

Civic Centre On Target

THE new £6.25 million Limerick Civic Centre, designed by architects Burke-Kennedy Doyle and Partners, located on the banks of the Shannon within the city's designated area and next to John's Castle, is due for completion next month.

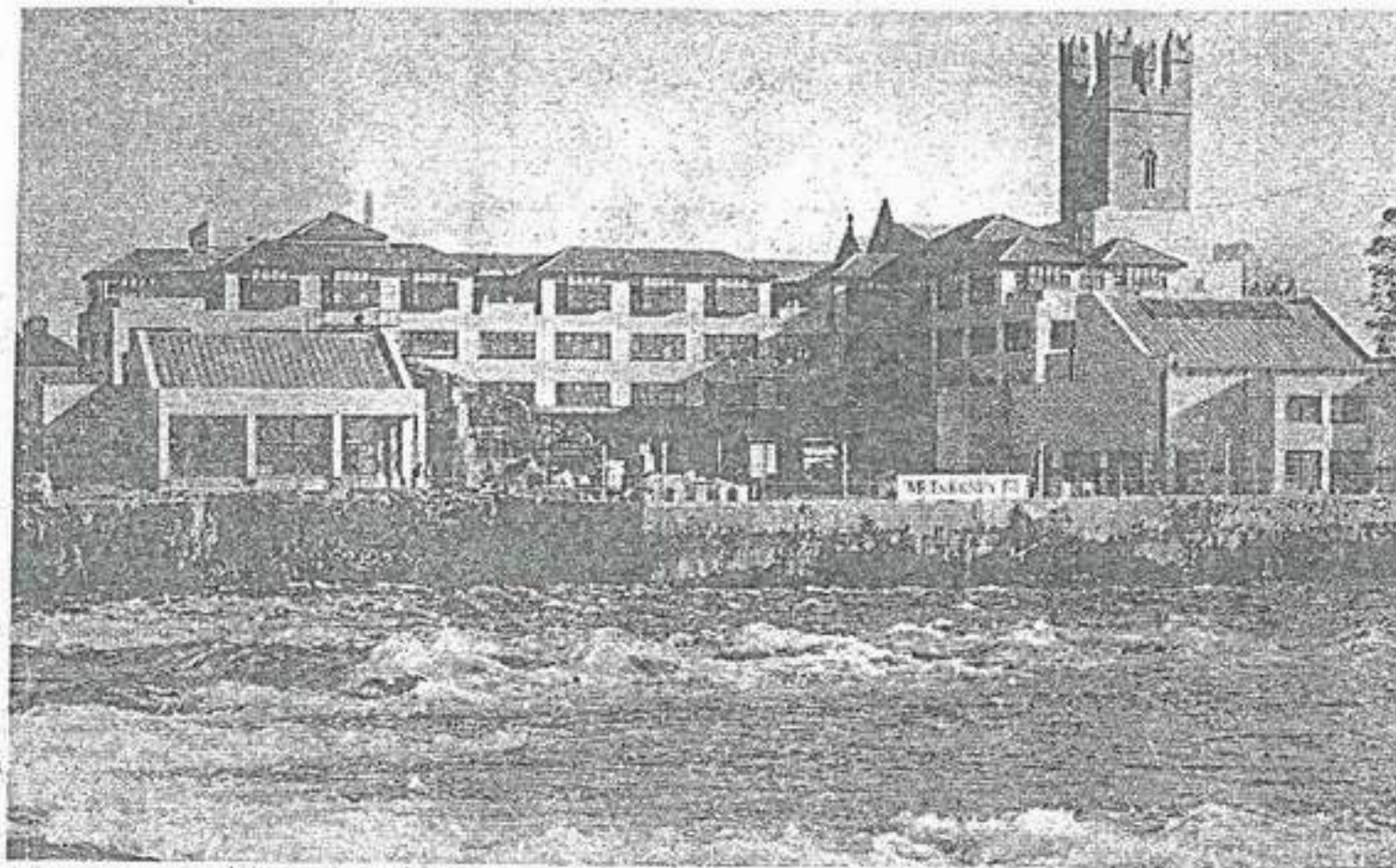
The modern 80,000 sq ft complex consists of three major elements: a court house and ancillary offices; a council chamber, again incorporating ancillary offices along with the Lord Mayor's quarters; and a four-storey high general office block of about 60,000 sq ft which also houses a single storey museum/exhibition area of approximately 7,000 sq ft. When completed, the premises will be occupied by Limerick Corporation.

The 70 weeks construction contract is being carried out by McInerney Contracting, and sister company Hillview Securities engineered the intricate commercial package for this novel project for Limerick Corporation. Being a public authority without tax liabilities, Limerick Corporation was unable to benefit from the financial incentives associated with designated

By Mike Rohan

area status. A holding company, Dalemarn, was subsequently formed to avail of the tax breaks and rent the new facilities to the Corporation under a long-term lease arrangement, with the complex eventually to pass into local authority ownership.

The two-storey court building and council chamber both overlook the river and flank the taller general office building. These three blocks, though autonomous, are linked via a glazed covered 'street' area which is one of the distinguishing features of the scheme and also acts as the main entrance into the complex. The entrance is located between the general office building and the new court house and stands adjacent to an existing court house. Steps and invalid ramps lead up to the entrance which is also characterised by a painted structural steel pergola arrangement. The covered street area hugs one wide of the main office building and culminates in a cafe area in front of the council chamber. This street cafe is also enclosed in glass and



● *The new civic centre: Due for completion before Christmas*

also accesses the Mayor's quarters.

The exterior of the Civic Centre is distinctive in appearance. All the windows are of single glazed aluminium and the glazed covered street area is of similar design. The council chamber building is connected at ground floor level to the main offices and a bridge at first floor level

The council chamber and court house buildings feature Ballinasloe Limestone cladding with a sloping 'copper' roof. The main office building is faced in Granite, producing a speckled stone effect finish, and has a more traditional style of pitched roof finished in dark Stonewall tiles.

The single-storey exhibition/museum area fronts the four-storey office building

but is characterised by a high roof (about 30 feet tall) with a glazed spine for natural illumination. The front elevation of this area of the Civic Centre incorporates part of the original wall of the old Limerick Jail. Another section of this historic structure is retained elsewhere within the complex. While the general office building has a very practical internal finish

including suspended ceilings, painted plaster walls and modern partitioning, the court house and council chamber have more traditional interiors. Ash and beech wall panelling and stone features characterise these two elements of the new development. Stairs access the various levels within the complex and four lifts are also provided in the four-storey general office building. The complex is carpeted throughout although Italian floor tiles are used in the covered street area. The heating system will be fuelled by natural gas.

The grounds will be fully landscaped with paved walkways and car-parking for about 50 vehicles is provided. Bollards from the old Ranks Mill site in Limerick are used along the quayside, where the development site meets the Shannon.

McInerney Construction hopes to start building an office/residential complex incorporating a multi-storey car-park at Charlotte Quay in Limerick, in the new year for Hillview Securities. The company currently has ongoing work in Ireland valued in the region of £60 million.