

Draft Planning Submission: Wind Farm Application

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

Re: Case number 323780

From: Senator Joanne Collins and Cllr PJ Carey

Address: Unit B, 8 Marketplace, Newcastlewest, V42 CK83

Date: October 31th 2025

1. Introduction

I wish to make a submission in respect of the proposed development of Ballinlee Wind Farm. While renewable energy is an essential part of our transition to a low-carbon future, this project raises concerns in the absence of updated national wind energy guidelines. Their impact on future rural housing development also remains in question.

2. Absence of Updated Wind Energy Guidelines

The current Wind Energy Development Guidelines date from 2006 almost two decades ago. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications have been reviewing these guidelines for several years, with draft revisions published in 2019 but never finalised.

This delay has left planning authorities, communities, and developers operating in a policy vacuum. Developers continue to submit applications under outdated standards that fail to reflect modern turbine scale, noise levels, shadow flicker, or proper setback distances. This undermines public confidence in the planning process and places rural communities at a disadvantage.

Until the updated national guidelines are formally adopted, local authorities are effectively being asked to assess 2025-scale wind farms using 2006 criteria. That is neither fair nor sustainable.

3. Impact on Future Rural Housing

In the absence of updated Wind Energy Guidelines, there are no clear criteria for the appropriate set-back distance of housing as it relates to turbine height.

Therefore, large-scale turbine developments in the absence of clear criteria can impact on planning permission, posing a risk to the development of housing in the surrounding areas.

This can then have a knock on effect by preventing young families from building locally and contributing to further rural depopulation.

This is especially concerning given that:

- National and regional policy emphasise balanced rural development;
- Local Development Plans encourage rural settlement sustainability; and
- The proposed wind farm's footprint overlaps with existing clusters of rural dwellings and viable housing sites.

If approved without the appropriate safeguards and criteria in place as set out in updated guidelines, this project could effectively create a no-go zone for new rural housing in Limerick County, directly undermining the viability and social fabric of the local community.

4. Need for Policy Coherence

The government cannot credibly promote both rural repopulation and renewable expansion without reconciling these two policy areas. The prolonged delay in publishing new Wind Energy Guidelines is resulting in:

- Planning inconsistencies across counties;
- Growing community opposition based on uncertainty; and
- Potential legal and planning conflicts in future rural housing applications.

Until these guidelines are updated, no major wind farm application should be approved that risks long-term constraints on rural housing and community sustainability.

5. Conclusion

While renewable energy development is necessary, it must proceed under clear, current, and equitable policy frameworks. In the absence of the long-promised updated Wind Energy Guidelines, it would be premature and inappropriate to approve this development.

I therefore respectfully request that the planning authority take into account the absence of revised national guidelines when making this decision to ensure proper regulatory consistency and community protection.

Signed:

Senator Joanne Collins and Cllr PJ Carey