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HD Failed **property** scheme linked to tax haven **firm**
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A failed **property** development is linked to a tax haven **company** that triggered an alleged money laundering probe into a wealthy businessman.

Albany Heights, more than 400 homes proposed to be built on Auckland's North Shore, was marketed as an "investors' dream" but companies connected to the project collapsed with \$9 million in deposits owed to investors in Asia.

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Among those involved were businessmen Chris Cook and Paul Bublitz, who "tried to salvage" Albany Heights by persuading William Yan to invest \$3 million in a new partnership, according to a recent High Court judgment.

The 2ha **site** was **sold** to a **company** linked to Mr Yan for \$6 million while a second **company** he was a director of held the first mortgage over the **property**.

The **company** that **sold** the land to him, Hunter Gills Rd Ltd, was placed into voluntary liquidation and a secured lender began demanding repayment of a loan, while investors started lodging caveats over the land.

"Mr Yan was not interested in becoming involved in litigation over the **property** ... he exercised the rights held by him as mortgagee to sell the **property**," wrote Justice Edwin Wylie.

So Albany Heights was **sold** for \$4.3 million to an Auckland **company** financed by Ease Treasure Ltd, registered in the tax haven of the British Virgin Islands, according to **property** records.

Ease Treasure Ltd has no visible links to Mr Yan but is mentioned in paperwork seized by police investigating him for alleged money laundering, according to court documents obtained by the Herald.

Handwritten in **Chinese**, the note authorised the **purchase** of \$1.85 million of shares in Ease Treasure Ltd and was signed by Yang Liu — a previous name of Mr Yan.

Another piece of paper contained an instruction to an Auckland-based foreign exchange **company** to transfer US\$500,000 (\$640,000) to an Ease Treasure bank account in **Hong Kong**.

The money-laundering case against Mr Yan is linked to an alleged \$129 million fraud in **China**, which is one of the reasons that Internal Affairs officials recommended that he should not receive citizenship.

No criminal charges have been laid against Mr Yan. His lawyer, Paul Wicks, QC, said his client denies any wrongdoing.

Detectives raided Mr Yan's luxury penthouse in August and seized at least \$40 million of assets using the Criminal Proceeds Recovery law, which essentially forces someone to prove how an asset was paid for.

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