

Spend by investors on Opera Centre has reached €106m

By ANNE SHERIDAN

DEVELOPERS behind the Opera Centre shopping centre in Limerick – the largest ever in the Mid-West if it gets planning approval in the next month – have invested at least €106m to date on the unbuilt project.

The latest accounts filed to the Companies Registration Office show that Regeneration Developments Ltd have investments and stocks amounting to €106,305,419, not including other costs.

However, their auditors, BDO Simpson Xavier, warn that “economic developments, in particular the downturn in the property market, creates an uncertainty about the appropriateness of the carrying value of the investments and stock.”

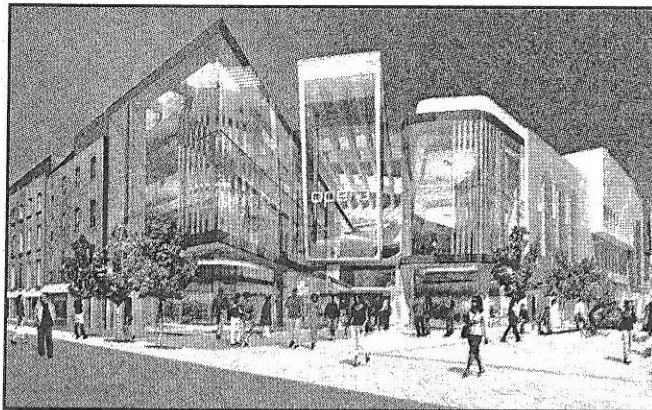
The price of property acquisitions for the site rose from €2.1m in 2006 to €86.6m in 2007. Just over €81m of this was acquired from bank loans, with shareholders loans comprising a further €25.5m.

After taxation, the company had a profit of €34,155 for the year ending December 31, 2007.

By the end of that year, the company repaid close to €3m to former directors Suneil Sharma and Samuel Morrison, who resigned in February that year.

Seven directors resigned from the company within the space of six months, with six directors – David Courtney, Jerry O'Reilly, Terry Sweeney, Peter Butler, Brendan Farrell and Gerard Davis – remaining on board.

This May it emerged that Anglo Irish Bank has a 50 per



The Opera Centre plans which are awaiting approval

cent share in the development, but a spokesperson for the company said Anglo's share in the project is “irrelevant” as to whether it goes ahead.

Mr Courtney, Mr O'Reilly and Mr Sweeney, who are the only directors with a beneficial interest in the shares of the company, are also believed to be clients of Anglo Irish

Bank. The revised plans for the Opera Centre, which have a reputed overall cost of €350m, are currently with An Bord Pleanála.

A second decision date had been set for June 8, however no decision was made at that time and a spokesperson for the national planning authority could only confirm that the plans “are at board level.”

In June, the board requested that the developers clarify the plans to the public following a new set of changes to the design.

At that time, Limerick City Council – who granted the development planning permission on two occasions – said they would once again plan to write to An Bord Pleanála stressing the need for this development to go ahead.

City manager Tom Mackey said they fully support the

need for the massive, 40-unit “shopping mecca” in the city, to rival those in the suburbs.

A decision on the expansion of the Crescent Shopping Centre is also with An Bord Pleanála. Both proposed retail centres are vying to offer Marks & Spencer an anchor store in the proposed new centres.

The British chain said the location of their first store in Limerick will depend on which, if any, application receives permission from the board, and which centre can offer M&S the largest unit.

ISSN 1649-8976

