

**CURRENT HOUSING TRENDS AT VARIANCE WITH NATIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY AND REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDELINES**

**New Housing Study Calls for Planning & Development Body for Dublin Regions**

The Government, together with the various Local Authorities in the Greater Dublin Area, should set up with immediate effect a separate body with complete and autonomous control over planning and development in the Dublin region, states the president of the Society of Chartered Surveyors (SCS), **Conor Hogan**, following the findings of a major new housing study published today (Wednesday 17 January).

Many of the current trends in house building are at variance with the objectives of the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines, the new study shows.

It also points to the fact that, rather than there being one 'housing market', there are now, in fact, a number of different markets caused by a growing segmentation, or 'fragmentation', of the housing stock which has an impact on future price trends.

The independent new study, the **SCS Housing Study 2007**, commissioned and published by the Society of Chartered Surveyors, Ireland's largest property and construction industry body, has shown that there will be increased fragmentation of the Greater Dublin Area housing market in 2007 and beyond.

Funded by the SCS, the new study has been prepared following an 18-month research programme by **Dr. Brendan Williams**, lecturer in Urban Development and Planning at UCD (the project co-ordinator), **Brian Hughes**, lecturer in Urban Economics at DIT Bolton Street and **Patrick Shiels**, urban research analyst.

The Society's president Conor Hogan states that "some areas near good infrastructure and transport links will do better than those with weak location attributes or services. This more fragmented market will give rise to a trend of diverging prices with certain areas remaining strong, whilst others will weaken over the next eighteen months".

“Based on the findings of the study, prices are expected to stabilise in some areas as overall demand and supply levels come close to equilibrium. Any price increases in 2007 are likely to be in single figures and in line with construction inflation. These will be most likely for housing in the better locations”, declares Conor Hogan, a director of Joseph C. Hogan & Sons Chartered Quantity Surveyors.

The SCS president welcomed the new study, which investigates land transformation process and growth patterns emerging in the Greater Dublin Area. It is the third in a series of independent studies on urban development trends in the Greater Dublin Area published by the Society.

The SCS Housing Study 2007 finds that it is, and will continue to be, necessary to maintain the increased housing supply levels in Dublin. This will allow choice of housing location preferences to be available to purchasers.

The new study shows that the strong underlying demand for housing in the Dublin region is likely to maintain momentum through to 2009. Dr. Brendan Williams says that this demand is evident in the current population growth and migration trends (Population Change 2002-2007 map SCS Housing Study 2007 page 7). This is augmented by previous relative under-supply of housing, represented in high population to housing stock ratios, when compared with European and international averages, he points out.

The urgent necessity for a separate planning and development body with central control over all Dublin regions, explains Conor Hogan, is evident by the fact that of the approximate 18,000 housing units built in the four Dublin Local Authorities in 2006 almost half have been provided in Fingal. There has been a continued under provision in other Local Authority areas, including most specifically Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown.

The SCS Housing Study 2007 points out somewhat surprisingly that population losses are now occurring in relatively modern suburban areas of Dublin, including parts of Tallaght, Blanchardstown and Templeogue as the population of these areas ages with children moving on to new locations. This leads to a potential under utilisation of infrastructure, which now will be required to be provided elsewhere where there is population growth.

In contrast, areas near good infrastructure and transport links such as Dundrum are seeing significant population growth.

The lack of suitably zoned land is, and will increasingly become, a problem. The SCS president Conor Hogan urges reform in land zoning and calls for a new zoning policy. The new zoning policy should follow best international principles. The zoning process should be depoliticized, stresses Mr. Hogan, calling on the Mahon/Flood tribunal to make recommendations of a structural and legal nature to achieve this.

The new study also finds that Dublin urban sprawl is continuing, with the commuter belt now stretching out to 100 kilometres from the capital into outer Leinster and south Ulster. “Housing development is occurring in a dynamic but unstable manner, often caused by major problems in managing the land supply process”, says Dr. Brendan Williams. “There is an absence of integration of housing, land use and transport infrastructure, which is causing major problems for accessibility and sustainability”.

“The recent demand for housing has been largely absorbed by the outward growth of the commuter belt, which has created a major sprawl-type settlement trend with new mono-type housing areas and a near total dependency on private cars. These development patterns have been supply-led with limited affordable housing available in Dublin and house buyers trading off lower land values for higher commuting costs”.

Dr. Williams believes that these weaker regional locations, less accessible to primary employment centres and with poor transport and amenity facilities, will suffer as the Dublin market becomes increasingly fragmented. “While these areas were in strong demand when there was no alternative, this is unlikely to continue if emerging supply trends are continued. The envisaged weaker Dublin locations will allow for movement of some of the deflected population back to the Greater Dublin Area”.

**Further information:**

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