

LAWRENSON ASSOCIATES

**CONSULTING STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS
ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES**

1 THE GLOBE
142 HARDSHAW STREET
ST. HELENS
MERSEYSIDE
WA10 1JT

DIRECTORS

WILLIAM LAWRENSON

C.Eng. M.I.Struct.E.

HOWARD T. LAWRENSON

B.Eng. C.Eng. M.I.Struct.E.

Tel: 01744 733446

E-mail: info@lawrensonassociates.co.uk

Website: www.lawrensonassociates.co.uk

Our ref: 6460/HS

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HERITAGE STATEMENT

for

**MAGAZINE BUNKER
9/8 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 8/9) is located on 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 the 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 8/9) 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 8/9 will not negatively impact any historical assets.

8/9 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 one 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 is also covered in dense foliage, which could well have been to camouflage the building.

With the exception of the 2 previous points, the building appears unaltered since 1940 – although it is now dilapidated.

8/9 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 square reinforced concrete columns which support the thick concrete roof.

The physical layout has not changed since it was constructed in 1940 and to summarise, the building is largely unaltered.

Pre-Application Enquiry

A pre-application enquiry concerning the proposed development was submitted to Knowsley Council in April 2023 – Application Number: 23/00012/PREAPP. A response from the council was received on 22nd August 2023.

A series of consultations formed part of the Pre-Application Enquiry, including a consultation with the Conservation and Design Officer; who stated no objections to the proposals within the application, however requested a Heritage Statement be submitted as part of the formal Planning Application, and noted that certain aspects of the site are preferable to retain/reinstate if practicable. The highlighted aspects are:-

Some of the changes proposed do affect features that add to the heritage significance of the structure, and further consideration be given to these aspects of the proposals with a view to lessening heritage impacts. In particular it is advised that any planning application proposal should consider:

- Retention of timber loading bay doors - while these do not appear to be the originals, they are a close copy and the original strap hinges may have been re-used.
- Consider options to retain sections of both the concrete wing walls and concrete retaining wall adjacent Draw Well Road if possible. This may be difficult, particularly with regard the wall adjacent the road given the access / egress requirements and the parking needed.
- Retaining / reinstating earth mounding as far as practicable.

In light of these comments the applicant has determined that it is not practical to retain the traditional wooden doors from a security risk, fire risk and practicality point for day to day operations. A roller shutter will be required. However, the applicant is willing to take the doors down and have them repaired and re-painted. The doors can then be hung on the wall on the inside of the bunker as a historical record.

Also from a practical operational point of view it will not be possible to keep both wing walls, the existing wing wall forming the Western boundary will be retained, but the Eastern wall will need to be removed.

Again as far as is practical the vegetated earth mound on top of the bunker will be retained and be enhanced over the bunker roof.

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 the other unit at 9/10 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, in particular 9/10, which was carried out by the Applicant. This project will update unit 8/9, 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.