



REPORT

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Bronwyn Parker, Director of Planning Policy
Jeff Markowiak, Director of Development Review

DATE: October 29, 2025

REPORT NO.: PD-2025-068

SUBJECT: Council endorsement of Urban Boundary Expansion Guidelines

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. PD-2025-068, dated October 29, 2025, regarding “Council endorsement of Urban Boundary Expansion Guidelines”, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council endorse the Urban Boundary Expansion Guidelines, as generally shown on SCHEDULE 1 – URBAN BOUNDARY EXPANSION GUIDELINES, for use by staff when evaluating private proposals seeking to expand the Town’s urban boundary.

KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- Following recent changes to Provincial legislation private landowners within Halton Hills have already submitted, or expressed an interest in filing applications, to amend the Town’s Official Plan to include their lands within the 2051 municipal urban boundary.
- To aid in the evaluation of proposals seeking to expand the Town’s urban boundary, staff have developed a set of guidelines which outline the anticipated review process and identify the materials that an applicant shall be required to submit in support of their proposal; see SCHEDULE 1 – URBAN BOUNDARY EXPANSION GUIDELINES.
- This report is seeking Council’s endorsement for staff to utilize the guidelines and checklist when evaluating any urban boundary expansion proposal.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

Following recent changes to Provincial legislation private landowners within Halton Hills have expressed an interest in filing applications to amend the Town's Official Plan to include their lands within the 2051 municipal urban boundary. In response to the policy changes and expressed interest by landowners, Town staff have developed guidelines, a checklist of submission requirements and terms of reference for some of the necessary technical reports to help guide the evaluation of any proposed private urban boundary expansion requests. This report is intended to provide background context for these requests and to seek Council's endorsement for the use of the guidelines, which are attached as SCHEDULE 1.

1. Context

The former Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) governed the expansion of settlement areas, including the urban boundary. Under this previous framework, urban boundary expansions, if any, were determined through a municipally initiated comprehensive review process. In the Halton context, the upper tier planning authority, being the Region of Halton, implemented revisions to the settlement area boundary through a Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) process. For example, ROPA 38 expanded the urban boundary for Georgetown to include the Vision Georgetown, Southeast Georgetown and Stewarttown Expansion lands and also expanded the Premier Gateway to include the Phase 1B and 2B employment lands. The Town was then responsible for approving the detailed planning framework for these expansion lands through subsequent Secondary Plan exercises to facilitate their development. More recently the Province further expanded the Georgetown and Premier Gateway urban boundaries to include additional community and employment area lands, resulting in modifications to the ROPA 49 urban boundaries. In keeping with the approved Terms of Reference, no further expansions are contemplated as part of the ongoing Official Plan review.

Under this previous planning framework, private landowners had no recourse to include their lands within the urban boundary should the request not be supported by the upper and lower tier municipalities as the *Planning Act* did not provide landowners with appeal rights for municipal decisions regarding expansions or revisions to the urban boundary.

However, recent changes to the planning framework in Ontario has altered this process:

a) Provincial Planning Statement 2024

In October 2024 the new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) came into effect, which integrated the Provincial Policy Statement 2020 and Growth Plan 2020 into a singular province-wide policy document. Whereas the former PPS 2020 and Growth Plan 2020 set out that the expansion of settlement areas was to occur through the municipal comprehensive review process, the new 2024 PPS now identifies that the expansion of an urban area boundary may be considered at any time. This allows private landowners to exercise the right under section 22 of the *Planning Act* to file private

Official Plan Amendment applications to seek to include their lands within the urban boundary.

When evaluating urban (settlement area) boundary expansion proposals, Section 2.3.2.1 of the PPS 2024 sets out seven criteria that municipalities shall consider:

- a) the need to designate and plan for additional land to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses;
- b) if there is sufficient capacity in existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities;
- c) whether the applicable lands comprise specialty crop areas;
- d) the evaluation of alternative locations which avoid prime agricultural areas and, where avoidance is not possible, consider reasonable alternatives on lower priority agricultural lands in prime agricultural areas;
- e) whether the new or expanded settlement area complies with the minimum distance separation formulae;
- f) whether impacts on the agricultural system are avoided, or where avoidance is not possible, minimized and mitigated to the extent feasible as determined through an agricultural impact assessment or equivalent analysis, based on provincial guidance; and
- g) the new or expanded settlement area provides for the phased progression of urban development.

b) Bill 185, *Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024*

On June 6, 2024, Bill 185, *Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024*, received Royal Assent, which amongst other things, had the effect of amending the *Planning Act* to grant any private landowner the right to appeal a municipal refusal or failure to make a decision on an Official Plan Amendment (OPA) application seeking to expand the urban boundary. Additionally, Bill 185 had the effect of identifying Halton Region as an upper tier municipality without planning responsibilities as of July 1, 2024, which resulted in Halton Hills now administering the Regional Official Plan for the geographic area of the Town. This means that the Town will now receive and process any OPA proposing a private urban boundary expansion.

2. Urban Boundary Expansion Proposals

In response to the above changes, the Town has received one Official Plan Amendment application (File No. D09OPA25.003) filed on behalf of the owners of 0 & 8673 Eighth Line seeking to expand the Premier Gateway Employment Area urban boundary to include their lands; see SCHEDULE 2 – LOCATION MAP. The Town is also aware of other private landowners contemplating similar proposals, with the expectation that additional applications will materialize in the future.

3. Urban Boundary Expansion Guidelines and Submission Requirements

In keeping with the 2024 PPS, Planning staff have developed guidelines, a checklist of submission requirements and terms of reference for some of the necessary technical reports to help guide the evaluation of any proposed private urban boundary expansion request; see SCHEDULE 1 – URBAN BOUNDARY EXPANSION GUIDELINES. The checklist requires the following core reports/documents to be submitted in support of any Official Plan Amendment application to expand the urban boundary in order to address the criteria set out in the PPS:

- Planning Justification Report;
- Draft Official Plan Amendment;
- Land Needs Assessment;
- Infrastructure & Fiscal Impact Analysis/Area Servicing Plan; and,
- Agricultural Impact Analysis (Including Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) formulae).

The following additional reports/documents may also be required:

- Aggregate Resource Assessment;
- Natural Heritage System Assessment;
- Transportation Impact Study; and,
- Cultural Heritage & Archeology Resource Assessment.

As the PPS criteria are part of the prescribed information required to evaluate any urban boundary expansion proposal, provided the Town submission requirements are consistent with those criteria, the Town is within its rights to require specific reports to be filed as part of a complete application through the development review process.

Therefore, this report is seeking Council's endorsement for staff to use the guidelines and checklist when evaluating any urban boundary expansion proposal. However, it should be noted that it may be possible that the submission checklist or the prepared terms of reference for the reports/documentation may be challenged for being beyond what the landowner feels should be required. Should the Town deem any application incomplete for failure to deliver the required reports/studies, the private landowner does have the right to appeal the status of the application to the OLT for determination.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report is administrative in nature and does not have an impact on the Town's Strategic Plan.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report is administrative in nature and does not directly impact or address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement was not needed as this report is administrative in nature.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Planning staff have consulted with the CAO, Transportation & Public Works and the Town Solicitor (Thomson Rogers, J. Wilker) in the preparation of this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report is administrative in nature and does not have any financial implications.

Reviewed and approved by,

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning & Development

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer