

## Westfield Stratford City – Wildlife Friendly Planting Stratford, London

Westfield Europe Limited

*BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Pollinator*

### Project overview

The project was identified by a Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Audit of Westfield Stratford undertaken by LUC in 2014.

It has involved increasing the area of planting within the shopping centre, with six new areas of planting created, and also ensuring that species planted in new and existing areas provide greater opportunities for pollinators to feed and shelter, as well as creating a more attractive and interesting environment for visitors.

The areas largely comprise new or enhanced planters through the shopping centre, with a further area identified for the creation of brownfield habitats.

This has also provided better connectivity to habitats within the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. The project is being undertaken by Urban Planters and involves a significant investment.

This is one of the projects identified by the audit, with others due to be progressed in the coming years as a



*Photo: Area of new planting beds, including species selected to provide benefit for wildlife and pollinators*

strategy to enhance the environment and biodiversity of the shopping centre, and complements a living roof created in 2014.

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

The LUC Biodiversity and GI Audit identified that areas of planting within the centre were generally of relatively low value to wildlife given the species planted and the relatively limited extent.

The shopping centre in general is a very urban environment, although being located next to the

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and River Lea there is greater potential for wildlife to use the site.

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

A desire to enhance the environment of the shopping centre for visitors and employees, whilst encouraging biodiversity.

This was not required to address any other conditions, but was undertaken to contribute towards meeting the objectives of Westfield Stratford's internal Environmental targets and policies.

### What were the biodiversity measures taken?

This project, one of several identified in the GI Audit, has included the creation of new planting features and the enhancement of the planting scheme through the centre specifically to benefit wildlife.

The Biodiversity and GI Audit comprised an innovative and robust approach to the identification of deliverable measures to enhance biodiversity in the context of the surrounding urban landscape, and the recently created Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, and relevant Biodiversity Action Plan.

The enhancement of planters therefore aimed to encourage pollinators and brownfield invertebrates characteristic of this area of London, and the focus of local BAPs.

The audit was undertaken by landscape architects and ecologists from LUC, alongside the Westfield team and with input from landscape contractors, Urban Planters.

This ensured that measures were achievable given the particular pressures associated with very high levels of footfall, with 47 million customers in 2012;

safety requirements; to accommodate the need for flexible open space; to facilitate long-term maintenance; whilst also attracting wildlife.

Ecological and landscape design input enabled the identification of a planting schedule which maximises opportunities for pollinators through the season, whilst providing an attractive display for people which is robust and easy to maintain given the pressures, and also sustainable including reduced watering requirements.

### 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.

As of August 2015, two of the six areas identified for improvement have been fully installed, with the remainder to be completed by the end of 2015.

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.

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

Westfield Stratford City is a significant site with millions of visitors each year.

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 environment that our customers enjoy spending time in.