

IN & AROUND

KING'S CROSS

Text: Gemma Balmford

The location, the connections, the canal-side setting, the rich and varied heritage, and exciting cultural scene make King's Cross an exciting place to live, work and shop in London.

Once an underused industrial wasteland, London's King's Cross is now being transformed into a vibrant mixed-use destination. By 2020 the area will comprise more than 740,000 sq m of offices, residential, retail and leisure properties, including 46,000 sq m of shops, restaurants, cafes, bars and other leisure facilities.

'With a combined investment in the region of £5 billion, the renovation of King's Cross and St Pancras International stations, with their magnificent Gothic architecture and new international connections delivering hundreds of millions of visitors every year; together with our masterplan and regeneration of King's Cross, is redefining and reinventing the area for new generations,' says Craig White, project director at Argent (Property Development) Services.

At the retail heart of the burgeoning neighbourhood is Coal Drops Yard, a new shopping development that is expected to open in October 2018. Built in the 1850s to receive and sort coal as it arrived from the north of England by train, the grand Victorian brick viaducts are being reimaged by Heatherwick Studio as a dynamic retail destination featuring up to 65 unique retail units.

'The heavenly thing about working with these existing structures has been taking their quirks and treating them like godsend that can add richness and texture, and true variety to the public space and retail,' says Thomas Heatherwick. 'There will be a huge range of differently sized and configured spaces, with the emphasis on discovery rather than conformity. Visitors will always find something interesting to see and it should be equally stimulating for retailers to respond to the aspects of the original buildings that we have retained and the contemporary elements that have been added.'

The cobbled streets and brick arches will be accessible from all areas of King's Cross and from the towpath of Regent's Canal and Gasholder Park.

'King's Cross has an ambition to redefine the physical shopping environment,' explains White. 'Led by the premise that digital is global and physical is local, we are focusing on brands that can express their stories by responding to the place, dynamic store design, visual merchandising innovation, and using art and culture to create engaging spaces: when you combine all of these influences together across King's Cross, and in particular in Coal Drops Yard, the result is an utterly compelling, welcoming and inclusive retail destination.'

'Right now, King's Cross is at that tipping point, moving from the food scene onwards to retail, with a raft of new concept stores due to open in 2017,' adds White. 'Over the next five years we will see the arrival of the real, functioning intersection between online and physical sales in the shops and other spaces at King's Cross.' **RF**

RETAIL NEIGHBOURHOODS

KING'S BOULEVARD

A vibrant shopping street with a focus on fashion and lifestyle. Nike opened its first neighbourhood concept store on the Boulevard in 2016.

KING'S CROSS STATION

The brighter, more spacious concourse at King's Cross Station opened in 2012 following a £500 million refurbishment.

ST PANCRAS INTERNATIONAL

A shopping and leisure destination in its own right, hosting retailers such as LK Bennett, Thomas Pink and Cath Kidston.

CANALSIDE

With Granary Square at its core, Canalside is the social heart of King's Cross. Waitrose has a large store off Granary Square with a wine bar and cookery school.

COAL DROPS YARD

Designed by Heatherwick Studio, Coal Drops Yard will be the retail heart of King's Cross when it opens in October 2018.

CUBITT PARK WEST

With the green space of Lewis Cubitt Park, this part of King's Cross has a neighbourhood feel, with local pubs, bistros, shops and day-to-day amenities.

CUBITT PARK EAST

Home to smaller independents and well-known and trusted brands.

