



# Fat lady sings for Ellen Street?

By ANNE SHERIDAN

**DEVELOPER** David Courtney, who is one of the investors behind the proposed €350million Opera Centre, has confirmed that buildings on Ellen Street will have to be knocked to make way for the Mid-West's biggest retail development.

An Bord Pleanála had previously ruled that these buildings should be repaired and preserved. However, both Mr Courtney, of the property company Spain Courtney Doyle, and Jim Barrett, a former Dublin city and Limerick city architect, said last night at a meeting at City Hall that the buildings would have to be demolished.

"We have made huge efforts to try and retain it, but the loss has to be Ellen Street," said Mr Barrett, whose projects as Dublin city architect included The Spire and the Millennium footbridge.

When built in 2011 – subject to planning – the 40,000-square-foot shopping centre will include a 200-seat food court, 500 car parking spaces, 40 retail units and three anchor units over three

levels, as well as a rooftop garden. A piazza or cafe area on Bank Place looking over the river is also part of the new design.

At the economic policy and planning committee last night, Cllr Kathleen Leddin welcomed the revised application and designs, stating that she believed the original design was "appalling".

Paul Ferguson, of Douglas Wallace Ferguson architects, agreed that the original design was "a bit contrived" but said it is now "timeless". Mr

Douglas said when the Opera Centre is built it will not "be about shopping and go. We want people to dwell and enjoy the experience".

Joe Clarke, manager of Trinity Rooms, was also in attendance at the meeting, as The Granary building where the club is situated has also been incorporated into the revised application currently before City Hall. Trinity Rooms have lodged an objection against the development to the planning department, describing it as

"unlawful and invalid".

In response to Cllr Kevin Kiely's question if the company Regeneration Developments have entered negotiations with the existing businesses in the area, Mr Courtney said "it's premature to enter negotiations with them".

"Our experience is that until such time as we get a final decision we won't be able to enter any meaningful discussions," Mr Courtney told members of the committee.



What the proposed Opera Centre might look like