

Minister's visit highlights importance of Thames Gateway infrastructure

24 September 2009

Shahid Malik MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (CLG) visited the Isle of Sheppey in the Thames Gateway yesterday (23 September) for an update on the £400m regeneration project led by South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) at Queenborough and Rushenden, including vital road works.

The proposed regeneration project is a partnership between SEEDA, Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council. It combines superb new transport links, approximately 1 million sq ft of employment space, environmental improvements, community and leisure facilities and around 2,000 new homes.

The new Rushenden Link Road and works at Neats Court will improve access between the A249 and Queenborough and Rushenden and open up Neats Court for development as a quality business destination, helping generate hundreds of new jobs.

"A revitalised Queenborough & Rushenden, an island just 50 miles from London, will bring about new opportunities for local people," said Mr Malik, the Thames Gateway Minister, "The Department is extremely pleased to be part of such a community-led project and I pay tribute to all those involved."

Jonathan Sadler, SEEDA's Project Director Thames Gateway, said: "The Rushenden Link Road is a critical element of this regeneration project. Once the infrastructure is in place, it will provide businesses with excellent opportunities to establish themselves or expand. For example, supermarket Aldi will start construction its new HQ building and regional distribution centre and we are also seeing considerable interest from other developers."

Councillor Gerry Lewin, Deputy Leader of Swale Borough Council, said: "Mr Malik's visit to see the initial stages of the area's redevelopment today shows that central Government is as excited as we are about the project. Queenborough and Rushenden's regeneration has been many years in the planning and the start of the road works, which will alleviate traffic and open up access to Rushenden, is a significant step forward."

...ENDS...

Notes to Editors

- The initial stages of regeneration project have been funded by a cash injection of £7million from the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) 'sustainable communities plan', now Communities and Local Government (CLG), and £3million from the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA).
- Kent County Council is the agency responsible for the design and delivery of the road, which is expected to be completed in Summer 2011.
- **SEEDA, the South East England Development Agency**, is the Government-funded agency responsible for the sustainable economic development of the South East of England – the driving force of the UK's economy. Through supporting businesses, encouraging innovation, developing skills and engaging with public and private partners, we aim to create a successful, sustainable future for the region.
- **SEEDA's support helped deliver the following** over the period 2005-2008:
 - 17,500 jobs created or safeguarded
 - 32,500 people helped to get work
 - 10,000 businesses created or attracted to region
 - 137,500 businesses assisted
 - £638m investment, 45% levered from private sector
 - 200ha Brownfield land remediated
 - 148,500 people assisted in skills development
- **Queenborough and Rushenden Regeneration**
Queenborough and Rushenden comprises 161 hectares of land and buildings on both sides of Queenborough Creek, the existing residential and business communities at Rushenden and the employment land at Neats Court. The area has been in steep decline for many years and a combination of poor transport connections and declining employment has resulted in a high degree of deprivation. Despite this, the area benefits from a rich history, attractive setting and a great deal of unlocked potential.

The 'vision' for the masterplan creates a mixed use development which has the potential to support up to 2,000 new homes, split 50/50 between family housing and apartments, all rated as Eco-home Excellent; up to 180,000 sq m of new employment space with the ability to support over 1,000 new jobs; up to 20 hectares of brownfield land; 180 berth Marina and community water space facility; Improved public realm; Provision of new Community/Educational Facilities; 1.5km of new strategic infrastructure; Development of a Combined Heat & Power Plant (CHP)

- **The Gateway Building**
The Gateway warehouse building is a central information point for the Queenborough and Rushenden Regeneration project and provides a base for the HCA funded Community Development Project Officer. When the building was acquired by SEEDA in April 2006, arrangements were put in place to offer the community a Licence to use the building for community activities, and a skills and training centre. The project has provided local volunteers the opportunity to gain experience in running a community facility, whilst still being supported by SEEDA and the Community Development Project Officer.
- **For media enquiries**, please contact:
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