



New look city: the proposed Opera Centre at the corner of Patrick Street and Ellen Street

Council to rule on new Opera Centre

By JENNIFER O'CONNOR and MAIREAD NI CHAOIMH

A DECISION could be made within a matter of weeks on what officials are calling the "most significant development ever to come before Council".

The Opera Centre, which will consist of a 42,000 square metre development over four floors and fronting five streets including Ellen Street, Patrick Street, Michael Street, Bank Place and Denmark Street, was discussed at this week's City Council meeting.

And while the decision on the application is officially due on February 17, planning sources say that

it could be up to a year before permission is fully granted.

Delays in the planning process are expected with issues such as requests for further information, objections, if the application ends up going to An Bord Pleanála or if archaeological digs are required all expected to tie up the application.

The retail development has been hailed as fantastic by city councillors who have expressed their delight at the prospect of such a project coming to the city centre.

"It is a matter for every councillor that the development is appropriate to the city. It's very important for that area of the city. We have to bear in mind that we have got to see the value of the city will be increased so much by such an important development in that area

of the city," said Cllr Pat Kennedy.

He said that it had been some time since the ward councillors had been invited to give their views on important developments and that in the case of the new Opera Centre, they should be invited to express their views on the proposals.

"This is the most important planning application for a generation. It is a wonderful proposal. It will make Limerick, and so it is very important to get it right," said Mayor Diarmuid Scully.

Regeneration Developments have applied for planning permission at the 3.8 acre site, which will be named The Opera Centre in honour of Limerick's famous rags to riches 18th century soprano Catherine Hayes.

Her birthplace, a premises on Patrick

Street, will be restored, and turned into a museum. Catherine Hayes, who was born into poverty, went on to become an internationally renowned singer, and made an important contribution to Irish musical history.

The centre will be fronted by two modern glass fronted entrances, set to become the flagship features.

One of the entrances will face the river at Bank Place, looking across to Georges Quay and the Locke Bar. The other entrance will be on the junction of Patrick Street and Ellen Street.

The other stand-out feature to the multi-million development is the Sky Bridge, a glass and steel pedestrian bridge, which will link a new multi-storey car park on Denmark Street with the centre at Ellen Street.

Other plans include the building of a stand alone three storey café / bar and restaurant with landscaped plaza and decking at Bank Place. Quinn's pub on Ellen Street will be re-roofed and refurbished.

"This is the most significant development that has come before Council. We considered asking for a scaled model, but as most of the development will be taking place behind the street, we will be getting digital images on what the development will look like. Without doubt, it is the biggest city centre development we have seen and are likely to see," said Dick Tobin, planning officer with Limerick City Council.

A full official launch of the Opera Centre is to take place in the coming weeks.

Gardai are baffled by chemical discovery

By CLODAGH O'LEARY

GARDAI in the city remain baffled this week as they continue their investigation into the discovery of toxic chemicals near the National Technological Park at Plasssey.

A small metal box containing 12 tubes of liquid was found by a passer-by on Plassey Park Road shortly after 1pm on Tuesday.

"The chemicals appear to have been hidden away behind a cement block in such a way that they could not have fallen off the back of a lorry," said a Garda spokesman.

"They were individually packed and wrapped and placed in the box carefully. We have sent the chemicals away for analysis. They appear to be professionally packed and prepared," he said.

Gardai from Henry Street and chemical experts from the fire brigade attended the scene, and found that the chemicals, were toxic, corrosive and flammable.

"According to the technical experts, the chemicals would be dangerous if mixed together. It was fortunate that a responsible individual found the chemicals, as if it was a child it could have resulted in a very dangerous situation," he said.

Five units of Limerick City Fire Brigade and one unit from Cappamore attended the scene for over two hours on Tuesday afternoon.

Roads in and out of the area at the back of the industrial estate were blocked by Gardai as an examination was carried out.

A chemist from Limerick City Council was requested at the scene and the chemicals were made safe.

The 12 tubes have been sent to Dublin to be examined.

"The box was metal and small to medium in size. There were no logos on the box, just symbols denoting what the chemicals were. If anyone has information on the chemicals, please contact us at 061-212400," said the Garda spokesman.



DIABETES FEDERATION OF IRELAND

Mid West Branch

Are Holding A Public Meeting
"Treatment & Activity - The Perfect Balance"

Venue: Castletroy Park Hotel,
Dublin Road, Limerick
Date: Thursday 26th January 2006
Time: 7.30 p.m.

Key Speakers

Dr. Sam Kingston, Consultant Endocrinologist,
South Tipperary General Hospital

Ms. Carol Murphy
Sports Scientist, University of Limerick

Medical Representatives Will Attend

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