

## Canberra Residents Push for Inquiry into Ainslie Football Club Rezoning Plan

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Residents in Canberra's inner north are urging the ACT Legislative Assembly to launch a formal inquiry into a proposal to rezone the Ainslie Football Club site, which could pave the way for high-density housing and commercial development. The draft amendment, known as DPA-2, has sparked opposition from locals who argue the scale of the planned

changes would compromise the character of the neighborhood and place additional strain on community infrastructure.

Barbara Livesey, a long-term Ainslie resident, told ABC Canberra that the plan would effectively grant the club “a blank cheque to develop a large area for commercial and high-density development.” She said that while the suburb welcomes growth, the proposed seven-storey towers and mixed-use buildings are out of step with Ainslie’s established low-rise environment. Livesey and other residents have formalised their concerns in an e-petition sponsored by ACT Greens leader Shane Rattenbury. The petition calls on the Assembly’s Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services to hold public hearings and scrutinise the rezoning proposal.

The proposed development includes up to 200 apartments in buildings of up to seven Storeys, 35 terrace houses, an 80-room hotel, retail spaces, and a new social club facility. A childcare center, already approved for the site, would remain in place. The amendment would change the site’s zoning from Parks and Recreation to high-density residential and commercial use. This shift has unsettled many locals, with more than 80 per cent of the 145 submissions received during the consultation period expressing opposition. Key concerns raised include the loss of open space, increased traffic, the impact on the suburb’s garden city character and pressure on local schools and services.

For residents, one of the most contentious elements is that this proposal is among the first under the ACT’s new Territory Plan framework to be initiated by a developer rather than a government agency. Opponents say this sets an uncomfortable precedent, allowing private interests to drive planning outcomes in areas where community consultation should be

central. They argue the plan undermines democratic processes by shifting decision-making power away from residents and elected representatives.

Supporters of the amendment counter that the proposal aligns with Canberra's broader planning strategy, which encourages higher-density housing in well-serviced areas to address population growth and housing shortages. The site's proximity to major transport links and existing amenities makes it an attractive candidate for redevelopment. Advocates also point to the benefits of modernised sporting and community facilities that would accompany the housing projects.

Despite these arguments, residents stress they are not opposed to all development. Many say they support moderate-density infill that respects the suburb's character and believe higher buildings should be concentrated along major corridors like Northbourne Avenue rather than within established residential areas. The growing call for scrutiny suggests the debate over Ainslie's future is far from settled, and the Assembly's response could shape how similar proposals are handled across the ACT.