



The Dacorum Core Strategy Examination (October 2012)

On behalf of Mr E Macdonald

Issue 11: Berkhamsted

Allocation of Land for Residential Development

Land at Ivy House Lane, Berkhamsted

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DLA Ref: 94/050

September 2012

The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this proposal in this report is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of the Royal Town Planning Institute and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

Table of Contents

Section	Subject	Page No
1	Introduction	2
2	Site & Context Appraisal	3
3	Existing Local Plan Designation	5
4	Relevant Planning History	7
5	Representations	8
6	Conclusions	12
7	Appendices	13

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report is submitted in response to the Dacorum Core Strategy Examination in October 2012 and supplements my earlier report of December 2011. In particular it addresses question 11.1 in relation to development at Berkhamsted, which is to be considered at the hearing session on the 16th October 2012. The report promotes the adjustment of the Green Belt boundary to the east of Berkhamsted, to allow the inclusion of land at Ivy House Lane within the defined settlement, with consideration to be given to its residential allocation. In these circumstances the following representation is made.

1.2 **Question 11.1 Is the policy for growth and change in this area appropriate and justified, including in relation to national guidance and local needs, and in terms of economic, social and environmental impact? Have all reasonable alternative sites been assessed?**

The definition of Berkhamsted as a market town, being a sustainable and accessible location for additional residential development is supported. The provision of new homes within Berkhamsted is also supported. The allocation of a strategic site to the south-west edge of the town should not exclude other allocations, such as the report site, coming forward, so long as they are in a sustainable location and do not harm the purposes of including land in a Green Belt.

2.0 SITE & CONTEXT APPRAISAL

2.1.0 Location

The report site is located on the north-eastern edge of the market town of Berkhamsted, on the western side of Ivy House Lane. The site is located some 1.25m to the east of the High Street, the commercial centre of the town and some 1km from Berkhamsted Railway Station.



2.2.0 The Report Site

2.2.1 This 4.8 ha site comprises a lone open field to the west of Ivy House Lane with housing to the north, south and west. To the north is Bracken Hill, a development of 7 large detached two storey houses. To the east of this development and to the north of the Report Site are 3 detached houses. To the south of the Report Site is Meadway, a private road lined with houses and with its northern spur terminating on the southern boundary of the site. To the west of the Report Site is Hunters Park, an estate of medium/large houses, albeit with very shallow rear gardens, with access from Gravel Path to the west. These houses are in clear view from Ivy House Lane.

2.2.2 The site falls moderately steeply from both its northern and southern boundaries, thus forming a valley in the central part of the site.

2.3.0 **Context**

The report site is enclosed by residential development on 3 sides, only that boundary to the east to Ivy House Lane is open. An aerial view of the report site and surrounding area is attached as Appendix 1.

2.4.0 **Local Services**

Berkhamsted as a defined market town, has an excellent range of shops and services centred on the High Street.

2.5.0 **Accessibility**

Berkhamsted is highly accessible by a variety of modes of transport as set out below.

2.5.1 **Road Network**

Berkhamsted is well connected to the road network, with the A41 bypass located to the west of the town linking it with the M25 to the south, providing access to the M1. The town is also well related to the neighbouring towns of Hemel Hempstead and Tring.

2.5.2 **Public Transport**

Berkhamsted is well served by local bus and rail services as set out in turn below.

2.5.3 **Bus Services**

The nearest bus routes to the Report Site are located 300m to the north, at the junctions of Gravel Path, Nettledon Road and The Common. These are the Nos 30 and 532 buses from the town to Aldbury, Northchurch and Hemel Hempstead.

2.5.4 **Rail Services**

Located 1km to the south-west of the report Site, Berkhamsted Railway Station is located on the West Coast Main Line, thus providing access to Hemel Hempstead, Watford Junction and London Euston to the south and Milton Keynes, Birmingham International Airport and Birmingham New Street Stations to the north.

3.0 EXISTING LOCAL PLAN DESIGNATION

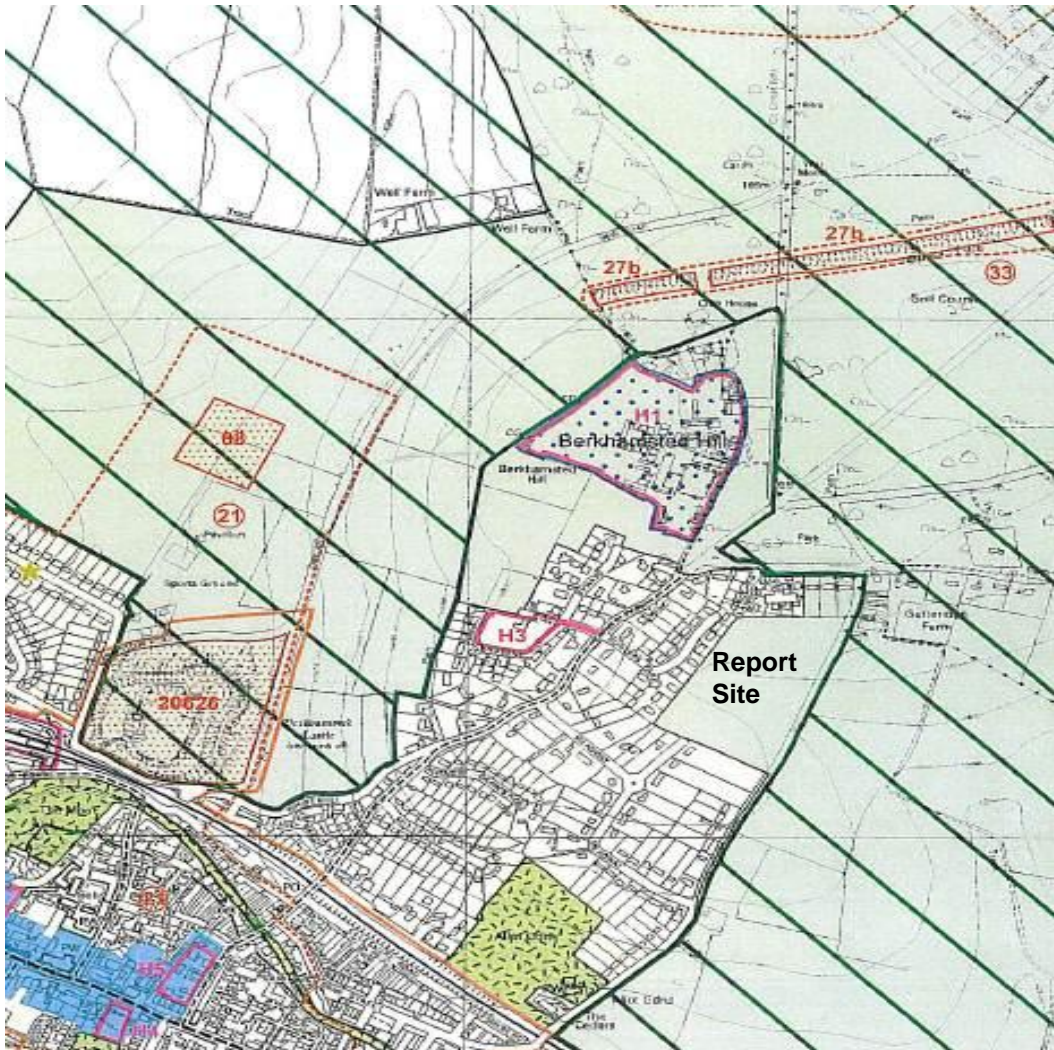


Fig 3.1.0: Extract from the Proposals Map of the Adopted Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011

NOTATION

	Borough Boundary		
	Limit of Proposals Map Sheet		
POLICY AREAS			
	Town		Main Shopping Frontage
	Large Village		Mixed Frontage
	The Green Belt		Shopping Area in a Local Centre
	Major Developed Site in the Green Belt		Main Out of Centre Retail Location
	Small Village in the Green Belt		Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
	The Rural Area		Site of Special Scientific Interest and/or Nature Reserve
	Small Village in the Rural Area		Conservation Area
	Residential Area within a Town or Large Village		Park or Garden of Special Historic Interest
	General Employment Area		Scheduled Ancient Monument
	Town Centre / Local Centre		Area of Archaeological Significance
	Open Land		Area covered by an Article 4 Direction
	Employment Area in the Green Belt		Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Site
	Conversion of Employment Land to Housing and other uses		

3.1.0 Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 (Adopted April 2004)

The Proposals Map of the Adopted Local Plan (See Fig 3.1.0 above), shows the Report Site within the Green Belt, abutting the defined eastern settlement boundary of Berkhamsted and which is identified as a 'Town.'

- 3.1.1 To the north of the report site, the houses of Bracken Hill are included within the settlement boundary.
- 3.1.2 Thereafter to the west, the settlement boundary follows the line of the area gardens of the houses in Hunters Park.
- 3.1.3 To the south, the settlement boundary follows the rear and side garden boundaries of the houses in The Meadway.
- 3.1.4 That land on the eastern side of Ivy House Lane is within the Chilterns AONB. The report site is excluded.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1.0 The Report Site

Representations were made in 2000 to the Dacorum Borough Local Plan Inquiry promoting the inclusion of the report site within the defined urban area of Berkhamsted.

- 4.1.1 An extract from the Inspectors Report of 2002 following the Local Plan Inquiry, relating to the proposed changes, is included as Appendix 2 and which recommended that no changes be made. However, in doing so the Inspector accepted that:

“4.21.1 This site forms a large rectangular field at the northern end of Ivy House Lane. It is bounded on the southern, western and northern sides by housing. Ivy House Lane runs along the eastern edge of the site, beyond which is open countryside...”

4.21.3 ... the land is surrounded on three sides by housing ...

4.21.4 I appreciate that some of the existing boundaries, particularly along the western edge of the site do not fall within the list of readily recognisable features identified in PPG2...”

5.0 REPRESENTATIONS

5.1.0 Representations are made in relation to question 11.1 of the Inspector's issues and questions for the Examination below.

5.2.0 **Question 11.1 Is the policy for growth and change in this area appropriate and justified, including in relation to national guidance and local needs, and in terms of economic, social and environmental impact? Have all reasonable alternative sites been assessed?**

5.2.1 The provision of new homes within Berkhamsted is supported but consideration should also be given to delivering these on suitable sites on the edge of the settlement boundary. The allocation of a strategic site should not exclude other suitable sites coming forward. It is considered that there is scope to amend the eastern settlement boundary of Berkhamsted, which would result in a more defensible and rational Green Belt boundary. This would reduce pressure on the Green Belt and make use of sustainable and accessible sites that it is no longer necessary to keep permanently open.

5.2.2 As set out in my earlier report of December 2011, Policy CS2 Priority B should allow for the limited outward expansion of settlements such as Berkhamsted where this will provide a more defensible Green Belt boundary. I consider that circumstances exist that justifies alterations to the existing settlement boundary of Berkhamsted to include the report site within the urban area. These are: -

- 1) The strength of the existing Green Belt Boundary.
- 2) There would be no harm to the purposes of including land in Green Belts.

5.3.0 **Circumstance No 1. The strength of the existing boundary**

I do not consider the eastern boundary to be particularly strong. As mentioned in detail in my earlier report of December 2011, the previous Inspector considered during the 2002 Local Plan Inquiry that there was a strong visual link between the report site and the open countryside to

the east due to the absence of screening. It would be possible to provide a landscaped buffer to the eastern edge of the site as part of any residential development of the report site. This would provide a more defensible and rational green belt boundary along Ivy House Lane and would also screen the views of the rear of the houses in Hunters Park. The area proposed to be included in the settlement boundary is edged red below and includes the report site and the three adjacent residential houses to the north on the basis that this would represent a more defensible boundary along readily recognisable features.

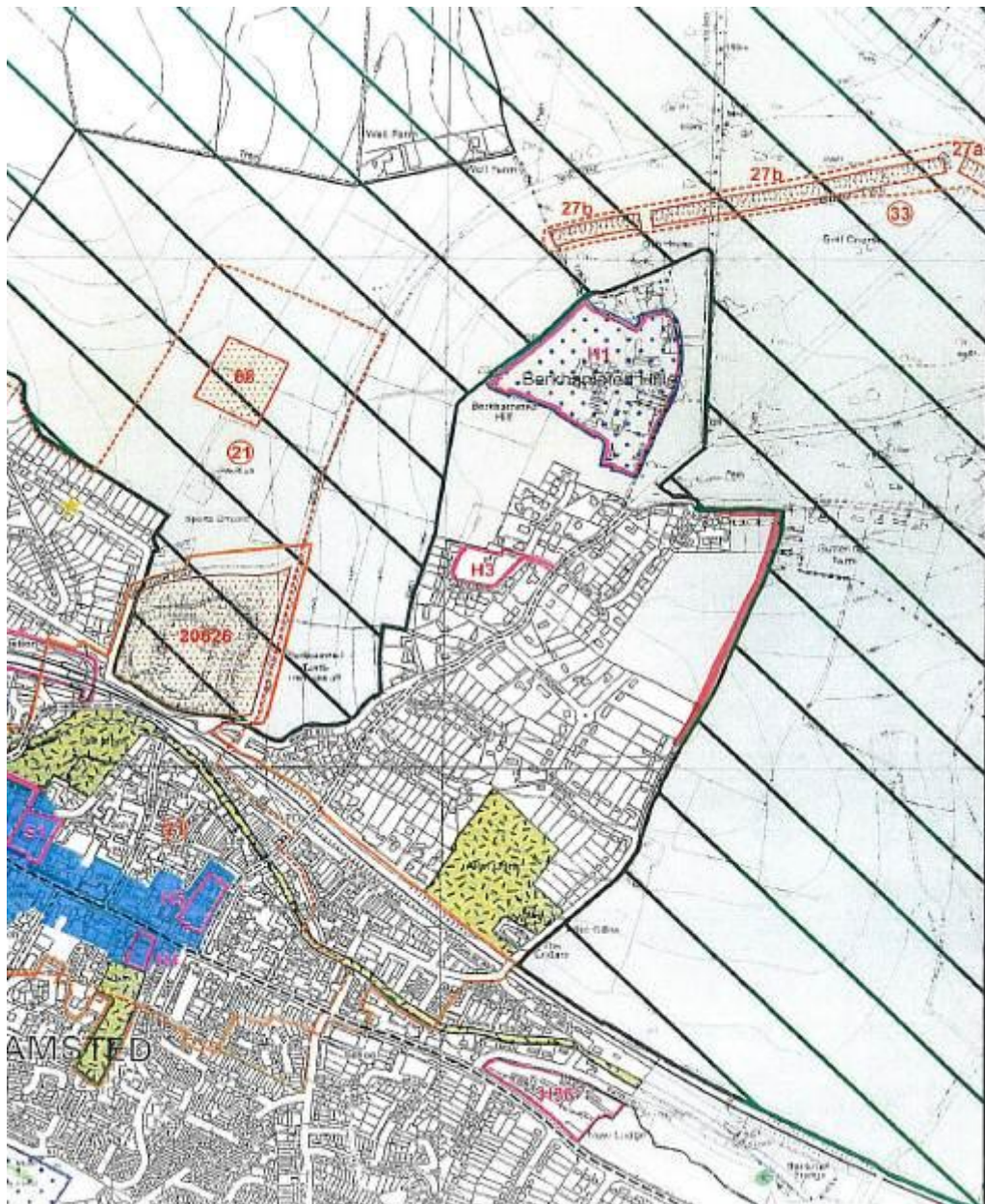


Fig 5.3.0: Annotated extract from the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011

5.4.0 **Circumstance No 2. There would be no harm to the purposes of including land in Green Belts**

The proposed boundary adjustment would **not** harm any of the relevant purposes of including land in a Green Belt identified at paragraph 80 of the NPPF. I say this for the following reasons: -

- 1) The report site is adjoined on three sides by houses, which would preclude the unrestricted spread of the built up area of Berkhamsted as acknowledged by the previous Local Plan Inspector.
- 2) The open countryside to the east would be saved from encroachment by the boundary provided by Ivy House Lane itself, ensuring excellent separation to Hemel Hempstead to the east.
- 3) The report site does not form part of the setting or special character of Berkhamstead.

5.5.0 In addition to the above, any development on the site would be low density to take account of its edge of settlement location. Soft landscaping would also be incorporated into any redevelopment scheme to ensure that there is no hard urban edge next to the open countryside.

5.6.0 With regards to the impact on existing services and infrastructure, the development of small sites such as the report site is considered to be preferable to large urban extensions, which would have a greater impact on existing services. If additional services and infrastructure are required then this could be funded through a condition attached to any planning permission.

5.7.0 **Conclusion**

In the above circumstances, it is considered that a revision to Policy CS2 Priority B to allow for the limited expansion of settlements where this would provide a more defensible boundary is considered to be appropriate. I have demonstrated above that the variation of the existing eastern settlement boundary of Berkhamsted would result in a more

defensible Green Belt boundary. Furthermore, the report site represents a suitable location for development given the context of the site being surrounded on three sides by existing development.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 This report is submitted in response to the Dacorum Core Strategy Examination in 2012. In particular it addresses question 11.1 in relation to development at Berkhamsted, which is to be considered at the hearing session on the 16th October 2012.

6.2 **Question 11.1 The vision for growth and change in Berkhamsted**

The provision of new homes in Berkhamsted is supported but consideration should also be given to delivering these on suitable sites on the edge of the settlement boundary. It is considered that Policy CS2 Priority B should allow for the limited outward expansion of settlements such as Berkhamsted where this will provide a more defensible Green Belt boundary.

6.3 This report demonstrates that two circumstances exist that justifies alterations to the existing settlement boundary of Berkhamsted to include the report site and the three houses to the north within the urban area. These are: -

- 1) The strength of the existing Green Belt boundary.
- 2) There would be no harm to the purposes of including land in Green Belts.

6.4 I have demonstrated above that the variation of the existing eastern settlement boundary of Berkhamsted would result in a more defensible Green Belt boundary.

7.0 APPENDICES

- 7.1 Appendix 1 Aerial view of report site and surrounding area
- 7.2 Appendix 2 Extract from the Dacorum Borough Local Plan Inquiry –
Inspectors Report – August 2002

Appendix 1: Aerial view of report site and surrounding area



Appendix 2: Extract from the Inspectors Report following the 1991 Local Plan Inquiry

town centre for housing and substantial public open space in an area of the town which is particularly deficient in such facilities. There is no similar deficiency in the residential area adjacent to Ashlyns School. On balance therefore I consider that the advantages of the development of the Egerton Rothesay School site outweigh any benefits that might be gained from the exclusion of land at Hilltop Road.

- 4.20.5. The site at New Road would be closer to many facilities than the land at Hilltop Road. It is also nearer to a main bus route. Since it would be closer to the floor of the valley I consider that it would be more readily accessible on foot or by bicycle. In the circumstances, I am not persuaded that it would be less sustainable than the objection site. In any case this site is proposed for development after the end of the Plan period. For the reasons I have already indicated in section 4.12 of my report I consider that it is no longer appropriate for such sites to be included in the Plan. My view is strengthened in this case by the harm I believe would be caused to the setting of the adjoining AONB.
- 4.20.6. As for the landscape considerations I believe that the development of the objection site would result in an encroachment into the open landscape to the south and would detract from its overall visual quality for the reasons I have already outlined. Although the development of the site would bring benefits to the school and to local residents through the upgrading of existing recreational facilities, including the provision of a new sports hall, I am not satisfied that these benefits would be sufficient in themselves to warrant excluding this land from the Green Belt. In the circumstances, I am not satisfied that sufficiently exceptional circumstances exist to merit revising the existing Green Belt boundary at Hilltop Road to exclude the objection site at the present time.

Recommendation

- 4.20.7. No modification be made to the Plan in response to objection 4162.

4.21. POLICY 3: THE GREEN BELT (Boundaries: Ivy House Lane, Berkhamsted)

Objections

Rep No.	Name	Rep No.	Name
1047	The Trustees of the I S Macdonald Estate		

Supports

7	A & H Champion	15	R & K Taylor
8	A & G Ohee	243	K J Aynsley
9	Mr & Mrs B Morris	1106	Mr & Mrs D Jennings
10	Mr & Mrs V P Watson	1107	Mr J C Allison
11	Mr N R Tiley	1986	Mr & Mrs T Shaw
12	Mr I A Fyfe	4279	D & J Steadman
13	Mr & Mrs C J Pinson	4851 L	Mr J A Ostle
14	P & K Jones		

Key Issues

- (a) Whether the site at Ivy House Lane should remain in the Green Belt. (1047)

Inspector’s Conclusions

- 4.21.1. This site forms a large rectangular field at the northern end of Ivy House Lane. It is bounded on the southern, western and northern sides by housing. Ivy House Lane runs along the eastern edge of the site, beyond which is open countryside. Hedges and mature trees generally define the southern and northern boundaries. Domestic fences and shrubs mark the western boundary. There is no hedge or vegetation along the eastern boundary with Ivy House Lane.
- 4.21.2. I have accepted in section 4.16 of my report that the release of a limited amount of land on the periphery of Berkhamsted is warranted under the provisions of Policies 5, 6 & 7 of the SPR in order to meet the housing requirements of the Borough. However, I am not satisfied that there is a need for more land than is already provided for in the Plan. I do not consider, therefore, that the release of this site would be essential to meet housing needs during the Plan period.
- 4.21.3. Although the land is surrounded on three sides by housing I do not consider that development of this site would amount to a rational rounding off of the boundary. In my view the site topographically forms part of the dry valley which slopes away to the south east. As there is no screening along the eastern boundary of the objection site there is a strong visual and physical link between the site and the open countryside to the east. I consider, therefore, that development of the site would have a detrimental impact on the attractive landscape to the east. In my view, it would visually encroach into the adjoining countryside contrary to the main purposes of the Green Belt.
- 4.21.4. I appreciate that some of the existing boundaries, particularly along the western edge of the site do not fall within the list of readily recognisable features identified in PPG2. The boundaries are nevertheless clearly defined on the ground and have not changed significantly since they were originally defined in 1984. While I accept that Ivy House Lane would be a more well-defined boundary in PPG2 terms, I am not satisfied that, in itself, this constitutes sufficient reason to justify amending the boundary, bearing in mind the harm that would be caused to the openness of the wider Green Belt.
- 4.21.5. There can be no doubt that the Green Belt boundaries are tightly drawn around the existing urban area. However, the boundary has been in existence for some time and was drawn up at a time when tight boundaries were considered appropriate. Since I am satisfied that the housing requirement can be achieved without the release of this site, I do not consider that the tightness of the existing boundaries is sufficient reason to recommend that this site should be excluded.
- 4.21.6. In terms of the site’s sustainability, it only scores 8 points in the assessment of the main Council greenfield and objection housing sites (CD53A). This is much lower than any of the sites proposed in the Plan. In my opinion, the site would be far less sustainable than the sites at Bank Mill Lane and New Road owing to its valley side location. In view of the distance to the nearest bus stop it would be less accessible than the site at Durrants Lane/Shootersway. Moreover, it would not bring forward the same benefits. I find, therefore, that the lower score is entirely appropriate. Consequently, I am not satisfied that the site would contribute to sustainability objectives as required by Policy 5 of the SPR. In the circumstances, I do not believe this site would be more suitable for release than any of the sites identified in the Plan.

I therefore recommend that no modification should be made to the Plan in response to objection 1047.

Recommendation

4.21.7. No modification be made to the Plan in response to objection 1047.

**4.22. POLICY 3: THE GREEN BELT
(Boundaries: Kingshill Way, Berkhamsted)**

Objections

<i>Rep No.</i>	<i>Name</i>
2169	The British Film Institute

Key Issue

(a) Whether the National Film Archive Site should be removed from the Green Belt. (2169)

Inspector's Conclusion

- 4.22.1. The objection site consists of an irregular shaped parcel of land of some 3.6 hectares in extent. It lies to the south of Kingshill Way, close to its junction with Kings Road and Shootersway. The British Film Institute (BFI) currently occupies the site, which is used to house the National Film and Television Archive (NFTVA). On the Kingshill Way frontage are Sir Ernest Lindgren House and The Granary, which are both Grade II listed buildings. Further into the site opposite the main access is another building known as The Stables, which is also Grade II listed. Behind these is a large modern building constructed mainly of brick, which houses the J Paul Getty Conservation Centre. A number of small temporary buildings are located on either side of this. To the west of the Conservation Centre is the access road and parking areas. There is a further large temporary car park to the south of the building. On the eastern side are the original ornamental gardens to Sir Ernest Lindgren House, which contain a number of large specimen trees.
- 4.22.2. The site is bordered on its eastern and south eastern sides by the gardens of Little Kingshill House, a private detached residence set in an extensive plot, and the municipal Kingshill Cemetery. Immediately to the south west and west are open fields. Beyond these is the A41 dual carriageway, which is set in a cutting. A short distance to the north west is another detached property known as The Old Orchard. To the north on the opposite side of Kingshill Way are a number of other detached residential properties, including a small development known as Meadow Close.
- 4.22.3. At present the existing Green Belt boundary, which was first defined in 1984, follows the alignment of Kingshill Way continuing west along Shootersway. East of the objection site the boundary turns north after Meadow Close so as to include the adjacent playing fields. The objector seeks the revision of the boundary to exclude the land owned by the BFI. It is argued that the site is central to the role of the BFI, whose activities are of national importance. Its removal from the Green Belt would allow