

The future of the Albany

Phase 1 consultation feedback report
Summer 2026

Thank you for taking part

Thank you to everyone who took part in our consultation and shared their views on the future of the Albany.

The Albany has been part of Deptford's cultural and community life for more than 130 years. We are exploring how our building can evolve so that we can continue welcoming audiences, artists, young people and community groups for generations to come.

Between June and September 2026, we invited local residents, artists, audiences, community groups and other stakeholders to share their experiences of the Albany today and their hopes for its future. Through a public survey, drop-in events, workshops and conversations with local people, we heard what matters most, what could work better and what people would like to see protected.

Your feedback covered a wide range of topics, from the theatre, rehearsal spaces and café to the garden, accessibility and the Albany's role as an affordable, welcoming place to meet, create and spend time together. We also heard a range of views and questions about the proposals for student homes.

This report brings together what we heard during the first phase of engagement. The feedback will help inform the next stage of work as we continue to develop the proposals and explore how the Albany can best serve its communities in the future.







The consultation in numbers

197

Survey responses across digital platforms and in-person engagement

52

Attendees across 2 drop-in events at the Albany and Deptford Lounge

3K+

Flyers distributed in the local area

5

Community workshops held

220

Community members engaged through local conversations

8K+

Community members reached through storytelling newsletter

200

Handouts given to members of the public to promote the survey

950

Combined visits to our ‘Transforming the Albany’ webpage and our survey

90K+

Combined social media reach across Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook

Overview of feedback

197 survey responses were received during the consultation. **81% of respondents said they live locally**, demonstrating a strongly local response base, while **71% said they found the current Albany building welcoming upon arrival .**

The Albany's future

48% of respondents said a main theatre space was a priority

47% of respondents said a café or social space was a priority

40% of respondents said the garden/outdoor space was a priority

Café proposals

74% of respondents supported the café being repositioned to Douglas Way

7% of respondents did not support the café being repositioned to Douglas Way

71% of respondents prioritised affordable food and drink and 61% want the café to be a warm and welcoming environment.

Garden priorities

53% of respondents identified the need for increasing biodiversity and providing people with a connection to nature

45% of respondents want to continue food production with a more flexible layout

38% of respondents supported bringing indoor activities outside during the summer

Student homes

35% of respondents supported the inclusion of new student homes on part of the site

33% of respondents said they felt neutrally or did not know enough

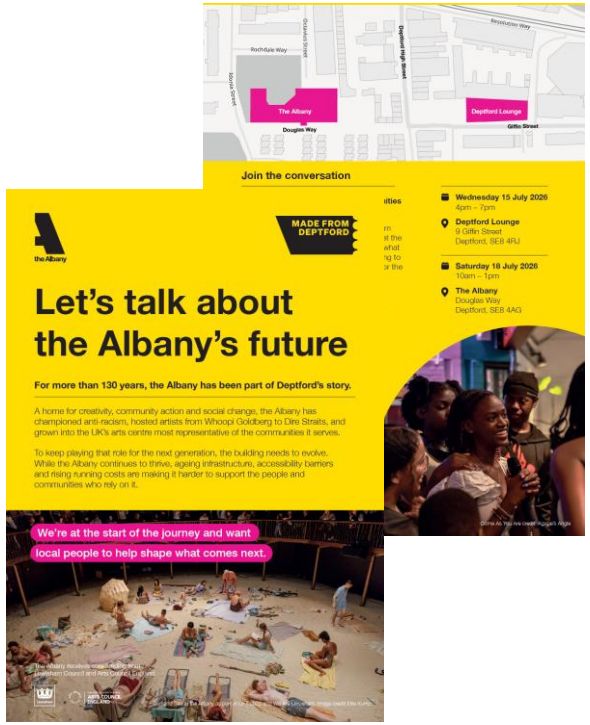
32% of respondents did not support the inclusion of new student homes on part of the site



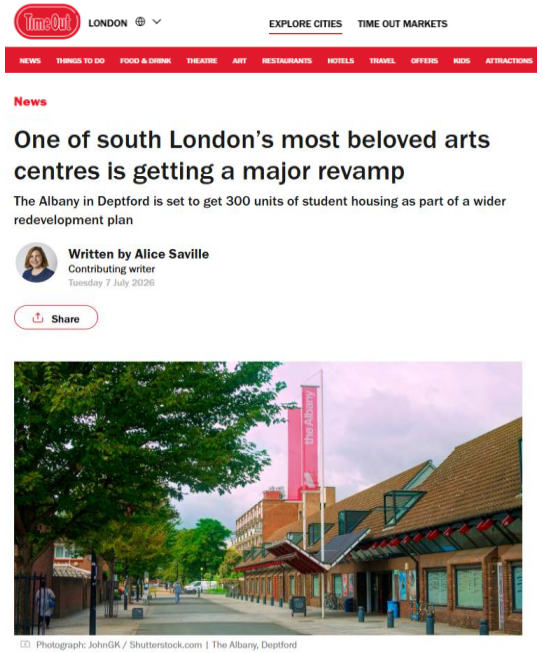
01

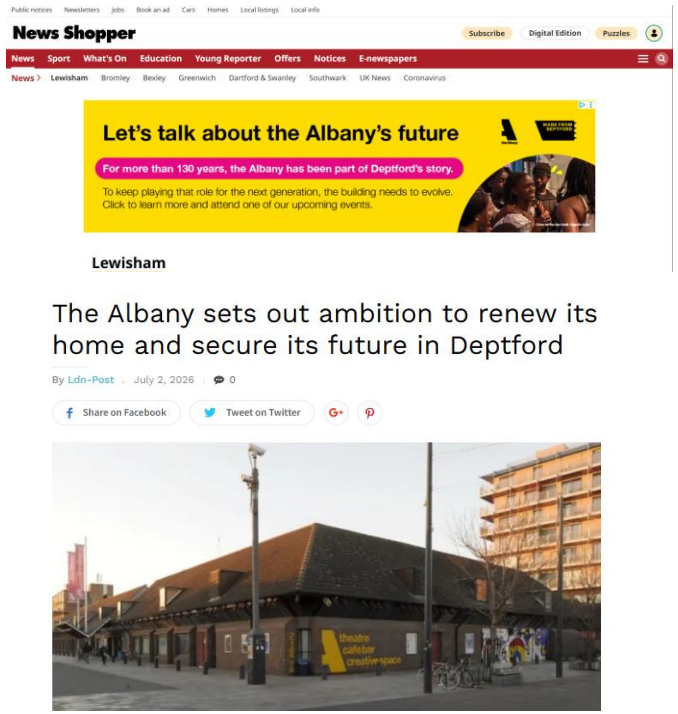
Promoting the consultation

Print and press









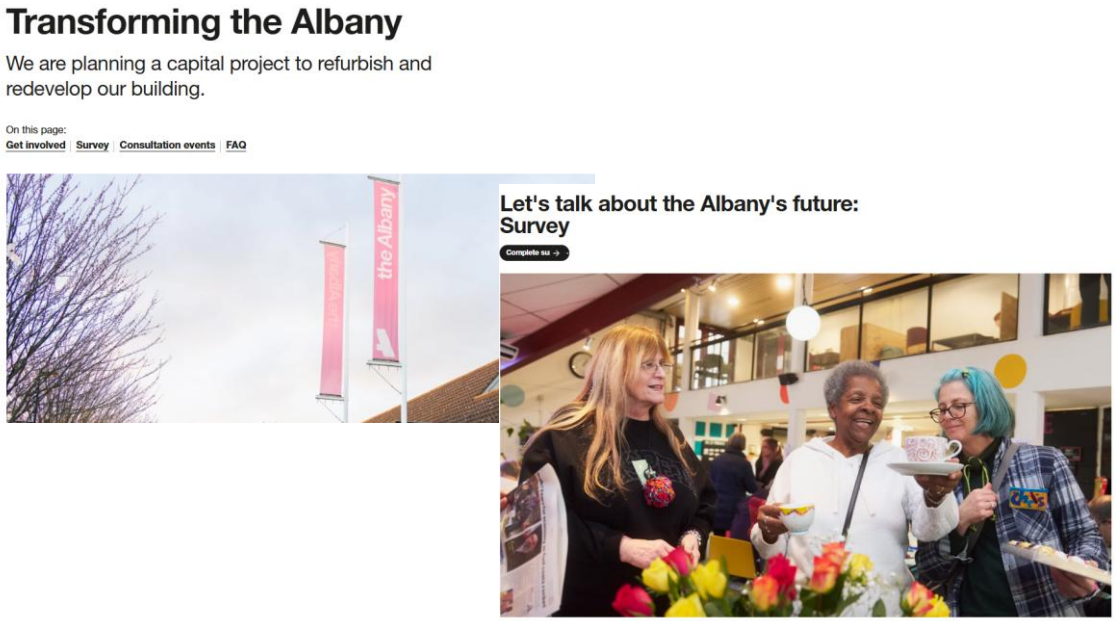
Print

- **3,140** flyers distributed to residential and commercial addresses around the Albany
- **400** flyers were available to collect at the Albany foyer and cafe and at Deptford Lounge
- **Two** posters displayed outside and inside the Albany

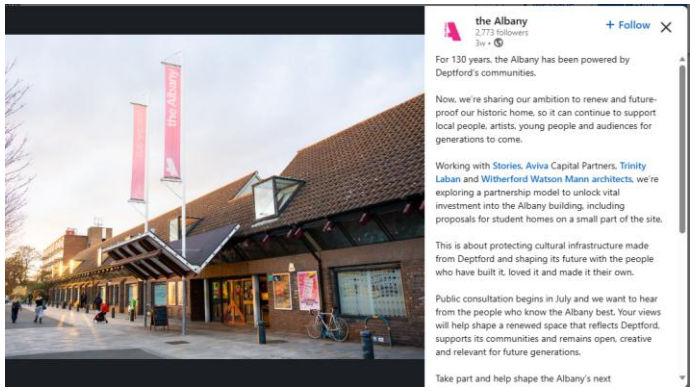
Press

- **Two** digital ads in the News Shopper, **13,166** impressions and **31** clicks over a two-week period
- **One** press release sent to **27** outlets and covered by **6** including Time Out London, Architects' Journal, London Post and The Stage.

Digital and social







Digital

- **8k+ people** notified of upcoming consultation through the Albany storytelling newsletter
- **950** views on the website page dedicated to the future of the Albany
    - Details of the drop-in events, and digital copies of the consultation boards and survey were available on the page from 15 July

Social media

- **90,887** people reached through social media across **6** posts to promote the consultation, events, and the survey
- **27,151** reached through a **6** week paid social media campaign



02

Events and outreach

Public events

We held a range of events and outreach activity so people could engage in a way that best suited them. This included public drop-ins, a two-week static exhibition and meetings with local groups, facilitated by the Albany's Community Producer.

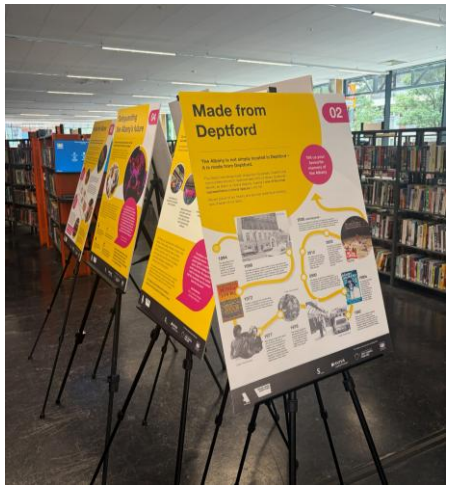


Photo from the 15 July event at Deptford Lounge

Wednesday 15 July 2026 – Drop in at Deptford Lounge

- **3** attendees to the stakeholder preview session held from 10am to 1pm. This was an opportunity for political and vested interest groups to view the consultation material ahead of public launch.
- **30** attendees at the first public exhibition event which took place from 4pm to 7pm.
- **7** feedback forms were completed during the event.
- Attendees included staff members and regular users of the Albany.



Photo from the 18 July event at the Albany

Saturday 18 July 2026 – Event at the Albany

- **19** attendees at the second public exhibition which took place in the Red Room of the Albany from 10am to 1pm.
- **2** feedback forms were completed during the event.
- Attendees included members of staff, members of groups which use the Albany, local residents living close to the Albany and regular users of the Albany.



July 2026 – Static exhibition in Deptford Lounge

- **11** boards were mounted on an exhibition display in Deptford Lounge from 13 July to 31 July 2026.
- **1** board included a space for the public to leave comments on their favourite memory of the Albany and as well as why they love coming to the Albany.



03

Workshops

Focused workshops

We held **5 co-production workshops** with young people and community members to explore the transformation of the Albany in more detail. The sessions were designed to give young people and community members a direct role in shaping the future Albany design brief.



Workshop 1: Understanding the Albany today

This session was designed to understand how young people and community members experience the existing Albany building, including what works well, what creates barriers and what the future building needs to enable. The aim was to ground the design brief in lived experience of the building today.



Workshop 2: Learning from other cultural venues

This session was designed to help participants reflect on what the Albany could learn from another redeveloped cultural venue. The aim was to explore how arrival, movement, accessibility, flexibility, creative use and local identity could inform the future Albany, while identifying what should be adapted or avoided.



Workshop 3: Testing the emerging vision

This session was designed to bring the youth and community groups together to test the emerging findings from the first two workshops. The aim was to identify areas of agreement, difference and further discussion, and to turn the strongest messages into shared design priorities for the future Albany.

Workshop feedback



A more open and welcoming Albany

Participants wanted the Albany to be easier to find, recognise and enter. Clearer signage, a more welcoming entrance and brighter, more inviting spaces could help more people feel comfortable coming in.

They also wanted the café and activity inside the building to be more visible from Douglas Way, helping the Albany feel connected to the life of Deptford.



Spaces for creativity and community

Participants highlighted the importance of flexible spaces that can support performances, rehearsals, workshops and community activities, alongside places to meet, relax and spend time together.

Comfort mattered too, including natural light, good acoustics and spaces that work for different needs. Participants also wanted stronger connections between the café and garden, with room for both lively social activity and quieter moments.



Keeping the Albany's character at its heart

Looking at Brixton House prompted discussion about accessibility, flexible spaces and how cultural venues can reflect the communities around them.

Participants wanted the future Albany to build on its own character and deep roots in Deptford. Local artists, stories and community life should be part of what makes the building feel special, with welcoming, inclusive spaces that feel lived-in rather than formal or corporate.

Design principles

Based on feedback in the workshops we have created the following Design Principles to guide the detailed design of the Albany. You can find out more in our accompanying Community Design Brief.

Open, visible and easy to understand

- Make the Albany's purpose, entrance and activity immediately visible from the surrounding streets.
- Create clear, intuitive routes and signage so everyone knows where to go and feels confident entering.
- Use lighting, transparent materials and active frontages to communicate that the Albany is open and welcoming.

A welcoming community living room

- Design the foyer and café as warm, comfortable places where people can meet, sit and spend time without needing to buy something or attend an event.
- Balance the café's commercial needs with the Albany's role as an affordable and trusted third space.
- Use natural, robust materials and avoid finishes that feel clinical, artificial or out of character with Deptford.

Flexible spaces for creativity and community life

- Create adaptable spaces that can support performance, rehearsal, learning, social activity and informal use—sometimes simultaneously.
- Make furniture, layouts, lighting and technical infrastructure easy to reconfigure for different users and activities.
- Provide rehearsal spaces with usable dimensions, clear circulation, natural light, effective temperature control and strong acoustic separation.

A garden at the heart of the Albany

- Connect the garden more clearly to the café, foyer and wider building so it feels like an integral part of the Albany.
- Make the garden welcoming and usable throughout the year, with adaptable seating, shelter and opportunities for growing and learning.
- Balance greater visibility and public access with the need to maintain a safe, secure space for children and young people.

Inclusive, comfortable and accessible to all

- Design for people of different ages, cultures, abilities and sensory needs from the outset.
- Provide step-free, dignified and easily understood access throughout, supported by clear signage and straightforward routes.
- Balance lively communal activity with quieter, calmer spaces, managing noise, visual clutter, lighting and overstimulation.

Rooted in the Albany, Deptford and its communities

- Celebrate the Albany's history, activism, programmes and people throughout the building.
- Give different areas a clear identity while creating a coherent sense of place across the whole venue.
- Use local character, art and community knowledge to create spaces that feel distinctive, lived-in and unmistakably "Albany"—not generic



04

Detailed feedback

Verbal feedback

During our consultation over the summer, we spoke with hundreds of local people through public drop-in events, targeted engagement sessions, pop-ups, and stakeholder meetings. These discussions provided valuable insight into local priorities, aspirations and concerns, helping to inform the emerging proposals. Below is a summary of the feedback we heard most frequently throughout the consultation period:

Theme	What we heard
Support for the café on Douglas Way	There was broad support for introducing a café on Douglas Way, with many participants seeing it as an opportunity to create a welcoming community space, increase activity throughout the day and provide a new local amenity.
Safeguarding the Albany as a cultural institution	There was strong support for protecting the Albany's long-term future as a valued cultural and community asset. Participants emphasised the importance of ensuring any development strengthens the Albany's ability to deliver arts, cultural and community programmes for future generations.
Students becoming part of the community	Some residents expressed concerns that students can be transient and questioned how they would integrate with the existing community. There was interest in ensuring any student accommodation contributes positively to local life and supports existing businesses and community activities.
The Albany remaining operational during construction	Community members frequently asked whether the Albany would continue operating throughout the construction period. There was a clear desire to minimise disruption to performances, community activities and services, with reassurance sought around what would construction timelines and operations.

Survey feedback

From 15 July to 19 September, a survey was available on the Albany's website asking a variety of questions about how people use the Albany now, priorities for the garden, and sentiment towards the café and student homes. Paper copies were also available at our drop-in events and at community meetings.

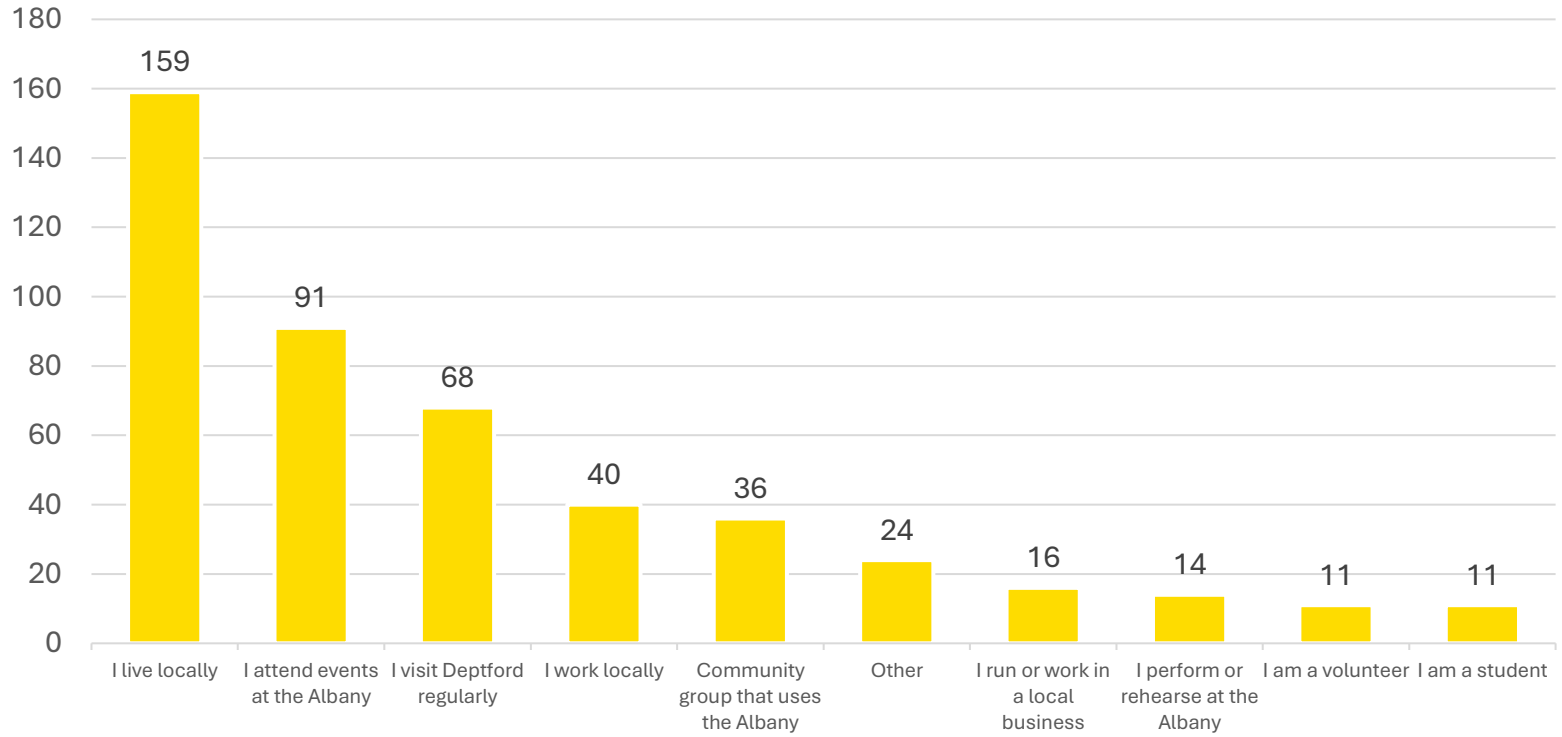
What is your connection to the Albany?

Respondents were asked what their connection to the Albany and the local area was.

197 people responded to this question and could select more than one option.

The survey reached a strongly local audience. More than four in five respondents (81%) live locally, while almost half (46%) attend events at the Albany. Around a third (35%) regularly visit Deptford.

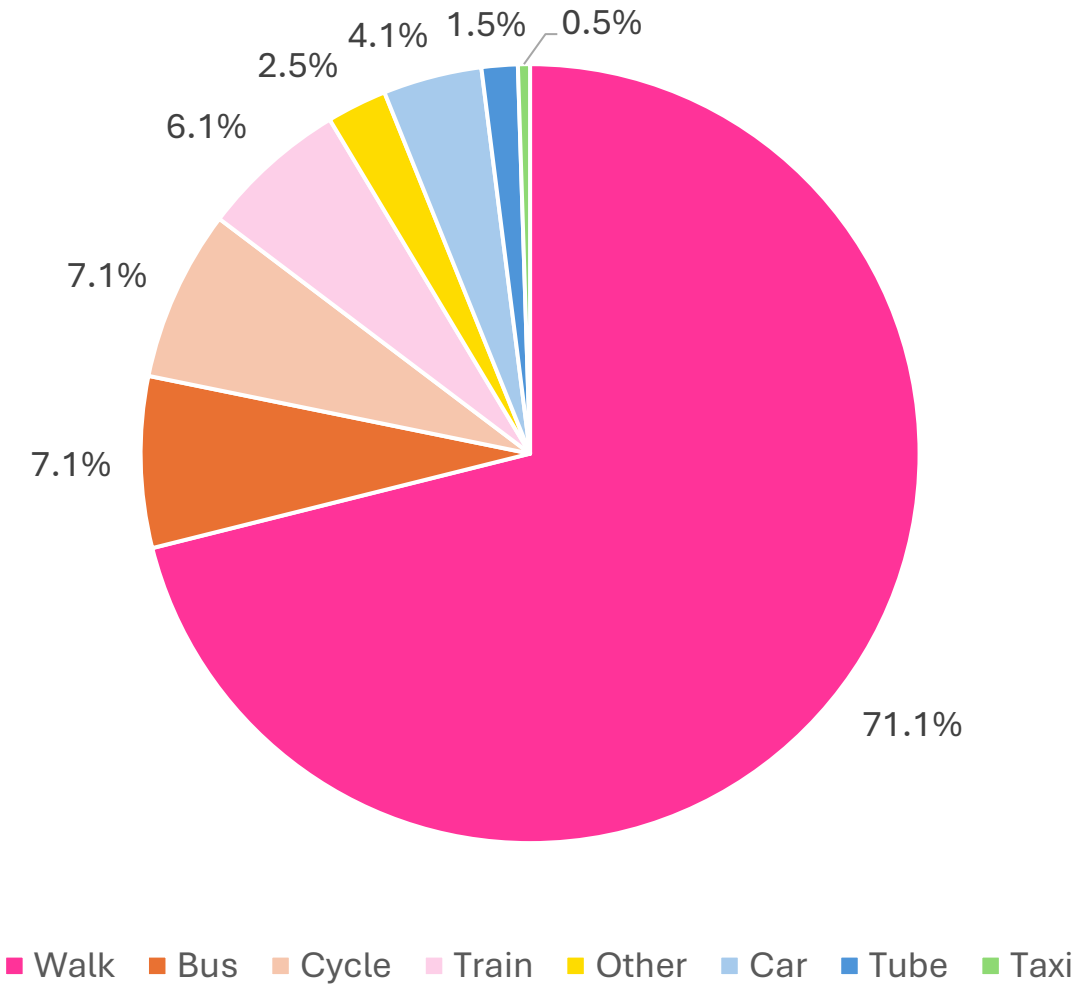
Responses also reflect the Albany's wider role in the community, with local workers, community-group members, performers, businesses, volunteers and students all represented.



How do you travel to the Albany?

Respondents were asked how they usually travel to the Albany. This question was answered by 197 respondents and allowed one selection.

The Albany is predominantly accessed on foot, with 71% of respondents walking to the venue. This points to a strongly local audience and highlights the importance of safe, welcoming and accessible pedestrian connections to the building.

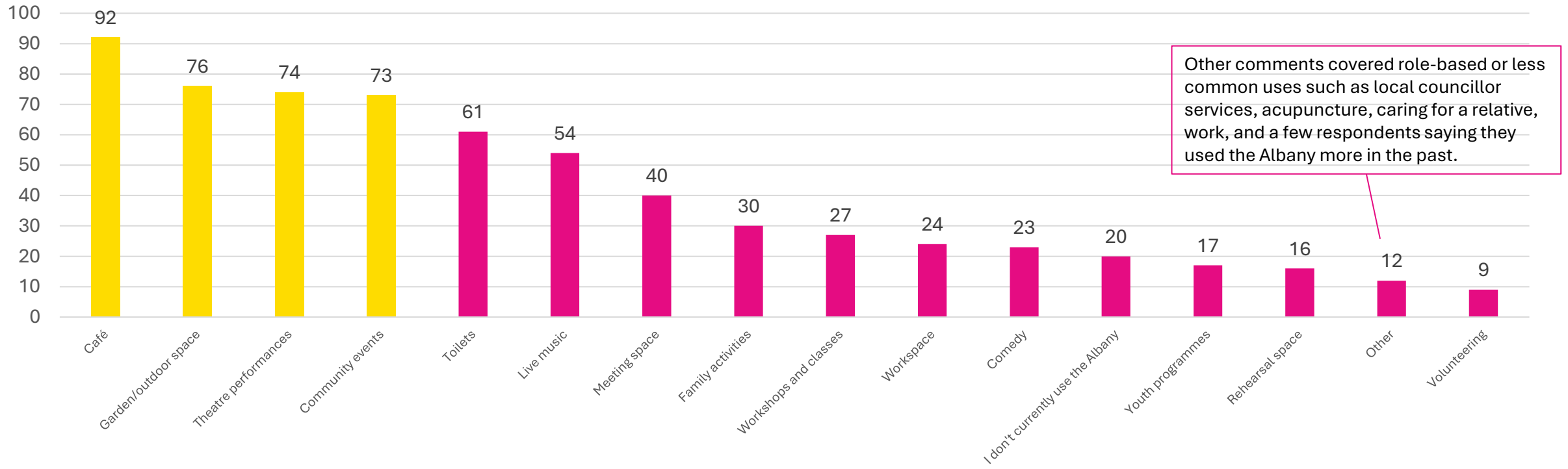


What do you currently use the Albany for?

197 respondents answered this question and could select more than one option.

The café is the most common use of the Albany, selected by almost half of respondents (46.7%), followed by the garden (38.6%), theatre performances (37.6%) and community events (37.1%).

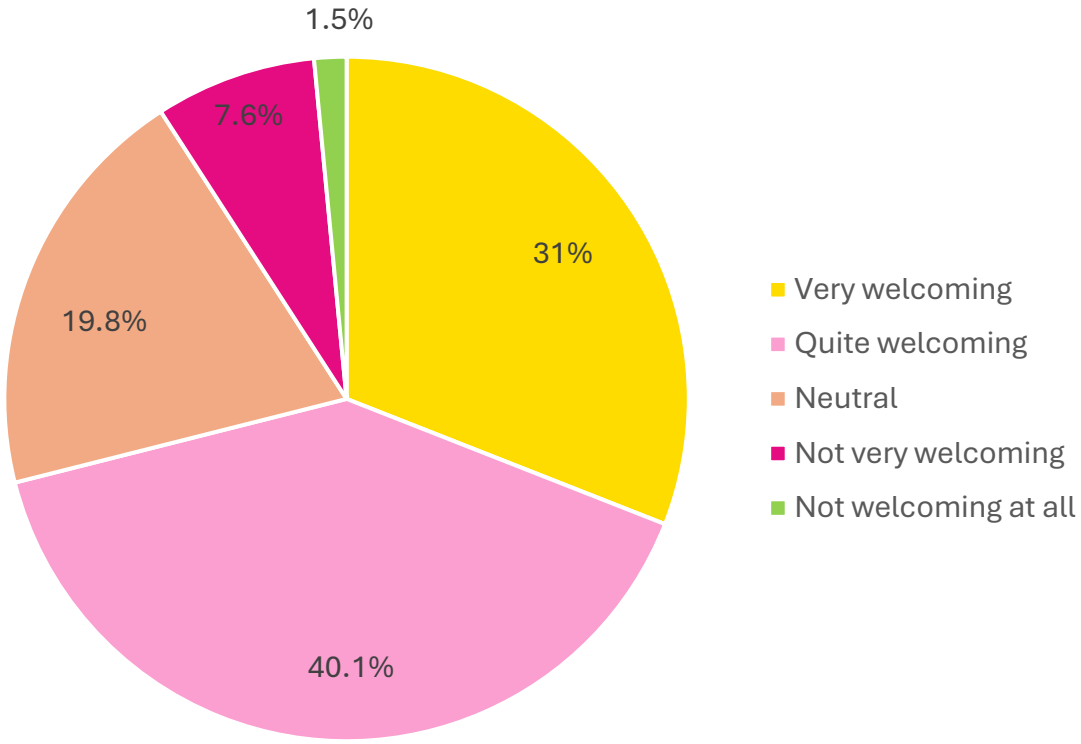
Overall, the findings highlight the Albany's dual role as an everyday community space and a cultural venue, somewhere people come to meet, work and spend time, as well as to take part in performances, events and other programmed activity..



How welcoming is the arrival experience?

This question invited participants to select on a scale of ‘very welcoming’ to ‘not welcoming at all’ on how welcoming the current Albany building currently feels upon arrival. This was answered **197 times**, and **119 people** provided comments in the open text box provided.

Overall, feedback on what makes the Albany feel welcoming was predominantly positive, with respondents most frequently highlighting **the people and atmosphere of the venue.** While respondents clearly recognise the Albany as a **welcoming and inclusive place**, the findings indicate that there are opportunities to strengthen this perception further by **improving the building's appearance**, making the **venue easier to navigate** and ensuring a **consistently positive arrival experience**.



The top 3 most frequently themes cited in the open text box provided were:

58 The Albany’s staff, volunteers and community feel welcoming

28 The condition of the building makes it feel dated or dark

20 The building and public spaces create a welcoming and relaxed environment

Comments show that it is the people that make the Albany feel welcoming; the condition of the building is the main thing detracting from that experience.

Are there barriers that prevent you from using the Albany?

This question provided an open text box for participants to identify any barriers they faced when accessing the Albany building – this was answered **117 times**.

While the largest single group of respondents, 57 comments (49%), reported no barriers to accessing the Albany, those who did identify challenges raised a number of consistent themes.

Overall, the findings suggest that barriers are **driven less by the building itself** and more by **how people are able to engage with its offer operationally**, highlighting opportunities to broaden programming, review opening times and enhance the visitor experience.

The top 5 most frequently cited barriers related to:



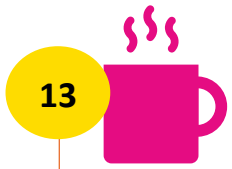
21

The Albany's programme and events not feeling relevant



20

Opening hours, event timings and personal availability



13

Café offer, ambience and overall comfort of the building



10

Family, age-group or caring responsibilities

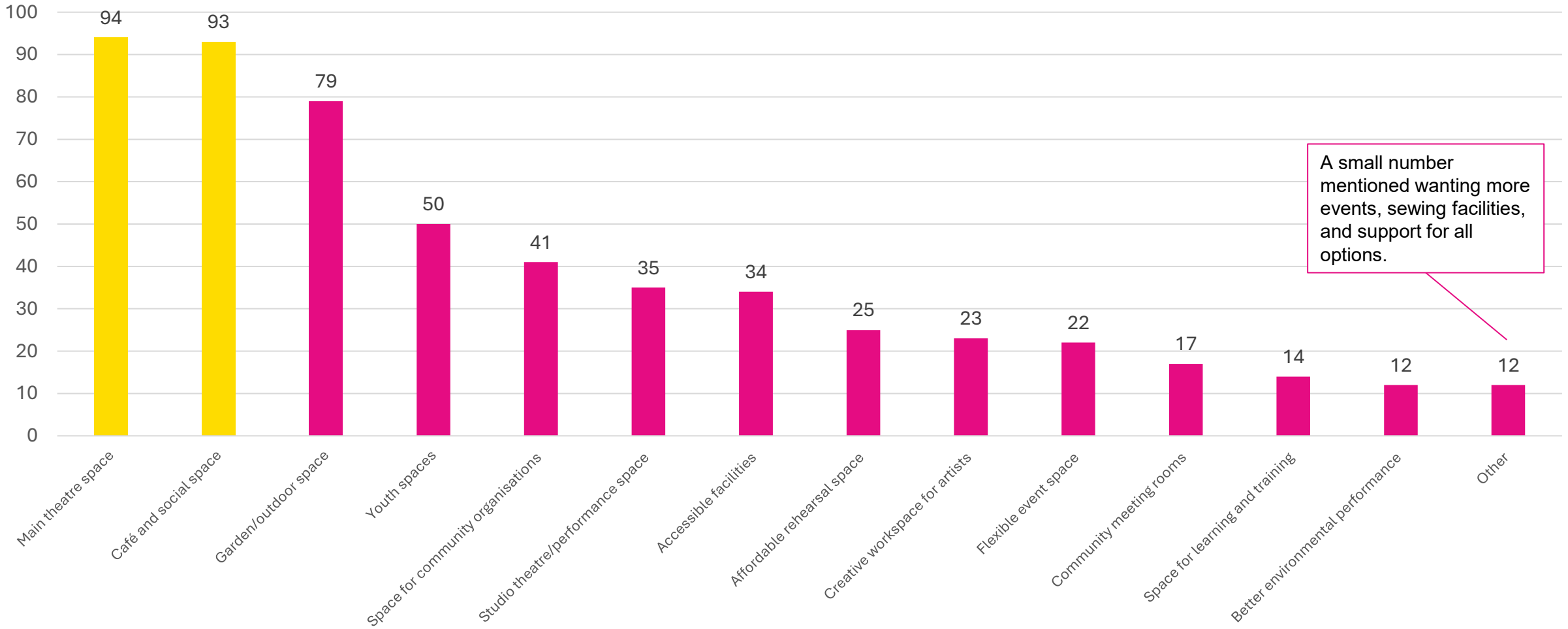


8

Accessibility, mobility or facilities

What facilities and activities are most important to provide?

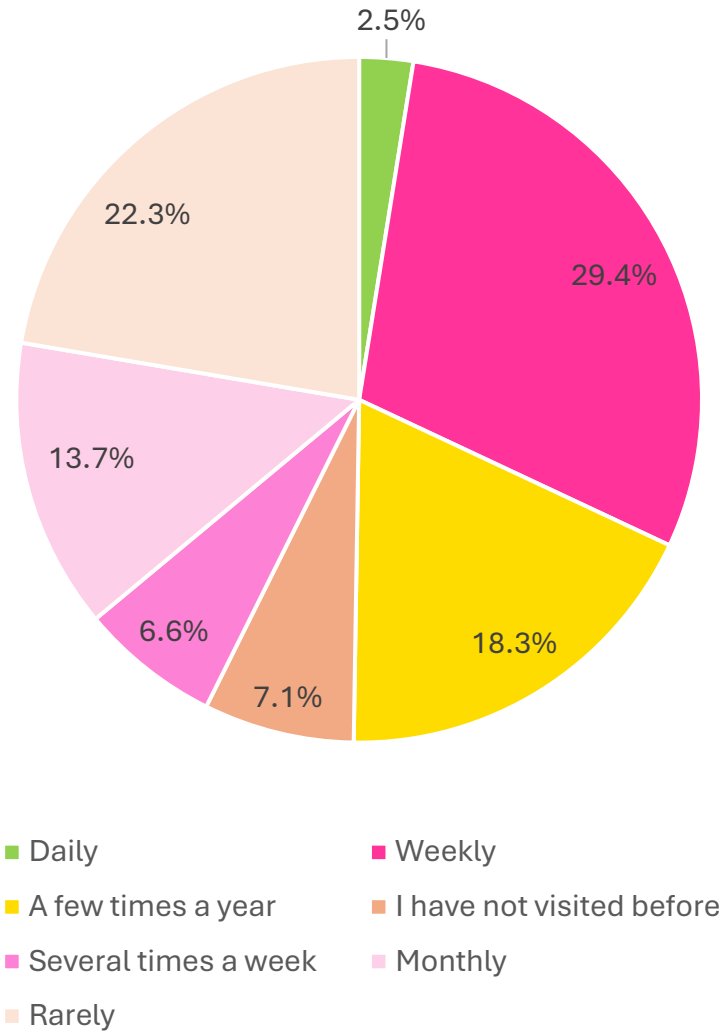
197 respondents answered this question. The chart shows the total number of selections for each option. Although respondents were asked to choose three priorities, some chose more than three. The top three themes were **a main theatre space** (94 responses), **a café and social space** (93 responses), followed by **a garden/outdoor space** (79 responses).



How often do you visit the Albany café?

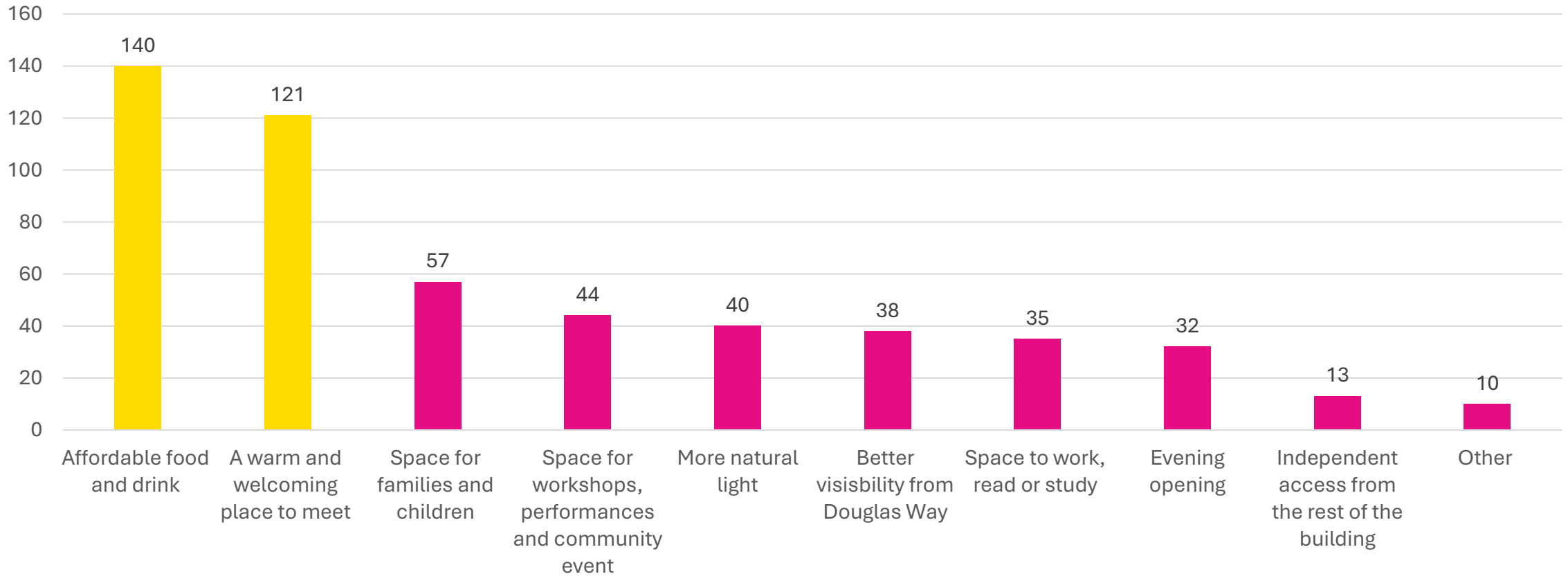
197 respondents answered this question, which was single choice.

Weekly visits were the most common response (29.4%), followed by rarely (22.3%) and a few times a year (17.8%). A further 13.7% visit monthly, while 7.1% have not visited before.



What should be the main priorities for a new café space?

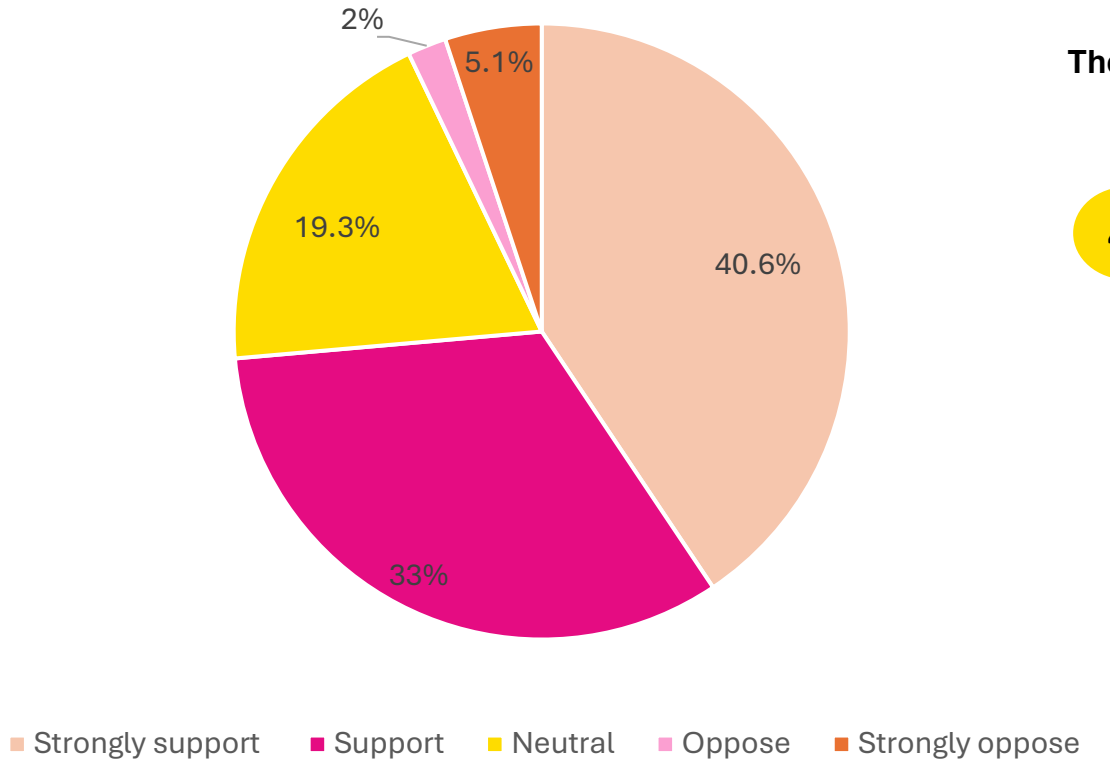
197 respondents answered this question. The chart shows the total number of selections for each option. Respondents were asked to choose three priorities. The top two themes were **affordable food and drink** (140 responses), **and a warm and welcoming place to meet** (121 responses)**.** The least popular options were **independent access from the rest of the building** (13 responses) and 'other' comments (10 responses) which mainly included more variety of food options.



How supportive are you of the café opening onto Douglas Way?

Participants were asked to indicate, on a scale from ‘strongly support’ to ‘strongly oppose’, whether they supported the new Albany café opening onto Douglas Way to make it more visible from the street. The question received 197 responses, with 102 participants also providing open-text comments. Overall, **73.6% supported the proposal -** nearly three quarters of respondents - while just 7.1% opposed.

Overall, comments were **predominantly positive** towards the principle of making the café more visible and better connected to Douglas Way. Many respondents felt this would help attract new visitors, increase awareness of the Albany and generate additional income. However, a minority valued the café's current garden-facing location and expressed concerns that relocating or opening it onto the street could reduce its unique character, tranquillity and sense of safety.



The top 3 most frequently themes cited in the open text box provided were:

47 Improve visibility, openness and footfall

21 Retaining the café's current character, garden setting and sense of safety

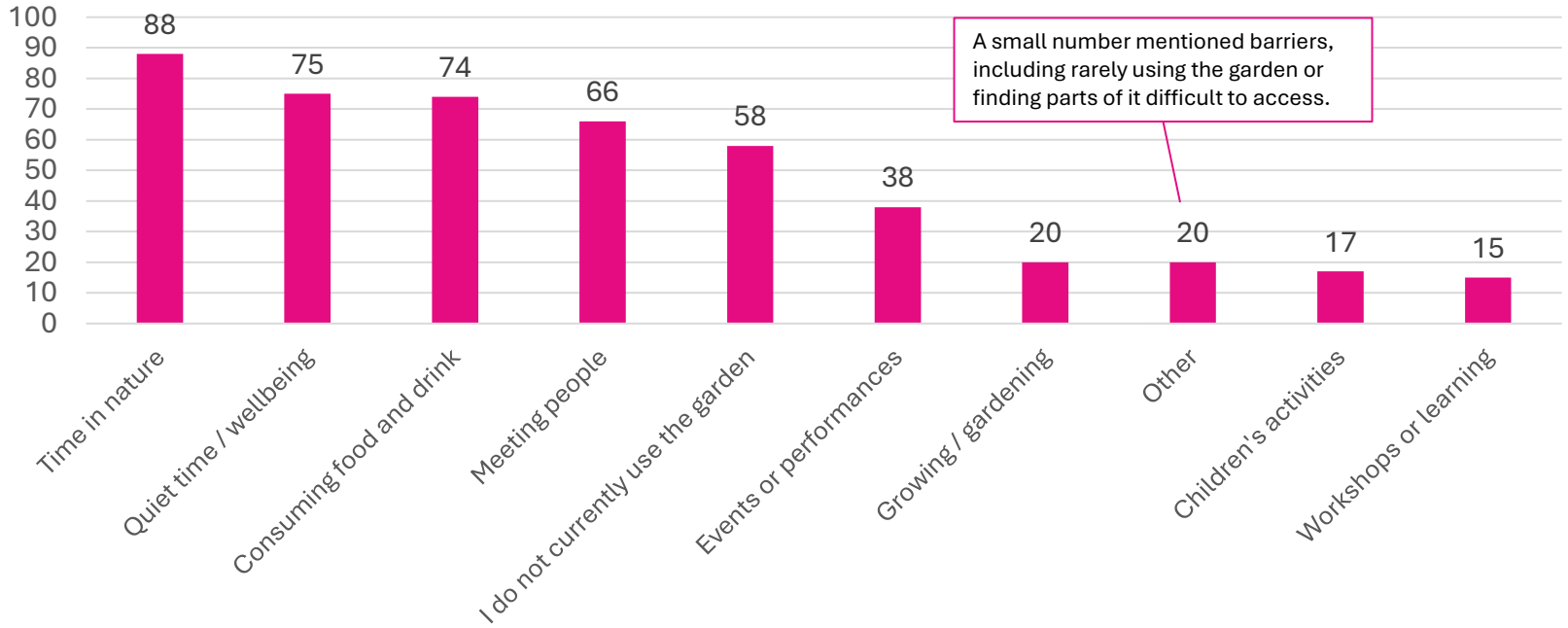
15 Commercial benefits and financial sustainability

How do you currently use the garden?

197 respondents answered this question. It was multiple choice, so respondents could select more than one current use.

Respondents most often described using it for nature, quiet time, wellbeing, food and drink, and meeting others.

At the same time, a notable group of respondents said they do not currently use the garden, which points to an opportunity to make the space more visible, accessible and useful to a wider range of visitors. More structured uses, such as growing, children's activities, workshops and performances, were selected less often, suggesting these may be important but more occasional forms of use.



Future garden priorities

Respondents were able to select up to three answers for this question on their priorities for the future garden.

The top three priorities were:

- **Introducing more biodiversity** to help people connect with nature, selected by 104 respondents (52.8%)
- **Continuing to provide space for food production** with a more flexible layout, selected by 89 respondents (45.2%)
- **Bringing indoor activities outside** during the summer months, selected by 74 respondents (37.6%)

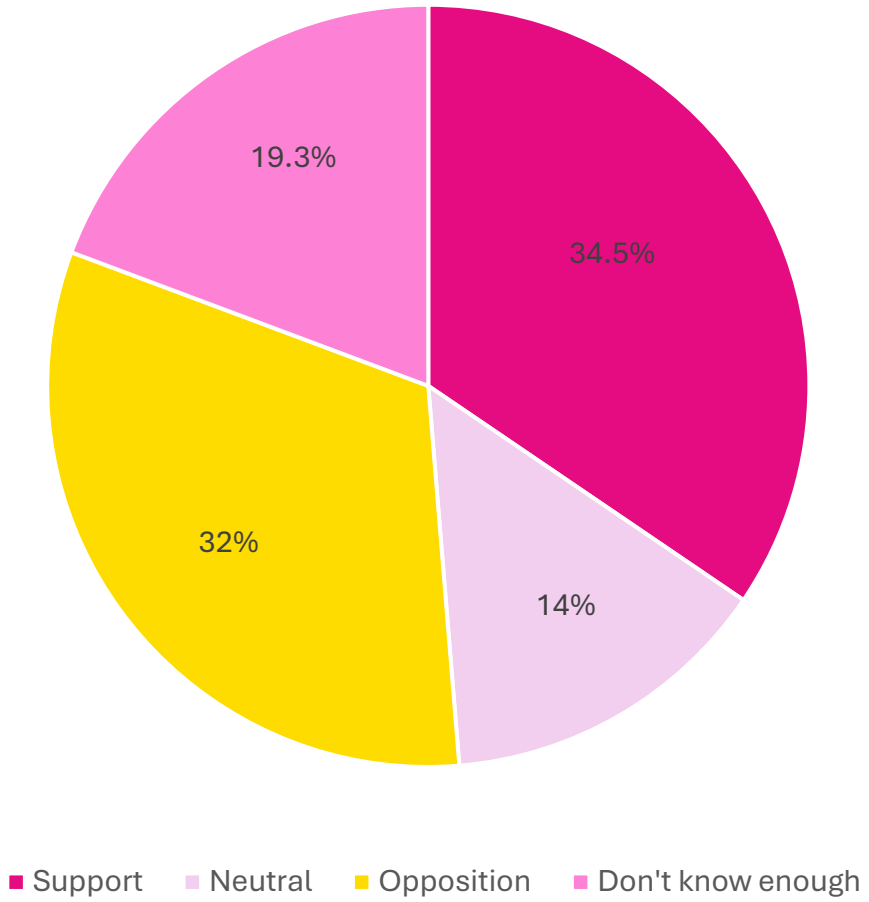
Overall, the priorities point to a garden that remains nature-led and community-focused, while becoming more flexible, active and useful to a wider range of visitors.

Do you support the inclusion of student homes?

Responses to the proposed student homes approach were mixed.

Out of the 197 respondents, 34.5% of respondents supported or strongly supported the idea, while 32% of respondents opposed or strongly opposed it. A further 14% were neutral and 19.3% stated they did not know enough yet to make a decision.

The results suggest that the principle of using student homes to help fund and safeguard the Albany's future has some support, but that views are not settled. The relatively high number of "don't know enough yet" responses points to a need for clearer information about the student homes proposal, including how it would affect the Albany, the garden, the surrounding area and the long-term funding model.



Additional comments

At the end of the survey, respondents were given an **open-text box to provide any final comments, raise additional concerns or share further suggestions for the future of the Albany**. In total, **114 respondents provided a comment**.

Overall, the final comments demonstrated **strong affection for the Albany and recognition of its importance as a cultural and community institution**, alongside significant concern about aspects of the emerging redevelopment proposals. Feedback was particularly focused on protecting the garden and green space, the principle and potential scale of student accommodation, and ensuring that redevelopment does not adversely affect neighbouring residents or dilute the Albany's community role. There was also constructive feedback about improving the Albany's programme, accessibility and facilities, as well as calls for continued engagement as more detailed proposals emerge.

The top 5 most frequently themes cited in the open text box provided were:

39



Student accommodation and alternative housing uses

34



Protecting the garden, trees and green space

31



Protecting the Albany's community and cultural role

18



Height, scale, daylight and impact on neighbours

17



The Albany's programme, facilities and visitor experience



05

Next steps

What happens next?

The project team will reflect on feedback received and use this to inform further development of the proposals to transform the Albany.

- Across **Autumn / Winter 2026/7**, we will continue to engage with our co-production panel through a new programme for Phase 2. Across our next stage of workshops, we will explore:
    - Feedback from Phase 1 and the six design principles guiding the development of the Albany
    - Student homes proposal
    - Future of the garden
    - How we shape the consultation story for phase 2
    - Further design of the Albany building
- As part of our second phase of public engagement in **early 2027**, we will provide more information about the student homes proposal and the garden.

