support high streets in North Paddington?

In 2023, the Council launched the borough-wide **Westminster High Streets Programme** to support local high streets to become the backbone of thriving neighbourhoods where goods, services and green spaces are available within walking distance from residents' doorsteps.

North Paddington is the second place-based focus of the Westminster High Streets Programme, which was first applied in Paddington-Bayswater.

The North Paddington High Streets Programme aims to improve local high streets across **Queen's Park, Harrow Road and Westbourne wards** to create healthy and inclusive environments that encourage diverse experiences, support businesses and strengthen community exchange and participation.

Committed to developing proposals in partnership with the community, we **engaged with 785 members of the public** at our pop-up engagement hubs, focus groups, drop-in sessions at community events and online engagement surveys between October 2023 - January 2024. The purpose was to understand the unique challenges and opportunities facing the users of these high streets and prioritise ideas for improvements.

How will it be funded?

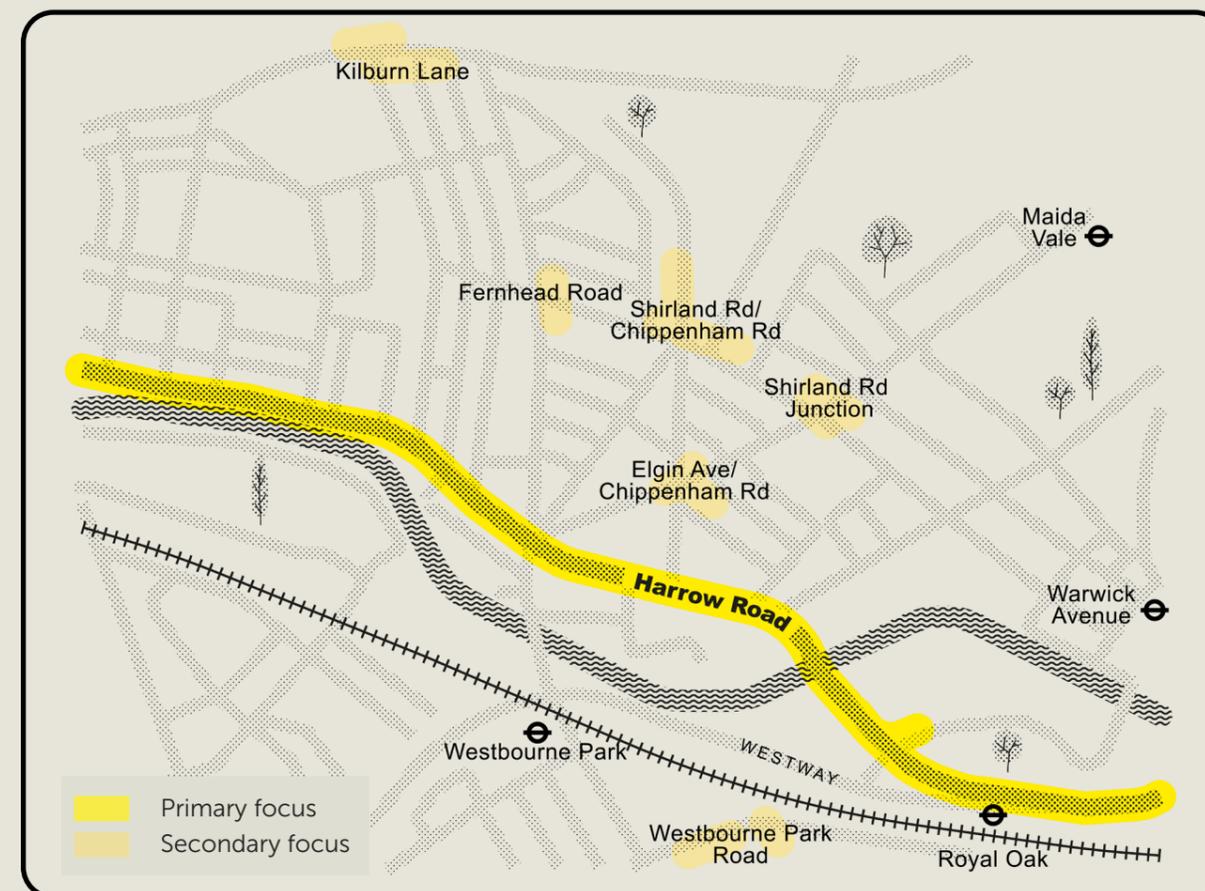
The Council has committed **£20 million towards the North Paddington Programme**, some of which some will be used to invest in the High Streets Programme. In addition, the initial engagement costs have been part-funded by the Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

How do I get in touch?

If you would like to hear more about the programme, please visit: <https://northpaddingtonhighstreets.commonplace.is>.

You can also contact our team directly at: northpaddingtonprogramme@westminster.gov.uk

Which high streets are we focusing on?



What are the key engagement findings for improving high streets? (p.28-31)

Providing opportunities for family activities, creating exchange hubs and increasing spaces for cultural, leisure and community events.

Creating a welcoming street environment through feature lighting, accessible street furniture and improved street greening.

Supporting businesses through shopfront improvements and creating opportunities for pop-up uses in vacant spaces.

What are the next steps? (p.32-35)

September 2024:
Publication of the **Delivery Plan**, setting out the Council's commitment to invest in high streets across North Paddington

March 2025:
Delivery of the **Shopfront Improvement Scheme** on Harrow Road via grants awarded directly to local businesses



Contents

<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <p>Introduction</p> </div>	<p>What is the North Paddington High Streets Programme?</p>	<p>6</p>
+		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <p>Engagement Process</p> </div>	<p>Public engagement roadmap</p>	<p>8</p>
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<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <p>Engagement Results</p> </div>	<p>Overall perceptions 10 Responses to the 23 ideas 12 Safe, sustainable & welcoming places 12 Vibrant & resilient economy 18 Connected communities 24 Your priorities 28 Business insights 30</p>	
↓		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; width: 60px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <p>Current Progress & Next steps</p> </div>	<p>What are we doing with the engagement feedback? 32 What have we already delivered? 34 Acknowledgements & thank yous 36</p>	

North Paddington High Streets Programme

What is the North Paddington Programme?

Fairer Economy is one of the pillars that sit within our Fairer Westminster Strategy, of which the North Paddington Programme was launched.

The North Paddington Programme focuses on tackling **social, economic, health and environmental inequalities** in the lives of those in the **Harrow Road, Queen's Park and Westbourne wards**. Selected for their specific needs, these wards face lower levels of qualifications, earnings, and health, along with higher rates of unemployment compared to other areas in the borough.

We are working with residents, businesses and the wider local community to deliver a healthier, safe and more financially secure North Paddington area.

What is the North Paddington High Streets Programme?

The North Paddington High Streets Programme aims to improve local high streets across Queen's Park, Harrow Road and Westbourne wards to become the backbone of vibrant neighbourhoods where essential goods, services and public spaces are within a short walking distance of residents' homes. The primary focus is on Harrow Road with a secondary focus on the smaller high streets of Kilburn Lane, Fernhead Road, Shirland Road, Chippenham Road, Elgin Avenue and Westbourne Park Road.

We are applying the Westminster High Streets Framework to these locations, which sets out our vision for improving local high streets across the borough. Our vision has three core ambitions: to create **Safe, Sustainable & Welcoming Places**, to support a **Vibrant and Resilient Economy** and to nurture **Connected Communities**.

To achieve these three ambitions, we have developed 23 ideas for improvements based on context analysis - of challenges and opportunities - and past community feedback. Asking participants to vote on which ideas should be prioritised formed one part of the wider engagement process, which is outlined over the following pages.

Westminster High Streets Framework

Safe, Sustainable & Welcoming Places

High Streets where everyone feels safe and welcome regardless of their identity or ability. High Streets that are clean, green and promote healthy lifestyles and sustainable practices.

- Improved street greening
- Feature lighting
- Safe and accessible crossings
- Space for pedestrians
- Welcoming street furniture
- Outdoor dining
- Art on high streets
- Cycle lanes
- Better delivery infrastructure
- Improved cycle infrastructure

Vibrant & Resilient Economy

High Streets that offer a diverse mix of uses and cater to everyday needs and special occasions across the seasons. High streets that champion local businesses and promote entrepreneurship.

- Shopfront improvement scheme
- Pop-up uses for vacant spaces
- Curating a night-time economy
- Business upskilling and mentoring
- Affordable creative workspace
- Access to business finance
- Sector-specific support
- Visual merchandising
- E-commerce platform, branding and identity

Connected Communities

High Streets that reflect the local community and celebrate the local culture. High Streets that offer a diversity of spaces and activities for people of all ages and backgrounds to play, learn, or socialise.

- Family activities
- Cultural and leisure venues
- Community spaces
- Exchange hubs

Public engagement roadmap

November 2023

Engagement hubs

Emmanuel Parish Church & Rebel Business School
2 weeks

316 hub visitors

Business visits

44 survey responses

Community event

Rebel Business School
2 weeks

42 attendees

December 2023



Undertaken throughout the engagement period

262 resident responses

44 business responses

Community drop-in

Queen's Park Library, Beethoven Centre, Waltherton & Elgin Community Homes (WECH), Westbourne Park Family Centre, The Stowe Centre & Grand Junction
9 events

107 attendees

Youth focus groups

The Avenues Youth Project & Sudanese Youth Club
2 events

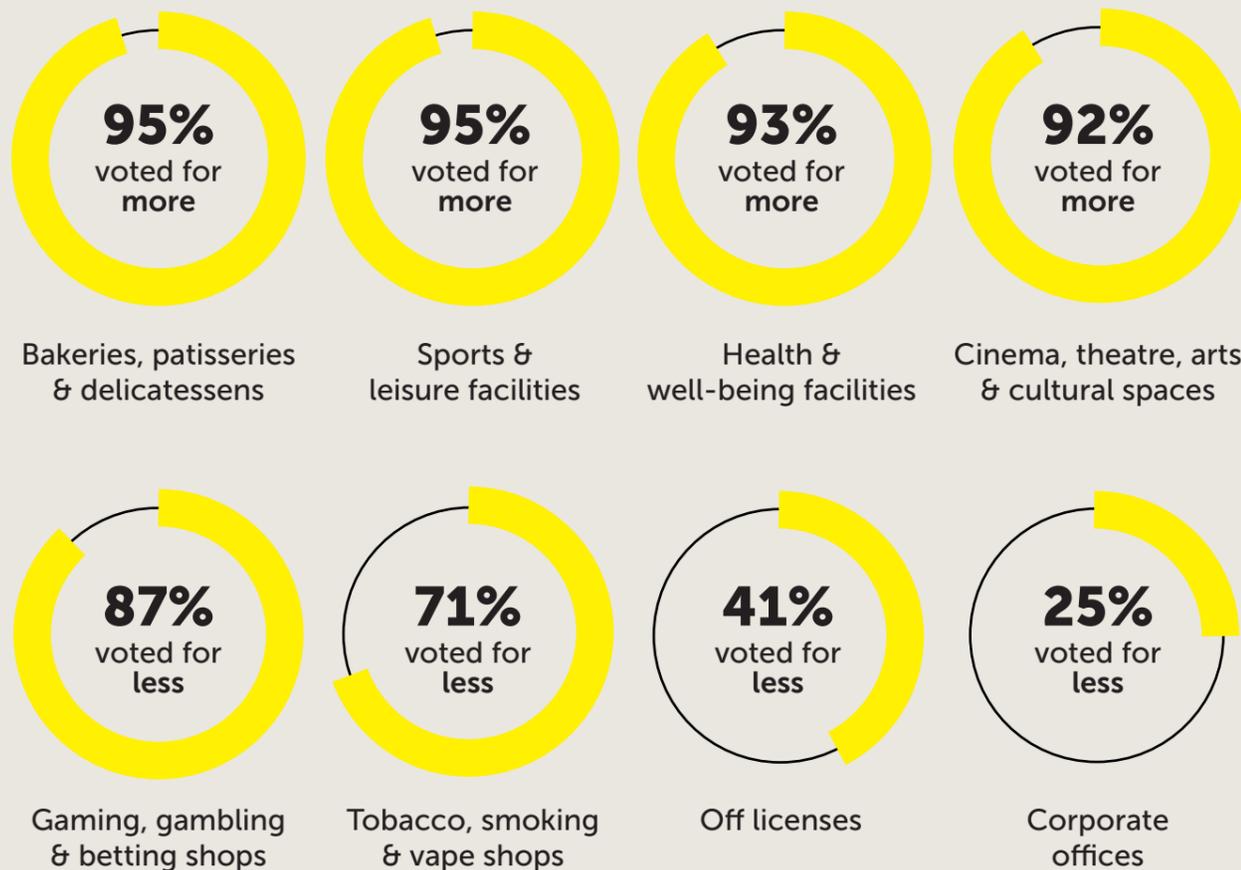
96 young people

January 2024

785 total participants

Overall perceptions

The following pages include a summary of the **785 residents', businesses' and frequent visitors'** comments on the strengths and weaknesses of high streets across the North Paddington area. This is followed by your responses, and priorities, to the **23 ideas for improvements**.



Above: 'Would you like the high street to offer more, about the same or less?' (%NET More: average voted for by residents and businesses)



"I love how there is still a sense of the global majority community."

"I always go to Harrow Road to buy ingredients from a range of world food shops which offer a good selection."

"It's a very unsafe high street. There are not places for families or children."

"A greater diversity of shops is needed, like a bookstore, flower shop, delicatessen."

"I would love to come here more frequently but I currently never do... there is too much traffic and rubbish on the streets."

Ideas for safe, sustainable and welcoming places

Vision

High Streets where everyone feels safe and welcome regardless of their identity or ability. High Streets that are clean, green and promote healthy lifestyles and sustainable practices. To deliver this vision we proposed **10 ideas** and asked you to vote on your priorities and tell us how you'd like us to refine the idea to best suit the needs of the area.

You said

Across the following pages, proposed ideas will be outlined in **priority** of respondents' feedback, along with a summary of how you would like the Council to develop and deliver these ideas.



1



Engagement idea

Improved street greening

We could explore opportunities to increase street planting, trees and sustainable drainage systems.

You said

We were unanimously told that Harrow Road should be greener but there isn't enough space along the pavements as they are too narrow for pedestrians, let alone trees. Other forms of greening has been suggested: hanging baskets, window boxes, green walls and roofs, plus more trees in open spaces stemming off the high streets.

2



Engagement idea

Feature lighting

Feature lighting could help celebrate landmarks and make the area more welcoming after dark.

You said

Women and young people, particularly girls, are less likely to feel safe and spend time on the high street after dark. You also told us that you'd like to see seasonal lighting such as Eid or Christmas lights to make the streets feel more festive, as well as lighting up some heritage buildings along the road that are shrouded in darkness to shine a spotlight on the hidden heritage of local high streets.

Ideas for safe, sustainable and welcoming places

3



Engagement idea **Safe and accessible crossings**

We could explore opportunities such as pavement build-outs and additional pedestrian crossings.

You said We were told that cars, vans, scooters, mopeds and bikes race down the road making it unsafe to cross. The traffic is very slow during peak times, so additional crossings may further slow it down. Therefore, it has been asked to rationalise the locations and frequency of crossings to benefit pedestrians without making congestion worse.

4



Engagement idea **Space for pedestrians**

Increasing space for pedestrians could include reworking junctions and widening footways.

You said The main issue highlighted is unauthorised business goods or furniture spilling onto the street which leaves little room for pedestrians, particularly those with push chairs, shopping trolleys and wheelchairs. A regular build up of rubbish that is put out at the wrong times clutters the pavements and makes the street dirty and smelly.

5



Engagement idea **Welcoming street furniture**

Seating in areas where there is unused space could provide places for people to rest or socialise.

You said We were told that whilst you'd like more places to sit and rest, it would be difficult to accommodate more furniture along the pavements as they are currently too narrow. Therefore, more furniture is welcomed in open public spaces. However, this should be furniture that does not encourage anti-social behaviour or large groups to congregate as this can make people feel unsafe.

6



Engagement idea **Outdoor dining**

We could create more space for businesses to offer outdoor dining.

You said We were told that you'd like to sit outside for breakfast to make the most of the warmer weather. An increase of outdoor dining would encourage more people to be outside and be 'eyes on the street' at night that will help people to feel safer when walking home. However, we were asked to manage the noise of outdoor dining as many residents live within earshot.

Ideas for safe, sustainable and welcoming places

7



Engagement idea **Art on the high street**

We could work with artists to create artworks such as murals to celebrate the local heritage.

You said We were told that the area feels like a forgotten, shabby island between the better known areas of Notting Hill and Maida Vale. Yet there is a cultural richness that needs to be remembered and celebrated. Art that celebrates the local culture, heritage and people will help not only create a sense of pride, but help brand the area to attract more visitors which would be good for local businesses.

8



Engagement idea **Cycle lanes**

The cycle lane network could be expanded and upgraded to improve safety and encourage cycling.

You said Whilst the 20mph change has helped cyclists to feel safer, the fact that it is a busy A-road means that there needs to be a dedicated cycle lane - where possible - in order for people to feel confident cycling.

9



Engagement idea **Better delivery infrastructure**

We could explore 'shared surfaces' to facilitate additional loading bays at off peak pedestrian times.

You said We were told there is an issue with deliveries, both for the businesses who need to receive fresh goods, as well as for everyone else who has to navigate 'white vans' making traffic worse and taking up space on the curb.

10



Engagement idea **Improved cycle infrastructure**

We could increase space for bicycle parking and cargo bike rentals.

You said Many people expressed that they would like to have a bike, but due to security concerns around theft, they are less likely to buy one. We were also told that whilst there are plenty of Lime bikes, you prefer docked bikes. Dockless bikes often clutter the streets and can be a trip hazard.

Ideas for vibrant and resilient economy

Vision

High Streets that offer a diverse mix of uses and cater to everyday needs and special occasions across the seasons. High streets that champion local businesses and promote entrepreneurship. To deliver this vision we proposed **9 ideas** and asked you to vote on your priorities and tell us how you'd like us to refine the idea to best suit the needs of the area.

You said

Across the following pages, proposed ideas will be outlined in **priority** of respondents' feedback, along with a summary of how you would like the Council to develop and deliver these ideas.



1



Engagement idea

Shopfront improvement scheme

We could invest in a shopfront improvement scheme to help independent businesses.

You said

There was a general consensus about the shabby appearance of shopfronts across the local high streets which chips away at the sense of local pride. We were told that you'd like the shopfronts to be improved, including both the frontage and forecourt areas where goods are displayed or furniture is set out.

2



Engagement idea

Pop-up uses for vacant spaces

We could tackle vacant units by promoting pop-up activation.

You said

We were told there is a fast turnover of shops with many units remaining vacant, making the streets look run-down and feel unsafe. You also told us there is a lack of diversity of businesses and pop-up uses provide a good opportunity for new businesses to test setting up on high streets. This added business diversity would mean local residents wouldn't need to go further afield to access essential goods.

Ideas for vibrant and resilient economy

3



Engagement idea **Curating a night-time economy**

We could encourage night time and evening uses, whilst balancing the needs of residents.

You said We were told that there are very few places to spend time in the evening and residents have to travel into town for night-life. Whilst night-time activities are favoured, there are concerns that the area may become too busy or noisy as a result. Therefore, you told us that you'd like more restaurants rather than bars.

4



Engagement idea **Business upskilling and mentoring**

We could provide support for businesses by e-commerce opportunities and business training.

You said Business owners told us that they are open to upskilling and mentoring but often lack the time as they are very busy running their businesses and family life. Therefore, upskilling needs to be efficient and take place locally. Additionally, many stay-at-home parents who would like to either start or return to work said they would welcome upskilling to build their confidence.

5



Engagement idea **Affordable creative workspace**

We could create new co-working spaces or incubator spaces for creative workers and start-ups.

You said Many people told us that they are increasingly working from home as a result of hybrid working and there are no convenient places to 'hot desk' during the week. Whilst there are cafes, residents would appreciate the sense of community in a co-working space.

6



Engagement idea **Access to Finance**

We could support businesses with signposting sources of finance.

You said It goes without saying that the Cost of Living Crisis has impacted both shoppers and business owners. You told us this is leading to a faster rate of businesses closing and more vacant units along the high streets. Therefore, both business owners and shoppers welcomed access to business finance to create more resilience and stability along the high street.

Ideas for vibrant and resilient economy

7



Engagement idea

Sector-specific support

We could tailor our support to meet your specific needs.

You said

Feedback on this was very limited, however we have heard that several businesses would welcome support particularly around visual merchandising if it would result in an increase in sales.

8



Engagement idea

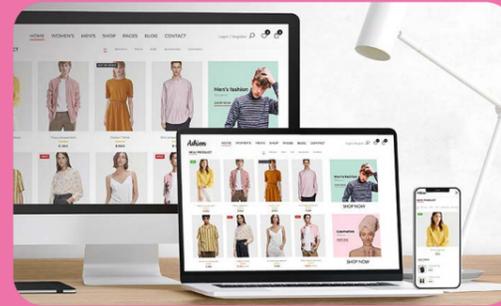
Visual merchandising

We could support high street businesses with specialist visual merchandising training.

You said

Similar to the comments about shopfronts needing substantial visual improvement, residents are positive about improved merchandising inside shops. However, they are more concerned with getting the 'face' of the shop right in the first place.

9



Engagement idea

E-commerce platform

We could launch an e-commerce platform which could act as a marketplace and marketing tool.

You said

Whilst online shopping takes place, high streets are still valued because the goods and products are available within a short walk from residents' homes. Residents are less interested in an e-commerce platform, but more businesses offering online ordering and delivery is welcomed.

Idea for connected communities

Vision

High Streets that reflect the local community and celebrate the local culture. High Streets that offer a diversity of spaces and activities for people of all ages and backgrounds to play, learn, or socialise. To deliver this vision we proposed **4 ideas** and asked you to vote on your priorities and tell us how you'd like us to refine the idea to best suit the needs of the area.

You said

Across the following pages, proposed ideas will be outlined in **priority** of respondents' feedback, along with a summary of how you would like the Council to develop and deliver these ideas.



1



Engagement idea

Family activities

We believe successful high streets could cater more to families and young people.

2



Engagement idea

Cultural and leisure venues

High streets serve as centres of community life where you can enjoy cultural and leisure activities.

You said

We were overwhelmingly told that more family activities and family friendly spaces are favoured. Young children want adventure playgrounds and parents said they want soft play cafes with areas where they can socialise. Teenagers told us they wanted both 'after-school homework clubs' to study together and entertainment spaces with games to socialise, without needing to spend a lot of money.

You said

There is a strong consensus to want more places for culture and leisure. You told us that there are too few places to socialise and gather locally, and that cultural events could be a good way to celebrate creativity and cultural diversity.

3



Engagement idea

Community spaces

High streets could provide more dedicated spaces where communities can meet.

4



Engagement idea

Exchange hubs

Exchange Hubs are community hubs where you can donate, exchange and hire items.

You said

Many of you told us that there are too few places to gather which is an important part of creating a sense of community and belonging in the area. Some communities don't have a place to gather indoors and are forced to gather outside, seemingly taking over public spaces which causes tensions. Lastly, there are a number of underutilised community spaces, so rather than creating new ones, we ought to invest in community programming.

You said

We were told that 'exchanging' things like children's clothes, books and toys is already happening informally, but people need to be 'in the know' to access it. Therefore, a more formalised and public exchange hub would be better. Many had never heard about 'exchange hubs' but feel it's a great way to minimise waste and save money and that they would be very open to participating.



Your priorities

In total, we received **785 responses** to the 23 ideas. **479 people responded in-person** at our pop-up engagement hubs, community drop-ins, and focus groups, and **306 people submitted their responses to our digital surveys**.

Residents' digital survey priorities from most to least popular

1. Shopfront improvements
2. Improved street greening
3. Safe & accessible crossings
4. Pop-up uses in vacant spaces
5. Space for pedestrians
6. Feature lighting
7. Community spaces
8. Cultural & leisure activities
9. Outdoor dining
10. Family activities
11. Welcoming street furniture
12. Art on the high street
13. Exchange hubs
14. Improved cycle infrastructure
15. Better delivery infrastructure
16. Cycle lanes
17. Sector-specific support
18. Visual merchandising

Key:

- Safe, sustainable & welcoming places
- Vibrant & resilient economy
- Connected communities

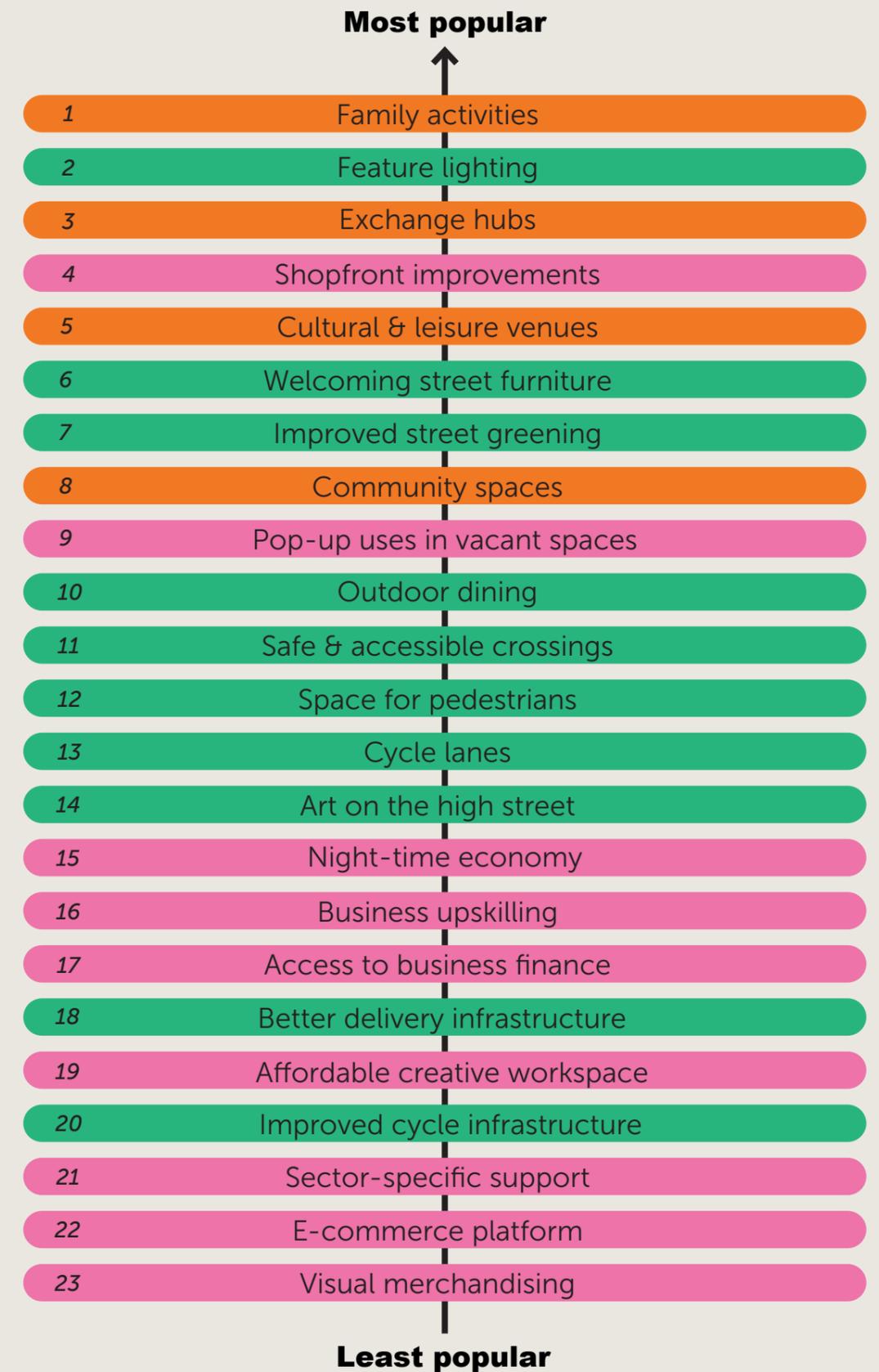
To help us to better understand the different needs and desires of residents and businesses, the digital survey responses from **262 residents** and **44 businesses** are ranked separately below.

The **combination of residents' and businesses' priorities** from all engagement methods are shown in the list opposite in order of popularity.

Businesses' digital survey priorities from most to least popular

1. Family activities
2. Improved street greening
3. Community spaces
4. Cultural & leisure activities
5. Pop-up uses in vacant spaces
6. Shopfront improvements
7. Access to business finance
8. Safe & accessible crossings
9. Outdoor dining
10. Affordable creative workspace
11. Better delivery infrastructure
12. Feature lighting
13. Business upskilling
14. Night-time economy
15. E-commerce platform
16. Visual merchandising
17. Welcoming street furniture
18. Exchange hubs
19. Improved cycle infrastructure
20. Art on the high street
21. Sector-specific support
22. Space for pedestrians
23. Cycle lanes

Combined residents' & businesses' priorities



Business insights

What did businesses say?

The following includes a summary of the main challenges and opportunities faced by the **44 businesses** who responded to the digital survey. Business owners are amongst some of the key custodians of the high street, contributing to the unique offering and resilience of the local economy.

We are committed to responding to the experiences of small businesses and entrepreneurs on the high street to ensure inclusive and sustainable growth. The 'next steps' on the following pages outline how we plan to put this feedback into action.



Note: Westminster City Council currently registers 293 occupied shop front units across the North Paddington area. Through our digital survey, we received responses from 44 businesses from the Harrow Road area. We are confident that insights gathered from this survey offer a fair representation of the views of high street businesses within the area.

Half of businesses identified **local costs** as the main barrier for operation



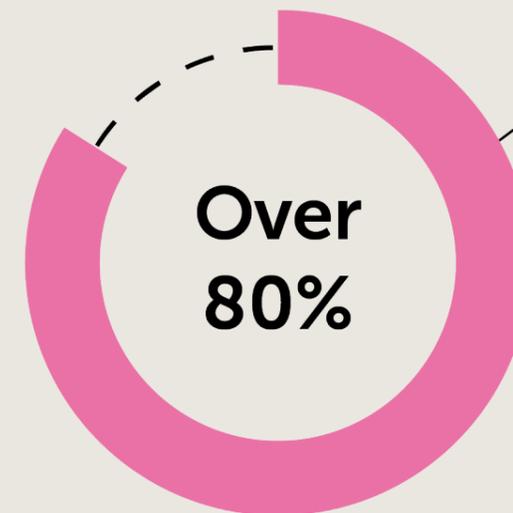
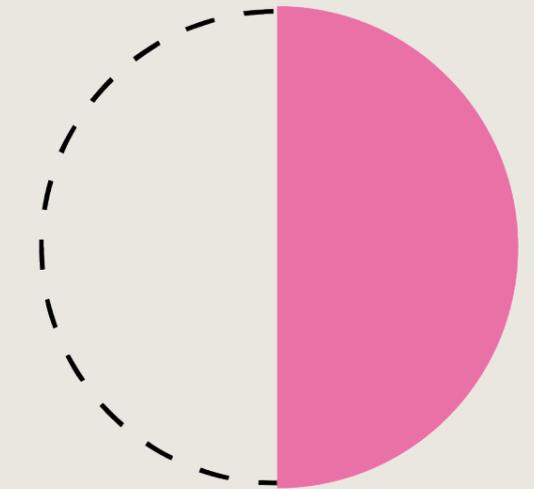
43%
Impact of the cost of living crisis



36%
Lack of capital for shopfront improvements



32%
Increased operating costs



of businesses said that technological solutions, such as an **e-commerce platform, faster broadband, website development and digital marketing tools**, would improve the function and revenue of their business

Digital skills are seen as the most beneficial training opportunity

Digital skills

77%

Networking & mentoring

73%

Leadership

68%

Risk management

66%

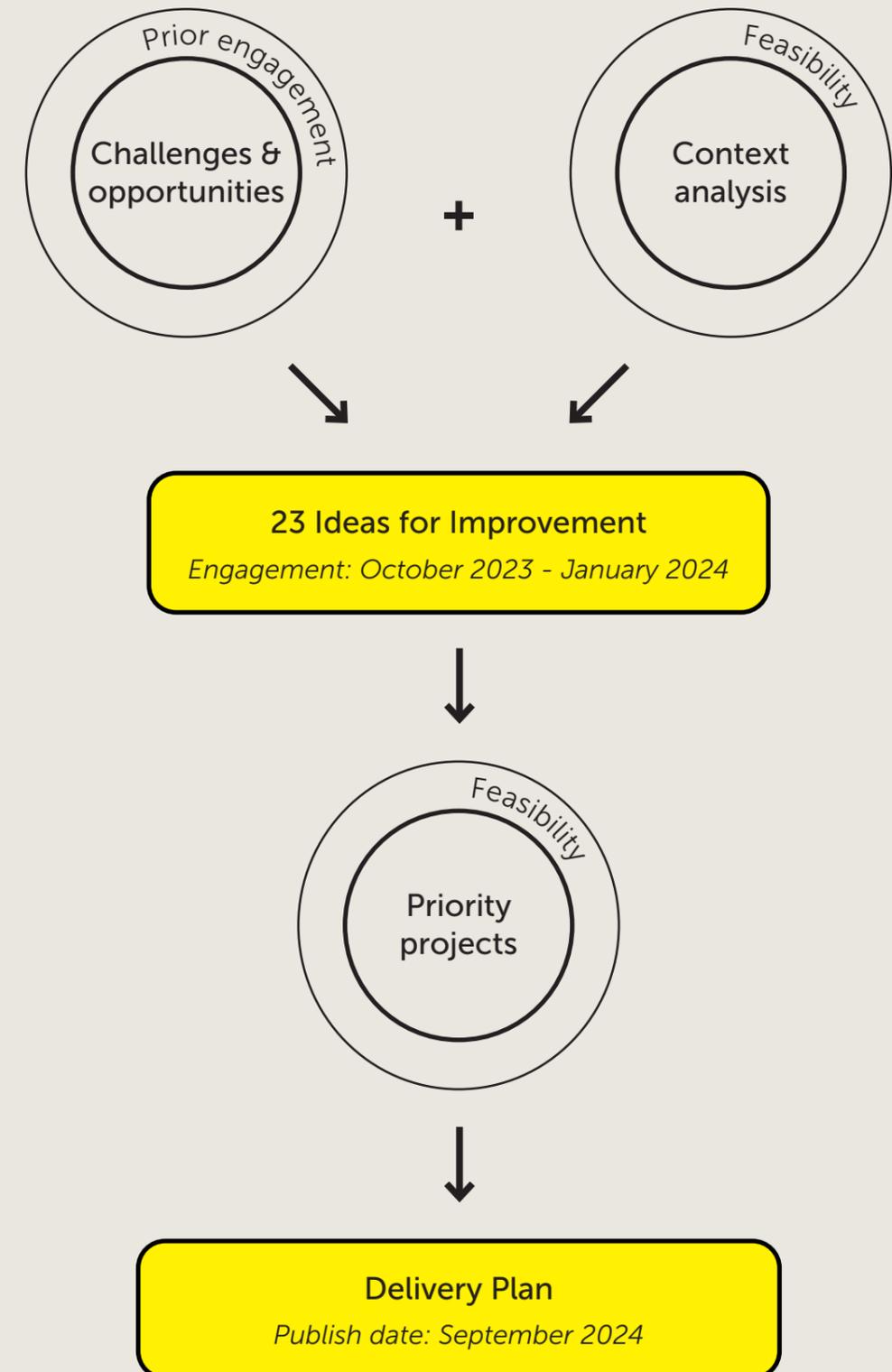
Next steps

What are we doing with the engagement feedback?

Having completed the analysis of the North Paddington High Streets engagement, the Council will create a **Delivery Plan** to set out our commitment to invest in high streets across North Paddington. The plan will consider:

- Context analysis: including site constraints and areas of need
- Outcomes of the engagement process
- Alignment with the Council's policy: including the Fairer Westminster Strategy
- Initial feasibility studies of the priority projects: including information on costs, impact and timescales

The delivery plan will include priority projects and provisional timescales for design and delivery. This document will be published in September 2024.



Current progress

What have we already delivered?

We understand that sometimes the wait between public engagement and delivery can be long. The development and delivery of projects is complex and takes time, but we are committed to delivering on our promises. The best way to do this is to showcase how we have turned past community feedback into current projects.



Queens Park Canalside:
Construction due to start Autumn 2024

Public space improvements



Maida Hill Market Square:
Completion aim Autumn 2024

Public space improvements

Maida Hill Market Action Plan:
Summer 2024

Supporting regular community activation & vibrancy of the market



WECH Watson Gardens:
Completed 2023

The Council supported in public space improvements



Rebel Business School:
Completed 2023

Refurbished to support local business skills and entrepreneurship



Creative Enterprise Zone: 2024-25

Providing access to employment opportunities, training and affordable work spaces across North Paddington



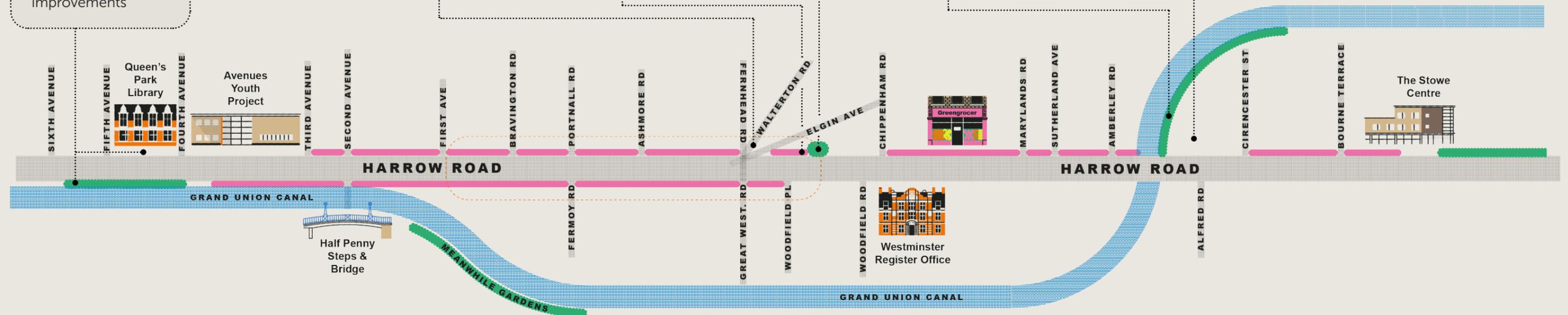
Westbourne Green Canalside:
Construction due to start Autumn 2024

Public space improvements



300 Harrow Road:
Completed Winter 2023

112 affordable homes, nursery and co-working space



Shopfront Improvement Scheme:

March 2024 - March 2025

Due to the extensive resident and business support for shopfront improvements, the Council launched a Shopfront Improvement Scheme in March 2024 to provide free architectural services and grants up to £15,000 for shopfront improvement works to eligible property owners on Harrow Road. Delivery of the shopfront improvements will be by March 2025. The works will focus on:

- Heritage repairs
- Repainting existing shopfronts
- New traditional hand painted signage

The Harrow Road Shopfront Improvement Scheme aims to support traders and the local economy as well as improving the retail environment for shoppers, residents and visitors.

This project is part-funded by the Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

Acknowledgements and thank yous

Every successful programme requires a village of collaborators and we'd like to acknowledge all of the collaborators, formal stakeholders and community members here.

Firstly, we'd like to thank all of the local organisations who hosted our various in-person engagement events: Emmanuel Parish Church and Rebel Business School who hosted the two locations of our pop-up engagement hubs; the Citizen Advice Bureau at the Beethoven Centre, Paddington Development Trust Queen's Park Library, the Stowe Centre, WECH and the Westbourne Park Pantry and Warm Welcome café at the Westbourne Park Family Centre for welcoming us at their regular community events; and the Sudanese Youth Club and the Avenues Youth Project for participating in the focus groups.

We are grateful to the 785 members of the public who generously gave us their time and reflected on their local high streets. Their views have shaped our recommendations and given direction to the next steps of the North Paddington High Streets Programme.

Maddison Graphic created the compelling visuals for the exhibition and this report, Mickey Lee took the photographs of the events and MJCP printed all the material that invited people into the hubs.

You can access more information about Westminster City Council's commitments, find out ways you can get involved and make your voice heard via the links below:

Our Strategy for a Fairer Westminster
www.westminster.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/documents/Fairer%20Westminster%20Strategy.pdf

Fairer Westminster Delivery Plan
www.westminster.gov.uk/delivering-our-plan-build-fairer-westminster

Our Plan for a Fairer Economy
www.westminster.gov.uk/fairer-economy

The North Paddington Programme
www.westminster.gov.uk/north-paddington-programme

Get involved with Our Westminster
www.westminster.gov.uk/our-westminster

Sign up to receive our newsletters
www.westminster.gov.uk/newsletters



Our Westminster High Streets will be the backbone of welcoming and safe neighbourhoods where everyday services and goods are accessible to all and cultural diversity is celebrated. They will support a fairer public life, within an enjoyable, healthy and inclusive street environment that encourages diverse experiences, supports businesses and fosters meaningful community exchange and participation.

www.westminster.gov.uk/place-shaping/westminster-high-streets-programme

**Westminster
High Streets
Programme**



Funded by
UK Government

**LEVELLING
UP**

