CyanLines

100 miles of nature in the city

CL1/ROUTE GUIDE

Glade of Light & NOMA to Queens Park

The Irk Valley explorer

This point-to-point walk from The Glade of Light shadows the River Irk north-east, taking you through the vibrant NOMA district to Queens Park. While it's only a short walk, there are museums to visit, sculptures to admire and many attractive green spaces to enjoy a sit down and a brew.

The route begins in the front of Manchester Cathedral, just around the corner from 'Glade of Light' - a poignant memorial to the victims of the Manchester Arena bomb and before entering Cathedral Gardens. Football fans will want to take a detour into the National Football Museum here.

The bustling NOMA neighbourhood is next and boasts the historic New Century House gig venue and the Michelin starred restaurant Skof, as well as coffee shops and pubs. Angel Square is the home of the Co-operative Group and showcases a particularly beautiful perennial garden. As you continue to follow the Irk, on the north bank you'll notice the developing St Catherine's Wood, a new public park that's planned for early 2026.

Beyond this, there's the option of crossing the river to see Barney's Steps, also known as the Lowry Steps, after artist L.S. Lowry depicted them in 'The Footbridge'. The route continues along the Irk to end at Queens Park.

Practical information

Distance	Start point	End point
4.04 km	Manchester Cathedral M3 1SX	Rochdale Road bus stop M9 5QN
	what3words: ///insist.cared.ranks	what3words: ///plant.hours.race

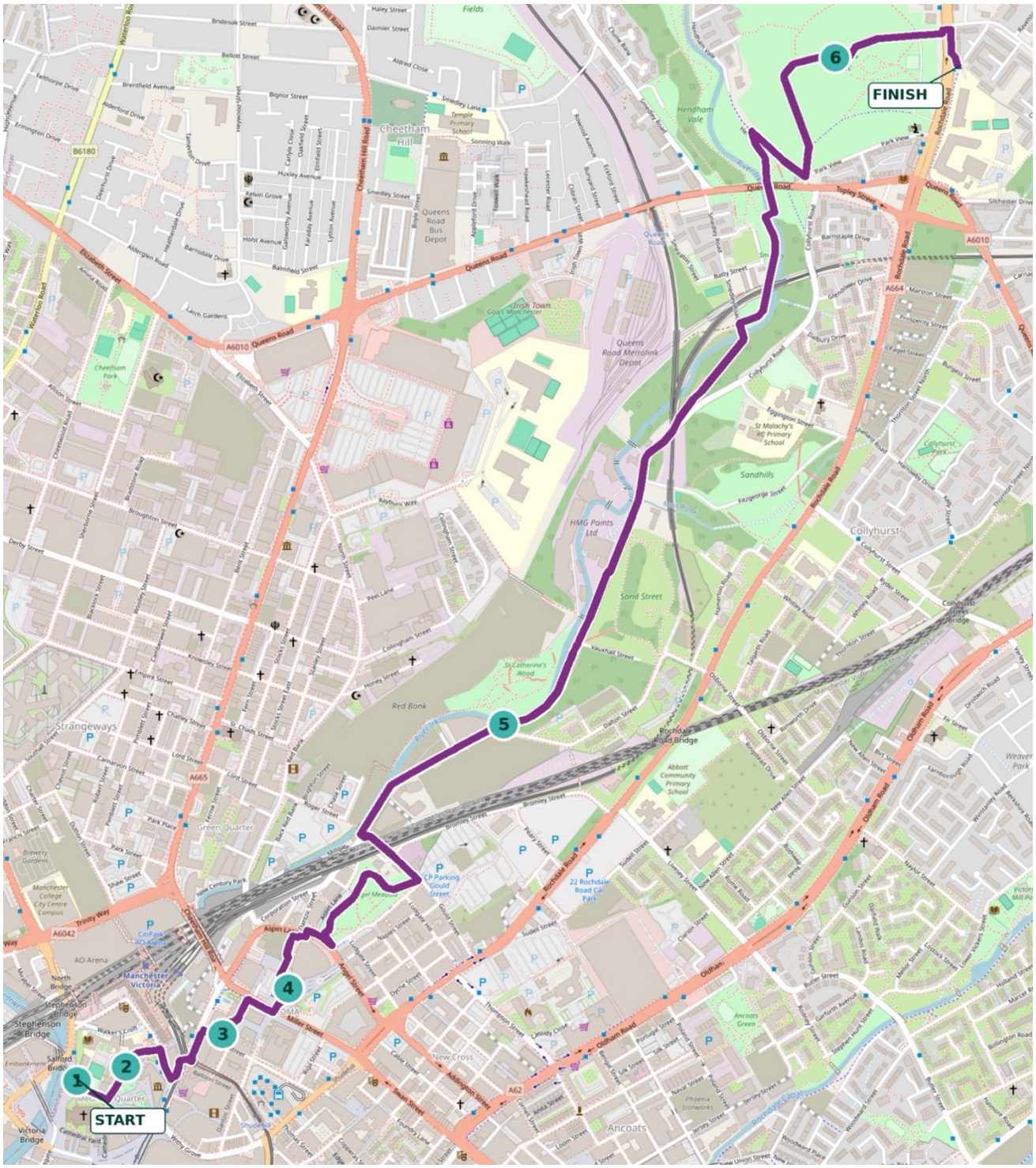
Notices

The route is as accessible as currently possible for a wide variety of users. The route finishes at a bus stop on Rochdale Road. Use the Bee Network app to check expected arrival times and plan onward travel.

Accessibility

The route has been designed to be step and barrier free where possible. On the Collyhurst Road section, there are poorly dropped pavements on side (mainly access) roads, vegetation overgrowth and pavement parking in places. There are also a couple of sections with an uphill gradient of around 7%.

Route map



Map data © Openstreetmap contributors

1 Glade of Light Memorial

2 Cathedral Gardens

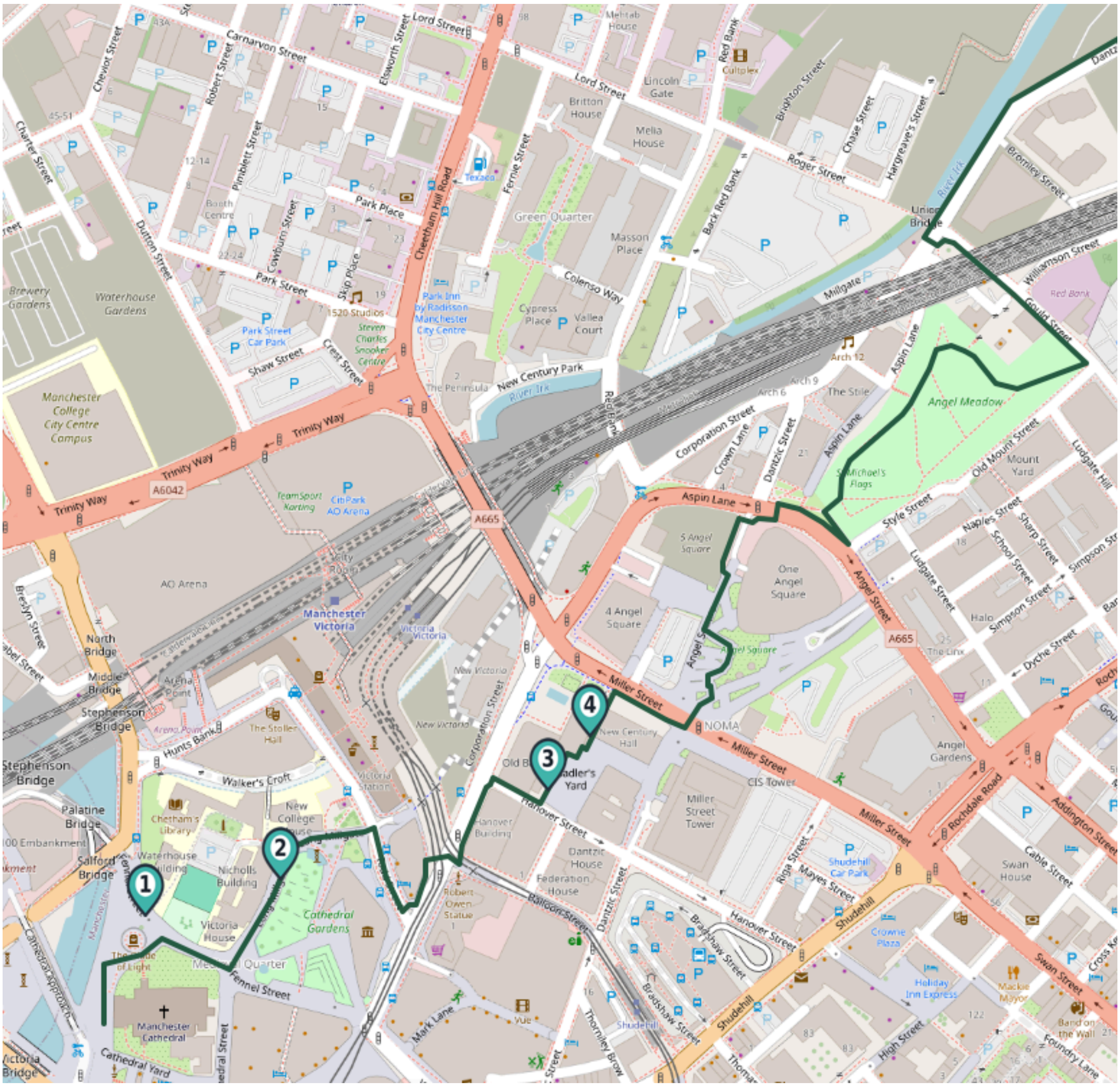
3 Sadler’s Yard

4 New Century Hall

5 St Catherine’s Park

6 Queen’s Park

Route detail



Map data © Openstreetmap contributors

Route detail



Map data © Openstreetmap contributors



1 Glade of Light Memorial

The Glade of Light is a living memorial to the 22 people who lost their lives in the Manchester Arena attack on 22 May 2017, and to everyone injured or affected. Designed as a tranquil garden for remembrance and reflection, it centres on a white marble halo bearing the victims' names. Native planting brings colour and light through the changing seasons, creating a peaceful place to pause in Manchester's historic Medieval Quarter



2 Cathedral Gardens

Cathedral Gardens is a green oasis in the heart of Manchester's Medieval Quarter, surrounded by some of the city's best-known landmarks, including Manchester Cathedral, Chetham's School of Music and the National Football Museum. Lawns, mature trees and natural stone paving create an open space to sit, meet and pause amid the bustle of the city. Throughout the year, the gardens also come alive with festivals, events and seasonal celebrations, bringing people together in every season.



3 Sadler's Yard

Sadler's Yard sits at the heart of Manchester's NOMA neighbourhood, a welcoming public square surrounded by a mix of historic buildings and contemporary city life. Named after pioneering balloonist James Sadler, who made Manchester's first manned balloon flight in 1785, the square is a place to meet, sit and linger. Green planting softens the urban setting, while regular events, food and drink bring activity to the space throughout the year for residents and visitors.



4 New Century Hall

New Century is one of Manchester's great modernist landmarks, built in the early 1960s for the Co-operative movement. Its Grade II listed hall has a remarkable musical history, hosting everyone from Jimi Hendrix and The Kinks to Manchester's house pioneers. Carefully restored, its original sprung dancefloor, wood-panelled walls and distinctive illuminated ceiling remain, while today the building is once again alive with gigs, food, events and creativity at the heart of NOMA.



5 St Catherine's Park

St Catherine's Wood is a restored riverside woodland in the Irk Valley, bringing a once-overgrown green space back into public use. Accessible paths wind through mature trees and new planting, with seating, viewpoints and interpretation along the way. The woodland combines nature, local heritage and regeneration, creating a greener connection through this changing part of north Manchester.



6 Queen's Park

Queen's Park is one of Manchester's oldest public parks and one of the first municipal parks in Britain, opening in 1846. Originally laid out around Hendham Hall, the former home of the Houghton family, today it offers a welcome stretch of green space in Harpurhey. With mature trees, open lawns, play areas and space for football, it's a place for walking, playing and spending time outdoors

CL1 Glade of Light to Queen's Park - Accessibility notes

The CL1 route has been reviewed to make it as accessible as possible for a wide range of users. There are a number of locations where gradients, uneven surfaces, pavement conditions and restricted access may present difficulties, particularly for wheelchair users, people using mobility scooters and those with limited mobility.

The main accessibility considerations are outlined below.

Hills and gradients

There are some uphill and downhill sections along the route. Some are relatively gentle, while others may be challenging for people with limited mobility or using manual wheelchairs.

- **Angel Meadow:** The step-free route into the park includes an uphill gradient, with further slopes within the park itself.
- **Gould Street:** A downhill section as the route continues towards the Irk Valley.
- **Smedley Dip:** A sloping path leads down into the valley, followed by a further uphill section towards Queen's Park.
- **Queen's Park:** Some paths within the park have gentle gradients.

Uneven and potentially muddy paths

Although much of CL1 follows paved footpaths and pavements, some sections have uneven or unmade surfaces.

- **Smedley Dip:** One of the more challenging sections, with worn tarmac, raised tree roots and surfaces that may become slippery due to fallen leaves. A longer section follows an unmade path which can become muddy, particularly following wet weather.
- **Hendham Vale:** Some uneven tarmac surfaces, followed by a gravelly section on the approach to Queen's Park.
- **Queen's Park:** Generally passable tarmac paths, although some areas are rough or potholed.

These sections may be particularly difficult for wheelchair users, people with reduced balance or those who find uneven ground challenging.

Pavements and road crossings

Parts of CL1 follow urban pavements and streets, where local conditions can affect accessibility.

- **Collyhurst Road:** Some poorly dropped kerbs, overgrown vegetation and pavement parking can make it more difficult to move along the footway.

- **Smedley Road:** Pavement obstructions and poorly dropped kerbs may create difficulties for people using mobility aids.

The recommended route uses alternative crossings and pavements where possible to reduce these challenges.

Narrow entrances and barriers

There are a few locations where entrances or barriers may restrict access, particularly for larger wheelchairs, mobility scooters and adapted cycles.

- **Hendham Vale:** The route passes through a narrow gap in a fence, with a step and an unmade surface.
- **Queen's Park entrance:** Chicane-style barriers may be difficult to negotiate with some mobility aids.