

Decision soon on objection to multi million euro project

By John O'Shaughnessy

THE developers of the proposed Opera Centre at Rutland Street are awaiting a decision from An Bord Pleanála on an objection to the project by a city architect to the granting of planning permission by Limerick City Council.

Ms Cait ni Cheallachain b.arch., has claimed in a detailed written submission to An Bord Pleanála, that the Limerick City Council contravened the stated goals and policies of its own Development Plan by failing to protect the built heritage in an Architectural Conservation area, and in the conditions attached to this permission has set a disastrous precedent.

Some of the points raised in an eight page presentation include:

Background.

O.1. Regeneration Developments Ltd, made a planning application for this immense shopping centre in an area contained by Bank Place, Rutland Street, Patrick Street, Ellen Street and Michael Street. The development connects Bank Place in a roughly diagonal line south with the junction of Ellen Street and Patrick Street.

O.2. The nature of this shopping centre is an introverted mall focussing towards a main pedestrian artery. All the new

shops turn their backs to the existing city streets. The facade to Michael Street is a wall which masks a service corridor at ground floor (street level).

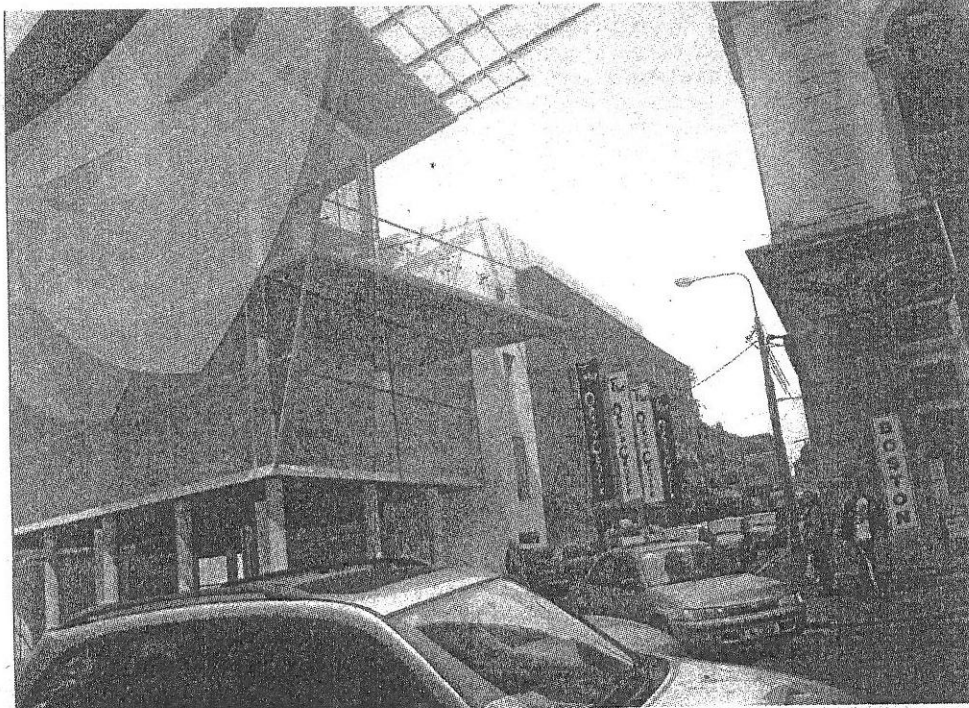
Part of the frontage on to Ellen Street consists of a retained facade behind which is another service corridor. There is no connection of any sort with either street except at designated entrances.

The planning will have a 'deadening' effect on both Michael Street and Ellen Street. The liveliness generated by shops and customer 'footfall' will not be felt there.

O3. The developers submitted detailed drawings and photographs of all the buildings affected by their plan.

Their own conservation consultant David Slattery states:

4".The proposal could avoid certain adverse potential impacts by retaining certain buildings in their entirety. The impact of the proposal could be avoided or reduced by the facade retention of No 4 Rutland Street;the retention of 5 Rutland Street in its entirety;the retention of



The much anticipated Opera Centre plans have been held up by a detailed submission to An Bord Pleanála.

No 8 Rutland Street;the facade retention of no 9 Rutland Street;the retention of No 4 and 5 Patrick Street in their entirety;the facade retention of No 4, 5 and 6 Ellen Street and total retention of No's 7, 8 and 9 Ellen Street. However, it is not proposed or suggested that the current proposal for urban rejuvenation should not take place. It is obviously necessary". In her conclusion,

Ms Cait ni Ceallachain states she has no objection in principle to this development.

"My very real concern is that Limerick City Council has contravened all the stated goals and policies of its own Development Plan by failing to protect the built Heritage

in this Architectural Conservation Area, and in the related conditions attached to this permission has set a disastrous precedent.

"I appeal to An Bord Pleanála to condition the permission to save all the buildings as recommended by David Slattery. Their inclu-

sion can only enhance the development and safeguard Limerick's Architectural Heritage for the immediate future.

"The impact of the proposal could be avoided or reduced by the facade retention of No 4 Rutland Street;the retention of

No 5 Rutland Street in its entirety;the retention of No 8 Rutland Street;the facade retention of No 9 Rutland Street;the retention of No 4 and 5 Patrick Street in their entirety;the facade retention of No 4,5 and 6 Ellen Street and total retention of No's 7, 8 and 9 Ellen Street".

The Limerick Post was unsuccessful in its efforts to contact Ms Cait ni Ceallachain this week.

Earlier this year, the City Council granted permission to Regeneration Developments Ltd., for Planning Reference no 05/548:

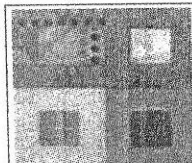
'RE:Permission for urban redevelopment relating to a site area of .55ha, within the sector defined by Bank Place to the North, Rutland Street/O'Connell Street to the west, Ellen Street to the south and Michael Street to the east and including Denmark multi-storey car park. Permission is sought for the demolition of No's 4,5, 6 and 7

Rutland Street, a five storey office building at the junction of Patrick Street/Ellen Street, No 6 Patrick Street, No 3 Ellen Street, Eurosurf and Workspace buildings on Michael Street. Permission is sought for building demolition with facade retention of Nos 4,5,6, 7 and 8 Ellen Street and No 5 Patrick Street and Nos 8 and 9 Rutland Street. Permission is sought for the refurbishment of No 4 Patrick Street.

Local auctioneer Pat Kearney, who put the package for the proposed Opera Centre together over a number of years, said a decision was likely by the end of October.

The developers, he told the Limerick Post, had set a timeline of 2007 for the opening of the centre "but now we are looking at well into 2008".

The danger was, he said, that the retailers who had expressed an interest in locating at the centre might be having second thoughts because of the delay".



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