From:	Carmel Egan <cegan@rgdata.ie>
Sent:	23 January 2019 16:21
To:	RSES
Subject:	RGDATA comment on Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for Eastern & Midland region
Attachments:	RGDATA comment on Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for Eastern & Midland region 23 Jan '19.pdf

A Chara

Please see attached submission on behalf of Tara Buckley, Director General, RGDATA, Mentec House, Pottery Rd, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin.

Please confirm receipt of this document.

Kind regards

Carmel Egan
Office Manager
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23 January 2019

Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly
3rd Floor North
Ballymun Civic Centre
Main Street
Ballymun
Dublin D09 C8P5

Re: Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region

A Chara

RGDATA supports sustainable and strategic retail development that is in line with the Retail Planning Guidelines and Local Retail Strategies. This is in the best interests of local communities, local consumers and vibrant and vital local towns, suburbs and villages.

RGDATA supports new shops and new formats in town centres and in retail zones as a diversity of shops provides citizens with choice, convenience and value. We believe that having shops that people can walk to play an important role in vibrant local communities.

RGDATA also supports the Retail Planning Guidelines and particularly the guidelines relating to sustainable retail development and maintaining the vitality and vibrancy of town centres.

RGDATA would like to emphasise the following points regarding future Retailing Development in the Eastern and Midland Region.

RGDATA respectfully suggests that a Collaborative Town Centre Health Check should be carried out in all towns before any additional grocery/convenience or other retail floorspace is considered in or on the edge or outskirts of the towns.

Local Authorities should commit to using the analysis of the health check indicators to inform the preparation of town centre strategies and to inform all future town centre development.

The Collaborative Town Centre Health Check will identify the key data about a town and will assist in identifying exactly what new retail and other development is required, what is in the best interests of promoting a good retail mix, what will best service the actual population of the town, ensure the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre, provide sustainable development and address the existing vacancy rate in the town centres.

Chapter 2 Retail Policy Context, of the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 states:
"Future retail development should be plan-led following the settlement hierarchy, including the identification of retail requirements and appropriate planning policies and objectives and implementation measures aimed at securing development plan objectives."

The Collaborative Town Centre Health Check will identify the current building uses and vacancy data in the towns and will assist in producing a Town Plan which will identify exactly what new development is required, what retail requirements will promote the best mix, what other business, cultural and community services are required, what will best service and grow the population of the towns and the footfall into the town centres. This strategic approach will develop the vibrancy and vitality of the town centres and provide sustainable development.

The Town Plan will also determine the exact future retail needs of the town as the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check includes:

- Land Use surveys to establish the overall vacancy rates in the town.
- Retailer surveys to establish current levels of commercial activity and outlook.
- Pedestrian counts to establish actual town centre visitor numbers.
- Shoppers surveys to rate visitor experience and satisfaction.

see Town Centre Health Check Methodology on the National Heritage Website (https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/town-centre-health-check-training-programme)

We trust that these points will be taken on board in the drafting of the Guidelines.

Yours sincerely

TARA BUCKLEY
DIRECTOR GENERAL
RGDATA