



Offaly County Council,
Áras an Chontae,
Charleville Road,
Tullamore,
Co. Offaly.

Laois County Council,
Áras an Chontae,
James Fintan Lalor Ave,
Portlaoise,
Co. Laois.

10th October 2023

Re: Issues Paper – Portarlington Joint LAP 2024 – 2030

Dear Sir/Madam

The Department of Education welcomes this opportunity to engage with Offaly and Laois County Councils in the preparation of the Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan 2023 – 2029.

The Department notes that Local Authorities, in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), are obliged to make all their statutory plans consistent with the core strategies and objectives of the NPF and the relevant RSES. The Department welcomes the reference to this statement in the Issues Paper. It is noted that the current Laois CDP 2021-2027 designates Portarlington as a ‘Self Sustaining Growth Town’ and provides a population increase of 1,000 persons for Portarlington from 2016 to 2027 and a further increase of 230 persons to 2031. It is noted that the current Offaly CDP 2021-2027 designates Portarlington as a ‘Self Sustaining Growth Town’ and provides a population increase of 207 persons for Portarlington from 2016 to 2027. If this projected population increase materialises, a requirement for additional education provision at both primary and post-primary level may emerge over the lifetime of the plan.

The Department also notes in the section titled Urban Design and Regeneration of the Issues Paper the reference to the potential regeneration of existing areas within the town’s core. The Department notes that the joint LAP will consider the cumulative impacts of regeneration and redevelopment on existing community facilities. Population growth within the existing “built-up” footprint of the town has the potential to upset the balance of use relative to education provision in the area. The absence of specific school site provision in such locations can significantly challenge the delivery of required school places



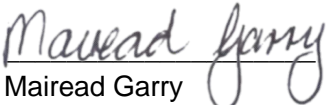
associated with intensified residential development. It is, therefore, critical that explicit provision for school development to cater for such development be made in existing “built-up” areas, within Portarlinton.

The Department notes in the section titled Strengths the reference to the vital role of community infrastructure within the town and its environs and in this regard requests that the Draft Plan would be explicit in its support for the provision of adequate and suitable school accommodation, including the development of new schools and the expansion or alteration of existing ones.

In terms of assessing current and future capacity, the Department of Education has to be mindful of potential unforeseen circumstances such as the Ukrainian crisis, which have the ability to put undue pressure on school place provision and could necessitate reassessments of school place provision from time to time. The Department will engage with the Council where the findings of an assessment require a review of existing or future school site provision within a specific location. The Department also anticipates that additional special education needs provision at both primary and post-primary level will be required in the future throughout the country and this may result in schools requiring additional accommodation to meet this growing need. The Department will consult with the Council if and when additional special education needs accommodation is required within specific locations.

Finally, the Department welcomes the continued engagement with the Councils regarding the development of both new and existing schools, as appropriate, and emphasizes the critical importance of the ongoing work of the Councils in ensuring sufficient land is zoned for this purpose.

Yours sincerely,



Mairead Garry
Statutory Plans,
Forward Planning Section