

## Open Call 'Square' Camden High Street



View of Camden High Street, Camden Council

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### The commission

The London Festival of Architecture (LFA) and the London Borough of Camden (LB Camden) invite emerging architects, landscape architects, designers and artists to propose a new public realm intervention that will test ideas for a new square in the heart of Camden during the trial pedestrianisation of Camden High Street. This 18-month trial, running across 2025 and 2026, will transform a section of the high street into a motor traffic-free zone, creating a safer, cleaner, and more welcoming environment. Throughout this period, the council will conduct engagement and monitoring activities to assess its impact and inform long-term improvements.

This competition seeks to bring creative design thinking and innovative public realm interventions that activate the pedestrianised space – bringing people together, encouraging cultural and social activities, and prompting dialogue about its future. The design should reflect Camden's rich cultural diversity, its subcultural heritage, and its global-local connections. This is an opportunity to build on existing projects

in the area, fostering public engagement in the past, present, and future of Camden Town. The installation will also help test the potential of a permanently improved, motor traffic-free environment.

The winning team, confirmed in July 2025, will be awarded £100,000 + VAT to develop and deliver a fully costed, feasible design, to be installed in Autumn 2025 and remain in-situ for at least a year.

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### Context

Camden High Street is situated in the heart of Camden as a shopping and transport hub for locals and a world-famous destination for visitors. It is an iconic destination seeing up to 40,000 visitors at peak times. The section between Camden Town Tube Station and the Jamestown Road/Hawley Crescent junction is a lively stretch of restaurants, shops and music venues, serving as a gateway to Camden Lock and its celebrated markets.

Currently, narrow pavements and high traffic volumes often force pedestrians into the road, impacting safety and visitor experience. The pedestrianisation trial aims to create a safer, healthier, and more enjoyable public space, while also providing new opportunities for cultural activities that celebrate Camden's unique identity.

Alongside the pedestrianisation, the Camden High Street Cultural Programme will run from May 2025 to April 2026, offering a seasonally driven series of events that respond to the community's desire for activities that celebrate Camden's rich history, grassroots culture and diverse communities.

The programme includes five major "anchor moments" – headline events designed to captivate and engage the community – alongside a series of smaller, complementary activities throughout the year. One highlight is "Camden as a Canvas", an interactive public art event in October that invites families and young people to collaborate on large-scale installations along the High Street. The event presents an opportunity to align with the public realm interventions outlined in this brief, to reimagine the high street as a space for social interaction. Participants are encouraged to consider this anchor event when developing their proposals.

The proposals should build on earlier public consultation carried out by Camden Council, helping to ensure that the competition responds to local priorities. In summer 2024 (8 July – 30 August), Camden Council consulted on proposed changes to Camden High Street. The consultation received over 1,860 responses to the online survey, and more than 900 people participated in pop-up engagement events on the high street, with the majority of people being in favour of the proposals. Feedback showed strong support for thoughtful public realm improvements, including outdoor seating, increased greenery, and measures to enhance navigation and accessibility, to create a cleaner, calmer environment with spaces for gathering and cultural activities. Aspirations such as preserving

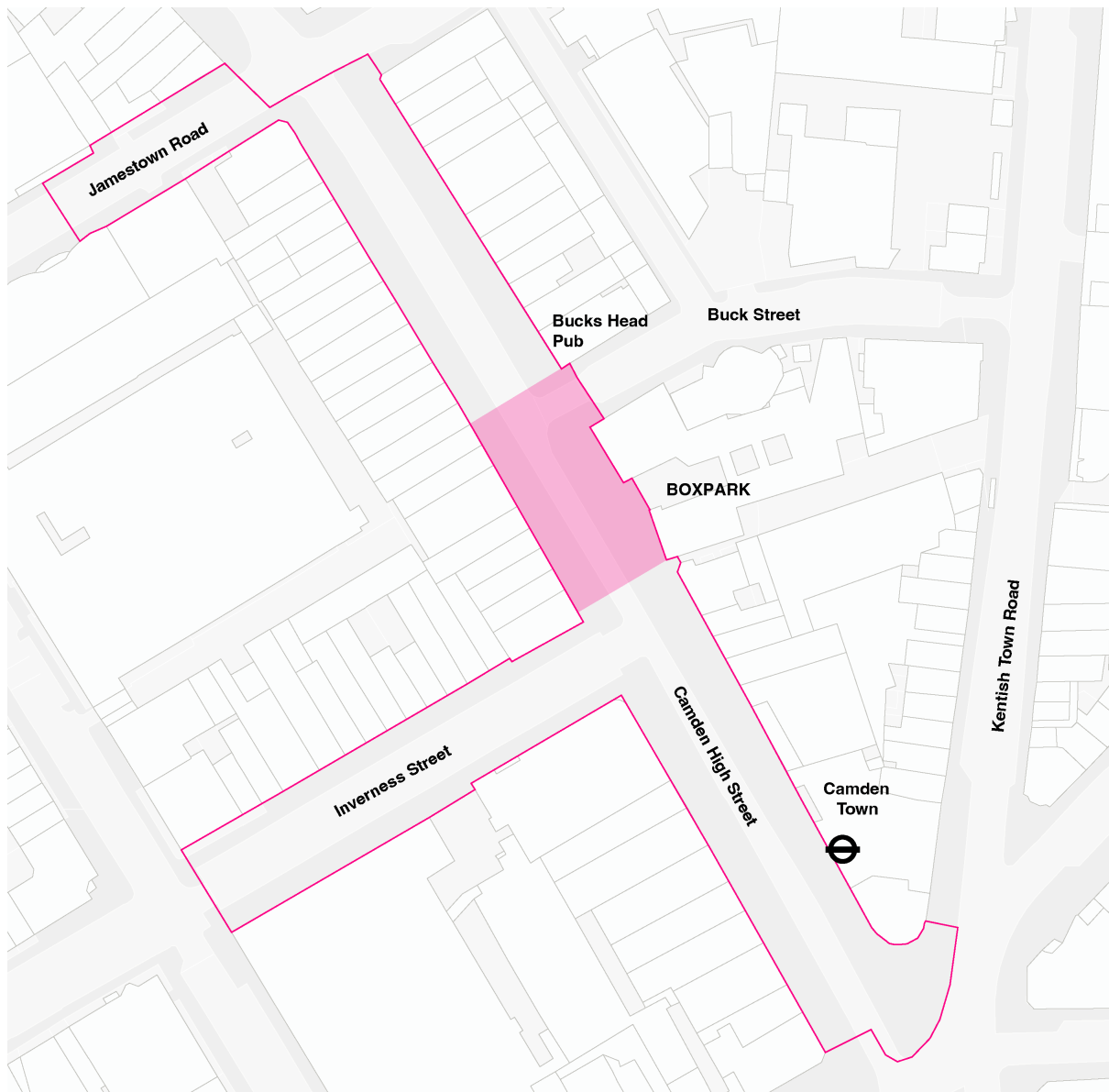
Camden's cultural identity also came across very strongly. Like many other high streets, the area has its challenges and community concerns including safety, security and cleanliness. The engagement reports will be shared with shortlisted applicants, once selected.

Following delivery, the winning team will be expected to engage with the public to understand how the intervention is being received. This feedback will help inform the development of longer-term improvement plans.

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## Site

This design competition invites designers and design teams to propose public realm interventions that create a vibrant focal point within the heart of Camden High Street.



Proposed road closure perimeter, highlighting site area for physical interventions



The site, home to chain eateries, independent food stalls within Box Park, and the Bucks Head pub, offers the opportunity to transform this area into a central square. The vision is to create a welcoming place for resting, eating and capturing the natural spill-out from nearby businesses, including Box Park.

Built interventions can be placed within the inset loading/parking bay area in front of Box Park, with potential additional space gained from the road that can also be utilised. The additional space gained from the road will be confirmed with the shortlisted teams, once selected. Proposals should work with existing street furniture, (e.g. phone box, advert board, lamp columns), while floor-based interventions, such as painted designs, can be applied across the High Street, beyond the highlighted site area.

While the focus is on the defined site, proposals that extend beyond this area are welcome, provided they align with the objectives of the brief, consider the road constraints, and enrich the overall experience of the high street.



View of Site Area, Looking North-West on Camden High Street



## Design Requirements

The applicant should provide a creative design solution for a site-specific public realm intervention that creates a focal point for people to come together and from which events and activities can take place during the pedestrianisation trial.

Overall, the key objectives of the project are to deliver a series of public realm interventions that:

- are bold, imaginative and visually striking, inviting engagement
- connect with the alternative culture and vibrant spirit of Camden Town
- are accessible and inclusive for all, striking a balance between physical interventions and the need to avoid over-cluttering an already busy high street. Enhancements should improve the overall experience, making the high street more welcoming and navigable rather than adding obstacles to movement
- imaginatively respond to the extra space gained through the road closure
- enable activities and events to take place during the pedestrianisation trial
- create a lasting legacy by encouraging community partnerships and building on existing objectives for the area
- act as a hub to bring people together to showcase and celebrate Camden's unique identity
- relate to and take advantage of opportunities presented by the local businesses operating in the area
- respond to both the challenges of the high street, which include anti-social behaviour and crime, and feedback received during the consultation period
- relate to and take advantage of opportunities presented the anchor events within the Camden High Street Cultural Programme.

The winning scheme may include – but is by no means limited to – elements that contribute to the creation of an imaginative and successful public square. This could include:

- Resting Spaces
- Temporary Greening\*
- Parklets
- Pavement & Road Treatments (Public Art, Wayfinding, etc.)

\*the management and maintenance of any greening should be considered

Further key guidance:

- Designs should consider materials and design quality that are suitable for high-traffic public highways with heavy pedestrian footfall
- Any winning design will be robust enough to withstand all weather conditions
- The project will need to last for a minimum of 12 months, and you should consider the longevity and appearance of your design accordingly, to ensure that little or no maintenance is required during this period
- Designs must be easily kept clean, litter-free and in good condition (e.g. avoid creating new areas where waste could be hidden)

- Where possible the final installation should be able to be constructed or assembled in situ
- Consideration should be paid to materials used and whole life sustainability of the design
- Although this project is designed to be temporarily in situ, any winning design team will consider the afterlife of their proposal, with a clear strategy for the relocation of built elements, outlining how and where they could be rehomed to
- Non-movable elements rather than movable elements are encouraged
- Free-standing designs without the need for installation of fixings or additional street works are preferred. If required, appropriate fixings and security measures should be incorporated into the design
- Include accessibility considerations, allowing people with different abilities to interact with the interventions. Seating elements should consider back rests and armrests where needed

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## Budget

The total budget available for this project is circa £100,000 + 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 in your stage 2 submission, if shortlisted.

The budget outlined includes a £12,500 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 the London Borough of Camden, local residents and businesses, and community and cultural organisations
- Project management and delivery of the winning design

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## Submissions requirements

This competition has a two-stage process. **No design work is required for the first stage.**

This first stage submission should be single PDF submission of no more than 10-pages and maximum 5MB and include the information below. Alternatively, you can submit your application in another format (e.g. video) but the content should not exceed the equivalent of a '10-page limit'.

Your submission should include the following:

**Your experience:**

- Brief biographies of all the project team.
- A 200-word description about your practice along with any relevant technical and consultation experience acquired through previous projects.
- A selection of relevant previous work, including images.

**Your response to the brief.**

Please provide reflections on the following prompts:

- The overall design brief - why you are interested in being involved in the project?
- Your initial vision and placemaking approach for the project

You can submit your response to these prompts in any format. For guidance, this should be (equivalent to) a short paragraph of max. 300 words per prompt or 90 second video per prompt.

**Shortlisting**

Submissions will be shortlisted by the judging panel. Up to five shortlisted practices will then be invited to develop a design concept based on the information laid out in this open call and will be awarded an honorarium of £1,000 + VAT each. The work required for the second phase of the project will be reflective of the honorarium sum.

At shortlisting, the second stage submission should include:

- Maximum 10-page PDF explaining your proposal to be shared with the jury for review, prior to interview. Your submission should (but is not limited to) include:
  - Detailed design drawings (we accept a variety of formats including hand or computer drawn 3D design visualisation)
  - Key construction details drawn to scale, with key dimensions noted
  - An outline of all materials, budget, delivery and fabrication process
- PowerPoint presentation for the purposes of judging.

\*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](mailto: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.

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

- being no more than seven years post-graduate, from your most recent qualification
- young professional\*
- set up your practice / collaboration in the past three years

\*this refers to individuals in the early stages of their professional careers, regardless of their age

The judges strongly encourage submissions from, or collaborations with groups who are underrepresented in architecture. They are particularly interested in seeing applications from local organisations or those working in partnership with community groups based within the vicinity of Camden High Street.

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## Deadline and submission details

- Deadline for first submission is Midday, Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May. Submissions received after time this will not be considered.
- For competition enquires please contact:  
[info@londonfestivalofarchitecture.org](mailto:info@londonfestivalofarchitecture.org)
- To send your expression 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 the receipt of your submission.

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## Schedule outline

Submissions open: 12:00, Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> April

Submissions closed: 12:00, Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May

Successful shortlisted teams notified: w/c 26<sup>th</sup> May

Site visit with shortlisted teams: Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> June 10:00-12:00

Round 2 submission deadline: Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June

Final judging / interviews: w/c 30<sup>th</sup> June

Winner notified: w/c 7<sup>th</sup> July

Delivery target: Autumn 2025

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## Judging panel

- Maayan Matz Ashkenazi, Social Anthropologist & Urban Designer
- Barbara Kaucky, Founding Director, Erect Architecture
- Tricia Richards, Castlehaven
- Georgie Street, CTU
- LB Camden Representative x3

NLA Chair – Rosa Rogina, London Festival of Architecture, Director

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## Judging criteria

Submissions will be judged on originality, demonstration of creativity and relevance to the brief.

### Round 1 Judging Criteria

*At round one expressions of interests will be given two scores, totalling a mark out of 20.*

- **Practice/team profile – score /12 (60%)**

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? Does the team proposed align with the eligibility criteria stated in the brief?

- **Initial vision/response to the brief – score /8 (40%)**

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? Does it meet the design requirements and the key objectives for this project? Is the team thinking beyond possible barriers or restrictions, and pondering how they might be broken down? Is the vision something which could be developed into an appropriate and achievable scheme for the area, in line with the brief and delivery target of Autumn 2025?

### Round 2 Judging Criteria

- Overall Design (35%)
- Sustainability and Longevity (20%)
- Programme and Resourcing (20%)
- Costs and Feasibility (15%)
- Contextual Design and Public Engagement (10%)

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 LFA at all levels of our organisation (New London Architecture), 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/](http://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 Camden Council.
- 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.
- LFA 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:

[www.londonfestivalofarchitecture.org](http://www.londonfestivalofarchitecture.org)

Camden Council:

[www.camden.gov.uk](http://www.camden.gov.uk)

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

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

[Have Your Say Today - Camden High Street - Commonplace](#)

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## Contact

To submit your entry please go [here](#).

For general enquires please contact: [info@londonfestivalofarchitecture.org](mailto:info@londonfestivalofarchitecture.org)

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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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## References

### Somers Town Acts

Link [here](#)



The Performer, Somers Town Acts © Luke O'Donovan

The LFA and Camden Council ran a competition for an intervention on Phoenix Road that was the central focus for a programme of activity during a weekend-long road closure on 24 – 26 June in 2022. The winning scheme 'The Phoenix Road Performing Gardens' by NOOMA Studio created a street garden, that facilitated performance and showcased the spirit of the local community. The design was made up of different space making elements; road and pavement painting brought colour and shaping the space using minimal intervention, and barrel gardens brought greenery into the street.

### The Tooley Street Triangle

Link [here](#)



You are Here by Charles Holland Architects. © Jim Stephenson & Luke Hayes

In 2018 the London Festival of Architecture and Team London Bridge ran a competition for a design to help people to orientate themselves near London Bridge, particularly on arrival at London Bridge station. The winning design, 'You are Here' by Charles Holland Architects is conceived as a map brought to life, helping people who use London Bridge to navigate their way around the area, and transforming an overlooked piece of pavement into a local landmark and meeting point.

## Let's Meet On The Edge

Link [here](#)



Let's Meet on the Edge (Garden City) © Luke O'Donovan

In January 2023 the LFA launched a competition with London Borough of Barnet, Transport for London and Ballymore 'More Edgware, Less Anywhere'. The winning design *Let's Meet on the Edge* by locally-based 'Edgy Collective' – Adrienne Lau, Daniella Levene and Leila Taheri installed in its three locations across Edgware town centre in June 2023 for a month-long period, along with a wayfinding map for visitors to navigate the three installations. The public realm intervention tested ideas for re-greening Edgware town centre and re-introduced greening on the high street.

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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. LFA's mission is to open up discussions around architecture, test new ideas and promote emerging talent. LFA brings together the public and built environment professionals



for the whole month of June and seeks to inspire and engage our audience with a programme that showcases London as a global architecture hub. LFA is run by NLA, London's built environment community.

[www.londonfestivalofarchitecture.org](http://www.londonfestivalofarchitecture.org)

X: @LFArchitecture

Instagram: @LondonFestivalofArchitecture



[www.camden.gov.uk](http://www.camden.gov.uk)

X: @CamdenCouncil

Instagram: @wemakecamden

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