

4. Significance

4.4 Evidential Value

The Eastern Coal Drops are one of the largest and most architecturally ambitious coal drop buildings in the country. It retains archaeological evidence of the process of coal handling, and the canal-side setting. The later infilling panels at yard and viaduct level are clearly legible, allowing the once-open arcading to be easily read.

It retains a number of archaeological remains of its original function. Its extant cellular plan form and section allow its original design to be clearly understood.

The roof trusses, composed of both timber and iron, show the technological development of metals during the 19th century. It also contains a number of adaptations from its later uses as warehousing and as a nightclub. Whilst these adaptations destroyed a lot of evidence of its original use, the surviving fabric from these periods enrich the understanding of its development.

The major fire in the 1980s destroyed much of the building's most important archaeological remains at the northern end, and the loss of the roof structure left what had survived without adequate protection.

Key surviving elements include the original cobbled bay towards the northern end; the contrasting north and south elevations showing functional differences; and the remains of the internal timber and brick structure.

It has **high evidential value**.

4.5 Historic Value

As the Eastern Coal Drops date from the initial development of the Goods Yard at King's Cross, they are an important building for understanding the development of rail transport in Britain, and at a more local level, the historic development of the wider King's Cross area. The Eastern Coal Drops also show the historic relationship of different modes of transport, including horses and canals.

Their historic value is enhanced by their association with Lewis Cubitt, engineer and builder, who was part of the Cubitt Family. Collectively they were responsible for designing or building a large number of buildings in mid-19th century London, transforming the face of the City and the West End.

It has **high historic value**.

4.6 Overall Significance

The overall significance of the Eastern Coal Drops derives from the close associations of the building's design and function with its physical and historic setting. Architecturally the building is derived from functional considerations with restrained ornamentation and materiality that help unify it with neighbouring buildings.

Its significance has been reduced by a century of ad-hoc alterations, lack of maintenance and the fire. The repairs of 2016-2018 have sought to address a number of these issues and better protect what has survived. Some further loss of historic fabric during these works was justified on the grounds of finding a sustainable new use for the building.

The most important elements that contribute to the significance of both the Eastern Coal Drops and to this area of the Conservation Area are those features that relate to its railway use and the understanding thereof. Elements such as the viaducts, the capstans and the original functional plan-form are critical in allowing current and future generations to understand the heritage of the building and the surrounding associated structures.



Figure 14 (opposite): Section through the Coal Drops showing their original configuration (Source: Thorne, 1990)

Figure 15 (above): The new curved slate roof looking south east



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5. The Proposals

Under the terms of the 2015 planning and listed building consents (2015/6015/P and 2015/6016/L respectively), a strategy for signage was developed to ensure that it would not cause harm to the appearance, character or fabric of the listed building, whilst also ensuring that there was sufficient scope for each retail unit to incorporate their individuality and graphic language.

This application covers only the signage for Unit 1 (the Upper Level unit) which will be within the stair core of the listed Eastern Coal Drops building.

The proposed signs are shown in figures 16 and 17. They are as follows:

On the 1850s east elevation:

o 1 no. hanging sign (1071mm wide x 165mm high) in the form of illuminated lettering. This will be suspended from the modern internal steel structure and set back from the façade by 2476mm. It will be 3435 from finished floor level (FFL).

On the 1850s west elevation:

o 1 no. column sign (655mm w x 655mm h) on the brick pier at viaduct level. This will be slightly narrower than the stock brick pier. 1800mm from FFL.

o 2 no. projecting signs (500mm w x 500mm h) located at high level in the spandrels between arches at Viaduct Level. 2400mm from FFL.

On the 1920s viaduct:

o 1 no. column sign (920mm w x 920mm h) on the western elevation. This will be the same width as the engineering brick pier. 1600mm from FFL. This part of the viaduct was reconstructed in 2016-18 as part of the alteration works.

Internally:

o 1 no. rectangular wayfinding sign (630mm w x 630mm h) on one of the internal brick cross walls. This brickwork was constructed in 2016-18.

o 1 no. rectangular wayfinding sign (630mm w x 630mm h) on one of the modern walls of the lift shaft to help locate the stairs. This brickwork was constructed in 2016-18.

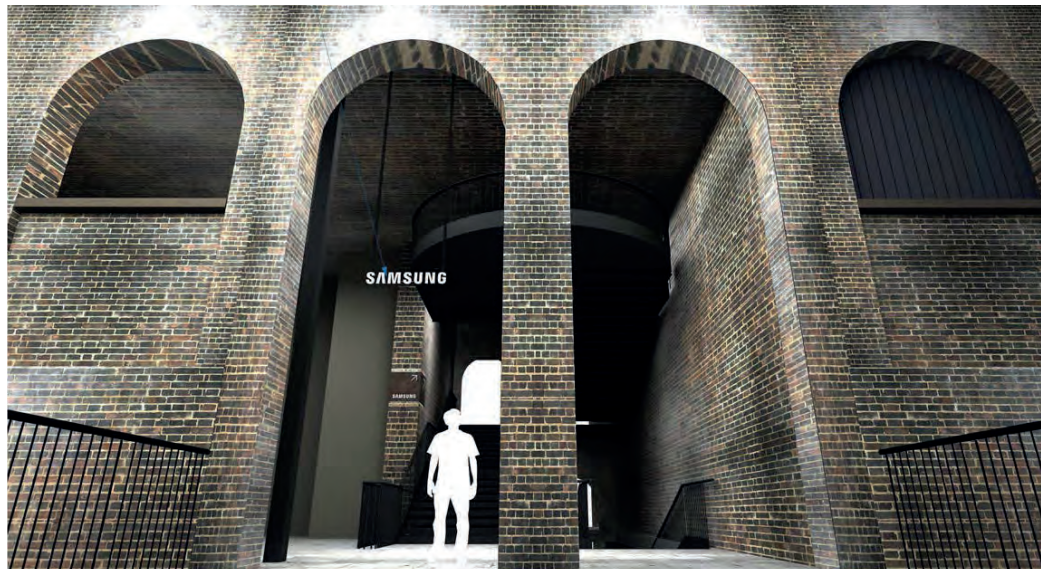


Figure 16 (opposite): Visualisation showing the proposed new column signage on the west elevation
Figure 17 (above): Visualisation showing the proposed new hanging sign on the east elevation

Materials

The proposed signs will be made of folded aluminium with an enamelled 'rusted steel' effect. The proposed signs will stand proud of the wall and be lit by LEDs. Where lettering has been cut into the signage, the internal illumination will be diffused with a pearl acrylic.

The design of all of the signage types is very similar to the existing retailer and wayfinding signage that has been installed around the site.

The rusted steel effect has been chosen to be in-keeping with the industrial character of the historic buildings. The deep brown/grey rust colouration will complement the adjacent brickwork and prevent the signage from becoming visually overbearing against the backdrop of the Eastern Coal Drops.



Figure 16:

6. Impact on the Significance

The proposals for the signage were initially presented to Camden Council's Planning and Conservation Officers on 19th September 2018 and a revised set of signs on 14th November 2018. The proposals have since been amended and refined to incorporate their comments.

The design and locations of the signage have been developed, both in outline as part of the 2015 application, and in detail as part of this application, to minimise harm to the character, appearance and fabric of the listed building and conservation area; whilst ensuring that they are adequately visible to allow visitors to locate the entrances to the retail unit.

The locations of each sign have been coordinated to reduce their impact on the building, and to align with

historic architectural features.

- The **hanging sign** on the east elevation, which is the most prominently located new sign, has been located on one of the new beams. This will prevent damage to the historic brickwork arches. It will also ensure that it is sufficiently set back so that in long views along Stable Street it will not protrude into the brick arcade. This location means it will not affect the appearance of Granary Square, identified in the Conservation Area Statement as being of particular significance. It will be centred on one of the viaduct level arches. Details of the fixing are shown on the drawing 'Hanging Sign Bracketry'.

As requested during the pre-application process, the internal illumination will not be constantly changing or moving, as there was concern this would detract from the

listed building.

- The **column sign** at viaduct level on the west elevation will be slightly narrower than the brick pier: 650mm. It will be at eye-level, and only be 945m high, allowing the original brickwork to be seen above and below. Details are shown on drawing 'Upper Column Sign'.

The column sign at Yard Level will also be slightly narrower than the brick pier: 945mm. It will sit slightly further forward of the elevation to allow a drainpipe to pass behind it. This section of the viaduct was reconstructed on a recessed line in 2016-18 and the works will therefore have no impact on historic fabric. Details are shown on drawing 'Lower Column Sign'.

- The two **projecting signs** at Viaduct Level will be located within the spandrels between the viaduct level arches on the west elevations. They will line up with the signs previously installed along this elevation by other retailers and be approximately the same size. Details are shown on drawing 'Projecting Sign'.

- The two internal **wayfinding signs** will be mounted into the mortar joints of the brickwork to allow visitors to identify the staircase leading to Samsung's roof-level unit. They will be set back into the unit to prevent interrupting long views, and will use the same in-keeping materials as the main signage. Details are shown on drawing 'Wall Mounted Directional Sign'.

None of the proposed signage will affect the archaeological remains of the building's original railway usage. The proposed rusted finish has an industrial aesthetic that is appropriate for the industrial heritage of the building and conservation area. They will be clearly legible as modern additions to the building, and can be removed at a future date without causing lasting damage.

Having reviewed the signage proposals and their locations on different parts of the site, we consider that the proposals will not cause harm to the significance of the listed building or the surrounding Conservation Area.

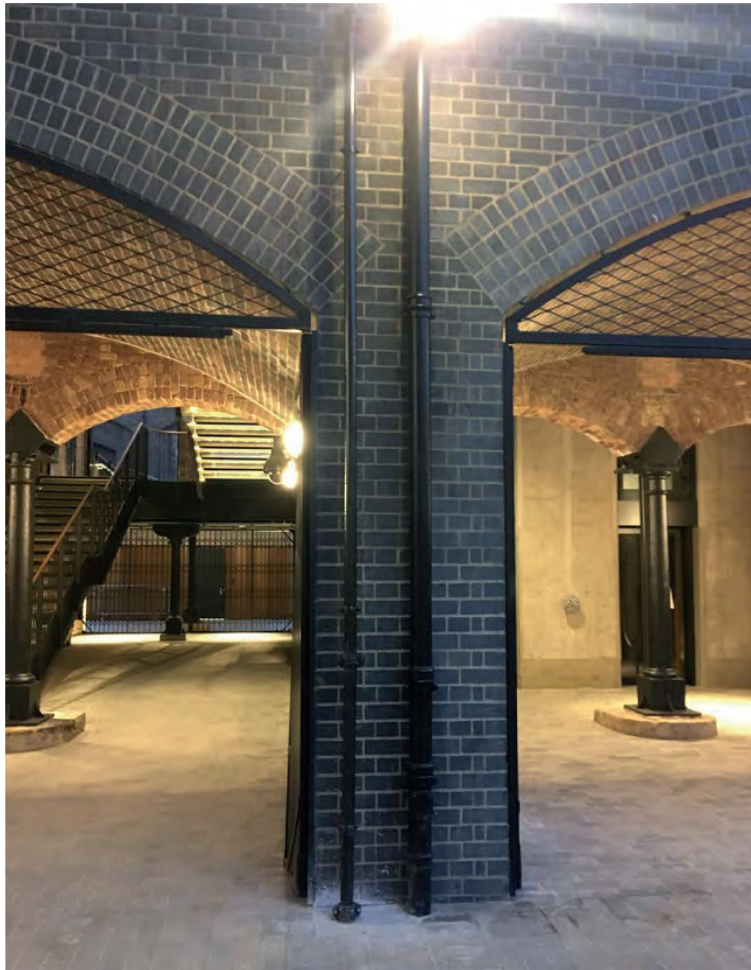


Figure 16 (opposite): The west elevation of the ECD from the Western Coal Drops viaduct
Figure 17 (above): The new extension by Heatherwick Studio



Figure 17:

7. Justification



Under section 16 of the 2018 National Planning Policy Framework ('Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'), Paragraph 185 sets out the risk that neglect poses to heritage assets and that 'Local planning authorities should take into account:... the desirability in sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation'.

The 2015 applications, which included the signage strategy for the Coal Drops Yard development, were granted consent as they were deemed to be in line with the above aspiration of the NPPF. By creating a viable new use, the historic buildings would be repaired. The addition of sensitive signage was accepted as a necessary part of this development, and the signage strategy that was developed was considered to be sufficiently discreet so as not to cause unnecessary harm to the designated heritage assets.

The proposed fixing for the signs included within this current application will, as shown in the attached drawings, be fixed into the mortar joints wherever possible so as not to damage the historic brickwork. In certain locations, due to the friableness of some of the original mortar, it may be necessary to fix into the face of the brickwork.

In response to concerns raised by planning officers during the pre-app process, the locations, sizes and locations of the signs have been amended to further reduce their impact on the historic building, whilst ensuring they still align with the locations and character of the pre-existing retail and wayfinding signage in Coal Drops Yard.

The current proposals, which have responded to the concerns of Camden's Planning Officers are, therefore, compliant with Section 16 of the NPPF. We also consider them to now be compliant with Policies 7.4 and 7.8 of the London Plan 2016; and Policy D2 (Heritage) of the Camden Local Plan (2017).

We consider that any minor impact that the signage will have on the character and appearance of the Eastern Coal Drops will not cause harm to its significance and be more than outweighed by the benefit in ensuring the future success of Coal Drops Yard. Furthermore, the simple, robust design is appropriate for the new context of the building as a retail destination, and is in-keeping with the string, utilitarian details of the original building.

Figure 16 (opposite): The east elevation of the ECD from the corner of Granary Square. The illuminated arch will house the hanging sign.
Figure 17 (above): The modern brick pier of the ECD which will have a column sign. Note the downpipe which will sit behind the proposed



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8. Conclusion

The wider King's Cross masterplan has been widely lauded as a successful example of mixed-use regeneration. Once-derelict historic buildings have been brought into a wide variety of uses. The success of Unit 1, as the most prestigious retail unit within Coal Drops Yard, is critical to the ongoing success of King's Cross. Its success is dependent on adequate, well-designed signage. The success of this retail unit, and Coal Drops Yard as a whole, will ensure ongoing use of the listed building or the surrounding Conservation Area.

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Figure 16 (opposite): Coal Drops Yard in 1990
Figure 17 (above): Coal Drops Yard in 2018

9. Selected Sources

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- Cherry & Pevsner (1998). The Buildings of England. London 4: North. Yale University Press
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