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**Submission:**

Need to stop prioritising large towns neglect of small rural towns and villages

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**Consultation:**

Draft First Revision to the National Planning Framework

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## Observations:

### 1. The Vision

**Chapter:** 1. The  
Vision

A revision of the National Planning framework can't come quick enough It is killing rural Ireland and causing one of the biggest migrations from our small towns and villages since the famine. My points relate to Westmeath where I am councillor but could give you countless other examples from numerous counties.

This focus on investment and infrastructure development in our cities and large towns (where everyone has to live where there are tens of thousands around you) has had a detrimental effect on the up to now sustainable small town and village centres supporting thousands of people around our country.

How many drives around our country sees you pass through once thriving town and village centres deserted of shops, restaurants, pubs, banks, Garda Stations, petrol stations and sometimes schools with many replaced by derelict buildings and passed up by all forms of public transport You then reach large towns choked with traffic even on supposed bypasses.

In every area of our society, we can see this:

- Health WE lack primary care settings and the closing of any basic health facilities in towns like Rochfortbridge
- Education in places like Kinnegad where council and developers moved in 3000 people and then left them without a secondary school and now no private house built there since 2007.
- Transport in places like Killucan where train stops 8 times a day at a closed station and lets no one on because govt won't spend the €5 million to reopen it but will spend that amount on a few footpaths around Mullingar
- Policing, all over rural Westmeath where Garda cover has nearly all moved to Mullingar and Athlone
- Banking where B of I closed 4 rural town banks in one day in our county and left us with just two towns served Mullingar and Athlone in and county of 100,000
- Housing in small towns where no one can get a house in the place they grew up (if it was even affordable) and rural farm families where the next generation has to leave in the town and drive out to the farm In Westmeath it seems you can only build an house in Mullingar or Athlone along bypass after bypass.

- Enterprise where so many towns in our county from Kinnegad to Killucan to Rochfortbridge to Delvin and Castlepollard are left without a business park where people can work close to home and have a quality of life rather than a two hour commute.
- Tourism where sometimes the only hotel is closed to tourists in what's supposed to be our major opportunity for a local indigenous industry
- In Community facilities where so many are left without parks, playgrounds, community centres, libraries and basic amenities and you have to drive miles to the big towns to avail of them due to non-existent bus services

If this NPF, a misguided policy, continues the map of Ireland will have 2, or 3 large towns in every county, with most people living in greater Dublin area and the rest of the country will be under the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Climate Change means people working locally in community and enterprise ventures and Eworking, It means going to school locally, having a local doctor and local shops and local community centres and facilities. It was the way we always were and this is certainly not progress.

NPF not fit for purpose, it is city and large town based and more than half of us live in Rural Ireland where we need local facilities kept local. Many of the politicians in the current government can't see beyond Heuston station, it's about time the rest of us did.

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**Documents Attached:** No

**Boundaries Captured on** No

**Map:**