



WHITECHAPEL SOUND WAVES

IF_DO

IFDO
architects



IN COLLABORATION WITH

- Alaa Alsaraji
- ARUP
- Michael Grubb Studio
- WSP
- BLOQS
- IF DESIGN Labs

We treat Whitechapel's soundscape as a design material. On-street recordings—hellos at the station, traders' calls, children's laughter—are translated into waveforms. These traces are smoothed and without adding ground clutter.

From Voice to Gateway “Welcome” স্বাগত

Whitechapel Sound Waves is a family of sculptural gateways that translate the market's living soundtrack—traders' calls, greetings, children's laughter—into sinuous, cloud-like forms.

Working with local residents, traders, and young people, we record oral histories and ambient sounds, convert the waveforms into lightweight metal fins, and compose them as floating “sound clouds” that hover above the street. By day, they are elegant markers that frame key thresholds. By night, programmable lighting turns them into warm, welcoming beacons that guide movement and announce arrival.

Our approach prioritises beauty, legibility, and care for place. The design reuses existing lighting poles and their foundations—minimising carbon, cost, and disruption—and crowns intermediate poles with new ring lights to create a continuous “light spine” along the market.

Cloud elements are fabricated from reclaimed metal mesh sourced through Material Index and made locally with BLOQS, supporting a circular economy. QR codes at each gateway link directly to the recorded stories, allowing visitors to hear the voices that shaped each form.

Three larger clouds mark the West, Station, and East gateways; smaller interventions stitch between them. Together, they create an inclusive, durable, and distinctly Whitechapel welcome.