

From: **Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate**

To: **Paul King, Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration**

Subject: **Reallocation of Getting Building Funding**

Non- Key decision 25/00074

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Electoral Division:

- Geoffrey Samme, Maidstone Northeast division
- Spencer Dixon, Maidstone Rural North division

Summary:

This paper sets out a need to reallocate £300,000 of Getting Building Fund money to the Bearsted Road Project from the Maidstone Business Suite Phase 2 project due to unforeseen delays with the latter.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration is asked to:

1. AGREE to reallocate the Getting Building Funding (GBF), originally awarded to Maidstone Business Suite Phase 2, to the A249 Bearsted Road Project.
2. DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth & Communities, to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision as shown at Appendix A.

1. Background

- 1.1 Getting Building Funding (GBF) was announced by the Government in June 2020. The funding was part of the then Government's plan to deliver upgrades to local infrastructure, boost skills, and help fuel an economic recovery by investing in shovel-ready housing and infrastructure projects, creating jobs and supporting economic recovery during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.2 The previous Government decided that the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) would allocate the funding with their approval. In total, the Government provided £85m of GBF to SELEP in 2020.
- 1.3 In summer 2023, SELEP announced that there was £2.05m of unallocated GBF available to bid for. Projects had to be shovel-ready capital projects which would deliver in 12 months. Business cases for Maidstone Business Suite Phase 2 and the A249 Bearsted Road Project were amongst those submitted for consideration.

- 1.4 SELEP Accountability Board met and considered the business cases submitted from across their area (Essex through to East Sussex).
- 1.5 On 12 January 2024, the SELEP Accountability Board agreed to “the award of £300,000 GBF to Kent County Council for the Maidstone Business Suite Phase 2 project which has been assessed as offering High value for money with a Medium/High certainty of achieving this, subject to receipt of Government approval of project inclusion within the GBF programme, and agree that the GBF funding can be retained against the project for a maximum period of 12 months to 31 January 2025.”
- 1.6 The GBF had to be spent in accordance with the business case, which is available here: **Maidstone-Business-Suite-Phase-2.pdf**
- 1.7 The A249 Bearsted Road project was not awarded funding, but was placed on SELEP’s reserve list of projects, were more GBF to become available.

2. Project Progress

- 2.1 Regular monitoring of the GBF programme is now undertaken by KCC which has become the accountable body for the SELEP legacy capital programmes following the closure of SELEP.
- 2.2 In late 2024, the project promoter requested a project extension to 31 July 2025 which was agreed by Central Government. However, due to unforeseen delays beyond the control of the project promoter, this milestone was not able to be met.
- 2.3 Consequently, deliverability concerns and project risks were discussed by senior KCC officers (from GET and Finance Departments). It was recommended that the GBF funding be re-allocated to the A249 Bearsted Project, a project on SELEP’s original reserve list.
- 2.4 The A249 Bearsted Road project commenced in August 2025 for a period of up to 15 months, ensuring prompt spend of the grant funding. It also aligns with the original aims of the GBF, as it will unlock development at the Kent Medical Campus Enterprise Zone. The site is restricted to 75% build out without improved highway capacity (from the Bearsted Road scheme and M20 Junction 7). This is a key employment site for the county and will create 3,700 highly skilled jobs, including specialised research and development – an area key to boosting productivity. The reallocation of funding will also continue to benefit businesses and communities in the original intended borough.

3. Options

- 3.1 If Kent County Council were to choose to not reallocate the funding to a project on SELEP’s original reserve project list, the GBF would either
 - (i) be retained for the Maidstone Business Suite Phase 2 project until such time as it could be delivered (currently not known); or
 - (ii) returned to central government.

4. Alignment to KCC Strategies:

- 4.1 **Framing Kent's Future 2022-2026** - The award of GBF to Kent-based projects supports KCC achieve its Levelling up Kent, Infrastructure for communities, and Environmental step change key priorities.
- 4.2 **Securing Kent's Future** - The recommendation is compliant with the Strategic Statement in the context of the significant financial challenges that the Council is facing. The A249 Bearsted Road Project is managed by KCC. The reallocation of funding towards this project will reduce potential cost pressures on KCC
- 4.3 **Kent & Medway Economic Framework** - supporting the conditions for growth

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The reallocation of GBF to the A249 Bearsted Road scheme will enable scheme delivery to continue as planned and provide £300,000 towards the £10.8m construction contract. The use of the funding for this project will avoid the money being returned to central government.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The award report for the A249 construction contract was signed in July 2025; and the completion of the contracts is imminent with construction commencing on 18th August 2025.

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1 The completion of the A249 Bearsted Road project will make travel in Maidstone better for all groups of the population, reducing journey times and delays for residents including those with protected characteristics.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 Re-allocating GBF funding to the Bearsted Road project retains money for investment in the county which will contribute to economic growth and bring about numerous benefits for the local area.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 The Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration is asked to:
 - 1. AGREE to reallocate the Getting Building Funding (GBF), originally awarded to Maidstone Business Suite Phase 2, to the A249 Bearsted Road Project.
 - 2.. DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth & Communities, to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into

required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision as shown at Appendix A.

10. Appendices

Appendix A – Record of Decision
Equality Impact Assessment

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