



Beachside barney to hit courts

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A DEFIANT coastal community will take its fight against development of a pristine piece of land to the Supreme Court.

Residents have been fighting a proposed large scale boat ramp, breakwater and car park at Bastion Point, Mallacoota for years.

But the plan was approved in June despite a panel of inquiry — part of an Environmental Effects Statement — recommending against it.

The town has united to launch legal action to save its beloved beach.

Papers were served on Planning Minister Justin Madden this week.

Friends of Mallacoota spokesman Leo op den Brouw said the community was furious the plan had been approved despite recommendations against it.

“We went through the environmental assessment process in good faith and it was completely disregarded,” Mr op den Brouw said.

“The community is very passionate about this and we believe we’re right so we aren’t going to back down. It would turn a beautiful and untouched piece of beach into an industrial site.”

The group estimates le-



Upgrade plan: The proposed redevelopment.

gal action will cost \$50,000 and said it would mean digging deep because they had already spent \$50,000 on a submission to the environmental effects inquiry.

But it’s money they’re prepared to pay.

Environment Defenders solicitor Elizabeth McKinnon said the group was hoping for a judicial review, which would mean Mr Madden’s decision would be found invalid and he would be ordered to revisit it.

The group has enlisted the help of barrister Debbie Mortimer, who worked on the case against Tasmanian logger Gunns.

Environment Minister Gavin Jennings will have the final say on the issue.

Victorian National Parks Associations spokeswoman Paige Shaw said the develop-

ment would involve an access road on the beach, a 130m breakwater across reef areas and a sand dredging operation.

“We’re concerned that the removal of more than 3000 cubic metres of reef, to make way for the boating channel, and . . . 8000 tonnes of imported rock to construct the 130m breakwater, will disturb tidal flows and damage the marine habitat,” Ms Shaw said.

Australian Conservation Foundation spokesperson Chris Smyth said the legal action was an inevitable result of Victoria’s weak Environment Effects Act.

Mr Madden said it would be inappropriate to comment when legal proceedings were afoot.



Making a point: Mallacoota residents protest. Picture: MICHAEL RAYNER