

# Heritage Statement

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Samsung Coal Drops Yard:

Eastern Coal Drops Signage



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# 1. Introduction

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This heritage statement is to support applications to the London Borough of Camden for Listed Building Consent and associated Advertisement Consent for signage at the new Samsung store at Coal Drops Yard.

This store will be housed within the principal new retail unit at Coal Drops Yard: the iconic new roof extension designed by Heatherwick Studio. Whilst the principal retail space is housed entirely within this new extension, access will be via a stair core in the listed Eastern Coal Drops building. This stair core will have Samsung signage so that visitors can locate the store's entrance.

This Heritage Statement will consider the heritage assets that will be affected by this new signage, and how the impact of the signage has been mitigated to minimise or eliminate harm.

Giles Quarme & Associates are specialist conservation architects and heritage consultants, with over thirty years' experience of working with historic buildings and new buildings with-in the setting of historic buildings. GQA have acted as consultants for a range of projects involving Grade I listed buildings, Scheduled Monuments, World Heritage Sites and National Parks.

Matt Woollven is an AABC registered specialist conservation

architect with over ten years' experience of conservation projects. He has worked on a range of prestigious projects including the V&A Museum and the Tower of London. Matt was the Heritage Consultant for the Coal Drops Yard redevelopment project from 2014 until its completion in 2018. He worked closely with Heatherwick Studio and the London Borough of Camden to develop the design from its conceptual development, through the planning process and whilst it was being constructed.

## Aims of this Heritage Statement

- To provide a summary of the history of the buildings;
- To detail the architectural and historical significance of the buildings;
- To give an overview of the proposed signage;
- To describe whether or not the proposals will affect the listed building, the conservation area and their settings.



Figure 1 (opposite): Cobbled cart bay in the Eastern Coal Drops in 2014, prior to its refurbishment  
Figure 2 (above): Visualisation of the proposed new Samsung store



## 2. The Heritage Assets

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Figure 3 (opposite): The western elevation of the ECD in the 1970s

Figure 4 (above): The northern end showing the original timber coal drops equipment in about 1980

The proposed new signage will be within one of the stair cores of the Eastern Coal Drops, a grade II listed building within a conservation area. The adjacent Western Coal Drops is unlisted.

### 2.1 Eastern Coal Drops

The Eastern Coal Drops is a Grade II listed building. It was listed in 1983.

The listing covers the original 25-bay 1851 structure. It does not cover the modern extension that was completed in 2018 or, by extension, the Western Coal Drops of 1859.

The listing description states:

TQ3083NW YORK WAY 798-1/79/1738 (North side) 27/07/83 Eastern coal drops at King's Cross Goods Yard

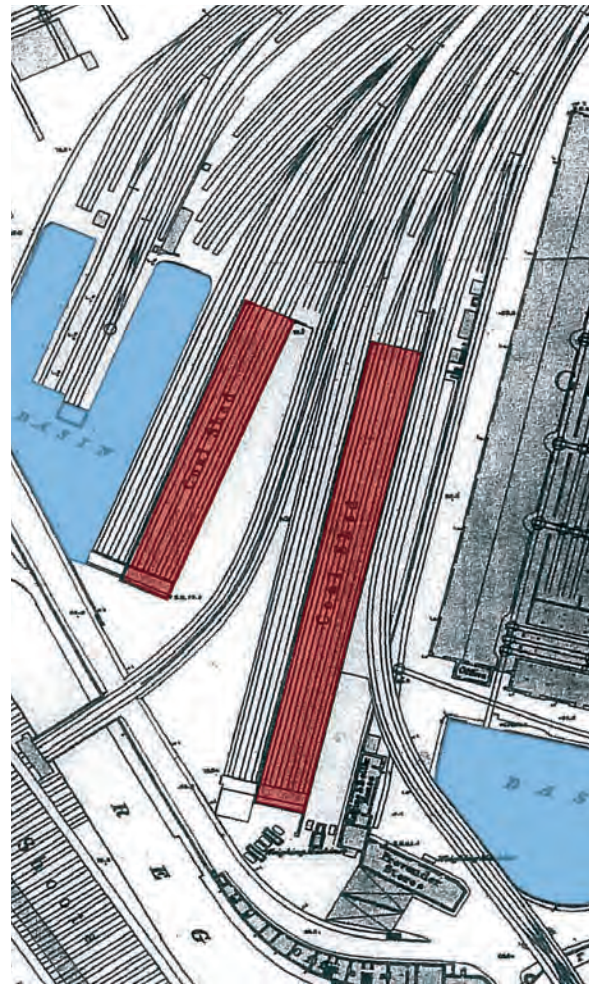
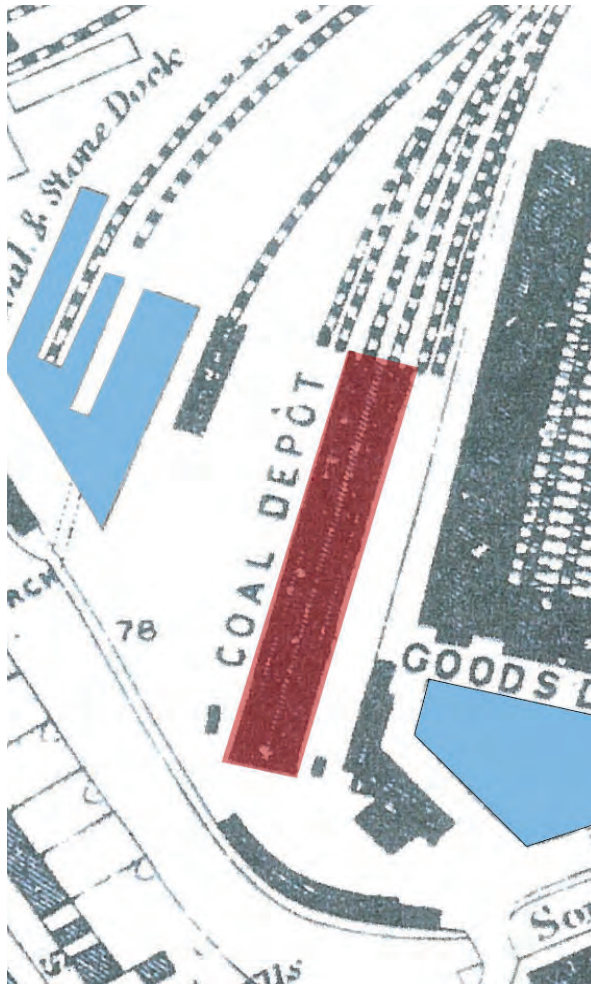
GV II

*Coal drops. 1851-2. Probably by Lewis Cubitt. Late C19 southern section converted into a warehouse. Northern, coal handling bays, damaged by fire, 1985. Multi-coloured stock brick supported externally and internally by a framework of cast-iron columns and beams in each bay. Slated hipped roof. EXTERIOR: oblong plan; 2 storeys and mezzanine. South elevation with single storey extension above which main building with 4 lunettes, recessed oblong panels below and brick pilasters supporting iron gable end. Eastern elevation with segmental-headed ground floor openings (cart loading bays), brickwork of arches extended and linking to give impression of arcading with inset cast-iron Tuscan columns. Metal framed windows with small panes. Occasional flat circular pattern in brickwork of spandrels. Mezzanine floor with half length segmental-arched windows and brick cornice, breaking at the window heads. 2nd floor (railway level), shallow brick arcading blind apart from lunettes in arch heads; recessed oblong panels at the base of each arch. Western elevation with similar arcading and remains of railway line on round-arched viaduct at top floor level. INTERIOR: has massive timber framing to support railway at upper level and storage hoppers at mezzanine. Open composite truss roof with timber tie-beams, rafters, collars and struts and single iron rods from the apex; also queen posts of wrought-iron. Wrought-iron plates at joints and cast-iron brackets where principal rafters are formed of two timbers joined at collar height. HISTORICAL NOTE: the coal drops were built as part of a system of distributing coal from the north-east and Yorkshire to the London market. Originally the structure carried 4 high-level railway tracks from which waggons discharged coal into storage bins on the mezzanine floor above cart-loading bays. A waggon traverser was provided at the southern end by which empty waggons were transferred to a wooden viaduct west of the coal drops. Approach by road is at a lower level.*





## 2. The Heritage Assets



### 2.2 Regent's Canal Conservation Area

The Regent's Canal Conservation Area was designated by the London Borough of Camden in 1974 and extended in 1983 to cover the Goods Yard. The conservation area forms a narrow band across the borough following the route of the canal. It consists of several separate character areas. These are outlined within the Regent's Canal Conservation Area Statement, adopted by Camden Council in 2008.

The site forms part of 'Sub Area 3: The Railway Lands'. This area is characterised by the many historic buildings that formed the Goods Yard to the north of King's Cross and St Pancras. When the character appraisal was written the buildings were largely derelict. Since then, most have been repaired for new uses. Other historic buildings of lower significance have been demolished and replaced by modern residential and office buildings.

The statement notes in particular the space enclosed by The Granary, the Fish & Coal Offices and the Eastern Coal Drops, now known as 'Granary Square', as being of particular interest to the conservation area.

Figure 5 (opposite): Granary Square in 2018 showing the Granary building and the ECD behind  
Figure 6 (above left): 1850s map showing the ECD when first built with its associated canal basins  
Figure 7 (above right): 1890s map showing both Eastern and Western Coal Drops and the profusion of railway lines serving the Goods Yard



ROAD

Parliament

St. Martin's  
Burying Ground & Chapel

St. Pancras College

St. Pancras College

St. Pancras Church

St. George's Burying Ground

St. Pancras Church Yard

St. Pancras Workhouse

St. Pancras Church

St. Pancras Church

Elm Lodge

Pancras Bridge

Oblique Bridge

St. Pancras Workhouse

St. George's Burying Ground

St. Pancras Church

Black Lane Station

File

REG

Horsfall Basin

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## 3. History

### 3.1 Before the Eastern Coal Drops

As London expanded in the 18th century and congestion on the narrow streets worsened, a new road was built to act as a bypass for travellers approaching from the north and west. This 'New Road', now Euston Road, marked the northern limit of London until the early 19th century.

To the north of the New Road, the Regent's Canal was constructed between 1812 and 1820 linking Paddington to Limehouse. It was intended as the main canal route for goods transported from the Midlands to London, and to its

docks beyond.

The Great Northern Railway was formed in 1846 to construct a railway linking London with the North of England, primarily Yorkshire. Whilst the railway always intended on carrying passenger traffic, from the outset its potential value was as a freight link to the capital. As well as its prestigious passenger terminal at King's Cross, it also developed a large goods depot to the north of the station, adjacent to the Regent's Canal. This allowed goods to be transported either via the canal (and on towards the docks) or via road (into the City and the West End).

During the 1840s the primary source of coal in London was County Durham. Collier barges would travel down the Eastern Coast, taking around two weeks to make the voyage. The construction of the new railway allowed coal to be profitably mined in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and transported via rail to the Great Northern Railway's new goods depot.

### 3.2 Construction & Use of the Eastern Coal Drops

To facilitate the swift transfer from railway wagons to barges or carts, in about 1851 a large set of coal drops were erected, 25 bays long. These allowed loaded wagons to enter at high level on tracks and deposit their load into a hopper level. The wagons could then be reversed out. Coal in the hoppers was then loaded into carts using the cellular bays below. This shift, from sea to rail, reduced the time taken to get coals from the coalfield into London from two weeks to just eight hours, in much larger quantities and without being affected by bad weather.

The success of the Eastern Coal Drops led to the construction of another set, the Western Coal Drops, less than ten years later. To further speed up the process, a viaduct was constructed along the western side of the Eastern Coal Drops and a 'traverser' installed at the southern end. This allowed wagons to come in from the north, deposit their coal, and then return via the viaduct to avoid the time involved reversing it out of the building.

In about 1890, the southern 15 bays were converted from coal drops to warehousing. This required alterations to the internal levels, resulting in the formation of a distinct mezzanine level with windows along the east wall. The northern ten bays remained in use as coal drops. At a similar time the Western Coal Drops were totally altered and incorporated into a (now demolished) warehouse to the west with a cast iron road viaduct on the east façade.

In the 1920s the Eastern Coal Drops viaduct was reconstructed in blue engineering bricks.



Figure 8 (opposite): The St Pancras area in about 1820 showing the Regent's Canal and open fields where Coal Drops Yard now stands  
Figure 9 (above): View of the eastern elevation in about 1980





### 3.3 Decline & Rehabilitation of the Eastern Coal Drops

During the late 20th century as freight switched from railways to roads, and the use of coal in London declined, the Goods Yard entered a period of serious decline. Buildings were either left vacant or were used for light industry and storage. The building was listed in 1983, primarily for its industrial archaeology then surviving in the northern ten bays. In 1985 a major fire gutted these ten northern bays, destroying their surviving internal timber structures and roof.

The southern 15 bays were converted into a nightclub, 'Bagley's', in the 1990s. This remained open until 2007. Since 2007 the whole Goods Yard site has been redeveloped by Argent. The transformation of this derelict industrial site into a major mixed-use development has been one of the most lauded urban regeneration projects in Europe.

As part of the masterplan, the Coal Drops were identified as a suitable location for retail use. Heatherwick Studio were appointed to design a new extension to link the two coal drops buildings. This link took the form of a roof-level bridge with curved slate roofs to house the new principal retail unit. The two historic buildings were repaired, upgraded and altered to form a number of smaller retail units and stair cores to link the three levels. The redeveloped Coal Drops Yard opened in October 2018.

Figure 10 (opposite): Aerial photograph of King's Cross

Figure 11 (above): The northern end showing the original timber coal drops equipment in about 1980



## 4. Significance

### 4.1 Setting

The Eastern Coal Drops is surrounded by many of the most important structures of the Goods Yard to have survived, namely the Granary Building (now Central St Martins), the Fish & Coal Offices (now Tom Dixon) and the Western Coal Drops (now part of the Coal Drops Yard development). These buildings, along with associated viaducts and other industrial fragments, were all constructed by the Great Northern Railway in the 1850s. Together they give a sense of the utilitarian stock-brick aesthetic with Italianate touches that Lewis Cubitt used across the King's Cross estate.

Interest is derived from its importance relating to typology and function with the history of goods yards, and in particular, the increased popularity of moving freight by rail in the mid-Victorian period. Key to its setting is also the adjacent canal, with which it was intrinsically linked.

The setting of all of the surrounding buildings has been changed as part of the King's Cross masterplan. Large residential and office buildings now frame views of the Coal Drops from all directions. The immediate surroundings have been changed from private industrial land to public space.

It has **very high group value** with the adjacent listed and unlisted historic buildings.

### 4.2 Aesthetic Value

The Eastern Coal Drops is a partially intact, though heavily modified, example of a utilitarian railway goods building. Dating from 1851, it was evidently designed with function in mind, though its simple repetitive facades are not without architectural intent, and its scale and setting add to its grandeur. The building is believed to have been designed by Lewis Cubitt.

The building facades are composed almost entirely of yellow stock bricks, with a Welsh slate roof covering the southern section. At yard level are colonnades of cast iron Tuscan columns. The brickwork above has decorative circles within the spandrels and within the upper arcade are recessed brick panels. These materials reflect the industrialisation of building materials and the ease of transportation in the Victorian period.

To the western side stands a 1920s blue engineering brick arcaded viaduct. This viaduct has less ornamentation than the principal building and reflects the shift towards a more utilitarian architecture in the 20th century.

The historic building has been transformed by its conversion with new glazing and openings, with extensive restoration to the formerly derelict northern end, and by the creation of the glass and slate roof extension by Heatherwick Studio.

Overall it has **moderate aesthetic value**.

### 4.3 Communal Value

Despite the history of the Eastern Coal Drops being little-known to the general public, the building facilitated a transformation in the capital by increasing the availability of coal and thereby reducing the cost of the most commonly used fuel for industry, transport and domestic uses. It allowed London to develop a network of suburbs linked by railways. The building is one of the only public coal drop structures that is publicly accessible.

Its subsequent re-use, particularly its temporary use as a nightclub, gives the building importance to those who visited it, yet were probably unaware of its historic origins.

It has **moderate communal value**.



Figure 12 (opposite): Painting by Cubitt of the Granary with the Coal Drops behind showing the original canal basin  
Figure 13 (right): The east elevation of the ECD following conservation and repair in 2018