

The Olympic high street makeover

By Rosie Taylor

Just in time for the Games round the corner, shops get a new look that's more Notting Hill than EastEnders

A FEW months ago it was just an anonymous street of tatty shop fronts – a mish-mash of broken signs, tasteless logos, peeling paint and grubby brickwork.

But Leyton High Road, just round the corner from the Olympic Park, has undergone a remarkable transformation.

In place of the broken windows and garish shopfronts is a parade more typical of Chelsea or Notting Hill than the East End of London.

Each shop, restaurant or cafe has been repainted using a sophisticated palette of deep reds, pastel greens, purples and browns.

Shop names in charmless neon or plastic have been replaced with hand-painted signs adorned

with elegant calligraphy or old-fashioned metal lettering. Even the local KFC has had its ugly plastic fascia replaced with a sophisticated dark red paint job, a smaller, subtler logo, and a smart new awning.

As part of the makeover, many businesses have

had their frames, awnings, windows and doors replaced. Most have also been fitted with internal shutters – sitting just within the windows rather than outside them – so the shopfronts can stay lit up at night. The refurbishment was carried out as part of a half-a-million-pound project to spruce up businesses in the Leyton area before the Olympics.

It is being funded by a £475,000 grant from the Government's Working Neighbourhoods Fund as well as money from Waltham Forest Council.

Last night shopkeepers expressed their delight with the results. Panayiota Philippou, who manages the Princess evening wear and bridal boutique with daughter Theodoula, said: 'The street is much nicer now.'

'People can window shop and trade has picked up. 'Having the shutter inside means people can see in the window all the time, which is like a 24/7 advert for us.'

Shamima Bung, owner of Blackwell's newsagents, was also pleased with the transformation.

'The area's definitely gone up market. The high street looks a lot better...now it is a matter of keeping it this way.'

But Mrs Bung said she had been reluctant to replace her shutters.

'The inside shutters look nice but I do go home worrying if I'll still have a win-

'A fantastic opportunity'

dow in the morning,' she admitted. 'After all this is East London, not Kensington.'

Leyton High Road will host the Olympic torch relay on July 21.

Chris Robbins, leader of Waltham Forest Council, said: 'This stretch of Leyton is a gateway to the Games. It will be on display to the world in July and we want our streets, homes and businesses to do us proud. This was a fantastic opportunity to smarten up Leyton.'

And it is not just the shops which have had a makeover.

The pavements have been cleaned, the street signs replaced with modern ones and the lamps given a contemporary update.

The walls of the flats above the shops, which were a dirty brown, have been jet-washed back to their original sandy colour, with some painted in bright shades to complement the shopfronts below.

Unightly satellite dishes have been moved, and the mass of burglar alarms and CCTV cameras on the walls above each shop has been tidied up.

Gordon Bennett, of Bennett Developers, one of four contractors on the project said: 'We have up to 22 men working ten hours a day, including weekends, to get the work finished in time. The whole street looks cleaner.'



BEFORE

Visitors to the High Road in Leyton are confronted by rows of mismatched shops and restaurants with garish, clashing frontages



AFTER

The parade goes upmarket, thanks to bold colours and some new logos. The tatty array of signs over the businesses has also gone



BEFORE

Peeling paint, grubby bricks and an ill-assorted array of brash signs



AFTER

Repainted window frames, cleaned-up brickwork and tasteful awnings



BEFORE

Olympic visitors would have been unimpressed by this dreary stretch...



AFTER

...but they can't fail to fall for the colourful reincarnation that's under way

Shamed, the foreign

SENIOR Olympics officials and agents were accused yesterday of selling thousands of premium tickets for the Games on the black market.

Representatives of countries including Saudi Arabia, China, Serbia, Lithuania, and Greece have been caught trying to trade the coveted tickets at inflated prices.

They had been allocated by the Games' organisers and were meant to be sold at face value to the public in their own countries.

But officials held back premium seats intended for their public – including the 100m men's finals and the opening

By Louise Eccles

ceremony – so they could sell them for up to ten times the market price abroad. Yesterday the International Olympic Committee launched an investigation into how so many of the national Olympic committees became involved in corrupt ticket practices.

The Daily Mail has also learned that two members of the IOC itself are being investigated over the matter.

A source at the IOC said they were 'seriously concerned' about the allegations and would now consider a complete overhaul of the system,

officials selling top tickets on the black market

which allowed 204 participating nations to assign their own ticketing agents, almost unchecked.

An estimated 1.2million of the original 8.8million London 2012 tickets were given to foreign committees. National Olympic committees are banned from selling tickets to customers from outside their country or to anyone planning to resell them.

In addition, they must not sell them for more than 20 per cent above face value.

Undercover reporters from the Sunday Times discovered 15 corrupt ticket agents – responsible for 54 countries – willing to sell thousands of sought-after tickets at huge mark-ups.

Yesterday Sir Menzies Campbell, the former Liberal Democrat leader who is on the Olympic Board, told the BBC the ticket selling was a 'thorough disgrace'.

'The sanctions [for offending countries] should be not just that the tickets get

cancelled for this Olympic Games but that tickets are not awarded on future occasions,' he said. A source at the IOC admitted its system appeared to have 'failed' and would have to be reviewed before the next Games.

The revelations will enrage thousands of Olympics fans in the UK who have struggled to buy any tickets.

Britain's Olympics organiser Lord Coe has been heavily criticised for the handling of its ticket sales, after its website and flawed ballot system left many Britons empty-handed.

However, some foreign Olympic committees had been given far more tickets than they could feasibly sell. In April, it emerged that tickets for sought-after events such as

beach volleyball and basketball were still available over-the-counter in Spanish shops – but no one wanted them – while people here scabbled for tickets to see even the little-known sports.

The IOC held an emergency meeting of its executive board on Friday and has asked its ethics commission to investigate the claims as a matter of urgency.

In one case, Sunday Times staff, posing as envoys of a Middle Eastern ticket tout, were offered 500 tickets by Serbia's ticket agency Big Blu. Tourism for £80,000 in cash.

In another, a Lithuanian seller, Baltic Clipper admitted tickets had been withheld from their own people 'on purpose'.

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