

*These notes refer to the Planning Act (Northern Ireland)  
2011 (c.25) which received Royal Assent on 4 May 2011*

# Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

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## **EXPLANATORY NOTES**

### **BACKGROUND AND POLICY OBJECTIVES**

3. This Act provides the legislative basis for the reform of the Northern Ireland planning system. The reforms are comprehensive, impacting on every aspect of planning, including how development plans are drawn up, how development proposals and applications are managed and the way in which these functions are delivered. The key reform changes relate to the complete overhaul and redesign of the development plan and development management systems which aim to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Significant changes are also proposed in relation to planning appeals and enforcement. Overall the aim is to create a planning system which is quicker, clearer, and more accessible and with resources better matched to priorities. The Act also gives effect to the local government reform changes which will transfer the majority of planning functions and decision making responsibilities for local development plans, development management plus planning enforcement to councils. This will make planning more locally accountable, giving local politicians the opportunity to shape the areas within which they are elected. Decision making processes will be improved by bringing an enhanced understanding of the needs and aspirations of local communities.
4. The Act therefore establishes a new framework for a reformed and transferred planning system which will be supported with a significant and comprehensive programme of subordinate legislation and guidance which will be subject to further detailed consultation exercises.