

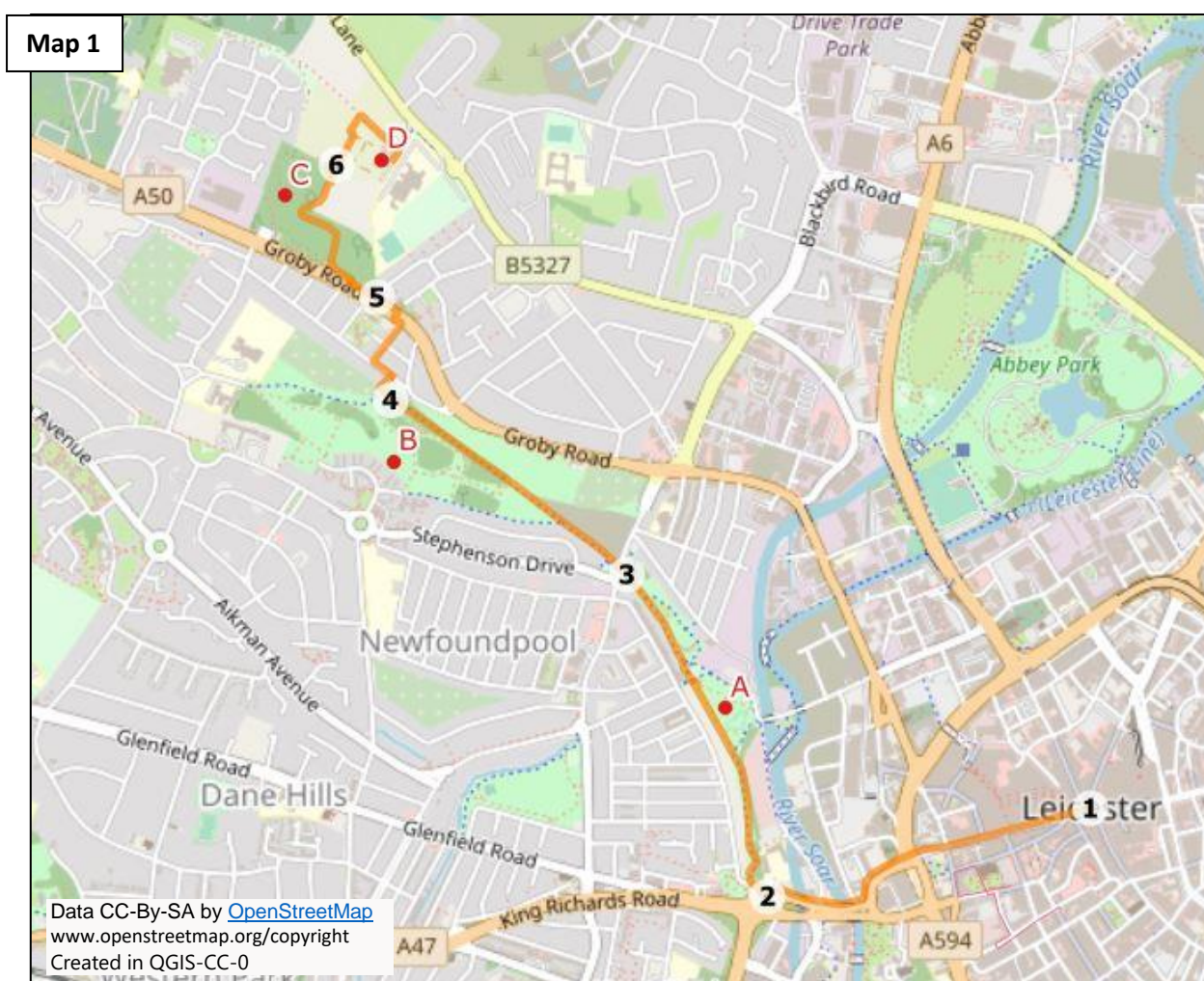
The Clock Tower to The Orchards LNR & Gorse Hill City Farm

Start location: The Clock Tower, Leicester city centre, LE1.

Time taken: 1 hour 15 minutes (steady, pace)* **Distance:** 2.5 miles 4 km **Linear route**
Around 60 minutes (medium pace). Allow additional time for information stops.

Description:

This walk starts in Leicester's city centre and heads to The Orchards Local Nature Reserve (LNR) with the opportunity to visit Gorse Hill City Farm nearby. It begins through city streets, then the rest is largely through the pleasant green spaces of The Rally, Stokeswood Park and The Orchards. A café and toilets are available at the City Farm. The Orchards has narrow, soft paths so is not buggy or wheelchair accessible. This route is suitable for those who enjoy stretching their legs, including families with older children. Return on foot or by public transport.



- Main route — Alternative route ● 1 Stage / waypoint ● A Point of interest

*Time is calculated at a steady pace of 2mph or medium pace of 2.5mph, if walked without stopping. Allow extra time to look at points of interest and read the information.

Route developed by R. Roenish. Adapted by staff and volunteers for Leicester City Council:
www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/walks



Walk starts: The Clock Tower, Leicester city centre, LE1.

Walk finishes: Gorse Hill City Farm, Anstey Lane, Leicester, LE4 0FJ.

Return on foot via the outward route or by public transport. Buses serve Anstey Lane (near the City Farm), and Groby Road (near The Orchards). Journey planner at: www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk

Need to know:

- This walk takes in three pleasant green spaces with the option to visit Gorse Hill City Farm (entry fee required). Check prices and farm and café opening times at: www.gorsehillcityfarm.org.uk
- Please note, you cannot bring dogs on Farm visits; only Assistance Dogs are permitted on the City Farm premises.
- The Orchards section is uphill and the paths through here to the City Farm are unsurfaced and will be muddy in the wetter months. Narrow entry to and narrow paths within The Orchards. **Not suitable as a wheelchair or buggy-accessible route.**
- Public toilets are available in the city centre in the Highcross Shopping Centre. No public toilets are available in the parks. A café and toilets are available in Gorse Hill City Farm.

Safety tips:

- Stokeswood Park and The Orchards are quiet areas and can feel isolated. Walkers may prefer to walk this route in company.
- Take care crossing roads, including residential side streets. Use pedestrian crossings where available, including at Vaughan Way and Groby Road which are particularly busy and traffic fast.
- Look out for cyclists in the city centre and take special care through The Rally and Stokeswood Park, which are popular cycle routes. The footway on Groby Road is now a shared pedestrian/cycle path.

Route directions:

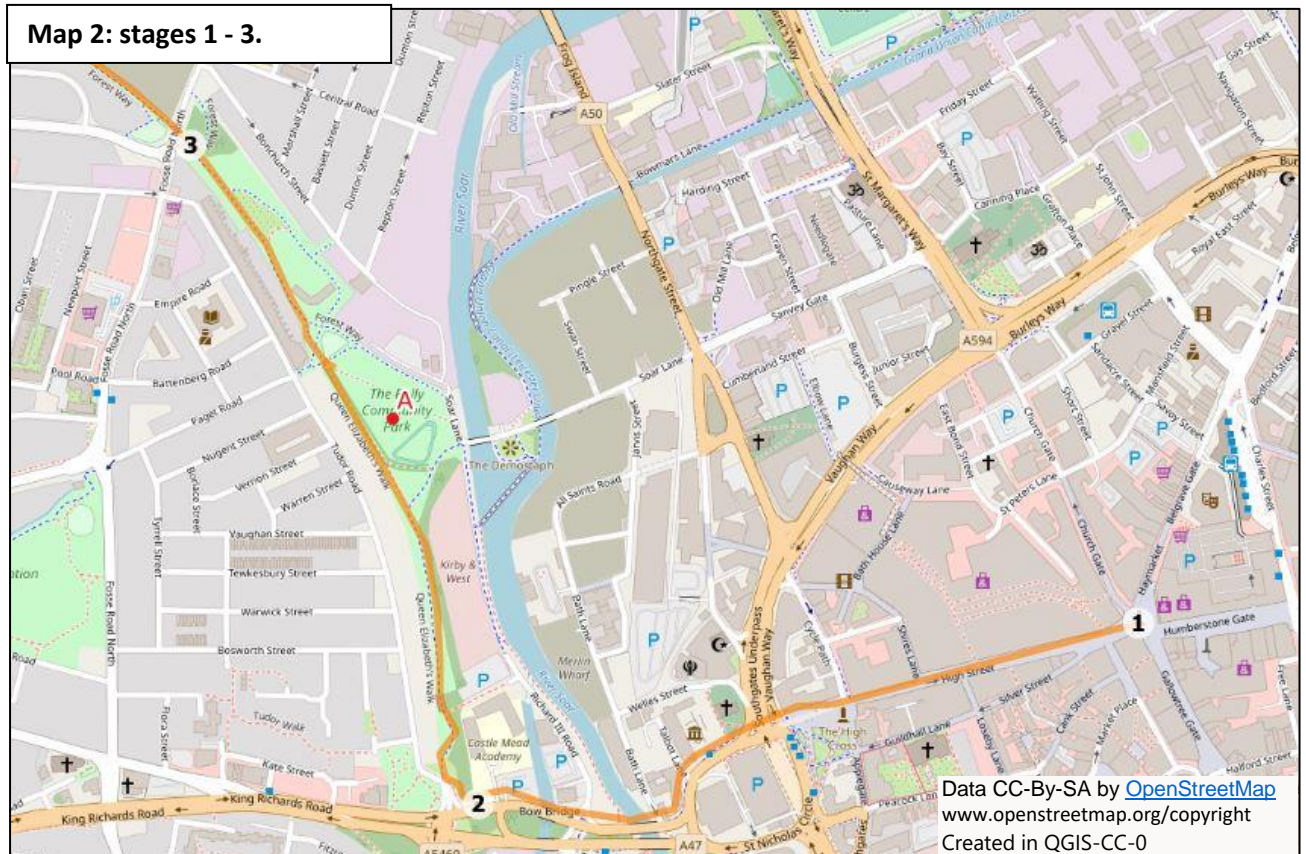
1. From the Clock Tower take East Gates, past the entrance to the Highcross shopping centre, then continue up High Street. At the top of High Street cross High Cross Street and continue ahead to St Nicholas Circle. Use the pedestrian crossings over Vaughan Way, towards St Nicholas Church. On the far side bear left to pass the Jewry Wall Museum (currently behind hoardings). Cross Talbot Lane and continue, soon bearing right onto St Augustine Road. Cross Bath Lane, cross the bridge over the Grand Union Canal, cross Richard III Road and pass the Bow Bridge.
2. At Tudor Road turn right and soon take the path on the right into The Rally park. Watch for cyclists: this is a popular cycle route. Follow the main path ahead, passing the short section of preserved railway track. There is an information panel here.

(A) The Rally

The Rally is an unusual wedge of land sandwiched between the back gardens of terraced houses in Tudor Road and Bonchurch Street, and is close to the Grand Union Canal. The Rally was once part of the historic Leicester and Swannington Railway, the very first to be opened in the Midlands in 1832. The railway went from West Bridge Station (once here, in the Rally) to Desford and Coalville and connected the Leicestershire coalfields with markets in Leicester and further afield. The Rally park includes the Queen Elizabeth Walk, laid out with 60 oak trees in

1986 to commemorate the 60th birthday of Queen Elizabeth II. The Forest Way cycle path is integrated into the park and there is a small nature area by the St Augustine's Road entrance.

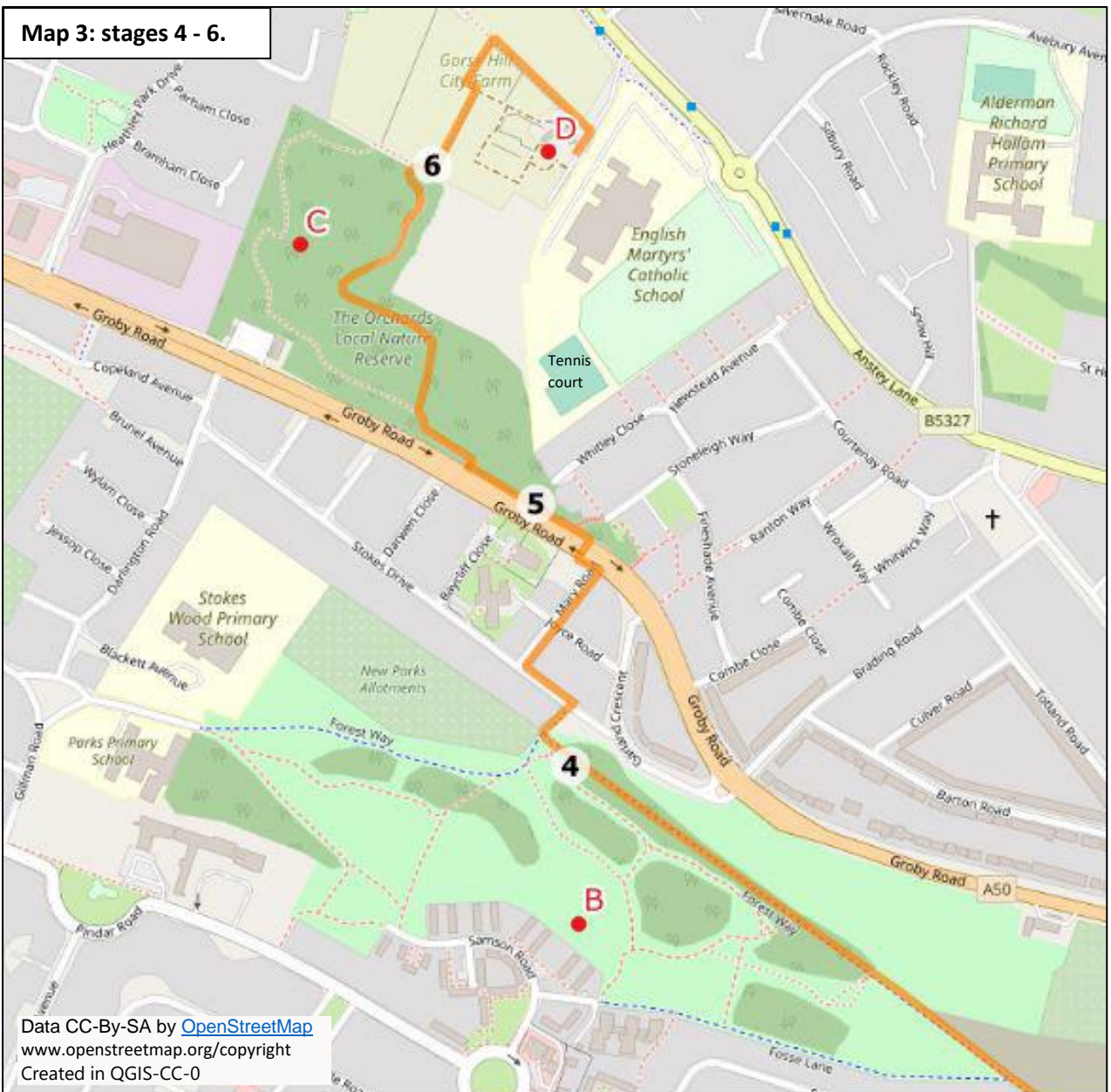
Continue to follow The Rally green corridor northwest, passing the outdoor gym, BMX pump track and children's play area. Ignore side paths and keep ahead (parallel with the terraced housing) to reach the footbridge over Fosse Road North.



3. Cross the footbridge over the road. On the far side, continue ahead into Stokeswood Park. This is still a cycle route - take care. Continue straight ahead, keeping to the path which follows the fence line. As you progress, hedges and trees line the path for some distance.

(B) Stokeswood Park

The path continues to follow the route of the former Leicester and Swannington Railway line through Stokeswood Park. The line finally closed in 1966. This route is now part of the [National Cycle Network](#).



4. At a complex path junction, head towards the blue fingerpost and bear right to exit onto Stokes Drive. Cross the road and turn left. Shortly, turn right into Mary Road and continue ahead to reach the A50 main road. Immediately to your left use the pedestrian crossings over the A50, Groby Road. On the far side, turn left. This section of pavement is shared with cyclists – keep to the pedestrian side. Continue on. You will see that the low, stone retaining wall for the high bank on your right gradually lowers in height and disappears just before the gate to the nature reserve.
5. There is a small blue sign on the gate to The Orchards Nature Reserve. Enter between the two wooden posts beside the gate (narrow). Gorse Hill City Farm is to the north of this site at the top of the hill.

Tip: Follow the main well-used footpath in this very wild and overgrown area. Avoid the small side paths (not mapped) that disappear or offer diversions into the undergrowth.

Follow the main path to the left which starts by running parallel to the A50 then divides. Take the right-hand path which heads up the hill. At the next junction turn left, then keep ahead passing small side paths. At the next two junctions in the path keep right, and then right again. Continue walking straight uphill to the boundary fence at the top.

Tip: If you do take a wrong turn, most small paths inter-link and you'll likely find your way to the perimeter path. Uphill leads past housing to the exit gates by the field (see 6); downhill leads back to the Groby Road gate.

(C) The Orchards Nature Reserve

The Orchards was previously orchards and allotments and is owned by Leicester City Council. The site is around 6.6 hectares (16 acres). It has been under conservation management (through various organisations) since 1985 and is currently managed by the City Council's Leicester Environmental Volunteers and Parks Services. The site is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and also a Local Wildlife Site due to the mosaic of woodland, scrub and grassland. Discover more about the wildlife here on the [Nature Spot](#) website.

6. Pass through the gate and take the path to the right beside a field. Turn left at the corner, then walk to the end (ignoring the gate ahead). Turn left and then right. Continue on until you reach a stile at the end – do not cross! Instead follow the path 90 degrees to the right, alongside a very long field. Towards the end you will catch glimpses of the farm buildings on your right behind a hedge and may even catch a whiff of the farmyard manure. At the end of this path pass through the gate onto the farm driveway. Turn right to reach the Gorse Hill City Farm entrance. There is a café, toilets and on the payment of a fee an opportunity to see the many farm animals.

(D) Gorse Hill City Farm

In 1985, a group of residents who had taken on the management of the overgrown allotment site came up with the idea of a city farm. Following consultation with the local authority, the site was signed over to the 'Friends of Leicester City Farm'. In 1990, Gorse Hill City Farm became a registered charity dedicated to providing an educational and recreational facility for visitors.

The route ends here. Return on foot via the outward route.

Alternatively, you may wish to return via public transport. The farm driveway leads down to Anstey Lane (served by buses) or retrace your steps through The Orchards to Groby Road (also a bus route).

Pre-plan your journey with help from the journey planner at www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk. We hope that you have enjoyed discovering the places on this route. Other walks are available to download from the Choose How You Move website: www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/walks

Acknowledgements

Route kindly provided by Rowan Roenisch and adapted by staff and volunteers for Leicester City Council.

Gorse Hill City Farm information:

<https://www.gorsehillcityfarm.org.uk/>

The Orchards Local Nature Reserve:

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Orchards_Nature_Reserve

Nature Spot: <https://www.naturespot.org.uk/node/160030>

Choose How You Move Journey Planner: www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk