

## Threat to stars' paradise

By Joseph Barratt

**4:00 AM** Sunday Feb 21, 2010

Plans for a "Coronation Street"-style development at a holiday playground for the rich and famous are before the Environment Court.

Developers want to build almost 700 residential units, a 150-room hotel and shops on more than 37ha at the southern end of Omaha, about an hour north of Auckland.

Prime Minister John Key, fashion designer Trelise Cooper, TV personality Louise Wallace and sports stars Dean and Mandy Barker are among those with homes at the beach.

Omaha Beach Community president Graham Painter said the settlement was already fully developed and the proposal looked like "crap".

"It looks like something out of Coronation Street. Ever seen anything like that on a New Zealand coastline? Ninety-nine per cent of the Omaha community is against it."

Omaha Park needs a zoning change for the development – known as Seaview Village – and lodged its first set of plans with Rodney District Council in 2006.

The proposal was rejected and the company took the case to the Environment Court after unsuccessfully appealing against the council's decision.

Council district planning manager Peter Vari said the original proposal for 748 residential units, 130 visitor units, retail and commercial space had been revised, but the new version was still considered too intensive for the small rural community.

It potentially could affect the "remoteness" of the Tawharanui Regional Park and have "significant negative effects on the roading network and Omaha community".

Omaha Park directors David and Valerie Hubbard refused to comment.

A spokesman for Key said it would be inappropriate for him to comment now, but in May 2008 he said people "want to try to preserve the integrity of the place."

"Development can take place, as long as it maintains that slightly rural aspect."

The 2006 census recorded 156 occupied and 591 unoccupied dwellings in Omaha.

Resident and real estate agent Linda de Vine said further expansion was inevitable.

"I've been here for the sale of all developments and I will probably still be here when this one gets off the books – if it gets off the books."

She had heard residents argue against other developments that went ahead, and said fears about falling house prices and the community being ruined had not eventuated. But the infrastructure needed for more population was lacking.

"It's not going to work unless someone pays to put in a four-lane highway."

Painter refuted suggestions further development was inevitable.

"Omaha is designed as a completely integrated community, it's not designed for further expansion," he said. "Where is



Developers want to build 700 residential units, a 150-room hotel and shops at the southern end of Omaha. Photo / Doug Sherring

the land? Omaha is fully developed.

"We are simply trying to maintain some of the images of New Zealand coastal environment for future generations.

"Do we really want to be like the French riviera from Auckland to the North Cape?"

The two-week hearing started on Monday.

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