



## Bengeo Trails 4: Around Hartham Common, Cowbridge and Port Hill with the Neighbourhood Plan

This trail takes walkers through Hartham Common and explains how the [Bengeo Neighbourhood Area Plan](#) policies are put into practice when planning applications impact community facilities.

Leaving Hartham Common, the route returns to the starting point via nearby streets, passing notable Listed Buildings along the way. Neighbourhood Plan policies have been put into practice on planning proposals for two of them.

This trail was produced by the [Love Bengeo Community Group](#). The planning responses are on the Love Bengeo Community Group [website](#).

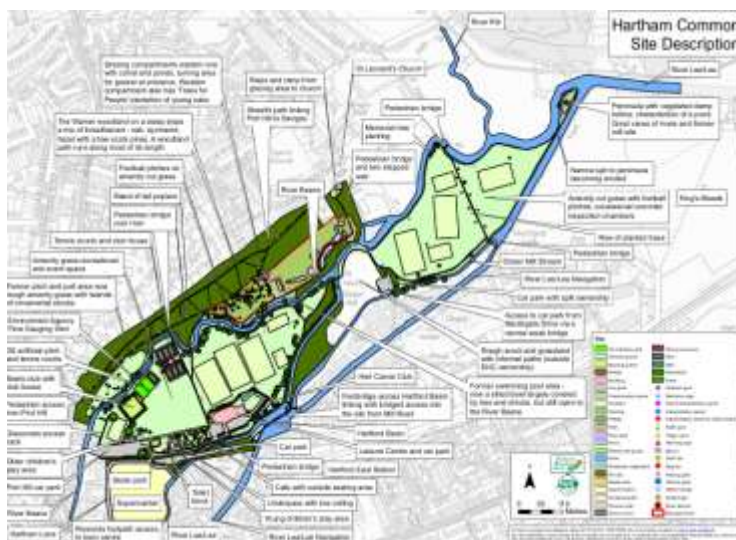


**Starts and ends:** Gates to The Warren and Hartham Common near the bottom of Port Hill SG14 3EP

**Distance:** 1.6m/2.7km

**Conditions:** Footpaths and pavements, with a short uphill at the end of the trail

Starting at the ornate gates at the entrance to The Warren and Hartham Common, go through the gates and follow Public Footpath 86, passing the River Beane (a rare chalk stream) and the tennis courts on your right. Ignoring the first footbridge on your right, take the next sharp right, by the Hartham Common interpretation panel, and cross over the River Beane via the second footbridge, into Hartham Common.



The map, left, is reproduced from the [Hartham Common Greenspace Action Plan \(GAP\)](#), a map-based management plan for Hartham Common.

In 2018 and 2024, the Love Bengeo Community Group supported proposals in the Plan to increase walking and cycling routes linking Hertford with Hartham and the wider countryside. There are some circular walks in this [Beyond Hartham Common leaflet](#).

Management of The Warren, and the upgrading of the younger children's play areas on the Common were also supported by the Love Bengeo Community Group, and recommendations to increase provision for teenagers were made.

Interpretation panels, with information about Hartham Common, its rivers, and its wildlife, are on display in various location on the Common.

After crossing the bridge from Footpath 86, turn left and follow the path around Hartham Common, with the River Beane on your left. Continue on until you reach the junction with another path and turn left.



Follow the path for a short distance to the bridge. From the bridge, you'll see the River Lee cascading over the weir on the right and the confluence of the River Beane and River Lee on the left.



The bridge is at the edge of the Bengeo Neighbourhood Area Plan boundary.

From the bridge, retrace your steps and follow the path towards Hartham Leisure Centre, with the River Lee on your left. Continue straight on, passing the large weir on your left and the [Herts Canoe Club](#) on your right. [Hartham Leisure Centre](#) is also on your right.

Between 2018-2020, the Neighbourhood Plan Group responded to public consultations and planning applications for the refurbishment and extension of [Hartham Leisure Centre](#).

Proposals to improve and increase community facilities were supported but concerns were raised about the proposed external design of the extension. It was felt that the exterior cladding, shape, and appearance of the double-height extension was more suited to an industrial setting than to Hartham, with its thousand-year heritage



Revised proposals for the addition of a living wall on the south side elevation, 'wrap-around' green corridor on the west elevation, and a raised boardwalk between the trees on the north elevation were welcomed by the Group. Planning consent was granted in late 2020 by East Herts District Council.

To the left of Hartham Leisure Centre is the Hartham Common Play Area. The Love Bengeo Community Group participated in the consultation on the refurbishment of the play area and welcomed the subsequent planning proposals.



The Group endorsed proposals for a broad range of play equipment (much of it constructed with natural materials), water and sand play, and an increase in benches and picnic tables. Planting plans for perennials, trees, and native hornbeam hedging, with their potential to improve biodiversity and wildlife habitats were also endorsed. Planning consent was granted by East Herts District Council in early 2020.

Local residents, particularly the [Hertford Playground Alliance](#) were instrumental (with East Herts District Council) in driving this initiative forward.



With the play area on your right, cross at the pedestrian crossing, bear left, and cross over the road, with Sainsbury's in front of you. Turn right and follow the pavement, curving round to the left and continue along Hartham Lane, passing the Grade II Listed [McMullen Brewery](#) on your left.

At the end of Hartham Lane, at the junction with Cowbridge, turn left and head towards the traffic lights at Old Cross, passing the Grade II Listed former [Hertford Library](#). The Library and the McMullen Brewery are both referenced in the Neighbourhood Plan.



At the lights, cross at the pedestrian crossing and head back towards Cowbridge. On your left is 7, Cowbridge, the former motorcycle shop, now beautifully restored.

Prior to its recent refurbishment, this Grade II Listed Building had lain empty for a considerable period. The proposal for change of use from retail to residential, and the refurbishment proposals, were welcomed by the Love Bengeo Community Group, including the removal of the shop window and its replacement with one in the original historic position. As there were swifts in the building, the Love Bengeo Community Group urged the developers to include swift bricks during construction. Change of use was approved and, in February 2023, Listed Building planning consent was approved.





Above: Prince Albert Model Cottage built 1864  
Photograph: V. A. Bennett

Continue straight along Cowbridge, passing the [Grade II Listed Prince Albert model cottages](#) on your left (mentioned in *'The history and heritage of the Neighbourhood Plan Area'* at the beginning of the Neighbourhood Plan).

Walk over Cowbridge – the bridge over the River Beane - and, when you reach Vale House on your left, cross over Port Vale and immediately right onto the cul-de-sac slip road adjacent to Port Hill. As you approach the pedestrian crossing, you'll see

**45 Port Hill** on your left. This mid/late 17<sup>th</sup> [Grade II Listed](#) building was originally a house, then in use as variously named pubs and, more recently, The Oak Veterinary Practice. In 2023, it was sold at auction, and, in 2025, a planning application was submitted for refurbishment of the building and change of use to residential. The Love Bengeo Community Group supported the planning application (referencing Neighbourhood Plan Policy HBC2: Listed Buildings and Structures). The building had not been used by the community for some time, the proposed alterations were sympathetic to the building's heritage, and the Policy supports proposals to bring empty listed buildings back into use. Planning consent was granted in February 2026.



Cross Port Hill at the pedestrian crossing and return up the hill to the Gates to the Warren and Hartham Common, where this trail ends.

### Route Map<sup>ii</sup>: Bengeo Trails 4: Around Hartham Common, Cowbridge and Port Hill with the Neighbourhood Plan



<sup>i</sup> Formerly the Community Steering Group for the Bengeo Neighbourhood Area Plan

<sup>ii</sup> Produced using openstreetmap.org