

London Legacy Development Corporation Quality Review Panel

Report of Formal Review Meeting: Westfield Street Canopy

Thursday 30 January 2014, 15.30 – 17.00

Level 10, 1 Stratford Place, Montfichet Road, London E20 1EJ

Panel

Peter Studdert
Catherine Burd
Martin Stockley
Peter Lainson

Attendees

Rachel Gleave	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions
Kathryn Firth	London Legacy Development Corporation
Deborah Denner	Fortismere Associates

Apologies / report copied to:

Anthony Hollingsworth	LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions
Chris Gasgoigne	London Borough of Newham

Note on process

The Quality Review Panel comments below were made at a pre-application review of the proposed Westfield Street Canopy. No significant changes have been made to the scheme submitted for planning approval, and the report has therefore been reissued as the Quality Review Panel's formal public response to the application.

1. Project name and site address

Westfield Street Canopy
Planning reference 14/00074/FUL

2. Presenting team

Jon Watson	Westfield
Simon Cochrane	Westfield
Amit Malhotra	RPS Planning
Matthew Small	Quod

3. Planning authority's views

LLDC planning officers have concerns about the proposal to construct a glass canopy above 'The Street' in Westfield Shopping Centre. This will become a key route from Stratford Station to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Planning officers are concerned about the effect that a canopy would have on perceptions of this route. They also noted that whilst illustrations of a canopy in this location were included in the outline planning application for Stratford City, no consent was granted for this.

4. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The Quality Review Panel recommends that a glass canopy should not be constructed over 'The Street' in Westfield Shopping Centre, at this stage in the development of the area. This will be a primary route from Stratford Station to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and the International Quarter. Full opening of the Park, and development of a substantial new commercial district will transform footfall along 'The Street'. The panel appreciates that currently this section of Westfield is not trading as successfully as the rest of the shopping centre. However, this short-term problem does not justify construction of a glass canopy, which will signal a change in the character of this route from public street to privatised 'mall'. The panel recommends that alternative solutions should be explored, and this is discussed in more detail below.

Pedestrian movement analysis

- Whilst the panel understand that analysis of future patterns of pedestrian movement have been carried out, this information was not presented at the review.
- The panel recommends that the planning authority requests expert analysis of the likely future patterns of pedestrian movement, once the Park is fully open, and development of the International Quarter is complete.

- This information is essential to understanding how current footfall along 'The Street' will change, and the likely impact on the success of retail units.

Lettings strategy

- In Westfield Shopping Centres elsewhere, there has been a successful approach to letting units on outdoor streets, for use as cafes and restaurants.
- This approach has already been adopted for Chestnut Plaza, and should be considered for 'The Street'.
- If Westfield decide to pursue this strategy, it would be important to ensure that café tables and boards are well managed, to maintain clear walking space.

Design of 'The Street'

- At present, the design of the street includes street furniture along the centre, with walking routes to either side.
- The natural pattern of movement in pedestrian streets is for people to walk down the middle, and pause at the edges.
- It would be valuable to analyse the effect that a redesign of the street to follow this natural pattern would have on the movement of people.

Canopy design

- As discussed above, the panel thinks a case has not been made for construction of a permanent glass canopy above 'The Street' to improve what is likely to be a temporary lack of footfall.
- One possible solution to this short-term problem may be to construct a temporary tensile structure canopy.
- However, once the Park is fully open, if further analysis convinces the planning authority that a canopy is justified, the following amendments to its design could reduce its impact on perceptions of 'The Street'.
- Omitting the 'elbow' section of the canopy where it turns the corner next to Chestnut Plaza would reduce the feel of a fully covered street.
- It would also avoid the awkward junction between the two straight lengths of canopy, and the need for any columns.

- The panel also think that maintaining the section of 'The Street' between Stratford Station and Chestnut Plaza as an open area should be a priority. This would provide an open-air route between the station and Park.
- However, it may be easier to make a case to cover the section of 'The Street' west of Chestnut Plaza.
- In terms of the current design, the panel agrees that placing the canopy as high as possible, with glass rather than ETFE to maintain clear views of the sky, would both help reduce its visual impact.
- Minimising the depth of beams would also be essential to maintain an open feel.

Next steps

- The Quality Review Panel recommends that the original vision for 'The Street' as an open-air route should not be compromised, so early in the development of the area.
- The panel would welcome an opportunity to comment on further analysis of movement patterns, and alternative design solutions, that could improve the success of retail units along 'The Street'.

