



Lismard Court, Portlaoise, Co. Laois,
R32 KT32 Monday – Friday
Tel: 057 8620232

O'Moore Street, Mountmellick,
R32 RH68 Tuesday a.m.

E Mail: charlie.flanagan@justice.ie



23 January 2019

Mr Jim Conway, Director
Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly
Ballymun Civic Centre
Ballymun
Dublin

Re: Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy

Dear Mr Conway,

I wish to make a submission in respect of the 'Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy' as published by the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly.

I am pleased to see a number of key objectives in respect of County Laois included in the draft strategy:

- Recognition of the fact that Laois was the fastest growing county in the EMRA between 2006-2016, with significant population growth of 26% (compared with 23% in the second-fastest growing county, Fingal).
- Portlaoise being recognised as a key town for growth in the EMRA region (on the same level as Tullamore, Longford and Mullingar) due to the strategic location of the town in respect of the M7 motorway and rail services.
- The Portlaoise Southern Distributor Road being recognised as a key infrastructure project in the region.
- An acknowledgement of the urgent need for further job creation in Portlaoise, and the imbalance between 33,244 resident workers and 18,505 jobs in County Laois.
- Graiguecullen being identified as a key town, and Mountmellick being recognised as a service town in the EMRA region.
- Provision being made for the estimated population increase to 97,500 people in County Laois by 2031.

However, I wish to express my concern in respect of protecting the policy of Laois County Council with regard to rural housing. It is recognised in the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023, that there is an individual housing need for people in rural areas, in particular on lands which may be owned by farm families and/or other people living in rural areas in County Laois due to family or work connections with the local area.



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I feel that the current policy of Laois County Council is correct and adequate in this regard and I believe that this should be protected in the EMRA Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy.

I would be grateful if my views as outlined above could be taken into consideration.

Yours sincerely,

CHARLIE FLANAGAN TD
Minister for Justice and Equality



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