



Middleton Heritage Trail



Introduction

“Middleton is a town of considerable individuality, historically important, and more distinguished than most in its architecture. Its medieval parish church is the most complex and complete of South-East Lancashire, its remaining great houses are of exceptional interest, and it nurtured one of the most interesting architectural partnerships of the early 20th century, that of Edgar Wood and Henry Sellers” (Pevsner Architectural Guides, Clare Hartwell et al.)

Welcome to Middleton, a town with a rich and proud history located in the borough of Rochdale. Famous for its arts and crafts architecture, silk industry and links to radical reformers, these suggested trails will take you around some of the highlights of Middleton town centre and its surrounding areas.

Explore Greater Manchester’s oldest church, discover the inspiration behind LS Lowry’s painting ‘Old Church and Steps’, and be inspired by the town’s fabulous array of early 20th century architecture from nationally renowned architects, rich in beautiful, if unexpected, details.

Each trail can be done individually or combined to create one longer route, taking in the town centre, its parks and key sites.

This trail has been funded by Historic England, along with Middleton Township and the UK Government’s Shared Prosperity Fund as part of the Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area Regeneration Plan.

HPA Architects were commissioned to undertake the research and provide the text for the trail, which has been further developed by officers from Rochdale Borough Council, along with Middleton residents and local historians.

We would like to extend special thanks to the many Middleton residents and local historians who have engaged with the project team during the development of the trail. Their detailed local knowledge and insight has been invaluable in ensuring that Middleton’s rich history is placed firmly on the map.





1. St Leonard's Church

Overlooking the town is St Leonard's, the oldest original church in the Manchester Diocese. Its oval graveyard and the remnants of an Anglo-Saxon preaching cross hint at its very early origins. A document held in Durham Cathedral suggests that the body of St Cuthbert, a famous medieval saint, rested here, and that the original Anglo-Saxon church was dedicated to him.

This early church was destroyed after the Norman invasion of 1066 and replaced with a stone church, dedicated to Saint Leonard. The earliest record of this church is from 1183.

In 1412, the church was largely rebuilt again by Sir Thomas Langley, one of the most important historical figures to come from Middleton. He was Bishop of Durham as well as being the Lord Chancellor to three kings of England. His new church included the tower, but reused the external pillars of the Norman entrance and axe-carved stonework, which all survive today.

The final major phase of rebuilding took place between 1515 and 1524. It is said that, in thanksgiving for a victory against the French at Flodden, Sir Richard Assheton extended the church. There is a famous stained glass window within the church, which shows Sir Richard with his wife and a group of archers.

Inside the church, there is also a series of memorial brasses. These are said to be the finest in Lancashire, and include the country's only memorial brass, depicting an officer of the parliamentarian army in full uniform. In 1666, the church's famous wooden steeple was added to the top of the tower to house new bells.



2. Jubilee Park, Exedra and houses on New Lane

Jubilee Park was opened in 1889 to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, two years earlier. The Monumental Staircase and Exedra in Jubilee Park were gifted to the people of Middleton by Thomas Broadbent Wood, father of Edgar Wood (who designed the unusual structure), in 1906.

They were designed to create a peaceful contemplation point within the park and originally included a water fountain. The structure was lovingly restored in 2017. The park also includes a monument to the victims of the 1927 Middleton flood, in which three people died. Facing onto Jubilee Park are 1 to 6 New Lane. These attractive brick built houses are among the oldest in the town.



3. Rochdale Road and Towncroft Avenue

Along Rochdale Road, between Cleworth Road and Towncroft Avenue, are a cluster of buildings designed by Edgar Wood.

Among the finest of these are Fencegate and Redcroft (33 and 35 Rochdale Road - 3a). They are an attractive pair of properties of unequal proportion dating from 1891. Fencegate is the smaller of the two and has a relatively simple plan. However, Redcroft was the home of Edgar Wood himself until 1916 and its internal design is as unique as we would expect, with strangely shaped hallways and a speaking tube up to the attic studio!

Further along, at 51 and 53 Rochdale Road (3b), you will find another pair of houses designed by Edgar Wood. Dating from the turn of the 20th century, they use a browner brick than most of Wood's buildings, paired with intricate stone detailing. Like many of Wood's buildings, these properties include flat roofed porches, which create a break between the entrance door and fanlight above.

Just around the corner, at 1 Towncroft Avenue, lies Arkholme (3c). It is a very early 20th century property of fierce, angular lines with large windows and a flat roof. The residence was built by Edgar Wood for Charles Jackson. He was the brother of Fred W Jackson, who was a close friend of Wood, having been on sketching tours with him. Fred Jackson had very little formal training, but he had a talent for painting and became an elected member of the Manchester Academy of Fine Art. He later became a member of the Royal Society of British Artists and worked regularly with Wood during the 1890s.



4. Mellalieu Street

The Old Rectory lies on the corner of Long Street and Mellalieu Street. This private house is one of the oldest buildings in Middleton, dating from around 1515 to 1520, but is not visible from the road.

On the opposite side, along Mellalieu Street, are terraces of red brick villas dating from the late 19th century (4a). The houses are of varying designs with black and white gable ends, next to Flemish gables. The western end of the run of terraces brings with it a surprise. 36 Mellalieu Street is the first house by the architectural partnership of Edgar Wood & Henry Sellers dating from the early 1900s (4b). It uses reinforced concrete for the flat roof. While the use of concrete had become popular in mill buildings, it was rarely used for building residential homes at this time.



5. Ye Olde Boar's Head

This pub stands out along Long Street as a fine timber framed building, likely dating from the late 16th or early 17th century, which started life as a pair of houses. Records show that the first tenant was Isaac Walkden, son of Middleton schoolmaster Robert Walkden.

His will included items like brewing vessels, pots and glasses, which indicate that the building was probably being used as an inn, even at this time.

The popularity of the building continued throughout the 18th and 19th century. It was used for political, public and church meetings, as well as quarterly court sessions where Justices of the Peace from the Salford Hundred helped local magistrates deal with petty crime.

The pub was even used as a base by the Scots during the Jacobite rebellion of 1745. Sam Bamford's grandfather Jeffrey Battersby, a cobbler by trade, helped the rebels collect 'Kings Taxes' from local people to strengthen the cause. Following the defeat of the Jacobites he was tried for treason but he luckily escaped imprisonment at Lancaster Gaol. Later the pub became one of Sam Bamford's favourite drinking establishments where he would regularly recite his poems.



6. Middleton Library

Opened in 1889 to mark the Jubilee of Queen Victoria two years earlier, Middleton Library was designed by architect Lawrence Booth.

His design was the winner of an architectural competition, involving over 60 entries. The building has a clear Arts and Crafts character and appears to have been influenced by famous architects of the time, such as Norman Shaw. The black and white gables seem to be a nod to the Olde Boar's Head, which stands opposite.



7. Former National School

The National School was constructed in 1842 following the passing of the School Sites Act in 1841. This Act made it easier for landowners to sell or donate land to charities to provide schools for the poor.

The building is built of sandstone with grand five light mullioned windows. The north classroom was added in 1889, with the south classroom and new entrance added in 1892. It bears a resemblance to The Queen Elizabeth Old Grammar School on Boarshaw Road.



8. Independent Labour Club, Milton Street

The Labour Representation Committee (LRC) was established in the 1900s with the coming together of trade unions and socialist delegates who were disillusioned with the Tories and Liberals. The LRC adopted the formal title of the Labour Party in 1906 following their success in gaining 29 seats during the elections.

The Club House on Milton Street was erected in 1912 as the Labour Party continued to grow. The property was designed by Edgar Wood and on its opening was described as having a spacious hall, large clubroom, bowling green and gardens.



9. Long Street Methodist Church and Sunday School

These are an exemplary collection of buildings, accessed through a gateway off Long Street. Dating from 1899, Edgar Wood has composed a beautiful European inspired aesthetic by combining Free Gothic, Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau styles with modest earthy materials of red brick, render and a traditional stone roof.

The angular forms which run along Long Street give the buildings grandeur and importance, drawing inquisitive visitors into the formal courtyard garden.



10. 83 to 87 Long Street

This small group of properties was originally built as a house and domestic loomshop in the late 18th century. Middleton had strong links with the silk industry and domestic loomshops were once commonplace. Silk was produced on the upper floors, where big windows generated lots of light, maximising the working day. These properties are a rare surviving domestic loomshop.

The upper floor windows have horizontally sliding sashes, also known as Yorkshire lights, which are particularly rare.



11. Market Place

In the 1750s, Middleton Hall sat to the south of the town, with a village green on the site of the roundabout we see today. An 18th century Market Charter allowed for this green to be turned into a Market Place.

The hall was demolished in the 1840s, but it wasn't until the mid to late 19th century that Market Place's important civic buildings were built.

Number 3 Market Place was built as the premises for the Manchester and Salford Bank in 1892 and designed by Edgar Wood. Its grandeur and importance as a bank is shown in its spectacular appearance, which is both symmetrical and asymmetrical and includes beautiful tilework.

The Manchester and Salford Bank was founded in 1836 with branches spread throughout Manchester and Lancashire. The bank was later acquired by the Royal Bank of Scotland, who continued to occupy the property on Market Street until relatively recently.

The former Middleton Police Station sits at 7 to 11 Market Place. Opened in 1874, it remained in use as a police station into the second half of the 20th century. In 1958, the Manchester Evening News described its cells as 'dark, dank, dismal dungeons'!

23 - 25 Market Place was once the home of the Middleton Guardian Newspaper. Designed by Edgar Wood in 1889, the property housed the newspaper offices and the print shop. After falling into disrepair it was restored as part of the Middleton Township Heritage Initiative.



12. Middleton Gardens

Formerly the site of the Corn Mill Lodge and within the gardens of Middleton Hall, Middleton Gardens was established in 1934. The Gardens have undergone various re-designs over time, with the most recent taking place in the early 2010s (12a). There are several interesting buildings in the gardens.

4 Middleton Gardens (12b), built in 1893, is a highly decorative red brick building with unknown origins. By 1905, the building belonged to James Duckworth and operated as one of his many grocery shops, which were spread across Lancashire. Duckworth rose from poverty to become a self-made businessman, later becoming the Liberal MP for Middleton from 1897-1900.

A tough upbringing and a career that started as a child labourer in the mills at just six years old, drove Duckworth's passion to promote the Education of Children Bill in the House of Commons. This raised the minimum working age to 12 years old. He was knighted in 1908 and passed away, aged 75, in 1915.

33 - 37 Manchester New Road (12c) are to the south of the gardens. Built in 1908 with façades of red brick broken up by geometric white and green tiles, Edgar Wood designed these buildings to add vibrancy and interest. The properties were precursors of the Art Deco movement and no doubt became quite the talking point!



13. Church of the Holy Trinity

Holy Trinity Church dates from 1861 and was designed by George Shaw, a Yorkshire architect famed for church buildings. Holy Trinity has a decorative architectural style with coursed sandstone walls and a slate roof with decorative sandstone on the gables. There is a stained glass window, which is a memorial to those who fell during World War I. The Church previously housed a War Memorial of brass plaques. These plaques are now held at the Church of All Saints and Martyrs in Langley.



14. Sefton Road

Sefton Road has a leafy suburban character with houses of different architectural styles.

Number 30, Westdene, is an impressive Arts and Crafts style dwelling, designed by Edgar Wood and built in 1889. It has an asymmetrical design with a diverse and interesting roof arrangement which makes the property very visually pleasing, especially with the contrasting red brick, white render and red roof tiles.

At the time the building was constructed, Wood was running classes on woodworking and furniture making and it is highly likely that some of the carved motifs we find at the property are his own work.



15. Manchester Old Road Conservation Area

Walking along the southern side of Manchester Old Road, there is a collection of fine Victorian and Edwardian villas and terraces. The area includes two pairs of semi-detached houses, also designed by Edgar Wood.

Numbers 161 and 163 Manchester Old Road are allegedly the first houses designed by Edgar Wood in 1887. They are of a restrained symmetrical design, constructed in stone. The tall Jacobean chimneys are the only element hinting at Wood's later architectural style.

Numbers 165 to 167 Manchester Old Road are by contrast the last pair of properties designed by Edgar Wood in 1912. The pair are entirely symmetrical and include an angular roof and projecting bay windows. They are built of brown bricks and have stone lintels and ledges beneath a slate roof, creating an organic colour palette.



16. Manchester Old Road Memorial Gardens

The Memorial Gardens opened in 1927 with the Memorial unveiled by Lieutenant Colonel R L Lees to commemorate those who died during World War I. The initial memorial comprised the central semi-circle and the side wing additions were made in 1945 to remember those lost during World War II. In 2015, a further addition was made in honour of Holocaust Memorial Day and this can be found in the left hand side of the garden.



17. Alkrington Hall Estate

Alkrington Hall dates from 1735 and was designed by Venetian architect Giacomo Leoni for Sir Darcy Lever (17a). Leoni was key in bringing the ideas of Palladian architecture to the UK. This architectural style is characterised by its classical form, symmetry and strict proportions. Alkrington Hall is one of the few surviving examples of his work in England.

The Hall was extended by Darcy's son, Sir Ashton Lever, in 1771 to house one of the world's first Natural History Museums. The museum was incredibly popular and the working classes were banned from visiting to reduce demand. The museum later moved to London and was renamed, 'The Leverian Collection'. Lever was friends with the explorer Captain James Cook and the hall included items brought back from his voyages. The exhibitions were sold off in 1806 and are now spread across the globe.

The hall originally sat within a large estate, elements of which can still be seen today. These include Home Farm Dairy, estate cottages and the Lever Bridge, named after the Lever family and built in 1733 (17b).

Home Farm dairy was originally the stables associated with the Hall. It probably predates the hall and was likely redesigned by Giacomo Leoni as part of the works to build the hall.

In the 20th century, it became one of the homes for the manufacture of Giovanni and Maria Pessagno's Italian ice cream business. Giovanni had travelled to Great Britain at the age of 13 from a small village in Italy and became a well-known member of the Italian community in Ancoats. Both Giovanni and his son John were interned during World War II, owing to Britain's distrust and suspicion of Italy during a time of international crisis.



18. Warwick Mill

Dating from 1907, Warwick Mill was part of the last major phase of mill building in Lancashire after 1900. It is typical of mills from this period, with a massive floor plate, which would have allowed for a greater number of spindles than earlier mills, increasing cotton production. Like many mills of this period, it is red brick with a cast iron frame. Terracotta detailing can be seen on the outside of the building and areas of attractive glazed tiles can still be seen within the buildings, particularly the engine house. Warwick Mill also has a triple brick-arch fireproof system to prevent the spread of fires. Mill fires, which often had devastating consequences, had been common in the 19th century.

The cotton business began to decline after World War II and continued to reduce until the closure of the business in the 1960s. The site has been vacant for a number of years. However, plans are afoot to convert it into apartments with commercial uses on the ground floor.



19. Church of St Michael, Townley Street

The Church of St Michael dates from 1902, with the side chapel added in 1926 and the tower added in 1930. It replaced an earlier church which was built in 1836. The design is by famed Lancaster architects Austin and Paley and was paid for by J.W. Lees.

John Lees was a successful cotton manufacturer who owned mills across Manchester. However, in 1828 he sold everything to set up Greengate Brewery on land he had purchased at Middleton Junction. The brewery's success continues today, with the business still occupying the original site.



20. Electricity Substation, Townley Street

This early 20th century substation and electricity department offices on Townley Street supplied the town's electricity and lighting. The electricity was generated by a steam plant on site which had three generating sets, fondly known as 'Sarah Ann', 'Mary Gertrude' and 'Eliza', following their naming by the mayoress.

Mains were laid in Long Street, Manchester Old Road, the Free Library and Townley Street first. The town's pride in this advancement can be seen in the quality and detailing of this building which includes beautiful red brick and terracotta details such as arched windows, separated by pilasters and a porticoed entrance.



21. Lodge Mill

Lodge Mill dates back to 1839 and started life as a silk mill, later being converted to a cotton weaving mill and dyehouse in response to changes in trends and demands. At its height, the mill employed hundreds of local workers and made a contribution to the economic growth of Middleton. The building became vacant following the demise of the business and various elements of the site have now been lost.

Part of the four-storey mill building survives along with the engine house, which now operates as an ice cream parlour.



22. 24 Steps

Famous for painting industrial landscapes and mills, 'Old Church and Steps' (known locally as 24 steps) was renowned Manchester artist, LS Lowry's only painting of Middleton. The old church at the top has gone, but the steps remain. Can you spot the five-legged dog in the painting?



23. Old Grammar School

The Old Grammar School we find on site today is a 1572 replacement of Thomas Langley's Parish School, which had been founded in 1412. The replacement was by Alexander Noxell, in honour of his brother's dying wish.

The school was granted letters of patent by Queen Elizabeth I herself and its aim was to provide free and permanent education in the Parish of Middleton. The red brick building which stands to the rear of the school was erected in 1836 for the schoolmaster.

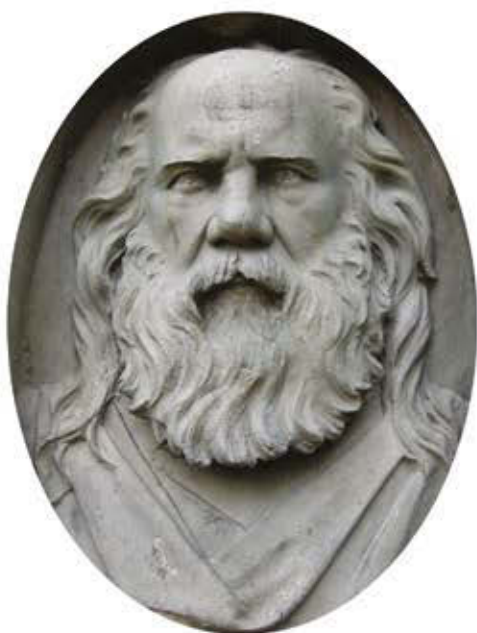
By 1867, pupil numbers had dramatically decreased and the school was forced to close in 1909. It was replaced in 1911 by a new school on Rectory Street. The old school building continued to be used by the local community and was lovingly restored and refurbished in 1997.



24. Old Burial Ground

The Old Burial Ground is the largest open space within the Conservation Area and is home to a number of important graves, including war graves.

Within the graveyard, there is also a monument to Middleton-born radical reformer, Sam Bamford, who was arrested for his part in the infamous Peterloo Massacre.



Sam Bamford

Sam Bamford was born in Middleton in 1788. He was an English radical reformer and poet. Throughout his life he pushed for the improvement of conditions for working class people and his poems also focused on the conditions endured by the working classes. He would recite many of these in the Olde Boars Head.

He led the Middleton contingent at the infamous Peterloo massacre, and was later imprisoned for attending and speaking at the protest. There is a monument to him within the Old Burial Ground on the trail.



Edgar Wood

Edgar Wood was one of the most important architects of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The son of a mill owner and born in Middleton, the town has many surviving examples of his work.

In addition to being an architect, Wood designed both craftwork and furniture and examples of these survive in some of his properties. In 1903, Wood teamed up with J Henry Sellers, and together they pioneered buildings with reinforced concrete roofs and cubic forms.

As there are a number of different places to explore, we have split the trail into three different, slightly shorter, walks, which you can see marked on the map. Both the red and green route include hills and inclines and some off road elements.

Red route

Golden Cluster. This route includes mostly pavements, with one steep hill. It will take approximately one and a half to two hours to complete.

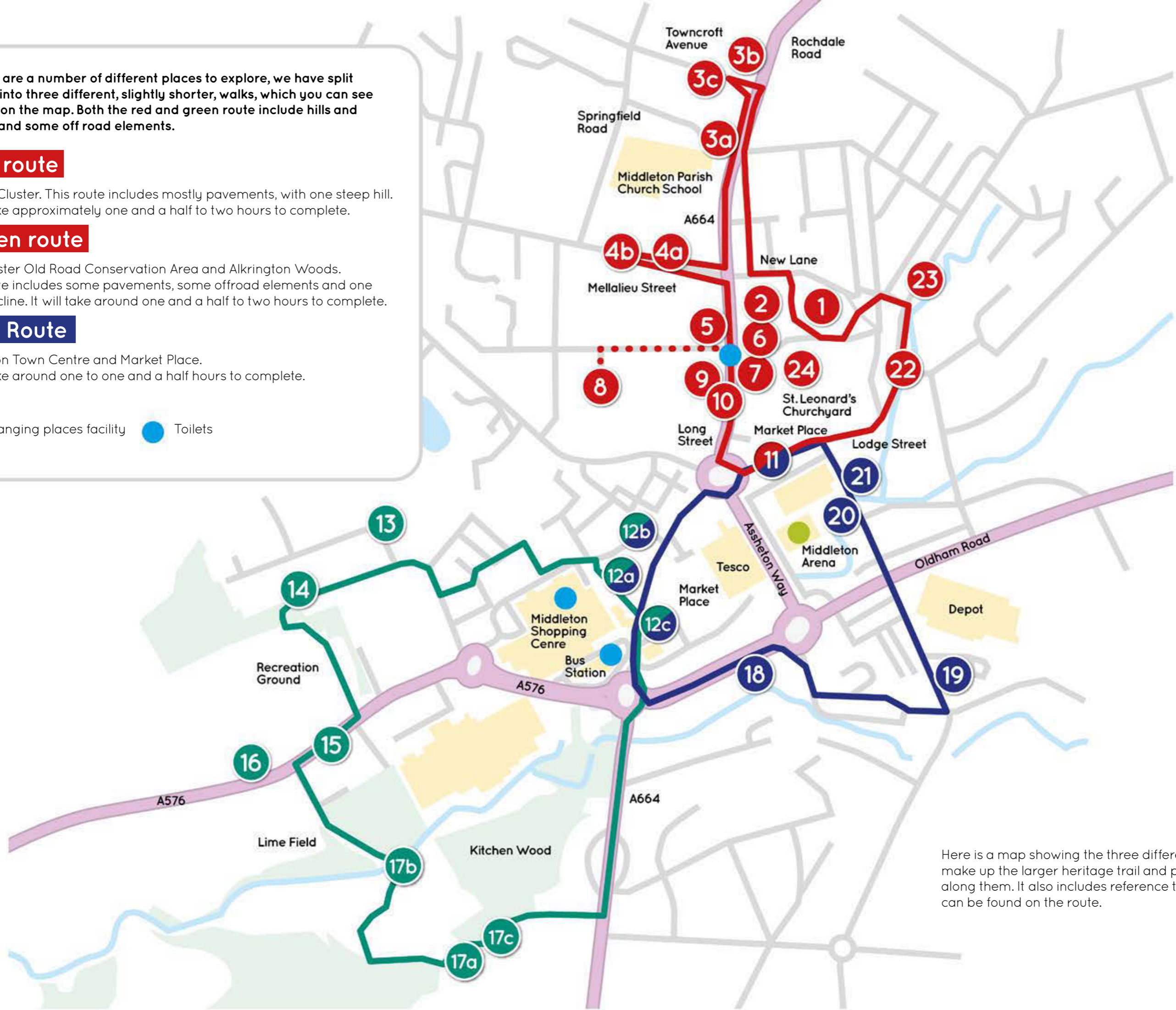
Green route

Manchester Old Road Conservation Area and Alkrington Woods. This route includes some pavements, some offroad elements and one steep incline. It will take around one and a half to two hours to complete.

Blue Route

Middleton Town Centre and Market Place. It will take around one to one and a half hours to complete.

● Changing places facility ● Toilets



Here is a map showing the three different routes which make up the larger heritage trail and points of interest along them. It also includes reference to where toilets can be found on the route.

GREATER MANCHESTER

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY



Funded by
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 rochdale.gov.uk

 conservationand.design@rochdale.gov.uk



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