

► SEEDA continued...

a former warehouse building has been transformed into a community hub for residents. The Gateway building, (formerly owned by Jewsons) is now used by a variety of local clubs and groups to hold sessions and is also a base for Community Development Project Officer Austin Clays, who helps ensure residents and businesses are kept fully up-to-date with the latest news on the scheme.

Despite the economic decline faced by Queenborough and Rushenden since the 1960s, the area has managed to retain its colourful past as an important seafaring district. The attraction of its inspiring waterfront location has also made it a prime location for regeneration.

Initial funding of £7million from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM's) Sustainable Communities Plan, plus £3 million from SEEDA was injected into the area to assist in the initial stages of the redevelopment. A further £10.2m for the link road was allocated by SEEDA and Communities and Local Government (CLG).

The masterplan has been developed to take into account the agreed needs of the existing and new communities and maximise the land use opportunities already available. To arrive at these agreed needs involved input from all those who live, work and provide services within the area. This started with "Planning for Real"™ consultation sessions – where residents used a physical model of their environment, made by children from Queenborough First School, to demonstrate where they would like to see changes to their

community. Further formal consultation has also taken place.

Features of the development include mixed-use schemes with a range of employment uses, provision of 2,000 new homes of mixed scale density and tenure and a clean-up of areas contaminated over the years by industrial use. There will be major road improvements, education and training to fill skills gaps in the area, marine employment and tourism opportunities. A new primary school, marina, shops, bars, restaurants and a hotel are all included in the proposals.

Initial strategic acquisitions in the area by SEEDA included the former Twyfords Bathroom Factory and three derelict industrial units at First Avenue, Rushenden. The sites have been cleared to enable future development to proceed. Further land acquisitions in the area have also been negotiated in order to push the scheme forward as quickly and efficiently as possible.

SEEDA's Kent and Medway Area Team undertook a central role in the project by co-ordinating a Community and Skills Group of local stakeholders which was designed to ensure the needs of the local community were fed into the masterplan. Close working relationships have already been established with a number of local groups and residents have been given regular updates on progress through a community newsletter about the regeneration plans, called "Your Future".

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