

PRESS RELEASE

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‘High-speed’ effect draws brands to Ashford

McArthurGlen’s Ashford Designer Outlet is already feeling the effect of the new high-speed rail service from Ashford to London’s St Pancras, due to launch this December.

The new, fast train service will cut the journey time to and from the capital by 47 minutes to 37 minutes, placing Ashford as the nearest designer outlet to London.

Already sales at Ashford Designer Outlet, which is located adjacent to Ashford International train station, have increased 5.7 per cent over the past four months compared with last year. And the centre has seen the arrival of three new brands in the past three months, keen to take advantage of the high-speed train link.

New brands to open at the centre include sailing and country sports clothing brand Musto, US footwear brand Skechers and women’s fashion label Phase Eight.

Carl Studholme, Retail General Manager, at Musto, explains why the brand was attracted to Ashford: “This is our second McArthurGlen location in the UK following our opening in Swindon. Ashford provides a great combination of factors: a strong catchment area, the quality of the outlet itself and, of course, excellent transport links. Those factors will certainly help to attract the discerning shoppers who love the Musto label.”

Ashford Designer Outlet, designed by Sir Richard Rogers and opened in 2000, has more than 80 stores. The offer includes fashion, homeware, jewellery, footwear, sportswear and electrical goods, all with savings of up to 60%. The centre has in its catchment area some of the region’s key towns and tourist locations, including Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells and Kent’s most popular attraction, Canterbury.

David Maddison, Ashford Designer Outlet Centre Manager, explains: “The new fast train link will not only make it easier for people to travel to Ashford from London, but it will also enable Ashford to grow as an important location in itself, whether for work or residence, given its greater proximity to London in terms of travelling time.”

The centre has also been benefiting from the weak pound compared with the euro, with the added advantage of Ashford being a key stop on the Eurostar rail routes. Mr Maddison continues: “We have been seeing a growing number of visitors from mainland Europe, especially Dutch, French and Belgian shoppers as well as German. Our discounts provide a better deal than ever for shoppers from euro zone countries.”

And, given its proximity to the coast, Ashford Designer Outlet is set to be a beneficiary of UK nationals holidaying at home.

Mr Maddison adds: “McArthurGlen is constantly evolving its shopping experience to meet the needs of its visitors. At Ashford we are certainly attracting an increasingly cosmopolitan and affluent mix of visitors, as well as an increase in the number of international and domestic tourists, and we are adapting our store mix accordingly.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS

McArthurGlen Group

Since introducing outlet retailing to Europe in 1995, McArthurGlen Group has become Europe’s leading developer, owner and manager of designer outlet villages. Its current portfolio of 17 architecturally unique designer outlet villages across the UK and Continental Europe comprises more than 400,000 sq m of high-quality retail space, housing over 750 premium brands in more than 1,800 stores. Visited annually by nearly 70 million people, the portfolio generated over €2 billion in retail sales in 2008. The Group currently has five new designer outlet villages in development in 2009, in Berlin, Salzburg, Naples, Athens and Hamburg, which will add an additional 115,000 sq m of new retail space.

In the UK, McArthurGlen Designer Outlets operates seven villages: Cheshire Oaks Designer Outlet (near Chester), which is the UK’s largest; Ashford Designer Outlet (London); Bridgend Designer Outlet (Cardiff); East Midlands Designer Outlet (Nottingham); Livingston Designer Outlet (Edinburgh); Swindon Designer Outlet; and York Designer Outlet.