

**I, Sean Fleming T.D. wish to make a submission to:  
Ireland 2040 Our Plan National Planning Framework  
- Draft Plan, as follows:**

- First of all, the time allocated for submissions to this final stage of this process is too short and unacceptable and shows complete disrespect and an unwillingness to genuinely seek the views of the public before this Plan is finalised. This approach will ultimately damage the creditability and public acceptance of the final Plan
- Any Plan like this must start from where we actually are as a country and plan forward from that point.
- There is a false permanent view at national level in the Public Service that there is substantial economic and social connection or synergy between Laois, Longford and Westmeath. In reality this is very limited. To include Laois in a Midland region with these counties makes very little sense. Practically all the connections in every context in Laois are with Kildare, Carlow and Dublin.
- Laois is far more connected with the eastern region than with the false and artificial construct of what is called the Midland Region.
- In the previous Spatial Plan and other plans, Athlone, Tullamore and Mullingar were listed as key economic drivers for the region. The factual reality is that in recent times the population of Portlaoise has increased more than the population in each of these three towns.
- Portlaoise now has a higher population than either Athlone, Mullingar or Tullamore. This reality was not envisaged in previous strategies and demonstrates the lack of reality in these plans. Failure to consider the actual position of Co. Laois and Portlaoise will undermine the creditability of this new plan.
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- This new plan can again go down the route of previous iterations and start from where some people think we should start from, rather than starting from the reality of where we actually are.
- The actual reality is that the population of Laois will increase naturally above what is provided for in this plan, without any new houses being built. This plan must not prevent this happening and would be much

better if it provided for and planned in a sustainable manner for what is likely to happen.

- Portlaoise should be designated as a key Regional Growth and Economic Driver.
- The population of Co. Laois is 85,000 and it is only projected to be allowed increase by another 8,550, between now and 2040. The natural population growth in the county without a single new house being built will exceed this.
- These plans always ignore economic gravity.
- This 2040 plan is about the future of our children.
- Laois has an exceptionally high percent of its population under 14 Years of age i.e. 20,812 people. This is 25% of the population.
- With this young population heading into school or currently in education in the county, there will be a major requirement for employment in approximately ten years' time. This plan does not adequately address this issue.
- The whole question of the distance between home and work must be addressed. 11,500 people leave Laois every day to work primarily in Dublin or neighbouring counties. This is excessive.
- Jobs should be brought to where the people live, rather than people having to commute to where the jobs are.
- The M7 motorway which is meant to be for inter-urban traffic is now being used as a commuter route because of all the jobs being located in Dublin.
- A major reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions can be achieved by reducing commuting distance between where people work and where their employment is based.
- The question of having an economic need for housing must be addressed in view of the number of houses that will be built in the future for rental purposes. It is important that social needs be considered as part of this economic assessment.
- There has been a significant population increase in Co. Laois over the last twenty years. This has not been matched by an increase in employment in the county.

- There needs to be sustainability of housing in the county by way of having employment to match the number of people living in the area.
- The whole question of Graiguecullen must be considered in the context of Co. Laois.
- This Draft Plan is based on an increase of 600,000 people or up to 1 million people by 2040. Recently the ESRI said that the population will increase by 1 million by 2030 when they were considering the requirement for additional health resources.
- This Draft Plan must deal with the whole quality of life issues.

Regards,

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***Chairman, Public Accounts Committee***

