

The Ebrington Arms, Winsham Road, Knowle, Braunton EX33 2LW – nomination as an Asset of Community Value (ACV)

Note: References to the “Act” are to the Localism Act 2011.

References to the “Regulations” are to the Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations 2012.

On **19 December 2025** a nomination was received under the provisions of the Regulations to list as a community asset the **The Ebrington Arms, Knowle, Braunton, EX33 2LW**. The nomination was in the name of **Knowle Community Group**.

Conclusion:

Based on the available evidence The Ebrington Arms, Winsham Road, Knowle, Braunton EX33 2LW be added to North Devon Council’s list of Assets of Community Value.

Consideration 1: Has the nomination been made by an appropriate body?

89(2)(b)(iii) of the Act provides for a voluntary or community body with a local connection to nominate land in a Local Authority’s area; this is expanded upon in regulation 5 (c) of the Regulations.

This criteria is therefore met.

Consideration 2: Is the nomination complete, including the necessary matters specified in para 6 of the Regulations?

Paragraph 6 requires a description of the land, information on the owners and occupiers, reasons for believing there is a community value, and evidence that nominator is eligible. This has all been provided and so the nomination is deemed valid. When submitted, the nomination submitted by Knowle Community Group did not include details of the 21 members of the unincorporated body together with their addresses and paragraph 4.4 had not been fully completed. Upon receipt of this information the nomination was then deemed as valid.

Consideration 3: Does the Ebrington Arms, Knowle, Winsham Road, Braunton, EX33 2LW qualify as being of “community value”?

s88(1) of the Act specifies that land is of community value “*if in the opinion of the authority*–

(a) an actual current use of the building or other land that is not an ancillary use furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the community; and

(b) it is realistic to think that there can continue to be” such use

Section 88(2) goes on to state that even if there is no current community use of the asset, for instance because the asset is currently closed, an asset might still be deemed to be of community value if the authority is of the opinion that

“(a) there is a time in the recent past when an actual use of the building or other land that was not an ancillary use furthered the social wellbeing or interests of the local community, and

(b) it is realistic to think that there is a time in the next five years when there could be non-ancillary use of the building That would further (whether or not in the same way as before) the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community”

Section 88(6) defines “social interests” as including cultural, recreational and sporting interests but there is no definition of social wellbeing or any definition that limits the breadth of the meaning of social interests. There is also no definition of what constitutes the “local community” but various appeals have given some guidance.

Background

Following the receipt of the valid nomination, an email was sent to the two Ward Members representing Braunton East, Braunton Parish Council and a letter was sent to the owner of the public house in accordance with the information provided on the nomination form. These requested any comments prior to the 12 February 2026. To date responses have been received from Councillor Bell (representing Braunton East) on 24 December 2025 in support of the nomination and from Braunton Parish Council on 29 January 2026 advising that it “would like to fully support Knowle Community Group’s nomination to list the Ebrington Arms, Knowle as an asset of community value”.

By way of background, the Ebrington Arms in Knowle is an 18th century village inn. It is located in Knowle. Knowle is a small village with Braunton being located approximately 1.4 miles away. Knowle is a parish of Braunton. It is located on the A361 between Ilfracombe and Barnstaple. The Ebrington Arms is owned by EI Group Plc. There are no other public houses located in Knowle. There is a small garage and post office known as Knowle Garage and Post Office which operates as a convenience store, fuel station and post office. The nearest village hall is Wraffton Village Hall which is located approximately 2 miles from Knowle.

New tenants had posted on Facebook on 4 December 2025 that they had taken over the running of the public house. They held an opening event in December 2025 and then closed for a short period from 12 January until 30 January 2026 to undertake refurbishment works.

In the nomination form, Knowle Community Group had advised that “that the pub is currently being marketed for sale and with so many pubs facing closure, our community group is concerned that Knowle’s only pub may be lost, and even if it were bought by a new landlord with good intentions, there is concern that the business model may still fail and we would be faced with another closure and cycle of uncertainty for years down the line. We would like the ability as a community organisation to bid for the asset in order to take it into community ownership, take control of producing and implementing a new business plan that has at its heart driving all the community and social benefit that the public has provided to date and much more”.

The nomination form also states that “the pub is the central social hub of Knowle Village where residents of all ages meet to keep alive the village’s sense of community cohesion and a sense of belonging and wellbeing. It has served this purpose for many, many years. It has also been used as the central hub from which to base and/or arrange multiple community orientated events and activities, such as the village fetes, street parties, sports events, live music and choral evenings, pub quizzes, local skittles league matches and charity events, to name but a few. It has also served as the polling station for local and government elections for a long time. This pub has been the unique cornerstone of our civic life for well over 100 years.”

There is some evidence of previous community events taking place at the Ebrington Arms as on a previous website (ebrington-arms.co.uk) that is still available in addition to providing food it refers to pool and darts, quiz nights, music nights and live entertainment. It also refers to a function room being available for all occasions. There is also a new website available (ebringtonarms-knowle.co.uk) that currently has limited information available.

Community Use

It is therefore necessary to consider whether the use of the is a non-ancillary use that furthers the social wellbeing or interests of the local community.

The nomination lists a number of community activities and events that have previously been held at the Ebrington Arms including village fetes, street parties, sports events, live music and choral evenings, pub quizzes, local skittles league matches and charity events

On the issue of whether the use is ancillary, after considering the uses referred to in the nomination I consider that many of the uses were part and parcel of the primary use as a public house.

It is therefore necessary to consider whether how the Ebrington Arms is used as a public house furthered the social wellbeing or interest of the local community.

As mentioned before, other than the definition of “social interests” in s88(2), there is no statutory definition of what furthers the social wellbeing or interests. It has been left to local authorities to determine this in the light of local circumstances. In the case of North Devon, the adopted policy states that:-

“A property that enhances the social interest and social wellbeing of the local community is one that in its absence would deprive the local community of a building or property which is essential to the special character of the local area and provides a place to meet and socialise, place to shop, recreational, sporting or cultural facility or a place used to provide a community service.

Neither is there a definition of what is meant by “local community”. It is difficult to put a clear meaning to this as it will differ depending on the nature of the area and the asset. Knowle however is rural in nature and so it is reasonable to take the view that the local community includes at least Braunton.

The nomination form states that “the community intends to consolidate and increase the frequency of the uses described. In addition, the following uses to further the social wellbeing and interests would be considered: Mother and baby groups, choir meetings, OAPs mornings and activities/bingo/films, other community group meeting place and round table”.

Taking the above into account, my view is that the use of the Ebrington Arms does further the social wellbeing and interests of the local community.

Realistic Prospect of Future Community Use

Having reached that conclusion, it is necessary to go on to consider whether s88(2)(b) is satisfied. In other words, is it realistic to think that there is a time in the next five years when the pub could be put to a non-ancillary use which furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community?

No response has been received from the owner of the Ebrington Arms, therefore there is no indication regarding the future of the business.

There have been various views expressed in appeal decisions as to what is meant by "realistic". What seems clear is that the issue of whether future community use is realistic or not does not depend solely on commercial viability. There are examples of community run public houses and the test is rather whether a future community use is not fanciable or unrealistic. In accordance with paragraph 7.3 of the Council's policy, the nominator was requested "to demonstrate a realistic prospect of continued or future use of the asset".

The nomination advises that "at a recent meeting of the Knowle Community Group, it became clear that there is significant and broad financial and practical support from within the community to feel confident of obtaining the capital commitments required to fund the acquisition. By seeking support from national organisations such as the Plunkett Foundation, who specialise in supporting community initiatives such as this, the Community Group feels it will additionally be able to obtain the support of long-term and short-term loan commitments, if necessary. It may also be prudent to raise funding commitments to establish a sinking fund for ongoing capex and refurbishment requirements which the community are supportive of. The Community Group has a number of members with experience of the various community initiatives that the pub has already supported, such that we will be able to align the business plan with the broader community benefit. The strategy and commitments proposed, coupled with a carefully considered and robust business plan, make us confident we will achieve the right financial and business model to make it a viable and sustainable undertaking."

It is noted in addition that the pub remains active, is being refurbished, has new tenants and it is apparent that there is no indication that the Ebrington Arms will not continue to be used as a public house, with ongoing community use as set out above for the foreseeable future, albeit the interest by the community as set out above is of material consideration should this not be the case.

As such, it is considered that the Ebrington Arms, Knowle, does further the social wellbeing or social interests of the area and that there is a realistic prospect of future community use and therefore should be included in the list of Assets of Community Value.

Decision

The Decision is therefore that The Ebrington Arms, Knowle, Braunton, EX33 2LW should be added to the list of Community Assets held by the Council.

Simon Fuller,
Senior Solicitor
13 February 2026