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Bid to slow business use of NT farmland

By JEREMY LAU

URBAN laws are to be extended to cover the New Territories in an attempt to stop farmland being used for business without authorisation.

Announcing details yesterday, the Secretary for Environment, Planning and Lands, Mr Graham Barnes, said the move was necessary because the conversion of agricultural land into business use over the past two years had created flooding and other environmental problems.

In the northwest New Territories a total of 102 hectares of agricultural land was converted to open storage space for construction materials in 1989, an increase of 16 hectares on the previous year.

The land converted for storing motor vehicles increased from 56 hectares to 74 hectares while that for container storage had increased by 46 hectares to 86 hectares.

As well as extending the Town Planning Ordinance to cover the New

Territories, the changes will also give the Town Planning Board, a statutory body appointed by the Governor, the power to designate certain areas which will require planning permission for any kind of development.

Offenders will be liable to a \$500,000 fine and a year in jail, plus a \$100,000 fine for each day on which the offence is proved to have continued.

Mr Barnes said the amendment would be introduced to the Legislative Council in October.