

Open Call

A Place to Belong: Goulston Street Pocket Park



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The Commission

London Festival of Architecture (LFA), powered by NLA, in partnership with Aldgate Connect, invite emerging creatives to reimagine an underused space within the Petticoat Lane Market area. Working closely with The Colombian Coffee Company, this commission seeks a design that celebrates the market and creates both a welcoming daily place to pause and, a flexible space for community-led activity during LFA2026.

We are looking for proposals for a temporary pocket park that will act as a welcoming, inclusive hub for market visitors, café customers, and local residents. Designs should explore new spatial, material, and programmatic ideas, incorporating elements such as seating, greening, and integrated storage. This is an opportunity to test bold yet deliverable ideas that enable connection, belonging, and everyday use in one of London's most culturally rich areas.

The competition consists of a single stage. The winning team will be announced in March 2026 and awarded a fee of £50,000 + VAT to develop and deliver a fully costed, feasible design for installation in June 2026.

Context

Aldgate Connect BID

Aldgate Connect BID was formed in April 2020 and straddles two boroughs - the City of London and Tower Hamlets. The BID works in partnership with these local authorities to champion businesses and help make Aldgate a better place to live, work, and visit.

Supporting Tower Hamlets' Strategic and Partnership Plans, the BID brings together businesses, the council, and community stakeholders to strengthen the local economy, support vulnerable communities through services and volunteering, enhance public spaces, and promote a safer, more attractive urban environment. Through shared priorities such as boosting tourism, supporting Petticoat Lane, local enterprise, culture, and social cohesion, the BID contributes to the borough's long-term growth and resilience.

The BID has four main areas of focus:

- **Making The District More Appealing:** We will take an innovative and creative approach to our community-minded placemaking and public realm agendas to make the area cleaner, greener, and more enjoyable for all.
- **Welcoming People In:** We will put Aldgate on the map as a unique, world class destination in London, ensuring effective marketing and promotion of the area's eclectic offerings to various audiences.
- **Shaping a Safer Area:** We will support community safety and business resilience across Aldgate through impactful programmes, communication, and collaborations.
- **Creating a Connected Community:** We will be committed to ensuring Aldgate's business and resident communities have opportunities for growth and our activities bring joy to those that live, work, and play here.

The Colombian Coffee Company

The Colombian Coffee Company is a social enterprise dedicated to the ethical trade and sustainability of coffee. Their main objective is centred around transforming the coffee industry into a more equitable and sustainable system. They pay their Colombian farmers fair prices, well above market rates, to help them achieve financial stability and improve community welfare. The company values environmental stewardship through eco-friendly farming, promoting cultural storytelling to connect consumers with the coffee farmers, and focuses on high-quality, single-origin coffee.

The leaseholder of the site is The Colombian Coffee Company, and this brief has been developed in collaboration with them to ensure alignment with their values. The winning design should support café customers while remaining welcoming and accessible to the wider market community.



LFA2026

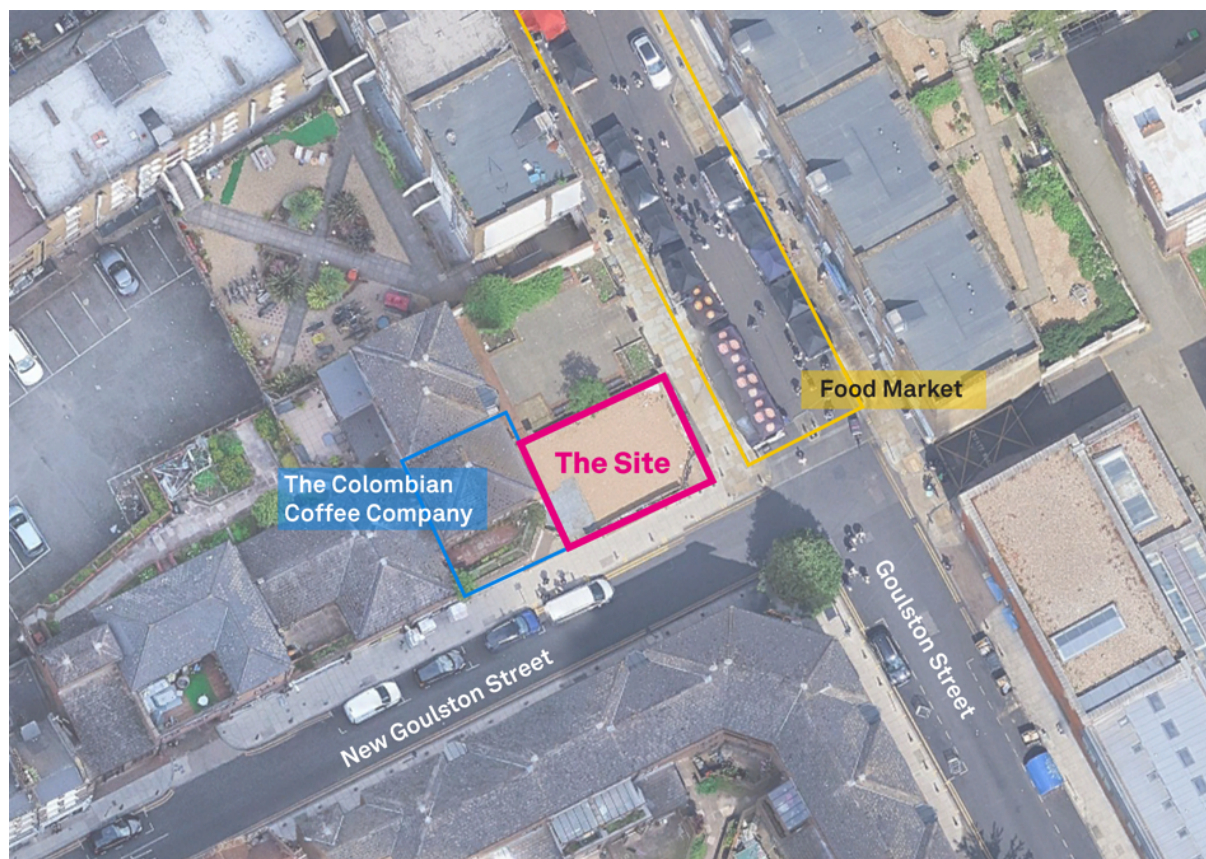
The London Festival of Architecture (LFA) is back for a month-long celebration of architecture and city-making in June 2026. All Festival activity for 2026 will focus on the theme of **Belonging**.

With activity happening across London, the Festival will once again be platform for conversation, testing new ideas, promoting emerging talent, helping shift us towards a more equitable, sustainable city.

We live in a time of stark contrasts – of people, places and ways of thinking. And within this it is all too easy to fall into traps of anger, pessimism or passiveness. None of which lead to healthy, thriving, and safe cities. LFA2026 aims to be a platform for hope and belonging, a space to reimagine connection, and a vehicle for change in our city.

We want LFA2026 to be more than a moment. We hope it will plant seeds that grow long after June has come to a close – whether that be skills, ideas, and connections. We hope organisers can begin to rewild grey parts of the city, reclaim neglected streets, and show what happens when lived experience and professional expertise work together to create spaces in which people can belong.

The Site



New Goulston Street and Goulston Street occupy a pivotal position within the Petticoat Lane Market area, acting as a key gateway between Whitechapel High Street and the historic market streets of Wentworth and Middlesex. Located at the intersection of Tower Hamlets and the City of London, the area has high-footfall and is bordered by the market stalls of Petticoat Lane Market, which is active throughout the week with food stalls and on Sundays with clothing vendors.

At 13 New Goulston Street, a unit leased by The Colombian Coffee Company, is an underused space with the potential for significance public realm transformation. Its visibility from Whitechapel Road and proximity to Petticoat Lane make it an ideal location for a pocket park that can serve both as a dwell space and a cultural marker, bringing huge value to the area.

This commission provides an opportunity to create character, provide space for rest and social interaction, as well as enhancing the area's greenery and sense of place. By offering a space such as this, it will encourage people to pause, socialise and enjoy the area, rather than simply passing through. By reimagining public spaces such as this, the BID aims to increase footfall, enhance accessibility, and foster a stronger sense of place. In the future, the space could be activated with cultural meanwhile events, art installations or workshops. This will not only enhance the public realm but also create a vibrant destination that will draw visitors and engage the wider community.



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Design Requirements

We are seeking proposals that aim to:

1. **Activate the Public Realm on New Goulston Street**

Reimagine the underused space on the corner of 13 New Goulston Street as a welcoming and vibrant public space, incorporating seating, greenery and other placemaking elements. Proposals should consider both market users and café customers and explore integrated storage solutions for the collapsible market seating that may be introduced.

2. **Celebrate Market Values, Heritage & Identity**

Reflect the market's historical roots and multicultural character, drawing on its legacy of trade, exchange, and everyday social life.

3. **Align with Aldgate Connect BID Priorities**

Demonstrate how proposals respond to the BID's strategic priorities, including creating a more appealing, connected, and welcoming district.

4. **Respond to the LFA2026 Theme of 'Belonging'**

Engage with the LFA 2026 theme of Belonging, drawing on the rich history of Petticoat Lane and its diverse communities. The area's legacy of migration, trade, and cultural exchange offers a powerful narrative for exploring what it means to belong in London today, and this should be expressed through spatial, social, or material design approaches.

General Design Guidelines:

- Use sustainable and low-maintenance materials.
- Ensure accessibility and inclusivity are integral to the design.

- Opportunities for community engagement and co-creation with The Colombian Coffee Company should be considered.
- The intervention should be durable enough for medium-term use (approximately 1–3 years).
- The existing gravel surface and bollards must remain in place.
- Access to the site will be from New Goulston Street only.

There may be potential to incorporate a proposal for temporary public art on the gable wall overlooking the site. This must be constructed from materials that are easy to remove. Please note that this element may or may not be delivered as part of the final intervention, and that additional budget would be allocated should it proceed.

Further guidance:

- Designs should demonstrate high material and design quality.
- As this is an experimental space, salvaged or reused materials may be used where they are safe and fit for purpose.
- Materials should be as sustainable and locally sourced as possible.
- Interventions must be safe for public use and should encourage positive social activity while discouraging misuse (such as sleeping, skateboarding, or use as a bike stand).
- Interventions must not block fire hydrants, fire exits, utility covers, street signage, or emergency access routes.
- Designs should require minimal maintenance and be easy to keep clean and in good condition.
- The structure must remain fixed and stable in daily use and must not be capable of being moved or repositioned by members of the public. Any relocation would be undertaken only under the supervision of Aldgate Connect BID and/or The Colombian Coffee Company.
- The winning team will be required to support any licensing or planning requirements associated with the activation of the intervention.
- A Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS) will be required for installation.
- Although temporary, designers are encouraged to plan for the intervention's afterlife, including reuse, re-homing, CSR initiatives, or recycling.
- Following installation, the intervention will be owned by The Colombian Coffee Company. It is intended to remain in place for 1-3 years but needs to remain flexible enough to be removed if needed.

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Budget

The total budget available for this project is £50,000 + VAT. This needs to include all fees, fabrication, installation, deinstallation, other capital costs and contingency. Minimum contingency within the budget should be 10%, although we recommend allocating 15% contingency.

The budget outlined includes a 12.5% design fee for the appointed team to cover on-going design fees and other costs required to deliver the concept. If your practice is not VAT registered, you will need to consider this when preparing your budget.

The winning team will be expected to undertake the following tasks:

- Provide a feasible and on-budget design intervention that is robust enough to be in the public realm for its duration.
- Consult with key stakeholders, including Aldgate Connect BID, The Colombian Coffee Company, residents and businesses, and other community and cultural organisations.
- Project management and delivery of the winning design.

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Submissions requirements

This competition has one stage.

We ask that applicants prepare a PDF (max. 10 pages) for submission that includes:

- Brief biographies of all the project team with headshots
- A 200-word description about your practice along with any relevant technical expertise acquired through previous experience
- A selection of relevant previous work, including images.
- A short reflection of max. 400 words on why you are interested in being involved in the project and how you would work to deliver your proposal if selected. Please include some thoughts about your vision including any initial written reactions you may have to the brief.
- At least one concept sketch to illustrate your initial vision in response to the brief.

The commission provides an exciting opportunity for artists and creatives to be involved in reimagining and activating a key space within an important heritage area. Aldgate Connect BID and Tower Hamlets are not looking for fully developed designs as part of this submission, but rather initial ideas and examples of similar projects. Following appointment, the chosen individual / team will work with the clients and key local stakeholders to develop ideas into more detailed design.

*If your practice is not VAT registered, you will need to consider this when preparing your budget.

Submission information

For any questions about the competition or submission process, please email:

info@londonfestivalofarchitecture.org

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Eligibility

The competition is open to emerging architects, landscape architects, designers and artists. We welcome collaborations; however, the project must be actively led by a named emerging architect, designer or creative.

Priority will be given to applicants who are based locally, have strong connections to the area, or who meaningfully collaborate with local groups, organisations, or communities.

Applicants need to fulfil at least two of the following criteria to be eligible for this competition:

- being no more than ten years post-graduation from your most recent degree or professional qualification
- be under 40 years of age
- have set up your practice or collaboration within the past three years
- be part of a practice or collaboration in which the majority of members of your team for this competition meet the first two criteria

The judges strongly encourage submissions from, or collaborations with groups who are underrepresented in architecture and design.

The winner should also be open to potential future work with The Colombian Coffee Company, who are often looking for design-conscious, modular units to be designed and built for market stalls and festivals.

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Deadline and submission details

- Deadline for first submission is **Midday, Thursday 12th February**. Submissions received after time this will not be considered.
- To send your expression of interest in a PDF format go [here](#).
- The PDF should be no more than 5MB and 10 pages (both portrait or landscape are acceptable)
- You will receive an email confirming the receipt of your submission.

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Schedule outline

Submissions open: Thursday 8th January

Submissions closed: 12:00, Thursday 12th February

Winner notified: w/c 2nd March

Project Delivery: June 2026

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Judging panel

The judging panel will be chaired by **Rosa Rogina**, Associate Director of Partnerships, NLA and Director, London Festival of Architecture, and consist of as representatives from the following organisations:

- **Aldgate Connect BID**
- **The Colombian Coffee Company**
- **Tower Hamlets Council**
- **Petticoat Lane Wider Stakeholders**

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Judging criteria

- **Practice/Team profile - 45%** Does the team have skilled professionals for delivering the proposal in line with eligibility outlined in the Open Call? Does the team have a diverse set of skills and experience? Are the previous work experiences and/or their work methodologies and wider design aspirations relevant to the competition?
- **Initial vision - 35%:** Does the proposal's initial written reflection to the brief suggest innovation, surprise and creativity? Does it explore a new and original way to use and engage with the area?
- **Feasibility - 20%:** Does it propose an approach which seems feasible and deliverable within the budget and set timeframe?

Our evaluation criteria are alignment with [New London Agenda](#) – NLA's framework for best practice in city-making. The jury will be assessing submissions on the criteria above as well as the six pillars of placemaking set out in the agenda.

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Access

Accessibility, diversity and inclusion are core values of the NLA at all levels of our organisation, and we are committed to delivering projects that are representative of the whole city and can be enjoyed by everyone. At the same time, we recognise that there are still significant barriers for groups in our society to be able to enjoy and participate in festival activity.

We will support with any resources and adjustments for anyone who needs it, to make applying for this role easier e.g. alternative document formats, interpreters, hybrid meetings. In the application form you will be asked how we can support you throughout the process; this will not influence your application.

www.londonfestivalofarchitecture.org/access/

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Further information

- Submissions will be judged on originality, demonstration of creativity, relevance to the brief as well as feasibility and how the proposal works in the context of the site.
- To process entries to this competition we will share your application, and any associated personal data provided on the application with our jury and competition partners.
- All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application, but due to the volume of submissions we may not be able to provide feedback to entrants individually.
- Applicants may not be assisted in any way in their submission by members of the judging panel, the client body, organisers, members of their family, close business associates or employees.
- The ownership of Copyright of the design will be in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, that is Copyright rests with the author of the submitted design.
- All designs remain the intellectual property of the designer however the winning design will itself when built will be the property of The Colombian Coffee Company.
- Please bear in mind the project requires a fast turn around and may have peak moments when your practice will need to dedicate sufficient staff to deliver the project on time, to budget and to the high standard expected by all stakeholders.
- If your practice/collaboration is appointed to deliver the project it will need to have the following insurance: Employers Liability, Professional Indemnity, Public Liability.
- Significant efforts are made by all stakeholders of the project to ensure wide media coverage.
- NLA reserve the right to use images from the submissions for promotional purposes in press, social media and publications. All endeavours will be made to ensure accurate accreditation.

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Useful links

[London Festival of Architecture](#)

[Aldgate Connect BID](#)

Follow this [link](#) to submit your entry. The link will take you to an external platform [zealous.co](#)

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Disclaimer

The competition organisers are not liable for lost, misdirected, or late entries. Decisions of the jury represent their professional judgments and all decisions are final. While it is the intent to construct the winning scheme, the organisers reserve the right to not proceed with construction for any reason. Material submitted by you shall be your sole responsibility, shall not infringe or violate the rights of any other party or violate any laws, contribute to or encourage infringing or otherwise unlawful conduct, or otherwise be obscene, objectionable, or in poor taste. By submitting such material, you are representing that you are the owner of such material and/or have all necessary rights, licenses, and authorization to distribute it.

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Commissioning organisations



The London Festival of Architecture (LFA) is a month-long celebration of architecture and city-making, taking place every June across London. Our mission is to act as a vehicle for change by making discussions around architecture more accessible, testing new ideas, and promoting emerging talent, all with the aim of creating a greener, healthier, and more equitable city. For everyone interested in shaping the future of London, the Festival unites industry professionals, students, and Londoners to collaboratively engage with and create positive change in our city's unique neighbourhoods. LFA is run by NLA, London's built environment community – a cross-sector membership organisation for everyone committed to shaping a better city.

www.londonfestivalofarchitecture.org

ALDGATE CONNECT

Aldgate Connect Business Improvement District (BID) was established in 2020, following a local business vote. The BID allows local businesses and communities to have an input into the development of the area. Over the first 5 years, the BID invested over £3.6million back into Aldgate. In February 2025, the BID received an overwhelmingly positive response to the second BID Ballot, demonstrating a strong endorsement of the BID's achievements to date and allowing Aldgate Connect to continue for a further 5 years. Aldgate straddles two boroughs – City of London and Tower Hamlets – and our team work in partnership with both local authorities to champion local business, to make Aldgate a more appealing, connected, safer, and welcoming place for all.