

Can vacant site levies solve housing crisis?



Editor's note Tina-Marie O'Neill
Even now, opinion is divided over the best way to manage the national housing problem

Last week was a busy one for commercial agents, who have kicked off the new year by releasing a flurry of optimistic forecast reports for 2016 and

buoyant end-of-year results for the commercial sector in 2015. Donal Buckley takes a look at what the sector has in store on pages 10 and 12. In marked contrast, the government has been suspiciously quiet

about its plans for tackling the housing crisis this year, perhaps bogged down in dealing with the chronic flooding epidemic that destroyed countless homes over the Christmas period, as well as a looming election

campaign in which both flooding and housing policies are expected to dominate.

In a tenuously connected way, one of my bugbears reared its ugly head last week prompted by a statement from IPAV, the Institute of Professional Auctioneers & Valuers. I'm of the "use it or lose it" school of thought when it comes to vacant levies as one method of managing the housing problem. However, Pat Davitt, IPAV's chief executive, is of a different mind. "No one should be looking to the new vacant site levy to help sort out the current housing crisis," he said.

"Since no payments will be collected until 2019, it is too far into the

future to impact the current housing crisis. However, that is not to take from the fact that the introduction of the levy, signed into law last year, will make a substantial contribution to the aesthetic of our urban areas in particular. It will accelerate and incentivise productive land use and prevent hoarding, into the future."

According to Davitt, the most pressing housing issue that needs to be urgently addressed at policy level is the issue of house building costs "to separate out fact from conjecture and inform action". He said it was imperative that the basis for the current gravely insufficient level of home building be fully understood. "We know that lack of develop-

ment funding is an issue adversely impacting supply although it does seem to be improving, albeit slowly. We know that the Central Bank lending rules are having an impact on the low level of lending and we now know that they will be reviewed later this year. We know that building costs are impacting the supply of new homes, but policymakers currently do not have a handle on the extent of the issue," he said.

"The latter is a most pressing issue that needs urgent attention. And if costs, including the substantial proportion of a house price that a buyer contributes to the state, is found to be an issue, then it should be tackled."



On the market

Lily Killeen rounds up the best homes currently on offer



▲ **KILMORE, 45 PARKVALE, SANDYFORD ROAD, DUNDRUM, DUBLIN 14**

Price: €1.375 million

What: at 360 square metres, this detached family home comes with generous mature gardens at the end of a cul de sac and is in need of some decorative updating. It incorporates two large reception rooms, a kitchen/breakfast room, two dining rooms, a lounge/study, a guest WC, five first-floor bedrooms, three of which are en suite, and a main bathroom. The master suite boasts a large dressing

room and access to the very spacious gravelled balcony. Outside, is a detached garage, outside storerooms, a west-facing rear garden and parking for numerous cars at the front.

Where: the property is surrounded by local shops, pubs and restaurants and is near the Dundrum Town Centre and Beacon South Quarter. Also in the area are a number of schools and parks, and the Beacon Hospital is a short drive away. The house is served by the Luas at Kilmacud and a number of bus routes.

Agent: Finnegan Menton at 01-6147900.



◀ **3 SIDMONTON SQUARE, BRAY, CO WICKLOW**

Price: €995,000

What: this unassuming five-bedroom semi extends to an impressive 279 square metres and has been modernised to combine period features with a versatile layout. At entrance level, an arched hallway leads to four large bedrooms and a family bathroom on the return. There are four spacious reception rooms, a shower room and a modern kitchen/breakfast room at garden level. The garden is in need of some attention and there is off street parking at the front.

Where: the house is surrounded by a number of schools and is a short walk from Bray with its choice of restaurants, shops and facilities. The M50 and N11, a number of bus routes and the Dart make the commute easy to and from the city centre. Bray promenade is a three minute walk away.

Agent: Sherry Fitzgerald Bray at 01-2866630.



◀ **41 SEAPARK DRIVE, CLONTARF, DUBLIN 3**

Price: €525,000

What: a three-bed terraced home of 104 square metres comprising entrance porch, hallway, living room/lounge, a modern extended kitchen/dining room and a shower room on the ground floor, while upstairs are three bedrooms and a main bathroom. The 60-foot rear garden has a raised deck area and is laid in lawn with a storage shed and a rear laneway.

Where: on the doorstep of Clontarf village, the house is near a selection of shops and restaurants and a number of well-established schools. Clontarf Road offers frequent bus routes and the Dart provides easy access to the city centre.

Agent: DNG Fairview at 01-8331802.



▲ **32 CARRICKMINES CHASE, CARRICKMINES WOOD, BRENNANSTOWN ROAD, DUBLIN 18**

Price: €1.575 million

What: this five-bed family home of 288 square metres sits on private south-west facing grounds of 0.4 acres. It has a double height entrance hall, two reception rooms, a family/dining room, high spec kitchen/breakfast room, utility and guest WC on the ground floor. A solid oak staircase leads to the first floor with five double bedrooms, four of which are en suite, and a family bathroom. There is also a self-contained annex with its own hall door as well as access from the house. It has a kitchen/living/dining room, double bedroom and a shower room. Outside, the large wooded garden has a raised deck and patio, a shomera, garden shed and a tree house. There is a separate garage and off street parking to the front.

Where: situated near the M50 and within 11 kilometres of the city centre, the house is close to shops, restaurants and cafés in the nearby villages of Foxrock and Cabinteely. There are sports clubs and good schools in the area and the Luas at Carrickmines provides easy access to the city centre.

Agent: Sherry Fitzgerald Foxrock at 01-2894386.



▲ **4 AUBURN ROAD, DONNYBROOK, DUBLIN 4**

Price: €825,000

What: In need of significant redecoration, this four-bed terraced redbrick extends to 140 square metres and includes an entrance hall, living room, dining room, breakfast room, kitchen, back hallway, shower room and bedroom at ground floor level. The first

floor has three further bedrooms and a main bathroom. The house benefits from front and rear gardens and rear off-street parking.

Where: set just off Donnybrook Road, the house is convenient to local amenities including shops, restaurants and pubs as well as some of Dublin's most popular schools. The area is served by a number of bus routes to and from the city centre.

Agent: Hunters Estate Agent at 01-6680008.



◀ **86 BALLINCLEA HEIGHTS, KILLINEY, CO DUBLIN**

Price: €735,000

What: this extended four-bed family home spans 179 square metres and has views of Dublin Bay towards Howth. No 86 has an entrance porch, reception hall, living room with double doors to the rear garden, two more reception rooms, a kitchen/dining room, a guest WC, four upper floor bedrooms, one with en suite, and a family bathroom.

Where: the cul de sac location is a short walk from local shops and a choice of schools. Killiney and Dalkey hills are nearby, as are Dun Laoghaire and Dalkey villages. The Dart, N11 and M50 are all a short drive away.

Agent: Beirne and Wise at 01-2880900.

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