

29th May, 1961.

Mr P. Bowles

C1220

NI/GP/61/29

11/2a

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Housing Requirements

Covering note by the Secretary

I enclose a paper seeking approval to proposals for overcoming the housing shortage which is almost certain to arise during the period October 1961 to March 1962.

The specific requests, detailed at the end of the paper, are for:-

- (a) Covering approval for an increase in the building scheme at Didcot from 24 to 31 houses (This proposal has already been sent to the AEA for submission to the Treasury).
- (b) Approval to purchase a block of 6 flats from Abingdon Borough Council at valuation.
- (c) Approval to purchase 12 further houses from speculative builders at a total cost not exceeding £42,000.

If we are to secure houses and flats for occupation during this period it will be necessary to enter into contracts before the end of June. The matter is, therefore, very urgent. I shall be very grateful if members will say whether they are prepared to deal with these proposals by correspondence. If so, and if there are no objections, I will ask the Chairman if he will approve the proposals on behalf of the Committee.

Rutherford High Energy Laboratory,
Harwell.

Circulation: To Members of the G.P.C. and
To Members of the Governing Board for information.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Housing Requirements

Note by Chairman of the Rutherford Laboratory Housing Committee

1. This paper reviews the current position regarding the provision of houses for Rutherford Laboratory staff and seeks approval for proposals to deal with the shortage of houses which will arise during the period October 1961 to March 1962.
2. In February 1961, the General Purposes Committee gave consideration to paper NI/GP/61/15 on Housing Requirements and approved a proposal to build 24 semi-detached houses at South Queensway, Didcot, subject to the inclusion of further details of size and cost in a case for financial approval to be submitted to the Treasury.
3. Subsequent discussions with officials of the County Planning Department indicated that the scheme we had in mind for the development of approximately 3.125 acres with 24 semi-detached houses was unacceptable. The road layout of the area is predetermined and in the opinion of the Planning Officials the scheme proposed would not fit in with the road layout nor would it fulfil minimum requirements for open space. The planning Department's view is that a natural division of the land available suggests the development of an area of approximately 4 acres. A scheme has, therefore, been prepared for the development of this area with 32 houses (11 pairs of semi-detached houses, a block of 5 terraced houses, and a block of 4 terraced houses.) The estimated total cost of the scheme is £120,000 and a detailed case has been referred to U.K.A.E.A., London for submission to the Treasury. Approval has already been given for the purchase of the land.
4. The owners of the land, the Wallingford Rural District Council, have agreed to sell the land to the National Institute, but consultations with the County Planning Department and the Local Authority on matters of detail have taken longer than was expected. It is unlikely that it will be possible to place a contract for the development at South Queensway, Didcot before September. It cannot be expected, therefore, that the first of these houses will become available before March 1962.
5. Housing requirements are kept under constant review. By the end of September this year all of the 26 houses authorised to be purchased (21 from speculative builders, 4 from the Abingdon Borough Council and 1 from A.W.R.E.) will be completed, allocated and occupied. They will provide houses for all applicants who joined the Rutherford Laboratory before the end of March. Undoubtedly, but for the decision to purchase houses from speculative builders, we should already be faced with a serious deterrent to recruitment.
6. Based on the experience of A.E.R.E. and our own more limited experience, the anticipated requirement is such that during the period September 1961 to March 1962, we expect to have to house about 35 to 40 staff if we maintain the present waiting period of 6 to 9 months. These figures take into account the maximum possible use of the Private House Purchase Assistance Scheme to reduce the demand for

Institute houses. Our current housing programme provides only 15 houses during this period, - all of them Abingdon Borough houses to be reserved by the Borough for tenants nominated by the Institute. It is apparent that, unless steps are taken now to acquire additional houses the present waiting period of 6 to 9 months will certainly have to be extended to 12 months or even longer. Furthermore, many of the staff to be recruited during the next six months will not accept or be attracted by council houses. This could have a most embarrassing effect on recruitment. The waiting period for a house is an important factor to many prospective recruits and it will not be possible to recruit the staff we need if we cannot offer a house within 6 to 9 months. Even this period is known to lead to hesitation in accepting offers. To maintain this waiting period we shall require about 20 to 25 houses or flats in addition to the 15 already assured from the Abingdon Borough.

7. It had been hoped to avoid further requests for permission to purchase from speculative builders, but such a course seems inevitable in view of the position now revealed. It is not proposed, however, that we should purchase the total number of houses which paragraph 6 above suggests will be required; the disadvantages of buying houses of speculative builder standards on scattered sites are acknowledged and it is recommended that only the minimum number of houses should be bought from speculative builders to ensure that the waiting period does not extend beyond 9 to 12 months. Where housing is found to be a prime consideration in the recruitment of "key" staff, priority of allocation may become necessary to reduce the waiting period. On this basis, it is proposed that the gap in housing availability which will arise between October 1961 and March 1962 should be bridged in the following ways:-
 - (a) by purchasing a block of 6 flats from the Abingdon Borough Council; and
 - (b) by purchasing 12 bungalows and houses from speculative builders.
8. Close liaison is maintained with Local Authorities regarding the Rutherford Laboratory's needs and the availability of housing. The Abingdon Borough Council have offered to consider selling to the Institute a block of 6 two-bedroomed flats at present under construction for the Council in West St. Helen Street, Abingdon. These flats are expected to be completed by early September. If approval is given to their purchase and the Abingdon Borough Council agree to sell, it is proposed that they should be used, in the first instance, to accommodate Rutherford Laboratory staff. They would, however, be intended for eventual use by University Visitors, for whom it is expected it will be necessary to provide approximately 24 houses or flats. Limited period tenancies can be arranged so that the flats may be made available in due course for University Visitors.

The flats would be sold to the Institute on the basis of a valuation by the District Valuer. The cost to the Institute, which would include an element for the Council's expenses, is likely to be about £3,600 per flat. This figure is rather high but the flats are being built to good standards and would be particularly suitable, by nature of their design and location, to the requirement for University Visitors and for our short term needs. It is recommended, therefore, that the District Valuer's valuation, which will be based on the actual contract price, should be accepted and the purchase authorised.
9. Because of the great demand in the area it will not be easy to find suitable houses conveniently located in groups and likely to be ready during the required period. For these reasons we cannot be too

fixed in ideas about type and price. However, all possible purchases are critically examined by the Housing Committee with the assistance of professional advice and prices quoted are subject to the District Valuer's confirmation. We expect to be able to purchase the 12 houses we need at a total cost not exceeding £42,000.

10. The provision for housing under the grant for 1961/62 is £140,000. It is not yet clear whether it will be possible to contain within this figure the expenditure including that for which approval is now sought, but if this should not be possible it is expected that savings can be found elsewhere to cover any over expenditure on housing.
11. If these proposals are accepted, it is hoped that it will not be necessary to recommend any further purchases from speculative builders. The proposals for building 31 houses at South Queensway, Didcot and 8 at the Vineyard, Abingdon (NI/GP/61/11) together with a scheme, at present being examined with other interested parties, for the building of approximately 80 to 100 houses at Peach Croft, Abingdon and the allocation of Council houses to nominated tenants by the Abingdon Borough Council will, if they are carried out, provide the houses necessary for staff and University Visitors.
12. The Committee is invited:-
 - (a) to give covering approval for the proposal to build 31 houses on a 4 acre site at South Queensway, Didcot at an estimated total cost of £120,000.
 - (b) to approve the purchase of a block of 6 two-bedroomed flats from the Abingdon Borough Council at District Valuer's valuation; and
 - (c) to approve the purchase of 12 houses from speculative builders at a total cost not exceeding £42,000.

.....