Westmorland and Furness Draft Design Code Consultation Report

Prepared by PLACED
January 2026

Westmorland & Furness Council

PLAC**ED**

LUC

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Report Summary

This report provides a summary and record of the public and stakeholder consultation undertaken for the Westmorland and Furness draft Design Code Supplementary Planning Document.

It supports the Consultation Statement, which demonstrates that the engagement and consultation satisfies the requirements for the Design Code to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document that supports the policies of the legacy Local Plans (Read more about the legacy Local Plans at the [Westmorland and Furness Council website](#)).

The second phase of public engagement for the draft Design Code was delivered between **3 November and 14 December 2025.** It followed the first phase of engagement undertaken in the late summer of 2024. The consultation provided multiple opportunities for people to share their views through public drop-in events, stakeholder workshops, a project website and survey, and direct email. The consultation emphasised that although the draft Design Code was quite a technical document, it was important that it had been shaped by local people and those with local knowledge.

In total, approximately **225 people and stakeholders** shared their views through the consultation – further details are provided below.

Online Engagement

Total responses: 88 (10 long survey responses, 13 email responses, 65 short survey responses)

Drop-in Events

Total attendees: 60

- Wednesday 12 November 2025, 3:00–6:30 pm, Ulverston Coronation Hall (4 attendees)
- Thursday 13 November 2025, 2:30–5:45 pm, Barrow Library (5 attendees)
- Tuesday 18 November 2025, 2:30–6:30 pm, Penrith Parish Centre (9 attendees)
- Wednesday 19 November 2025, 2:30–6:30 pm, Appleby Main Hall (10 attendees)
- Thursday 27 November 2025, 3:00–6:45 pm, Grange Victoria Hall (10 attendees)

- Friday 28 November 2025, 2:30–5:30 pm, Westmorland Shopping Centre, Kendal (22 attendees)

Workshops

Total attendees: 77

- Wednesday 12 November 2025, 10:00 am–12:00 pm, Ulverston Coronation Hall (7 attendees)
- Thursday 13 November 2025, 10:00 am–12:00 pm, Barrow Library (21 attendees)
- Tuesday 18 November 2025, 10:00 am–12:00 pm, Penrith Parish Centre (19 attendees)
- Wednesday 19 November 2025, 10:00 am–12:00 pm, Appleby Main Hall (7 attendees)
- Thursday 27 November 2025, 10:00 am –12:00 pm, Grange Victoria Hall (3 attendees)
- Friday 28 November 2025, 10:00 am–12:00 pm, Kendal Town Hall (20 attendees)

Key findings from the consultation

Some general concerns were raised about the documents being overly wordy and complex, with suggestions that it should be trimmed down and more graphically led. The Greenfield Homes (10+ dwellings) section was specifically noted as long. It is noted that the printed document format isn't the final presentation format, and the final digital form may make interacting with the documents more manageable.

Design Code Values

Participants generally felt that the values presented in the draft Design Code were desirable and important, with most commenting that they should be considered in parallel. Well-designed, accessible, and green developments were seen as equally important by many attendees. However, significant concerns were raised about the viability of implementing certain requirements, with participants noting that financial constraints affect material choices, particularly for smaller developers. The balance between protection and innovation was emphasised, with participants stressing that requirements must be realistic.

Character and Context Approach

Participants emphasised that responding to and reflecting local materials and design was important, with several commenting that local materials were

paramount to maintaining character and recommending that the Draft Design Code should take into account local geology. However, several participants also felt that it was important to introduce new designs and modern buildings with character, rather than simply replicating existing styles. The distinctiveness of neighbourhoods was highlighted, with participants feeling developments should not all be the same, but design should protect and enhance local distinctiveness, suggesting that the feel of a place was important, not just its visual appearance.

Development Types

Participants emphasised that shopfronts should respond to the character of each town, with colour schemes and quality of finish noted as important considerations.

The topography of sites was commented on as key to housing design. Some attendees suggested that the design code needed to be adaptive to specific views and that housing developments should ensure local uniqueness of the areas were valued and enhanced.

How the Deign Code related to mixed-use, out-of-town retail, new settlements, energy provision, and town extensions was questioned.

Well-designed Housing for All

Participants felt that energy efficiency was important, alongside proper ventilation and natural light, with renewable energy and EV charging points highlighted. However, concerns were raised about unforeseen impacts on running costs, with suggestions for more focus on running costs as well as installation installing costs of the green features. The distinctiveness of neighbourhoods was highlighted, with attendees suggesting neighbourhoods should have a mix of styles and layouts.

Several participants commented on the mixing of housing tenures, suggesting affordable housing should not be concentrated in one place. Several participants also said layouts should be designed so that cars do not dominate, though attendees stressed the need to be realistic about where people would park vehicles.

The importance of green spaces around housing developments was raised, with questions about how the new green space would be maintained.

Some participants questioned whether adaptable housing requirements adequately reflected policy caveats around viability and site-specific constraints.

Sustainable Travel

Participants emphasised that it was important to include good walking routes within developments, with walkable developments connected to services, town and village centres, and schools. Routes to schools were specifically highlighted.

Cycle storage was raised by several participants, with attendees suggesting it should be well-placed and usable. However, some felt cycle infrastructure might not be suitable in all locations, e.g. due to narrow rural roads, and should not be introduced universally.

Participants commented that it was important to include adequate parking to avoid clogging up streets, though several suggested parking should be communal or located away from houses.

Bus routes located close by, and the provision of bus shelters were raised, with several participants feeling public transport needed to support older people as well as families.

The connection between housing and nearby facilities was emphasised, with some commenting that connectivity was just as important as the development itself.

Several participants felt measures to enable car-free or low-car lifestyles were important, though a culture change was needed to encourage active travel.

Views and Design of Development Next to the Countryside

Participants commented that space around settlements and greenery was important, with several emphasising the need for green spaces within and around developments. The retention of trees was emphasised by attendees, who felt trees should not be lost during development.

The importance of bringing habitat into development was highlighted. However, concerns were raised about a lack of greenery in new developments, with hard standing and car parking noted as issues.

Participants felt that protecting views was important, with several commenting on retaining views out to vistas. The views of the Beacon were given as a specific

example that should be retained, alongside protecting Penrith's ridgeline, which was noted as being in danger from development.

The height of buildings was raised by several participants, with topography noted as affecting visual prominence. Spacing between homes and streets was noted as important. Several participants felt horizons should not be broken and skylines should be respected.

Dark skies were raised by some, though other attendees noted that proper streetlighting was needed to create safe environments for walking, representing a tension between environmental considerations and safety needs.

The code should emphasise not just creating but also retaining accessible and healthy places already used by existing residents, with particular concern that existing walks such as quiet lanes should not be destroyed for roads or changed into major routes, as these were valued amenities for walking, cycling, and socialising.

Image 1 shows participants at the Design Code Reference Group workshop in Kendal.

Introduction

Westmorland and Furness Council, working with LUC, Mcmullan Studio, and PLACED, has been developing a comprehensive Design Code to establish a clear vision for design quality across the council area, excluding those parts within the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.

Early community and stakeholder engagement took place in Summer 2024. This gathered local views and preferences on what matters most for design in Westmorland and Furness. This early engagement was vital to understanding what residents and others identified as good design in their local contexts and helped shape the development of the draft Design Code. You can read the findings from this phase of engagement by visiting the Westmorland and Furness Council website at westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/design-code.

Following this early engagement, the Council and partners developed and later published a draft Design Code for public consultation in November 2025. Whilst the draft Design Code includes detailed technical guidance, it is built around clear values that reflect what communities told us matters most.

This report provides a record of the comments and feedback collected during the draft Design Code public consultation phase. It captures the views, concerns, and suggestions raised by those who participated in our public consultation activities. The Consultation Statement prepared by Westmorland and Furness Council provides a record of comments shared by statutory and other key stakeholders. The consultation focused on various themes, including design code values, character and context, development types, housing design, sustainable travel, and views of the countryside, as well as providing the draft Design Codes themselves. The findings have helped inform the finalisation of the Design Code.

Consultation Overview

Westmorland and Furness Council and PLACED delivered public consultation on the draft Design Code between **3 November and 14 December 2025**. The consultation provided multiple opportunities for people to share their views. Because of the technical nature and amount of information being shared, a short survey was designed to collect views on the broader themes of the draft Design Code, and a longer survey was used to allow more detailed feedback on specific

codes. In-person drop-in events and a series of workshops were also held across the area to ensure accessibility and enable face-to-face dialogue. Workshops were targeted at different groups or audiences – see details below. The consultation emphasised that although the draft Design Code is technical, it is important that it has been shaped by local people and local knowledge.

How we engaged

Online Engagement

Total responses: 88 (65 short surveys, 10 long surveys, 13 emails)

Live from Monday 3rd November – Sunday 14th December 2025, website link: https://consult.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/planning-policy-designcode/

Table 1 Short survey respondents by type and permission to publish.

Short survey respondent group	Total	Permission to publish
Member of public	46	39
Planning consultant / agent / architect	1	0
Neighbouring Local Planning Authority	1	1
Town / Parish Council	4	3
Community / Interest Groups / Charity	11	11
Government / Public Advisory Body	1	1
Other bodies / organisations	1	1
Totals	**65**	**56**

Table 2 Long survey and email respondents by type.

Long survey and email respondent group	Long survey	Email
Member of public	5	-
Planning consultant / agent / architect	1	-
Landowner / development interest	-	1
House building industry	-	1
Community / Interest Groups / Charity	1	1
Business interest	-	1
Government / Public Advisory Body	1	-
Infrastructure Provider	-	3
Statutory body	-	5
Other bodies / organisations	2	1
Totals	**10**	**13**

Drop-in Events

Total attendees: 60

- Wednesday 12 November 2025, 3:00–6:30 pm, Ulverston Coronation Hall (4 attendees)
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Workshops

Total attendees: 77

- Wednesday 12 November 2025, 10:00 am–12:00 pm, Ulverston Coronation Hall (7 attendees – Town and Parish Councillors)
- Thursday 13 November 2025, 10:00 am–12:00 pm, Barrow Library (21 attendees – young people)
- Tuesday 18 November 2025, 10:00 am–12:00 pm, Penrith Parish Centre (19 attendees – Community Interest Groups/representatives)
- Wednesday 19 November 2025, 10:00 am–12:00 pm, Appleby Main Hall (7 attendees - Town and Parish Councillors)
- Thursday 27 November 2025, 10:00 am–12:0pm, Grange Victoria Hall (3 attendees - Town and Parish Councillors)
- Friday 28 November 2025, 10:00am–12:00pm, Kendal Town Hall (20 attendees – Design Code Reference Group*)

*The Design Code Stakeholder Reference Group was established at the project initiation stage to help define the scope of the Design Code and input into its contents. The group comprises representatives from Westmorland and Furness Council, the housebuilding industry, the business community, health organisations, interest groups, architects, planning agents, and landowners.
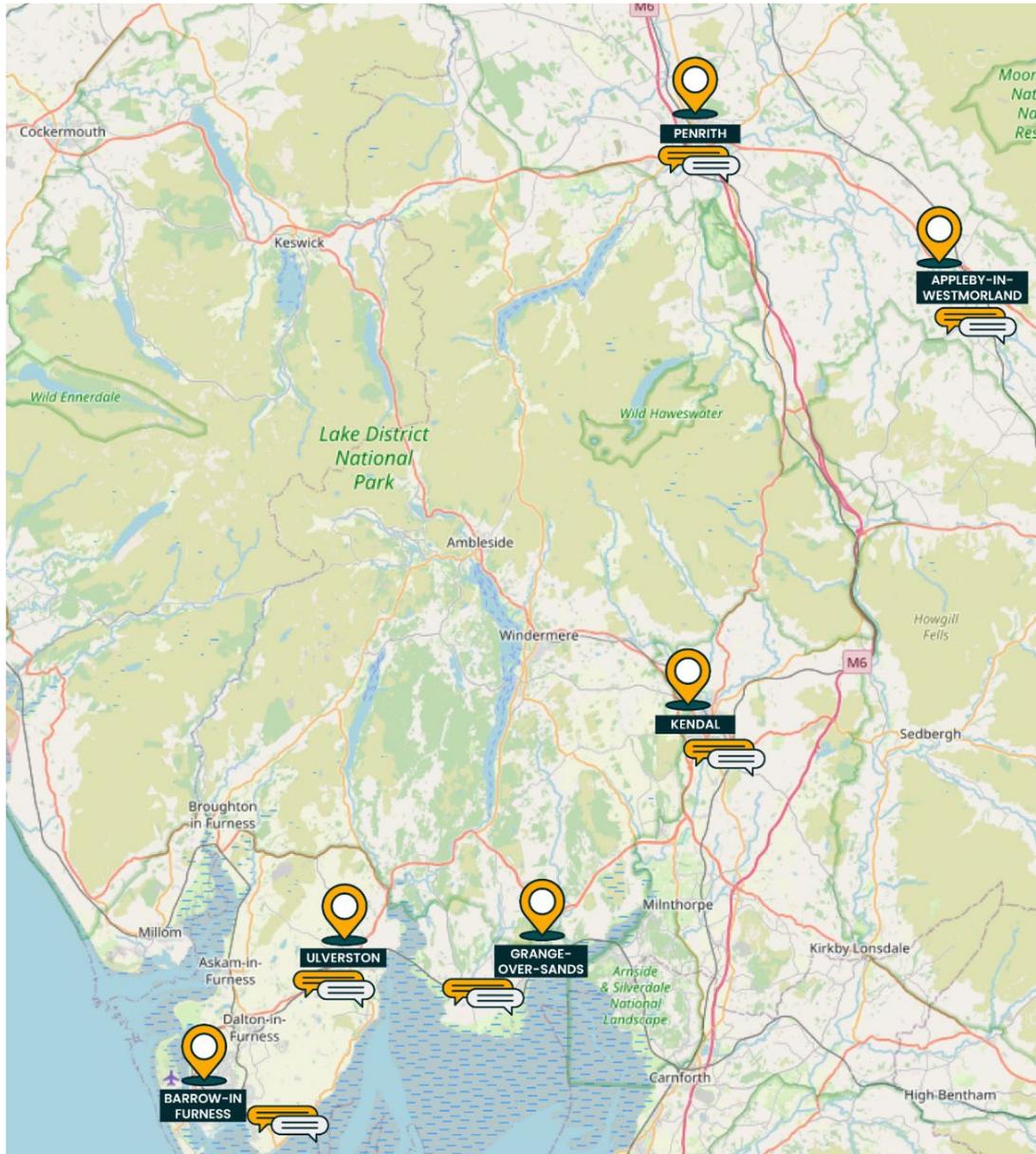
Map 1 shows the drop-in and workshop locations

How we reached out

In advance of the consultation launch, a comprehensive programme of briefings was delivered to ensure elected members, parish and town councils, and key stakeholders were informed about the consultation. These briefings included:

- Cabinet briefing (29 September 2025),
- Locality member briefings for Furness (20 October 2025), Eden (13 October 2025), and South Lakeland (14 October 2025), and
- Parish and town council briefing on 22 October 2025.

All consultation materials, including the draft Design Code documents, supporting documents, consultation flyers, and online response forms were prepared and made available by 24 October 2025, with the website going live on 3 November 2025.

Emails inviting responses on the draft Design Code were sent on 3 November to statutory consultees, members of the public, developers, agents, parish and town councils, elected members, interest groups and other relevant bodies who are on the Council's consultation database. Consultation letters were also posted on 3 November. Hard copies of the draft Design Code and supporting documents were delivered to deposit points (Barrow Town Hall, Kendal Town Hall, and Voreda House, Penrith) by 31 October. The consultation was promoted through multiple channels, including social media, local radio, press releases, and the council's website.

We also asked online participants how they became aware of the draft Design Code consultation.
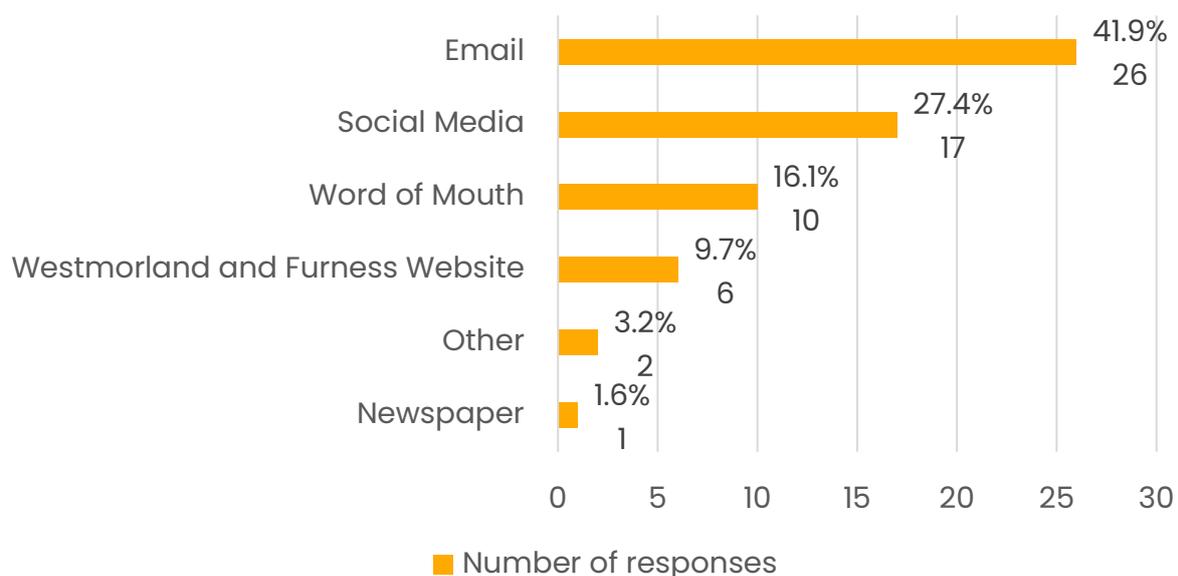
Graph 1 shows online responses to the question 'How did you find out about this consultation?' Responses are presented as percentages and number of responses. Most participants selected 'via email' at 41.9% or 26 responses.

Who we engaged

In total, we engaged with approximately **225 people and stakeholders** through the consultation activities.

- Online (short survey): 65
- Online (long survey): 10
- Email responses: 13
- Drop-in events: 60
- Workshops: 77

This number indicates the number of people with whom we engaged in conversation about the Design Code and who participated in the activities delivered to share their views. It does not include every person who viewed consultation materials.

The following organisations attended workshops or responded directly by survey or email, other organisations may have responded but did not share details.

Westmorland and Furness Council (councillors and officers)

- Councillor for Appleby and Brough
- Councillor for Eamont and Shap
- Councillor for Greystoke and Ullswater Ward
- Councillor for Kirkby Stephen and Tebay
- Countryside Access
- Community Development
- Economic Development
- Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

Image 2 shows people engaging with display materials at the Kendal drop-in event.

Parish and Town Councils

- Appleby Town Council
- Allithwaite and Cartmel Parish Council
- Askham Parish Council
- Bampton Parish Council
- Barton and Pooley Bridge Parish Council
- Brougham Parish Council
- Burneside Parish Council
- Dalton with Newton Town Council
- Dufton Parish Council
- Egton-with-Newland, Mansriggs and Osmotherley Parish Council
- Grange-over-Sands Town Council
- Hawcoat and Newton Parish Council
- Hesket Parish Council
- Kirkby Stephen Parish Council
- Lazonby Parish Council
- Lindal and Marton Parish Council
- Lowther Parish Council
- Penrith Town Council
- Skelton Parish Council
- Ulverston Town Council

External Stakeholders

- Action for Swifts
- Action with Communities Cumbria
- Active Cumbria
- Arnside and Silverdale National Landscape
- BAE Systems Submarines
- Burlington Stone
- Churches Together in Penrith
- Clean River Kent Campaign
- Coal Authority
- Connecting Cumbria
- Cumbria Constabulary
- Environment Agency
- Farley Huxley
- Genesis Homes
- Historic England
- Holker Estates
- Home Group
- Kendal Futures
- Kendal Swifts
- Keswick Swift
- Lake District National Park
- Lancaster City Council
- Manna House Cumbria
- Marine Management Organisation
- Ministry of Defence
- MJ Gleeson
- Mullberry Homes Limited
- MWT Planning
- My Community Penrith
- National Grid
- National Trust
- Natural England
- NCIC Wellbeing Service
- Network Rail
- North West Music Academy
- Oakmere Homes
- Penrith Business Improvement District (BID)
- Penrith Swift Group
- Persimmon Homes
- RSPB
- SkandiShack
- South Lakes Housing
- Story Homes
- United Utilities

Demographic information

Demographic information was collected as part of the online consultation to understand who responded. We collected information on interest or connection to the draft Design Code, postcode, gender, disability, and age. Demographic information was not collected at in-person events.

**Interest in the Design Code**
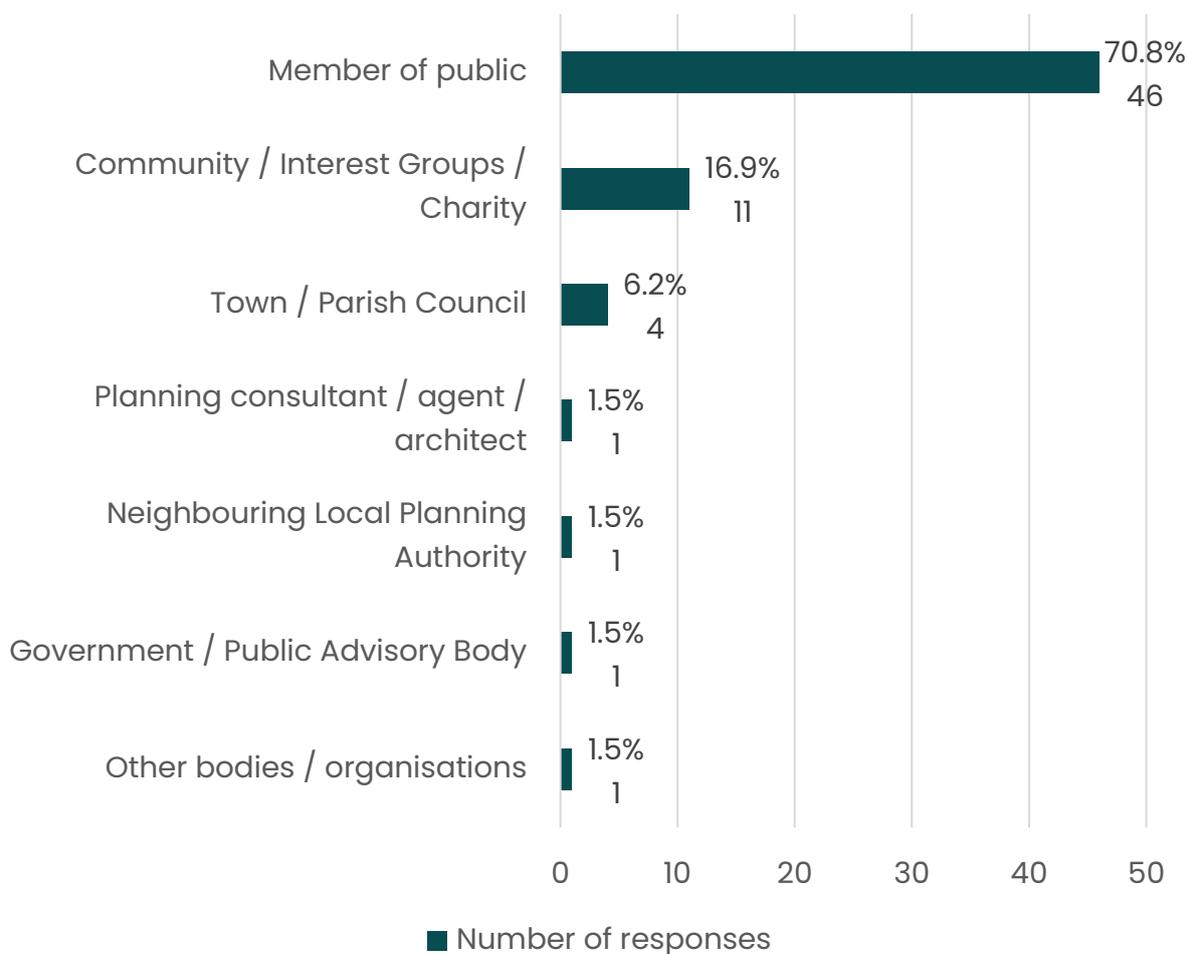
Graph 2 shows online responses to the question 'what describes your interest in the Design Code consultation?' Responses are presented as percentages and number of responses. The majority of the respondents were members of public, which is 70.8%.

Postcode
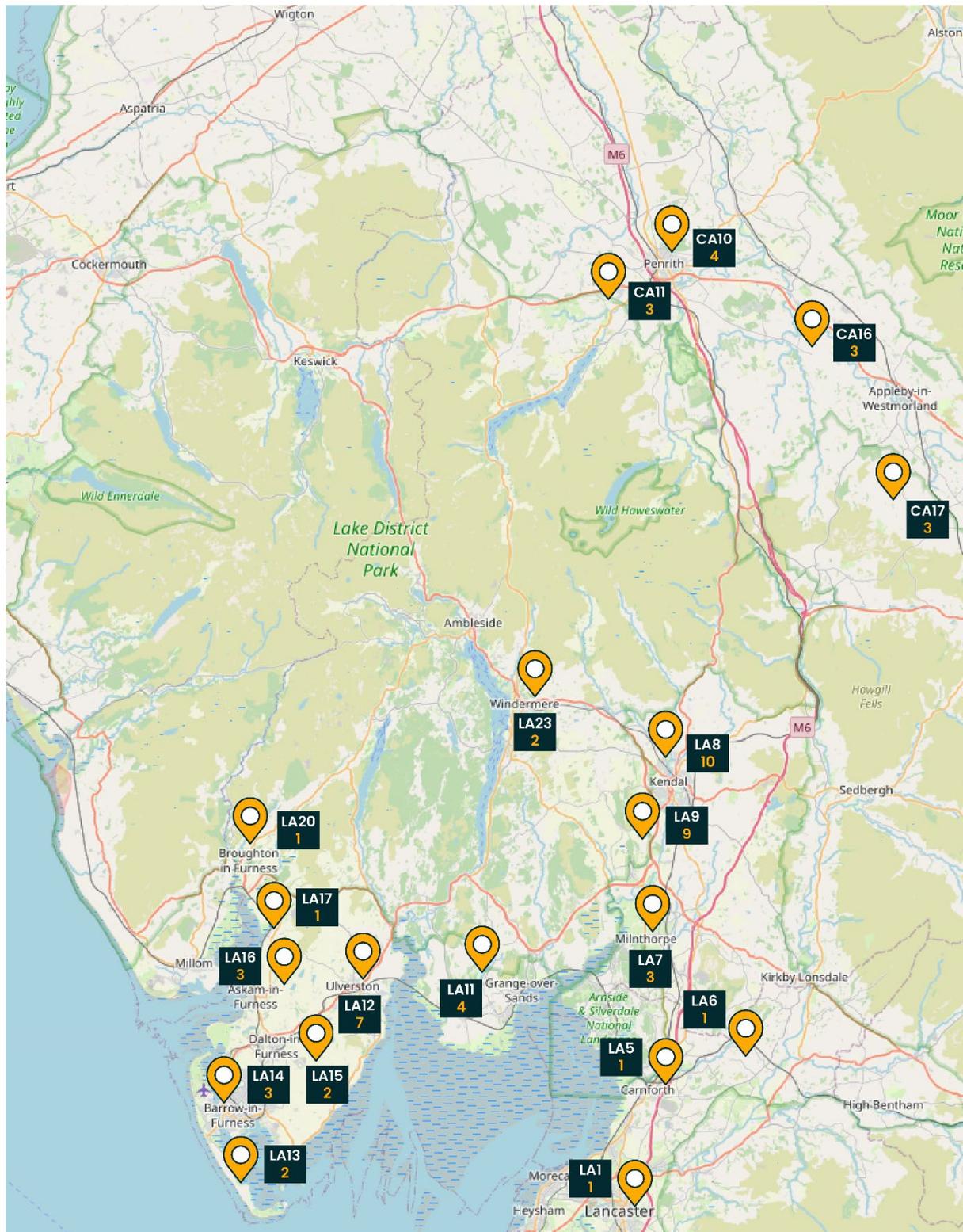
Map 2 shows online responses to the question 'What is your postcode?' The top 3 postcodes were LA8 with 10 votes (16.7%), LA9 with 9 votes (15%) and LA12 with 7 votes (11.7%).

Gender

1, 2%

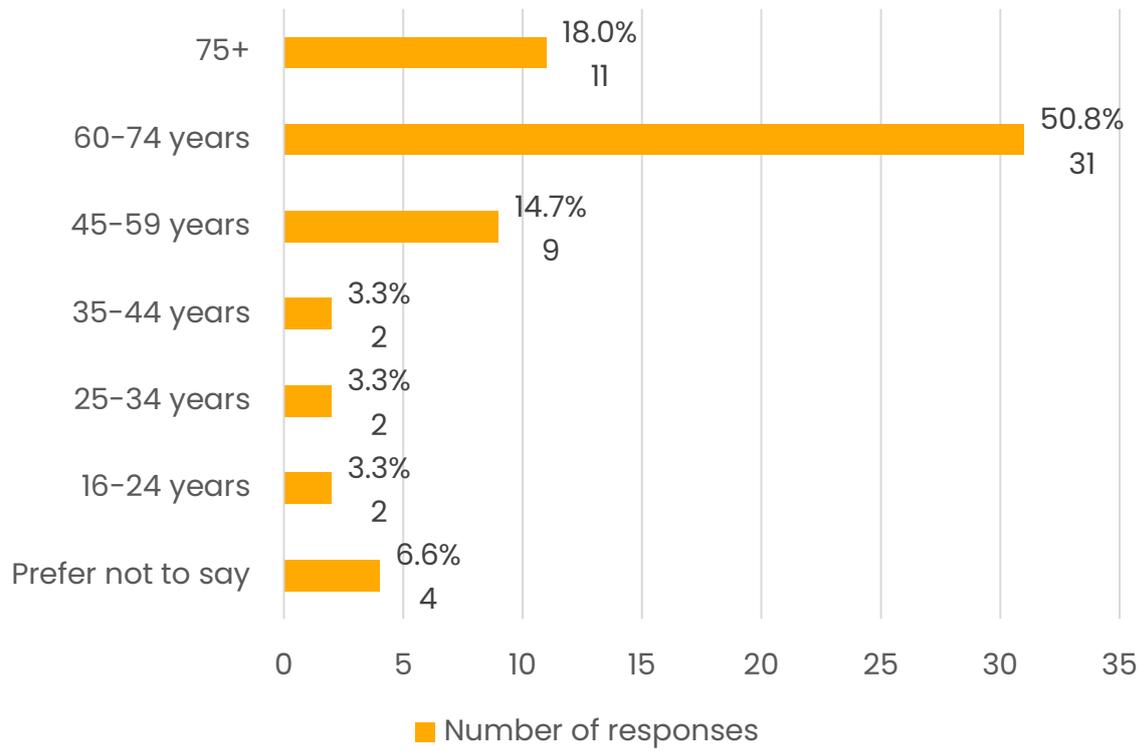23, 36%

39, 62%

- Female - Male - Prefer not to say
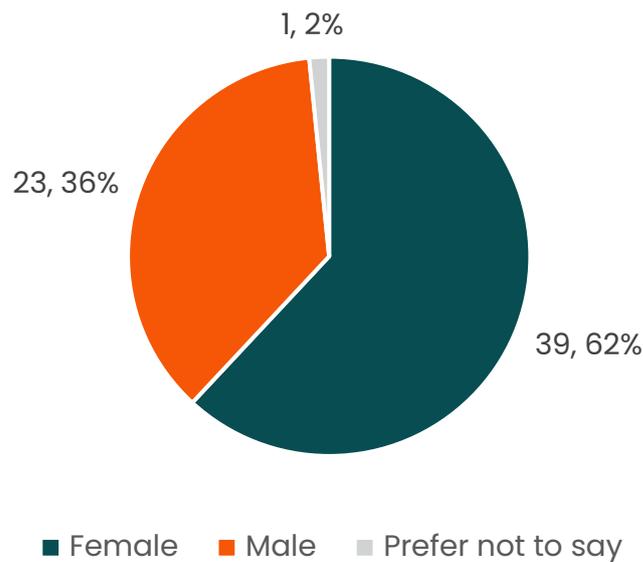
Graph 3 shows online responses to the question 'What gender describes you best?' Responses are presented as percentages and number of responses. Majority of the participants were female, with 62% and 36% were male. 2% of participants preferred not to say.

Disability

8, 12%   4, 6%

53, 82%

- Yes - No - Prefer not to say
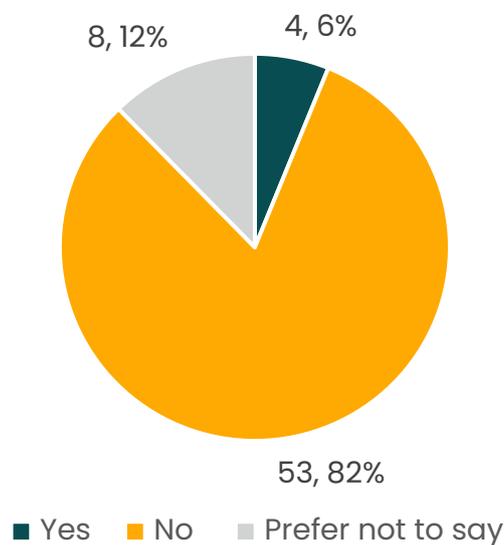
Graph 4 shows online responses to the question 'Do you consider yourself to have a disability or long-term health condition?' 6% of the respondents said yes, they have disabilities, and 12% prefer not to say. 82% of the participants said they do not have disability.

Age

Graph 5 shows online responses to the question 'Which age category do you fall within?' Responses are presented as percentages and number of responses. The majority of the respondents were aged between 60 and 74 years.

Engagement Findings

The following are the common themes and comments identified from analysis of the short survey responses, drop-in events, and workshops. Long survey and direct email responses are considered in detail in the Consultation Statement.

It is important to note that this represents only the views of those who participated. Due to differing opinions amongst contributors, contradictions and factual inaccuracies may be present in some of the responses provided, and we recognise this is the nature of public consultation.

The consultation feedback includes both general comments and comments on specific codes or sections of the draft Design Code.

Throughout this report, the frequency of comments has been assessed to reflect the weight of opinion amongst participants. To provide clarity our analysis uses the following approximate categories.

- When a suggestion was mentioned by more than 30% of participants, phrases such as 'many participants' or 'many attendees' have been used.

- For comments raised by approximately 15-30% of participants, terms like 'several participants' or 'several attendees' have been applied.

- When comments came from approximately 5-15%, phrases such as 'some participants' or 'some attendees' have been used.

- For ideas or suggestions raised by fewer than 5% of participants, language such as 'a few participants', 'one participant', or 'one attendee' has been applied.

This approach is to ensure that the report reflects the relative weight of different opinions and priorities, making it clear which themes generated broad consensus, and which represented individual perspectives, whilst maintaining readability and ensuring the language is inclusive.

Design Code Values

Do you think these are the right values for the Westmorland and Furness Design Code?
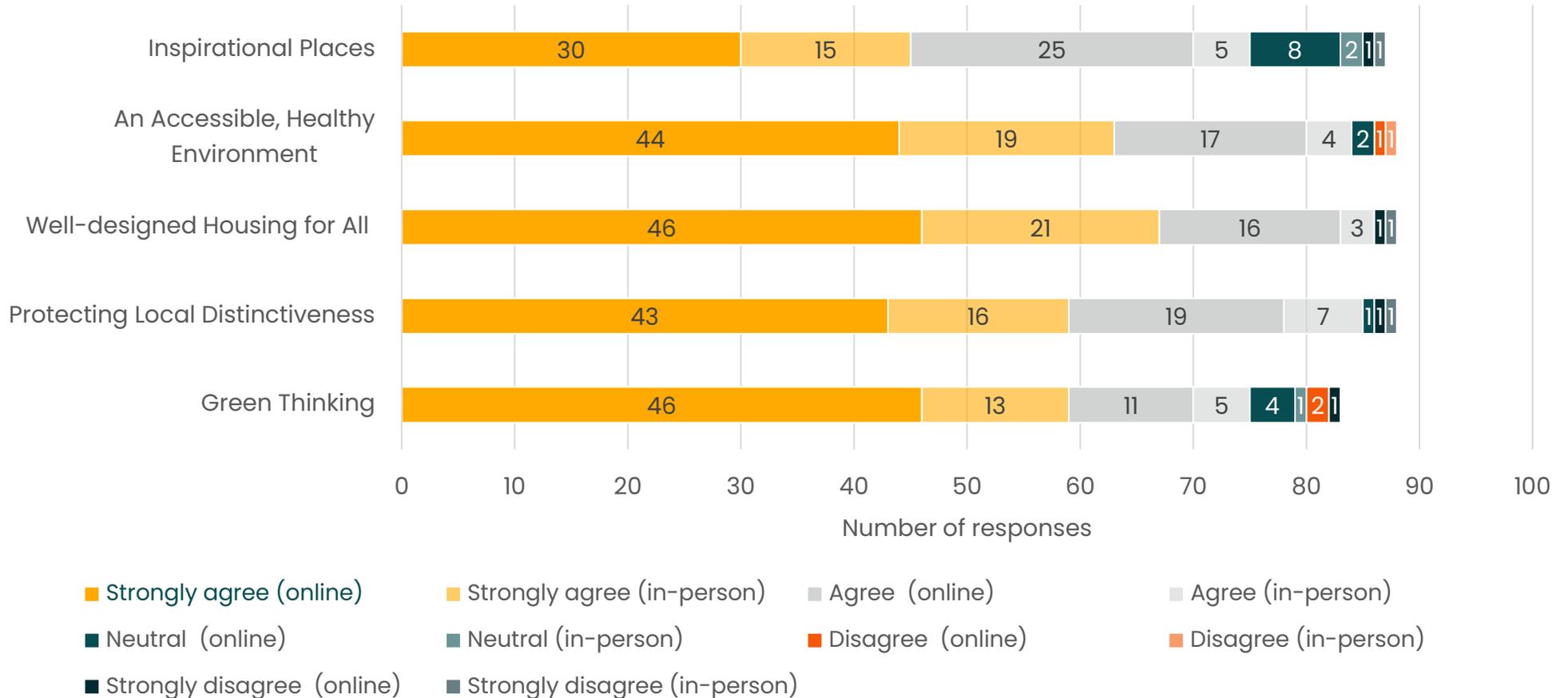
Graph 6 shows online and in-person responses to the question 'Do you think these are the right values for the Westmorland and Furness Design Code?' Data is provided in the table below.

Table 3 The below table shows online and in-person responses to the question 'Do you think these are the right values for the Westmorland and Furness Design Code?'

Do you agree these are the right values for the Westmorland and Furness Design Code?	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Green Thinking (online)	46 (71.9%)	11 (17.2%)	4 (6.3%)	2 (3.1%)	1 (1.6%)
Green Thinking (in-person)	13 (68.4%)	5 (26.3%)	1 (5.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Protecting Local Distinctiveness (online)	**43 (67.2 %)**	**19 (29.7%)**	**1 (1.6%)**	**0 (0.0%)**	**1 (1.6%)**
Protecting Local Distinctiveness (in-person)	**16 (66.7%)**	**7 (29.2%)**	**0 (0.0%)**	**0 (0.0%)**	**1 (4.2%)**
Well-designed Housing for All (online)	46 (73.0%)	16 (25.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1 (1.6%)
Well-designed Housing for All (in-person)	21 (80.8%)	3 (11.5%)	1 (3.8%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.8%)
An Accessible, Healthy Environment (online)	**44 (68.8%)**	**17 (26.6%)**	**2 (3.1%)**	**1 (1.6%)**	**0 (0.0%)**
An Accessible, Healthy Environment (in-person)	**19 (79.2%)**	**4 (16.7%)**	**0 (0.0%)**	**1 (4.2%)**	**0 (0.0%)**
Inspirational Places (online)	30 (46.9%)	25 (39.1%)	8 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.6%)
Inspirational Places (in-person)	15 (65.2%)	5 (21.7%)	2 (8.7%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (4.3%)

Comments

Overall values and priorities

Participants generally felt that all the values presented were desirable and important, with most commenting that they should be considered in parallel. Well-designed, accessible, and green developments were seen as equally important by many attendees. Some noted subtle differences between local distinctiveness and inspirational places as concepts. Others specifically noted the need to acknowledge the *identities* of Westmorland and Furness, rather than a single identity. The need for a balance between protection and innovation was emphasised, with participants stressing that requirements must be realistic. Several participants commented that homes should be well-designed and of sufficient quality to be desirable and marketable. The role of the tourist economy was raised, with suggestions that this should perhaps be referenced.

Local distinctiveness and materials

The connection between local distinctiveness and carbon efficiency was highlighted, as people suggested that using local materials would reduce the carbon footprint of developments, and participants recommended that the design code should have regard to local geology.

Some attendees suggested that stone facing could be used to help new developments fit in, particularly along development edges. It was noted that local distinctiveness was important to local people, and there were calls for careful balance when establishing reference points to place. A few participants commented that it was possible to have modern development that still responds to local distinctiveness, citing examples in where stone and slate were being used.

Participants commented positively on seeing a variety of materials specified. It was suggested by some that designs could give a nod to older or existing buildings and design styles through small details, proportions or specific design features. Attendees noted that there was a difference between things that should be kept in keeping and things that could be distinct. Landmark buildings could be used to break up housing developments.

Viability and development costs

Several participants (professionals including housebuilders and members of the public) raised concerns about viability, with some commenting that certain

design requirements could make development expensive. Financial constraints were noted as impacting the choice of materials used, particularly for smaller developers. There was concern expressed that if requirements were too rigid, developers might look elsewhere, with affordable housing potentially being squeezed as a result.

Some attendees felt that the difference in development across different parts of the district should be recognised to avoid mass replicated housing.

Green infrastructure and sustainability

Participants placed high priority on green thinking and environmental standards, with several suggesting that green infrastructure should be in place within new developments from the outset. Some attendees suggested encouraging the use of swift bricks, bat boxes, and wildlife-friendly planting, with calls for education on sustainability, wildlife, and ecology.

Higher regulations for developers regarding green infrastructure were proposed by some participants. Sustainable drainage was also mentioned as an important consideration.

The maintenance of green spaces was raised as a problem by young people. It was suggested that green spaces should support biodiversity and be easy to maintain. New-build parks were noted as being well-used, whilst other parks were seen as being misused. The need for spaces suitable for different ages was highlighted.

Accessibility and healthy living

The concept of designing places so that people would not need to use cars was raised by several participants, who linked this to accessible and healthy living. However, some attendees questioned whether this was realistic for an ageing population and whether services could genuinely support sustainable travel for all groups.

The importance of safe and accessible walking routes was emphasised, with participants suggesting that rights of way were often an afterthought and should be incorporated from the design stage, potentially through a checklist approach.

Active travel links were mentioned as having always been desirable, though participants suggested the design code could make them a priority.

Mixed and inclusive communities

Participants commented on the importance of mixed communities, with reference to health, safety, and shared facilities. The need for affordable and accessible housing was raised, with some attendees questioning whether integrating affordable housing and 'tenure blind' ideas came through strongly enough in the proposals.

Several participants felt that inspirational places should include mixed communities with shared facilities.

The design of accessible public spaces was raised. Some participants commented that shared spaces should include somewhere to dry clothes, with yards required rather than internal drying. Green spaces in Penrith were noted by one attendee as being poor, despite distant views of the fells.

Housing

Some participants noted that housing needs should take into account the number of people working from home, which affects the number of bedrooms required. The ageing population was acknowledged, though participants expressed a desire to attract young people to the area as well.

Prioritising Design Code values

While the drop-in sessions and online surveys focused on whether participants agreed or disagreed with the values themselves, workshop participants were asked to prioritise the values to highlight specific preferences. It is important to clarify that the ordering of these values was not intended to establish a formal rank (i.e., Value 1, Value 2, etc.). Instead, the objective was to better understand the priorities within the five core values.

To determine the relative importance of each value, a weighted average approach was applied. Rather than simply counting how many times a value was mentioned, this method assigns a higher score to values ranked as a 'top priority' by participants. A value ranked 1st by a respondent was assigned 5 points, decreasing to 1 point for a fifth-place ranking. The approaches were ranked in order of 1 = most important, 5 = least important. The final score shown is the average of these points.

1. Well-designed housing for all

2. An accessible, healthy environment

3. Green thinking

4. Protecting local distinctiveness

5. Inspirational places

Figure 1 shows workshop participants' responses who ranked the values to better understand the priorities.

Table 4: The below table shows workshop participants' votes who ranked the values to better understand the priorities.

values	1	2	3	4	5	weighted average
Green Thinking	6	4	5	1	7	3.04
Protecting Local Distinctiveness	**4**	**7**	**1**	**7**	**7**	**2.77**
Well-designed Housing for All	11	10	4	0	0	4.28
An Accessible, Healthy Environment	**8**	**2**	**6**	**8**	**0**	**3.42**
Inspirational Places	2	3	5	7	8	2.36

Image 3 shows young people participating in the workshop in Barrow-in-Furness.

Character and Context Approach

To better understand how local character and context should be balanced with other considerations, e.g. innovative design or sustainability, respondents were asked to rank five approaches to new development in order of importance (1 = most important, 5 = least important). Responses were collected both online and in-person and shown alongside one another for analysis. Responses were analysed using a weighted scoring method, where higher-ranked preferences were given greater weight, to provide an overall indication of relative importance across all approaches.
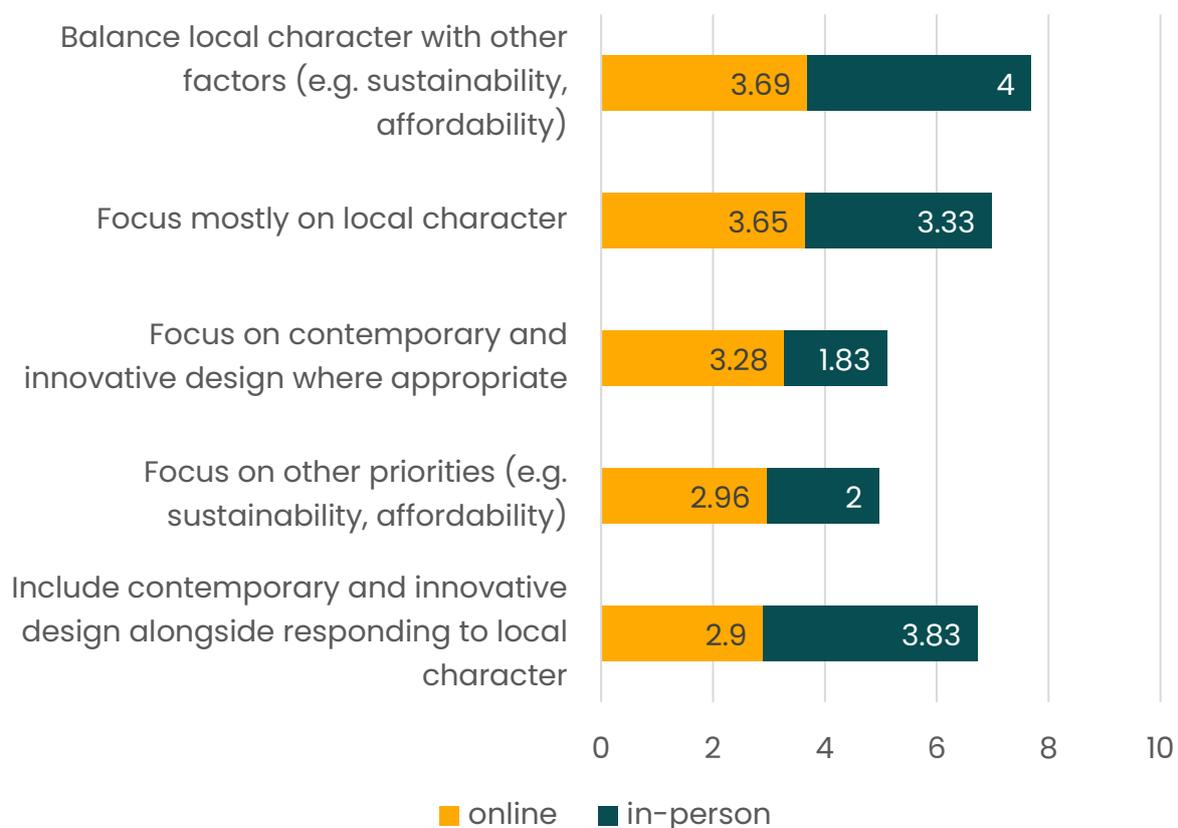
Graph 7 shows online and in-person participants' responses to the prompt, 'Please rank these approaches in order of importance for new development design'.

Comments

Local character and design response

Participants commented that responding to and reflecting on local materials and design was important. Respondents suggested that it was necessary to

understand local distinctiveness based on what already existed in an area. The need to recognise different characteristics was emphasised, including considerations around the orientation of houses and the balance between modern or contemporary design versus traditional or older existing buildings.

Some participants suggested that the feel of a place was important, not just its visual appearance.

Modern design

Several attendees felt it was important to bring new designs and modern buildings with character, rather than simply replicating existing styles.

Sustainability measures

Participants commented that eco-measures were important, with solar panels given as a specific example. However, concerns were raised about potential contradictions in achieving sustainability goals, particularly regarding 'solar gain' and orientation to prevent overheating.

Community space and engagement

The importance of community spaces and spaces for people to use was highlighted by participants. Some attendees suggested that outdoor spaces should be designed to inspire people to engage with them.

Image 4 shows people participating in the community groups workshop in Penrith.

Development types

Do you think the Design Code is focusing on the right types of development for Westmorland and Furness?
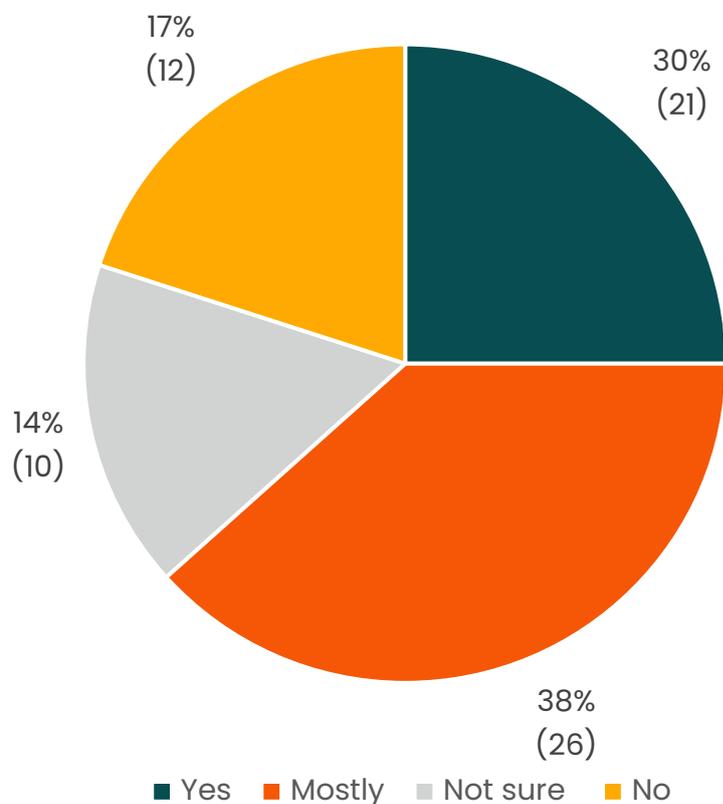
Graph 8 shows online and in-person (combined) responses to the question 'Do you think the Design Code is focusing on the right types of development for Westmorland and Furness?' Responses are presented as percentages and number of responses. 68% think the design code is or mostly is focusing on the right types of development.

Comments

Shop fronts

Participants emphasised that shopfronts should respond to the character of each town. Colour schemes and quality of finish were noted as important considerations for shopfront design. Window vinyl that blocked full windows was mentioned as a concern. Colour palettes were raised as an important consideration. One participant questioned whether it was flawed to take account of context if the starting point was of poor quality.

Design guidance

The Lake District National Park Authority's approach was referenced by one attendee, noting that checklists provided support rather than being validation requirements, with control extending to refusal where necessary. The importance of education and communication was highlighted.

Well-designed Housing for All

Views on approach to well-designed housing

We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed with the approach to well-designed housing set out in the draft Design code. The approach was described as follows: The Design Code aims to ensure new homes are safe, efficient and warm, accessible and adaptable for changing needs (e.g. aging, disability), and designed to high standards for all housing tenures (e.g. owner occupied, private rented, social rented).
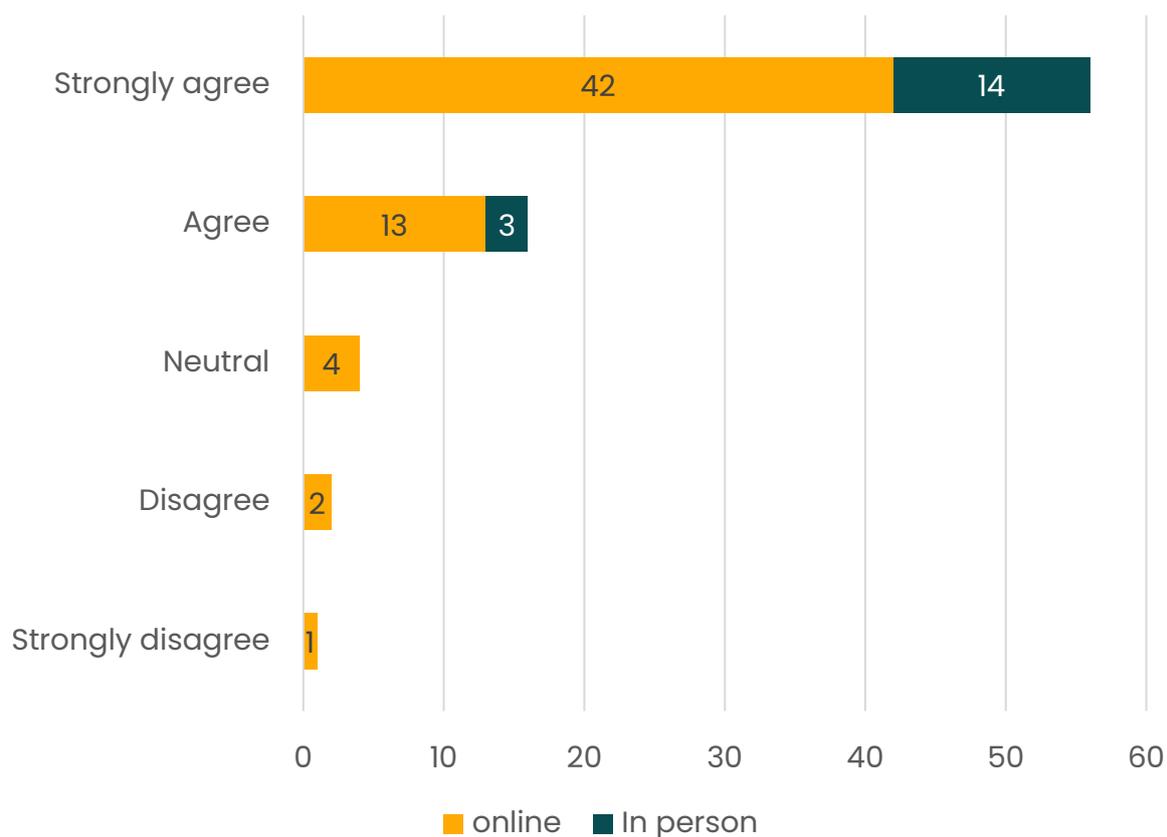
Graph 9 shows online and in-person participants' responses to the question on the approach to well-designed housing.

Comments

Adaptability and accessibility

Participants emphasised that adaptable homes should be built with high standards for wheelchair accessibility. Attendees commented that housing should be accessible for a range of needs and provide access to services. The importance of homes being close to amenities was raised, with some participants noting that people with less mobility needed to avoid reliance on cars.

The availability of a mix of housing sizes to fit all stages of life was mentioned by participants, suggesting this would allow people to stay in their community and downsize or upsize as needed. The adaptability of homes was also noted in this context.

Housing Types and Connectivity

The importance of renovating older buildings and keeping buildings in use was raised. Driveways were noted as clearing up pavements on older streets that were not designed for cars. A variety of house types at different prices was mentioned as important. Connecting estates to current housing and towns was highlighted. Spacious gardens, driveways, and well-built homes were noted as desirable features. Bungalows for disabled people were specifically mentioned by one participant as an important housing type.

Energy efficiency and renewable energy

Several participants felt that energy efficiency was important, alongside proper ventilation and natural light. Renewable energy was highlighted, with specific reference to considering sun exposure and drainage areas.

EV charging points were mentioned as a desirable feature. Some attendees suggested that future-proofed homes should incorporate building regulations requirements, including insulation, rainwater capture, and renewable energy from the outset to avoid the need for retrofitting. The value of allowing well-designed, sustainable new homes into traditional areas was noted by some attendees.

Character and distinctiveness

Participants commented that topography was key to housing design. It was suggested that the design code needed to be adapted to specific views and that housing developments should ensure local uniqueness of different areas were

valued and enhanced. However, attendees also noted that in new developments, there was a need to consider the surrounding character and size of existing buildings.

The distinctiveness of neighbourhoods, homes, and areas was highlighted by several participants, who felt that developments should not all be the same. Attendees suggested that neighbourhoods should have a mix of styles and layouts, with different palettes for homes and buildings. However, it was emphasised that design should protect and enhance local distinctiveness. Sympathetic design when mixing new builds into old build areas was noted as important. Some participants commented that whilst it was important to preserve historic areas and character, it might not be necessary or possible to replicate them exactly.

Layout and parking

Participants suggested that layouts should be designed so that cars did not dominate, though several attendees stressed the need to be realistic about where people would park, with parking linked to buildings.

On-street parking was viewed negatively by some, who suggested it should be avoided. Rural areas' needs were noted as being different, with one participant suggesting a minimum of two parking spaces per dwelling. Off-road parking and visitor parking were both mentioned as important considerations.

Affordable housing integration

Several participants commented on the mixing of housing tenures, suggesting that homes should be mixed rather than separating affordable houses or bungalows. The need to think about housing needs was emphasised. One participant stated that affordable housing requirements should be enforced.

Green space and community

The importance of green spaces around housing developments was raised by participants. Attendees suggested that a community should be created through shared spaces with a purpose. Questions were raised about how the new green space would be maintained. Some participants felt that gardens should include both private and shared spaces, including play areas.

Green gaps between smaller towns and villages were highlighted by participants as creating a sense of community identity.

Young people suggested that following local character was important, but there should also be space for something different. It was noted that if the environment was nice, people would feel inspired.

Sustainable Travel

How important is sustainable travel?
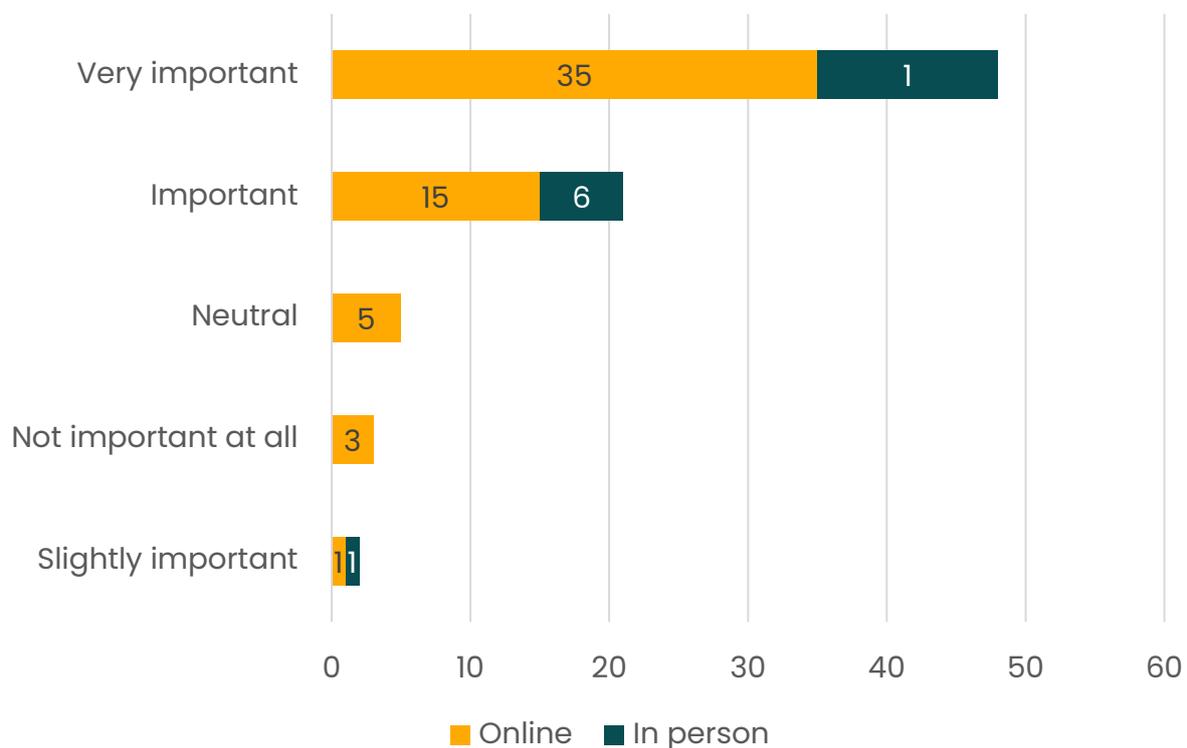
Graph 10 shows online and in-person participants' responses to the question 'How important do you think it is for new developments to prioritise walking, cycling and public transport?'

Comments

Walking Infrastructure and routes

Several participants commented that walkable developments should be connected to services, town and village centres, and schools. Routes to schools were specifically highlighted by some participants. It was suggested that walking routes should not always follow main roads. The importance of pavements that

were wide enough to stop and pass was raised, with some participants noting that shared pavements and cycle spaces with minimal kerbs did not help.

Walking was noted by one attendee as enabling people to meet and bump into one another. However, some participants commented that roads were very wiggly and not easy to walk around, suggesting that maps and clearer signage showing distances and facilities would be helpful. The concept of play streets was mentioned by one participant.

Cycling infrastructure

Cycle storage was raised by several participants, with attendees suggesting it should be well-placed and usable, reflecting the needs of different areas. Some felt that cycle infrastructure should be practical, as some locations and sites might suit it more than others. Sheltered or covered bicycle racks and lit bicycle parks were proposed by participants. Questions were raised about whether cycle storage would be a requirement and how this related to car usage and travel plans. Concerns were expressed by some attendees about potential conflicts between drivers and cyclists.

Some young people commented that other things were more important to tackle climate change than just sustainable travel. Cycle lanes were noted by some as creating congestion and using energy to create. More charging places were mentioned as being needed, though it was acknowledged that this would require funding.

Car parking and management

Participants commented that it was important to include adequate parking to avoid clogging up streets. However, several attendees suggested that parking should be communal or located away from houses, with green areas between car parking spaces. Some felt that cars should be removed from main highways and kept away from footways. The navigation and clarity of where people could and could not park were raised as issues. Shared spaces with dropped kerbs and no footways were noted by some participants as being problematic, as cars still park on them.

Public transport

Bus routes located close by, and the provision of bus shelters were raised by participants. The importance of seating at bus stops and being able to stop and

rest was highlighted by some attendees. Several participants felt that public transport needed to support older people as well as families. Access from outlying areas to town centres was noted as a concern, with Appleby specifically mentioned as lacking a park and ride scheme or hub and ride facility. Some attendees suggested that public transport needed to improve to provide access to facilities throughout the day and evening.

Connectivity and integration

Some attendees commented that connectivity was just as important as the development itself, noting that a lack of structured links between new housing and existing areas created barriers. Participants suggested that new developments should be connected to existing developments. The importance of understanding the transport network beyond the site was raised. However, concerns were expressed about connectivity being a problem for accessing town centres, workplaces, and other destinations.

The security of cut-throughs was mentioned as a consideration. Re-use of derelict infrastructure, such as railways, was proposed by one participant.

Safety considerations

Child safety was raised by participants as an important consideration. Lighting was mentioned by some attendees, who suggested it should be designed with safety in mind, thinking of all users and providing surveillance. Dropped pavements were noted by several participants.

Other comments

Questions were raised about potential conflicts with national guidance and what the design codes would add to existing policies. Some participants asked about consistency between the design code and highway design standards.

Concerns were expressed about whether major housebuilders would use the design code. One attendee questioned whether the approach was imposing character on developments.

EV charging for visitors and provision for emergency vehicles were mentioned as important considerations.

Several participants felt that measures to enable car-free or low-car lifestyles were important. However, some attendees stressed the need for a culture change to encourage active travel.

Views and Design of Development Next to the Countryside

Views on approach to transition from town to countryside

The engagement explained that the Design Code requires applicants to consider how they protect and enhance views, viewpoints or sightlines as far as possible.
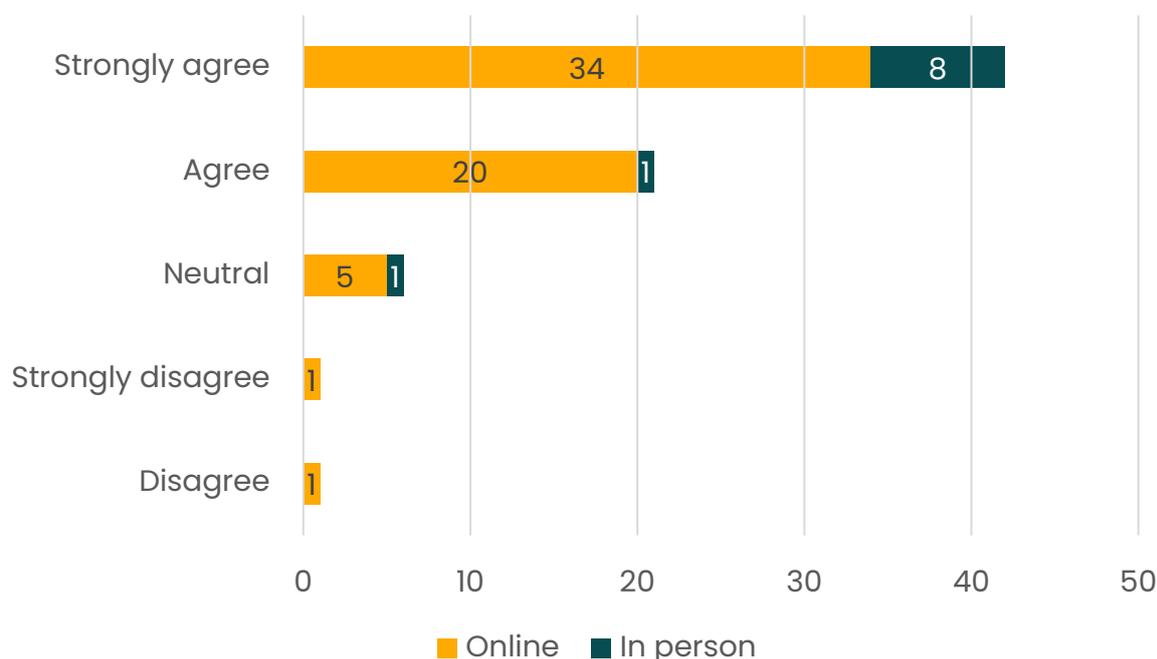
Graph 11 shows online and in-person participants' responses to the question 'Do you agree with the approach to views and design of development next to the countryside?' The majority of responses, both online and in-person, strongly agreed with the approaches to views of the countryside.

Comments

Green Space integration

Participants commented that the space around settlements and greenery was important. Several attendees emphasised the need for green spaces within and around developments. The importance of bringing habitat into development was highlighted by some participants. Concerns were raised about a lack of greenery

in new developments, with hard standing, car parking, and insufficient green space noted as issues.

Some participants suggested that hedgerows and trees should be used at the edges of developments, with low clumps of trees helping to soften transitions. The retention of trees was emphasised by attendees, who felt that trees should not be lost during development.

Protecting views

Participants felt that protecting views was important. Several attendees commented on the importance of retaining views out to vistas, with the views of the Beacon (Penrith) given as a specific example of views that should be retained. Some participants suggested that views of existing developments should also be protected. However, one attendee noted that whilst views were important, accessibility was more important.

Building height and spacing

The height of buildings was raised by several participants, who suggested that topography was a factor that could affect visual prominence and building height. Some attendees proposed using street layouts that were stepped so that more views were available from each house.

Spacing between homes and streets was noted as important, with participants suggesting consideration should be given to spaces between different-sized homes and buildings. Large buildings were mentioned as a concern by some attendees.

The interaction between density and height was noted by participants, with some commenting that density might be pushing height, as smaller footprints were used to achieve more units. However, some attendees welcomed the requirement for developers to respond to these issues and justify their approach.

Edge transitions

Participants commented on the importance of breaking up hard edges and reflecting ground conditions in development design. Although, it was noted by some attendees that settlement edges would move over time.

The softening and hiding of human activity from habitats were raised as a consideration. Hedgerows at the edges of developments were suggested by participants as a way to manage transitions.

Skyline and lighting

Several participants felt that horizons should not be broken and that skylines should be respected during development.

Dark skies were raised by some participants, who suggested avoiding excessive illumination, using LEDs, and not using motion sensors. However, other attendees noted that whilst dark skies were important, proper streetlighting was needed to create safe environments for walking.
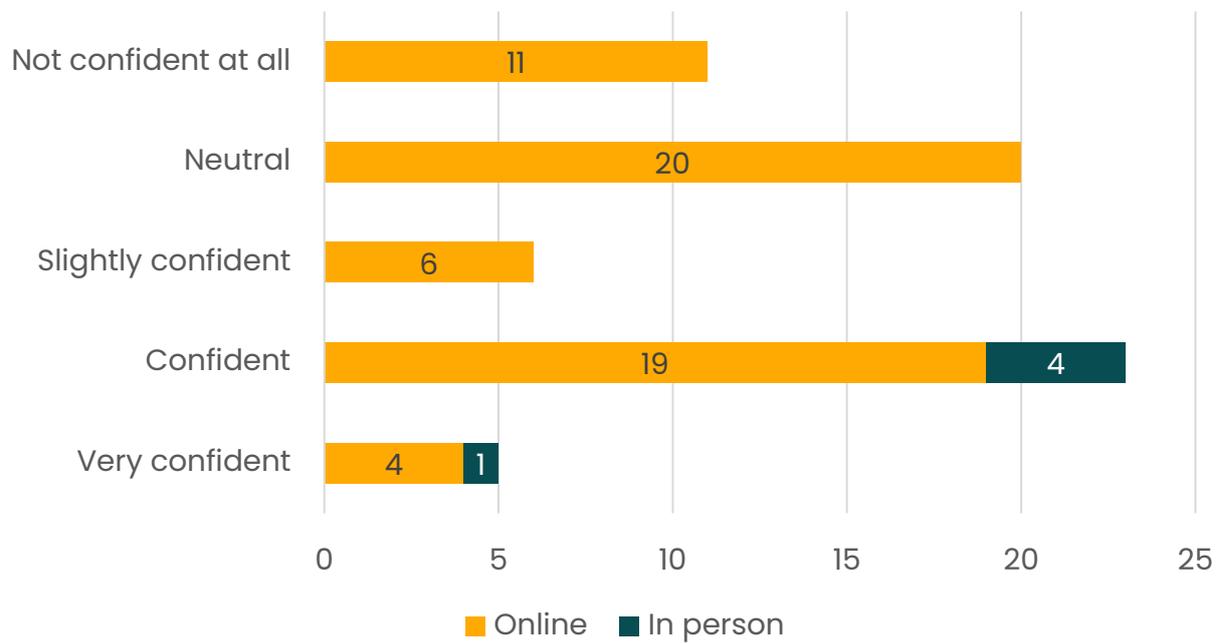
Building orientation

The orientation of buildings and windows was noted by participants as something that should be considered. Some attendees raised the balance between natural surveillance and privacy. From a safety perspective, blank gable ends were noted by some participants as reducing visibility, surveillance, and access. Overlooking by neighbours was mentioned as something that should be avoided.

Innovation and local character

Some materials and designs were acknowledged as causing concern amongst attendees. However, it was suggested by some that modern schemes could be appropriate in the right context.

Specific design styles were noted as being related to the age of settlements, with Grange, Cartmel, and Allithwaite mentioned as examples. The shape and setting of places were commented on by participants as shaping the character of settlements, with Grange noted as being shaped by the sea and higher ground, whilst other places were shaped by railways. The use of open spaces was suggested by some attendees.

How confident are you that this approach will deliver better development in Westmorland and Furness?

Chart data:

Response	Online	In person
Not confident at all	11	
Neutral	20	
Slightly confident	6	
Confident	19	4
Very confident	4	1

Legend: Online, In person

Graph 12 shows online and in-person responses who answered the question 'How confident are you that this approach will deliver better development in Westmorland and Furness?'

Image 5 shows people participating in the workshop in Appleby.

Additional comments

Implementation and process

Questions were raised about how the design code would be applied in practice, with participants asking whether it would operate as a tick-box exercise. Some attendees questioned how the code would fit into the pre-application process and suggested coordination with highway authorities and the Lake District.

The timing of the design code was questioned by some, who asked why it was being progressed before the new local plan. Some participants felt that certain values were already covered by the national design code, local plan policies, or building regulations.

Participants commented that these design considerations were important and that developers should follow them. Some attendees emphasised that it was important to use plans properly and ensure they were implemented. Parish Councils were noted by some attendees as wanting their views taken seriously.

Questions were raised about whether planning statements for applications should outline how the new design codes were being dealt with. Concerns were expressed about whether checklists would be used appropriately, with one participant suggesting the checklist needed significant thought.

For larger development sites, the use of development briefs was noted as a useful approach.

Concerns were raised about terminology being too complex in places.

Reuse of empty properties

Several participants felt it was important for Westmorland and Furness Council to stop people from leaving buildings to ruin, with reuse and regeneration emphasised. Some attendees suggested there should be more focus on reusing empty buildings before allowing new development.

Town and Village Centres

Some participants commented on the need for more focus on town centres, with concerns raised about supermarkets and out-of-town retail having cheaper rates that drew activity away from town centres.

More public facilities in town and village centres were suggested by some attendees.

Design Details

The inclusion of chimneys on new-build housing was suggested by one participant.

Signage was mentioned by one attendee as needing to be appropriate.

Questions were raised about how the shopfront section dealt with colours.

Questions were raised by participants about how the design code would deal with very small settlements, with this concern mentioned more than once.

Flooding and drainage

Permeable surfaces for parking was mentioned by participants, who questioned where this fitted within the role of the design code. Some attendees felt it was essential that developers put in the necessary arrangements to address flood risk, with flood-resistant and resilient measures needed.

Young people's aspirations

Comments from young people highlighted aspirations for quality-built homes, with semi-detached or detached properties preferred. Good-sized rooms, big kitchens with islands, driveways, good gardens, Victorian-style beams, and utility rooms were mentioned as desirable features.

Open-plan layouts and wooden beams were noted. Some young people expressed a preference for regenerated buildings rather than new builds, located on roads without potholes.

Modern design, convenience, and usability were emphasised as priorities. However, the importance of preserving history, identity, culture, and the roots of places was also raised. Futureproofing and reducing carbon impact were mentioned as important standards for the future.

One participant commented that whilst the area was good, it needed more people and vibrancy for young people, noting that bus routes were inaccessible.

Housing for Young People

The importance of affordable housing for younger people and everyone was emphasised by several participants. Local connections and affordability were noted as important for keeping young people in the area. One attendee questioned how additional design requirements could be prevented from reducing the provision of affordable housing. New-build social housing was mentioned by some participants. The availability of smaller housing to rent for those looking to downsize was raised as a concern.

Code-Specific Comments

Most of the feedback and comments shared during the consultation were thematic and have been collated and presented above. Table 3 below provides those code specific comments received from the workshops – these comments are therefore a mix of individual and small group contributions. Workshop participants also focused on a small number of Design Code sections preferring to submit more detailed comments through the long survey or by email if necessary. Therefore, these comments represent useful feedback on a selection of Design Code sections. We also note that some codes are repeated or are similar across different development types, comments may therefore apply more widely than show in this table. A more detailed consideration of specific comments is provided in the Consultation Statement.

Table 5 lists the code specific comments received from the short survey and workshops

Design Code section	Code / page reference	Comments
Greenfield Homes – Large (GHL)	Code GHL 1.1	Some attendees suggested there should be distinct borders and boundaries to local characteristics areas.
Greenfield Homes – Large (GHL)	Code GHL 1.2	One participant questioned how houses enhanced the existing vista in relation to the analysis of the existing townscape and landscape.
Greenfield Homes – Large (GHL)	Code GHL 2.3	One attendee questioned whether Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) ponds were part of biodiversity net gain, noting that flood basins were implied.

		A question was raised about whether rainwater harvesting was a requirement.
Greenfield Homes – Large (GHL)	Code GHL 2.4	The design code's reference to tree-lined streets was noted. Participants suggested that street trees should be encouraged as part of biodiversity net gain, though service charges on affordable homes were mentioned as a consideration.
Greenfield Homes – Small (GHS)	Code GHS 2.5	One participant questioned whether this code should acknowledge indoor light levels rather than only solar gain.
Greenfield Homes – Small (GHS)	Code GHS 2.6	Solar panel capacity on the grid was raised as a concern.
Greenfield Homes – Large (GHL)	Code GHL 3.5	Questions were asked about whether biodiversity net gain should be on-site.
Greenfield Homes – Large (GHL)	Code GHL 4.1	Could stronger explanation or cross reference be made to clarify the meaning of street hierarchy.
Greenfield Homes – Large (GHL)	Code GHL 4.2a	Does this conflict with the hierarchy in the previous code and explanatory text?
Greenfield Homes – Large (GHL)	Code GHL 4.2b	Some participants commented on the impact of surrounding topography restricting walking and cycling use and limited public transport. The need to think about wider connectivity beyond the development site was raised.
Greenfield Homes – Large (GHL)	Code GHL 4.3	Some participants felt the approach was aspirational but might not be practical.
Greenfield Homes – Large (GHL)	Code GHL 5.1	Participants questioned what would happen if a site were next to a poor example in terms of urban grain and density. How would new development help to fix existing issues rather than replicate them?
Greenfield Homes – Large (GHL)	Code GHL 5.3	Concerns were raised about height requiring more justification and assessment, noting the relationship between development density and building height.

Greenfield Homes – Large (GHL)	Code GHL 5.4	How will the code ensure it did not result in repeating mistakes by requiring developers to follow local context? Questions were raised about what the unit of density was. The importance of considering density for the right reasons was emphasised.
Brownfield Homes – Large	p. 104	The Lindal-in-Furness example was noted by some as still not in keeping in terms of form, though material choices were noted as good.
Shopfronts	Code SF 3.1	Figures should include labels or arrows to clarify the points being made about shop fronts, e.g. p.26 explanatory text relating to SF 3.1.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The consultation on the draft Design Code for Westmorland and Furness generated thoughtful and detailed feedback from participants across the area. Responses reflected a strong interest in ensuring that future development respects local character whilst meeting the needs of communities. Participants emphasised the importance of using local materials and responding to local distinctiveness, local geology and building stone in different areas. However, there was also recognition that modern, well-designed development had a place alongside traditional styles, provided it respected the feel and character of its surroundings.

Concerns about viability were raised often, with participants noting that strong requirements could affect the delivery of affordable housing and deter smaller developers. The balance between aspirational design standards and practical deliverability was highlighted as crucial, with calls for the draft design Code to remain realistic and flexible rather than overly prescriptive. Whilst participants supported well-connected walking and cycling routes, public transport provision, and measures to enable lower car use, there were concerns about the practicality and tensions between different requirements, such as solar orientation versus preventing window glint, or dark skies versus street lighting for safety. There are also constraints surrounding how the Design Code can support these themes.

The feedback collected during this consultation phase offers valuable insight into local priorities and concerns. These findings have informed the finalisation of the Draft Design Code to ensure it effectively balances the aspiration for high-quality, locally distinctive development with the practical realities of delivery, viability, and the needs of both new and existing residents.

Image 6 shows participants at the Design Code Reference Group workshop in Kendal.

Image 7 shows people participating in the community groups workshop in Penrith.

LISTENING TO LESS HEARD VOICES AND DELIVERING MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT