

tion of Limerick city and attracting investors is low commercial rates, according to Limerick City Mayor Cllr Joe Leddin.

"Confidence in the city is at an all time high and Limerick City Council is conscious that to attract further investment we need to be pro-business and pro-development and that is why we have cut commercial rates for two years in a row," Mayor Leddin said.

But in tandem with attracting investment to Limerick, the overall vision for the city is to rejuvenate the centre, according to Limerick City Council's Director of Planning Kieran Lehane. "We want to make Limerick a vibrant, attractive place for people to visit, shop, work and eat out," he said.

And central to this is the tasteful redevelopment of existing buildings and the major pedestrianisation programme currently underway, Mr Lehane added.

"This will bring major life back into the city centre with the development of cafes, street entertain-

and Clancy Strands and a boardwalk from King John's Castle down to the Clarion Hotel.

The pedestrianisation of Bedford Row and part of Thomas Street have been completed and the remainder of Thomas Street, along with Little Catherine Street, are due to be completed by the mid-June.

The full pedestrianisation of O'Connell Street, from William Street to Roches Street, is the last piece in the jigsaw that will see Limerick get a high quality public space in the heart of the city.

Plans for the pedestrianisation of this part of O'Connell Street, along with the proposed Orbital Route around the city to facilitate it, will be put on public display early in the New Year.

Limerick City Council Director of Transport Pat Dromey said: "There will be extensive consultation with all the stakeholders before we advance the planning process and we are hopeful that work on the pedestrianisation of O'Connell Street will start in the autumn."

British experience has shown that the public sector investment in pedestrianisation has stimulated private investment.

"Pedestrianisation gives the city centre a public space for putting on a variety of events and festivals as well as promoting the café culture and we have seen this already happen in Limerick with the completion of Bedford Row," he added.

Over €1 billion of private and public sector money is being pumped into projects currently under construction or just completed within the past six months.

The projects just completed include four new hotels - the Quality Hotel, Punches Hotel, The George and the Clarion Hotel Suites. These opened in the past six months and brought over 400 extra bedrooms, corporate suites and apartments into the Limerick market.

Four other hotels due to be completed this year - the Hilton on Clancy Strand, Marriott in Bedford Row, Absolute on Sir Harry's Mall and the Spa

ments and offices on Henry Street by Len Dinneen which are due to be occupied by the Department of Foreign Affairs Overseas Aid Division.

Added to this is the development of offices and retail space on O'Connell Street by Robert Butler; the Thomas Street development of retail and offices by Michael O'Malley; the extension to Barrington's Hospital and 1,000 sq ft retail park on the Ennis Road by Pat Whelan.

The go-ahead has also been given to another €500 million worth of commercial projects—including the €250 million Opera Centre that is set rejuvenate the shopping heart of Limerick city.

Belfast developer Suneil Sharma is behind the Opera Centre/shopping complex planned for Rutland Street. Construction on this is expected to start in the Spring and the project is expected to be completed within three years.

Other city projects that have been given the go-ahead include: the development of a €20 million retail and office park at

The rejuvenation of the city now is at a stage where someone comes across a development of a site, they do not need a tax break to continue, Mr Daly added.

"This is the case for us now in Limerick because we are at a level where we have created enough development that the River is an established focal point.

Mr Daly is currently proposing a very imaginative Riverside civic project that would link the Limerick Boat Club and Poor Man's Kilkee by a footbridge onto the pedestrianised Bedford Row.

The Lonely Planet Guide 2006 gave Limerick a major endorsement in January when it stated:

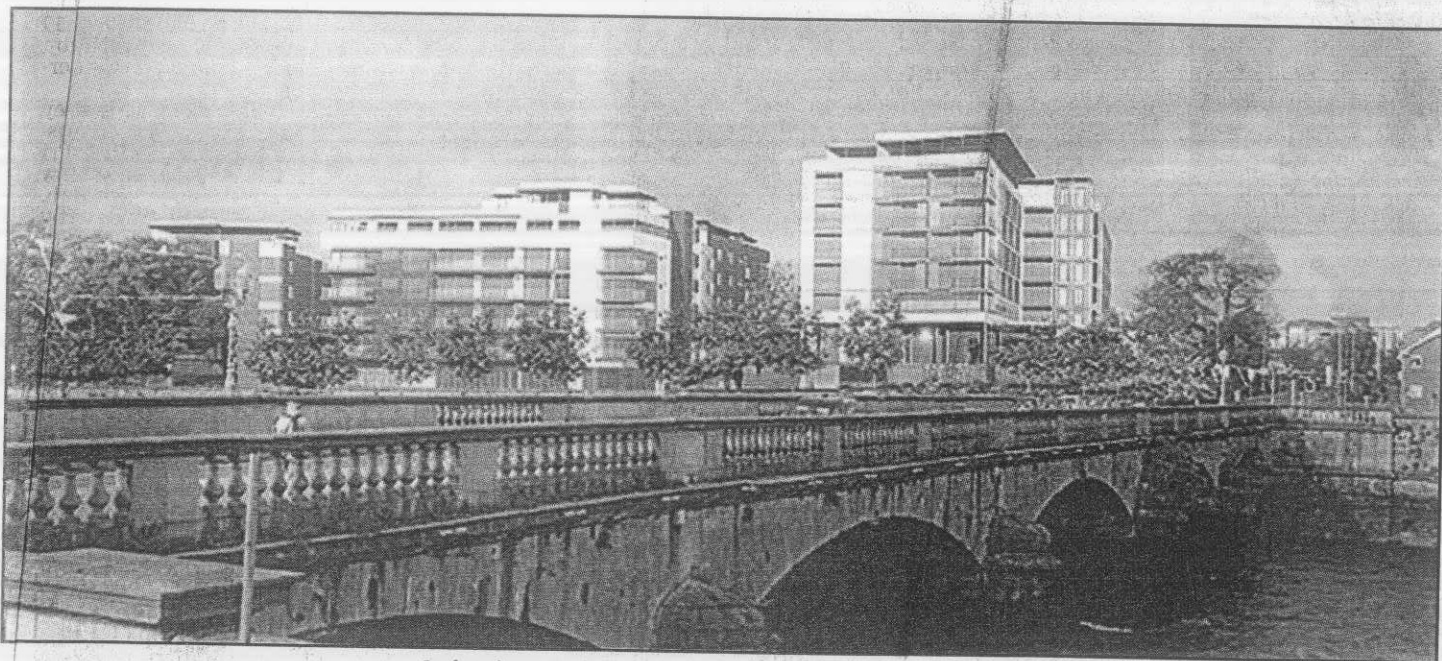
"The city has lifted itself with some spirit in recent times. Its central streets buzz with life and a busy shopping scene.

"Fine museums, galleries and a thriving restaurant and pub culture have enhanced Limerick's already warm heart."

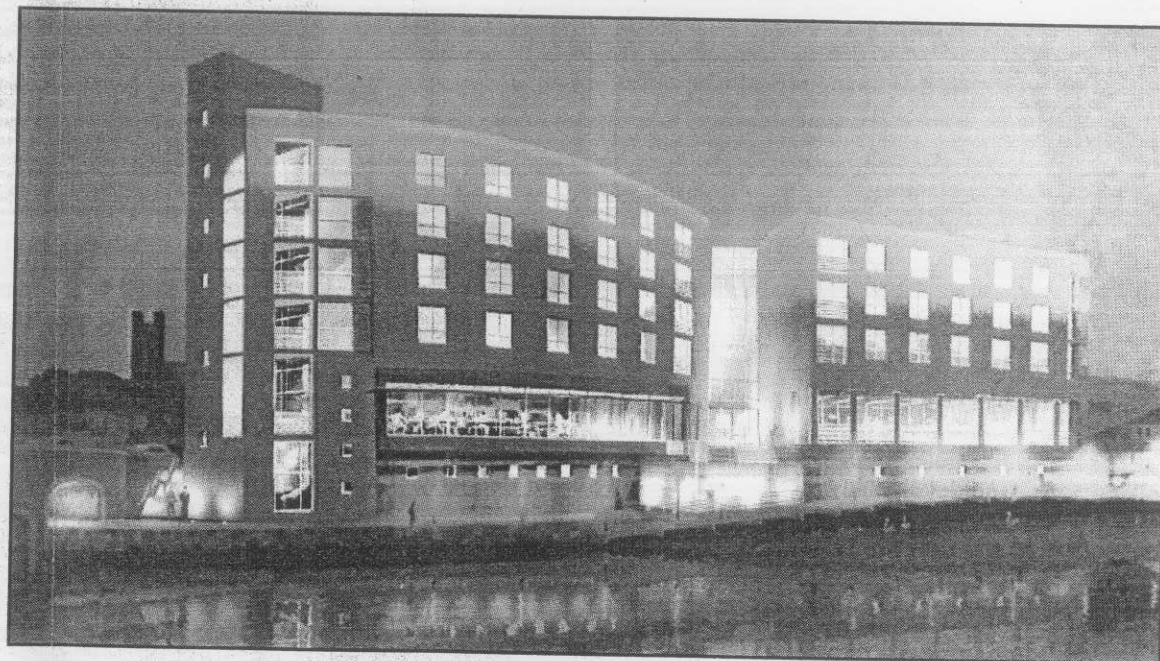
We await The Lonely Planet Guide 2007 with interest.



The plan for pedestrianising O'Connell Street



Artists impression of the Hilton Hotel and apartments



The new Absolute Hotel

Hotel openings and new jobs go up to the hilt in Limerick

By ANNE SHERIDAN

THE six new hotels that have sprung up on the Limerick market this year are providing a boost to the local economy in more ways than one.

Over 500 new jobs will have been created by hoteliers in Limerick by the time the Hilton opens its doors next February.

And just when we thought the

bubble was about to burst, another boutique hotel is planned for the Pery Square area, where construction has just begun.

The final hotel to open here before 2006 draws to a close is the €25m Absolute Hotel, designed by renowned architects Burke Kennedy Doyle.

The city centre hotel, which will open on December 28, is confident it will beat off stiff competition through one unique factor: the first

health spa in the city centre. The Absolute Spa has six spacious treatment rooms, a thermal suite and Canadian hot tub.

The 99-bed hotel, which overlooks the Abbey River, boasts wonderful 360 degree views of the city.

Another €25 million hotel, this time located on O'Connell Street, has a different take on the hotel experience. The owners of the George Boutique like to call it "ultra cool"

Awash with retro glamour and hinted sexual frivolity, swilling back flutes of pink champagne in opulence surroundings is the main stay of this hotel. An estimated 80,000 guests are expected to stay in the George Boutique over the coming year.

The €35million Quality Hotel and Leisure Centre in Southill provided 92 jobs to the region when it opened this summer and its one discerning feature from all the other sleek, styl-

ish hotels is Bar 23-19—a homage to the winning Munster Rugby Team after their epic win against Biarritz in the Heineken Cup.

In April the €20m four star Clarion Hotel Suites Limerick arrived and provided jobs for 60 people in the area. Appealing to all markets, the hotel offers 18 one bedroom and 43 two bedroom hotel Suites and 6 duplexes.

The 77 bed four star Patrick Punch's Hotel, one of seven hotels

in the Dunnes Group, opened this October.

However, surely the most awaited hotel is the Hilton, which is set to create 150 jobs in the city when it opens in two months time. The €55m 184-bedroom seven storey hotel occupies a focal point in Limerick City overlooking the River Shannon, at the corner of O'Callaghan Strand and Ennis Road.

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