

## Biodiversity at Westfield Shopping Centre (Stratford)

### Westfield Shopping Centre, Stratford

Westfield Europe Ltd

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Small Scale Permanent

#### Project overview

The area and variety of planting within the shopping centre has been increased and dramatically improved.

The team consisted of landscape architects and ecologists from LUC, alongside the Westfield team and with input from landscape contractors, Urban Planters. Species planted in new and existing areas provide greater opportunities for pollinators to feed and shelter.

Planting has been designed to include many features for wildlife including wetlands and flower-rich habitats to encourage invertebrates, as well as bird nesting and bat roosting features.

This has also provided better connectivity to habitats within the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

#### What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?

Areas of planting within the centre were generally of relatively low value to wildlife given the species planted and the relatively limited extent (The LUC Biodiversity and GI Audit). It provided limited year round supply of food and water for wild life.

#### Were there any specific conditions that led to you carrying out this work?

The project was undertaken to encourage biodiversity and also provided better connectivity to habitats within the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

This also contributed towards meeting the objectives of Westfield Stratford's internal Environmental targets and policies by encouraging biodiversity.



*Mallard duck nesting within raised planters.*

### What were the biodiversity measures taken?

- Design – Plant areas are designed to include many features for wildlife including flower-rich habitats to encourage invertebrates, pollinators, as well as bird nesting and bat roosting features. Ecological and landscape design input enabled the identification of a planting schedule which maximises opportunities for **pollinators through the season. It's also** robust, easy to maintain ,and sustainable with reduced watering requirements. Existing planters were upgraded to increase their depth so that they can accommodate a wider range of plants.
- Food – Our raised beds provide a rich food source for i.e. invertebrates, bird nesting and bats. It provides year round food supply i.e. spring and summer bloom for pollen and nectar and leafy host plants, followed by shrubs and trees late fall and into winter .
- Water source – A naturalistic swale collects rainwater runoff from adjacent car park This provides clean drinking water and a habitat for wildlife such as amphibians, insects and other wildlife.
- Native Plants – We have taken the climatic conditions of the centre into consideration when selecting plant species . Native plants are used in our raised beds as they are most beneficial to our natural habitat and creates continuity with the Olympic Park. These plants thrive best in environments which matches their growing requirement.
- Threatened Species – In the last 12 years, our UK native ladybird species are being threatened by an invasive ladybird species from North America, the Harlequin Ladybird. As such, our Centre encourages habitats for our native ladybirds. The ladybird itself does not feed on the plants however they are a predator to aphids (a bug) that are attracted to all plant species mainly in the Spring and Summer producing a viable food source for the Ladybirds.



*The Swale which provides water for wild life*

- Shelter – There are 20 insect hotels sited around the external mall areas in the raised planter beds, and 2 bird boxes and 2 bat boxes on the M5 bio-diverse roof area. The log area on the roof also serves to shelter wild life.
- Bio diverse Roof – This encourages both grassland and bare ground habitats such as the Rape Winter Stem Weevil. Its also suitable for hosting invertebrates and act as feeding areas for bats and birds. The bio-diverse roof will also provide potential nesting and roosting opportunities.

### How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement

### Further information

Since the GI Audit carried out by LUC in 2014, Westfield Stratford City has worked with Urban Planters to design and implement the recommendations to ensure that they deliver their intended benefits.

The six areas identified for improvement have been fully installed. The installation process has involved producing and installing the planters (in some cases upgrading the existing planters to increase their depth so that they can accommodate a wider range of plants and in other cases installing completely new planters, all from certified timber), laying the beds with a range of species to maximise the biodiversity impact and watering and monitoring to ensure that the plants grow healthily.

The project has definitely met the original objectives and the benefits are already very clear: Westfield Stratford has received extremely positive feedback from customers about the new planting and the biodiversity of the improved areas has notably increased, with the chosen species giving a more natural feel that complements the Olympic Park.

From here we intend to build on these improvements by adding a retailer and customer engagement angle to our biodiversity work, for example through pop-up events, e.g. food growing, and awareness-raising about local biodiversity.



*Raised beds*

### What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Westfield Stratford is located within the Lee Valley, an important wildlife corridor linking the River Thames to the wider countryside north of London. It was important to us to provide some continuity with the London Olympic Park.

By improving the biodiversity across the site we aimed to show our commitment to having a positive impact on the local area and to creating an environmental that our customers enjoy spending time in.