

LAND PURCHASE GIVES GREEN LIGHT TO ALDI HQ AT NEATS COURT

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The next phase of construction can begin at Neats Court, the employment area within the £400m regeneration of Queenborough & Rushenden on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent, following the purchase of 60 hectares of 'compensatory' land at Harty Marshes by South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and The Crown Estate.

Outline planning consent for development at Neats Court was granted subject to various conditions in 2007, and includes a new hotel, filling station and a regional distribution centre for supermarket ALDI. The acquisition of replacement grazing land at Harty Marsh through a joint venture between SEEDA and The Crown Estate satisfies the final planning condition, bringing forward funding from SEEDA, the Homes & Communities Agency and ALDI to complete the Neats Court enabling works and Section 1 of the Rushenden Link Road.

Nick Young, Senior Project Manager at SEEDA said, "SEEDA is creating inward investment and both construction and permanent jobs in these difficult times. To have attracted ALDI, a major international business to the Isle of Sheppey is a major achievement and we now have a valuable 'bio-bank' in place, a proportion of which will offset development at Neats Court with the remainder available for future high quality schemes in the region."

The ALDI development at Neats Court comprises around 600,000 sq ft of HQ office building and distribution centre, creating at least 250 jobs directly and many more indirectly due to the company's policy of sourcing local produce. The combined construction projects including the ALDI development, the site preparation works and new road will deliver some £40m of construction over the next few years.

Nick Harper, Head of Asset Management and Development at The Crown Estate said, "The completion of the new bridge onto the island and the Rushenden Link Road will open up the area and help Neats Court establish itself as a high quality business destination. The recent land acquisition means we are now in a position to offer new development sites and opportunities for investment in the future, working in partnership with SEEDA and enabling companies such as ALDI to bring new employment to the area."

Graham Hetherington, Managing Director for ALDI South East said, "The acquisition of this distribution site indicates ALDI's commitment to significant expansion of store numbers across the South East/London over the coming years".

Housing Association AmicusHorizon have also received planning permission for a £10.1m office building at Neats Court that will employ around 250 staff.

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Notes to editors

- **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.
- **ALDI**, is one of the world's biggest grocery retailers, with over 7,000 stores worldwide. The ALDI investment will create around 600,000 sq ft of employment space including a distribution centre and offices serving the network of stores across the South East.
- For further information, please contact Linda Stevens Tel: 01892 775 777 or Mobile 07774 164 837 on behalf of SEEDA.