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TO: Chair and Members of the Planning and Housing Committee and the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

DESTINATAIRE : Président et membres du Comité de l'urbanisme et du logement et du Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales

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SUBJECT: Housing Acceleration Plan Item 11 – Terms of References Update #2

OBJET : Plan d'accélération du logement Point 11 – Mise à jour des mandats #2

PURPOSE

This information report provides Council an update on the implementation of the Housing Acceleration Plan (HAP) action 11, with the publication of the second batch of revised Terms of References for items listed on the Development Application Studies and Plans By-law. The first update was shared with Committee through report [ACS2026-PDB-PS-0034](#) on March 5, 2026, detailing four terms of reference updates.

BACKGROUND

The Housing Innovation Task Force and Housing Acceleration Plan (HAP) ([ACS2025-SI-SPO-0002](#)), is tailor-made to address the specific housing challenges facing Ottawa, while maintaining a holistic, balanced view that considers all aspects of city-building. The HAP, approved by Council on October 8, 2025, is an ambitious plan with more than 50 actions that goes far beyond continuous improvement, using every tool within the City's municipal power to drive transformational change and clear the way for new homes to be constructed in the short term.

The five objectives of the Housing Acceleration Plan:

1. Simplify the regulatory environment and expedite approvals processes
2. Evolve city culture to be housing development friendly
3. Introduce more flexibility in fees and charges
4. Consolidate and strengthen capacity for Affordable Housing development
5. Unlock urban intensification and Transit-Oriented Development

Specific to the recommendations of this report, HAP includes the following action:

11	Undertake a review of the terms of reference for items listed on the Development Application Study Policy (Information and Materials for Planning Applications (By-Law No. 2023-297) for opportunities to increase flexibility in interpretation, including:
a)	Reduce the number of studies and plans required, and timing
b)	Reduce the level of detail required for pre consultation

c)	Streamline the approval process for applications of high quality
d)	Explore opportunities to remove the need for transportation studies in certain areas of the city
e)	Accept studies prepared by certified professionals without requiring duplicate review

On January 28, 2026, Council approved OPA 47: Housing Acceleration Plan Update [ACS2025-PDB-PS-0075](#). That report delivered two major outcomes. First, it amended the Development Application Studies and Plans By-law (DASP) to remove 13 requirements from the list, and signaling the City’s intent to reduce the thresholds for an additional 13 items within their Terms of Reference. Second, it confirmed the City’s intention to replace the existing completeness review with a more streamlined completeness-check. In addition, through report **ACS2026-PDB-RHU-0032** approved by Council on 8 April 2026, the Urban Design Review Panel report was removed from the DASP, and the Urban Design Brief terms of reference updated with reduced requirements.

Together, these changes represent a significant shift in how development applications are processed, positioning the City to support housing approvals more efficiently. The new completeness-check process allows applications to be circulated more quickly and to all stakeholders at the same time, within a single coordinated review window. This approach aims to enable staff to prepare a complete, conflict-free, and timely set of comments. Meanwhile, the updated DASP provides applicants with a clearer and shorter list of required studies and plans, improving predictability and reducing unnecessary work.

The City continues to collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to refine study and plan requirements to better address site-specific issues. Thresholds within the Terms of Reference are being updated so that a study or plan is only required when it is genuinely needed – either because of a specific risk, a clear technical need, or a legal obligation under municipal responsibilities.

DISCUSSION

The Development Application Studies and Plans (DASP) By-law establishes the complete list of documents that the City may require as part of a complete planning application. Its purpose is to ensure clarity and transparency for applicants. Importantly,

inclusion on the list does not mean a study or plan will always be required; requirements depend on the specifics of each application.

Each item included in the DASP has a corresponding Terms of Reference (ToR) on Ottawa.ca, which outlines:

- the purpose of the study or plan;
- which application types require it;
- site-specific triggers;
- guidance on required content; and
- the type of professional qualified to prepare the document.

As part of implementing HAP action 11.c, thresholds within the Terms of Reference are being updated to ensure a study or plan is only required when genuinely needed—in response to a specific risk, a technical necessity, or a clear legislative requirement under municipal responsibilities.

In February 2026, the first batch of four (4) ToR were published on Ottawa.ca, being:

- Building Elevations;
- Grading and Drainage Plan;
- Noise Control Study;
- Planning Rationale.

In May 2026, the second batch of five (5) ToR were published on Ottawa.ca, being:

1) Environmental Site Assessment

a) Description:

- i) Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) ensure that development only takes place on sites where the environmental conditions are suitable for the proposed use in accordance with provincial legislation and regulations.

b) Key outcome:

- i) Phase One ESAs will no longer be required for every single development application.
- ii) A Phase One ESA will be required to be submitted with Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Plan of Subdivision, and Site Plan Control applications where one is deemed to be required in accordance with at least one of the following: the *Environmental Protection Act*, Ontario Regulation 153/04, City of Ottawa's Official Plan, and Council-Approved Real Property Acquisition Policy.

c) Summary of changes:

- i) Removed requirement to provide ESA for Official Plan Amendment and Condominium applications.
- ii) Reduced when Environmental Site Assessments are required for Zoning By-law Amendment, Plan of Subdivision, and Site Plan Control applications to match provincial regulation, the City's Official Plan, and City Real Property Acquisition Policy.

2) Landscape Plan

a) Description:

- i) Demonstrates how the canopy cover, urban design, health and climate change objectives of the Official Plan will be met through tree planting and other site design elements. It identifies any existing landscaping, site elements and natural features (including trees, shrubs, and ground covers) that will be preserved, and illustrate the proposed landscaping elements to support the associated development.

b) Key outcomes:

- i) Allows clarity on when a landscape plan is required (at submission or later in process) and introduces a new conceptual plan for more efficiency in defined circumstances.

c) Summary of changes:

- i) Removed the requirement for a full landscape plan for the submission of Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment, and Plan of Subdivision applications.
- ii) Introduced a conceptual landscape plan with submission of Zoning By-law Amendments and Plans of Subdivision applications, under certain defined circumstances.
- iii) Introduced the ability to show landscaping elements on a site plan, removing the requirement for a separate landscape plan, if the site plan is legible.

3) Geotechnical Study

a) Description:

i) Evaluates geological, soil, and subsurface conditions to assess site stability and suitability for development, in compliance with applicable legislation/regulations, and conforming with geotechnical standards.

b) Key Outcome:

i) Geotechnical study will no longer be required for every development application.

ii) For Official Plan Amendments, Zoning Bylaw Amendments, and Consent to Sever applications, geotechnical study may no longer be required. For one to be required, specific site conditions must be present.

iii) Where appropriate, a full geotechnical investigation may not be required, and a scoped report may be acceptable.

iv) A full geotechnical investigation will remain a requirement for Site Plan Control and Plan of Subdivision applications.

c) Summary of changes:

i) A geotechnical investigation report will only be required for Official Plan Amendment, Zoning Bylaw Amendment, and Consent to Sever applications under specific circumstances where the site exhibits known or suspected geotechnical hazards (i.e. sensitive clays, former landfill, unstable slopes, karst topography), or the proposed development is of high impact (i.e. nine or more storeys, multiple basement levels, heavy structures, emergency/critical facilities)

4) Hydrogeological and Terrain Analysis

a) Description:

i) Analyzes potential impacts on surface and groundwater resources, ensuring compliance with applicable legislation/regulations and hydrological standards, and consistency/conformity with applicable policies.

b) Key outcome:

i) New Terms of references which provide 'at a glance' requirements for hydrogeological investigations.

c) Summary of changes:

- i) Staff have completed a new Terms of Reference for hydrogeological and terrain analysis studies. These terms of reference are based on the existing Hydrogeological and Terrain Guidelines, published by the City in March 2021.
- ii) Provided investigation requirements for stormwater management facilities.

5) Plan of Survey

a) Description:

- i) Establishes, locates, or describes any line or boundary of a parcel of land. This is done through thorough examination and consideration of available property boundary evidence and title documentation.

b) Key outcome:

- i) Clarifies that Professional Engineers are permitted to submit topographic plans.

c) Summary of changes:

- i) The addition of Professional Engineers to the qualified professional section relating to the preparation of topographic plans. Property boundary information continues to be the responsibility of a Certified Ontario Land Surveyor.

Expected to be published in future batches, which will be reported to Committee via IPD, are the following:

- Agricultural Impact Assessments (a new study requirement, as required by the new 2024 PPS)
- Site Plan and Facility Fit Plan (within Site Plan Control)

Separate releases as a result of substantial work on technical guidelines which impact Terms of References:

- Transportation Impact Assessment Guidelines
- Hydrogeological and Terrain Analysis Guidelines Update (2027)

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