

Open Call – Fitz&Sits London Festival of Architecture 2025



'City Benches' (top row) & 'Pews and Perches' (bottom row) 2019 - 2024 © Luke O'Donovan

1. The Commission

The Fitzrovia Partnership and the London Festival of Architecture (LFA) are inviting emerging architects, designers and artists to develop and submit a creative design for one of several new seating areas, to be installed in the Fitzrovia area during the London Festival of Architecture 2025.

Fitzrovia will once again be a key LFA Destination for the London Festival of Architecture. The Fitzrovia Partnership and LFA are collaborating for the second year of a four-year initiative to test and implement successful public realm schemes which can improve navigation and the overall experience around the whole Fitzrovia footprint.

Building on the success of last year's temporary installation, which improved the pedestrian area outside Warren Street Station, this competition aspires to continue the public conversation on the power of architecture. We are seeking proposals that will transform the public realm of Fitzrovia, which has limited public seating, to be a place to pause, sit and relax – public furniture fit for a festival.

The seating solutions should be sustainable and colourful, like a piece of art – and be sympathetic to the limited space. They should reflect the creative personality of Fitzrovia and the nuances of specific streets. Most importantly they must provide the community an inviting place to sit, enjoy and take note of the surroundings they are in. We strongly encourage applicants to explore designs that allow people with different access needs and requirements to interact with and use the seating.

Following the competition process, a minimum of 5 winning teams will be revealed in February 2025 and will work with The Fitzrovia Partnership and the London Festival of Architecture in delivering a fully costed, feasible design. Each successful entrant (individual or team) will be awarded a £3000 budget, with an additional £500 design fee, to make their seating solution ahead of the London Festival of Architecture 2025.

This will be a chance to participate in a unique project and showcase your imaginative design to the public and the many festival producers, as well as the opportunity to be involved in events held through the LFA 2025.

2. The Context



Neighbourhood of Fitzrovia, The Fitzrovia Partnership

Fitzrovia is a neighbourhood situated between Marylebone, Bloomsbury and Soho, extending from Euston Road in the north, to Oxford Street in the south, and Tottenham Court Road in the east to Great Portland Street in the west. It is in both the London Borough of Camden and Westminster City Council.

Fitzrovia is known for its creativity which has prevailed throughout its history and pervades the pavements we walk on today. Over the centuries, it has attracted artists, poets, writers, musicians, inventors and activists who have all left their mark. Characters such as John Constable, Augustus John, Alexander Pope, Karl Marx, Dylan Thomas, Virginia Wolfe and Nina Hammett have all called Fitzrovia home.

It encouraged freedom of expression and experimentation, giving people a voice, at times when it wasn't welcome or was considered controversial. It was where Olaudah Equiano wrote 'The Interesting Narrative' which influenced British abolitionists; where Charles Dickens was influenced by the workhouse for the novel 'Oliver', where 'My Fair Lady' was written; where 'Round the Horn' was written; where Lennon and Stalin visited; where Bob Dylan played his first gig out of the USA; where the 'Bloomsbury Set' hung out; where the medical narrative was changed when Lady Diana first hugged an AIDS patient and where Elizabeth Garrett Anderson became the first woman to qualify as a doctor and surgeon.

Fitzrovia continues to pave the way for new ideas and attracts creative influencers such as designers, design agencies, post-production agencies, filmmakers, architects, talent

agencies, built environment specialists, restaurateurs, mixologists and fashion houses. The bohemian vibe with the village feeling and community spirit - made up of residents, employees, students and visitors - make it a unique place in central London. It is where global companies sit next to start ups, flagship stores sit next to independently run retail and hospitality venues, Michelin-starred restaurants sit next to cafes.

LFA2025

The London Festival of Architecture returns in June 2025, with a month-long series of events, installations and other activities. Through this project, LFA and The Fitzrovia Partnership are looking to test ways in which the neighbourhood of Fitzrovia can be shaped for the future to better serve people and the planet.

Through the LFA2025 theme of 'Voices,' we encourage applicants to respond to the brief by exploring how diverse perspectives can influence the public realm of Fitzrovia. We invite you to consider how your proposals can celebrate the stories and experiences of different businesses, residents and visitors.

Architecture is not only about creation; it's about listening, amplifying, and intertwining the voices that make up our spaces, stories, and neighbourhoods. At present, where diverse perspectives are both essential and vulnerable, we must explore how different voices complement, contradict, and evolve together.

We are looking for innovative seating that not only enhance the built environment but also celebrate and elevate the unique narratives that contribute to the character of Fitzrovia. This may be some of the historical references or the modern-day influences. Large corporations such as the BBC, Netflix, Meta as well as theatres- such as the groundbreaking Soho Poly – sit in the Fitzrovia footprint and represent voices over the years.

The proposed locations for LFA 2025 have a rich and varied history, influences by people and industries. Designers are encouraged to research these to help inspire the proposed designs.

3. The Sites

A variety of potential locations across the Fitzrovia footprint have been identified for this project. These are areas where there is significant scope for public realm enhancement or seating provision. The ambition is to create a trail of seating across the area, with a particular emphasis on Fitzrovia Westminster, with a few seating solutions on the Camden side.

Potential sites, each with its own micro history and identity, include Berners Street, Crabtree Fields, Charlotte Street, Cleveland Street, Gosfield Street, Great Portland Street, Great Titchfield Street, New Cavendish Street, Newman Street, Riding House Street, Tottenham Court Road, Warren Street and Wells Street.

Design submissions can indicate a preferred location, but please note that your choice may not be granted. Therefore, your design proposal should be flexible and adaptable to other locations. The final decision on seating placement will be made by The Fitzrovia Partnership.

Potential Locations



The above locations are subject to final approval in collaboration with Camden Council and Westminster City Council.

4. Design Requirements

We are looking for pieces that function for visitors (are not purely sculptural) and are realistic to the brief (do not become pavilions or follies). They must be safe, durable and offer a low-cost and sustainable design solution.

We encourage submissions that consider the LFA2025 theme of 'Voices' in a creative and interesting way.

Circular economy principles are strongly encouraged in the design. Consideration should be paid to materials used and whole life sustainability of the design. Some greening is desirable, but maintenance should be considered.

The Design:

- Each design must offer a comfortable seat for a minimum of 2 adults
- The design should be playful and creative and work in small spaces
- Consider how people of a variety of ages and physical ability could use your seating solution
- The proposal must be safe for public use (deter anti-social behaviour and not encourage sleeping, skateboarding or acting as a bike stand)
- Designs must be sustainable, practical, realistic and be weather-resistant whilst responding to the project objectives – evidence should be given that it is buildable within the budget
- Non-movable elements rather than movable elements are encouraged
- The seating solution must be secure and be unable to be moved by the public. It should be self-standing with no fixtures to the ground and weighted sufficiently

- The design must also consider all the site conditions, any slopes and weather conditions
- Designs should require minimal maintenance, and the seating solution must be easily kept clean, litter-free and in good condition. Details on how it should be maintained must be included within the submission
- The seating design must protect the safety and security of passers-by and reduce the opportunity for a group of people to take it away

Further Guidance:

- Interventions should not block fire hydrants, fire exits, utility covers, street signage, or any other emergency access
- Winning teams will need to prepare the necessary documentation for permission from local authorities
- Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS) will be required for installation
- Although the intervention is designed to be temporarily in situ, we encourage and support our designers and partners to plan for the afterlife of these projects which could go on to be re-homed by the commission business, found a new home within the area as part of a CSR programme or recycled
- At the point of the project install, the intervention will become the property of The Fitzrovia Partnership and at the point of de-install it will become the property of the project sponsor

5. Budget

The budget available for one seating solution is £3000, along with an additional design fee of £500 upon commission to further refine the concept for fabrication and delivery. The £3500 (£3000 + £500) budget is to include all fees, fabrication, and installation costs (materials and construction).

Three quarters of the fee will be awarded on receipt of a signed agreement in which you commit to provide a seating solution as per your submission and any revisions as requested by The Fitzrovia Partnership and London Festival of Architecture. The remaining fee will be given in June after delivery and approval of the seating solution.

Depending on the location, there may also be a requirement for a licence for the seating solution. We will confirm if this is a requirement once your location is allocated and this cost will be covered in addition to your budget.

6. Submission

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 short paragraph of max. 300 words on why you are interested in being involved in this project
- Hand or computer drawn 3D design visualisation
- Construction detail drawn to scale, with key dimensions noted
- Outline all materials, budget and production process
- Installation process including draft risk assessment and maintenance regime

Submission information:

We are using zealous.co to administrate our application process. To submit your expression of interest for this competition, you will need to set up a free login on zealous which will enable you to begin your submission as a Draft and save it as you go. You can find information about [how to submit via zealous here](#).

If you have any feedback on using this platform, please do let us know so we can help improve the experience of entering LFA competitions. For any questions about the competition or submission process, please email: info@londonfestivalofarchitecture.org

7. Eligibility

The competition is open to emerging architects, landscape architects, designers and artists. We welcome collaborations; however, the project team must include a qualified architect or landscape architect.

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

1. being no more than seven years postgraduate from your most recent qualification
2. being under 40
3. set up your practice / collaboration in the past three years
4. be part of a team within a larger practice that meets criteria 1 and 2

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

8. Deadline and submission details

- Submissions open: 18 December 2024
- Deadline for submission: 31 January 2025. Submissions received after this time will not be considered.
- For competition enquires please contact: info@londonfestivalofarchitecture.org
- To submit expressions of interest in a PDF format go [here](#).
- The PDF should be no more than 5MB and 10 A4 pages. (both portrait or landscape are acceptable)
- You will receive an email confirming receipt of your submission.

9. Schedule outline

- Submissions open: 18 December 2024
- Submissions closed: 31 January 2025
- Judging: Week commencing 3 February 2025
- Winners notified: Week commencing 17 February 2025
- Benches installed by: 30 May 2025
- Benches deinstalled: Summer 2025

10. Judging panel

- Bee de Soto, Head of Marketing and Communications, The Fitzrovia Partnership
- Lavinia Scaletti, Placeshaping Manager, London Borough of Camden
- Katie Fisher, LFA Pews and Perches Winner 2024
- Rosa Rogina, Director, London Festival of Architecture – Chair

With more judges to be announced shortly.

11. Judging criteria

- **Initial vision - 40%** Does the proposal respond to the brief and theme with innovation, surprise, creativity and sustainability? How well would this design fit within the context of the Fitzrovia neighbourhood? How robust are the circular economy design principles?
- **Practice/Team profile - 30%** 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?
- **Feasibility - 30%** Does it propose an approach which seems feasible and deliverable within the budget and set timeframe? Are the materials durable and will the bench be low maintenance?

12. 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.
- Please bear in mind the project requires a fast turn around and may have peak moments when you will need to dedicate sufficient time to deliver the project on time, to budget and to the high standard expected by all stakeholders.
- Applicants are not expected to have Public Liability Insurance, this will be organised by the client.

- The winning teams will work with the client and relevant stakeholders to ensure the proposed design responds to paired site, which might include some adjustments to the original design concept.
- Significant efforts are made by all stakeholders of the project to ensure wide media coverage.
- London Festival of Architecture and The Fitzrovia Partnership 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.

13. Useful links

[The Fitzrovia Partnership](#)

[London Festival of Architecture](#)

[We Make Camden](#) (Camden Council's overall Vision)

[Our Strategy for a Fairer Westminster](#) (Westminster City Council)

[Camden's Strategy for Diversity in the Public Realm 2023 to 2028](#)

14. Contact

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

For general enquires please contact: info@londonfestivalofarchitecture.org

15. 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.

16. References

This year will be the second of four years in which The Fitzrovia Partnership and LFA collaborate to make the Fitzrovia neighbourhood a key destination for the London Festival of Architecture.

Rabbit Warren Street 2024

Rabbit Warren Street was the first in a series of wayfinding projects in Fitzrovia, brought about in collaboration between the LFA and The Fitzrovia Partnership. The installation acted as a focus point for around 30 diverse events which took place in Fitzrovia across the

month of June 2024, including walking tours, workshops, family events and panel discussions.



Rabbit Warren Street from above © Luke O'Donovan

Pews and Perches 2019-2024

Five editions of the 'Pews and Perches' project - a series of benches designed by emerging architects as part of the London Festival of Architecture (LFA)'s growing year-round programme - have been on display across the Royal Docks from 2019-2024.

In total 25 benches have been delivered across the Docks over the 5-year arc of the competition since 2018, with 9 benches from past years still in situ, and an additional 6 added this year. Every year the project has elevated students, recent graduates and emerging practitioners, often earning them their first commissions.

See the designs for the 'Pews and Perches' benches:

- [2024 \(fifth edition\)](#)
- [2023 \(fourth edition\)](#)
- [2022 \(third edition\)](#)
- [2020/21 \(second edition\)](#)
- [2019 \(first edition\)](#)



Round The Neighbourhood © Luke O'Donovan. Pews and Perches 2023

City Benches 2018-2021

From 2018-2021, London Festival of Architecture, in collaboration with the City of London Corporation and the Cheapside Business Alliance organised annual competitions for a series of one-off public benches installed around Cheapside and the Eastern City Cluster areas. The winning designs responded to their settings with imagination and air and were enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people during the LFA.



Here Lies Geoffrey Barkington © Agnese Sanvito. City Benches 2018

17. Commissioning & Partner 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

Twitter: @LFArchitecture

Instagram: @LondonFestivalofArchitectureOfficial



About The Fitzrovia Partnership

The Fitzrovia Partnership represents two Business Improvement Districts with more than 250 businesses in Fitzrovia Camden and over 170 businesses in Fitzrovia Westminster. Its role is to bring together local businesses to provide added-value solutions and make a tangible difference to the area that benefits all stakeholders. Sustainability is at the heart of the organisation. This means leading campaigns on behalf of member businesses to reduce the environmental impacts of conducting business whilst improving economic and social sustainability.

For 2025, Fitzrovia will be a Destination for the second time during the LFA month-long festival and The Fitzrovia Partnership will host its second design competition to look at sustainable ways of providing solutions to public realm challenges.

www.fitzroviapartnership.com