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HERITAGE STATEMENT

for

**MAGAZINE BUNKER
9/10 DRAW WELL ROAD
KNOWSLEY BUSINESS PARK
KIRKBY
L33 7BJ**

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Introduction

This supporting heritage statement has been prepared to assess and support the merits of a Full Planning Application, which seeks to upgrade and convert a dilapidated World War II magazine bunker into commercial / industrial premises for the manufacturing and storage of metal products.

This document has been prepared with information sourced from the Historic Environment Record (HER), by virtue of paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The Site

The site (Bunker 9/10) is located at the far end of Draw Well Road, a long straight cul-de-sac road lined with similar magazine bunkers - which have all been converted into industrial / commercial units. The site forms part of the Knowsley Business Park complex in Kirkby.



Site Position on Draw Well Road, highlighted in Red

Historical Context and Historical Environment Record (HER)

The immediate surrounding area (Knowsley Business Park) originates from the 1940s. A munitions factory was constructed towards the North end of the Business Park as part of the national war effort.

To support the munitions factory, rows of reinforced concrete bunkers were constructed to store ammunition. The bunkers were all uniform in appearance; thick reinforced concrete walls, reinforced concrete roofs, surrounded by mounds of earth - hidden behind another reinforced concrete wall.

Munitions deliveries were carried to / from the site by train. A railway branch was constructed from the Kirkby – Wigan line to the bunker locations, and further branches went directly into each bunker. Trains were loaded within the bunker on a dedicated loading platform.

The Heritage Environment Record (HER) describes the bunkers as the following:

“Second World War munitions bunkers, Draw Well Road, Knowsley Industrial Park, Kirkby.

In 2019 Wardell Armstrong carried out a building survey of four bunkers. They were built from reinforced concrete, continuously cast on site. The buildings were originally protected by mounded earth but this was largely removed following the closure of the filling factory. The bunkers were originally accessed via railway lines and had covered loading areas.

In 2020 Oxford Archaeology North carried out a building survey of the four bunkers”

At present, the majority of bunkers have been converted into industrial units and have been physically altered in a variety of ways; including the addition of external cladding, creation of new openings, and demolishing / repositioning of walls. All former railway artefacts such as tracks, signals, and overhead catenaries have been removed.

In terms of Draw Well Road, the bunkers located on the East side of the road (directly opposite Bunker 9/10) have been demolished, leaving a vast empty Brownfield site.

According to the HER directory, (excluding the dilapidated bunkers) there is nothing of historical significance in the immediate site area; there are also no listed buildings in the area. Therefore, the proposed conversion of Bunker 9/10 will not negatively impact any historical assets.

9/10 Draw Well Road - External

As mentioned above, the bunker dates to c.1940 when it was used as a munitions storage facility. The building was surrounded by a thick reinforced concrete wall which only had 1 opening – a large pair of heavy steel / timber doors, which could be opened to allow a railway locomotive enter the facility to load / unload munitions from the nearby factory. The building was also covered in dense foliage.

At present, the foliage has been removed which exposes the reinforced concrete structure, the railway line leading to the facility has also been removed. With the exception of the 2 previous points, the building appears unaltered since 1940 – although it is now dilapidated.

9/10 Draw Well Road – Internal

Inside, the bunker is a large empty square room with bare reinforced concrete walls and a bitumen covered reinforced concrete floor. The loading platform for the historic railway is still in-tact, however all railway tracks have been removed. The main floor area consists of 5 rows of 6 square reinforced concrete columns which support the thick concrete roof.



Loading Platform



Damaged Walls



Flooded Interior and Columns

The physical layout has not changed since it was constructed in 1940, however – the building is severely damaged. 1 part of the reinforced concrete wall has been partially removed and needs reconstructing, other walls have been extensively vandalised and covered in graffiti, the bunker floor is also flooded with rain water – suggesting the roof may be leaking (allowing water ingress) and the floor level drains are blocked (preventing water egress). At the time of writing, there is no working electricity supply into the bunker, therefore there is no lighting available.

To summarise, the building is largely unaltered; however extensively dilapidated.

Proposal

The proposal intends to conduct all necessary remedial works to return the building to a safe, usable facility.

The exterior of the building will be clad – similar to other units along Draw Well Road. New door openings will be created in the front elevation to provide an appropriate number of fire exit points, and the existing timber / steel railway doors will be replaced with a secure roller shutter.

Internally, the majority of the building will remain structurally unaltered. Lighting, drainage and water facilities will all be repaired and be reinstated. An enclosed internal fire escape corridor will be constructed along one side of the facility, to provide a safe egress route. Staff

facilities (WC's, Kitchen) will be provided within the bunker by constructing blockwork walls. Safety guard railing will be introduced around the platform edge to prevent falling.

The site will be surrounded by a new paladin fence, car-parking bays will be provided along the front elevation, and appropriate landscaping will be introduced.

Justification

Minimal alterations will be made externally. The front elevation will feature 3 door openings (2 new fire exits and the existing roller shutter access). The building will also be clad, similarly to the other neighbouring bunkers. A new tarmac car park will be created with associated landscaping.

Internally, the building will be mainly unaltered. Small blockwork walls will be constructed inside to facilitate the necessary addition of staff welfare facilities and covered fire escape routes. Guard railing will be installed around the edge of the loading bay platform for safety of the staff.

Similar works have previously been successfully conducted on other neighbouring units. This project will update unit 9/10, ensuring it is 'in-keeping' with the rest of the streetscene. The work will also save a piece of local heritage by repairing and reusing the historic bunker, instead of demolishing the building in favour of a new-build facility.