

Opera Centre has all singing from the same hymn sheet

By John O'Shaughnessy

"At last, all are singing from the same hymn sheet" - that was how one local businessman described the decision taken by the developers of the Opera Centre and other agencies, to proceed with their euro 300m project.

As revealed in last week's edition of the Limerick Post, confirmation has been received that everything is finally in place for the develop-

ment to proceed.

Said Pat Kearney of Rooney Auctioneers, who helped to assemble the various sites in Bank Place, Rutland Street, Patrick Street, Ellen Street and Michael Street: over a period of years:

"This will change the landscape of Limerick city centre. It may have been a drawn out process but now the green light has been given and the bull-

dozers are due to move in any day".

He expects that the first building to come under demolition will be the former Cahill Roberts office block in Bank Place, to allow for access to the overall site.

The developers, from Belfast, have earmarked 2009 for the official opening.

Back to Kearney: "All the ugly buildings will come tumbling down, as well as sheds and warehouses. The Opera Centre will give an entirely new dimension to the city centre. There will be over 300,000 sq feet of retail space, when completed.

"Those concerned in the project have now moved and it is to be all systems go".

One of the entrances will face the river at Bank Place, the other entrance will be on the junction of Patrick Street and Ellen Street.

The complex has been named by the developers in honour of Limerick's famous "rags to riches" 18th century soprano

Catherine Hayes.

The most striking aspects to the design of the Opera Centre are the two modern glass fronted entrances, set to become the flagship features.

Other plans include the building of a stand alone three storey café / bar and restaurant with landscaped plaza and decking at Bank Place.

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.

The project will involve the demolition/renovation of a substantial number of historic Georgian buildings.

This raised heritage concerns given that Limerick has the largest collection of Georgian architecture in Ireland outside of Georgian Dublin.

In some cases the facades will be maintained but in general the outside perimeter will house service corridors.

It is predicted that the advent of the Opera Shopping Centre, the

biggest of its kind in Munster, will result in the modernisation of other

premises in the downtown Limerick, where a number of premises, not

associated with the development, were recently vacated.



This is a concept image of the front entrance of the proposed new Opera Centre development. The 300 million euro project is set to proceed following confirmation that everything is now in place for demolition and restoration of several Georgian buildings.

A dozen artists and 900 children

CLLR Eddie Creighton recently launched the Limerick County Council's Artist in Schools programme 2007. Present were children, teachers and the artists from the 12 schools who will participate.

More than 90 of the county's 115 primary schools have been involved in the programme since 1997, covering music, art, dance, creative writing, painting, clay work, engaging the children's imagination and talents.

"I am sure that these residencies will benefit the children, helping to build imagination and allow them have a fun creative time exploring the arts," commented Mr Creighton.

Joan Mac Kernan, arts officer, explained that at least 900 children will be actively involved in this schools' programme, organised with a team of a dozen artists and some 30 teachers.

Call for longer opening hours at Park depot