

Dear Minister English,

I hope this email finds you well. I would be grateful if you could arrange for this submission below to be issued to the relevant section as I had difficulty with submitting the document on the National Planning Framework website.

Kind regards and best wishes,

Marcella

**Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy submission to National Planning Framework Ireland: 2040
Our Plan**

- The National Planning Framework 2040 is a Government initiative that will make a plan for the Ireland of 2040. This plan will place on a statutory footing a blueprint outlining where we all want Ireland to be in 2040. This plan will factor in the infrastructural needs across the country taking into context population growth projections. While it must be acknowledged how difficult it can be to accurately predict population trends, this plan will arm this Government and future administrations with a clear vision and roadmap for the future. Crucially it will ensure that the disastrous mistakes of the last development plan, The National Spatial Plan of 2002 will never happen again.
- I am determined that we get this framework right for Offaly, Laois and the entire Midlands region so it can develop socially, economically and culturally.
- Offaly and Laois is at the heart of Ireland and the framework needs to be framed to ensure that Offaly and the Midlands is a major engine of growth for the entire country. Its central location with close proximity to Dublin, the Capital city means it is ideally located to cater for the population growth that it predicted. The Dublin region cannot deliver housing and education services and crucially it cannot deliver the quality of life that we can provide here in the Midlands.
- The National Planning Framework 2040 must ensure significant extra investment in infrastructure for Offaly and Laois. In order for Ireland to meet its climate change targets, significant investment is needed in public transport across the midlands. The framework must prioritise the enhancement of the rail network to provide appropriate services to commuters travelling to and from the Midlands. The public transport services linking the main urban centres of Tullamore, Portlaoise, Mullingar, and Athlone need to be improved so that people working and studying in the Midlands can travel without the need for private car ownership insofar as possible.
- The Technological Universities Bill will allow Athlone Institute of Technology to prosper as a world-class tertiary education centre in the heart of the Midlands, thus stimulating economic growth and critical mass across the region which will serve to benefit County Offaly. This will help to ensure that indigenous companies have the supports to compete on the world stage in the IT sector and that the intellectual property rights are kept in Ireland.
- The economy in the Midlands needs to be supported to move from a traditional focus on agriculture, mining and construction to driving entrepreneurialism. Irish entrepreneurs need the necessary incentives and supports to base their businesses in the Midlands. Over reliance on the FDI sector could leave the region overly exposed to the vagaries of the world economy. We just have to look at the examples of local businesses who are leaders in their field like Grant Engineering, Glenisk, Romaquip, Banagher Concrete, Killeshal Precast and J Grennan & Sons to name just a few. These enterprises are the backbone of the local economy and the framework document must ensure the necessary level of investment by Government to support these businesses, and foster the next generation of Midlands based market innovators and disruptors.
- The agri-food sector requires continued support and investment from central Government and Europe as the Midlands can produce quality food, efficiently and economically, which will also be a driver for sustainable employment.
- The framework must ensure that Offaly's brand as a quality artisan food producer is encouraged to develop and flourish.
- I submit that the framework must ensure that the bad planning mistakes of the past are never allowed to be repeated where permission was given for large retail parks on the outskirts of some of the Midlands major urban centres. This has seriously damaged the heart of our urban centres and the plan must offer supports and policies to regenerate the town and

village centres across the Midlands.

- I welcome assurances from the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Eoghan Murphy TD and the Minister of State with responsibility for Housing and Urban Development, Damien English TD that the Midlands population growth will not in any way be restricted and that the framework will ensure that population growth is supported by the necessary level of infrastructural investment.
- The Development of Birr as a science centre of excellence in light of Trinity College's new Education Centre working in conjunction with I-LOFAR telescope project. Huge potential for revenue into the town in terms of increased tourism activity and bed occupancy levels for hotels and guesthouses to accommodate academics and students. Public transport to South Offaly will need significant extra investment to support and facilitate this. An inner relief road for Birr town to remove the heavy goods vehicles from congesting the centre of the town must be an essential component of the plan for Birr.
- N52 link road. At present in excess of 13,000 vehicles drive through Durrow. Tullamore as Offaly's capital town needs the link to the Galway-Dublin motorway and its absence has the risk of hindering development for the County. This N52 road is a major North/South link and the addition of this carriageway would greatly improve the road network for the entire region.
- N62 requires major upgrading works as a vital artery through West and South Offaly linking Athlone with the M7 at Roscrea and the M8 at the Horse and Jockey. This must be considered in the context of the road's foundations over boglands which means that the road surface requires works every five years rather than the normal 20 year period on roads with proper foundations. Specific Improvement Grants need to be funded continually by Government because so much of the road network in West and East Offaly is built on peat. Clonmacnoise as one of the country's premier tourism destination requires a new focus on improving safe access to this significant heritage site
- A large amount of preliminary work has been done on the inner relief road project for Edenderry town. This project is needed to allow the town to benefit fully from the new Edenderry to Enfield Road which has brought so many benefits to Edenderry and the East Offaly area.
- M6 to M7 link road from Rhode to Portarlinton along the R400. A very strategic route that would drive enterprise and investment in East Offaly.
- The development of facilities for the provision of helicopter landing to support business in the Midlands.
- Making sure that fibre-optic broadband is delivered to all of our business parks and technology centres to allow them to continue to prosper and develop.
- The rollout of the Greenways along the Grand Canal and linking Lough Boora Discovery to the Slieve Bloom mountains will be a key driver for tourism growth in County Offaly. This tourism link will be further extended with the Slieve Bloom Bike Trail in Laois Offaly and the planned Dublin to Galway Greenway.

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