

2025 Adelaide Hills Council Community Survey

Feedback Report – *Talking about your place*



TSA Riley



Welcome

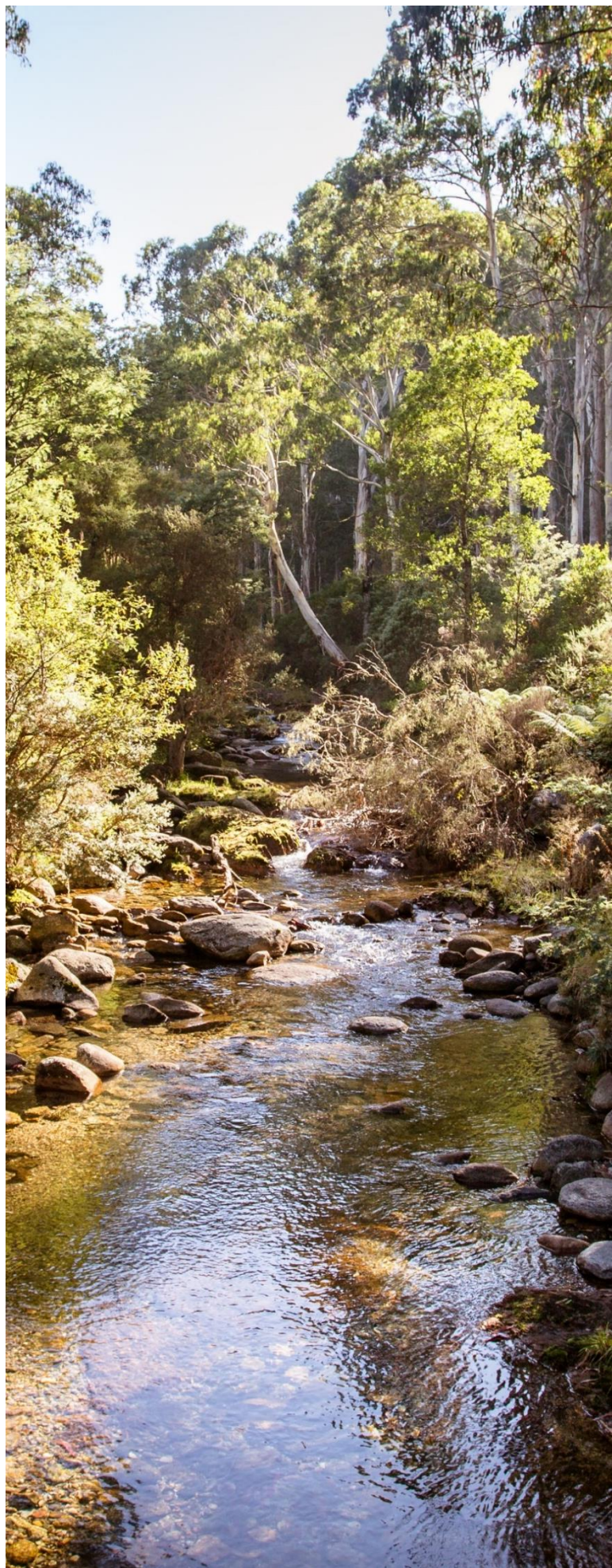
Every two years, Adelaide Hills Council undertakes a Community Survey to check in with its residents, ask how Council is performing and talk about what is most important to residents.

The survey allows Council to understand what it's doing well, what could use improvement, what people love about living in the Hills and what ideas they have for the future.

This report is a comprehensive analysis of all the feedback received as part of the 2025 Community Survey and the Youth Survey.

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1. Introduction

TSA Riley was appointed to analyse all survey feedback submitted as part of the 2025 Community Survey to provide a level of independence to the analysis.

Feedback was accepted from Wednesday 30 April to 5pm Monday 9 June 2025 and a copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

The survey could be submitted in two ways:

- Online via the Engagement Hub
- Hard copy submitted by post or to a customer service centre at Stirling, Woodside or Gumeracha.

A total of 462 feedback submissions were received as part of the Community Survey and a further five responses were received via the Youth Survey specifically designed for young people.

The main community survey has predominantly shaped the structure of this report and the reader can find the following key sections within it:

- About You
- Living in the Adelaide Hills Council Area
- Creating a sustainable Adelaide Hills: What's important to you?
- Adelaide Hills amenity and character
- Your wellbeing and sense of community
- Your satisfaction with Adelaide Hills Council organisation.

The Youth survey is summarised in a separate chapter (see Section 8).

1.1 Analysis methodology

Feedback has been analysed by question and segmented by demographic subcategory type to give a comprehensive overview of how various demographics to different questions.

All 'open ended' (qualitative) responses were thematically analysed (by theme) as well as by ward differences. All 'closed questions' (quantitative data) was analysed by all respondents and then further by ward differences.

A note on reading data, where a count is provided it is reflected as "n = number" and where a percentage is reflected this is show as a %. Quotes are indicated by "inverted commas" and are reflective of the theme or sentiment shared.

In some instances, percentages are shown with decimal point because response numbers were low – by using a decimal point all responses could be accounted for.

1.2 Sample size

While the survey was not designed as a formal statistical sample, the volume of feedback provides a strong indication of community sentiment and reflects the views of the population within a reasonable margin of error. As at the 2021 Census, the Adelaide Hills Council had a population of 40,879. Using a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the required sample size is 381 respondents. A total of 462 feedback submissions were received.

Survey analysis

02

2. About you

At the end of the survey participants were asked to provide optional demographic details to help Adelaide Hills Council understand the diversity of respondents and ensure a representative cross-section of the community was reached. The data below reflects the responses of 462 individuals who completed the 2025 Community Survey. The Youth survey is summarised in Chapter 8.

Note: with responses being optional, where the response count does not total 462 this means that some respondents elected not to answer the question.

2.1 Age category

Question 25 asked *What age group are you in?* The age breakdown reveals a strong skew toward middle-aged and older adults among respondents, with the largest groups being **45 - 54 years (22%)**, **55 - 64 years (21%)** and **64 - 74 years (20%)**. In contrast, younger age groups are significantly underrepresented, with only 1% of responses from those aged 0 - 19 years and 1% from 20 - 24 years, suggesting limited youth engagement in the survey.

Age group	Response count	Percentage
0 - 19 years	n = 2	1%
20 - 24 years	n = 3	1%
25 - 34 years	n = 35	8%
35 - 44 years	n = 85	19%
45 - 54 years	n = 96	22%
55 - 64 years	n = 91	21%
64 - 74 years	n = 87	20%
75 - 84 years	n = 33	7%
85 years and over	n = 3	1%
Total	n = 435	100%

2.1.1 Ward differences

The Valleys Ward has a higher survey representation of older respondents, particularly those aged 55 and above, suggesting a more established or ageing population base. This trend aligns with its semi-rural character and predominance of long-term home ownership. Younger age groups, while present, are less represented overall.

In contrast, the Ranges Ward survey respondents exhibit a broader age spread, with notable representation across both younger (25 - 44 years) and older (55 - 74 years) cohorts. This may be influenced by the ward's proximity to metropolitan Adelaide, greater housing diversity and access to services, potentially attracting a mix of family households, retirees and working-age individuals.

2.2 Housing

Question 26 asked *What is your current housing situation?* Most respondents (**90%**) reported owning their own home, with smaller proportions renting (5%). A small number of responses (2%) were classified as “something else” and included a mix of retirement village residents, community housing and informal living arrangements. This suggests a relatively stable and secure housing base within the surveyed population, which may influence perspectives on local planning, development and service priorities.

Housing situation	Count	Percentage
I own my own home	n = 394	90%
I am renting	n = 23	5%
I live with parents or family	n = 12	3%
I have no fixed address	n = 0	0%
Something else, please tell us	n = 8	2%
Total	n = 437	100%

2.2.1 Ward differences

Housing tenure patterns differ between the Valleys and Ranges wards. In the Valleys Ward, home ownership is more prevalent, particularly among respondents aged 55 and over, aligning with the area’s lower density, established residential character. Renting appears less frequently but is present among younger age groups in townships such as Woodside and Lobethal. In contrast, the Ranges Ward shows a more varied profile, with a relatively higher proportion of renters and some intergenerational living arrangements, particularly in localities closer to Adelaide such as Stirling and Bridgewater.

2.3 Diversity

2.3.1 Disability

Question 27 asked *Do you have a disability?* The majority of respondents (**89%**) reported not having a disability, while 6% identified as living with a disability and 5% chose not to disclose. This relatively small proportion of respondents with disability may not robustly represent the lived experiences and access needs of this community group.

Disability status	Response count	Percentage
Yes	n = 26	6%
No	n = 388	89%
I'd prefer not to say	n = 20	5%
Total	n = 435	100%

2.3.1.1 Ward differences

Disability prevalence varies modestly between the two wards. In the Valleys Ward, 6% of respondents reported having a disability, compared to 3% in the Ranges Ward. This difference may be influenced by the higher proportion of older residents in the Valleys, as disability rates tend to increase with age. The vast majority of respondents in both wards reported not having a disability, with slightly more selecting "I'd prefer not to say" in the Ranges Ward.

2.3.2 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Question 28 asked *Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?* Only 1% of respondents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, while 96% indicated they were not, and 3% chose not to disclose. This low representation may limit the visibility of First Nations perspectives in the survey findings.

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status	Response count	Percentage
Yes	n = 3	1%
No	n = 420	96%
I'd prefer not to say	n = 15	3%
Total	n = 439	100%

2.3.2.1 Ward differences

Among respondents, those identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander were a very small proportion in both wards, with just one individual from each. In Ranges Ward, 97% of respondents stated they were not of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, compared to 94% in Valleys Ward. A slightly higher proportion of Valleys respondents (5%) selected "I'd prefer not to say" versus 3% in Ranges. Overall, the data suggests limited representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in the sample across both wards.

2.3.3 Gender

Question 29 asked *What is your gender?* **Survey responses were predominantly from women**, who made up 65% of participants, compared to 30% from men. A small proportion (4%) preferred not to disclose their gender, suggesting the data is relatively gender representative but skewed toward female perspectives.

Gender	Response count	Percentage
Female	n = 286	65%
Male	n = 132	30%
Non-binary	n = 0	0%
I'd prefer not to say	n = 18	4%
I'd prefer to self-describe	n = 1	0.2%
Total	n = 437	100%

2.3.3.1 Ward differences

In both wards, the majority of respondents identified as female, with 64% in Ranges Ward and 67% in Valleys Ward. Male respondents made up a smaller proportion with 31% in Ranges and 30% in Valleys. A minority in each ward selected "I'd prefer not to say", with slightly more opting for this in Ranges (6%) than Valleys (3%). These figures suggest a higher female participation rate across the survey, with consistent gender distribution between the two wards.

2.3.4 Languages

Question 30 asked *Do you speak a language other than English at home?* The vast majority of respondents (**93%**) reported **speaking only English at home**, with a small proportion (4%) indicating they speak another language. This suggests limited linguistic diversity among survey participants.

Language group	Response count	Percentage
English	n = 423	93%
Other language	n = 20	4%
Prefer not to say	n = 14	3%
Total	n = 457	100%

2.3.4.1 Ward differences

Most respondents in both wards reported that they do not speak a language other than English at home, with 96% in Ranges Ward and 98% in Valleys Ward. A small minority selected "I'd prefer not to say", comprising 4% in Ranges and 2% in Valleys. These results suggest a largely English-speaking population across both wards, with minimal linguistic diversity reflected in the survey sample.



Image courtesy Adelaide Hills Council

3. Living in the Adelaide Hills Council Area

This section summarises the responses relating to where people live, how long they have lived in the area and why they choose to reside in the Adelaide Hills Council (AHC) area.

3.1 Residential township, suburb or locality

Question 1 asked *What is your residential township, suburb or locality?* A response to this question was marked as mandatory. All participants answered this question, and responses were received from across the Council area and beyond. The top 10 locations below represent over half of all responses that included a suburb, township or locality. A detailed suburb breakdown is included in Appendix B.

Township/Suburb/Locality	Response count	Percentage
Stirling	n = 37	8%
Bridgewater	n = 35	8%
Aldgate	n = 33	7%
Woodside	n = 30	7%
Lobethal	n = 28	6%
Crafers	n = 25	5%
Upper Sturt	n = 22	5%
Kersbrook	n = 20	4%
Gumeracha	n = 19	4%
Crafers West	n = 14	3%
Mylor	n = 14	3%
Total (top 10)	n = 277	60%

Across the two Council wards, the breakdown of respondents was as follows:

Ward	Response count	Percentage
Valleys Ward	n = 187	40%
Ranges Ward	n = 249	54%
Outside of Adelaide Hills Council area	n = 26	6%
Total	n = 462	100%

3.2 Respondent type

Question 2 asked *What best describes you? (choose all that apply)*. The majority of respondents (77%) indicated that they **live in the Adelaide Hills Council area**, demonstrating strong local engagement with the survey. Additionally, 14% reported they work in the Adelaide Hills Council area followed by 7% indicating they own or operate a business in the Adelaide Hills Council area, and 1% indicated they own a property but don't live in the Adelaide Hills Council area or are visitors. Two respondents

Note, as multiple selections were allowed for this question the percentages in the table below do not add up to 100%.

Connection type	Response count	Percentage
I live in the Adelaide Hills Council area	n = 445	77%
I work in the Adelaide Hills Council area	n = 78	15%
I own a property but don't live in the Adelaide Hills Council area	n = 7	19%
I own or operate a business in the Adelaide Hills Council area	n = 38	8%
I am a visitor in the Adelaide Hills Council area	n = 7	4%
None of the above	n = 2	0.2%

Across the two Council wards the most noticeable difference was in the Ranges ward where 70% indicated they live in the Adelaide Hills Council area compared to 48% Valleys Ward. More business owners responded from the Valleys Ward (10%) compared to 5% in Ranges Ward.

3.3 Length of living in Council area

Question 3 asked *How long have you lived in the Adelaide Hills Council area?* Most respondents (70%) have **lived in the Adelaide Hills Council area for 10 or more years**, indicating a well-established resident base. In contrast, **only 16% have lived in the area for fewer than five years**, suggesting relatively low recent population turnover among survey participants.

Length of residence	Response count	Percentage
Less than a year	n = 15	4%
1-4 years	n = 55	12%
5-9 years	n = 64	14%
10 or more years	n = 311	70%
Total	n = 446	100%

Across the two Council wards, the breakdown of respondents was as follows:

Length of residence	Ranges Ward	Valleys Ward	Ranges Ward %	Valleys Ward %
1-4 years	27	25	11%	14%
10 or more years	181	124	73%	68%
5-9 years	30	31	12%	17%

Less than a year	9	3	4%	2%
Total	247	183	100%	100%

3.4 Reason for living in the Council area

Question 4 asked *Why do you choose to live in the Adelaide Hills Council area?* The most common reasons respondents gave for choosing to live in the Adelaide Hills Council area were **lifestyle** (23%) and **natural environment attractions** (21%), reflecting the strong appeal of the region’s quality of life and natural beauty. **Bigger block sizes** (19%) and **community** (14%) were also frequently selected, suggesting a preference for space and social connection. Other important factors included family reasons (7%), sustainability housing or living options (4%), housing options (4%) and access to schools (3%). A small proportion (2%) cited work or business opportunities, and another 2% provided unique responses under “something else, please tell us”. These results highlight a community strongly driven by amenity, landscape, and connection to place.

Note, respondents were able to select multiple options for this question, resulting in a higher response count than survey participants.

Reason for living in AHC area	Response count	Percentage
Lifestyle	n = 346	23%
Natural environment attractions	n = 314	21%
Bigger block sizes	n = 277	19%
Community	n = 217	14%
Family reasons	n = 99	7%
Housing options	n = 57	4%
Sustainability housing / living options	n = 60	4%
Access to schools	n = 41	3%
Work / business opportunities	n = 26	2%
Something else, please tell us*	n = 36	2%

*Summary of responses to ‘something else’ included: *cooler weather, large trees, open paddocks/ space, birds, more rain, green fresh winters, being able to live in an unattached home, clean air, lots of trees, acreage, no close neighbours, easy access to CBD, love the villages, country living, peace and quiet, cycling, no streetlights and where they grew up.*

4. Creating a sustainable Adelaide Hills: What’s important to you?

4.1 What you like most about the Adelaide Hills Council area?

Question 5 asked *Tell us what you like most about the Adelaide Hills Council area?* Respondents most frequently cited the **natural environment** (32%) and a **strong sense of community** (22%) as the most valued aspects of living in the Adelaide Hills Council area. These results highlight the area's appeal as a place of natural beauty and social cohesion, with residents clearly valuing the region's greenery, wildlife and landscapes, alongside the friendliness and connectedness of local neighbourhoods.

Other commonly mentioned themes included **open space and block size** (13%), access and location (9%) and lifestyle and amenities (9%), indicating a desire for balance between space, comfort and convenience. Overall, the responses underscore the importance of preserving the region’s environmental assets and local identity.

The responses also align with the demographic question which asked respondents to indicate why they chose to live in the Council Area.

Quotes:

"I love the people and community atmosphere, as well as the natural environment and easy access to great environmental spaces to walk and ride eg. Bushland Park and Fox Creek Mountain Bike Park"

"Green environment. Places for recreational walking, parks, playgrounds, community."

"Open spaces, natural bushland yet very accessible to city."

"Natural environment - flora and fauna. Peaceful and quiet environment with clean air and beautiful vistas."

Theme	Count	Percentage
Natural environment	n=252	32%
Strong sense of community (community feel)	n=169	22%
Open space and block size	n=101	13%
Access and location	n=73	9%
Lifestyle and amenity	n=72	9%
Total	n=667	100%

The top three themes are explored in more detail, as follows:

4.1.1 Natural environment

The natural environment was the most frequently celebrated feature in responses about what people value in the Adelaide Hills Council area. Many participants expressed a deep appreciation for the landscape, describing it as **beautiful, peaceful and essential** to the identity of the region. Trees, wildlife and the presence of native vegetation were commonly cited, as was the clean air and open space. Respondents used words like “stunning”, “unspoiled” and “diverse” to characterise the local ecology, often noting its contribution to personal wellbeing, recreation and a slower pace of life. This emphasis on the environment was not abstract – people referred to specific assets such as bushland corridors, hills vistas and shaded trails.

There was also a strong connection between the natural setting and broader lifestyle values. Respondents saw the environment not just as scenery, but as something that actively shaped how they lived, **quieter, healthier and more connected to nature**. Some expressed concern about preserving these features amid increasing development, hinting at a desire for environmental stewardship.

Quotes:

“The native environment - clean air, wildlife and the feeling of being close to nature.”

“I love the trees, the space and how everything feels greener and calmer here.”

“The natural beauty is what makes the Hills the Hills - it’s what sets us apart.”

These responses show that the natural environment is not a passive backdrop but a defining and cherished aspect of local identity.

4.1.2 Strong sense of community (community feel)

The sense of community emerged as a prominent theme in what residents most value about the Adelaide Hills Council area. Respondents frequently described the area as friendly, welcoming and socially connected, with many highlighting neighbourliness and local support networks. This sense of belonging was particularly associated with smaller towns and rural communities, where people noted that “everyone knows each other” and that support during challenging times was readily available. The community was not just perceived as present, but also as active, with regular events, volunteerism, and civic pride contributing to a strong social fabric.

In some cases, respondents linked community spirit to shared values such as sustainability, creativity, and mutual respect. There was also appreciation for the diversity of ages and interests that coexist in townships, with residents noting how different groups contribute to the area’s character.

Quotes:

“There’s a really strong sense of community and belonging. People look out for each other.”

“The friendly people - we say hi in the street, and you feel like you’re part of something real.”

“It’s not just a place to live, it’s a community - people care here.”

4.1.3 Open space and block size and

Open space and block size were consistently highlighted by respondents as valued attributes of the Adelaide Hills Council area. Participants described the feeling of space - both private and public - as a key factor in their quality of life. Larger residential block sizes were associated with privacy, peace and a sense of freedom, especially compared to denser suburban areas closer to metropolitan Adelaide. People value being able to **have a garden, hear native birds, or enjoy their own land without feeling crowded**. This theme also extended to public open spaces - such as reserves, parks and natural corridors - which were appreciated for recreation, views and their contribution to township character.

The open feel of the region was often framed as part of its identity and a contrast to overdeveloped urban environments. Several comments mentioned concern that increasing subdivision or infill development could erode this valued characteristic. Nonetheless, the dominant tone was one of appreciation - not resistance - with residents expressing a desire to retain the balance between development and spaciousness.

Quotes:

“Love the space - you don’t feel cramped in. We moved here for the block size and the trees.”

“Open space and views - you can breathe here.”

“The rural feel and larger blocks make the Hills feel like home, not just another suburb.”

4.1.4 Ward differences

Thematic analysis of open-ended responses reveals distinct differences in what residents from Ranges and Valleys Wards most value about the Adelaide Hills Council area. Notably, the **natural environment is significantly more prominent in Ranges Ward** (n=184, 79%) than in Valleys Ward (n=100, 56%). This may reflect the greater concentration of native bushland, national parks and forested terrain in the western ranges, where townships like Stirling, Crafers and Uraidla are closely integrated with conservation areas and walking trails. Similarly, **access and location are more frequently cited in Ranges Ward** (n=57, 24%) compared to Valleys (n=18, 10%), likely due to the ward’s proximity to Adelaide’s eastern fringe, making it an attractive location for those balancing rural lifestyle with urban access.

In contrast, **rural and open space holds greater importance for residents in Valleys Ward** (n=57, 32%) than Ranges Ward (n=64, 27%), suggesting a stronger association with agricultural land uses, larger residential blocks and traditional rural character. The **community feel theme is consistently valued across both wards**, appearing in 39% of Ranges responses and 40% in Valleys, indicating shared social cohesion and appreciation for local connection. Lifestyle and amenity show similar representation in both wards, though slightly higher in Valleys Ward (22%) than Ranges (18%), possibly influenced by perceived peacefulness and slower pace of life in more distantly located townships such as Lobethal, Birdwood and Mount Torrens. These variations reflect how geography, land use and access shape the lived experience and values of residents across the Adelaide Hills.

Theme	Ranges Ward	Ranges Ward %	Valleys Ward	Valleys Ward %
Natural environment	n=184	79%	n=100	56%
Community feel	n=91	39%	n=71	40%
Lifestyle and amenity	n=42	18%	n=39	22%
Access and location	n=57	24%	n=18	10%
Rural and open space	n=64	27%	n=57	32%

4.2 What are the main issues that concern you about the Adelaide Hills Council area?

Thematic analysis of the 411 responses to Question 6 “What are the main issues that concern you about the Adelaide Hills Council area?” reveals that concerns about **traffic and roads** dominate, with 24% of respondents referencing issues such as **congestion, inadequate parking, road maintenance and safety**. This is followed by concerns related to the **environment and vegetation loss** (21%), where residents express anxiety about the **clearing of native vegetation, biodiversity decline and threats to bushland**. These results reflect heightened sensitivity to the Hills’ natural character and the impact of urban pressures on ecological integrity and mobility.

A further 17% of responses relate to **development and overdevelopment**, including perceptions of urban sprawl, inappropriate subdivisions and loss of rural character. Closely following are concerns with council performance and communication (16%), where themes such as transparency, engagement and leadership were raised. Infrastructure and services round out the top five themes at 15%, suggesting that access to basic physical and community infrastructure remains a core concern. Overall, the data reflects a consistent tension between growth pressures, environmental values and governance responsiveness within the community.

Theme	Count	Percentage
Traffic and roads	n=107	24%
Environment and vegetation loss	n=92	21%
Development and overdevelopment	n=74	17%
Council performance and communication	n=72	16%
Infrastructure and services	n=66	15%
Total	n=411	100%

The top four themes are explored in more detail, as follows:

4.2.1 Traffic and roads

Traffic and roads emerged as the most prominent concern among Adelaide Hills Council respondents, mentioned by 24% of those who answered the question about main issues. The concerns span both local and regional contexts, with residents expressing frustration at growing congestion, inadequate road infrastructure and the perceived inability of roads to accommodate increased development and tourism. Particular hotspots include intersections in town centres, rural roads that remain unsealed or poorly maintained, and concerns about speeding and pedestrian safety in residential areas.

These issues are often linked to broader themes such as overdevelopment, public transport deficiencies and infrastructure planning. Residents feel that traffic volumes are increasing faster than the region's road network can sustainably manage, and many perceive a lack of strategic investment in long-term road safety and maintenance. This concern is compounded by growth in tourism and residential subdivisions, placing strain on historically rural roadways not designed for such loads.

Quotes:

"Increased traffic and lack of planning for road infrastructure as the population increases"

"Too much traffic congestion especially on narrow and winding roads"

"Inadequate parking and unsafe roads around schools"

4.2.2 Environment and vegetation loss

Environment and vegetation loss was the second most cited concern, mentioned in 21% of responses. Residents expressed deep concern over the clearing of native vegetation, degradation of bushland, loss of wildlife habitat and perceived erosion of the Hills' natural character. These sentiments are closely tied to the ecological identity of the region, with many respondents pointing to a lack of protection for biodiversity, the visual impact of land clearing and frustration over perceived weak enforcement of environmental regulations.

This theme also overlaps with concerns about development, with residents voicing opposition to subdivision and land use change that leads to the removal of trees and fragmentation of natural areas. Several respondents noted that vegetation loss is not only impacting amenity but increasing bushfire risk and degrading air quality. There is a strong sense that the region's natural assets are undervalued in decision-making and poorly protected through current planning systems.

Quotes:

"Loss of native vegetation including degradation of habitat and biodiversity"

"Too many trees being removed for development without accountability"

"We're losing our bushland and it's changing the feel of the Hills"

4.2.3 Development and overdevelopment

Development and overdevelopment were raised in 17% of responses, making this the third most common theme among community concerns. Residents frequently referenced fears of inappropriate development, urban sprawl and the steady erosion of the Adelaide Hills' rural and village character. There is a strong perception that new developments are not aligned with the scale, form or environmental sensitivity of the region. Many view the pace and nature of subdivision as incompatible with the existing landscape, and express concern about the cumulative impacts of growth on roads, infrastructure and natural values.

Concerns also relate to the perceived loss of strategic planning and a lack of community influence in decision-making processes. People feel that development is being driven by external interests or state-level targets rather than reflecting local character and sustainability. The language used in responses often reflects frustration and scepticism toward both the process and outcomes of development activity in the Hills.

Quotes:

"Overdevelopment is destroying the character of our small townships"

"There's too much infill without proper planning or infrastructure upgrades"

“Subdivision after subdivision – it’s not the Hills I grew up in anymore”

4.2.4 Council performance and communication

A significant theme emerging from the survey question “What are the main issues that concern you about the Adelaide Hills Council area?” relates to dissatisfaction with Council performance and communication. Respondents expressed concern that the Council is often perceived as opaque in its decision-making processes, with limited transparency around major planning decisions, budget allocations and strategic priorities. Several participants conveyed a belief that Council engagement efforts were tokenistic or poorly timed, noting that opportunities for public input often occurred too late in the process to have meaningful impact. This created a sense of frustration and disempowerment among some community members, particularly when they felt their feedback had been disregarded or misrepresented.

A recurring issue was the perceived inconsistency or ineffectiveness of communication channels between Council and residents. Many respondents felt uninformed about upcoming projects, changes to regulations or consultation opportunities, highlighting a gap between Council intentions and community awareness. Others pointed to the over-reliance on digital formats, such as online newsletters and social media, which may not adequately reach older residents or those without regular internet access. Suggestions included improving the clarity and frequency of Council updates, offering more in-person forums across the region, and ensuring information is communicated in plain language. Respondents indicated a desire for more proactive, two-way communication that fosters trust and accountability.

Another commonly raised point was the belief that Council lacked responsiveness to community concerns, particularly on matters such as overdevelopment, environmental protection, and local infrastructure maintenance. Some comments reflected frustration with delays in receiving responses to queries or complaints, or a perception that decisions had already been made regardless of public feedback. This has contributed to a sense that Council is disconnected from local sentiment and needs to refocus on community-led priorities. Improving responsiveness, both in timeliness and tone, was viewed as essential to rebuilding confidence and demonstrating that Council values its role as a representative and collaborative local government authority.

Quotes:

“The Council needs to stop pretending to consult and start listening. Too many decisions are made behind closed doors without genuine community input.”

“Communication is poor – I often find out about changes or developments after they’ve already been approved. It feels like residents are the last to know.”

“There’s no accountability. You raise issues and get no response, or a generic one that doesn’t address the problem. It’s frustrating and disheartening.”

4.2.5 Infrastructure and services

Across the region, residents expressed concern about the uneven delivery of core services such as stormwater management, waste collection, footpath networks, and public lighting. Many people in smaller townships or rural areas feel these services are concentrated in better-known centres like Stirling, while outer areas receive minimal investment. Respondents in places like Kersbrook, Houghton, and Paracombe noted a lack of basic infrastructure and limited visible maintenance by the council.

There is a strong community interest in better access to services that support daily living, especially for older people and those with mobility needs. Comments pointed to a shortage of accessible public toilets, footpaths, community facilities, and support programs such as Meals on Wheels. Some respondents noted the absence of local services meant they would eventually need to relocate, despite having strong social ties in the area. The lack of clear information or progress on aged care infrastructure was also mentioned.

As new housing developments increase across the council area, residents are questioning whether services are keeping pace. Specific concerns included gaps in mains water access, sewerage, and bin services in newly developed or rural areas. There was also frustration over the perceived focus on consultation processes without delivery of visible improvements. Many called for more consistent maintenance of existing infrastructure and better planning for future growth.

Quotes:

“While both I and my wife still have driving licenses, there will come a time where lack of community transport may force us to forego the Hills.”

“We live in a forgotten town. Any assistance is a struggle.”

“Where can I live when I get old?”

4.2.6 Ward differences

Analysis of ward-level responses shows notable differences in community concerns. In Ranges Ward, the most frequently cited issue was environment and vegetation loss (n=59, 25%), followed closely by traffic and roads (n=53, 23%) and development and overdevelopment (n=43, 18%). These concerns align with Ranges Ward's environmental setting and development pressures along the Adelaide fringe, where residents are especially sensitive to vegetation clearing and ecological impact from urban expansion. Concerns about infrastructure and services (14%) and public transport (9%) also appear, though to a lesser extent.

In Valleys Ward, the most common concern was traffic and roads (n=48, 26%), reflecting issues with road maintenance, congestion and rural transport access. This was followed by development and overdevelopment (n=30, 16%), infrastructure and services (15%) and environment and vegetation loss (n=27, 15%). While similar issues are present across both wards, their ranking suggests that Valleys residents are more focused on the impact of growth on mobility and service delivery, whereas Ranges residents are more concerned about the natural environment and urban encroachment.

Theme	Ranges Ward	Ranges Ward %	Valleys Ward	Valleys Ward %
Development and overdevelopment	n=43	18%	n=30	16%
Traffic and roads	n=53	23%	n=48	26%
Environment and vegetation loss	n=59	25%	n=27	15%
Infrastructure and services	n=33	14%	n=28	15%
Public transport	n=20	9%	n=15	8%
Total	n=208	100%	n=186	100%



Image courtesy Adelaide Hills Council

4.3 If you could choose one thing you want us to focus on to improve sustainability, what would it be?

Question 7 asked *If you could choose one thing you want us to focus on to improve sustainability, what would it be?* The most common sustainability priority identified by respondents was **improving sustainable transport and walkability** (18%), reflecting strong interest in infrastructure that supports safer and more accessible **alternatives to car use**. Comments pointed to the need for **better footpaths, cycling routes and public transport connections**, particularly in rapidly growing or semi-rural areas where these services are often limited. This suggests that enhancing connectivity between townships and services could play a significant role in supporting low-emission lifestyles.

Close behind, 12% of respondents wanted **stronger action on protecting native vegetation and biodiversity**. Many emphasised concerns about the ongoing loss of habitat and species, and called for better management of natural areas, roadside verges and private land. Similarly, 12% prioritised **sustainable development and housing**, focusing on the balance between population growth and maintaining village character, environmental integrity and housing affordability. These responses point to a shared desire for future development to be more environmentally sensitive and socially inclusive.

Other frequently mentioned themes included **waste management, water conservation, energy and emissions reduction, and community support**, each attracting around 3-4% of responses. A notable portion (4%) also **expressed concern about Council decision-making and accountability**, signalling a demand for stronger leadership and responsiveness on sustainability issues.

Focus area	Response count	Percentage
Sustainable transport and walkability	75	18%
Native vegetation and biodiversity	51	12%
Sustainable development and housing	50	12%
Waste reduction and management	16	4%
Water conservation	16	4%
Equity and community support	15	4%
Council policy and engagement	15	4%
Energy and emissions	14	3%
Fire risk and land management	11	2%
Other / no response	157	37%
Total	420	100.0%

The top three themes are explored in more detail, as follows:

4.3.1 Sustainable transport and walkability

Responses categorised under sustainable transport and walkability frequently emphasised the importance of infrastructure that supports alternatives to car-based travel. Many respondents identified the need for safer and more extensive footpaths, particularly in and around townships, to enable walking as a viable mode of transport. Several also highlighted the benefits of connecting walking and cycling routes to existing trails such as the Amy Gillett Bikeway. These responses often suggested that better pedestrian and cycling infrastructure would improve not only environmental outcomes but also health, mobility and safety, especially for children and older residents.

A smaller number of responses referenced public transport, with comments focused on accessibility and service availability. While less prominent than walkability, these views still reflect a desire for transport systems that reduce reliance on private vehicles. Taken together, the comments in this category point to a broader interest in making every day travel more

sustainable through investment in basic infrastructure, rather than large-scale system overhauls. The emphasis was largely on improving what exists - filling footpath gaps, increasing connectivity and making streets safer and more user-friendly for non-drivers.

Quotes:

"Better bike paths and safer pedestrian routes would encourage people to leave the car at home – right now it's just not practical or safe."

"Public transport is almost non-existent in the hills. We need regular, reliable services that actually connect communities and reduce car dependence."

"Focus on walkable town centres – people should be able to get to shops, schools and parks without having to drive everywhere."

4.3.2 Native vegetation and biodiversity

Responses in the native vegetation and biodiversity category expressed strong concern for the preservation and protection of natural flora and fauna. Many respondents highlighted the value of existing vegetation - including native trees, understorey plants, and corridors of bushland - as essential to the environmental character of the Adelaide Hills. These features were often described not only as visually appealing but as ecologically important, supporting wildlife and maintaining biodiversity. Several responses referred to habitat preservation or restoring degraded areas, suggesting a community interest in active conservation.

In addition to calls for preservation, some comments addressed perceived threats to vegetation, including urban development, roadside clearing and fuel reduction practices. While these were not always framed in overtly negative terms, they reflected an underlying concern about the long-term viability of bushland within a changing landscape. A number of responses suggested that the integrity of native vegetation contributes to the identity of local places, distinguishing them from more heavily modified environments. Overall, these views suggest that many residents see biodiversity and native ecosystems as core to both environmental health and community wellbeing.

Quotes:

"Protecting the integrity of our agricultural and food producing areas to ensure their longevity. While encouraging wildlife corridors between the pockets of natural bush land."

"Less destruction of landscapes and native vegetation to maintain country feel and lifestyle"

"Protect, manage, connect and expand native vegetation. It is only 10% of original and many native species are doomed if we do not act."

4.3.3 Sustainable development and housing

Responses relating to sustainable development and housing reflected a concern with the pace, scale and nature of growth in the Adelaide Hills. Many respondents described a desire to retain the region's low-density and village-style character, and expressed apprehension about new housing developments that were seen as inconsistent with this identity. Common concerns included increased subdivision, loss of open space, and the visual or environmental impact of housing estates. The theme of sustainability was frequently linked to the idea that development should be carefully planned, with attention to environmental integration, infrastructure capacity and long-term community needs.

In addition to opposing perceived overdevelopment, several responses also addressed housing affordability and accessibility. These participants noted the need for housing options that accommodate younger people, older residents or those on lower incomes, suggesting that sustainability includes not only environmental concerns but also social equity. While this view was less dominant than concern about growth pressure, it highlights a broader understanding of sustainable development as encompassing both environmental limits and inclusive access to housing. The responses in this category reflect a community interest in managing change in a way that preserves valued features while meeting evolving needs.

Quotes:

"Development needs to be in harmony with the environment – not just endless subdivisions with no thought for character or climate impact."

"There's too much rapid development without proper infrastructure or green space – it's not sustainable in the long term."

"We need housing that's affordable and energy-efficient, not just more expensive homes that ignore the needs of younger and older residents."

4.3.4 Ward differences

Across both wards, the most frequently raised theme was sustainable development and housing, particularly in the Ranges Ward where 15% of respondents referenced this issue compared to 14% in the Valleys Ward. The comments in this category focused on the need to manage subdivision, control sprawl and ensure future housing aligns with environmental and liveability standards. This may reflect concern about urban pressures in fast-growing settlements and the interface between residential growth and ecological values.

Sustainable transport and walkability emerged more strongly in the Ranges Ward (11%) than in the Valleys Ward (6%), suggesting that communities closer to the metropolitan fringe are more attuned to issues of mobility, public transport access and infrastructure for walking and cycling. Native vegetation and biodiversity concerns were relatively consistent between wards, though slightly more pronounced in the Valleys Ward (7%) where the rural and bushland setting is closely tied to residents' values and identity.

Theme	Ranges Ward	Ranges Ward %	Valleys Ward	Valleys Ward %
Native vegetation and biodiversity	n=13	6%	n=12	7%
Sustainable transport and walkability	n=25	11%	n=10	6%
Sustainable development and housing	n=34	15%	n=24	14%
Total	n=229	100%	n=167	100%



Image courtesy We Are.SA

5. Adelaide Hills amenity and character

This section relates to the qualities and characteristics of the area that contribute to community enjoyment, comfort and overall satisfaction with the surroundings both in their natural and built forms.

The Adelaide Hills region is defined by a combination of natural, rural and built features that contribute to its overall amenity and character. These elements include native vegetation, open landscapes, agricultural land, and low-density residential development. The area's topography and ecological setting play an important role in shaping the built environment, which typically features heritage buildings, modest commercial precincts and infrastructure designed to integrate with the landscape. This combination supports a range of environmental, recreational and aesthetic values that influence community satisfaction and engagement with the area.

Responses to the survey indicate that residents **value features such as mature trees, streetscape quality, heritage conservation, and larger block sizes**. Survey participants also identified the importance of **streetscape enhancements, sustainable design principles and infrastructure that maintains the established character of towns and localities**. When considering development, residents prioritise minimising environmental impact, preserving land for rural activity and maintaining a low-density built form. These preferences reflect a consistent community interest in balancing development with the preservation of existing landscape and township characteristics.

5.1 What character and amenity features do you value about your town, suburb or locality? *(Think about the natural, rural and built environments)*

Responses to question 8 indicated they most strongly valued the **natural environment and bushland** in their local areas, with 36% of responses highlighting features such as trees, wildlife, green spaces and scenic landscapes. This dominant theme underscores the Adelaide Hills' identity as a region deeply connected to its natural surroundings, and suggests strong community support for preserving ecological features as part of future planning and development decisions. **Access to amenities and townships** was the second most cited feature (13%), indicating that proximity to schools, shops, parks and local services is also important in maintaining liveability.

Other valued features included the **rural character and block sizes** (11%), reflecting appreciation for spaciousness, low-density living and a sense of openness. Community feel (7%) and built environment or village character (5%) also appeared as notable themes. A number of other themes emerged relating to heritage, privacy, tradition and cohesion. The overall pattern reveals a **clear emphasis on environmental quality, rural amenity and balanced accessibility**.

Valued feature	Response count	Percentage
Natural environment and bushland	n = 137	36%
Access to amenities and townships	n = 47	13%
Rural character and block size	n = 41	11%
Community feel and shared spaces	n = 27	7%
Built environment and village character	n = 18	5%
Quietness and tranquillity	n = 6	2%
Other (e.g. heritage, privacy, tradition, cohesion)	n = 99	26%
Total	n = 375	100%

The top three themes are explored in more detail as follows:

5.1.1 Natural environment and bushland

The natural environment and bushland was the most frequently identified and consistently described aspect that residents valued about their locality. Many participants cited features such as native vegetation, trees, wildlife, rolling hills and green spaces as defining elements of their environment. These were appreciated both for their aesthetic and recreational value, with some comments referencing walking trails, bike paths and local reserves as part of everyday life. The connection to natural surroundings was often articulated in terms of tranquillity, beauty and access to open space.

Respondents also described the natural landscape as central to the character and identity of the Adelaide Hills region. The presence of bushland and biodiversity was frequently tied to a sense of distinctiveness and lifestyle, with numerous references to the importance of preserving these features. This suggests that for many residents, the natural environment is not simply a visual backdrop but a core part of what differentiates their area from more urban or suburban environments.

There were also indications of concern about the potential loss or degradation of natural assets. Comments occasionally reflected unease about vegetation removal, encroaching development or the pressures of increased population growth. While not always the dominant focus, these perspectives indicate that the natural environment is seen as both a valued resource and a feature that requires attention to maintain. Overall, the emphasis on bushland and natural beauty appeared across a broad cross-section of responses, highlighting its relevance to a wide range of community members.

Quotes:

"Tree canopy, nature, large blocks, green space"

"The natural surroundings, trees and peaceful landscapes are why we moved here and why we stay."

"It's the bush character that defines our town – remove that and it's just another suburb."

5.1.2 Access to amenities and townships

Access to amenities and townships was the second most commonly referenced theme in responses about valued character and amenity features. Many participants described the benefit of being close to essential services such as shops, libraries, parks and schools. These responses often framed access as a key contributor to liveability, particularly where residents could reach these services without needing to travel far. Ease of access to town centres, village-style shopping areas and public open spaces appeared to be valued as both practical and community-enhancing features.

Several responses also highlighted the appeal of being able to walk to local amenities, linking access with broader ideas of convenience and connectedness. In these comments, smaller-scale infrastructure and services were typically mentioned positively, suggesting that respondents value townships that remain human-scale, integrated with their surroundings and responsive to daily needs. The presence of amenities within walking distance also appeared to support perceptions of independence, particularly for families with children and older residents.

Quotes:

"Bike track, sporting facilities"

"Maintained and fenced playgrounds. Green environment. Cafes and locally owned shops. Sports grounds. Community centres groups, e.g. RSL, Scouts, Toy Library, The Hut."

"Access to local amenities like libraries, cafes and medical centres makes daily life much easier."

5.1.3 Rural character and block size

Rural character and block size was a prominent theme among respondents, reflecting a shared appreciation for spaciousness, open landscapes and low-density living. Many comments described the value of large blocks, minimal housing density and the presence of open paddocks or agricultural land as central to the identity of their towns and suburbs. These features were often framed as important for maintaining privacy, peacefulness and a sense of separation from more urbanised settings. The association between land size and lifestyle was frequently implied, particularly in relation to gardening, animal keeping or general outdoor activity.

For some respondents, rural character was also linked to the visual qualities of the built environment, such as uncluttered views, tree-lined roads or the absence of intensive development. Descriptions of what was valued often contrasted with concerns about subdivision or encroachment, though the emphasis remained on what currently exists and is appreciated. Overall, the responses in this category highlight a preference for preserving the semi-rural qualities of the Adelaide Hills, including both functional space and a landscape typology that differs markedly from suburban or metropolitan forms.

Quotes:

“We chose to live here for the rural feel – large blocks, open skies and space between neighbours.”

“Beautiful natural environment with houses and shops in keeping with the feel of the area. Large block sizes, unobtrusive development.”

“The vibe of the area, the green paddocks, the animals, the country feel”

5.1.4 Ward differences

Respondents from both Ranges and Valleys Wards highly valued the natural environment and bushland, although it was notably more prominent in the Ranges Ward. This theme was mentioned by 56% of Ranges Ward respondents compared to 34% in the Valleys Ward. This reflects the Ranges' proximity to conservation parks and native bushland, as well as heightened community emphasis on tree canopy, wildlife and natural landscapes. The stronger weighting in Ranges may also relate to greater concern over development pressure and the need to retain natural amenity amid urban interface locations.

Access to amenities and townships was evenly cited across both wards, with 29% in Ranges and 33% in Valleys. This suggests that both communities place value on proximity to services, shops and local facilities, even though the built form and town layout differ. Meanwhile, rural character and block size was more commonly cited in the Valleys Ward (17%) than Ranges (14%), likely reflecting the more spacious rural setting of the Valleys and its identity grounded in open landscapes, larger lots and agricultural surrounds.

Theme	Ranges Ward	Ranges Ward %	Valleys Ward	Valleys Ward %
Natural environment and bushland	n=120	56%	n=49	34%
Access to amenities and townships	n=61	29%	n=47	33%
Rural character and block size	n=29	14%	n=25	17%
Total	n=213	100%	n=143	100%



5.2 What ideas do you have for enhancing the character and amenity of your town, suburb or locality? *(Think about the natural, rural and built environments)*

Responses to Question 9 shared a wide range of ideas for enhancing the character and amenity of their local areas, with the most common theme being **improvements to pedestrian infrastructure and walkability**, mentioned by 28% of participants. These suggestions included the construction or repair of footpaths, safer road crossings, better lighting and improved access to community trails. Many comments reflected the desire for more connected, accessible and walkable environments that allow residents to move safely within and between townships. This emphasis on walkability indicates that for many people, physical access is a key part of enjoying and engaging with their local area.

Other prominent themes included **enhancement of the natural environment** (10%), such as more tree planting, weed control and protection of bushland, and **traffic and road management** (8%), including concerns about safety, maintenance and congestion. Smaller but still notable proportions of respondents suggested development controls to retain rural character, streetscape upgrades, and additional public amenities such as toilets or seating. While a significant portion of responses were diverse or general in nature, the overall pattern points to a shared interest in practical, place-based improvements that preserve what people value about their town or suburb while addressing infrastructure gaps or pressures from change.

Enhancement theme	Response count	Percentage
Pedestrian infrastructure and walkability	103	28%
Natural environment enhancement	36	10%
Traffic, road and drainage management	30	8%
Development controls and rural character	23	6%
Streetscape and town centre upgrades	23	6%
Public amenities and facilities	8	2%
Other / Unclassified	140	40%
Total	363	100%

The top three themes are explored in more detail as follows:

5.2.1 Pedestrian infrastructure and walkability

Responses classified under pedestrian infrastructure and walkability reflected a strong desire for safer, more connected and more accessible environments across many parts of the Adelaide Hills Council area. Respondents commonly called for new or upgraded footpaths, particularly in areas where existing pedestrian networks are incomplete or poorly maintained. Issues such as uneven surfaces, inadequate lighting and lack of roadside safety were frequently mentioned as barriers to walking, especially for older residents, families with children and people with mobility challenges. Several responses also highlighted the importance of safe crossings and improved links between residential areas, schools, parks and town centres, suggesting that footpath infrastructure is not only a matter of accessibility, but also of liveability and safety.

Beyond functional upgrades, some participants connected pedestrian infrastructure with broader goals such as promoting active transport, supporting local business districts, or encouraging community interaction. Walking was described not only as a mode of travel but also as a valued social and recreational activity that helps build connection to place. These comments often referenced town centres, local trails, and informal walking routes that could be improved or extended. The prominence of this theme across diverse geographic areas points to a shared expectation that walking should be supported through considered planning and investment in basic infrastructure.

Quotes:

“Having a network of shared pathways for foot, bike and horses connecting the area of Inglewood, Paracombe, Milbrook (eg via SA Water land) and Houghton. This would encourage more slow pace other than vehicle traffic and allow more connection with neighbours.”

“Better footpaths”

“An accessible safe walking track from Upper Sturt to Stirling”

5.2.2 Natural environment enhancement

Responses categorised under natural environment enhancement centred on ideas for improving and protecting the local landscape, with a focus on both conservation and restoration. Many respondents expressed a desire to see more trees planted, especially native species, and identified opportunities to strengthen vegetation along roadsides, creeks and reserves. Others highlighted the need to reduce invasive weeds or rehabilitate degraded areas. These suggestions often reflected a strong sense of environmental stewardship and a belief that townships should maintain and reflect the natural beauty of the Adelaide Hills. The relationship between the built and natural environment was also a recurring theme, with several participants advocating for more greenery in town centres and public spaces to soften hard infrastructure and create a more inviting, shaded environment.

There was also a concern about environmental loss due to development or infrastructure works. Respondents mentioned a desire for stronger protections for existing vegetation, as well as proactive planning to preserve the bushland and biodiversity that many consider central to the region’s identity. Some described specific features, such as local wildlife, creek lines, and native corridors, that could be enhanced through revegetation, fencing or better management.

Quotes:

“Plant more natives in public spaces and around the edges of town. Create wildlife corridors and make the environment feel more connected to the bush that surrounds us.”

“Retain native vegetation along roadsides (and for heaven's sake stop slashing roadside native vegetation - it just turns it to annual grasses which are ugly and a greater fire threat than leaving it alone!), implement the Lenswood main street beautification project!”

“Adhere to the Hills Face Zone. I'm seeing ugly big white mansions being built that are visible from the plains. How is that in keeping with the natural aesthetics?”

5.2.3 Traffic, road and drainage management

Responses categorised under traffic, road and drainage management highlighted a range of infrastructure issues affecting the safety, accessibility and resilience of local areas. Many participants described roads in poor condition, with potholes, narrow lanes, and unclear markings being common concerns. Some pointed to the need for better maintenance on frequently used rural roads or school routes, while others mentioned the impact of increasing traffic volumes and speeding in residential zones. Safety at intersections, visibility on winding roads, and the absence of appropriate signage were recurring issues, suggesting that road infrastructure is a persistent source of concern across both townships and rural localities.

Drainage and stormwater management were also raised, albeit less frequently, with respondents noting problems such as water pooling, poor runoff, and erosion. These issues were often described in the context of heavy rain events, and occasionally linked to broader concerns about climate resilience or environmental degradation. While the comments varied in detail, the overall picture was one of infrastructure pressure and a desire for practical improvements that respond to both growth and changing environmental conditions. Participants framed these issues less in terms of long-term planning and more as everyday problems in need of maintenance or basic upgrading.

Quotes:

“Road maintenance is a real issue – potholes everywhere, especially on the way into town. It’s dangerous for cars and even worse if you’re on a bike or walking.”

“Some rural roads are in terrible condition and drainage is a major issue when it rains.”

“Council to either start caring for the roadsides (Onkaparinga Valley Road, south of Woodside comes to mind) even if it's classed as DIT land, it looks horrid, messy and dangerous if there's another fire.”

5.2.4 Ward differences

Respondents from both wards identified similar priorities for enhancing character and amenity, but the emphasis varied. In the Ranges Ward, the most frequently mentioned theme was natural environment enhancement (20%), followed closely by traffic, road and drainage management (19%) and pedestrian infrastructure and walkability (16%). This pattern reflects a balanced focus on protecting the natural landscape while also improving infrastructure, especially in areas closer to the metro fringe where development pressure and interface management are likely more prominent.

In contrast, Valleys Ward respondents placed equal importance on pedestrian infrastructure and walkability and natural environment enhancement (both 20%), but assigned even more emphasis to traffic, road and drainage management (23%). This likely reflects concerns about road condition, maintenance and access in more rural or spread-out settlements, where residents may experience challenges related to distance, stormwater runoff or road surface degradation. Both wards share consistent concern for enhancing natural assets and safety, but infrastructure issues appear to have slightly higher prominence in the Valleys.

Theme	Ranges Ward	Ranges Ward %	Valleys Ward	Valleys Ward %
Pedestrian infrastructure and walkability	n=33	16%	n=28	20%
Natural environment enhancement	n=41	20%	n=28	20%
Traffic, road and drainage management	n=38	19%	n=33	23%
Total	n=203	100%	n=141	100%



Image courtesy Adelaide Hills Council

5.3 When thinking about what should be the focus for any future upgrades of main streets and town centres, how important are the following items to you?

Based on the number of very important and important ratings from survey respondents to Question 10, the upgrade priorities for main streets and town centres are ranked as follows:

Priority ranking of future upgrades	
1.	Landscaping / tree planting n= 359 (128 important + 231 very important)
2.	Footpath upgrades / treatments n= 330 (127 important + 203 very important)
3.	Public infrastructure (i.e. seats and shelters) n= 289 (183 important + 106 very important)
4.	Maintenance of shop frontages n= 254 (173 important + 81 very important)
5.	Undergrounding of power lines n = 241 (116 important + 125 very important)
6.	Improvements to street lighting n= 209 (130 important + 79 very important)
7.	Public art n= 183 (136 important + 47 very important)
8.	Electric vehicle charging stations n= 120 (91 important + 29 very important)

This ranking reinforces the strong support for green infrastructure and pedestrian amenity, while highlighting moderate interest in visual and functional improvements to town centres. Public art and EV charging rank lowest, with relatively fewer respondents viewing them as upgrade priorities.

This is further detailed as follows (in order of how question options were displayed):

Upgrade item	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very important	Total
Public art	30	61	125	136	47	399
Footpath upgrades / treatments	11	15	44	127	203	400
Improvements to street lighting	23	44	124	130	79	400
Landscaping / tree planting	1	6	32	128	231	398
Maintenance of shop frontages	14	21	109	173	81	398
Public infrastructure (i.e. seats and shelters)	10	10	89	183	106	398
Electric vehicle charging stations	62	92	125	91	29	399
Undergrounding of power lines	15	40	102	116	125	398

Commentary in relation to the top three themes is as follows:

5.3.1 Landscaping / tree planting

Landscaping and tree planting emerged as the highest-priority upgrade item across all response categories, with 90% of respondents (359 out of 398) rating it as either important or very important, and just 7 respondents indicating any level of unimportance. This support reflects a **widespread community preference for greener, more shaded and visually appealing public spaces**. This may infer that participants see trees and landscaping as essential elements that enhance the identity and amenity of main streets, contribute to town character, and provide environmental benefits such as shade, cooling and habitat.

5.3.2 Footpath upgrades / treatments

Footpath upgrades and treatments emerged as one of the highest-priority items among respondents, with over half (203 out of 400) rating it as very important, and a further 127 classifying it as important. This made it the second most highly rated item in terms of top-tier importance, just behind landscaping and tree planting. The low number of unimportant or very unimportant responses (26 combined) suggests **broad community consensus that safe, accessible, and well-maintained footpaths are essential components of functional and welcoming streets**.

5.3.3 Public infrastructure (i.e. seats and shelters)

Public infrastructure, such as **seats and shelters, was rated as important or very important by 289 out of 398 respondents**, placing it third among the eight upgrade items considered. This result reflects a strong appreciation for practical, human-scale improvements that support comfort, inclusion and accessibility in public spaces. Their importance in the Adelaide Hills context may also relate to climate, providing places to rest and take shelter from heat, rain or wind contributes directly to the usability of main streets.

5.3.4 Ward differences

Clear differences emerged between Ranges and Valleys Wards in their priorities for town centre upgrades. The strongest area of agreement was support for footpath upgrades, rated as important or very important by 73% of Ranges respondents and 61% of Valleys respondents. Landscaping and tree planting was a top priority in Ranges, with 94% rating it important or very important, compared to 67% in Valleys. Public infrastructure such as seats and shelters also received higher support in Ranges (75%) than Valleys (46%), suggesting a stronger focus in Ranges on street-level amenity and comfort.

By contrast, Valleys respondents expressed greater support for electric vehicle charging stations (26% rated important or very important, compared to 18% in Ranges) and for undergrounding of power lines (60% in Valleys vs 50% in Ranges), indicating stronger concern for long-term infrastructure and possibly resilience. Public art was consistently rated low in both wards, with only 2% in each ward considering it important or very important. These results highlight clear spatial variation in priorities, with Ranges respondents favouring greening and comfort enhancements, and Valleys respondents placing relatively more value on long-term infrastructure upgrades.

Upgrade priority	Ranges Ward (% important/very important)	Valleys Ward (% important/very important)
Public art	2%	2%
Footpath upgrades / treatments	73%	61%
Improvements to street lighting	14%	18%
Landscaping / tree planting	94%	67%
Maintenance of shop frontages	65%	65%
Public infrastructure (seats and shelters)	75%	46%
Electric vehicle charging stations	18%	26%
Undergrounding of power lines	50%	60%

5.4 Please add any other focuses for future upgrades you think we should consider

Community feedback on future upgrade priorities in the Adelaide Hills Council area reveals strong sentiment around core infrastructure themes, particularly **roads and traffic management**. Residents consistently raised concerns about the condition of local roads, traffic speeds and the safety of intersections, particularly on rural or frequently travelled routes. There were also calls for better traffic flow management in town centres and more proactive maintenance to improve driving conditions. Closely tied to this was a desire for **safer pedestrian and active transport options**. Respondents requested more footpaths, road crossings, bike lanes and shared-use trails that would allow safer movement between residential areas, schools, parks and town centres. This emphasis reflects a broader interest in connected, walkable neighbourhoods that support healthier and more sustainable transport options.

Parking and accessibility featured prominently in feedback, with a strong preference for more strategically placed, user-friendly parking in main streets and precincts that host regular events or attract tourists. Several respondents also flagged accessibility and inclusion, noting the importance of infrastructure that accommodates prams, mobility aids and people living with disability. **Public amenities and infrastructure** were also a frequent focus, including requests for better street lighting, more public seating, upgraded parks and shelters and improved toilet facilities. These suggestions often intersected with community concerns about **preserving the natural beauty and unique character of townships**. Many respondents expressed a clear preference for upgrades that maintain local identity, protect trees and bushland, and avoid overdevelopment that could erode the region's distinct environmental and cultural qualities.

The top five focus areas mentioned in relation to focuses for future upgrades were:

5.4.1 Roads and traffic management

Respondents frequently raised concerns about roads and traffic management, making it the most discussed theme in this question. Comments reflected frustration with the condition of local roads, with many calling for improved surfacing, better maintenance and timely repairs. Several participants mentioned potholes, narrow shoulders, or uneven surfaces as ongoing safety risks, particularly on rural or frequently used routes. In addition to physical road condition, there was considerable attention on traffic behaviour and volume – especially in townships where congestion or speed is affecting liveability. Issues such as the need for roundabouts or safer intersections were raised as solutions to ease traffic flow and improve safety for both drivers and pedestrians.

Beyond maintenance and congestion, some respondents expressed concern about increased traffic in previously quiet areas, which they linked to population growth or tourism. This created a perception of reduced safety and loss of amenity, particularly in areas without dedicated pedestrian infrastructure.

Quotes:

“Round about installed on corner of Onkaparing Road and Nairne Road”

“Reduce speed limit on Onkaparing Road between Barracks and Crest due to new development / safety of residents”

“The single lane bridge over the railway line on Onkaparinga Rd Bridgewater, scene of many frustrations because of uncreated vegetation that minimise the capacity to see traffic...but being in Bridgewater I'm sure it will not be addressed”

5.4.2 Pedestrian and active transport

Pedestrian and active transport was another frequently mentioned theme in the open-ended responses, with a strong emphasis on the need for safer and more connected infrastructure for walking and cycling. Respondents often called for additional or improved footpaths, particularly in townships where current coverage is patchy or non-existent. There were also comments about unsafe crossings, especially near schools or on roads with heavy traffic. The desire for linked walking and cycling trails, both for commuting and recreation, featured in multiple responses, reflecting a growing expectation for infrastructure that supports active mobility and local access.

Several submissions also referred to the need to make towns more walkable, both in terms of connectivity and comfort. The lack of consistent footpath quality, poor lighting and limited shade were cited as barriers to walking safely and comfortably. This concern extended beyond just accessibility, respondents framed active transport as important for inclusion, sustainability and wellbeing.

Quotes:

“Footpaths that actually connect the community - not ones that just stop and start or dump you in a ditch. Walking should feel safe and easy.”

“Traffic has increased so much since GPS, with cars and trucks using unsuitable country roads as short cut routes, however, traffic speed remains the same. This makes some of our country roads much more dangerous for pedestrians, horse riders,

children and dog walkers. The road was not built to withstand the semi-B doubles that pass my door. Speed limits need to change and trucks diverted to more suitable routes. Please consider this urgently.”

“... provide safe pedestrian environment not car oriented streetscapes.”

5.4.3 Parking and accessibility

Parking and accessibility were raised as notable concerns by respondents, particularly in relation to the growing pressure on town centres and public spaces. Many comments pointed to insufficient or poorly designed parking infrastructure, especially during peak periods or community events. Respondents noted challenges finding convenient parking in high-traffic areas like Stirling or Hahndorf, and some called for expanded or reconfigured car parks. In regional townships with ageing populations, the proximity of parking to shops, services and community facilities was highlighted as a key issue. Several comments also mentioned the need for better signage and enforcement to ensure equitable access.

Beyond general parking provision, accessibility for people with disabilities was specifically mentioned in a number of responses. Participants stressed the need for clearly marked disabled parking bays, smoother access routes and more consistent surfaces. These concerns were framed as not only practical, but also reflective of the council’s commitment to inclusion.

Quotes:

“More accessible parking options for older people and those with mobility issues – it’s not just about quantity, it’s about usability.”

“Safe places on roadsides for buses (school, tourist, senior citizens, residents) to stop for pick up drop off’s, with sufficient car parking for parents / relatives to wait for collection/ pick up to encourage more of this type of transport usage.”

“More tables and chairs that are disabled friendly”

5.4.4 Public amenities and infrastructure

Respondents highlighted the importance of public amenities and infrastructure as a key area for future upgrades, focusing particularly on comfort, safety and functionality in town centres and recreational areas. Comments frequently called for more public toilets, seating, shelters and drinking fountains, especially in locations with high pedestrian activity or frequent visitors. Some respondents noted that while existing amenities are appreciated, they are not always evenly distributed across townships, leaving certain areas under-serviced. Others raised concerns about ageing or poorly maintained infrastructure, suggesting a need for regular upgrades rather than one-off installations.

Lighting and drainage also featured in this theme, with community members pointing out the practical role these features play in both accessibility and safety. Inadequate street lighting was noted as a barrier to using public spaces at night, and a contributor to a sense of insecurity in less trafficked areas. Drainage concerns focused on stormwater pooling, with some suggesting that poor design in older areas leads to frequent water accumulation after rain, affecting walkability and road safety.

Quotes:

“Seats, shelter, lighting – the basics make a big difference. Not fancy, just functional.”

“Audit playgrounds for safety and provide more equipment for children in Paracombe.”

“Stormwater drainage needs serious attention – every time it rains heavily, the streets flood and it damages the roads.”

5.4.5 Environment and town character

The environment and town character theme attracted a wide range of comments focused on preserving the unique qualities of Adelaide Hills communities. Respondents expressed a strong appreciation for the natural environment, including trees, open space and native vegetation, and called for its protection amidst perceived development pressure. Many asked for more tree planting, not only for environmental benefits like shade and biodiversity, but also to maintain the green and leafy identity of their townships. Others raised concerns about the loss of trees due to construction or roadworks, with some calling for stricter controls and better offset planting policies.

Alongside environmental values, the character of townships - especially those with historic or village-style layouts — was seen as something worth actively protecting. Respondents pointed to inappropriate or poorly designed new developments as a threat to what makes their areas distinctive. Heritage, scale, and architectural consistency were common threads, with several comments arguing for better urban design guidelines to retain a sense of place.

Quotes:

“Don’t lose the charm of the Hills. We live here because it feels different - green, local, connected, human.”

“Keep the village characters and the amazing trees with autumn displays. No inappropriate and modern developments, preserve historic streetscapes.”

“Constrain advertising and provide safe pedestrian environment not car oriented streetscapes.”

5.4.6 Ward differences

Responses to this open-ended question were slightly more frequent among participants from Ranges Ward, which accounted for 56% of all suggestions. The higher number may reflect a concentration of town centres and formalised infrastructure in the Ranges Ward, prompting more ideas for upgrades. These responses often referenced built form elements such as footpaths, streetscapes and public realm improvements, reflecting engagement with issues commonly experienced in more densely settled areas.

Valleys Ward respondents contributed 44% of the total comments, still a substantial proportion. Their ideas were generally more focused on environmental protection, rural amenity, and safety improvements, including road surfaces, drainage and vegetation management. The split suggests that while both wards value investment in their townships, the specific priorities and concerns differ according to their geographic and development contexts with Ranges focused more on urban amenity, and Valleys emphasising rural upkeep and natural character.

Ward	Response count	Percentage
Ranges Ward	n = 119	56%
Valleys Ward	n = 92	44%
Total	n = 211	100%



5.5 When considering development in your local area, how important are the following matters to you?

Based on the number of very important and important ratings from survey respondents to question 11, priorities for development are ranked as follows:

Priority ranking of development considerations	
1.	Preserving land for rural activity n=362 (113 important + 249 very important)
2.	Preservation of heritage n=358 (131 important + 227 very important)
3.	Minimising impact on the surrounding area (e.g. retaining trees, larger setbacks, minimal earthworks) n=338 (107 important + 231 very important)
4.	Sustainable design n=334 (153 important + 181 very important)
5.	Maintaining large block sizes n=328 (124 important + 204 very important)
6.	Maintaining low density housing (i.e. one dwelling per block) n=258 (74 important + 184 very important)
7.	Creating affordable housing n=213 (129 important + 84 very important)
8.	Encouraging tourist accommodation n=171 (122 important + 49 very important)
9.	Embracing modern style living n=116 (97 important + 19 very important)

The development priority ranking reveals a community that strongly values the preservation of the Adelaide Hills' rural identity, heritage character and natural environment. The highest-rated considerations - **preserving land for rural activity, heritage protection and minimising environmental impact** - reflect a clear preference for development that is sensitive, low-density and visually integrated with the landscape. Mid-ranked priorities such as sustainable design and maintaining large block sizes underscore support for environmentally responsible growth that does not compromise openness or local character. In contrast, lower-ranked items like affordable housing, tourist accommodation and modern style living, while still supported by some, are viewed as secondary to protecting the region's distinctive qualities. Overall, the results indicate a cautious and place-based community mindset, with strong support for Council to prioritise environmental stewardship, heritage conservation and thoughtful, landscape-responsive planning.

Total numbers by level of priority from very unimportant to very important as displayed in the question options.

Development matter	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very important	Total
Preserving land for rural activity	3	4	30	113	249	399
Preservation of heritage	3	4	36	131	227	401
Minimising impact on the surrounding area	6	12	43	107	231	399
Sustainable design	8	8	50	153	181	400
Maintaining large block sizes	4	14	53	124	204	399
Maintaining low density housing (one dwelling/block)	18	39	85	74	184	400
Creating affordable housing	39	50	97	129	84	399

Development matter	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very important	Total
Encouraging tourist accommodation	32	57	140	122	49	400
Embracing modern style living	42	78	163	97	19	399

5.5.1 Ward differences

The distribution of “very important” responses by ward reveals strong alignment between Ranges and Valleys communities on key development priorities. In both wards, the **highest levels of importance were assigned to preserving land for rural activity, protecting heritage, and minimising the impact of development on the surrounding area**. These three priorities each attracted between 16-19% of all “very important” responses across both wards, signalling a shared commitment to protecting the distinctive rural and environmental qualities of the Adelaide Hills. Maintaining low-density housing and large block sizes also scored highly, further reflecting a widespread preference for spacious, landscape-integrated development.

Although overall response patterns were similar, some subtle differences emerge. Valleys Ward respondents gave slightly greater emphasis to rural land protection and minimising development impacts, while Ranges Ward respondents placed more importance on sustainable design and heritage preservation. Lower priorities, such as embracing modern style living or encouraging tourist accommodation, received relatively few “very important” responses across both wards. These results underscore the consistent view that growth should be carefully managed to reinforce, not compromise, the character, heritage and environmental values of Hills communities.

Development matter	Ranges Ward	Ranges Ward (%)	Valleys Ward	Valleys Ward (%)
Creating affordable housing	33	4%	39	7%
Embracing modern style living	13	2%	4	1%
Encouraging tourist accommodation	17	2%	30	5%
Maintaining large block sizes	114	14%	83	15%
Maintaining low density housing (i.e. one dwelling/block)	104	13%	70	13%
Minimising impact on the surrounding area	125	16%	106	19%
Preservation of heritage	126	16%	99	18%
Preserving land for rural activity	125	16%	106	19%
Sustainable design	115	15%	71	13%

5.6 Please add any other development matters you would like us to consider

The strongest theme emerging from this question was **protection of environment**, representing 30% of responses. This indicates a sustained community focus on conserving trees, bushland and native biodiversity in the context of development pressures. Residents voiced concern that future development should not come at the cost of degrading the Hills' unique natural environment. Comments also reflected sensitivity to issues such as habitat loss, native vegetation clearance and broader ecological impact, particularly in response to population growth and urban edge expansion.

Preservation of rural character was the second most common theme, with 23% of responses. This often overlapped with concerns about design, density and the character of buildings, reflecting a strong desire to retain the village-like and low-intensity feel of the region. While not as widely discussed, some respondents also highlighted the importance of **infrastructure and services** (20%), especially in relation to roads, stormwater and amenities, which are often under pressure in growth areas. Affordable and diverse housing, heritage protection and design standards each received a smaller number of mentions but together point to a broad view that future development must be carefully managed to align with local values, character and environmental expectations.

Overall, the responses illustrate a community that is not anti-development but highly engaged in how they want to see development. The low mention rate for opposition to overdevelopment (2%) suggests the concern is less about resisting all growth, and more about ensuring it is integrated sensitively. Expectations around the built environment, public infrastructure and maintaining heritage and natural identity are likely to continue to shape local preferences for future development directions.

Theme	Response count	Percentage
Protection of environment	n = 28	30%
Preservation of rural character	n = 21	23%
Infrastructure and services	n = 19	20%
Design standards and aesthetics	n = 10	11%
Heritage protection	n = 8	9%
Affordable and diverse housing	n = 5	5%
Opposition to overdevelopment	n = 2	2%
Total	n = 93	100%

The top three themes are explored in more detail as follows:

5.6.1 Protection of environment

Many respondents expressed deep concern for the protection of the natural environment, frequently citing the need to preserve bushland, native vegetation, biodiversity and wildlife habitat. The Adelaide Hills region is viewed not just as a place to live but as an interconnected natural system that supports community identity, mental wellbeing and ecological function. Residents consistently urged the Council to prioritise conservation in all planning and development decisions – especially by avoiding excessive vegetation clearance, enforcing native planting requirements and investing in bushland restoration. This theme was also closely tied to broader discussions about sustainable growth and climate resilience.

Participants often described a perceived tension between development and environmental protection, with many urging Council to shift its priorities firmly toward the latter. Some respondents suggested greater enforcement of tree protection laws and supported stricter environmental impact assessments for new housing or infrastructure projects. There was also a call for active programs to enhance biodiversity, such as habitat corridors, community planting days and wildlife-friendly design. These responses indicate that environmental values are not just background concerns – they are central to how residents define the Hills' liveability and expect it to be safeguarded into the future.

Quotes:

“Council needs to do more to protect native trees and bushland – development shouldn’t come at the cost of biodiversity.”

“Once our vegetation is cleared, we lose wildlife and the whole Hills character – it’s not just about aesthetics, it’s about ecology.”

“Preserve green space and remnant vegetation – these are irreplaceable and form the backbone of our local environment.”

5.6.2 Preservation of rural character

Many respondents expressed a strong attachment to the Adelaide Hills' rural character, describing it as central to the area's identity and lifestyle. This includes appreciation for open paddocks, bushland, native vegetation and large residential blocks, as well as the village-like atmosphere of townships. Preservation of this rural character was seen as essential to maintaining the qualities that make the region attractive – not only for long-term residents but also for those who seek a quieter, nature-connected lifestyle. Comments highlighted concern that inappropriate development could undermine the Hills' open, green and community-oriented setting.

Respondents also associated rural character with more than just physical attributes – it includes a slower pace, strong local ties, and a close relationship to the landscape. There was a clear preference for low-density living and protection from suburban sprawl. The character and design of townships like Stirling and Aldgate were cited as positive examples worth preserving, with concern that increasing development pressure may risk losing this unique charm. Overall, residents want growth that respects and reinforces rural identity rather than replacing it.

Quotes:

“Large trees, open space, open paddocks, birds, nature; more rain. Green fresh winters. To be able to live in an unattached home.”

“Love the trees. Love the wild life. Love the villages of Stirling and Aldgate. Love the easy access to CBD”

“Rolling hills. Regional landscapes. Soft scapes. Community engagement and facilities e.g art classes, community gardens, workout clubs. Amy Gillet Bikeway to connect all townships throughout district”

5.6.3 Infrastructure and services

Residents frequently raised concerns about the adequacy and reliability of core infrastructure and essential services. Responses reflected frustration with localised flooding due to poor drainage, limited access to footpaths and mobility infrastructure, and aging or insufficient utility systems. Stormwater management and road maintenance were described as ongoing issues in both older townships and expanding residential areas. These responses suggest that while environmental and character themes dominate some conversations, there is also a strong practical awareness of basic infrastructure gaps that impact daily life.

Participants also stressed that planning and development must account for supporting infrastructure, not just new dwellings. Several noted that without upgrading services such as water, power and digital connectivity, further development could place strain on already stretched systems. Suggestions included better lighting, safer pedestrian links, and upgrades to town centre amenities like toilets and bins. The theme demonstrates that residents see infrastructure as the backbone of liveability and want to see it prioritised alongside broader planning objectives.

Quotes:

“Stormwater and drainage need urgent attention in older streets - they flood with just a small amount of rain.”

“We need better footpaths and lighting so it’s safer to walk around - especially at night or in winter.”

“Essential services like water, power and internet are unreliable in some areas - infrastructure needs upgrading.”

5.6.4 Ward differences

Ranges Ward respondents made up a larger proportion of the total responses, contributing 59% of the feedback on additional development matters. This may reflect higher levels of engagement due to more visible or concentrated development activity in townships like Stirling, Aldgate or Crafers. Issues raised from this ward often included concerns about balancing growth with the need to preserve streetscape quality, community facilities and village character.

Valleys Ward accounted for 41% of the responses. While smaller in total count, the feedback from this ward tended to focus on rural character, infrastructure gaps and environmental protection. Respondents from areas such as Birdwood, Lobethal and Woodside frequently raised the need to retain open space and ensure services like drainage and road maintenance keep pace with new subdivisions. The difference in response content across wards suggests a shared concern for character and quality, expressed through different local development lenses.

Ward	Response count	Percentage
Ranges Ward	n = 117	59%
Valleys Ward	n = 80	41%
Total	n = 197	100%



5.7 What ideas do you have for preserving or enhancing streetscapes?

The majority of responses to question 12, on preserving or enhancing streetscapes, focused on **landscaping and tree planting**, which accounted for 57% of the total. Community members consistently emphasised the importance of maintaining green, leafy environments in both established and developing areas. Suggestions included planting native trees, ensuring tree canopy cover along main streets, and integrating natural landscaping into streetscape design. Many respondents saw vegetation not just as aesthetic, but vital for cooling, air quality and character retention. The emphasis on green space reinforces broader environmental concerns and the community’s deep appreciation for the natural assets of the Adelaide Hills.

The second most discussed theme was **footpaths and walkability** (15%). Respondents expressed a strong desire for more connected, safer and accessible pedestrian infrastructure. This included calls for footpath extensions, improvements to surface quality, and the provision of shared paths and crossings to accommodate people of all ages and mobility levels. This theme intersects with equity, safety and active transport, showing that streetscapes are not just about visual elements, but how people move through and experience their local environment. Respondents frequently linked these upgrades to town centres and school routes, highlighting their practical significance.

Other themes, while smaller in proportion, remain significant. **Built form and design** (10%) and **street furniture and lighting** (9%) featured regularly in comments that called for functional improvements and visual cohesion. Respondents suggested seating, shade structures and lighting as practical enhancements, particularly in high-traffic or high-visitor areas. Built form concerns included consistency in architectural style, appropriate signage, and maintaining the character of historic shopfronts or main street façades. Although traffic and road safety was mentioned less frequently (3%), those who did raise it were often passionate about the need for calming measures and safer shared zones. Collectively, these responses reflect a sophisticated understanding of how streetscapes contribute to safety, character and day-to-day amenity.

Theme	Response count	Percentage
Landscaping and tree planting	n = 141	57%
Footpaths and walkability	n = 37	15%
Built form and design	n = 25	10%
Street furniture and lighting	n = 21	9%
Traffic and road safety	n = 8	3%
Total	n = 247	100%

The top four themes are explored in more detail as follows:

5.7.1 Landscaping and tree planting

Landscaping and tree planting emerged as the most prominent theme in community responses on streetscape enhancement, highlighting the importance placed on vegetation as both a functional and aesthetic element. Respondents frequently described street trees and native plantings as essential to the character of the Adelaide Hills, not simply as beautification measures but as critical to environmental sustainability, shade provision and local identity. Many called for expanded canopy cover and protection of existing mature trees, especially along main streets and pedestrian corridors. The community clearly values streets that feel green, cool and connected to the natural setting of the Hills.

The desire for increased landscaping was often paired with concerns about recent loss of vegetation due to development and infrastructure upgrades. Some respondents requested native species plantings to reinforce biodiversity and low-maintenance greening approaches. There was also a strong interest in tree planting as a long-term investment in liveability – reducing the urban heat island effect, improving air quality and fostering a village feel. The call for vegetation as part of streetscape design suggests that for many, trees are not an afterthought but a core expectation for how public space should look and function.

Quotes:

“Large trees, open space, open paddocks, birds, nature; more rain. Green fresh winters. To be able to live in an unattached home.”

“Love the trees. Love the wild life”

“More large trees. House spaced further away from nearest neighbour.”

5.7.2 Footpaths and walkability

The theme of footpaths and walkability featured prominently in community responses about enhancing streetscapes, with many residents expressing a need for safer, more connected and accessible walking routes. Footpaths were often mentioned in the context of daily practicality – supporting older residents, families with prams and people with limited mobility. In townships and rural areas alike, respondents identified gaps in existing pedestrian infrastructure, calling for extended networks, better surfaces and crossings that support safe walking. There was a strong preference for footpaths that connect residential streets with schools, shops and open spaces.

Walkability was not just about infrastructure – it was closely tied to lifestyle and liveability. Respondents described walking as a valued part of their routine and identity in the Hills, linking it to social interaction, health and connection to nature. Suggestions included shared walking and cycling paths, shaded walkways and better lighting for evening use. The tone of responses showed that footpaths are not considered a minor detail – they are central to how residents want to experience and navigate their communities.

Quotes:

“I love the people and community atmosphere, as well as the natural environment and easy access to great environmental spaces to walk and ride eg bushland park and Fox Creek MTB park.”

“Walking trails. Living in the country but still close to city.”

“Townships (shops, cafes, small businesses), walking trails (Amy Gillett and others), open spaces, wineries, community, wildlife.”

5.7.3 Built form and design

Many respondents emphasised the importance of maintaining and enhancing the visual quality of streetscapes through consistent and appropriate built form and design. A recurring concern was the desire to preserve the distinct architectural character of town centres by using materials and styles that align with local heritage or rural identity. There was resistance to generic or modernist elements that could undermine the established aesthetic, with calls for stronger design guidelines and façade maintenance requirements. Respondents also highlighted the value of coherent signage, underground powerlines and the use of sympathetic lighting and street furniture that complements the surrounding built environment.

In addition to visual cohesion, some residents expressed a preference for small-scale, human-centred design that promotes walkability and comfort without overwhelming the streetscape. There were suggestions for the use of recycled or natural materials, subtle lighting design and thoughtful integration of greenery and seating. These comments reflect a nuanced understanding of how the built form shapes local identity and the pedestrian experience, underscoring the community’s desire for design outcomes that enhance both functionality and character.

Quotes:

“Ensuring there are guidelines that can be enforced with regards shop front appearance – sympathetic in appearance to the area – neutral colour etc.”

“Less Colourbond fences, more fences made from natural / traditional materials, e.g. stone, hedges.”

“Look at rezoning around transport corridors to increase density. Retrofitting existing buildings, increased building height within township centres etc.”

5.7.4 Street furniture and lighting (included due to percentage being similar to 5.7.3)

The theme of street furniture and lighting appeared in comments where respondents described the need for more welcoming, usable and inclusive public spaces. While not as dominant as landscaping or walkability, this theme revealed specific frustrations about the lack of basic infrastructure in town centres and along main streets. Residents requested more seating options for resting, especially for older adults, as well as shelters for shade and weather protection. Public lighting was also mentioned as a safety issue in areas where footpaths exist but feel unsafe at night.

Respondents connected the presence of street furniture and lighting with both comfort and functionality. They see streetscapes as places not just to move through, but to pause, connect and feel supported by well-maintained amenities. This includes lighting for visibility, bins to reduce litter, and benches or shaded areas that make main streets more accessible and appealing. The feedback shows that even simple additions can contribute significantly to how residents experience public space.

Quotes:

“Increasing amount of streetlights and footpaths which impacts on the rural nature of the place.”

“The streets lined with trees and gardens, seats to sit on, safe walking footpaths, pedestrian crossings, well-lit streets at night, public toilet facilities, parks, playgrounds, recreation and picnic areas, buildings of historical significance.”

“Having shared spaces - e.g. playgrounds, benches that are accessible/safe and serviced.”

5.7.5 Ward differences

The analysis reveals notable thematic differences in how residents from Ranges and Valleys wards engage with streetscape enhancement. Landscaping and tree planting emerges as the dominant theme in both wards, but particularly so in Ranges Ward, where it received 88 mentions compared to 66 in Valleys Ward. This suggests a strong preference among Ranges residents for preserving natural aesthetics and greenery, likely reflective of the ward’s more established garden suburbs and strong community interest in tree cover. Similarly, footpaths and walkability was more frequently raised in Ranges (24 responses vs 18 in Valleys), possibly due to its denser residential layout and higher pedestrian traffic, which drives demand for improved walking infrastructure and pedestrian-friendly design.

Conversely, street furniture and lighting was cited nearly four times more in Ranges than in Valleys (23 vs 6), indicating a greater emphasis on urban amenity and place-making in that ward. While both wards showed similar concern for traffic and road safety, Valleys Ward showed slightly more concern proportionally relative to total responses, likely due to its more rural road network and visibility issues. Built form and design also featured more strongly in Ranges (21 vs 14), aligning with the ward’s interest in maintaining character housing and village-style settings. Overall, the results highlight Ranges Ward’s orientation toward enhancing walkability, amenities and neighbourhood character, while Valleys Ward demonstrates a slightly more practical focus on road safety and vegetation.

Theme	Ranges Ward	Valleys Ward
Landscaping and tree planting	n = 88	n = 66
Traffic and road safety	n = 29	n = 25
Footpaths and walkability	n = 24	n = 18
Built form and design	n = 21	n = 14
Street furniture and lighting	n = 23	n = 6
Total	n = 185	n = 129



5.8 What ideas do you have for enhancing rural landscapes?

Responses to question 13, *‘What ideas do you have for enhancing rural landscapes?’* reflect a community that strongly values the environmental, visual and ecological integrity of the Adelaide Hills’ rural areas. Many respondents suggested enhancements that prioritise the restoration or reinforcement of natural systems, with **native vegetation planting**, biodiversity protection and **improved tree cover** among the most common suggestions. This reflects a landscape identity that is deeply intertwined with nature and a desire to preserve the Hills’ bushland and open vistas for future generations. Tree planting and habitat restoration were not just seen as aesthetic improvements, but also as important strategies for biodiversity support, shade, and climate resilience.

Another key theme was the need to **manage threats to rural landscape quality, particularly in the form of weeds and pests**. Several comments highlighted concerns around invasive species, the spread of blackberry and olive trees, and the impacts of feral animals on native flora and fauna. There was also frustration about rural land being subdivided or visually cluttered through inappropriate fencing, signage or infrastructure. These responses indicate a desire for proactive land stewardship and land use controls that reflect rural character, visual amenity and environmental function.

Although some responses were brief, many demonstrated a strong appreciation for the distinctiveness of the rural landscape and a commitment to its preservation. Suggestions often overlapped with broader sustainability goals, such as enhancing water-sensitive planting, limiting urban sprawl, and retaining scenic views. A small number of respondents also proposed educational approaches or collaborative community projects such as landcare-style planting programs or incentives for landowners to conserve native vegetation. Overall, the responses reinforce that rural landscape enhancement is not just about appearance, but about identity, stewardship and ecological health.

Theme	Response count	Percentage
Native vegetation	n = 18	29%
Tree planting	n = 15	24%
Weed and pest control	n = 12	19%
Biodiversity protection	n = 10	16%
Visual amenity	n = 8	13%
Total	n = 63	100%

The top three themes are explored in more detail as follows:

5.8.1 Native vegetation

Respondents frequently emphasised the importance of native vegetation as a cornerstone of the Adelaide Hills’ rural landscape identity. Suggestions focused on planting native species along roadsides, creeks and property boundaries, with several highlighting the ecological benefits of restoring native habitat. Many viewed native vegetation not only as a visual asset but as a necessary element of biodiversity protection, climate resilience and bushfire adaptation. There was a strong preference for low-maintenance, drought-resistant native plants that support wildlife and reflect the natural character of the region.

Community members also expressed concern about the loss of native vegetation due to development, invasive species and land clearance. They called for more proactive replanting, protection of remnant bushland and community-supported revegetation efforts. This indicates a strong public appetite for Council to lead or support long-term native vegetation strategies across both public and private land. The tone of many responses conveyed pride in the local natural environment and a desire to strengthen the integrity of the native landscape.

Quotes:

“Use native plants that support biodiversity and don’t require too much water.”

“More native trees and shrubs along rural roads – it brings the landscape back to life.”

“Protect remnant native vegetation – once it’s gone, it doesn’t come back.”

5.8.2 Tree planting

Tree planting was one of the most frequently mentioned ideas for enhancing rural landscapes, with respondents consistently linking it to improved visual amenity, climate resilience and ecological function. Many advocated for more trees along rural roads, in open paddocks, and around town fringes to restore the natural character of the Hills and provide shade and windbreaks. Respondents also noted that trees contribute to the identity and distinctiveness of rural areas, offering both aesthetic value and habitat for wildlife. There was a clear preference for species that are appropriate to the region, ideally native, and suited to long-term sustainability.

In addition to new plantings, some responses reflected concern about the loss of existing mature trees and called for stronger protections. Others suggested integrating tree planting with community initiatives, such as landcare programs or incentives for private landholders. The tone was generally forward-looking, with many seeing tree planting as a visible, low-cost, high-impact investment in the landscape that aligns with broader goals around environmental health and climate adaptation.

Quotes:

“More tree planting along property lines and rural roads – the area looks bare in places.”

“Bring back native trees to help cool the environment and support birdlife.”

“Protect old trees and plant new ones – both are important for the Hills’ character.”

5.8.3 Weed and pest control

Weed and pest control emerged as a practical and recurring theme in responses about enhancing rural landscapes, with many residents expressing concern over the unchecked spread of invasive species. Blackberry, olive trees and feral animals were mentioned multiple times as threats to both native vegetation and the visual quality of the landscape. Respondents emphasised the need for more consistent, visible management strategies—particularly on roadsides, public land and neglected properties. There was a strong sense that ineffective weed and pest control undermines other efforts to protect biodiversity and rural character.

Several responses also reflected frustration with the perceived lack of enforcement or follow-through on existing weed management obligations. Suggestions included coordinated control programs, Council-led education, and stronger support for landowners in managing their responsibilities. The theme reveals a strong public expectation for local government to be more active in addressing landscape degradation caused by weeds and pests, especially where private efforts are insufficient or uncoordinated.

Quotes:

“Blackberries are out of control – they’re choking creeks and roadsides.”

“Support landowners with weed control – it’s too big a job for individuals alone.”

“Remove feral olives and pest plants – they ruin the native bush.”

5.8.4 Ward differences

Analysis of the responses to “What ideas do you have for enhancing rural landscapes?” reveals a strong alignment in thematic priorities across both the Ranges and Valleys wards. Native vegetation and tree planting were the top two themes in both areas, reflecting a shared community emphasis on ecological restoration, biodiversity support and reinforcing rural character. Respondents in both wards frequently mentioned the visual and environmental benefits of planting native species and increasing tree cover along roadsides and on rural properties. This consistent concern highlights the value placed on environmental stewardship and preserving the natural landscape that defines the Adelaide Hills.

Smaller but still significant proportions of respondents in each ward identified weed and pest control, biodiversity protection and visual amenity as important areas for improvement. These themes reflect community awareness of both ecological pressures and the aesthetic quality of rural settings. While the response counts were similar, the Ranges ward had slightly higher numbers in biodiversity and visual amenity, possibly due to more direct interaction with high-profile conservation areas or visible tourism corridors. Overall, the consistency in themes suggests that residents across both wards share a common vision for protecting and enhancing the Hills’ rural landscape through low-impact, nature-based solutions.

Theme	Ranges Ward (response count)	Ranges Ward (%)	Valleys Ward (response count)	Valleys Ward (%)
Native vegetation	n = 16	31%	n = 15	32%
Tree planting	n = 13	25%	n = 12	26%
Weed and pest control	n = 9	17%	n = 8	17%
Biodiversity protection	n = 8	15%	n = 7	15%
Visual amenity	n = 6	12%	n = 5	11%
Total	n = 52	100%	n = 47	100%



6. Your wellbeing and sense of community

Questions 14-17 relate to respondents' physical and mental wellbeing as well as their sense of connection to the Adelaide Hills community.

6.1 On a scale of 0-10, how connected do you feel to your Adelaide Hills community with 0 being 'not at all' and 10 being 'very connected'?

The distribution of connection scores shows that a **strong majority of respondents feel positively connected to their Adelaide Hills community**. The most common response was 10 (n = 109), representing 27% of all answers, while 60% of respondents rated their sense of connection as 8 or higher. The mean score of 7.2 and a median of 8 indicate generally high levels of social connection across the region. Very low connection scores (0–3) were rare, comprising just 7% of responses. This suggests that while some residents may feel isolated, the overwhelming sentiment reflects a sense of belonging and engagement with the broader community.

Connection Score (0–10)	Response count	Percentage
0 (not at all)	n = 7	2%
1	n = 4	1%
2	n = 5	1%
3	n = 10	3%
4	n = 17	4%
5	n = 32	8%
6	n = 41	10%
7	n = 42	11%
8	n = 72	18%
9	n = 59	15%
10 (very connected)	n = 109	27%
Total	n = 398	100%

6.1.1 Ward differences

Ward-level analysis reveals a modest difference in perceived community connection between Ranges and Valleys wards. Respondents in Ranges Ward reported a higher average connection score of 7.34, compared to 6.99 in Valleys Ward. The median scores also differed slightly, with Ranges at 8 and Valleys at 7. While both wards show strong overall connection, the slightly higher mean and upper quartile in Ranges Ward suggests that residents in this area may experience a greater sense of social engagement or community belonging. This could reflect differences in settlement patterns, access to local hubs or social infrastructure, or community cohesion across townships.

6.2 How would you currently rate your overall physical wellbeing on a scale from 0-10, with 0 being 'extremely poor' and 10 being 'as good as it could be'?

The distribution of physical wellbeing scores indicates that **most respondents feel positively about their current health**. The majority rated themselves at the upper end of the scale, with 25% selecting 8, 19% choosing 9 and 17% giving the highest possible score of 10. Together, these top three scores account for 61% of all responses, suggesting a generally high level of physical wellbeing across the community. Lower scores were uncommon, with fewer than 10% of respondents rating themselves below 5. This trend reflects a largely healthy population with relatively few individuals experiencing poor physical health, although the small number of very low scores (e.g. n = 1 for both 0 and 2) does indicate the presence of some vulnerable individuals.

Physical wellbeing Score (0–10)	Response count	Percentage
0 (extremely poor)	n = 1	0%
2	n = 1	0%
3	n = 9	2%
4	n = 10	3%
5	n = 21	5%
6	n = 45	11%
7	n = 70	18%
8	n = 98	25%
9	n = 75	19%
10 (as good as it could be)	n = 68	17%
Total	n = 398	100%

6.2.1 Ward differences

There is a small difference in self-reported physical wellbeing between Ranges and Valleys wards. Respondents from Ranges Ward reported a mean score of 8.34, slightly higher than the 8.00 average in Valleys Ward. Median scores were identical at 8, and both wards shared the same upper quartile value of 9, suggesting that a majority of residents in each area perceive their physical wellbeing positively. However, the significantly wider standard deviation in Ranges Ward (5.69 vs 4.23) and its unusually high maximum score (88) suggest the presence of one or more data entry anomalies or outliers. Despite this, both wards exhibit a strong general trend of high wellbeing, with little indication of geographic disparity.

6.3 How would you currently rate your overall mental wellbeing on a scale from 0-10, with 0 being 'extremely poor' and 10 being 'as good as it could be'?

The distribution of mental wellbeing scores reveals a **generally positive outlook among respondents, though slightly more varied than physical wellbeing**. The most common rating was 8 (n = 106), followed by 10 (n = 78) and 9 (n = 74), together comprising 66% of all responses. This indicates that two-thirds of participants feel their mental wellbeing is strong. However, a wider spread in lower scores is evident, with 11% rating themselves at 6 or below and a small but notable group reporting very low scores of 0–3 (n = 12). These results suggest that while the majority of residents enjoy good mental health, a minority are experiencing significant challenges, underscoring the importance of accessible mental health supports and community-connectedness initiatives.

Mental wellbeing Score (0–10)	Response count	Percentage
0 (extremely poor)	n = 1	0%
1	n = 2	1%
2	n = 2	1%
3	n = 7	2%
4	n = 9	2%
5	n = 20	5%
6	n = 29	7%
7	n = 65	16%
8	n = 106	27%
9	n = 74	19%
10 (as good as it could be)	n = 78	20%
Total	n = 393	100%

6.3.1 Ward differences

Ward-level analysis of mental wellbeing scores shows that residents in Ranges Ward reported a higher average score (mean = 8.19) than those in Valleys Ward (mean = 7.73). Median and upper quartile scores were consistent across both wards at 8 and 9 respectively, but Valleys Ward showed slightly more variation, with a wider standard deviation (1.89 vs 1.57) and a lower minimum score of 1. These results suggest that while mental wellbeing is generally strong across both areas, Ranges Ward respondents feel marginally more positive on average, and Valleys Ward may have a slightly broader spread in wellbeing experiences, including a few residents facing greater mental health challenges.

6.4 Thinking about your experience of living in the Adelaide Hills Council, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following

The responses to key statements, in Question 17, about living in the Adelaide Hills Council area reveal a generally positive sentiment, particularly in relation to safety, with **93% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they feel safe in their neighbourhood**. Similarly, a **substantial majority believe the Council area is a good place to raise a family**, with 92% selecting “agree” or “strongly agree”. Perceptions of the area as a good place to grow old were also positive but more mixed, with 70% expressing agreement and 30% either neutral or disagreeing. This suggests that while the Adelaide Hills is viewed as a desirable place for families, there may be barriers or concerns regarding ageing in place that warrant closer attention. Regarding ‘getting to the place you want to go’ 55% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed while 45% were neutral or disagreed showing there is a divide in transport access across the community.

Views on inclusion and Council performance were more divided. While half of respondents (50%) agreed that diversity is welcomed and celebrated, 50% selected “neutral or neither agree nor disagree”, indicating uncertainty or limited visibility of inclusive practices. Similarly, only 30% felt that elected members appropriately represent their views, with 70% disagreeing or remaining neutral. The statement on disability access drew the highest level of neutrality (52%) and 25% disagreement, suggesting a perceived lack of clarity or confidence in equitable service provision. These results point to specific areas—particularly governance transparency, accessibility and community representation, where Council could strengthen its engagement and communication.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total responses
The Council area is a good place to raise a family	202	161	28	4	0	395
The Council area is a good place to grow old	104	171	64	50	4	393
Diversity is welcomed and celebrated in the Adelaide Hills Council area	44	152	154	38	6	394
People with disability have the same access to services and activities	19	72	206	78	19	394
I feel safe in my neighbourhood	186	180	16	12	1	395
I believe my Elected Council Members represent my views	25	91	179	66	31	392
I can easily get to the places I need to	56	162	60	91	24	393

6.4.1 Ward differences

Ward-level analysis of community sentiment shows broadly consistent views across Ranges and Valleys residents in key areas such as safety and raising a family. In both wards, more than 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they feel safe in their neighbourhood, with slightly more in Ranges (48% strongly agree) compared to Valleys (46%). Similarly, the Adelaide Hills was widely regarded as a good place to raise a family, with 74% of Ranges respondents and 73% of Valleys respondents expressing agreement. Views on growing old in the area were more varied. While 55% in Ranges agreed or strongly agreed it was a good place to grow old, only 51% in Valleys did so, and the proportion who disagreed was slightly higher in Valleys (16%) than in Ranges (14%), suggesting modest differences in perceptions of ageing-related support and infrastructure.

There were more notable differences in perceptions of inclusion and representation. Only 30% of respondents in either ward felt that their Elected Members represent their views, but Valleys residents showed slightly higher levels of disagreement (26%) compared to Ranges (24%). Views on whether people with disability have equal access to services and activities were also more divided in Valleys, where 29% disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared to 18% in Ranges. Likewise, while roughly half of respondents in both wards agreed that diversity is welcomed, neutral responses were more common in Valleys,

indicating possible uncertainty or less visibility of inclusion efforts. These patterns suggest that while both wards share strong positive sentiment in relation to safety and lifestyle, residents in Valleys may feel somewhat less confident about accessibility, equity and representation.

6.5 Would you like to tell us more about your choices?

Respondents were able to provide further information about their selections for this question. Key themes for this open-ended question were as follows:

Key theme	Response count	Percentage
Transport and infrastructure	n = 85	41%
Mobility and accessibility	n = 65	31%
Council representation and trust	n = 59	29%
Living and housing	n = 38	18%
Community and inclusion	n = 36	17%
Total	n = 207	100%

The top three key themes are analysed further as follows:

6.5.1 Transport and infrastructure

Transport and infrastructure emerged as the most prominent theme in open-ended responses to “Would you like to tell us more about your choices?”, accounting for 41% of all comments (n = 85). Respondents frequently raised issues related to road conditions, the adequacy of public transport, and traffic flow in both rural and township areas. Common concerns included insufficient bus services, poor road maintenance, and unsafe or congested intersections. The data suggests that while many residents appreciate the rural lifestyle, there is widespread frustration with the accessibility and reliability of transport systems, particularly for those without private vehicles or those living in more isolated locations.

Participants often highlighted the need for investment in safer road infrastructure and more consistent public transport schedules to better connect smaller communities with local hubs and Adelaide. Suggestions ranged from traffic-calming measures and improved signage to greater route coverage and coordination with Adelaide Metro services. The high frequency and specificity of these comments indicate that transport is a key determinant of liveability in the Adelaide Hills and a critical area for council planning and advocacy.

Quotes:

“There’s no safe or easy way to walk or cycle into town – and the bus service is infrequent and unreliable.”

“Access to Main Street difficult as footpaths in poor condition and parking is limited – especially on weekends.”

“Rural roads are getting busier and more dangerous – we need better shoulders and lower speed limits in key spots.”

6.5.2 Mobility and accessibility

Mobility and accessibility was the second most frequently mentioned theme, appearing in 31% of open-ended responses (n = 65). Respondents expressed concern about the lack of infrastructure supporting people with mobility impairments, elderly residents and others who require accessible public spaces. Common issues included uneven footpaths, inadequate kerb ramps, poor lighting, and the absence of pedestrian infrastructure in rural areas and smaller towns. Many responses also noted that even when facilities exist, they are not always maintained to a safe or usable standard, creating barriers to participation in community life for less mobile residents.

The comments reflect a broader call for inclusive design in both public and civic spaces, with some residents noting that accessibility appears to be an afterthought in planning decisions. The concerns were not limited to disability-related access, but also included challenges faced by parents with prams, older adults and anyone navigating hills terrain or traffic-heavy roads on foot. These issues highlight the need for targeted investment in universal design improvements that promote independence and dignity for all community members.

Quotes:

“There are no footpaths near us and it’s dangerous for anyone who isn’t fully mobile to get around.”

“I have no mobility issues, have lived in Crafers for 40 years, but it’s clear many parts of town are not wheelchair-friendly.”

“It’s not just disabled people – elderly neighbours and parents with prams also struggle with uneven paths and poor crossings.”

6.5.3 Council representation and trust

Council representation and trust featured in 29% of open-ended responses (n = 59), reflecting a significant level of community concern about how effectively the Adelaide Hills Council engages with and responds to its residents. Many respondents expressed frustration with what they perceive as a lack of transparency, accountability or genuine community consultation in Council decision-making processes. Several felt that their views were not reflected in policy outcomes or that decisions were made without adequate public input, particularly on issues such as development approvals, infrastructure priorities and environmental management.

While some respondents acknowledged the challenges of balancing diverse community needs, many comments suggested a disconnect between Council leadership and everyday residents. Calls for better communication, more accessible forums for engagement and stronger representation from elected members were common. The strength of these views indicates that rebuilding trust and improving two-way communication could be pivotal to enhancing local governance and resident satisfaction.

Quotes:

“Council doesn’t listen to us – decisions are made before consultation even begins.”

“It’s hard to feel represented when community feedback is routinely ignored or sidelined.”

“We need elected members who actually speak for their communities, not push through agendas.”

6.5.4 Ward differences

The analysis of open-text responses to “Would you like to tell us more about your choices?” reveals broad thematic consistency across Ranges and Valleys wards, though with some subtle differences in emphasis. Mobility and accessibility was the most common theme in both wards, accounting for 21% of responses in Ranges and 19% in Valleys. Respondents frequently described challenges with navigating public spaces, particularly due to poor footpaths, inadequate kerb ramps and barriers for elderly residents or those with disabilities. These concerns highlight a shared community priority around improving physical access and inclusive infrastructure in both rural and township areas.

Council representation and trust also featured prominently in both wards, slightly more so in Valleys (20%) than in Ranges (19%). Comments often reflected frustration with Council decision-making processes, perceived lack of transparency and a sense that community voices were not being meaningfully included. This theme suggests that residents across the region feel a disconnect between elected representatives and local concerns, and reinforces the need for stronger community engagement and clearer communication about how feedback is used. That this issue was consistently raised across both wards indicates it is systemic rather than geographically isolated.

Themes such as community and inclusion and living and housing were equally present in both wards, with similar response rates (10–13%). These comments typically referenced the value of social cohesion, concern for overdevelopment and the need for better housing diversity or affordability. Interestingly, natural environment was mentioned more in Valleys Ward (6%) than in Ranges Ward (3%), perhaps reflecting localised concerns about vegetation loss or development encroachment. Overall, while the core concerns are shared between wards, the relative weighting of responses points to slightly different lived experiences and environmental contexts that shape residents' priorities.

Key theme	Ranges Ward (response count)	Ranges Ward (%)	Valleys Ward (response count)	Valleys Ward (%)
Council representation and trust	n = 34	19%	n = 25	20%
Mobility and accessibility	n = 39	21%	n = 23	19%
Community and inclusion	n = 23	13%	n = 13	10%
Living and housing	n = 23	13%	n = 13	10%
Natural environment	n = 6	3%	n = 8	6%
Total	n = 125	100%	n = 125	100%

7. Your satisfaction with Adelaide Hills Council organisation

Questions 18-19 sought information about respondents' level of satisfaction with Adelaide Hills Council as an organisation and sought feedback on respondents' relationship with council.

7.1 Which statement below best describes your feelings about how Adelaide Hills Council is doing as an organisation?

Community sentiment about how the Adelaide Hills Council is performing reveals a mix of **moderate dissatisfaction, cautious approval and a desire for improvement**. The most common response was "There are one or two things that bother/concern me" (33%), closely followed by "I think there is a lot of improvement needed" (31%). Together, these account for nearly two-thirds of all responses (64%), suggesting that while outright discontent may not be dominant, many residents see room for improvement and hold specific concerns about Council operations, services or decision-making.

Approximately one-quarter of respondents (24%) expressed general satisfaction, and a small number indicated they are very satisfied (4%). An additional 5% felt they lacked enough information to make a judgment, and 4% said they don't really have an opinion. This shows that a small portion of the community feels neutral or disengaged from Council matters.

These results reinforce the need for clear, transparent communication and tangible improvements in the areas of greatest concern. The relatively low levels of strong satisfaction and the presence of neutral or uncertain responses suggest opportunities for the Council to improve trust and community confidence through more responsive service delivery and governance.

Statement	Response count	Percentage
There are one or two things that bother/concern me	n = 118	33%
I think there is a lot of improvement needed	n = 113	31%
I'm satisfied	n = 87	24%
I don't really have an opinion	n = 15	4%
I don't have enough information to respond	n = 19	5%
I'm very satisfied	n = 13	4%
Total	n = 365	100%

7.1.1 Ward differences

Ward-level differences in sentiment toward Adelaide Hills Council show broadly similar patterns but with a few notable distinctions. In both Ranges and Valleys wards, the most common response was "There are one or two things that bother/concern me", selected by 34% of Ranges respondents and 32% in Valleys. Satisfaction was relatively balanced across wards, with 24% of Ranges and 25% of Valleys residents selecting "I'm satisfied". Very few in either ward reported being "very satisfied" – 5% in Ranges and just 2% in Valleys.

A slightly larger proportion of Ranges respondents selected "I don't have enough information to respond" (7% vs 4% in Valleys), and 4% in each ward chose "I don't really have an opinion". These neutral or undecided responses suggest that some community members may not feel adequately informed or engaged to form a clear view. Overall, the data indicates that while the general pattern of concern and moderate satisfaction is consistent across the district, Valleys respondents are marginally more likely to express a desire for significant improvement.

7.2 Tell us why you feel like this...

The most dominant theme in responses to “Tell us why you feel like this...” was **Council representation and trust**, cited in over half of all comments (53%). Many residents expressed concerns about perceived gaps in transparency, consultation and responsiveness. A common thread across these responses was frustration with how decisions are made – often described as top-down or disconnected from community sentiment. This theme underscores a significant challenge for Adelaide Hills Council in rebuilding confidence in governance and better communicating how resident feedback is incorporated into policies and services.

Other frequently mentioned themes included **Transport and infrastructure** (18%) and the **Natural environment** (15%). Respondents voiced concerns about road maintenance, traffic safety and access to reliable transport, issues particularly acute for those in more remote areas or without private vehicles. Comments related to the environment often focused on perceived overdevelopment, loss of vegetation and lack of environmental protections, suggesting that changes to the landscape are seen not just as aesthetic issues, but as indicators of deeper systemic concerns around planning and sustainability.

Themes such as Community and inclusion (13%) and Living and housing (10%) also featured, albeit to a lesser degree. These responses reflected a desire for greater social cohesion, more diverse housing options and a stronger sense of belonging, particularly for marginalised or newer residents. Overall, the results point to a complex intersection of policy, perception and lived experience, with trust in Council emerging as a core factor influencing broader attitudes toward Council performance.

Key theme	Response count	Percentage
Council representation and trust	n = 152	53%
Transport and infrastructure	n = 52	18%
Natural environment	n = 44	15%
Community and inclusion	n = 36	13%
Living and housing	n = 29	10%
Total	n = 313	100%

The top three themes were further analysed as follows:

7.2.1 Council representation and trust

The theme of Council representation and trust was the most prominent in the open-ended responses to “Tell us why you feel like this...”, appearing in 53% of comments (n = 152). Many respondents described a sense of detachment from Council decision-making, feeling that consultation processes were either tokenistic or poorly communicated. There was a recurrent perception that the Council prioritises administrative or political agendas over the lived experiences of local communities. These sentiments were expressed across both wards and demographic groups, highlighting a systemic disconnect rather than isolated dissatisfaction. The lack of visible responsiveness to community feedback was frequently cited as a source of erosion in trust.

A number of responses also expressed disappointment in elected members, with some noting that decisions appear to be predetermined regardless of public input. Others acknowledged the complexity of Council’s role but still felt a stronger commitment to transparency, accountability and inclusion was needed. The consistent emphasis on this theme suggests that rebuilding trust is not just about addressing service issues but also about reforming how Council communicates, listens and responds. Effective representation will likely require more than engagement events – it must include demonstrable responsiveness and ongoing dialogue with the community.

Quotes:

“I feel like the Council already makes decisions and then pretends to consult with us after the fact.”

“There’s no transparency – I don’t know who represents me or how to have my voice heard.”

“You can’t build trust when the same concerns are raised year after year and nothing changes.”

7.2.2 Transport and infrastructure

Transport and infrastructure was the second most common theme in responses to “Tell us why you feel like this...”, featuring in 18% of comments (n = 52). Respondents consistently raised issues with deteriorating roads, poor maintenance, lack of street lighting and limited public transport options. These concerns spanned both town centres and rural areas, with many highlighting safety issues at intersections, narrow verges or a general feeling of being neglected in Council planning priorities. For some, inadequate transport infrastructure directly affected their ability to participate in community life – especially older residents, those without private vehicles or people with mobility limitations.

There was also widespread frustration at the slow pace of infrastructure upgrades and perceived inequity in how resources are allocated. Some felt their township or locality was overlooked in favour of larger population centres. Others noted that growth in the region was not being matched by adequate investment in supporting infrastructure, such as parking, road safety treatments or pedestrian pathways. Overall, this theme reflects both immediate lived inconveniences and deeper concerns about long-term planning and equity across the district.

Quotes:

“The roads are narrow and dangerous, especially with increased traffic – nothing’s being done to fix this.”

“Public transport is unreliable or non-existent where I live – we’re completely car-dependent.”

“Street lighting is poor and intersections are unsafe – it feels like infrastructure is an afterthought.”

7.2.3 Natural environment

The Natural environment was identified as a key theme in 15% of open-text responses (n = 44) to “Tell us why you feel like this...”. Respondents frequently expressed concern about the loss of vegetation, tree removal and the visual impact of development on previously green or semi-rural landscapes. These comments often carried a sense of frustration that environmental values were being sacrificed in favour of urbanisation or convenience, with several participants noting a lack of long-term environmental planning or perceived disregard for the ecological character of the Hills. The preservation of native flora, wildlife corridors and bushland was seen as not just a matter of aesthetics, but essential to maintaining the identity and liveability of the region.

Many responses suggested that environmental stewardship should be more central to Council’s strategic vision, particularly given the Hills’ ecological significance and community attachment to its landscapes. Residents described a disconnect between stated sustainability goals and on-the-ground outcomes, especially where clearing or development had occurred. This dissonance appeared to contribute to broader distrust in Council processes and a sense of loss among those who value the natural setting. The prominence of this theme suggests that stronger environmental protections and clearer communication about conservation priorities could play a key role in restoring confidence and fostering community alignment.

Quotes:

“Every year more trees disappear – the character of the Hills is being lost bit by bit.”

“I chose to live here for the environment, not to watch it get paved over for convenience.”

“There’s a lot of talk about sustainability but not much visible action – especially when it comes to development.”

7.2.4 Ward differences

Across both wards, Council representation and trust was the most dominant theme, accounting for 44% of responses in Ranges Ward and 45% in Valleys Ward. This consistent concern suggests a widespread perception – regardless of location – that Council decision-making lacks transparency, responsiveness or genuine engagement with the community. It reinforces earlier findings that trust and representation are fundamental to how residents evaluate Council performance.

Notable variation appears in relation to the Natural environment theme. While both wards expressed environmental concerns, it was more prominent in Ranges Ward (15%) than in Valleys Ward (10%). This may reflect higher development pressure in peri-urban areas of the Ranges, or stronger environmental advocacy within those communities. Other themes – including Living and housing, Community and inclusion and Mobility and accessibility – were present at comparable levels across both wards, suggesting that many issues are broadly shared, but may differ in intensity based on local context.

Key theme	Ranges Ward (response count)	Ranges Ward (%)	Valleys Ward (response count)	Valleys Ward (%)
Community and inclusion	n = 24	12%	n = 11	8%
Council representation and trust	n = 87	44%	n = 61	45%
Living and housing	n = 17	9%	n = 12	9%
Mobility and accessibility	n = 11	6%	n = 9	7%
Natural environment	n = 30	15%	n = 13	10%
Total	n = 198	100%	n = 136	100%

7.3 How do you currently get most of your information about Council?

Respondents could select more than one choice to Question 20. The table captures the frequency of choices respondents made between the different information channels.

The survey results reveal a diverse range of communication channels through which residents currently access information about Adelaide Hills Council, with a clear preference for digital formats. The **Hills Voice e-newsletter (n = 147) and Council website (n = 143) emerged as the most frequently used sources**, indicating that well-maintained, regularly updated digital platforms are effectively reaching much of the community. These findings reinforce the importance of continuing to invest in user-friendly, content-rich online communication tools that provide timely updates on projects, consultations and decisions.

Traditional media still holds relevance, with the **Courier newspaper cited by 107 respondents**. While this is lower than digital channels, it underscores the role of local print media in reaching older residents or those less active online. **Social media channels collectively recorded high engagement**, with Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and X (formerly Twitter) each being selected by 99 respondents. This suggests that residents are engaging with Council content across multiple platforms and that a multi-channel strategy remains essential for reaching different demographic groups.

Interpersonal and community-based methods were also present, though with smaller numbers. Respondents noted sources such as friends and family, neighbours, signage, and face-to-face engagement at community centres. These responses highlight the ongoing importance of local networks and place-based communication, especially for those less engaged with digital tools. While lower in frequency, direct contact through letters, elected members, and Council staff still plays a meaningful role in building trust and reinforcing transparency. Taken together, these findings suggest that while digital engagement is dominant, personal and place-based communication approaches remain valuable, especially in maintaining inclusion and trust across diverse community segments.

Information source	Count
Hills Voice E-Newsletter	147
Council website	143
Courier newspaper	107
Council social media: Facebook, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram	99
Neighbours, friends and family	98
Signage around the council area	70
Letter or email From council staff	51
Face to face at community centres and libraries	41

Information source	Count
Council meetings / agendas and minutes	21
Directly from elected members	20
Community / resident association meetings and newsletters	20
Phone call or sms from council staff	17
Hills Voice engagement hub	14
Other	13

Of those who answered other responses included: *residents Facebook groups, I don't hear anything, local government site link, ABC country hour and Council member interviews.*

7.4 How can we improve our communication with you in the future?

The analysis of responses to “How can we improve our communication with you in the future?” shows a **clear preference for more accessible and consistent digital communication methods**. The most common theme was **email and digital newsletters**, mentioned in 23% of responses, suggesting that many residents value receiving direct, curated updates. Respondents often cited this method as efficient, non-intrusive and easy to reference, especially when newsletters are well-structured and timely. This highlights an opportunity for Council to expand or refine its existing e-newsletter offerings to ensure residents stay informed and engaged.

Print communication was the second most mentioned theme (20%), reflecting the ongoing importance of physical mail-outs, particularly for residents who may be less digitally connected. This group includes older populations or those in areas with unreliable internet access. Similarly, 14% of respondents suggested **improving or increasing use of social media**, indicating that these platforms are valuable for quick updates, event announcements and visual storytelling, especially among younger or more mobile residents. Notably, 19% indicated that no changes were needed, suggesting a baseline of satisfaction but also reinforcing the importance of maintaining current standards and reliability.

Other themes, such as direct contact or alerts (6%) and public meetings and engagement (5%), reveal that some residents want more personalised or face-to-face interaction. These methods could be particularly valuable during high-impact consultations or in response to localised issues. While only a small number of respondents mentioned website and online updates (3%), this may reflect a desire for improvements to the website's functionality, rather than a preference for it as a primary channel. Overall, these findings show the need for a multi-channel approach that balances digital reach with inclusive accessibility.

Key theme	Response count	Percentage
Email and digital newsletters	n = 39	23%
Print communication	n = 35	20%
No change needed	n = 33	19%
Social media	n = 24	14%
Direct contact or alerts	n = 10	6%
Public meetings and engagement	n = 9	5%
Website and online updates	n = 6	3%
Total	n = 156	100%

7.5 Thinking about how Council engages with the community, how satisfied are you with the opportunity to engage with issues that affect your area?

Question 22 asked about community views on Council consultation which revealed a broad mix of satisfaction, neutrality and calls for change. The **most common sentiment was general satisfaction**, expressed by 38% of respondents, with a further 4% indicating they were very satisfied. This means that 42% of respondents feel there are adequate opportunities to engage with issues affecting their area.

However, this still **leaves a majority who either saw room for improvement or were undecided**. Almost one-quarter (24%) believed “a lot of improvement is needed”, while 17% noted “one or two things that bother me”, indicating mild to moderate dissatisfaction. In addition, 9% of respondents selected “I don't really have an opinion” and 7% felt they lacked enough information to respond.

These results suggest that while there is a foundation of satisfaction with engagement, a significant proportion of the community remains ambivalent or concerned. Strengthening visibility, accessibility and responsiveness in engagement processes will be critical to lifting overall satisfaction and improving trust.

Engagement satisfaction level	Response count	Percentage
I'm very satisfied	n = 15	4%
I'm satisfied	n = 137	38%
I think there is a lot of improvement needed	n = 85	24%
There are one or two things that bother me	n = 62	17%
I don't really have an opinion	n = 34	9%
I don't have enough information to respond	n = 25	7%
Total	n = 358	100%

7.5.1 Ward differences

Ward-level differences in satisfaction with Council engagement reveal a clear divergence in experience between Ranges and Valleys residents. In Ranges Ward, 44% of respondents reported being “satisfied” and a further 5% selected “very satisfied”, bringing total satisfaction to 49%. In Valleys Ward, 31% of respondents were “satisfied” and 3% were “very satisfied”, totalling 34%. This indicates notably higher overall satisfaction in the Ranges Ward.

Conversely, a greater proportion of Valleys respondents indicated that “a lot of improvement is needed” (28% vs 20% in Ranges), reflecting stronger dissatisfaction in the more rural parts of the district. Neutral or disengaged responses were relatively balanced, with 10% of Valleys respondents selecting “I don't really have an opinion” compared to 9% in Ranges, and 9% in Valleys choosing “I don't have enough information to respond” versus 6% in Ranges.

Overall, the findings suggest that while Ranges residents are more likely to feel satisfied with current engagement opportunities, Valleys residents are more likely to desire improvement – pointing to a need for targeted, place-based engagement strategies in less connected or more geographically dispersed communities.

Engagement satisfaction level	Ranges Ward (count)	Ranges Ward (%)	Valleys Ward (count)	Valleys Ward (%)
I'm very satisfied	n = 10	5%	n = 5	3%
I'm satisfied	n = 87	44%	n = 46	31%
I think there is a lot of improvement needed	n = 40	20%	n = 41	28%
There are one or two things that bother me	n = 29	15%	n = 20	13%
I don't really have an opinion	n = 18	9%	n = 14	10%
I don't have enough information to respond	n = 12	6%	n = 13	9%
Total	n = 196	100%	n = 139	100%

7.6 How would you like to participate or be more involved in local issues and Council decision making in the future?

Question 23 asked how participants would like to be more involved in local issues and Council decision-making. One-third of respondents (33%) indicated they were **content with the current level of engagement** or expressed no interest in further participation. This sentiment suggests a cohort that either feels adequately informed, is disengaged from Council matters or prefers to delegate responsibility to elected representatives. While this may reflect satisfaction in some cases, it also highlights a potential gap in civic engagement that could be addressed through more tailored or accessible outreach.

For those who do wish to be more involved, **online surveys or feedback mechanisms were the most preferred method** (30%). This preference reflects a growing demand for low-barrier, convenient and time-efficient forms of engagement that align with modern lifestyles. A further 25% expressed **interest in community forums or meetings**, showing that in-person, dialogue-driven engagement still has strong relevance, particularly for those who value discussion, relationship-building or more detailed exchanges with Council representatives. Less common but still important were options like advisory groups or committees (7%) and participatory budgeting or voting (4%), which appeal to residents seeking more active or decision-making roles. These findings point to a diverse mix of engagement preferences and support the need for a flexible, multi-modal approach to community participation.

Key theme	Response count	Percentage
No interest / happy as is	n = 59	33%
Online surveys or feedback	n = 54	30%
Community forums or meetings	n = 44	25%
Advisory groups or committees	n = 12	7%
Voting or participatory budgeting	n = 7	4%
Total	n = 176	100%

The top three themes are analysed further as follows:

7.6.1 No interest / happy as is

The most common response to how residents would like to be more involved in Council decision-making was “No interest / happy as is”, accounting for 33% of responses. This group either expressed contentment with current engagement

opportunities or a clear lack of desire for further involvement. For many, this may reflect a sense of trust in the Council's existing processes, a belief that their voice is unlikely to influence outcomes, or simply limited time or interest in civic affairs. This theme also indicates that for a notable portion of the community, participation is not a priority – whether due to satisfaction, disengagement or perceived irrelevance.

This trend is important to acknowledge because it challenges the assumption that all residents want deeper involvement. Instead, it highlights the need for a nuanced approach that respects varying levels of interest while ensuring participation remains open, transparent and accessible for those who wish to engage more actively. Maintaining passive satisfaction can be just as critical as encouraging active engagement, especially if Council decisions continue to reflect broader community needs and values.

Quotes:

"I'm happy with how things are – I don't feel the need to be more involved."

"No time or interest. I trust the Council to manage things."

"I just want to be informed, not participate in decision-making."

7.6.2 Online surveys or feedback

Online surveys or feedback was the second most common theme, with 30% of respondents identifying it as their preferred method for future involvement in Council decision-making. Many participants favoured the convenience and flexibility of digital engagement, particularly those with busy schedules, mobility limitations or limited interest in attending in-person meetings. Online tools were seen to provide input quickly and anonymously, allowing residents to engage on their own terms. This feedback supports the continued use and expansion of survey-based consultation, especially if promoted effectively and designed to be easy to complete.

Respondents also expressed a preference for targeted feedback opportunities, short, topic-specific surveys or regular check-ins that focus on matters relevant to their local area. This reflects a desire not just for digital access but for more meaningful and personalised consultation. The findings suggest that well-timed and clearly communicated online engagement, paired with visible follow-up, could significantly strengthen Council's relationship with the community and improve perceptions of responsiveness and transparency.

Quotes:

"I'd happily complete online surveys if they're short and specific to my area."

"Online feedback is easy – I just want to be able to share my thoughts quickly and move on."

"More online surveys please – it's the only way I can engage with a full-time job and kids."

7.6.3 Community forums or meetings

Community forums or meetings were nominated by 25% of respondents as their preferred method for future involvement, highlighting an enduring appetite for face-to-face engagement. Many participants valued the opportunity to hear different perspectives, ask questions and engage in deeper discussions with Council representatives and other community members. In-person forums were often described as more meaningful and transparent than written communications, particularly when residents could see how their feedback contributed to outcomes. This suggests that, while digital tools offer convenience, forums remain vital for building trust, context and connection.

However, respondents also called for improvements in how forums are structured, promoted and facilitated. Comments suggested that sessions need to be well-timed, inclusive and genuinely interactive, not simply opportunities for one-way communication or information delivery. There was particular interest in more localised sessions that address township-specific concerns or projects. For Council, this presents an opportunity to strengthen engagement by offering a balanced mix of digital and in-person formats, tailored to community expectations and capacity.

Quotes:

"Public meetings give people a chance to talk face-to-face and really be heard."

"More forums, especially in rural areas – it's hard to attend ones held too far away."

"Meetings where Council actually listens and responds would make a big difference."

7.6.4 Ward differences

Ward-level analysis shows broadly consistent preferences across the two wards, with some variation in the prominence of individual themes. In both Valleys and Ranges Wards, the largest group of respondents indicated “No interest / happy as is”, accounting for 31% and 34% respectively. This reflects a shared sentiment among residents who either feel content with their current level of involvement or are disengaged from civic processes altogether. Similarly, interest in Online surveys or feedback was almost identical – 31% in Ranges Ward and 29% in Valleys Ward, affirming the broad appeal of digital participation regardless of geographic location.

The most notable difference appears in Community forums or meetings, which were more strongly preferred in Valleys Ward (26%) than in Ranges Ward (23%). This may reflect a desire for more face-to-face interaction in rural or semi-rural communities, where residents may feel distanced from formal Council processes. Conversely, Advisory groups or committees showed a slightly stronger presence in Valleys (8%) than in Ranges (5%), though numbers were low overall. These results suggest that while core preferences are aligned across the district, tailored engagement strategies, particularly around in-person formats, may help to better reflect the needs and expectations of each ward.

Key theme	Ranges Ward (response count)	Ranges Ward (%)	Valleys Ward (response count)	Valleys Ward (%)
No interest / happy as is	n = 34	34%	n = 24	31%
Online surveys or feedback	n = 31	31%	n = 23	29%
Community forums or meetings	n = 23	23%	n = 20	26%
Advisory groups or committees	n = 5	5%	n = 6	8%
Social media interaction	n = 3	3%	n = 2	3%
Total	n = 96	100%	n = 75	100%

8. Youth survey

Five young people aged 11 to 13 participated in the youth version of the Community Survey, all of whom reside in the Adelaide Hills Council area. Respondents were from Woodside, Crafers, Bridgewater, and Upper Sturt, and attend a range of schools including Birdwood High School, Urrbrae Agricultural High School, Mt Barker Waldorf, St Dominic's, and Heathfield High School. Most also study, work, or volunteer locally.

Respondents expressed a strong appreciation for the Adelaide Hills' natural environment, open space, limited urban development, and sense of community. However, they also raised concerns about the gradual loss of vegetation, urbanisation, a lack of public transport options and local recreational activities for teenagers, and poor road conditions.

When asked about the future of the Adelaide Hills, participants indicated a desire for the area to remain green, natural, and community oriented. They called for the preservation of tree-lined streets and wildlife, the creation of more conservation parks, improvements to pedestrian infrastructure, and inclusive spaces for all age groups, particularly teens, while avoiding overdevelopment.

In terms of communication preferences, respondents primarily rely on informal channels such as neighbours, friends, and family, as well as signage around the Council area. Fewer respondents access information through Council social media or face-to-face contact at community centres, and no respondents indicated engagement with digital newsletters, letters, or the Council's online engagement platforms.

The key demographics of the youth respondents are:

- All respondents indicated they live in the Adelaide Hills Council Area
- 3 indicated they go to school in the Adelaide Hills
- 2 said they work or volunteer in the Adelaide Hills
- Respondent suburbs: Woodside, Crafers, Bridgewater and Upper Sturt
- Respondents were aged between 11 and 13 (11 years old n=2 | 12 year olds n=2 | and 13 year old n=1)
- Respondents attend: Birdwood High School, Urrbrae Agricultural High School, Mt Barker Waldorf, St Dominics and Heathfield High School.

Respondents enjoy living in the Adelaide Hills for the natural surroundings, space for freedom, limited urban development, and strong sense of community.

Quotes:

"I enjoy living here"

"How there is no extension to town boundaries. Furthermore, how there isn't an extreme amount of housing."

"The natural environment, that it is not like the city. We have space to be free."

"I love the fact that we are surrounded by nature, both at home and at school. I also love the sense of community we have with each other."

Respondents expressed concerns about the loss of natural vegetation, the area becoming increasingly urbanised, limited public transport options for young people, poor road conditions, and a lack of local activities for teenagers.

Quotes:

"For teenagers there are not many things to do or even buses to places"

"The removal of old large trees that have ecological value. The removal of batches of shrubbery or native vegetation for housing".

"How we are slowly losing a lot of natural aspects and our appreciation for them"

"Places are becoming like the city. I don't want it to become like Mt Barker, that would be the worst!!! Leave the hills alone".

"I'm a bit scared about the bumpy road surfaces for when I start driving. I also think there needs to be more daytime and weekend busses from Upper Sturt to Stirling, Crafers and Blackwood so I am able to go out by myself."

When asked how they would like the Hills to look and feel in the future, respondents said they want the Adelaide Hills to remain natural, green, and community-friendly, with more conservation parks, native trees, better footpaths, and spaces that are accessible and enjoyable for all ages, especially teens, while preserving the area's unique charm and avoiding overdevelopment.

Quotes:

"Exactly as they are now. Little drives to the next town through tree lined streets. Not a concrete jungle. I want to see the stars and wildlife. Thats the fun of the hills. It's what makes it so special and a place people want to be."

"More accessible and fun for teens, there are lots of things for adult, families and younger kids".

"I would love the hills to have better footpaths around, especially along Upper Sturt road. I want it to remain filled with beautiful trees and want to make sure that Melville park/Upper Sturt tennis courts remains a place undeveloped by houses. "

"The Adelaide Hills should purchase land for conservation setting up more conservation parks. Implement a one large endemic tree rule on every new housing block".

"Have a lot more trees in areas with less or other native plants to reduce plant extinction and increase air quality. "

When asked where respondents look for information on Council activities responses were as follows:

- 4 x Neighbours, friends and family
- 3 x Signage around the Council area
- 2 x face to face at community centres and libraries
- 1 x Council social media: Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn
- No responses were recorded for: Hills Voice e-Newsletter, Letters or emails from Council staff, community / resident association media groups, Hills Voice Engagement Hub.



Appendix A: Hard copy of survey



Community Survey

Talking about your place



Every two years, we undertake a Community Survey to check in with our residents and ask you how we are performing and talk about what is most important to you. We'd like to know what we're doing well, what could use improvement, what you love about living in the Hills and what ideas you have for the future.

As you progress through the survey, you are welcome to skip any questions that are not relevant to you. If you need assistance to complete this survey, or need it in an alternative format, please email engage@ahc.sa.gov.au or call 8400 400.

Please return this form by Monday 9 June 2025, via one of the following ways:

- Handing in a copy into any Adelaide Hills Council Customer Service Desk (Woodside, Gumeracha or Stirling)
- Sending it back in the mail: Melissa Clarke 63 Mount Barker Road, Stirling SA 5152
- Scanning it and emailing it to engage@ahc.sa.gov.au

Living in the Adelaide Hills Council Area

1. What is your residential township, suburb or locality? (required)

2. What best describes you? (choose all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I live in the Adelaide Hills Council area | <input type="checkbox"/> I work in the Adelaide Hills Council area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I own a property but don't live in the Adelaide Hills Council area | <input type="checkbox"/> I am a visitor in the Adelaide Hills Council area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I own or operate a business in the Adelaide Hills Council area | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |

3. How long have you lived in the Adelaide Hills Council area?

- Less than 1 year
- 1- 4 years
- 5-9 years
- 10 or more years

4. Why do you choose to live in the Adelaide Hills Council area? (choose all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to schools | <input type="checkbox"/> Family reasons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing options | <input type="checkbox"/> Work / business opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Natural environment attractions | <input type="checkbox"/> Community |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifestyle | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability housing / living options |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bigger block sizes | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Something else, please tell us | |
-

Creating a sustainable Adelaide Hills: What's important to you?

5. Tell us what you like most about the Adelaide Hills Council area?

6. What are the main issues that concern you about the Adelaide Hills Council area?

7. Thank you for helping us work together to create a sustainable future for the Hills. If you could choose one thing you want us to focus on to improve sustainability, what would it be?

Adelaide Hills amenity and character

These questions relate to the qualities and characteristics of the area that contribute to community enjoyment, comfort and overall satisfaction with the surroundings both in their natural and built forms.

- 8. What character and amenity features do you value about your town, suburb or locality?**
(Think about the natural, rural and built environments)

- 9. What ideas do you have for enhancing the character and amenity of your town, suburb or locality?** *(Think about the natural, rural and built environments)*

- 10. When thinking about what should be the focus for any future upgrades of main streets and town centres, how important are the following items to you?** (add a tick or cross in the relevant column)

	<i>Very unimportant</i>	<i>Unimportant</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Very important</i>
Public art					
Footpath upgrades / treatments					
Improvements to street lighting					
Landscaping / tree planting					
Maintenance of shop frontages					
Public infrastructure i.e. seats and shelters					
Electric Vehicle charging stations					
Undergrounding of power lines					

Please add any other focuses for future upgrades you think we should consider

11. When considering development in your local area, how important are the following matters to you? (add a tick or cross in the relevant column)

	<i>Very unimportant</i>	<i>Unimportant</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Very important</i>
Preservation of heritage					
Embracing modern style living					
Maintaining large block sizes					
Creating affordable housing					
Maintaining low density housing (i.e. one dwelling per block)					
Sustainable design					
Minimising impact on the surrounding area (i.e. retaining trees, larger setbacks from roads and other dwellings, minimal earthworks)					
Preserving land for rural activity					
Encouraging tourist accommodation					

Please add any other development matters you would like us to consider

12. What ideas do you have for preserving or enhancing streetscapes?

13. What ideas do you have for enhancing rural landscapes?

Your wellbeing and sense of community

These questions relate to your physical and mental wellbeing as well as your sense of connection to the Adelaide Hills community.

14. On a scale of 0-10, how connected do you feel to your Adelaide Hills community with 0 being 'not at all' and 10 being 'very connected'? (please circle)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

15. How would you currently rate your overall physical wellbeing on a scale from 0-10, with 0 being 'extremely poor' and 10 being 'as good as it could be'? (please circle)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

16. How would you currently rate your overall mental wellbeing on a scale from 0-10, with 0 being 'extremely poor' and 10 being 'as good as it could be'? (please circle)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

17. Thinking about your experience of living in the Adelaide Hills Council, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following (add a tick or cross in the relevant column)

	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
Diversity is welcomed and celebrated in the Adelaide Hills Council area					
The Council area is a good place to raise a family					
The Council area is a good place to grow old					
People with disability have the same access to the Council’s services and facilities as others and community activities					
I feel safe in my neighbourhood					
I believe my Elected Council Members appropriately represent my views about important issues in the Adelaide Hills					
I can easily get to the places I need to					

You’re welcome to tell us more about any of your choices above

Your satisfaction with Adelaide Hills Council organisation

The below questions seek information about your level of satisfaction with Adelaide Hills Council as an organisation and seek feedback on your relationship with council.

18. Which statement below best describes your feelings about how Adelaide Hills Council is doing as an organisation?

- I'm very satisfied
- I'm satisfied
- There are one or two things that bother me
- I think there is a lot of improvement needed
- I don't really have an opinion one way or the other
- I don't have enough information to respond

19. Tell us why you feel like this...

20. How do you currently get most of your information about Council? (Tick top three)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Council meetings / agendas and minutes | <input type="checkbox"/> Directly from Elected Council Members |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Council website | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighbours, friends or family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Courier newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Council social media: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phone call or SMS from Council staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Signage around the Council area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Face to face at community centres or libraries | <input type="checkbox"/> Community / resident association social media groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hills Voice e-Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Adelaide Hills Engagement Hub |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter or email from Council staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (tell us more) |
-

21. How can we improve our communication with you in the future?

22. Thinking about how Council engages with the community, how satisfied are you with the opportunity to engage with issues that affect your area?

- I'm very satisfied
- I'm satisfied
- There are one or two things that bother me
- I think there is a lot of improvement needed
- I don't really have an opinion one way or the other
- I don't have enough information to respond

23. How would you like to participate or be more involved in local issues and Council decision making in the future?

24. What is your email address?

Please note that your email will not be associated with your responses and your responses will remain anonymous. We are asking for your email address so we can let you know the outcomes of the survey and let you know if you won a prize.

About You

By answering the next few questions, you will help us understand who we have reached through this survey.

25. What age group are you in?

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0-19 | <input type="checkbox"/> 35 – 44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65 – 74 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20 -24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45 – 54 | <input type="checkbox"/> 75 - 84 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25 – 34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55 - 64 | <input type="checkbox"/> 85 and over |

26. What is your current housing situation?

- I own my own home
- I am renting
- I live with parents or family
- I have no fixed address
- Something else, please tell us: _____

27. Do you have a disability?

- Yes
- No
- I'd prefer not to answer

28. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

- Yes, Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander
- No
- I'd prefer not to answer

29. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- I'd prefer not to say
- I'd prefer to self-describe _____

30. Do you speak a language other than English at home?

- No
- I'd prefer not to answer
- Yes (please tell us what language/s): _____

Thanks for providing your feedback, you're the best!

As a thank you for your time you also have an opportunity to receive passes to either:

- Warrawong Wildlife Sanctuary
- Cleland Wildlife Park, or
- Gorge Wildlife Park.

See full Terms and Conditions at ahc.sa.gov.au

31. Would you like to enter the chance to receive one of three family passes to Warrawong Wildlife Sanctuary, Cleland Wildlife Park or George Wildlife Park? (please provide your email address above)

- Yes please
- No thanks

32. Would you like to receive the Adelaide Hills Council e-newsletter each month? (please provide your email address above)

- Yes please
- No thanks

Appendix B: Suburb/ township breakdown



Township/Suburb/Locality	Count
Stirling	37
Bridgewater	35
Aldgate	33
Woodside	30
Lobethal	28
Crafers	25
Upper Sturt	22
Kersbrook	20
Gumeracha	19
Crafers West	14
Mylor	14
Mount Torrens	11
Heathfield	10
Balhannah	10
Birdwood	10
Houghton	10
Carey Gully	8
Inglewood	8
Oakbank	8
Mount Barker	7
Summertown	6
Basket Range	6
Uraidla	6
Paracombe	5
Teringie	5
Lenswood	4
Kenton Valley	4
Forreston	4
Woodforde	4

Township/Suburb/Locality	Count
Ironbank	3
Upper Hermitage	3
Longwood	3
Ashton	3
Verdun	3
Cudlee Creek	3
Lower Hermitage	2
Charleston	2
Forest Range	2
Piccadilly	2
Scott Creek	2
Nairne	2
Norton Summit	2
Montacute	2
Bradbury	2
Davoren Park	1
Belair	1
Marble Hill	1
Echunga	1
Greenhill	1
Cromer	1
Hawthorndene	1
Meadows	1
Willyaroo	1
Wistow	1
Humbug Scrub	1
Prospect	1
Port Adelaide	1
Unley	1

Township/Suburb/Locality	Count
Plympton Park	1
Brukunga	1
Mount Barker Summit	1
Harrogate	1
Cherryville	1
Hahndorf	1
Tea Tree Gully	1
Rostrevor	1
Abbey, WA	1



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