

# The building blitz that is threatening our gardens

By **John Ingham**  
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THE nation's gardens are under threat from developers as never before, MPs from both major parties warned yesterday.

They launched a Save Our Gardens campaign in a bid to stop Britain's lawns being concreted over.

And they warned that without swift action to stop rampant "garden grabbing", green spaces and flower beds covering the equivalent of 2,755 Wembley football pitches will be wiped out by the year 2016.

Tory MP Greg Clark and Labour MP Chris Mullin say they want to stop the destruction of gardens in towns and cities across the nation.

The crisis is deepening because gardens are classed as brownfield sites and the Government wants 60 per cent of all new developments built on brownfield sites.

Mr Clark claims one in six new houses – at least 20,000 a year in England – are actually built on gardens. He says the loophole is not only ruining neighbourhoods but



**RAMPANT:** Lovely gardens like this are being turned into building sites, right

they have to pay the costs. Mr Clark said: "The whole brownfield policy is a con. When people think of brownfield sites they think of derelict factories or gas works. They have no idea it really means beautiful gardens full of wildlife."

The campaign is backed by the charity Garden Organic, whose chief executive Dr Susan Kay-Williams warned: "Removing gardens from the definition of brownfield sites would protect our green spaces from future development, giving our children gardens to play in rather than living amongst concrete jungles and building sites."

The Home Builders Federation said local authorities could reduce the number of gardens taken for

development by releasing other land. A spokesman said: "If councils do not want garden grabbing to happen, the answer is to take positive steps to bring forward other sites. Developers will be quite happy to build on other sites if they can be brought through the planning system".

A spokesman for the Department for Communities and Local Government said: "Local authorities already have the power to turn down applications for inappropriate housing development in back gardens which are badly designed or not in keeping with the local area."

"New planning policy on housing launched before Christmas strengthens these powers further."



**'This will have a devastating effect on quality of life'**

also means the Government is missing out on the opportunity to regenerate traditional brownfield sites like old factories.

Mr Clark said he has had "thousands" of letters from across the country from angry residents who feel powerless to stop developers.

His Early Day Motion drew support from 171 MPs of all parties. He and Mr Mullin want the law changed so that gardens are no longer classed as brownfield sites.

This summer his Ten Minute Rule Bill will go before the Commons and he wants the public to register its support by signing a petition at [www.gardenorganic.org.uk/saveourgardens](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/saveourgardens).

Mr Clark said that developers are even hiring helicopters to fly over towns to find houses with big gardens. He said: "It's shocking that this is going on but it may only be the tip of the iceberg. Losing green space the equivalent of 2,755 Wembley pitches will have a devastating effect on many areas of life, not least the environment, children's health and everybody's quality of life."

Councils feel powerless because if the developer appeals and wins,