

24th July 2017

Community Engagement Charter Feedback (YourSay) to Development Division, DPTI.

SECRA is of the view that if a Community Engagement Charter is to have any meaningful value it will have to deliver the outcomes which the community needs in the planning process. The proposed charter in no way compensates the community for what it has lost through recent changes to the planning process within the State, nor does it address the issue of the ability of the Minister to make ad hoc planning decisions outside those planning processes.

The community needs to be involved in every aspect of planning and every stage: from early involvement in strategic matters, to the more detailed precinct and neighbourhood planning, to the “nitty-gritty” of the development proposed for next-door or down my street.

A charter requires the awarding of powers and privileges. What powers and what privileges? And why is the community merely to be “engaged” rather than consulted?

The recent changes to planning laws have taken away the power of the community and individuals:

- to be consulted on most developments (now that they are largely considered “complying”)
- to “have their day in court” at a Development Assessment Panel
- to have their elected local government representatives involved in such panels.

The community now asks: Who is accountable for planning decisions? Who decides that my one-storey heritage cottage or two-storey townhouse is now to be overlooked, and overshadowed for most of the day, by a fifteen-storey development, and that my narrow street is going to be choked with traffic? Who is able to challenge a Minister who decides to rezone a key area at the stroke of a pen to suit the request of a developer? There have been a number of recent examples of this in our area of the city.

Members of the SECRA committee have attended and spoken at DAPs and have seen how important it has been for people to have their legitimate concerns heard and acknowledged. There has been the opportunity for developers to make changes to a development as a result of this process. A charter must ensure that such a process be retained.

Yours sincerely,

Heather Nimmo
Secretary,
SECRA