



The Creek at Queenborough



Meanwhile, on the Isle of Sheppey, North Kent, SEEDA is making huge strides in the regeneration of Queenborough and Rushenden

Major plans to regenerate Queenborough and Rushenden on the Isle of Sheppey gained huge momentum in late 2007 with planning permission granted for the £13.2m Rushenden Link Road and the 50-acre first phase of the employment area known as Neats Court.

Years of careful planning and extensive public consultation are now beginning to come to fruition, with the area set to become a vibrant environment for people to make their homes, find jobs and spend their leisure time. The ambitious project is a renaissance breathing new life into the neighbourhood with the creation of improved transport links, enhanced employment opportunities, community and leisure facilities, environmental improvements and up to 2,000 new homes.

The project received a huge boost earlier in 2007 when the £100m Sheppey Crossing opened. For the first time residents could move freely to and from the island, having previously been hindered by a lifting bridge connected to the mainland which was often closed for ships and other vessels, leading to traffic congestion and huge disruption.

The bridge has already started to transform the lives of people living in Sheppey and will have a huge influence on businesses deciding to locate to the Rushenden area. Already two major employers - including international supermarket chain Aldi - have come forward and are planning to make Neats Court their home, providing an additional 500 jobs on the island. Further companies are also in detailed negotiations with SEEDA.

Two operators are in discussions with the SEEDA team regarding plans to build a hotel, restaurant and petrol station, while a major property company is looking at a speculative investment to create a high-quality, 40,000 sq ft, business park. Negotiations are also underway to bring forward a further 80,000 sq ft of warehouse, office and manufacturing space.

Meanwhile the masterplan for the whole regeneration programme has now been submitted to Swale Borough Council and approval is anticipated in early 2008. Once this has happened it is hoped the first residential site can be taken to the market in spring/summer 2008. Work on the Rushenden Link Road began at the end of 2007, with major construction as part of a two year programme, which commenced March 2008.

While plans are drawn up and initial infrastructure work gets underway, ►

An artist's impression of future waterspace at Queenborough and Rushenden

