

Hurstville locals lose battle

■ Sue Williams

Residents fighting to stop two high-rise towers being built overlooking their low-level heritage conservation area have lost their battle after a ruling by state government-appointed planners to give the developer the go-ahead.

The angry locals of O'Brien's Estate in Hurstville consulted a Land and Environment Court lawyer over a possible appeal but were told it could cost about \$50,000.

"It's horrendous, but we can't fund raise for that kind of money," said Sharon Raco, who has lived in the inter-war heritage area for 21 years. "Money wins. We just can't afford to fight a developer who has the funds for something like that."

The dispute follows an application by developer Deicorp to build a \$20 million complex of 369 apartments on the other side of the road from the estate with one tower of up to 16 storeys and the other of 12.

In return for permission, the company offered to pay Kogarah Council \$12,500 a unit for permission to break the city plan limit on building heights of 39 metres, to be allowed to build to 60 metres, and to nearly double the floor-space ratio from the permitted 3:1 to 5.5:1. It also promised, under a Voluntary Planning Agreement, to give the council a car park and a "community facility" in return for getting the go-ahead.

Residents objected and the application went to the Joint Regional Planning Panel, which has now

over high-rise

given Deicorp the green light to redevelop the former Tax Office site.

"We are always seeking to provide for our customers to ensure they have access to the best of Sydney right on their doorstep, Deicorp managing director Fouad Deiri said. "Grand H, Hurstville will set a new benchmark for transit-oriented development's in Sydney, with all residents having access to the Sydney CBD within 19 minutes by train."

At the time of the JRPP hearing, the CEO of the developers' lobby Urban Taskforce, Chris Johnson, expressed concern that local councils seemed to be agreeing to VPAs, often regardless of their own planning rules and using them simply as a revenue-earning process.