



AGRICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TERMS OF REFERENCE

STUDY DESCRIPTION

An **Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA)** aims to assess the potential effects of non-agricultural development on existing surrounding agricultural operations and the Agricultural System, and recommend measures to avoid, or, if avoidance is not possible, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts to the extent feasible.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

AIA allows County Planning staff to understand the following components more clearly:

- Impact of proposed development on the surrounding environment specifically the viability of agricultural uses and operations.
- Additional restrictions that may impact abutting agricultural operations as a result of the development. (e.g., changes in MDS that would restrict expansion of an abutting agricultural operation).
- Locational options for the proposed development in terms of minimizing the impact on agriculture.



WHEN REQUIRED

Through an initial pre-consultation meeting with the County and, for certain applications, the Town/Township, staff will confirm if the applicant is required to submit an AIA.

The submission of an AIA will likely be required for the following development applications:

- Official Plan Amendment (including Secondary Plans)
- Zoning By-law Amendment (including Temporary Use By-laws)
- Draft Plan of Condominium
- Draft Plan of Subdivision
- Consents
- Site Plan Control

At the discretion of County staff, an AIA may be requested for submission in support of other development applications. County staff may determine that a proposed development has only minor implications and minor in nature only requires an AIA Brief (1-2 pages).

QUALIFIED PERSON(S)

The AIA must be prepared by a qualified professional with knowledge in:

- Agri-businesses, agricultural supply chain linkages, rural/agricultural economic development in Ontario, and within the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the agri-food network, where relevant
- Rural and agricultural land use planning;
- Canada Land Inventory (CLI) classifications of capability for agriculture assessment and, where relevant, a practical understanding of soil science, including the ability to review technical information from non-agricultural disciplines and assess its relevance and utility in identifying potential agricultural impacts; and,
- Assessment and evaluation of the potential effectiveness of agricultural impact mitigation measures to reduce impacts.

Examples of qualified professionals include:

- A professional agrologist (P.Ag.) registered with the Ontario Institute of Agrologists;
- A registered professional planner (RPP) who is a full member of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute;
- A professional geoscientist (P. Geo) who is a practicing member of the Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario,
- A professional engineer (P.Eng.) licensed by Professional Engineers Ontario in a discipline relevant to work completed for the AIA; or,
- A landscape architect who is a full member of the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects.

The cost of the study shall be borne by the applicant. All reports and drawings must be stamped and/or signed and dated by a qualified professional, as well as include contact information.

REQUIRED CONTENT

The AIA is required to include the following sections, subsections, and information.

1. Executive Summary

- A high-level summary of proposed development, key findings and impacts, and recommendations for mitigation and/or improvement.

2. Introduction

- Information on the site (location, property size, existing uses), surrounding land, access, and servicing.
- Indicate the proposed development, type of development application and proposed activities, and identify a need within the planning horizon of the Official Plan for the proposed use.
- Identify the reason and objectives for the AIA, including an explanation of how provincial, regional, and municipal planning requirements and other provincial directives will be satisfied.

3. Planning Policy Framework

- Review and assess the provincial, county, and municipal policy context and regulatory framework as it applies to proposed development.
- A description of how the assessment aligns with the economic development and tourism strategy, specifically related to agricultural uses and on-farm diversified uses.

4. On-Site Physical Resource Inventory

- Describe the soil composition of the site including CLI agricultural capability ratings.
- *Climate*: Describe climatic features most relevant to agricultural production including Crop Heat Units and number of frost-free days. Include a description of any microclimatic conditions of the site that may impact agricultural capability.
- *Topography/Slope*: Describe the general slope and topographic features of the site including contour mapping and any CLI notations regarding topography. Include a description of any related limitations to agricultural capability.
- *Drainage*: Describe the drainage of the site focusing on any existing or past improvements (e.g. tile drainage).
- *Past Farming Practices*: Outline the agricultural history of the site.
- *Type and Intensity of Existing Production*: Describe current agricultural production on the site (e.g. cultivation patterns, livestock operations).
- *Non-Agricultural Land Uses*: Identify non-agriculture uses on-site.
- *Parcel Size, Shape, Characteristics and Accessibility*: Provide a description of the parcel and connectivity with the broader agricultural system (e.g. access to transportation routes and neighboring farm properties).
- *Existing Farm Management*: Describe land tenure and management on-site.
- *Capital Investment*: Describe the degree of investment in improvements for agriculture (e.g. tile drainage, facilities, buildings, machinery, etc.)

5. Off-Site Features

- Describe the location, type, and intensity of surrounding agricultural and non-agricultural land uses and proposed land use changes.
- Inventory existing and potential constraints to on-site agriculture that exist off-site.
- Describe the broad rural area identifying patterns of fragmentation and tenure, agricultural capability resulting from soil and microclimate conditions, trends in agricultural production, and any non-agricultural land use commitments in applicable planning documents.
- Indicate availability of agricultural support services to the site.

6. Assessment of Agricultural Viability

- Discuss the viability of the site as an agricultural operation on its own and as part of the larger agricultural system. Consider the viability of the site under different types of agricultural production and related alternative agricultural operations that could occur in the future.
- Discuss the impact of the proposed development on the viability of surrounding agricultural operations.

7. Assessment of Impacts on Agriculture

- Discuss the short- and long-term effects of the proposal on the existing agricultural community, including, but not limited to, consideration of:
 - Loss of agricultural resources including a description of the quantity and quality of land lost from agricultural production;
 - Effect on Surrounding Lands;
 - Agricultural Character of the Area;
 - Minimum Distance Separations;
 - Nutrient Management Issues; and,
 - Cumulative impacts of the proposed development.

8. Alternative Location Analysis

- Explain why the location of the use would have minimal impact on agricultural lands by demonstrating that:
 - There are clearly no other reasonable alternatives that are outside of prime agricultural areas;
 - There are no reasonable alternative locations in prime agricultural areas with lower priority agricultural lands and with few agri-food network components and investments; and,
 - The proposed use will not be located in an area that may have an impact on the efficient and logical expansion of nearby urban areas.

REQUIRED CONTENT CONTINUED

9. Mitigative Measures

- Describe any measures that could be taken to reduce the impacts of the proposal on both on-site and off-site agriculture, including:
 - The degree to which the impacts will be reduced;
 - Mitigation measures proposed by the proponent; and,
 - Notices that could be included as conditions of development.

10. Summary and Conclusion

- Summarize the anticipated net impact of the proposed development and provide an opinion on whether the development is appropriate.
- Provide recommendations including any potential mitigation to impacts.

11. Appendices

- This section should contain all materials that are relevant for review but not suitable for the body of the report. Materials to be included in this section are:
 - Any maps, figures, and illustrations (i.e., tables and charts)
 - Proposed Development or Concept Plan
 - Quantitative analysis results
 - Literature Citations
 - Other Data Sources Used
 - Curriculum Vitae of Study Team

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

To hire a professional engineering consultant, please refer to the Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) directory that can be accessed [here](#).

To hire a Registered Professional Planner (RPP), please refer to the 'Hire a Planner' section of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) that can be accessed [here](#).

To hire a Professional Agrologists (P.Ag.), Ontario Institute of Agrologists website can be accessed [here](#).

To hire a Professional Geoscientist (P. Geo), Professional Geoscientists Ontario website can be accessed [here](#).

All information relating to the County Official Plan, Application Process and Fees, and other applicable policies and regulations can be found on the County's [Planning and Development page](#).

All information relating to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs can be found on the [Ontario Agricultural Impact Assessments webpage](#).

NOTES

- The County of Dufferin may wish to peer-review any studies that are submitted in support of an application, at the cost of the applicant.
- If the proposed development is revised, the proposed revisions shall be updated by an addendum report or letter from the author, indicating if the recommendations and conclusions are the same.
- Please note that the requirements of this study may vary depending on the nature of the proposal. This will be determined through the pre-consultation process and in consultation with any applicable external agencies.
- If the submitted study is incomplete, is authored by an unqualified individual, or does not contain adequate analysis, the development application will be considered incomplete and will not be processed by the County.

