



DSD

Department for  
Social Development

# Urban Regeneration in Northern Ireland

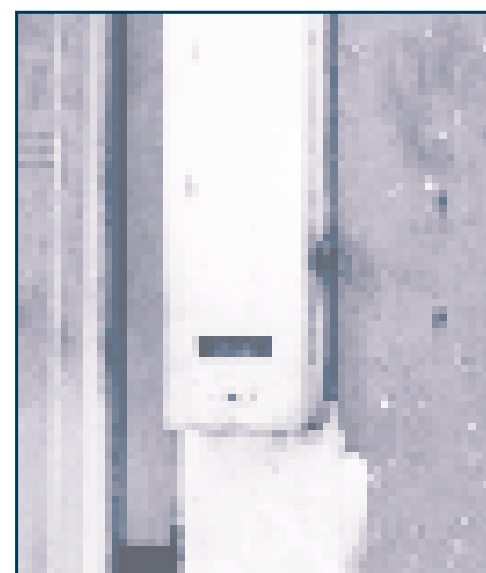
neighbourhood renewal - a consultation document

# Urban Regeneration in Northern Ireland

## neighbourhood renewal - a consultation document

This document sets out for consultation a new strategic approach to urban regeneration across Northern Ireland.

Further copies can be downloaded from the Department's Internet site [www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk)



**All submissions must be with us by 1 October 2001.**

The document can be made available in alternative formats, on request.

Consultees may wish to comment in writing to the address below, by e-mail, or in person at a workshop, in your area, planned for late August/early September.

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# Urban Regeneration in Northern Ireland

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## Ministerial Foreword

I am pleased to introduce my Department's consultation document for Neighbourhood Renewal in Northern Ireland.

The key components are:

- Firstly, to put the tackling of the most acute deprivation and disadvantage at the heart of all regeneration activity;
- Secondly, by focusing regeneration activity at the neighbourhood level to empower communities to shape, and then drive, urban renewal initiatives in their own areas;
- Thirdly, to encourage Government Departments and public agencies to place regeneration at the centre of their programmes of work; and
- Finally, to commit to a 7 to 10 year planning and implementation timescale, so that sustainable renewal and stability can be achieved.

These are ambitious commitments. However, I am confident that they can be met. By identifying and prioritising places of greatest deprivation, and by closely involving local communities, our neighbourhood renewal strategy will not only reflect local choice, but will specifically address the issues and needs which are important to people living in the most disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland.

To achieve this, the consultation process upon which we are embarking must be a meaningful one. I want to see an open, informed and realistic discussion of the options and priorities within the strategy. I want the views and suggestions of the whole community to be reflected. I want to know that what we are proposing is right, and if it is not, I want to know how we can put it right.

This is a real opportunity for us to focus resources effectively, to work in partnership with other Departments and agencies, and to promote neighbourhood renewal as a positive means of improving the quality of life within disadvantaged communities.

I hope you will join with me in working to ensure that our citizens gain greater access to services, have more say on the use of community resources and have the means and opportunity to make informed choices about their future.

As indicated previously, for the strategy to work it needs the active involvement of all, not only in its delivery but in its design. Section 6 of this document provides more detail as to how you can contribute to the debate on the future direction of urban regeneration strategy in Northern Ireland.

I look forward to your feedback and comments.



**Maurice Morrow**

Minister for Social Development

# Urban Regeneration in Northern Ireland

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## Section 1 Introduction

1.1 This paper sets out for consultation a new strategic approach to urban regeneration across Northern Ireland. In so doing, it reflects the mission statement of the Department for Social Development (the Department) which is: **“Together, tackling disadvantage, building communities”**. It addresses the commitment made in the Programme for Government that renewal of the most disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods will be a priority for the Northern Ireland Executive.

1.2 The strategy’s core aim is the regeneration of neighbourhoods, targeting those communities experiencing the most serious economic and social deprivation. This lies at the heart of government policy for targeting social need. To achieve this regeneration, the strategy will be delivered throughout Northern Ireland by co-ordinated action across all government departments, working in partnership with local communities and key stakeholders. Whilst this new approach is Northern Ireland-wide, it recognises the specific needs of Belfast and Londonderry, as well as the policy for the reinvigoration of other town and city centres, and the efforts to build community capacity in deprived neighbourhoods.

1.3 The Department undertakes to enter into widespread and meaningful consultation on the strategy, in addition to which it will produce further detailed proposals relating to:

- Belfast;
- Londonderry;
- the re-invigoration of town and city centres;
- building community capacity in deprived neighbourhoods;
- delivery mechanisms for neighbourhood renewal throughout Northern Ireland.

1.4 These detailed proposals, while specific in their content, will continue to reflect the aims and objectives of this strategy, particularly by focusing resources effectively, working in partnership with other departments, agencies and key stakeholders, and promoting neighbourhood renewal as a means of tackling disadvantage.



# Urban Regeneration in Northern Ireland

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## Section 2 Background

### Where have we come from?

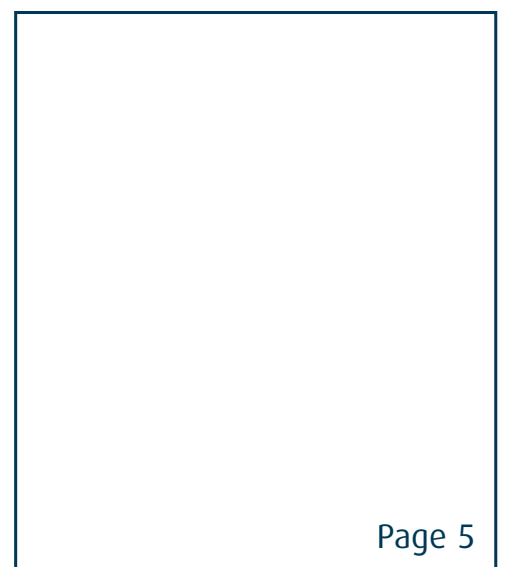
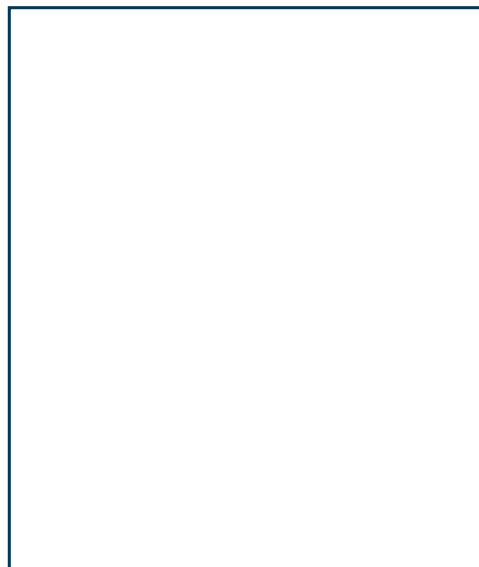
2.1 For a number of years urban regeneration in Northern Ireland has been delivered through four main functional areas:

- Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO);
- Laganside Corporation (LC);
- Londonderry Development Office (LDO);
- Regional Development Office (RDO).

2.2 The financial resources applied to urban problems have included a mix of public money, European Union Structural Funds and contributions from the International Fund for Ireland. The mechanisms and schemes used to achieve regeneration objectives have ranged from the Laganside Urban Development Corporation model, Grant-Aid in partnership with the private sector for property development (Urban Development Grant), Comprehensive Development (CD) and Environmental Improvement (EI) Schemes, to the more community-focused Making Belfast Work (MBW) and Londonderry Regeneration Initiatives (LRI). A range of initiatives, including the Community Regeneration Investment Special Programme (CRISP), has been introduced to reverse decline in the smaller towns and villages throughout the Province.

2.3 The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) has also played a significant role through its renewal and urban regeneration programmes.

The NIHE recognises that renewal must go beyond the physical condition of its housing stock to make a significant contribution to economic regeneration, health and welfare gains and community development.



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## Section 2 Background

### Where have we come from?

2.4 There have been many successful regeneration programmes which have contributed significantly to the economic, environmental and social well-being of Northern Ireland. Regeneration successes include:

- Laganside which has created 5500 permanent jobs in its designated area and has levered nearly £400m of private sector and other investment;
- Urban Development Grants which have supported 2,200 projects in Belfast and Londonderry levering £370m of private sector investment to areas of market failure and general disadvantage;
- Comprehensive Development Schemes which have enabled well-planned regeneration schemes to proceed to the benefit of both town/city centres and disadvantaged communities. Examples include Springvale and Duncairn, in West and North Belfast respectively, and the Foyleside Development in Londonderry;
- The CRISP Scheme has rejuvenated a number of smaller towns and villages including Coalisland, Portaferry and Fivemiletown;
- Environmental Improvement Schemes, often undertaken in conjunction with district councils and statutory organisations such as the Roads Service Agency, have contributed to the upgrading and enhancement of town and city centres, including the main thoroughfares of Belfast and Londonderry;

- The MBW initiative was launched in July 1988 to strengthen and target more effectively the efforts made by the community, the private sector and the government in addressing the economic, educational, social, health and environmental problems facing people living in the most disadvantaged areas of Belfast; and
- similar activity has been carried on in Londonderry through the LRI.

2.5 These regeneration measures were developed to deal with evolving urban problems. While they can point to a number of successes over a period, they share a weakness in that they have tended to be demand-led and fragmented in response to need. In spite of worthwhile achievements, independent analysis and study of regeneration strategies has demonstrated that there is now a need to update and upgrade existing programmes; to establish priorities for scarce financial resources, and to address the needs of those whose lives do not benefit adequately from modern services and opportunities.

# Urban Regeneration in Northern Ireland

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## Section 2 Background

### Where have we come from?

2.6 The main urban regeneration measures employed by the Department share a number of key features:

- an emphasis on physical and economic regeneration;
- focus on disadvantaged areas;
- the aim of developing partnerships involving key stakeholders and statutory providers; and
- close working with other programmes and agencies such as the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) and the European Union (EU).

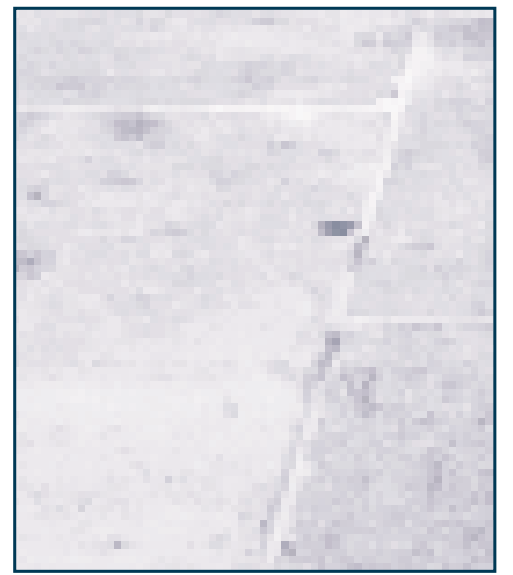
### What key lessons have been learned?

2.7 A number of important lessons has emerged from a series of evaluations of the government's current approach to regeneration:

- physical and economic, as opposed to social, regeneration has been emphasised, but has not always had the desired impact in terms of promoting social inclusion;
- attempts at placing regeneration on the agenda of Government Departments and Statutory Agencies has met with only limited success;
- effective regeneration brings together the four strands of people, jobs, services and infrastructure;
- effective regeneration requires the development of cross-cutting policies and joined-up delivery across public sector agencies, leading to concerted and comprehensive action to address social and economic need; and
- improving the quality of life within disadvantaged communities requires the active engagement of those communities.

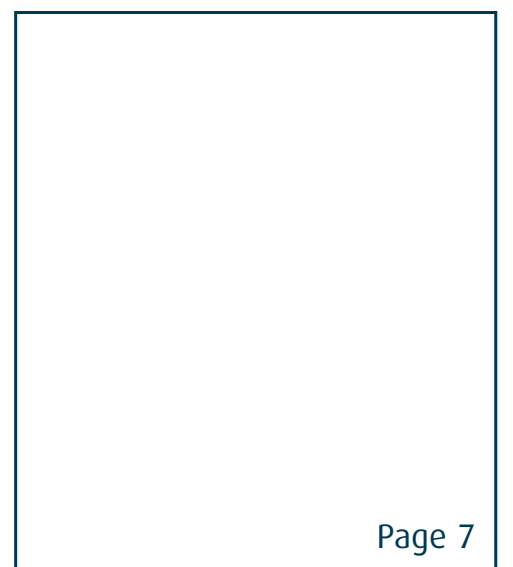
### What is the National and International context?

2.8 The challenge of regenerating urban areas has received considerable attention throughout the United Kingdom and Europe. There is now greater emphasis on helping people obtain jobs and to focus on specific initiatives in areas such as health and education. It is now accepted that disadvantage and social exclusion are complex and multi-dimensional issues that require an integrated and comprehensive approach if they are to be successfully tackled.



2.9 Last year the government published a National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, which reflects the importance of a holistic and integrated approach to tackling social and economic disadvantage. This Strategy sets out overarching aims as follows:

- to bridge the gap between the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of England; and
- in all the worst neighbourhoods to achieve lower long-term worklessness; less crime; better health; and better educational qualifications.



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## Section 2 Background

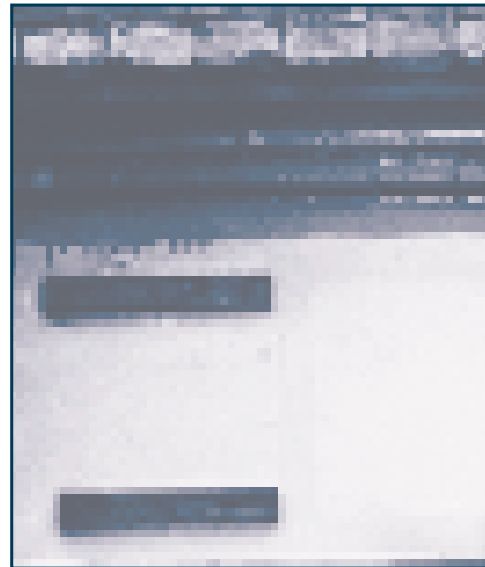
### Where have we come from?

2.10 At European-wide level the European Commission has produced a policy document, "Framework for Action" in relation to sustainable urban development, which emphasises the need for:

- strengthening economic prosperity and employment in towns and cities;
- promoting equality, social inclusion and regeneration in urban areas;
- protecting and improving the urban environment towards local and global sustainability; and
- contributing to good urban governance and local empowerment.

2.11 Against this backdrop of developments nationally and internationally has been the development of significant Northern Ireland policies.

Firstly, New Targeting Social Need (New TSN) which commits the Northern Ireland Executive to tackling the significant levels of deprivation, long-term unemployment and benefit dependency which blight Northern Ireland. It recognises the inequalities and the life experiences of citizens in terms of poverty, health, housing, education, economic opportunity and disability and makes the commitment to redirect resources and efforts towards people, groups and areas in greatest need.



Secondly, the Programme for Government which, amongst other things, focuses on:

- tackling poverty and social disadvantage;
- the renewal of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods;
- sustaining and enhancing local communities, particularly in the most disadvantaged urban and rural areas; and
- emphasising the need to see linkages between issues affecting the lives of ordinary people and seeks to develop a wider approach to help make a real change in society.

Thirdly, the Investing for Health Strategy provides a framework for action to improve people's health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities by addressing the upstream determinants of

health. These include many of the deprivation factors which an effective urban regeneration strategy must tackle.

2.12 It is recognised that the new strategy should be developed in the context of the draft Regional Development Strategy and the Strategic Planning Guidelines relating to the development of community cohesion and the sustainability of small towns and villages. It must also complement related EU initiatives such as the Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme (BSP) and Peace II, which is being implemented by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) under the Community Support Framework (CSF). The strategy must also reflect the other wider priorities and themes of the Programme for Government.

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### Section 3 Key Urban Regeneration Issues

3.1 Multiple economic and social deprivation is to be found in significant concentrations within our cities and larger towns. These concentrations have grown over the last 30 or 40 years and have persisted to the extent that deprivation has been passed down from one generation to the next. The manifestation of urban areas with widespread multiple deprivation is well documented and well known. These are characterised by:

- a dominance of social housing;
- high rates of unemployment;
- a high dependence on state benefits;
- low average income and high levels of poverty;
- low levels of skills and qualifications in the population;
- low levels of attainment in secondary school pupils;
- above-average disability, incapacity and long-term sickness;
- below-average standards of health; and
- above-average rates of vandalism and crime.

3.2 All areas of the country, even relatively prosperous ones, have a minority of households with these characteristics of multiple deprivation. High concentrations in such households covering whole neighbourhoods result in problems of a much greater order of magnitude.

3.3 Levels of deprivation closely mirror population density. Belfast and Londonderry contain many of the most deprived urban areas. This is important, not only for the levels of disadvantage experienced but also for the total number of people affected. Significant levels of disadvantage exist in the neighbourhoods and housing estates of regional towns.

3.4 An examination of the differentials that exist on many measures highlights the gap between these deprived urban areas and society in general. For example:

#### Education and Employment

- In secondary schools in the most deprived areas of Belfast only one quarter of pupils achieve 5 GCSE grades A\*-C compared with a third in Northern Ireland; in some schools this rate is in single figures;
- while the unemployment rate for Northern Ireland is currently 5%, the Parliamentary Constituencies of Belfast West and Foyle have rates of 13% and 9% respectively;
- long-term unemployment is also greater: 41% in Belfast and 37% in Londonderry compared with the Northern Ireland figure of 34%; within many of the electoral wards of these areas the figures are closer to 50%.

#### Crime

- The recorded crime rate in the most deprived wards in Belfast is over twice that of Northern Ireland (135 per 1,000 population compared to 63).

#### Health and Social Issues

- There are statistical indications of the more limited life expectancy for people living in deprived areas compared with those in more affluent areas, for example it has been reliably estimated that about 2,000 lives could be saved

each year if those living in the council districts with the highest death rates (such as Derry City Council area) enjoyed the health status of those in the districts with the lowest death rates (such as North Down Borough Council area).

- the birth rate to teenage mothers in Northern Ireland for the period 1991-99 was 6.9% of all births; this figure rises to 21% in the most deprived urban wards;
- using the uptake of Invalidity Benefit and Severe Disability Allowance as a proxy for long-term illness, the rate of relevant benefits uptake in Northern Ireland is around 10.5%, but in the socially deprived wards it can go up to almost 25%.

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## Section 3 Key Urban Regeneration Issues

■ On many housing estates throughout Northern Ireland the proportion of households in receipt of housing benefit, a measurement which equates to low levels of income, is over 90% (Northern Ireland average 79%). In many estates, between 50% and 75% of dwellings are allocated to lone parents (NI average 28%). Anti-social behaviour and vandalism also contribute to decline and instability on estates, reflected in the often high proportion of unoccupied and un-lettable dwellings.

3.5 All the evidence of the last 30 years suggests that problems of this nature and scale do not go away of their own accord; rather they tend to become cumulatively worse and inter-generational. To do nothing would result in the continued misery of deprivation and poor opportunities for many thousands of people. The most recent data suggests that over 240,000 people, or 15% of Northern Ireland's population, live in the 66 most deprived urban wards, experiencing unacceptably high levels of unemployment, sickness and educational under-achievement. The costs to society as a whole of doing nothing are very high and increasingly prohibitive in terms of the burden on those in work.

3.6 Action needs to be taken to reverse the spiral of decline; deprivation lowers image, morale and capacity, which, in turn leads to yet more deprivation.

3.7 Urban regeneration will only become more effective if it is based on meaningful partnership working at all levels and including all stakeholders. Experience has demonstrated that the private sector contributes significantly to urban regeneration through investment in industrial, commercial and retail developments in run-down areas and in complementary ways, for example in supporting the development of local community infrastructures under the Business in the Community (BIC) initiative.

3.8 Government's efforts to tackle social and economic regeneration have tended to be on an ad hoc basis, project by project. A concerted and comprehensive programme, focused at the community and neighbourhood level and consisting of a number of key themes, would secure the energy and commitment that is needed to address causes as well as symptoms and ensure the better targeting of limited financial resources. A more systematic approach would also encourage the development of community infrastructures which experience has demonstrated is necessary to enable deprived communities to participate fully in the regeneration process and produce sustainable change.



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## Section 4 The Proposed Strategy

4.1 There is a continuing need to address economic and social problems in urban areas. The various policy instruments and mechanisms which have been developed to date lack the coherence and integration required, but retain value as engines for change. There is a need to focus limited resources in more effective ways; to co-ordinate action to reduce inequalities within and between urban communities; and generally to promote social inclusion.

4.2 The key components of the new strategy are:

- to tackle the most acute deprivation and disadvantage;
- to place regeneration at the centre of the work of departments, agencies and programmes;
- to empower communities to shape, and then drive, urban renewal initiatives in their areas by focusing regeneration activity at the neighbourhood level;
- to move away from project/policy instrument-led regeneration towards an area- and needs-based approach;
- to develop and enhance city and town centres in physical, economic and social terms, enhancing their competitiveness and improving linkages to disadvantaged areas;
- to develop and implement plans on a partnership basis; and
- for the purpose of achieving sustainable renewal and stability to commit to a 7 to 10 year planning and implementation time-scale.

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## Section 5 Delivering the Strategy

5.1 Those involved in urban regeneration should interact with each other in the form of a “learning family” subscribing to common strategic goals and principles but all the while reflecting the realities and nuances of the local situation. The successful delivery of the proposed new approach depends on all those involved working together within an agreed overall framework to meet a number of key challenges. An urban regeneration framework structure for Northern Ireland is proposed to include:

- at regional level, an inter-Departmental Group led by the Department which will provide strategic leadership and overall accountability;
- at District Council level, the evolving Local Strategic Partnerships under Peace II (facilitated by district councils) which will include representatives of key

Government Departments, Statutory Agencies and the relevant local authority and social partners;

- at local level, neighbourhood renewal initiatives linked to Local Strategic Partnerships of Peace II, to be backed up where appropriate by the Department’s Voluntary Activity Unit in relation to community capacity building; and
- city/town centre regeneration, co-ordinated and led by the Department in consultation with district councils and other relevant public and private organisations.

5.2 Working within the local strategies and frameworks developed by the Local Strategic Partnerships of Peace II and City Vision Boards, Neighbourhood Action Plans will be developed and delivered. Recognising that delivery at the neighbourhood level will depend on the needs identified and the existing structures in the area, the precise form of delivery is likely to vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. However, common to all Neighbourhood Action will be:

- securing community ownership and leadership by means of a neighbourhood forum;
- developing a robust analysis of local needs and subsequently prioritising those needs;
- increasing significantly the role of, and contribution from, the private sector;

- developing and delivering an action plan for the neighbourhood co-ordination and integration of the activities of relevant Statutory Agencies and organisations, including Peace II local delivery mechanisms;
- setting clear and unambiguous targets for achievement; and
- monitoring and reporting on performance against those targets in an open and accountable way.

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### Section 5 Delivering the Strategy

#### Action by the Department

5.3 The Strategy for regenerating our urban communities needs to be backed up by appropriate actions by the Department.

The Department will:

- draw up strategy frameworks for:
  - Belfast;
  - Londonderry;
  - Community Capacity Building in deprived areas;
  - the reinvigoration of town and city centres;
- establish an inter-Departmental Group to drive forward the new strategy;
- secure from each relevant Government Department, Statutory Agency, District Council, Voluntary/Community and private sector organisations, a commitment to participate in this strategy by contributing to urban regeneration;
- identify on the basis of the most up-to-date information the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland;
- agree appropriate delivery structures within each neighbourhood;

- selectively use urban regeneration instruments such as Urban Development Grants, Comprehensive Development Schemes and Environmental Improvement Schemes to support neighbourhood renewal and the linkage of city and town centres to deprived communities;
- set target dates to have received from each of these Neighbourhood Structures an Action Plan which will include:
  - clear analysis of the gaps in provision and the needs and aspirations of the neighbourhood;
  - a statement of how local people have been, and will continue to be, engaged in the process;
  - key issues that need to be addressed by Statutory Agencies/Departments;
  - a 10-year vision for the Neighbourhood;
  - broadly-costed, 3-year plans/initiatives aimed at achieving the vision;
  - what is required over the subsequent 7 years; and finally
  - targets for achievement, including clear and acceptable measures of local regeneration performance based on a standard performance measurement framework.

5.4 It is anticipated that these objectives will evolve to synchronise with the new Urban II and Peace II EU-funded packages, since these offer an excellent opportunity to move towards the new urban regeneration strategy during the coming years.

5.5 The process of identifying, developing and resourcing neighbourhood regeneration, particularly taking account of prioritising areas of greatest deprivation, will involve a significant period of change and evolution from existing demand-led intervention to a more structured and coherent neighbourhood strategy.

5.6 The main measurable elements of social deprivation and exclusion include long-term unemployment, levels of ill-health, and low educational attainment, as well as the physical environment. The outcomes of all locally-designed regeneration plans would be expected to address similar themes, but there must be scope for the individual neighbourhood structures to reflect local choice and for the regeneration plans to address those issues through locally appropriate measures.

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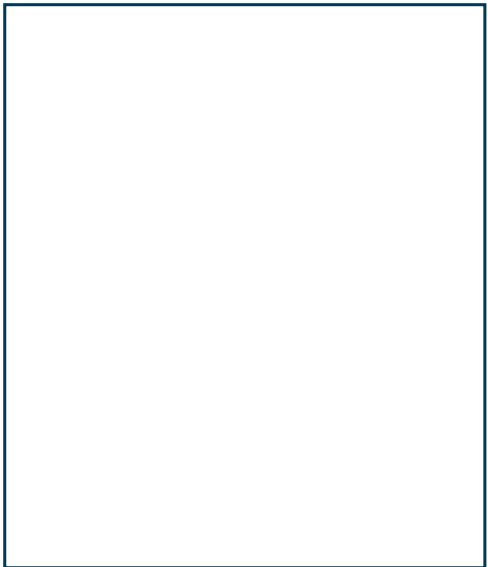
### Section 5 Delivering the Strategy

#### Resourcing the Strategy

5.7 Government Departments and Statutory Agencies are and must remain the dominant provider of resources and associated actions which meet the social and economic needs in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Securing the commitment of Departments at every level, to ensure funding is clearly targeted on the needs of these neighbourhoods, is fundamental to the successful delivery of this strategy.

5.8 Inter-Departmental action will build upon existing initiatives, including Health Action Zones, and will take account of rural disadvantage issues, particularly in relation to district and smaller urban centres.

5.9 The new approach also demands a significant change in terms of how current DSD resources are allocated to urban regeneration. It is the Department's objective to merge the existing allocations of expenditure to support the development of neighbourhood structures and to resource selected strategic plans.



5.10 The new funding regime will also be closely aligned with NIHE programmes. The result of this will be more effective targeting of disadvantaged areas and long-term sustainability of local communities. The funding regime will further include resources from the various related EU programmes. Other opportunities will also arise to lever additional resources to further support the work of the Neighbourhood Structures from other providers such as the IFI and The National Lottery.

5.11 However, for the strategy to work it needs the active involvement of all not only in its delivery but in its design.

#### Equality Considerations

5.12 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. The Department is fully committed to complying with the Section 75 obligations and has set out in its approved Equality Scheme how it proposes to fulfil those obligations. Its 5-year Scheme provides for full Equality Impact Assessments of the new neighbourhood renewal strategy and related programmes for Belfast, Londonderry and town centre reinvigoration. In line with the Department's Equality Scheme, and in the light of comments received during the consultation process, the strategy will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment during the Autumn, for compliance with Section 75 of the Act. By that time an updated index of areas of deprivation should be available to properly inform the impact assessment.

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## Section 6 Let us Know your Views on the Strategy

6.1 This document is intended to facilitate the consultation process which will be as wide-ranging and as inclusive as possible; it is a framework for an informed and realistic discussion of options and priorities.

6.2 Copies of this document can be downloaded from the Department's Internet site [www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk).

6.3 Recipients are asked to consider the proposals over the summer period and are invited to attend consultation workshops which will be held, throughout Northern Ireland, beginning in late August/early September. It is expected that the workshops will consider the following questions.

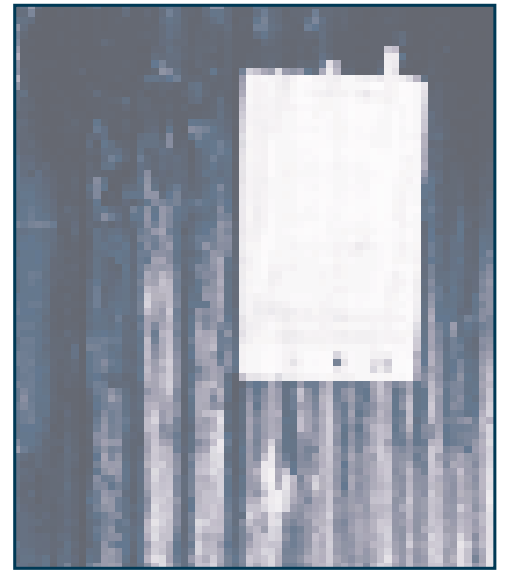
### Questions for Consultation

1. Should the Department target/focus its limited resources on the most disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods?
2. If so, how should they be identified and prioritised?
3. What should be the priority issues to be addressed in the new neighbourhood structures?
4. How quickly can this transition to new structures be managed?
5. Is the 7-10-year-long commitment to the strategy an adequate/correct period of time?
6. What is the definition of a neighbourhood?
7. How should we measure the success of the strategy?
8. The Department is committed to carrying out an equality impact assessment of the new strategy for compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 concerning the promotion of equality of opportunity. Based on your knowledge and experience what are the **equality** issues for the implementation of the new policy?

6.4 Comments may be forwarded at any time either by post or e-mail to:

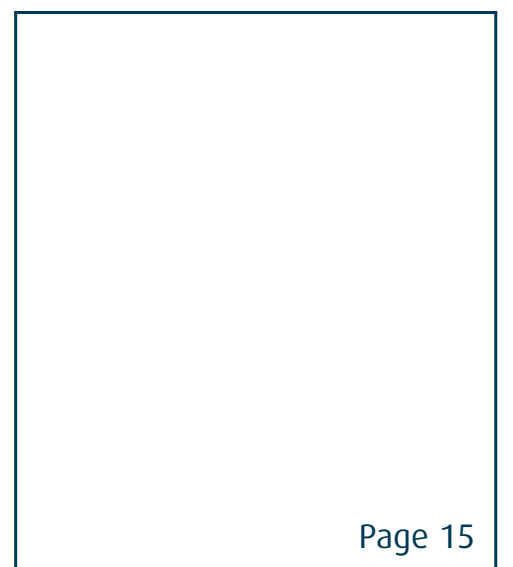
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6.5 All submissions must be with us by 1 October 2001.

6.6 Dates and venues for the workshops will be published in the press in the near future. If you are interested in attending, please contact us.



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## Section 6 Let us Know your Views on the Strategy

6.7 All comments received will be evaluated during October by a panel of academics and practitioners in Urban Regeneration. It is hoped that the Department will be in a position to launch its new strategy by the end of November and begin the process of putting in place the range of delivery mechanisms referred to in the strategy document.

### **Consultation On Equality Considerations (Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998).**

6.8 This document is being distributed to all organisations and individuals listed in the Department's Equality Scheme. Comments of those recipients on any equality issues that they consider are relevant to the strategy proposals would be particularly welcome. Such comments would inform the equality impact assessment, referred to in Section 5, and which the Department plans to undertake later in the Autumn.

