



OUR NEW MAYOR

CLLR KEARY ELECTED
DESPITE CONTROVERSIAL
COMMENTS ON EASTERN
EUROPEANS SEE PAGE 8

STANDOUTS

MIXED REACTION TO WOGAN &
FOLEY MONUMENTS PAGES 6 & 18



GROWING SECTOR

BIOTECH BOSS ON
THE SUCCESS OF
RAHEEN PLANT
LEADER2, BUSINESS



'Transformational': €150m plans for city

■ Application to be lodged for 'Project Opera' which could bring 3,000 jobs

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LONG awaited plans to redevelop the Opera Centre site have taken a huge step forward with the commencement of the planning process.

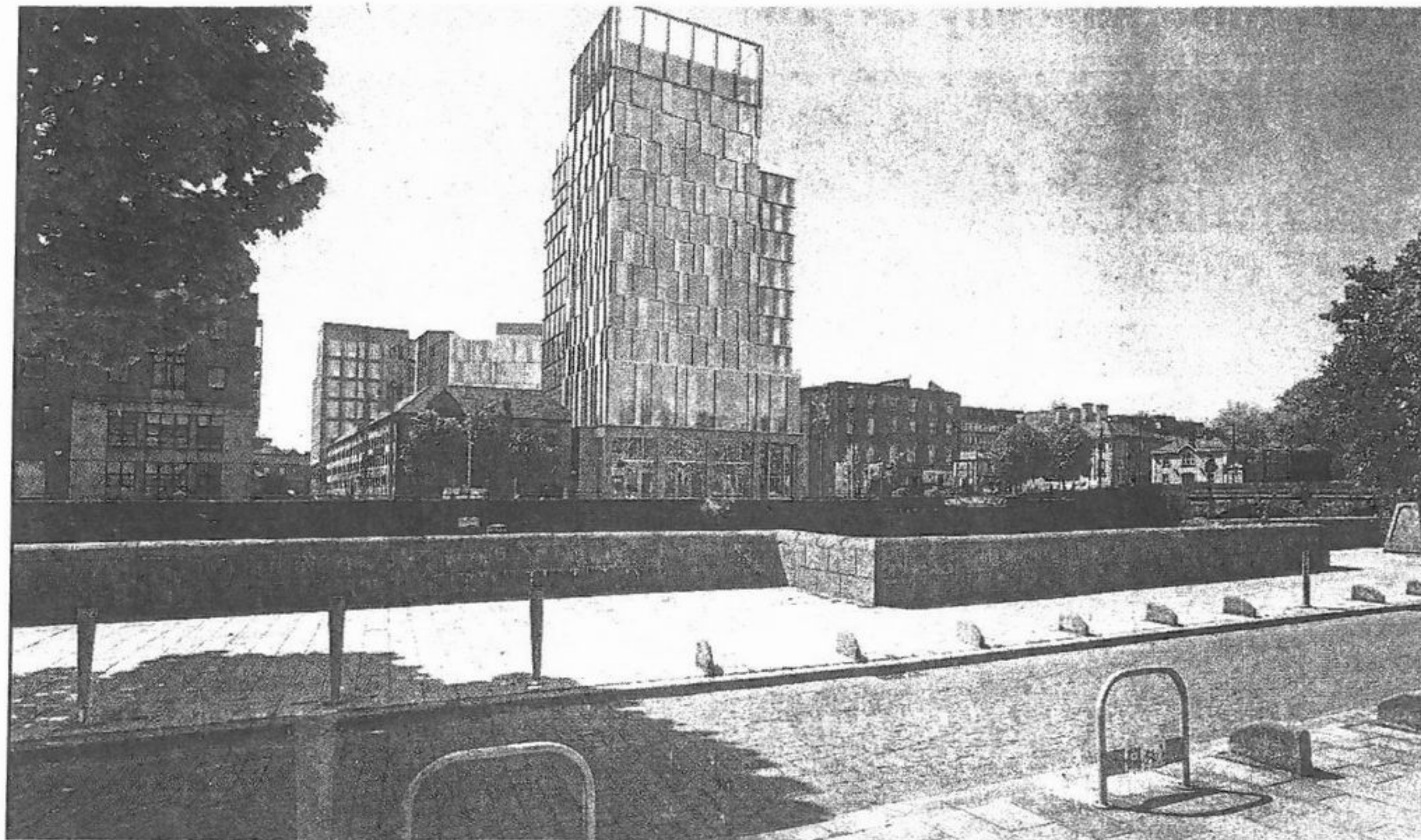
The site is to be developed as a massive "dynamic economic hub" across the 1.62 hectare space, the council has confirmed.

A planning notice has been lodged by Limerick 2030 Strategic Development DAC, a wholly owned subsidiary of the council, with the intention to re-transform a site which has lain idle for well over a decade.

It intends to develop a modern office-based campus, supplemented by ancillary retail, cultural and licensed premises uses. And brand new images on how the site could look, with three towering office blocks, have also been released.

Codenamed 'Project Opera', thousands of jobs look set to be created on the scheme, which also includes a cultural centre.

The proposals – first announced in March 2015 – have been welcomed across the board with local businesswoman Helen O'Donnell saying: "Today is the



A look how the Opera Centre site may appear from George's Quay. Limerick 2030 will shortly submit plans, which could lead to up to 3,000 jobs locally

first time I have felt confident something is going to happen there".

Chief executive of Limerick 2030 David Conway says the development will represent "a symbol of Limerick's recovery", while

chairman Denis Brosnan added it "will accelerate the unrelenting transformation of Limerick into an attractive and competitive international city."

A comprehensive planning notice for the €150m

scheme – which forms the centrepiece of Limerick 2030 – was published this week.

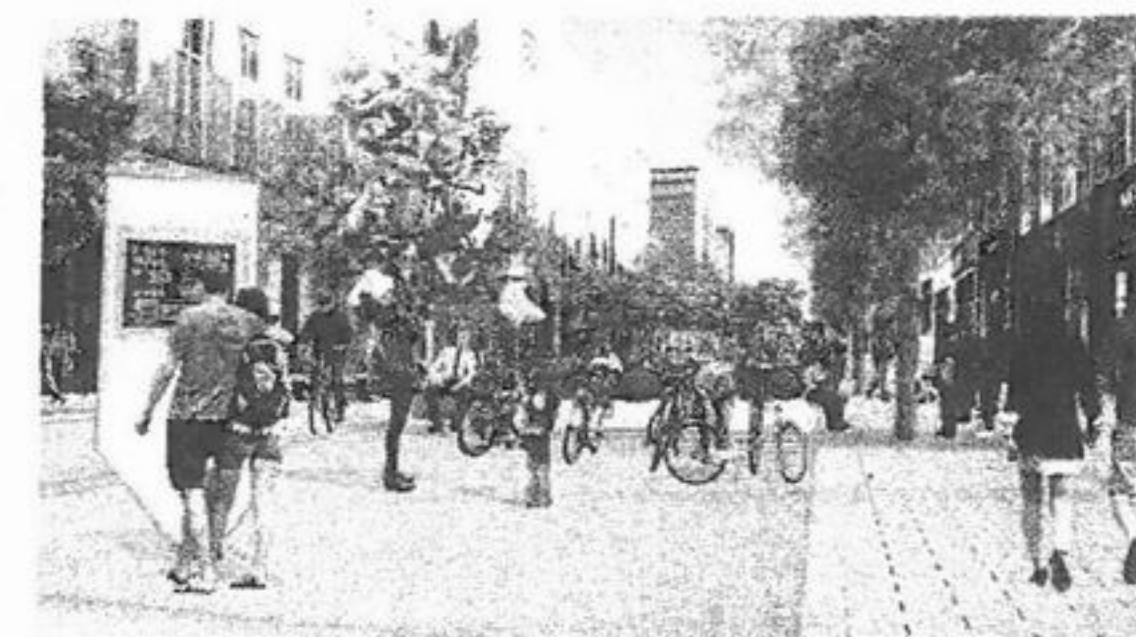
At the heart of the huge project will be the construction of three commercial buildings.

One, comprising between 11 and 14 storeys, will front onto Bank Place and bring 9,048 square metres of office floor space.

A second commercial building comprising five to

seven storeys will front onto Rutland Street, according to the plans, to provide 7,571 square metres of office floor

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An architectural rendering of the O'Connell Street redesign

Chamber to seek suburban stations to stop 'gridlock' in city

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THE Limerick Chamber is to lobby Irish Rail to open suburban stations on existing track around the city.

It comes after plans to transform O'Connell Street revealed by the council showed a reduction to one lane of traffic on the main thoroughfare.

Chamber chief executive Dr James Ring said, having spoken to members, with up to 5,000 extra staff likely to come into the city centre under the Limerick 2030 plan, alternative solutions are needed to avoid "gridlock".

"At this moment in time, we just cannot take this traffic. It means alternatives to people driving must be looked at. One way is providing more city centre accommodation. But what we want to see is much better public transport," he said.

Dr Ring said at this moment in time Limerick's public transport offering is "just not good enough".

"The buses are very unreliable, effectively all you have

is a train to Dublin and Ennis every so often. If we got cars off the road and had a reliable bus service, people would be more inclined to use them," he said.

However, he believes trains can also come to the rescue of commuters, with new stations being built on underused lines across the city.

Along the Limerick-Ballybrophy line – which already serves Castleconnell – halts could open at Annacotty and Castletroy, he suggested.

A park-and-ride facility could open at Mungret on the old Limerick Foynes line, while the Limerick-Ennis line could serve both Corbally and Moyross.

And a stop could be provided on the Limerick – Limerick Junction line at Southill, he suggested.

"If we don't do this, we will end up almost as bad as Dublin and Galway with no-one getting anywhere in a hurry. That's not what we want for this city," Dr Ring cautioned.

Separately, a call has gone out to Limerick councillors

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High Court bid

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allegations made by this teacher against him on September 13, 2013, on unspecified dates in May 2012 and in October 2012, and on another unspecified date.

Senior counsel John Hennessy earlier said that the complaints against Mr Malone were "utterly baseless, false and malicious." Counsel claimed that an investigation into complaints against him were part of an agenda to have him removed from his position.

When contacted by the Limerick Leader after the case, Mr Malone said that he believes he has been "victimised and penalised for the last three years because I repeatedly raised issues of concern."

He said that while the High Court judgment is "disappointing", "it does not change the facts in any way." He is considering his options with his legal team, including the possibility of an appeal.

The married father of four, who earlier described his ordeal as a "nightmare", said he feels that there has been a "witch hunt" against him.

"I believe the LCETB has suspended me without cause and then has sought to create a case against me," he told the Limerick Leader. "None of the allegations or charges have

any substance behind them and proper procedure and natural justice has not been followed.

In his application for a judicial review, Mr Malone's legal counsel said that his "personal and professional reputation have been destroyed" by his absence from his school and due to "wild and lurid speculation."

In a letter dated July 15, 2014, Mr Malone was directed not to enter the school or to contact any school staff members during the duration of his "administrative leave" or suspension.

He had also sought to be allowed access to the school IT system for records relevant to his case.

Mr Justice McDermott noted that in the case relating to the alleged teaching of classes to one of Mr Malone's children, the investigator ought to have been told to suspend the investigation pending Mr Malone's ability to re-engage, as he had been out sick at that time.

In this aspect, Mr Justice McDermott said "the court has some reservations about the implementation of the appropriate fair procedures."

Mr Malone was deemed unfit by medical consultants to engage in the processes in March 2015 and the investigations were suspended a month later.

Death

Fr. William Hanly, SAC, of the Pallottine Community, Thurles and formerly of Askeaton, Co. Limerick. On 27th June Fr. William died peacefully at St. Theresa's Nursing Home, Thurles, following a long illness. Remembered with love and affection by his Pallottine Community, his sister Mary Frost, brother James Hanly, sisters-in-law, nephews, nieces, grandnephews and grandnieces, former parishioners and a wide circle of friends. Lying in repose at the Pallottine College, Kickham Street, Thurles, on Sunday 2nd of July from 4pm to 7pm, followed by prayers and removal to College chapel. Concelebrated funeral Mass on Monday 3rd July at 12pm in the College chapel, burial immediately afterwards in the Community cemetery at St. Mary's Cabra. May his good soul Rest in Peace.



She may have the Miss Kilkenny sash over her shoulder and one of the county's most talented hurlers on her arm but Ennis Road native Niamh de Brún is a Limerick lady all the way. The girlfriend of deadly Kilkenny forw ard TJ Reid will be torn between both counties during the hurling qualifier which takes place at 7pm in Nowlan Park, Kilkenny on Saturday evening. See facing page for story on Niamh's recent triumph at the Miss Kilkenny pageant PICTURE: PAT MOORE

towering home for the Bells of Alphonsus cannot be so average."

The letter - tying in with updated proposals from the social entrepreneur on page seven - goes on to refer to Patrick and John Collison, who have enjoyed towering success in the Silicon Valley and John Holland, who designed the submarine.

"Two Limerick lads have built a billion dollar company before they reached the age of Christ - and are still reaching further the skies. A Limerick schoolkid dreamed of a submarine and made it a reality. Well we say to you Limerick councillors - please continue to dream too"

"Demand everything you can dream of - become Europe's new coolest metropol. A main street without cars and buses driving through it and people playing on its paved surfaces doesn't seem like such a big deal after that now does it," it adds.

More on page seven.

'Project Opera' development set to finally sing in the city centre

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space. This will be linked with a public plaza. And a third building will be built up to eight storeys, again providing a public plaza and fronting Michael Street.

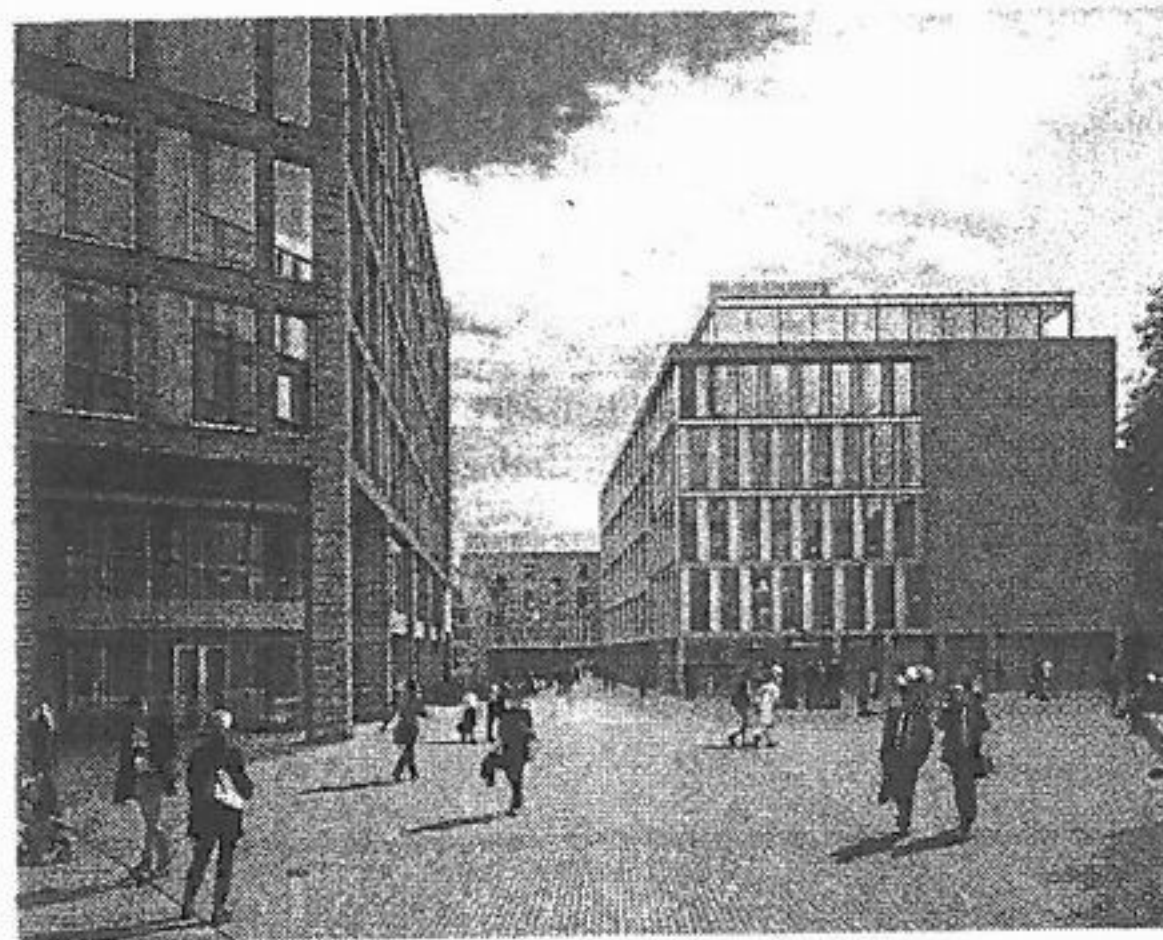
Four and Five Rutland Street will be refurbished to provide around 378 square metres of retail floor space at ground floor level and 435 square metres of office floor space at upper levels.

Units 1-5 Patrick Street and 4-6 Ellen Street will be refurbished and integrated into new units through a glazed link at first floor level. This will bring 862 square metres of retail space and a further 4,877 square metres of office floor space.

The Old Town Hall, a protected structure, will be refurbished to provide a cultural centre.

The plans provide for the demolition of a number of buildings in Rutland Street, Patrick Street and Ellen Street, plus the former Cahill May Roberts factory and existing workspace yards at Bogues Yard and the Watch House Lane.

While the Ellen Street car park will go, there will be 150 car parking spaces at basement level.



An artist's impression of how the central plaza of the new Opera Centre will look

Council chief executive Conn Murray has previously said up to 3,000 jobs will be created in the heart of Limerick.

Once slated to be a shopping centre, the Opera Centre has lain largely idle since the 2008 crash, but the local authority bought the land in 2011.

Mr Conway said: "The Opera Site, given the failure to deliver on the exciting plans announced for it early in the last decade, became one the biggest symbols in Limerick of the crash. The redevelopment of it, which is

now finally going to planning, will be a symbol for Limerick recovery. It will be a pivotal moment for the city, and deliver a massive injection of confidence."

Cllr James Collins, a director of Limerick 2030, said Project Opera represents the largest construction scheme in the state being led by a local authority.

"This is all about putting jobs in the city centre. It's about people in suits walking around using the cafes and restaurants and living in the city centre. That's the objective all along



Surveying the site of the Opera Centre along Rutland and Patrick Streets were, Limerick Twenty Thirty Chairman Denis Brosnan and CEO David Conway PICTURE: ALAN PLACE

in terms of how we will promote Limerick and make it a better place to live and work in," he said.

A public consultation process with regard to the plans will kick off on Friday, July 30 and run until August 25, with the planning notice on display. Since it is a public project, it will be the job of local councillors to rubber-stamp it. This will likely happen in the autumn.

Cllr Daniel Butler encouraged all citizens to have their say in the public consultation.

"This is a potentially transformative development which will have repercussions for our entire city and county, so it must be done well," he said.

He admitted his surprise that the project has no mention of accommodation.

"We need to see people living in the city and I will be making this point as part of the process to ensure we have a truly liveable Limerick City."

Ms O'Donnell, who trades in the Hunt Museum cafe, said: "We have lived in the centre of dereliction for

many years now, and it's so exciting something is finally going to happen. This is the catalyst for a lot of other things to happen now. It's that important for the city."

It's hoped to commence work in 2018 with a five to six year timeframe to complete the scheme.

Mr Brosnan added: "When we launched Limerick 2030 last September, we said we would not delay in bringing about the transformation of the city through developing key, disused city sites, and this is evidence of that. The patience of Limerick and its people has been tested in relation to this particular project, but they are about to be rewarded."

Project Opera comes hot on the heels of the grant of permission for another major city development, a 15-storey skyscraper planned by Rudi Butler for Limerick's riverside.

As exclusively revealed by the Limerick Leader last week, An Bord Pleanála has now green-lit this €40m scheme, which could bring 600 new jobs to the city centre.

For a look at a video of how the Opera Centre site may appear, check out our web site at www.limerick-leader.ie.