

## **BURNHAM FACES AN EXISTENTIAL CHALLENGE!**

The prospect of Burnham's secondary school site in Opendale Road being developed for housing has been voiced by Buckinghamshire Council and now is the time for Burnham's parents, prospective parents, grandparents and indeed the whole community to find its own voice and start to campaign for the re-opening of the secondary school and its future development.

The prospect of Burnham having a successful grammar school which has recently been completely rebuilt and expanded and yet continuing to have no non-selective secondary school for the great majority of its children poses a threat to Burnham's sense of community wellbeing.

To date, the small working group that has been campaigning to reopen Burnham's secondary school has focused its attention on Buckinghamshire Council (BC) but it has become increasingly apparent that BC hold little interest and awareness of issues that impact on Burnham. BC's first major strategic error from our perspective was to enable the multi academy trust E-Act to take over the management of Bourne End Academy when it's stewardship of Burnham Academy from 2012 to 2019 had ended with the school's closure. In the last month, when the working group has advised BC of the plans to build additional housing in Maidenhead, BC's response has been to advise that they would be prepared to expand Bourne End Academy to provide spaces for Burnham children.

BC have failed to appreciate that Burnham's community comprises of a hinterland to its west and also, more importantly, to its east in Slough and has a population that will support two secondary schools as was the case for fifty years as Burnham Grammar School opened in 1960 and Burnham Secondary School opened in 1969. We in Burnham are mindful of the likely impact of the Elizabeth Line on Slough, Burnham and Maidenhead schools and yet BC's present outlook is to build more houses on the Opendale Road site in order to realise a short term boost to its capital funds whilst leaving a legacy of insufficient school places in Burnham in the future. Such folly must be resisted and challenged in all quarters.

The working group over the last few months has, as outlined in its update in the previous edition of Round and About, been focusing on the benefits of maximising collaboration between the future two Burnham secondary schools. And especially should they both settle under the wing of the Beeches Learning and Development Trust who currently are responsible for the management of Burnham Grammar and Dorney Schools. Such a collaborative arrangement is already developing in Marlow between Sir William Borlase Grammar School and Great Marlow School and Great Marlow's performance more than matches that of other secondary schools in its locale. This collaborative effort has to take place with both schools being situated on either side of Marlow's town centre – how much more powerful could such a collaborative approach be in Burnham where both schools are located within half a mile of each other?

So what are the next steps? It looks very much to be the case that no further purpose is served by maintaining a dialogue with BC without a significant political campaign being

established to voice Burnham's concerns and ideas. Such a campaign must also reach our MP, the Department for Education, the Learning and Skills Council and other opinion formers that we can identify. There is a certain format that should be followed when participating in a campaign to ensure that each submission is counted separately and not conjoined. Further guidance and e-mail addresses are all included on the Burnham Parish Council Website – [www.burnhamparish.gov.uk](http://www.burnhamparish.gov.uk) – under the header titled Projects and scroll down to New School in Burnham.

SO – DO PLEASE E-MAIL YOUR CONCERNS AFTER FOLLOWING THE GUIDANCE ABOVE.

Viv Nicholas (March 2022)