



Kristian Tkatchenko and his neighbours are worried about the Coptic Church's development plans for its Donvale property.

Picture: MICHELLE KELCEY N25DT489

Church plans rile residents

Planning | Danielle Crowe

DONVALE residents are mounting a campaign to stop a major development planned for the former Whitefriars monastery site.

A residents' action group is opposing the Donvale Coptic Orthodox Church's plans for an \$8 million multi-purpose venue, function centre, sports courts and retreat at 88-154 Park Rd.

Group spokesman Kristian Tkatchenko said the development, now being considered by Manningham Council, was "inappropriate" and "out of scale" for a low-density area.

"This development is completely unsuitable for a semi-rural suburb and will disrupt the area's natural ambience – the reason residents moved to Donvale," Mr Tkatchenko said.

"The main concerns relate to increased traffic conges-

tion, noise pollution and demand on the existing road network, particularly at peak times when local clubs will be accessing the sporting facilities.

"There is also a lack of parking (on site) and that will result in an overflow of parking in neighbouring streets."

But project manager Bishop Suriel, from the church, moved to reassure residents, saying the development would not disrupt the neighbourhood character and would have a positive impact on the wider community.

"My policy from the very beginning was to have an open-door policy and complete transparency with the community," Bishop Suriel said.

"We held a number of public meetings to give residents an opportunity to look at the plans and talk to us about

them. I also doorknocked homes to ensure they were aware of the development."

Mr Tkatchenko said more than 200 people had signed a petition opposing the development plans, and he said residents had vowed to take their battle all the way to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal if necessary.

"We are prepared to fight this all the way to protect the area from intense development and stop native wildlife corridors and vegetation being destroyed," he said.

Bishop Suriel said consultants had worked on the design of the development for three years to protect the flora and fauna and design a building that would fit in with the neighbourhood character.

The application is likely to be put to a council meeting early next year.

► **Details:** www.drpa.org.au