

LYNDHURST

Church to 'spoil' Green Wedge

Megan Bailey

Activists decry development bid, which also includes stables, nursery and cafe

A HUGE Coptic Christian church planned for Lyndhurst will be a blight on the Green Wedge, an activist group has warned.

The City of Greater Dandenong is considering an application for the church on a 23.4ha block on the corner of Thompsons and Taylors rds.

The plan also includes sporting grounds and courts,

16 horse stables, a cafe and a plant nursery. The applicant, St Kyrillos and St Philopatere Pty Ltd, said it would require 181 car parking spaces.

Defenders of the South East Green Wedge say the church will ruin the character of the area.

Spokesman Barry Ross said the building, which

would seat up to 500 people, would be too large.

"We believe that this large church with its 500-seat capacity and two towers, as tall as a seven-storey building, together with all the other activities, would be disastrous for the Green Wedge," Mr Ross said.

"With its bulk, height and

all its 'bells and whistles', the church complex would be completely out-of-place in the Green Wedge and would spoil the pleasant, open rural landscape."

Ogee Architects spokesman Youssef Gadalla, who is also a Coptic Christian, said the design had already been amended to reduce the size of

the towers from 24m to 21.9m at council's request.

He said the closest church for Christians in the area was Hallam, which had to increase the number of masses it held due to demand.

"Between 1500-2000 people go to Hallam," he said. "There are many Coptic Christians in Lyndhurst,

Dandenong, Patterson Lakes ... why should they have to drive all the way to Hallam?"

The Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne did not return *Leader's* call.

Greater Dandenong acting city planning, design and amenity director Peter Shelton said two objections had been made. The application would go to VicRoads and Melbourne Water before councillors vote on it in May.