

has been reflected

Nearly half of new homes are built on greenfield sites

James Gillespie

MOST half of new homes in greenfield sites, raising further concerns about the effects of the government's reform of planning laws, according to the latest available official statistics, by 53% of housing development in 2011 was on

brownfield sites, even before planning reform made greenfield development easier. In 2008, more than 70% of development was on brownfield sites. The development of only 3,138 acres of brownfield land in 2011 represented the lowest annual total for a quarter of a century. Concerns over the planning reforms, known as the National

Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which was introduced early last year, have been heightened by a ruling in the Appeal Court this month that allowed the building of 116 homes on green-belt land in St Albans, Hertfordshire. Groups including the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) fear the ruling sets a precedent for green-belt

developments. The plans had been blocked by St Albans council and a planning inspector, but the decisions were overturned by the High Court and the Appeal Court. Sir David Keene, who gave the Appeal Court's judgment, acknowledged that the NPPF was intended to simplify national planning guidance. "Unhappily, as this case

demonstrates, the process of simplification has in certain cases led to a diminution in clarity," he said, criticising the ambiguity in parts of the NPPF. The crucial failing in the St Albans case was the absence of a local plan in place for building new homes. Without one, the NPPF insists on a "presumption in favour of sustainable development".

Paul Mimer, CPRE senior planning officer, said: "This judgment reinforces our worry that the government is failing in its commitment to protect the green belt. Ministers urgently need to move away from setting unrealistic housing targets through their inspectors and give full backing to local councils to use brownfield sites first."

Baroness Stowell communitaries mini "The NPPF is clear on the importance of protecting the green belt, and the has worked hard to protect it by abolishing regional strategies and introducing new planning strategies. Valuable green space

Additional