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A Heritage Trail around Warndon Villages

Warndon Villages was a vision of a planned townscape sympathetic to the historical places which it would encompass. It was the largest new urban development in Great Britain in the 1980s and its special wooded character is greatly valued by residents and visitors alike.

The Warndon Villages Heritage Trail twists along leafy lanes and tracks, with interesting historical connections and passing several children's play areas. It's easy walking, mostly level surfaces but some woodland tracks can be muddy in places; the flights of steps have alternative routes for pushchairs and wheelchairs. Allow plenty of time to enjoy the sights and sounds of the woodland habitats through the changing seasons, the squirrels in autumn and the birdsong in spring…

The Trail is circular, anticlockwise, between the Lyppard Hub and St Nicholas Church, and can be completed as a single route or alternatively in two sections by using the path through the New Plantation, along Plantation Drive. The total distance is 4.6 km (just under 3 miles).

The Trail can be joined at different points; Point A is the Lyppard Hub car-park, Point B is the bridge over a ditch near the east end of Plantation Drive, Point C is the lane by St Nicholas Church and Point D is on the cycle-path towards the west end of Plantation Drive. There's parking in the Lyppard Hub shopping area and it is possible to park in St Nicholas Lane, WR4 0SL, GR888569. Please park courteously wherever! The route passes close to a number of private houses; please respect the privacy of residents.

From Lyppard Hub shopping area car-park, Point A.

The adjacent pub is on the site of the old manor house called Lyppard or Leopard Grange; built in 1675 it fell into disrepair in the 1970s and was demolished in 1994. The tall pines and cedars that are visible were specimen trees in the gardens. The nearby pond is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, owing to its population of great crested newts; in spring the ducklings and moorhen chicks bob busily around it.



From the Hub car-park, walk through between the shops and climb the stile to the left of the pond (carefully) then bear left past the tall conifer trees and a bench **1** round the perimeter of the pub to join the tarmac cycle track, with the Primary School on your LHS.



To avoid the stile, walk from the Hub car-park along Ankerage Green to the left of the medical centre, through the staggered metal barrier, to the tarmac cycle track, with the Primary School on your LHS.

Follow the cycle path north east; *wheelchair users should continue up the cycle track approx. 300m to reach the staggered barriers at Trotshill Lane.* For others, after 200m there's a pretty excursion into Trotshill Field, **2** a grassy area with shrubs that is great for hide-and-seek and a raised stage for imaginative play, a castle or theatre?! Turn left off the cycle path and immediately turn right through the gateway into Trotshill Field. Meander through this area parallel to the cycle track, through a metal kissing gate, then bear right to a wooden kissing gate to rejoin the cycle track for 35m.

Immediately on your left is a restored cottage where the Cordwainer lived **3** ; the early cobblers made footwear as well as doing repairs. You left your only pair of shoes to be mended then called back later to collect them!





Continue straight ahead, looking to your right: you'll see the Grade ll Listed granary known as The Apple House, dating from 1660 **4**. It is raised on staddle stones to prevent the rats scrambling up into the grain store.

Go straight ahead (northwards) passing between an overgrown pond on your left and the brick buildings on your right, up a gravelled track. On your right are The Cruck Barn and The Parlour.

Pass between the wooden staggered barriers and follow the path through woodlands; this area can be muddy. Trotshill East playground is on your LHS. Along the RHS is a pond fed by a stream; note the ancient oak tree beside it, hanging firmly onto the bank. **5**





Those who wish to avoid steps should take the LH fork and follow the narrow tarmac path downwards to Barras Avenue. Turn right and walk up to Plantation Drive, noting the ancient oak tree in a grassy area on your right ***6****, a typical feature preserved in the design of Warndon Villages. Walk left along Plantation Drive to the letterbox, cross over and enter The New Plantation. If you are continuing on the Northern Loop to St Nicholas' Church, turn right over the wooden-railed bridge onto the wide woodland path towards the 'Roman' bridge (Point B). If you are turning back towards The Hub along the Southern Loop, immediately turn left along the woodland path before reaching the wooden railed bridge, picking up the directions from Point B towards Point D*

If you are happy with steps, take the righthand fork, a narrow woodland path that leads down steps to the roundabout where Plantation Drive joins the A4440, opposite the new warehousing development of Sixways Park, which butts up against the ancient woodland of Warndon Wood. **7** This is a remnant of the extensive medieval hunting Forest of Feckenham, which stretched to the city walls.





Cross Plantation Drive, climb the steps and turn left. There were two Gamekeepers Cottages here, demolished in the 1960s. Follow the path through the trees and continue across the wooden-railed bridge over a ditch, with a bench seat to your right **8**. This is **Point B**. Evidence of Roman pottery making was found in this area, the local clay being a useful base material. A Roman farm complex was discovered near the Mabs Allotments site and was the subject of an archaeological dig in 2017.



From Point B, the 'Roman' Bridge near Plantation Drive

If you want to follow the Southern Loop and return to Point A, Lyppard Hub, bear left and walk along the wide woodland path for around 400m, bearing left to cross a wooden-railed bridge and then right, continuing on the woodland path. There's plenty of opportunity to build a den by a seat in a clearing along the way **9** !

You are now in the New Plantation. While a few older trees such as the oaks remain, thousands of trees were planted there as part of the 1980s development to link Warndon and Tolladine Woods, replacing the trees destroyed by the route of the M5 Motorway. The locality provides a safe environment for wildlife and even bluebells are beginning ti colonise the undergrowrth. However, these are mostly ash trees, fast growing but vulnerable to Ash Die-back disease, which could potentially devastate the New Plantation.ron

Around 400m from the 'Roman' bridge, you will cross a bridge over a ditch; notice the two tall mature oak trees on the left, on the banks of the brook. Now you will reach a crossroads with a cycle-path, meeting the Northern Loop. Turn left at this junction, **19 Point D**

If you are heading for St Nicholas Church **(Point C)** on the Northern Loop from Point B, bear right and follow the leafy woodland path as it wends northwards, running parallel to the busy A4440, Parsonage Way, opened in the 2000 to provide a fast north-south route round the new development of Warndon Villages. The road now divides the eponymous parsonage from the parish church which it served.

Continue along the woodland path for around 350m, passing a public footpath signpost that points to a stile and a crossing of Parsonage Way leading into Warndon Woods. At the T-junction with another path, turn right and follow the path as it curves leftwards for 100m, when the route forks beside a sign saying “Hillwood Meadow” **10**.



Look out for a metal kissing gate on your left. **12**

Wheelchair users should continue on the path into Hillwood Meadow, carefully because the path is quite narrow, bearing left and left again into St Nicholas Lane and through the field gate across the road. The church can be viewed from its carpark, but there are steps up to the building itself.

Go through the kissing gate and follow the public footpath across the mown lawns of Warndon Court, which is a private house – please keep any dogs on short leads. At the wall in front of you, turn right through a gate into the churchyard.





Follow the left hand fork but be aware that this section of the path can get rather muddy! The open grassy area on the left **11** is thought to be the site of the ancient hamlet of Warmedon, (Waerma’s Hill), from which the name Warndon is derived, perhaps deserted through plague in the Middle Ages.



Warndon Court is a Grade II* listed building, being probably the oldest brick-built house in the county. **13**. Standing on foundations that may go back to Waerma in Iron Age times, it is an early 17th century moated farmhouse with later additions and was listed in the 1980s, along with two nearby barns and a stable block.

The Church of St Nicholas is itself Grade 1 listed; its origins may go back to the Druids, whose sacred structures were often circular, as is this hill-top churchyard. The Normans built on Anglo Saxon foundations and the striking black and white timber-framed tower with lath and plaster infill was added in the 14th century **14**. As Pevsner notes, unusually this is a parish church untouched by Victorian restoration. There's a sundial on the south side and some fascinating contents to be seen when the church is open, including a wooden panel recording the early major benefactors of the poor and their gifts.





The Grade II listed barn serves as a church hall and the Grade ll listed base of a 15th Century octagonal wayside cross stands in the churchyard **15**. This originally stood at the junction of Offerton Lane and Pershore Lane and was removed to the churchyard when the canal was constructed; modern metal features have been added.

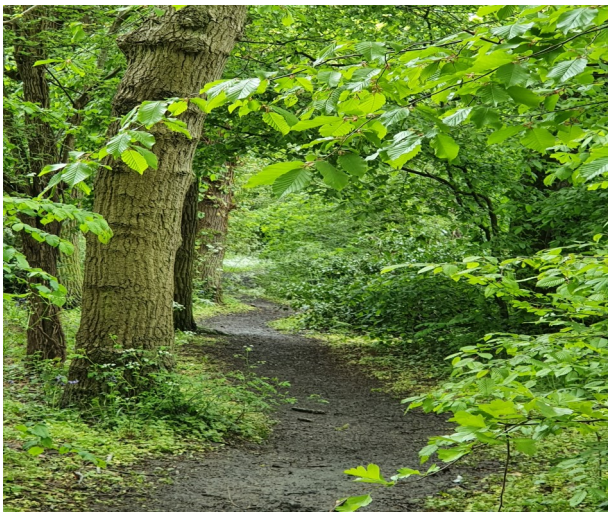
Walk down the steps past the cross and you are now in St Nicholas Lane, **Point C.**

But why not pause for a picnic in Hillwood Meadow, with its entrance to the east side of the churchyard through the field-gate? It's a haven for wildlife - perhaps you may encounter a slow-worm ?!

From Point C, St Nicholas Lane



Heading towards Lyppard Hub, Point A via Point D, walk west along the lane (away from the Church) and turn left as you reach Hastings Drive, alongside the stream which runs beside the grassy strip. Follow this track and stream **16**



crossing Stafford Avenue; keep following the stream as the path winds between tall oaks **17,** emerging briefly beside Hastings Drive then hugging the stream again, until it merges with a tarmac path.



You are following a route that has been used since before Roman times, between Worcester and the brine pans of Droitwich, linking with Pershore Lane. Salt was greatly prized as a preservative as well as for its taste. In the Middle Ages, the pack-horse teams carried wood faggots to Droitwich for the charcoal burners to utilise, returning with their panniers filled with refined salt, for local use and for transport down the River Severn. The traders possibly rested and refreshed their horses at this stream. However, the demand for wood for charcoaling became so great that the Forest of Feckenham (of which Warndon was a part) was greatly denuded by the 14th Century and the ordinary people began to suffer because they could not obtain fuel for domestic cooking or heating. Eventually coal mining provided an alternative to the use of wood as fuel.



As the tarmac path passes a large fenced multi-games area on your left and the stream dives into a culvert, turn immediately right, beside lamp-post numbered 10289. **18** Follow the tarmac path with its ancient trees along Hemsley Place, across Hever Avenue and along the right-hand side of Caister Avenue with the children's play area on your RHS. Bear right round the play area to the T-junction with a cycle-path; turn left along the cycle-path and continue into the New Plantation.

While a few older trees such as the oaks remain, thousands of trees were planted here as part of the 1980s development to link Warndon and Tolladine Woods, replacing the trees destroyed by the route of the M5 Motorway. The locality provides a safe environment for wildlife and even bluebells are beginning to colonise the undergrowth. However, these are mostly ash trees, fast growing but vulnerable to ash die back disease, which could potentially devastate the New Plantation.

As the barriers on Plantation Drive come into view, the cycle-path is crossed by a footpath **19;** this is **Point D** .

From Point D, on the cycle path towards Plantation Drive

If you wish to return to St Nicholas Church, **Point C,** go leftwards across the gravelled bridge iver a ditch, following the ;Badger Trail' signs. Notice the two tall oak trees on your right, on the banks of the brook, survivors of the earlier forest. Follow the wide woodland path for around 400m, to **Point B.** There's plenty of opportunity to build a den by a seat in a clearing along the way **9**! Bear left over a bridge with wooden railings and then bear right.





When you come to a gravelled track over a bridge with wooden railing near a shady bench, **8**, this is **Point B** where you will meet the northbound section of the Trail. Evidence of Roman pottery maklng was found in tis area, the local clay being a useful base-material. A Roman farm complex was discovered near the Mabbs Allotments site and was the subject of an archaeological dig in 2017..

Don't go over the bridge, bear left and follow the route directions above from **Point B** to St Nicholas Church, **Point C.**

From **Point D**, **heading for Point A the Lyppard Hub**, cross over Plantation Drive, taking the cycle path immediately opposite, following the culverted brook on your left. After c 250m, as you approach Trotshill Lane East, on the LHS you will see a Grade ll listed house which is undergoing refurbishment **20**. This is a 17th Century timber-framed building with wattle-and-daub infills and late 19th Century alterations, listed in 1986 as of special architectural interest, Listing No. 1166574. The designers of the 'Warndon Villages' concept obviously thought it was worth preserving.



Emerge on Trotshill Lane East by the Children's Nursery, turn right and cross Mill Wood Drive to Trotshill Lane West. Along Trotshill Lane, now a wide tarmac track, there were many farm workers cottages mostly gone; the womenfolk often worked as Gloveresses to supplement the family income. Worcester's gloving industry reached its peak between 1790 and 1820 when 150 manufacturers of gloves employed over 30,000 people in and around the city. In factories such as Dents and Fownes, men stretched and cut the skin, while hundreds of female outworkers sewed the many glove components together to create the finished product. Bundles of materials were distributed to them for careful stitching and exchanged for payment and more materials. You are following in their footsteps towards Tolladine Road, one of the Anglo-Saxon routes or 'wegs' to the city.

As you walk along Trotshill Lane West, note the thatched house on your RHS, called Shelbourne Cottage **21**; this was substantially restored and extended in the 1960s and is one of the few thatched buildings remaining in the Villages. The property on your LHS, Woodside Cottage, is also being sympathetically rebuilt.





This was part of an ancient track to Lyppard Grange, where rabbit burrows seriously undermined the great oaks in the early 20th C. So Matthew Darlington who farmed Lyppard Grange from 1905 to 1927 would regularly send his ferrets, which were kept in cages in the farmyard, down the rabbits' burrows to 'ferret' them out. The rabbits were shot and sold for 1/- each in the 1920s - they made a good meal! Rabbits hanging in butcher's shops were a common sight until the 1960s, when mixomatosis became rampant. Nowadays around the oaks you are more likely to see squirrels **22**…

Continue along the path passing another play area on your RHS and emerge on Mill Wood Drive by the pedestrian lights. You can reach the Lyppard Hub by the footpath on the opposite side of the crossing, or by Ankerage Green. You are then at point A. Why not enjoy a picnic by the pond **1** or refreshments in the Grange ?! *To reach the picnic spot avoiding the stile, from the Hub carpark go clockwise around the perimeter of the Medical Centre and the Lyppard Grange pub, to the grassy area under the specimen conifers.*

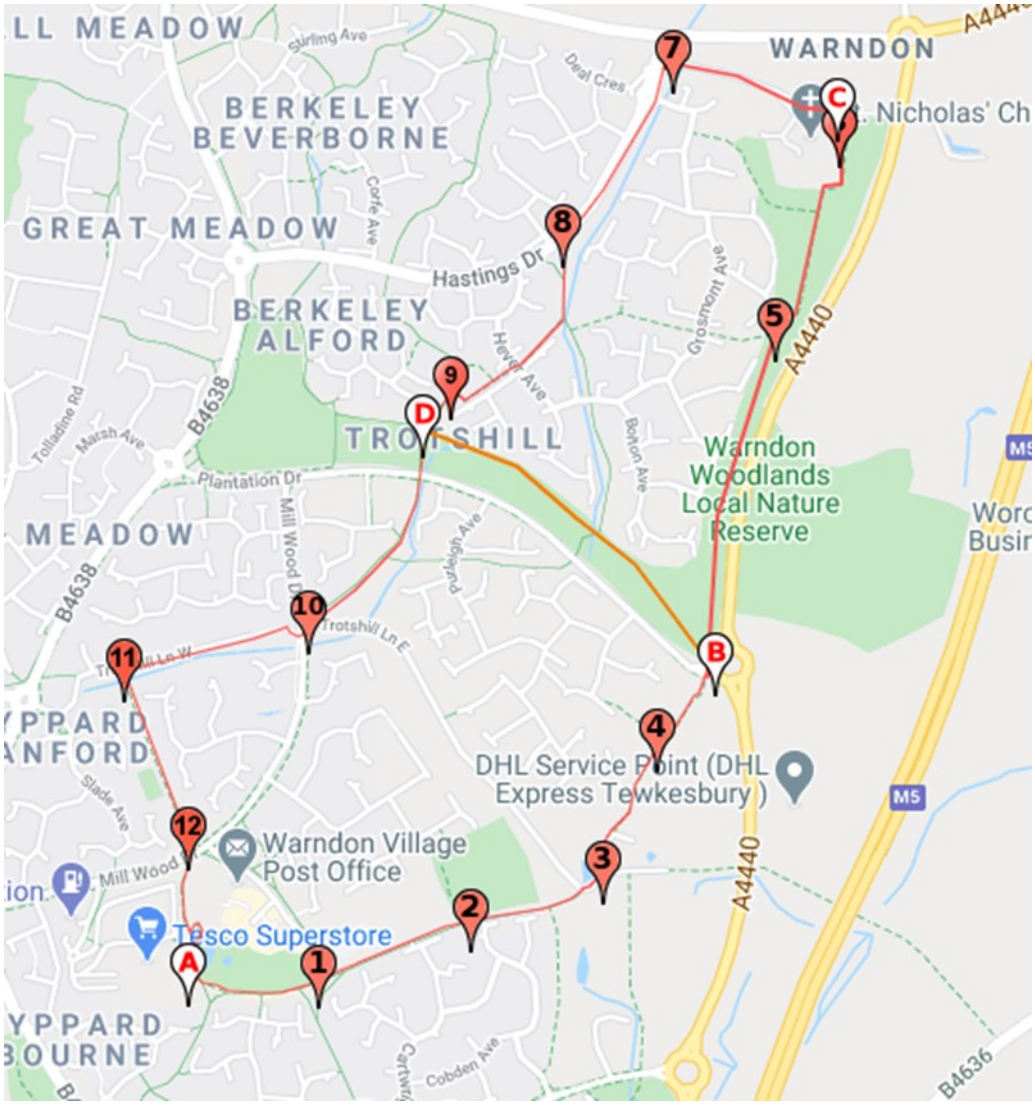
The Heritage Trail route is based on "Walking Around Warndon Villages" by Barbara Hopper, adapted by Jan Scrine; the historical information is taken principally from Barbara's book "Ages and Ages Before Warndon Villages" where you can find a great deal of further information.

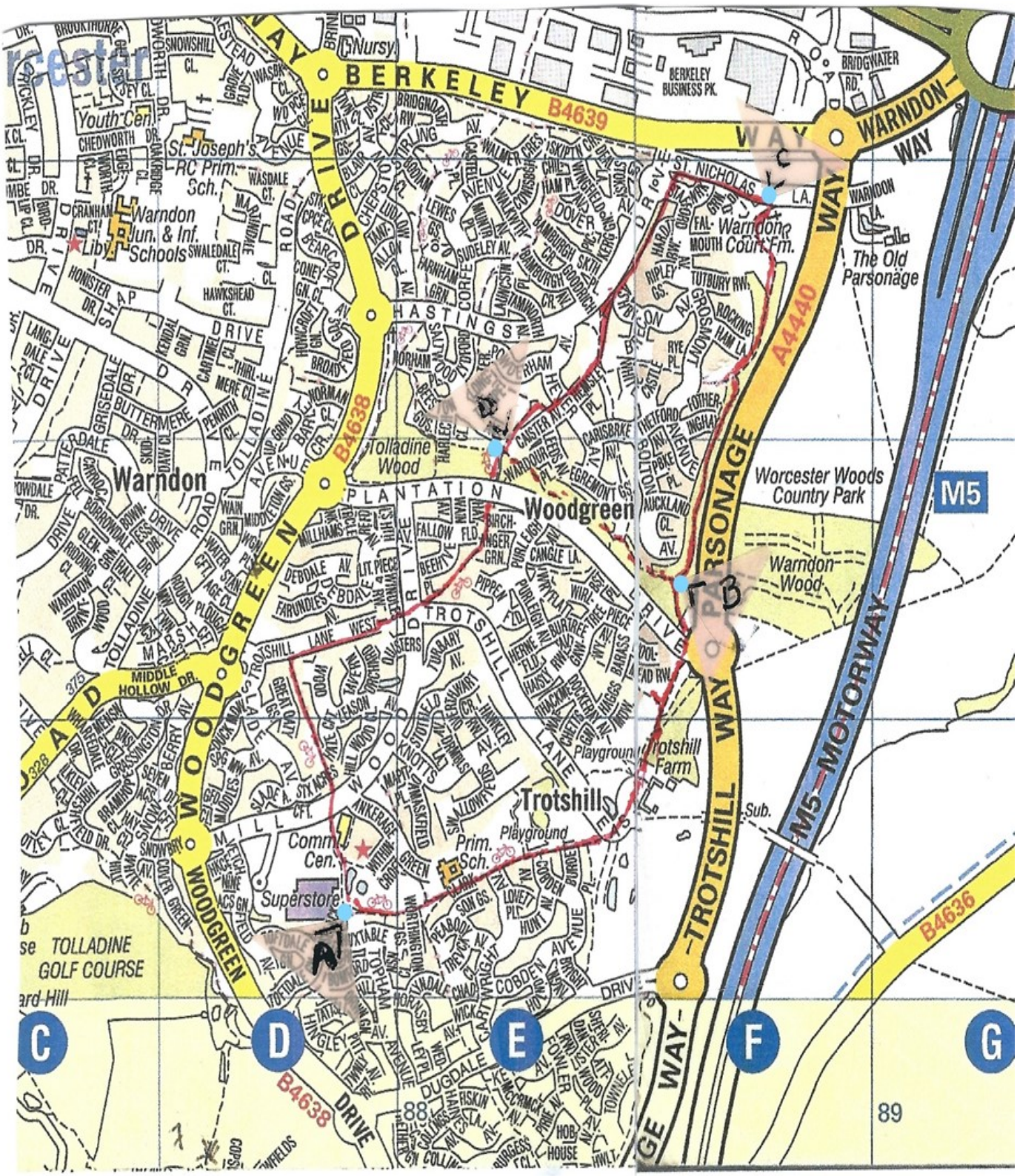
Please observe The Countryside Code at all times. It is designed to help us all to respect, protect and enjoy our countryside.**www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/countrysidecode .**

When you are following the Trail, be prepared for adverse weather conditions or slippery ground under-foot; wear suitable outdoor clothing and footwear and always carry a drink and a snack.

While every effort has been made to ensure that the details given are accurate, no liability can be accepted by Warndon Parish Council for any inaccuracies or omissions; nor liability for any claim, loss, damage or injury (howsoever arising) incurred by those using the information provided. Paths may be re-routed, flooded or closed, weather conditions may be adverse; stiles and barriers are altered. But the heritage of Warndon Villages has stood the test of time – enjoy!

DRAFT MAP OF ROUTE





Please take only photographs, leave only footprints….