



**BS Handling Systems**  
Warehouse, storage & conveyor solutions

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**Noatum Logistics UK partners**

**with BS Handling Systems**

**for new DC**



BS Handling Systems has designed and installed a complete materials handling and storage solution at 3PL Noatum Logistics' latest 378,000 sq. ft. UK distribution centre (DC) located in Medway, Kent.



The £3.5 million turnkey package includes racking for flat-pack, a goods-in monorail system for hanging garments (GOH) with elevators up through four mezzanine floors along with tote and goods-in conveyors with booms for flat-pack boxes.

There is pick-to-light on the ground floor for eCommerce fulfilment and a goods-returned conveyor system. The solution also includes packing benches, goods lifts, rack labelling and a new warehouse management system (WMS) supplied in conjunction with partner IDC.

"This was a very important project for us," explains Steve Hicks, managing director contract logistics at Noatum Logistics UK. He continues, "It has been almost five years in the planning; in 2019 we secured a suitable green-field site for this design and build project, breaking ground in 2020. A huge amount of work went into ensuring the project would be a success and this all started with assembling the right team of partners.

"To guide us through the process we employed the Supply Chain Consultancy Group who drew up a list of 12 potential suppliers. In round one of the process, we appointed a panel of seven stakeholders to evaluate the supplier submissions. This took about three months during which time the panel reduced the number of potential partners to three.

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Managing Director Contract  
Logistics, Noatum Logistics UK



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**Steve Hicks,**  
Managing Director Contract Logistics,  
Noatum Logistics UK



“The selected companies were then given more details for round two. From here the panel selected two companies who were given a comprehensive brief; they then presented their final solutions.

“The panel's decision to appoint BS Handling Systems was unanimous (7-0); a winning margin which in itself speaks volumes about their solution. It was crystal clear that BS Handling totally understood the brief along with the KPIs we wanted to achieve. The solution they proposed was proven, a fact that was underlined when we visited a few other sites where BS Handling also completed multimillion-pound projects.”

### **A complex site with a fluid design spec**

The Noatum DC building is 20 metres high and has a footprint of 150,000 sq. ft. The four mezzanine floors above the ground level are an integral part of the building structure and account for an additional 228,000 sq. ft. A great deal of time and effort was invested in the design phase of the project to ensure that the facility would meet the differing needs of Noatum's customers – the site will handle the retail, wholesale, eCommerce and eCommerce returns for at least five customers.

To accommodate the varying requirements BS Handling Systems has installed a monorail system to transport GOH from goods-in up through all the mezzanine floors. For flat-pack boxes it supplied a conveyor system whilst for oversize items three goods lifts were included in the package.

Large projects like this tend to evolve as the design and installation process unfolds. Consequently, it's not unusual for plans to change on a regular basis and it is vitally important that all parties are able to remain flexible and respond accordingly.

Steve Hicks again, “Because of our different customers' needs, Phil and Stephen (the project managers for BS Handling Systems), had to cope with a lot of adjustments on the fly, and I must say they were excellent at taking hits on the chin and calmly working out solutions.

“Their professional yet friendly approach and positive attitude helped to build the excellent relationship we have with them. Indeed, the entire BS Handling team are very customer focused and throughout the project they made sure that each part of the installation was completed on time and to specification.”

### **The challenge of moving to a new DC**

“Moving into a new DC has its challenges. We transitioned from our traditional manual pick and pack operation at our old Rochester site over several weekends. Eventually, this meant that our 100 or so staff finished on Friday operating with the old methodology and came in on Monday morning to our new semi-automated Medway facility with a new warehouse management system.

“That they were able to quickly get to grips with the new way of working is testament to the design and solutions that BS Handling Systems created for this site. The systems simply worked from the get-go. Yes, of course there were teething problems; it would be a miracle if, on a site this size, there weren't any. Overall, however, it has been an extremely smooth transition and we are looking forward to adding more automation in the future.

“Not surprisingly, with so many specific wants and needs from our multiple customers, one of the most challenging aspects has been the integration of the new WMS. It's not been easy to keep everyone happy but, BS Handling Systems' software partner IDC, continues to work closely with us as we refine the system to ensure we meet all our customers' requirements.”





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## Looking towards the future

"This new facility has already attracted new customers to the Noatum portfolio and Phase Eight, one of our original clients, is delighted with the operational benefits this more automated site has delivered.

"There was a brief period when we'd just started work on the site and the pandemic struck, we wondered if we'd made the right call. Thank goodness we did though, because with the boom in eCommerce, it would have been impossible for us to handle the additional work we have won over the last couple of years.

"There is no doubt in my mind that BS Handling Systems has played a major part in the success of this new DC. To care for us now and in the future, we have invested in an ongoing maintenance and support package with them. This gives us real peace of mind with access to a 24/7 helpline with a guaranteed call back time within half an hour.

"If an issue can't be sorted remotely, BS Handling will be onsite within 24 hours to remedy the fault. They also hold a stock of critical spare parts here at the DC to minimise any disruption to business," concludes Hicks.

## BS Handling Systems

Established in 2009, BS Handling Systems is a provider of warehouse, storage and conveyor solutions across a broad cross-section of industries. Our first principle of business is customer satisfaction and peace of mind. Based in Leicester and drawing on 100 years' experience in the materials handling industry, we offer a unique competence in delivering bespoke systems and solutions.



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