

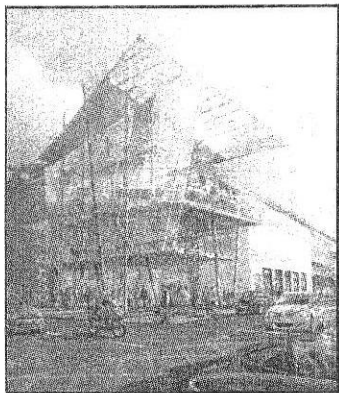
# LIMERICK LEADER

ESTABLISHED 1889

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# 1,000 JOB OPERA CENTRE OKAYED



The Opera Centre design

By MIKE DWANE

**PLANNING** permission has been granted for the €250 million Limerick Opera Centre, the largest development ever planned for the city centre.

It is hoped that 25,000 square metre retail/restaurant complex by Belfast-based Regeneration Developments will counter the growth of suburban shopping centres and draw visitors back into the city.

Heritage bodies such as the Irish Georgian

Society have made submissions stressing the architectural sensitivity of the Rutland Street/Ellen Street/Patrick Street/Bank Place quarter but the project has the support of Limerick Co-ordination Office and Mayor Diarmuid Scully.

"This is vitally important for Limerick City and a sign of the renewed confidence in Limerick that an investment of this magnitude is coming to this city and I very much welcome it," said the Mayor.

Senior planner Dick Tobin said further information on services for the development, car-parking, traffic strategy and on what frontages are to be retained or otherwise was submitted by the developers as requested by City Hall.

Potential objectors now have a three-week window in which to make submissions.

Mayor Scully said while he respected people's right to object on heritage grounds, "there's a

danger that heritage sometimes gets in the way of what's right for the city."

There were buildings in the area, some of which date from the 1770's, "that are not far off being condemned" and might have to be torn down in any case, the Mayor said, adding that the developers had been consulting with Limerick Civic Trust on heritage and conservation matters.

To this end, a €2.5 million museum at the Patrick Street birthplace of 19th century Limerick diva Catherine Hayes will form part of the appropriately-named development.

The developers have predicted that the project could bring over 100,000 people into the city weekly and have knock-on benefits for the Hunt Museum and other city centre attractions.

Up to 500 jobs could be created in the construction phase and 1,000 full-time jobs after it is completed.