

# **GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF PLANNING JUSTIFICATION REPORTS AND PLANNING JUSTIFICATION BRIEFS**

## **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for the preparation of Planning Justification Reports and Planning Justification Briefs.

Planning Justification Reports are required to accompany submissions of development related applications such as Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment applications and Draft Plan of Subdivision/Condominium applications and sometimes Site Plan applications.

Planning Justification Briefs are typically required for less complex applications such as Consent or Minor Variance applications.

All reports shall follow the guidelines contained in this document unless report requirements are further scoped during pre-consultation. Failure to adhere to the guidelines may result in a report being considered unsatisfactory and submitted applications being deemed incomplete.

The goal of the Reports is to provide a background context of the proposal, an overview of the purpose and effect of the application(s) and provide a professional planning rationale for the application by demonstrating how the proposal is consistent with provincial policy and conforms to applicable planning policy documents and good planning principles.

All reports must be signed by a Registered Professional Planner (RPP). A Candidate Member of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) or a Certified Planning Technician (CPT) may also prepare the report, however it must be reviewed and signed an RPP.

Reports will vary in content and detail depending on the nature and complexity of the proposal and applications being sought, however all reports must include the following:

- Introduction
- Site context
- Description of the proposal
- Policy and planning analysis
- Summary and conclusions
- Appendices/maps/plans

## **Planning Justification Reports:**

The framework for a Planning Justification Report is based on the following:

### A. Introduction

Every report must contain a brief introduction which outlines:

- Who was retained to write the report, when and by whom
- What applications(s) have been submitted or are required to support the proposal
- Date of the pre-consultation meeting(s)
- A statement of the purpose of the report

### B. Site Context

The site context is intended to provide an understanding of where the proposal is located and the characteristics of the site and surrounding area. This section of the report contains:

- A description of the location, existing condition and existing land uses of the subject lands
- A description of the surrounding land uses and important features such as roadways, significant buildings/features or characteristics of the area
- Identification of constraints affecting the site such as hazards, natural heritage features, access restrictions, servicing restrictions, cultural heritage resources, etc.
- Identification of any lands on the site that may be regulated by the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority
- Identification of any other known development proposals affecting the area
- Maps or reference to appendices that help provide a context for the site and surrounding land uses, such as surveys, aerial photographs, site photographs, maps, etc.

### C. Description of Proposal

The description of the proposal is to provide detailed information to allow the reader to understand the purpose and outcome of the applications(s). This section of the report must provide details about proposed uses, proposed buildings and siting, if known the planning history of the site (i.e. previous applications), identification of how the lands will be serviced and any previous consultations with the Town, Region and Conservation Authority.

Where modifications to the Official Plan are proposed, a detailed draft of the proposed amendment and proposed modification should be included.

Where modifications to the Zoning By-law provisions are proposed, a detailed draft of the proposed by-law along with a detailed concept plan should be provided illustrating all applicable zoning regulations, (i.e. lot frontage, setbacks, coverage, encroachments, building height, parking (number and size of parking spaces, and driveway aisles), etc.).

The description of the proposal will also list and provide a brief description of other technical supporting studies that have been submitted as part of a complete application, in support of the application(s) and how these relate to applicable planning policies and inform the planning opinion in this report (i.e. Traffic Impact Studies, Noise and Vibration Assessments, Archaeological Studies, Functional Servicing Studies, Urban Design Brief, etc.).

#### D. Policy and Planning Analysis

The policy and planning analysis is the basis for establishing why a proposal should be considered and approved. The analysis must provide an outline of applicable planning policy documents and regulatory contexts quoting specific policies that are relevant to the proposal. The analysis must establish a basis for the application(s) by providing detailed analysis of the identified relevant policies and explain how the proposal conforms to the policies. Where changes to the Official Plan and/or Zoning By-law are proposed, the analysis must discuss the appropriateness of the requested amendments, including the policy basis for any requested modifications that are specific to the proposal. The following planning documents must be addressed as part of the policy and planning analysis:

1. Provincial Policy and Legislation:
  - Provincial Policy Statement
  - Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
  - Greenbelt Plan
  - Niagara Escarpment Plan
2. Municipal Policy
  - Region of Niagara Official Plan
  - Town of Pelham Official Plan
  - Secondary Plans
  - Council Approved Guidelines and Studies
3. Zoning By-law

If during the pre-consultation meeting specific policies were identified that need to be addressed in the Planning Justification Report, the policy and planning analysis should include an analysis of those specific policies and discuss how the proposal is supported by those specific policies.

The policy and planning analysis section is intended to provide a rationale and opinion as to why the proposal is appropriate, in terms of how the proposal addresses good planning principles. This may include a discussion of how the proposal provides social, cultural, economic, and/or environmental benefits; how the proposal contributes to creating complete, vibrant communities; and/or how potential negative impacts have been mitigated or avoided.

The analysis should also include a summary of the findings of other technical supporting studies that make up a complete application and discuss how the

findings of these studies are supported by the policy context and support the proposal and the planning opinion.

Applications which propose residential uses must provide an analysis of proposed densities and unit counts compared to the requirements in the applicable policy documents and demonstrate how the proposed density is in conformity with Provincial and/or municipal plans.

In some cases policy documents or zoning by-laws affecting lands may have been adopted or approved by Council, but are under appeal. In these cases, the documents are not in effect, but are relevant to the proposal. The Planning Justification Report should address the policies in the documents as part of the planning analysis and identify if changes are needed if the document or zoning by-law were in effect.

#### E. Summary and Conclusions

This section of the Report will provide a summary and concluding remarks outlining:

- The purpose and effect of the application(s), including why the requested amendment(s) are necessary
- A summary of the key relevant plans and policies and how they are being addressed
- A summary of the key merits of the application and
- Final recommendations

#### F. Appendices/Maps/Plans

The following visual aids and/or appendices are typically included in Planning Justification Reports and should be included where applicable:

- Maps, including aerial photographs, land parcel mapping and surveys
- Street level photographs/renderings of the lands subject to the proposed application(s)
- Official plan maps of land use designations
- Zoning maps
- Concept plans or site plans
- Official Plan amendment sketch and copy of proposed Official Plan amendment
- Zoning By-law amendment sketch and copy of proposed Zoning By-law amendment
- Draft plan of subdivision
- Supporting technical studies

#### **Planning Justification Briefs:**

For less complex proposals a Planning Justification Brief may be requested instead of a full Planning Justification Report. A Planning Justification Brief may be included as a covering letter with a formal application or as a short report. The Planning Justification Brief should give a summary of the proposal, outline the merits of the proposal based on

good planning principles. The requirement for a Planning Justification Brief will be determined on a case by case basis.

Planning Justification Briefs must include at a minimum:

- A description of the proposal and site context
- A summary addressing how the proposal meets the general intent of Provincial, Regional and municipal policies, including policies specific to the lands
- A brief summary of any supporting technical studies and how they support the planning opinion
- A summary of how the proposal is consistent with good planning principles.