

2018 WALK 9 Breachwood Green and countryside east of Luton

Throughout 2018, our walk each month will feature the corresponding site in our "Countryside Under Threat" calendar. Our aim is to highlight these sites and raise their profile in aid of local campaigns to prevent their inappropriate development.



Our September walk of just under 6 miles explores Green Belt countryside in North Hertfordshire District to the east of Luton. There is a short optional detour into the area proposed in the emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan for a development of 2,100 houses. Agricultural land would be lost and precious urban fringe countryside, so important for health and well-being, would disappear (see photo left).

The walk described starts and finishes in Breachwood Green, goes north-east through King's Walden to reach Ley Green, then heads south-west to Tea Green, on the edge of the area proposed for housing. There are wide ranging views in many places. Apart from two gentle climbs the route is mainly level. A few short stretches of the walk run along country lanes. There are no stiles. Although the walk is close to Luton Airport, don't let this put you off, as for much of the route you should be barely aware of aircraft noise. There are pubs in Breachwood Green, Tea Green and Darleyhall, and a further one close to the route at Ley Green.

Parking The walk starts and finishes at point A on the map, in Breachwood Green, just over a mile to the east of the most easterly part of Luton, and just inside Hertfordshire. Satnav or a phone navigation app will be useful to reach here. Park on the roadside to the north of the Red Lion pub (SG4 8NU) in the main street - Chapel Road. The walk returns to Breachwood Green along Colemans Road.

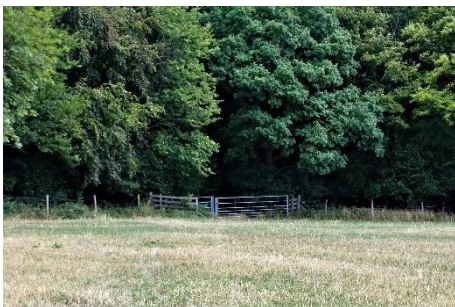


There is a shorter option of just over 4 miles which does not visit Tea Green or the proposed housing area.

Breachwood Green And Countryside East Of Luton - 5.95 miles



To begin the walk, head northwards along Chapel Road (the main street in Breachwood Green). Approximately 45 yards past the house called 'The Pheasantry' on the left, turn right across the road, go through the kissing gate (see photo right) and head across the field to the far wood. The map shows the footpath making a zig-zag route across the field, but in practice head very slightly right of straight across until you see the field gate and kissing gate into the wood (see photo below left).



Go into the wood and along the path which runs slightly downhill. From the far edge of the wood there is a lovely view of rolling countryside in the upper reaches of the river Mimram valley (see photo right).



Follow the path down to the road with the fence to your right (see photo left). Cross the road, go through the gap in the hedge opposite and the kissing gate, then go up the hill, slightly right of straight on. Head for the kissing gate (see photo right) into the wood.



In the wood go left almost immediately at the T-junction before the iron fence. Follow the path to the field gate (see photo right) to reach parkland with pasture and scattered trees. Keep to the right hand side of the parkland, with the wood to your right. Go downhill, passing mature oak trees: you will see the tower of King's Walden church ahead and the garden of King's Walden Bury to the right.



Leave the parkland through the gate by the brick and black-and-white house (see photo left), turn right onto the road and go uphill, into the tiny village of King's Walden. Set in a wall opposite the churchyard is a George V letterbox, said to be one of only two left in the county (see photo right).



King's Walden is the original village, while Breachwood Green in the same parish is the larger settlement. You may wish to visit St Mary's Church (see photo left), although on the day I visited it was locked. There are 13th century features inside, although much of the church dates from the 15th century with substantial 19th century restoration. On the north-east side the brick vestry is 17th century. From the churchyard you can glimpse the modern Georgian style house of King's Walden Bury, built in the early 1970s

to replace a Victorian building, itself a replacement for an Elizabethan house.



From the church keep ahead through the village. After passing 'The Lodge' on the right, turn left off the road onto the public footpath signposted to Tache Wood (see photo left). Keep the hedge to the left and head for the wood ahead. The path turns right to run along the front edge of the wood, then turns left onto a track (see photo right). Keep going along the track, with the wood on your right and a field to the left.



Pass a barn on the right then go ahead through a gap in the hedge. Keep following the path as it turns to the right around an overgrown hedge, and follow it towards the house ahead. At the road turn right then immediately left, along the road (see photo right) signposted to Hitchin and Preston, with a close boarded fence on the left and a tiny green on the right. This is Ley Green.



From the early 13th century place names containing the suffix 'Green' began to be established throughout Hertfordshire. Many are thought to indicate the establishment of a new 'free' farmstead, created out of the often wooded common grazing areas or 'waste', especially on the higher land between the river valleys. They were perhaps the result of population growth. At many

locations small greens remain, still common land. 'End' names are thought to have originated in a similar way, although mostly date from after 1500. Many are found towards the edges of parishes.

Just past the entrance to Ley Green House take the footpath on the left. Go through the kissing gate (see photo right) and cross the field passing a large oak tree. Go through the next field to the next gate. In the next field pass to the right of two oaks and to the right of a barn to reach a kissing gate in the right hand corner of the field.



Take the path to the left of the hedge ahead, heading for Kingswell End (see photo left). At the far end of the field the path bends to the right through the hedge. Almost immediately turn left to go through the archway of trees across the path, much of it holly (see photo right).



The path runs slightly uphill. At the road, turn left then shortly afterwards turn right onto the footpath signposted to 'Lilley Bottom Road 1/2'.



The path crosses the field on a left diagonal towards the line of wires (see photo left). At the far side bear right to go through the gap in the hedge by the waymark post (see photo above right).



Bear slightly right across the next field to go around the corner of the hedge: there is a fine view ahead (see photo left). At the next field boundary go to the left through the gap in the hedge (see photo right) and down the hill with the hedge to your right.



At the foot of the field turn right keeping the young planted trees to the left (see photo left), then turn left to go down the field edge to the road. Cross over to take the footpath almost opposite, which goes to the right of the hedge and slightly uphill (see photo right).





Follow the path along the field edge as it turns left and then right, to reach a field gate, with a pedestrian gate on the left (see photo left). Go through the pedestrian gate and walk around the base of the bank towards the former windmill visible on the hilltop ahead. There is a fine view



from higher up the slope back across the Lilley Bottom Road to King's Walden (see photo above right).

A windmill was recorded in King's Walden parish in 1329, although not necessarily on the present site. The mill here (see photo right) was built in 1860 but ceased working in 1900 and by 1930 it had lost its sails. It is a brick-built circular five storey tower mill, now partly clad in weatherboarding making it appear like a smock mill. In tower and smock mills only the top rotated to catch the wind. After being listed as a Grade II building in 1978 the mill was made weather tight, then later converted into a house, without any additional structures added.



If you wish to return directly to Breachwood Green from here (4 mile route) keep on the path with the mill above and to your right. Go though the gate (see photo right) to follow the track to reach The Heath. At the first houses keep left on Windmill Road, then go straight ahead at the next three road junctions to reach Breachwood Green.



To stay on the longer route, turn right up the steps to a kissing gate (see photo left) to the right of the mill, then cross the track and take further steps ahead uphill (see photo right). The path runs alongside an area of woodland, then goes straight ahead uphill to trees on the skyline.



At the next waymark post go right then almost immediately left, crossing another field to reach the T-junction of paths: turn right here and head for the water tower. Luton Airport is now in sight from this high vantage point. You can also see your last views towards the rolling hills to the north and north-west from here. The path turns left then right as you approach Tea Green. The official route of the footpath runs between the White Horse pub and the water tower, but this is overgrown, so walk through the pub car park to reach the road.

Tea Green (see photo right) is a tiny settlement which will be on the edge of the proposed area of 2,100 houses. From the far side of the green you can look out over part of the area proposed for housing, and perhaps imagine the impact it will have on this rural area.

To continue the walk, go along the road signposted to Wandon End and Luton, with the pub behind and the row of houses to the left.



Walk along the road for approximately ¼ mile, reaching a fork in the road and a footpath to the right. A walk along the footpath will give another view of part of the area proposed for housing (see photo right). Retrace your steps to continue the walk.



Take the left fork of the road signposted to Breachwood Green and Darley Hall. Walk for another ¼ mile then take the footpath to the left just before the farm buildings in Wandon End, which passes a metal barrier.



The path goes across the field to a wood ahead (see photo left). From here there are more countryside views (see photo right).



From alongside the wood there is a final view behind of the proposed housing area (see photo right: the area of paler land with the long woodland edge behind).



Follow the path along the front edge of the wood, with the field to the right, to reach the road at Darleyhall adjacent to The Fox pub. Turn left and walk up the road to reach the footpath signpost on the right, just beyond the last house.

The path heads across a field to reach Breachwood Green (see photo right). At the far side of the field, turn right and walk along the road to return to Breachwood Green via Colemans Road.



At the southern end of Breachwood Green, on Chapel Road, the Baptist Chapel (see photo right), is of interest. Built in 1904 it has two front turrets embellished with 'wide cornices and prominent ironmongery', as described by Pevsner. Inside is a pulpit partly dating from 1658 from which John Bunyan is said to have preached.



If you have enjoyed this walk, please consider supporting CPRE Hertfordshire in our efforts to protect and celebrate the Hertfordshire countryside for everyone to enjoy. Our website www.cpreherts.org.uk contains more information about our work and how you can donate and perhaps volunteer.

This route was last walked by CPRE in August 2018.

Note: all walkers do so at their own risk. Suitable footwear and clothing are recommended.

CPRE Hertfordshire is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered charity no. 1162419, address: 31a Church Street, Welwyn, AL6 9LW, tel: 01438 717587.

We are the county branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England.