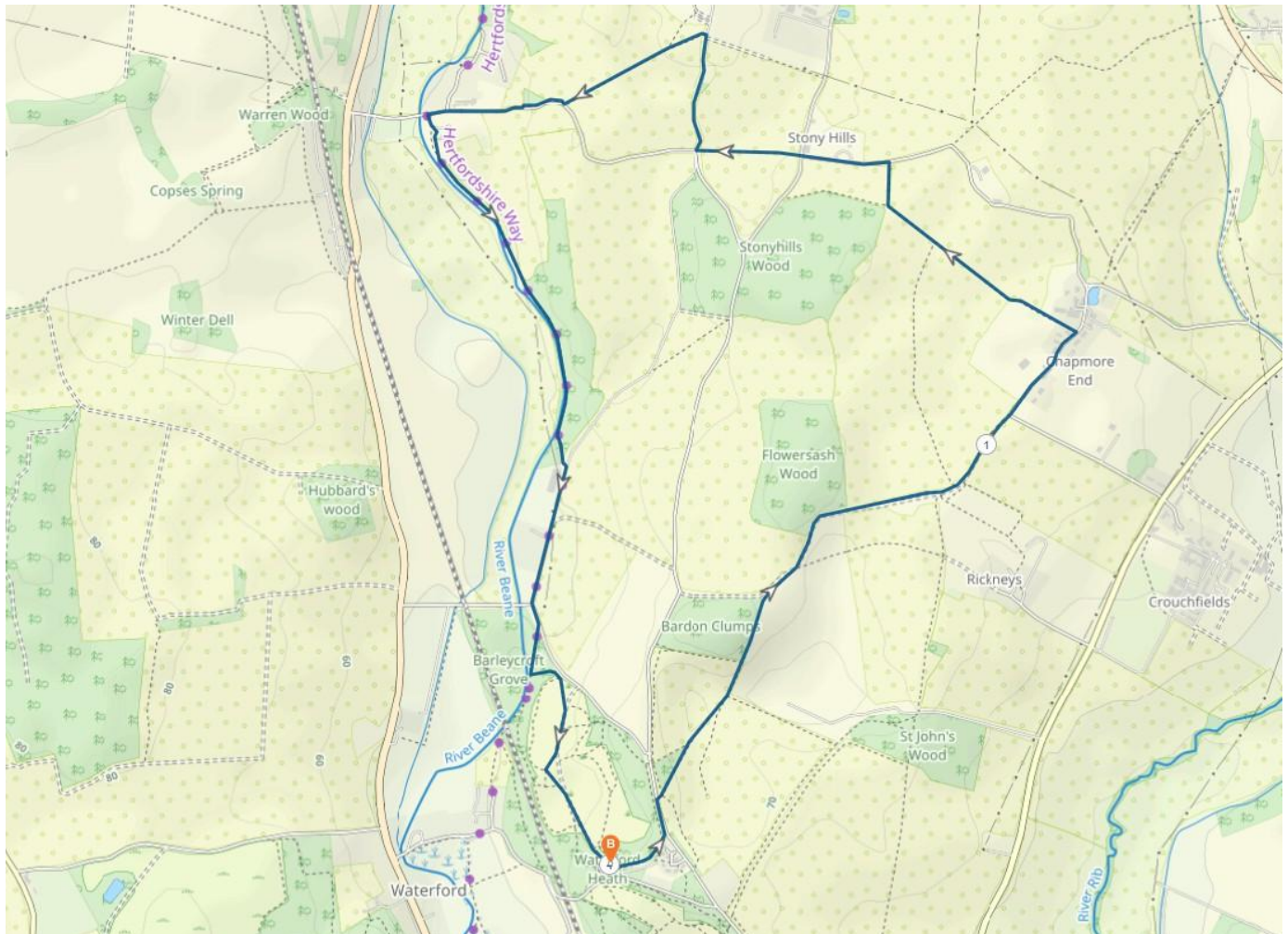




The countryside charity
Hertfordshire

Waterford Heath and Stapleford



This is a 4 mile circular walk on quiet rural paths in East Hertfordshire, just north of Hertford. The route includes Waterford Heath Nature Reserve, passes through the small communities of Chapmore End and Stapleford, and runs alongside the River Beane.

Distance: 4 miles / 6.4 km

Ascent: 226 feet / 69 metres

Duration: 1 ½ - 2 hours

Difficulty: Easy, with some steps

Start / finish: the car park at Waterford Heath Nature Reserve, which is on Vicarage Lane just east of the railway line. (What3Words: counts.dips.lift)

Refreshments: the Woodman pub, Chapmore End

The walk starts and finishes at the Waterford Heath Nature Reserve, which is well worth taking some time to explore. The Nature Reserve is managed by Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust and their website describes the site: “A former sand and gravel quarry, this wonderfully varied reserve has a range of habitats. Visitors have a chance to see birds of prey hunting over the open ground of the North Heath, dragonflies and Kingfishers by the River Beane and Woodpeckers and Treecreepers among the large Oak, Ash and Hazel trees in Great Mole Wood. In the autumn and winter Fieldfares and Redwings are regular visitors.”

From the Waterford Heath Nature Reserve car park on Vicarage Lane, head to the eastern corner of the car park. The start of the footpath is on the right hand side as you enter the car park track off of Vicarage Lane.



Pass alongside the boundary fence of a small housing development on your right.

Continue until the horse step-over access on the right. Turn right over this step-over access to leave the nature reserve and cross the Sacombe Road.



Turn left along the road, then almost immediately right on Public Bridleway 6 signposted to “Chapmore End 1”.



Continue straight as the bridleway merges into a Restricted Byway.

Ignore the footpath to the right and continue straight on the bridleway up the incline and onwards.

The path bends left and immediately right on to a wider track.



At a junction of paths bear left on the wide track signposted “Public Byway 2” and continue to reach the tarmac road leading to Chapmore End.

Bear left on to this road and walk in to the village until you reach a footpath on the left just before The Woodman pub



Turn left onto the footpath signposted “Public Footpath 9, Stonyhills 760 yds”, walk alongside a cottage on your left, and out into open fields.



When you reach woodland on your left, turn right just in front of a bench.

Continue to reach a kissing gate at a lane, and turn left onto the lane.



Walk along the lane to the T-junction and go straight across to join signposted “Public Footpath 015, Church Lane 280 yds”.

Continue on the path through the field, enjoying the long views to the west.



Upon reaching the other side of the field turn right on to the track.

Do not be put off by the sign that reads “Private Road to Southend Farm, Authorised Access only” because this track is a public right of way and you may walk along it.



Continue until you can turn left on to a footpath, through a kissing gate.

Then follow the waymarks diagonally left (south west) across the field until you reach Church Lane.



Go through the kissing gate and turn right to take a permissive path between hedges that avoids having to walk on the road around a corner with limited visibility.

The path then rejoins the road and continues into Stapleford.



Turn left onto “Public Footpath 3” at the entrance to the church of St. Mary the Virgin.

The path goes to the right across the grass before you reach the church.



Follow this delightful section of the path alongside one of the world’s rarest habitats - the chalk stream River Beane - for over 1 km.

Stapleford Parish Council says that grey herons, little egrets, little grebes and kingfishers may be seen along the riverside here.



The path leaves the riverside up a short incline, and at the junction with a track turn right.

Continue along the track that, after some gates, joins a country lane to continue onwards to a T-junction on a bend with Bullsmill Lane.

Turn left onto the lane, and then shortly turn right onto signposted “Public Footpath 2, Waterford 600 yds”.



Soon you will reach a path junction with steps on the left. Go up these steps to re-enter Waterford Heath.

Go through the gate at the top and soon bear right onto a paved quarry road.



Continue on the paved road for 125 m then turn right on the path up the incline to visit the artwork by sculptor Andrew McKeown titled “Breaking the Mould”.



The artist’s website describes the sculpture as follows: “Breaking the Mould takes the form of a giant seed, which has emerged, from an industrial mould. The mould is old and has been broken. The sculpture represents new life and growth emerging from industrial decline.” This is 1 of 21 similar sculptures that celebrates and marks the Changing Places programme which transformed 1,000 hectares of post-industrial derelict land across the UK into parks and open spaces.

At the artwork turn left and downhill to a junction of paths, then keep straight ahead to follow the wide concrete track uphill back to the car park.



This route last walked by CPRE in September 2025.

If you have enjoyed this walk, please consider supporting CPRE Hertfordshire in our efforts to protect and promote the Hertfordshire countryside for everyone. For more information on our work, or to sign up for our newsletter, make a donation, or volunteer with us, please visit www.cpreherts.org.uk

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

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