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Attack on rights

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PLANS to build a 268-unit complex at Kellyville Ridge are being viewed as a test case for controversial new legislation handing approval powers to state government-appointed planning panels.

All developments worth more than \$10 million, such as the units proposed for Merriville Rd, will now be decided by a joint regional planning panel, not local councils.

At last Monday night's community meeting more than 150 angry residents made it clear they did not want the complex built, for fear of traffic and anti-social behaviour.

Opposition planning spokesman Brad Hazzard, Hawkesbury State Liberal MP Ray Williams and Blacktown councillors Nick Tyrrell, Alan Pendleton and Allan Green all labelled the new planning laws an attack on democratic rights of residents.

"Democracy demands people have their say," Mr Hazzard told the meeting.

"You need to get in the ear of the planning panel. But there are no guarantees as this is not a democratic practice at all."

Cr Green likened the laws to Chinese governance.

"They do this kind of thing in China. This is not China. This is Australia and Australia is a democracy," he said.

"This is a precedent that will show that these planning panels will not work."

Cr Pendleton added: "Local government should be administered by elected councillors so if you don't like what we do, you can vote us out."

Mr Williams said to call the proposal an overdevelopment was an understatement.

"This is very much a test case

for this new legislation," he said.

"We have quality housing in a quality community and the only way to keep it is to stand up and lobby."

Cr Tyrrell said allowing this development would set a bad precedent.

"If you can have eight storeys here, you can have eight storeys anywhere," he said.

Riverstone State Labor MP John Aquilina said he had taken his concerns directly to Planning Minister Kristina Keneally.

"I have told the Minister for Planning that the construction of the other units at Kellyville Ridge was not a happy exercise in Kellyville Ridge and its history," he said.

● See what the developers have planned: Page 6.