

2nd August, 1962.

NI/GP/62/25

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HOSTELS FOR UNIVERSITY VISITORS

Note by the Secretary

1. In 1958, the Institute accepted the need to provide hostel accommodation for University Visitors to the Rutherford Laboratory. It was agreed that the needs of such visitors called for a different type of hostel to that suitable for staff. Since the work they would be doing at the Rutherford Laboratory would be part of their University studies it was desirable that the residential arrangements should be similar to those at their universities. It was important to foster an academic atmosphere by the use of a suitable building with the provision of good public rooms as well as reasonable sleeping accommodation.
2. This need was fulfilled very satisfactorily in the arrangements made with the U.K.A.E.A. for the Institute to buy The Cosener's House, Abingdon, and for the A.E.R.E. to operate it on behalf of the Institute.
3. The Cosener's House has provided precisely the sort of residential facilities necessary for University Visitors; but the time is fast approaching when the accommodation there will be insufficient for the number of visitors we expect at the Laboratory.
4. It is important that when NIMROD is commissioned and University teams arrive to conduct experiments, we should be able to offer residential facilities comparable to those which the Universities have come to associate with the Rutherford Laboratory at The Cosener's House.
5. Property as suitable for our purpose as The Cosener's House does not often come on to the market in the sparsely populated area of the Rutherford Laboratory and it is fortunate that, at a time when the need for additional residential accommodation to supplement that at The Cosener's House is being impressed upon us, a house which could conveniently be adapted to suit our needs should be offered for sale at Chilton Village, one mile from the Laboratory.
6. Chilton House, a house of timber frame and brickwork construction is on two floors and has a superficial area of about 4,000 square feet. The present first floor accommodation consists of six bedrooms and a box room, but the house could be readily converted to provide sleeping accommodation for 12 guests (in 8 bedrooms) and a Warden or Manageress with ground floor public rooms appropriate to the needs of University Visitors.
7. A survey has shown that, although the house is shabby it is in good structural condition. There is very little woodworm activity normally found in a house of this type and there are no signs of dry rot.
8. It would be very useful to have residential accommodation suitable for University Visitors near to the Laboratory and experimental teams working irregular hours would find it most convenient to live at Chilton.

9. The property is on offer at £8,500, and it is estimated that it could be adapted to suit our requirements for a further £4,000. A similar sum would be necessary for furnishing the house to the appropriate standards and it is believed that the cost of the whole project would not exceed £17,000. This is not an unreasonable sum for good residential accommodation for twelve University Visitors. The need is clearly established and a suitable property is now available. If the opportunity to acquire it is missed, it may prove very difficult indeed to find an alternative. It would be unfortunate if, when the flow of visitors reaches its maximum, we do not have good residential accommodation to offer.
10. Although we do not wish to disturb the arrangement by which the Cosener's House is operated on our behalf by A.E.R.E. it would be more appropriate at the present stage of development for the Rutherford Laboratory itself to accept full responsibility for managing and operating any additional hostel.
11. The accommodation and other facilities would be comparable with those at the Cosener's House and it is proposed that charges should be similar. As far as can be foreseen there would probably be a net annual loss during a normal year amounting to about £3,500. This compares with a net annual loss at the Cosener's House of about £4,100 but it must be accepted that in a smaller hostel which will nevertheless require much the same staff, the loss will be proportionately higher.
12. The Committee is invited:
- (1) To approve the purchase of Chilton House and its adaptation as a hostel for University Visitors at a total cost not exceeding £17,000.
 - and (2) To accept an operational deficit on the proposed hostel estimated at £3,500.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Paper NI/GP/62/25: Hostels for University Visitors

I enclose a copy of comments, on Mr. Drake's memorandum of 7th August, 1962, which I prepared at the request of the Chairman.

J. M. Valentine
Assistant Secretary - N.I.R.N.S.

Rutherford High Energy Laboratory,
Harwell,
Didcot,
Berks.

17th August, 1962.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

COMMENTS ON MR. A. E. DRAKE'S MEMORANDUM OF 7TH AUGUST, 1962

ON PAPER NI/GP/62/25

1. The policy of providing a central laboratory for high energy physics to be used by all the universities in the country, is one which has many attractions, financial and otherwise. In order to ensure that such a laboratory is used to the best advantage a certain price must be paid in the provision of ancilliary services.
2. In our view, a subsidy in respect of suitable accommodation for university visitors is precisely the sort of additional expenditure which is to be expected.
3. In submitting our proposals we believed that the G.P.C. have always felt that particular care should be taken to provide good accommodation for university visitors and that it has been generally accepted that The Cosener's House does this. Our proposal is simply to extend the facilities at The Cosener's House to provide for the increasing number of university visitors.
4. It is true that the proposal envisages an operating loss of about £3 10s. 0d. per week per visitor. The nub of the problem is simply whether such a subsidy is justified in our giving the university visitor this type of accommodation. This is a matter of judgement and not solely of finance.
5. We do not believe that Mr. Drake's alternative proposal (of finding accommodation in Harwell in two or three year's time and meanwhile making do with lodgings or hotels) is acceptable on two counts. Firstly, to make sure that no difficulties over accommodation arise when Nimrod comes into operation next year, we must have more accommodation under our own control very soon. Secondly, with the example of The Cosener's House in mind, we do not believe that the type of accommodation suggested would be considered satisfactory by the G.P.C.
6. With regard to the comments on Lime Tree House, this assessment is more pessimistic than that of our own Civil Engineer whose view is that although the house is in a bad state, it is structurally sound and capable of conversion to provide similar accommodation to that available at The Cosener's House and proposed at Chilton House. Should Lime Tree House prove to be unusable after a more detailed examination we would abandon this part of the scheme.

J. M. Valentine
Assistant Secretary - N.I.R.N.S.

7th August, 1962

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Paper NI/GP/62/25: Hostels for University Visitors

Further to paragraph 3 of my Covering Note of the 2nd of August,
I now enclose financial comments by Mr. Drake on Paper NI/GP/62/25.

J. M. Valentine
Assistant Secretary, N.I.R.N.S.

Rutherford High Energy Laboratory,
Harwell,
Didcot,
Berks.

7th August, 1962

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

NI/GP/62/25

Financial Comments by Mr. A. E. Drake

This case poses a difficult problem because the university visitors to be accommodated in Chilton House, if charged the proposed £4-£5 weekly, would need an operating subsidy of about £3. 10. Od. per week each - this excluding the capital amortization and interest costs which up to now have been excluded from hostel charges. (The Authority are currently considering imposing a 10s. per week surcharge in Authority hostels for this factor, and this would of course increase the subsidy needed at Chilton House to £4.) Such a deficit would be very hard to justify on the normal basis of hostel subsidisation (which is considered within the Authority by reference to uneconomic features of operation and the like but not by reference to deliberate subsidisation to the individual so that he pays less than a proper share of actual costs).

Conceivably the case might be held to warrant reference to the Treasury, particularly in view of their recent insistence on charging economic house rents to University visitors. In any event it is incumbent on the Institute to make every effort to meet the need by more economical means.

The G.P.C. might consider whether this standard of accommodation is in fact really necessary for all the fifty university visitors which are envisaged as being in residence at the same time. Already the Institute have acquired Cosener's House on the basis that this affords, at some expense, a hostel of the right type for about half of the total number of visitors expected. Moreover, while it is understood that Harwell may not as yet be able to offer hostel places for the remainder, they might be able to help within two or three years, e.g. by finding accommodation in a wing of Ridgeway House. In all the circumstances I am prompted to suggest that strenuous efforts might be made to house these university visitors who cannot be accommodated in Cosener's House by improvisation, e.g. in lodgings or even in hotels, until such time as Harwell are in a position to accommodate them. Some inconvenience in this respect seems worthwhile as the price of avoiding a heavy subsidy and material capital expenditure to solve what may be only a short term problem.

Incidentally, we hear from Harwell that Lime Tree House, which we understand might eventually be adapted to supplement Chilton House, is in very poor order and approaching the stage of utter dilapidation; if this is so the proposition would seem a most doubtful one.