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Sent: 23 January 2019 20:10
To: RSES
Subject: RSES - Online submission

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From: Sean Fleming T.D. [REDACTED]
Organisation: Public Representative

Message Body:

I wish to make a submission to the Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region as follows; In relation to Regional Policy Objectives, Rural Areas, RPO 4.51: serviced sites in small towns and villages should be developed in their own right, but not as an alternative to one- off rural housing. There is a total misconception throughout this document that the majority of people in rural areas are involved in farming, forestry or tourism. This is certainly not the case. Most people who live in rural areas do so because they were born in these areas or have strong family, social and economic links with the area.

The National Planning Framework supports balanced sustainable growth of rural economies and rural communities. This document talks about "compact growth, with serviced sites, acting as a viable alternative to the house in the countryside." This policy is designed to further weaken and diminish rural communities, leading ultimately to denuding rural areas of their populations and communities. This plan goes too far on this issue.

RPO 4.54 correctly differentiates between rural areas under strong urban influence and areas experiencing decline or stagnation. There should be a positive strategy to support housing in these weaker areas.

RPO 4.55 must be amended. Most economic development can be based in urban areas, except those that specifically are land connected in rural areas. This presumption that all economic development should be in the first instance be located in towns and cities is unfair. The cost of sites, building and business overheads are higher in urban areas compared to rural areas. This policy is designed to add costs to businesses and ultimately the consumer, which could be reduced by allowing a balanced amount of sustainable economic development outside the urban areas.

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