

**GUIDE TO THE**  
**2026**  
**ELECTIONS**  
**LONDON**  
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## INTRODUCTION

It was only four years ago that the London boroughs last elected their councillors. But that was a different world. We're on our fourth prime minister since! Boris Johnson was on his last legs as Prime Minister with Partygate scandals and the capital's anger over Brexit overwhelming his party. The Conservatives fell to their worst defeat since 1994 losing control of Wandsworth, Westminster and Barnet. But they received consolation prizes by gaining Harrow and the new mayoralty of Croydon.

The Conservatives are polling even worse than 2022 and now have a populist party to their right that threatens further losses in the remaining councils they hold. Bexley is most at risk but also perhaps Bromley and Hillingdon. But Reform is not a huge threat in most of London. The Conservative problem is that Reform could deprive them of enough votes to stall their recovery and even cost them more councillors than they've already lost.

The only consolation for the Conservatives is that Labour has fallen by even more, proportionally. There has been a swing from Labour to Conservatives of between four and six percent in London since 2022; enough to win back Wandsworth and Westminster and put Barnet on a knife-edge.

As Reform is a threat to Conservatives, an even bigger threat to Labour is the Green Party. They seem to be putting into play boroughs and wards that have been considered safe for Labour for decades.

The Greens' top target is Hackney: both the council and the elected mayoralty. They also expect big things in Lambeth and Lewisham, and to be represented on swathes of councils

even where they can't win power. We need to be somewhat cautious about the Green threat because the surge they enjoyed following the election of their new leader, Zack Polanski, is not reflected in all polls and has abated somewhat. The Greens had every opportunity to do well in London last time and they did not, mostly from lacking sufficient members to stand for election or campaign.

But the Green surge does appear real in terms of members and activists - and that is a massive boost they did not have in 2022. The ability to field candidates and canvass and leaflet and turn out voters on election day is a massive step up for them. The Labour-Green battleground is very much larger than the Conservative-Reform battleground in London. And that's aside from considering the impact on Labour councillors with Conservatives as their main opponent from having a big chunk of their vote go Green. How many Labour seats will the Greens gift the Conservatives?

One big factor in 2022 was large swings away from Labour in ethnically diverse wards across London - but especially West London. It was noticed in Harrow because council control switched, but not more widely because it occurred in mainly super-safe Labour wards. These are now a lot less safe and Labour is in deeper trouble with voters from minority ethnic backgrounds this year.

Labour's problem with Muslim voters since the Gaza conflict is well documented, but the party is tanking with every ethnic group - and that matters in multicultural London. Their loss of Harrow was a backlash by Hindu and Sikh voters, a very powerful bloc of votes in a corridor across west London running from Heathrow to Stanmore.

Labour lost Tower Hamlets to a Bangladeshi-focussed party in 2022 and is unlikely to get it back this year; and is in real difficulty in Newham and Redbridge and bits of Waltham Forest: all with huge Muslim populations.

It's exactly twenty years since Labour in London was last the recipient of a mid-term government backlash. The party bounced back in 2010, 2014, 2018 and 2022. Labour has virtually nothing to gain in the capital and everything to lose.

Holding any of its three gains from 2022 would be a significant achievement and Reform, by eroding Tory support even a little, may help them achieve that. But in terms of gains, beyond an attempt at winning the Croydon mayoralty, they must brace for major losses - possibly on a scale that dwarves 2006. This will look even worse for Labour because 2006 followed a round of elections in 2002 that, while not disastrous, cost Labour a lot of seats. In other words they entered 2006 from a lower baseline than they do in 2022. It won't be pretty.

The battle for London can be characterised as a battle of who could care less: if the Tories lose fewer votes to Reform than Labour loses to not voting or to parties positioned to its left there will be substantial Labour losses. If the other way round, Starmer (if he's still there in May) may be able to spin a success story from pretty dismal results. He could well be helped by the minor consolation that several boroughs are more likely to fall to no overall control rather than swing to an opponent. That just looks a little less bad presentationally.

On the other hand, Labour may well lose the spin war for the exact same reason they won it in 2022. The totemic boroughs of Wandsworth, Westminster and Barnet tend to declare early on election night (or early the next morning). That will give the headline writers the narrative, even if as the rest of

the councils declare the next day things go bit differently. Two of the three boroughs Labour lost declared on Friday or, in the case of Croydon, days later.

Some notes on the previews that follow. Forecasting how an election will go is not easy at the best of times, and these are not they. I also don't make predictions: it's better to let the voters choose for themselves than to pre-empt their choices.

Because there are two parties expected to have explosive impacts in boroughs they didn't contest or barely contested last time, the 2022 results are far less of a guide than they'd typically be. In other words we have far less idea which wards are going to be competitive this year than we normally do.

As I did last year in the previews for those council elections, I provide a list of wards a particular party might hope to gain. I call these "hopefuls" rather than targets because I have no insight into where the parties are targeting. I've cast my net wide to include wards I don't necessarily believe they will win. Those with more acute local knowledge might scoff at some of those on the list. Fair enough. You're probably right but you might get a surprise! Who knows?!

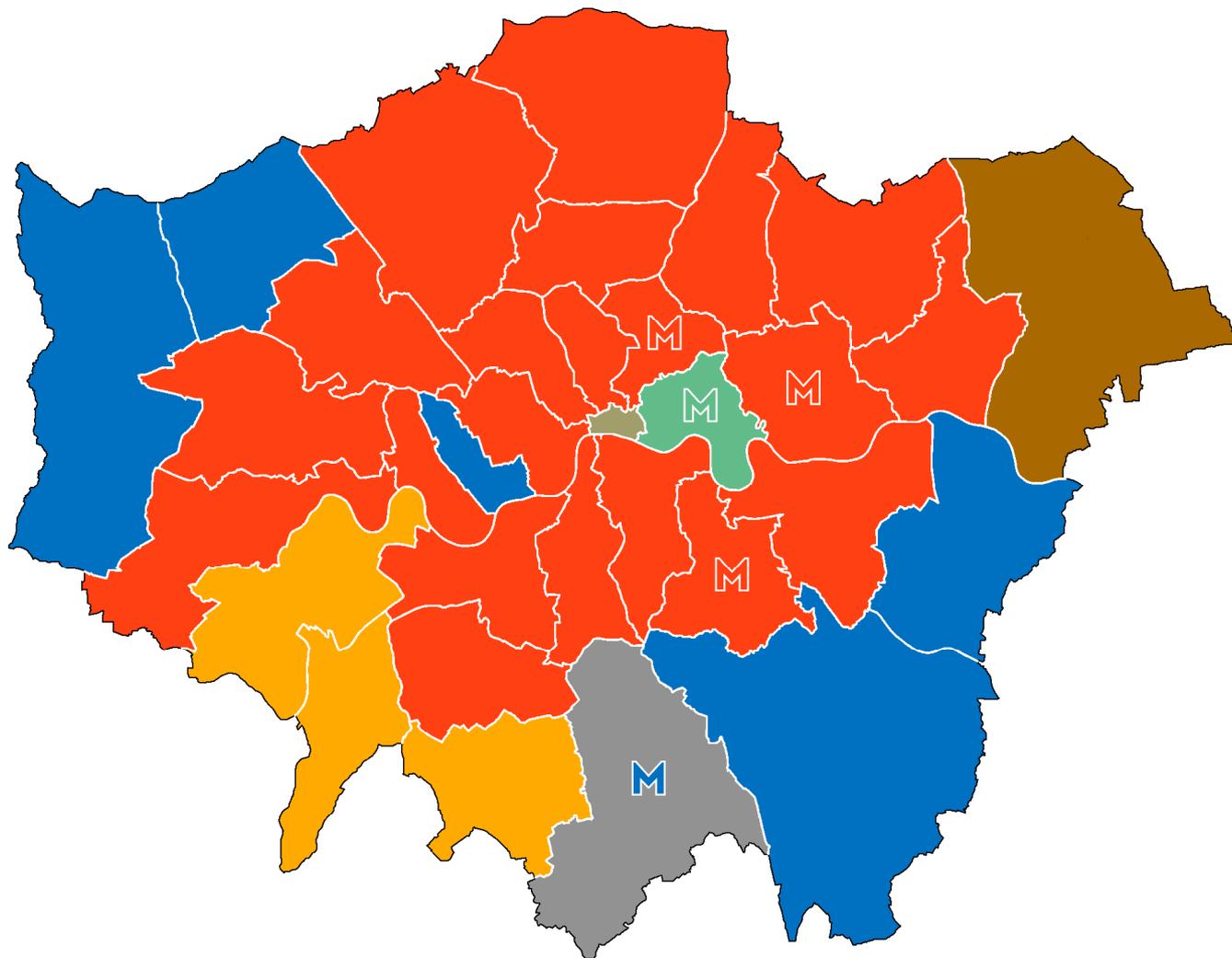
I've also included in party target lists wards they won in 2022 but have since suffered defections or a by-election loss.

Finally, I refer frequently to an Electoral Calculus MRP model that the site published in December. This was a general election MRP and it came up with questionable results in places. However, it does provide some measure of what is going on beneath the headline poll results within London boroughs and that is the sole reason I feature its output.

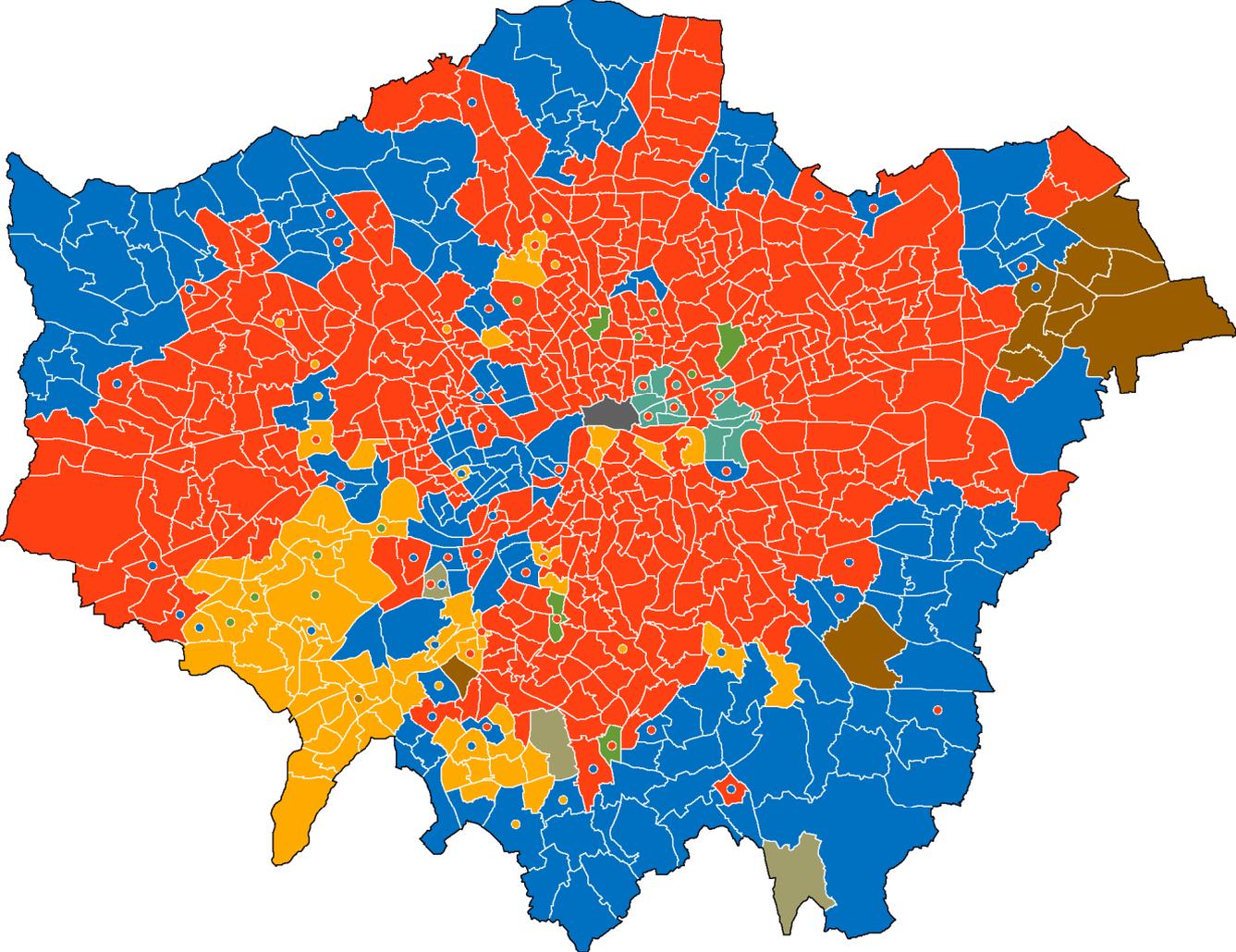
Anything could happen in these elections - and it probably will.

# LONDON BOROUGHS MAP 2022

**M** = directly elected mayor (with the colour of the M denoting the party that won the position).



# LONDON WARDS MAP 2022



# SUMMARY OF THE 2022 LONDON BOROUGH ELECTIONS

Council	seats	votes	Maj								
Barking & Dagenham	0	26.4	51	69.0	0	1.1	0	1.3	0	2.3	*
Barnet	22	35.1	41	43.4	0	9.2	0	9.7	0	2.6	19
Bexley	33	47.4	12	41.2	0	6.9	0	1.8	0	2.7	21
Brent	5	23.7	49	53.1	3	13.3	0	8.7	0	1.2	41
Bromley	36	38.2	12	30.3	5	17.8	0	8.1	5	5.7	14
Camden	3	17.9	47	51.4	4	17.2	1	11.5	0	1.9	39
Croydon	33	37.5	34	32.3	1	13.4	2	12.8	0	4.1	
Ealing	5	22.1	59	46.1	6	15.0	0	14.0	0	2.7	48
Enfield	25	34.0	38	41.3	0	9.7	0	12.8	0	2.2	13
Greenwich	3	21.0	52	53.1	0	8.9	0	15.0	0	1.9	49
Hackney	5	11.1	50	53.5	0	8.4	2	23.1	0	3.8	43
Hammersmith & Fulham	10	26.7	40	54.4	0	14.3	0	4.1	0	0.5	40
Haringey	0	7.5	50	53.0	7	21.8	0	16.2	0	1.5	43
Harrow	31	42.8	24	37.6	0	9.2	0	7.4	0	3.0	7
Havering	23	30.0	9	20.6	0	1.1	0	3.7	23	44.6	
Hillingdon	30	46.1	23	39.6	0	3.4	0	8.6	0	2.3	7
Hounslow	10	27.5	52	48.0	0	8.4	0	14.3	0	1.8	42
Islington	0	11.2	48	52.7	0	12.6	3	22.5	0	1.0	45
Kensington & Chelsea	35	44.0	13	31.9	2	21.2	0	2.5	0	0.5	20
Kingston-upon-Thames	3	25.1	0	13.1	41	44.8	0	9.7	0	7.4	38
Lambeth	0	11.5	58	51.6	3	12.9	2	23.0	0	1.0	53
Lewisham	0	11.3	54	53.7	0	13.3	0	20.3	0	1.4	5
Merton	7	23.9	31	41.4	17	20.7	0	11.0	2	3.0	5
Newham	0	14.0	64	56.0	0	5.4	2	16.5	0	8.4	62
Redbridge	5	30.8	58	54.8	0	6.8	0	4.1	0	3.5	53
Richmond-upon-Thames	1	22.6	0	10.0	48	51.1	5	12.8	0	3.5	42
Southwark	0	9.7	52	51.9	11	19.9	0	16.7	0	1.7	41
Sutton	20	33.7	3	17.1	29	36.8	0	8.7	3	3.6	3
Tower Hamlets	1	7.9	19	34.5	0	10.2	1	10.0	24	37.3	3
Waltham Forest	14	18.8	46	50.3	0	8.4	0	15.1	0	7.3	32
Wandsworth	22	33.4	35	43.5	0	8.0	0	11.2	1	3.9	13
Westminster	23	38.6	31	46.4	0	12.6	0	2.1	0	0.3	8

Note: majorities are those won in 2022, not as of now



# BARKING AND DAGENHAM

47 3 1

**2026 marks twenty years since the BNP caused a minor earthquake by winning eleven council seats in Barking and Dagenham.**

The BNP polled 43% in Parsloes, 42% in Alibon and Goresbrook, 41% in Valence and 39% in Mayesbrook. In wards the BNP didn't contest, UKIP polled strongly, a whole decade ahead of the EU referendum. They polled 30% in Heath and River, and 29% in Becontree and Thames.

Much hand-wringing occurred trying to comprehend what had happened and why it happened. It was one of the earliest examples of the growing alienation of white working-class voters from their traditional party: Labour. The BNP lost all its seats in 2010 as the much higher general election turnout of Labour voters swamped their vote. Their vote held up but Labour's sky-rocketed.

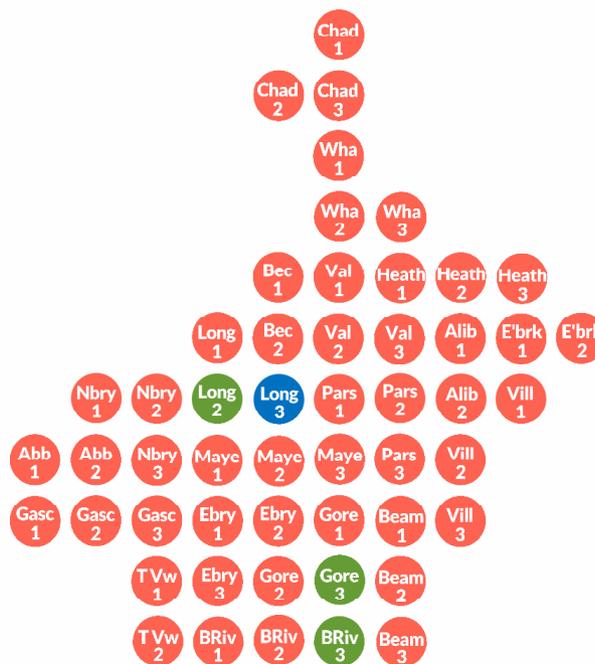
In 2014, the peak year for UKIP, there was again a huge nonconformist vote - just less noticed because, despite big votes, they won no seats. Broadly, the wards where UKIP polled strongly were those in which the BNP did well in 2006: **Alibon, Parsloes** and **Valence**, for example. But they also did well elsewhere: **Chadwell Heath, Eastbrook** and **Heath**.

The alienation that fuelled these substantial votes for parties regarded as far from the mainstream at the time was driven by very rapid demographic transformation of the outer East End. Insular, tight knit communities suddenly experienced a large influx of people seemingly very different, who often spoke a different language. This fostered discomfort - and it manifested in votes against the party they perceived had imposed this change on them with no mandate.

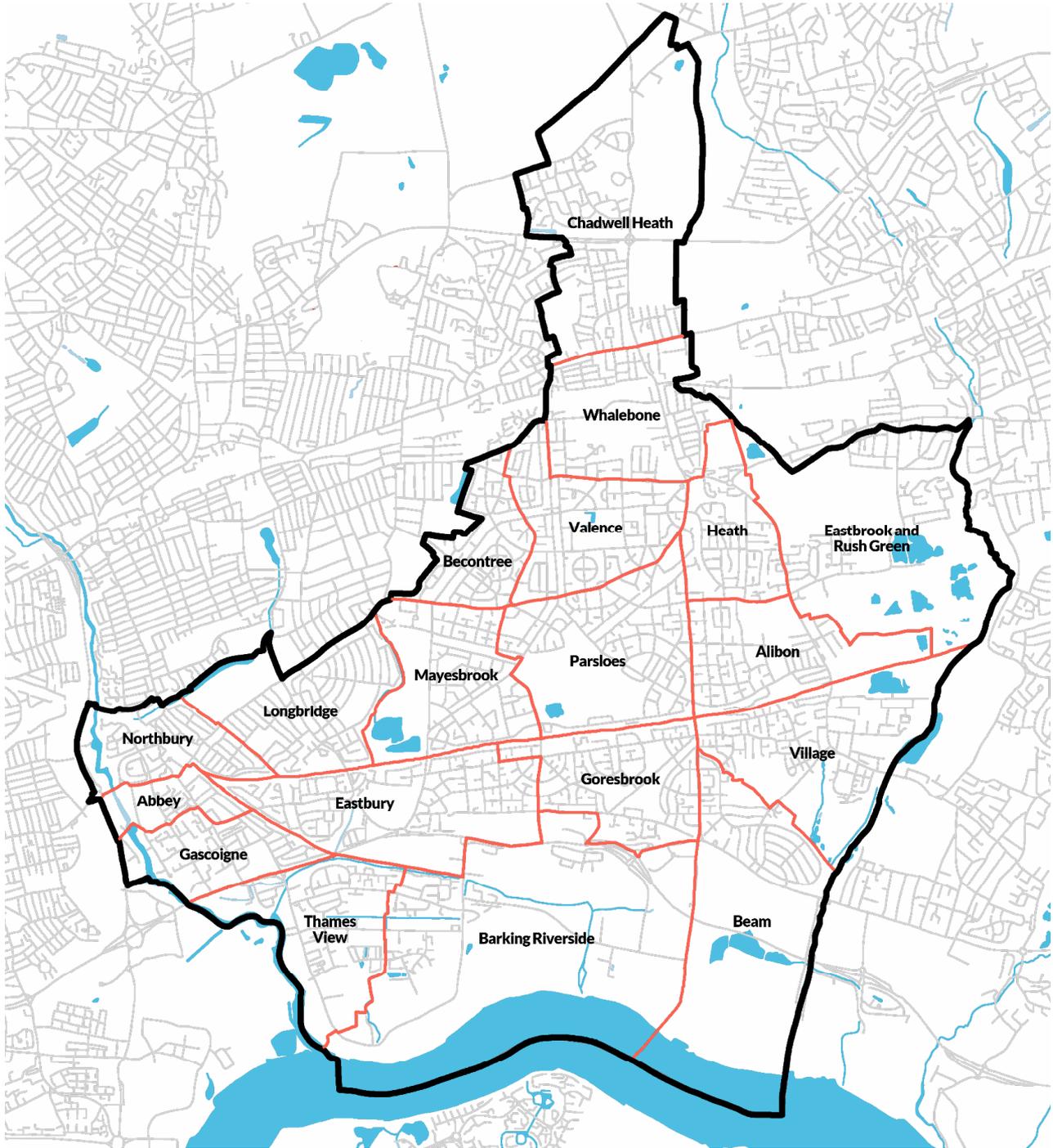
Barking and Dagenham is no longer an overwhelmingly white working class borough: it's no longer even majority white (45% white, 26% Asian, 21% Afro-Caribbean). These are the first London elections since 2006 with Labour in the midterm

of government, even if the BNP still existed, any repeat of that result would be highly unlikely. This is no longer the same borough.

But the ethnic mix is not evenly spread. The Becontree estate (Alibon, Becontree, Eastbrook, Goresbrook, Mayesbrook, Parsloes and Valence) and the Romford borders (Eastbrook, Heath and Village) remain substantially white British, especially in London terms.



Barking old and new - that is: the historic old town (**Abbey, Gascoigne, Northbury** and **Longbridge**), and the new, huge Thames- and Roding-side developments (**Barking Riverside, Beam, Thames View**), are overwhelmingly diverse with relatively small white populations.



It is unlikely Reform will be the main challenger in these wards. There is the potential of a serious Green challenge based on their showing in the July 2025 Thames View by-election (30% to Labour's 36%) and the defection to the Greens of one of the Barking Riverside Labour councillors. Of their three defectors, this is the one the Greens might successfully defend - though it's no slam-dunk.

### By-elections: change in party share

	Con	Lab	LD	Ref	Grn
Heath	+6.2	-11.5	+2.1		+3.3
Mayesbrook	+2.1	-22.3	+6.0		+14.2
Northbury	-7.6	-12.1	+5.0	+10.4	+4.3
Village	+17.0	-27.8	+3.6		+6.6
Whalebone	-5.4	-14.5	+9.6		+10.3
Thames View	-11.4	-28.8		+21.3	+29.9

*Italics show party that didn't contest the 2022 elections but did stand in the by-election so, strictly speaking, they're not increases: just the actual vote share won in the by-election*

Barking and Dagenham retains characteristics that stand it apart from the bulk of London Labour boroughs to the west. Most starkly, it voted 62% Leave in a capital that voted 60% Remain in the 2016 EU referendum, though that margin would have been closer had the current demographic been present a decade ago.

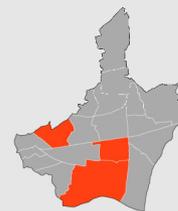
But, in theory, those differences and that electoral history give Reform some prospects here, especially at the Dagenham end of the borough, around the edges of Romford.

Electoral Calculus is currently forecasting that, in a general election, Reform would poll most votes in every ward in the borough bar three. That's not as surprising as it may at first appear because general elections tend to attract a far broader range of contestants than local elections and, therefore, Reform needs a much lower share of the vote to be tipped a ward in a general election scenario than in "real life" as it were.

## possible target wards

### Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Barking Riverside (1 Grn - def)
- ▶ Goresbrook (1 Grn - defec)
- ▶ Longbridge (1 Con, 1 Grn - defs)



### Reform UK hopefuls

- ▶ Alibon (2 Lab)
- ▶ Becontree (3 Lab)
- ▶ Chadwell Heath (3 Lab)
- ▶ Eastbrook and Rush Green (3 Lab)
- ▶ Goresbrook (3 Lab)
- ▶ Heath (3 Lab)
- ▶ Mayesbrook (3 Lab)
- ▶ Parsloes (3 Lab)
- ▶ Valence (3 Lab)
- ▶ Village (3 Lab)
- ▶ Whalebone (3 Lab)



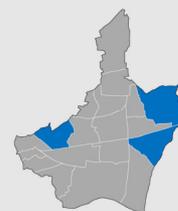
### Green hopefuls

- ▶ Barking Riverside (3 Lab)
- ▶ Longbridge (3 Lab)
- ▶ Thames View (2 Lab)



### Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Eastbrook and Rush Green (2 Lab)
- ▶ Longbridge (1 Lab, 1 Grn)
- ▶ Village (3 Lab)



The Conservatives are very weak in this borough: always have been, and were unable to find enough candidates to contest every seat last time. The other parties fared even worse: just twelve candidates fielded from all of them combined.

So, on the one hand, there is almost a deserted battlefield for Reform to occupy here. But this is also a problem for Reform because, if repeated this time, it means they are up against absolutely massive Labour vote piles. To win they need disaffected Labour voters who would never choose them splitting off towards the Greens, Lib Dems and independents.

Reform or anyone might win with 30% of the vote in a multi-party contest but 30% in a two-party fight equals a massive defeat. This happened to the Conservatives in 2022 despite winning a decent share of the vote.

So for Labour to be in real jeopardy in Barking and Dagenham it doesn't just need a big surge to another party: it requires a multi-party contest, ward by ward. That may happen given how poorly Labour is polling but we need to see actual candidates nominated, not just poll results. This has been the least competitive borough in London for decades, almost stuck in a time warp from an era when councillors were routinely elected unopposed.

Probably the best target for Reform is **Eastbrook & Rush Green** in the corner of the borough nearest Romford, which has been the top Tory hope for at least three elections. They should also have shots at **Alibon, Eastbury, Goresbrook, Heath, Mayesbrook, Parsloes, Village, Chadwell Heath** and **Whalebone** (though they failed to stand a candidate in the ward's 2025 by-election).

Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	White Brit	Black	Muslim	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Abbey	22.3	20.1	53.5	11.3	13.1	26.8	45.5	54.5	48.8	16.9
Alibon	46.9	27.2	24.5	38.9	17.6	16.8	30.2	69.8	31.2	24.3
Barking Riverside	36.0	39.0	20.9	19.3	32.0	25.4	40.6	59.4	43.7	16.0
Beam	48.0	21.3	29.7	29.8	24.7	19.3	29.4	70.6	31.3	23.5
Becontree	43.1	28.1	27.2	30.0	16.0	28.6	30.6	69.4	30.4	24.0
Chadwell Heath	49.2	30.2	19.9	32.4	15.5	23.6	36.3	63.7	32.1	23.1
Eastbrook and Rush Green	60.1	23.5	15.7	50.3	14.2	12.5	37.7	62.3	30.2	24.4
Eastbury	41.8	34.4	22.8	32.3	17.7	24.3	31.7	68.3	31.9	24.3
Gascoigne	23.9	42.5	26.7	16.9	24.7	34.3	36.9	63.1	40.3	18.9
Goresbrook	39.2	37.0	22.2	41.3	19.3	15.8	30.0	70.0	29.2	25.3
Heath	40.8	39.8	17.3	38.3	23.6	17.0	32.9	67.1	32.6	22.9
Longbridge	67.4	10.9	21.4	17.3	8.2	51.6	42.3	57.7	34.7	19.8
Mayesbrook	36.2	37.3	25.0	32.5	19.0	20.6	32.7	67.3	32.8	23.7
Northbury	27.3	28.7	40.1	12.5	20.7	39.1	33.0	67.0	37.5	21.0
Parsloes	43.6	35.7	20.0	40.7	17.5	16.6	30.3	69.7	29.0	24.8
Thames View	35.9	44.3	17.7	23.2	25.2	30.5	32.2	67.8	33.4	23.5
Valence	43.4	34.1	21.3	39.9	14.5	20.5	31.3	68.7	28.2	25.5

It is not necessarily just Reform Labour needs to be wary of. There are now organised pro-Gaza independents standing in Ilford - which merges seamlessly into Barking; and in East Ham, just across the river Roding.

Wards like **Longbridge**; once the only ward the Tories could win here (and once again with a Conservative councillor following a defection from Labour), now have sizeable Muslim populations. Voters this year may think having more councillors to challenge Labour and seek help from would better serve them, especially if they are uninspired by the monopoly party that has never lost an election here.

The Conservatives did pretty well in the [Dagenham] **Village** by-election in November 2024 (23% swing from Labour) but that was without Reform standing. It suggests that "old" Dagenham may suddenly be receptive to parties other than Labour.

The December Electoral Calculus General Election MRP had Labour in third place in Barking (Reform 34%, Green 24%, Labour 18%, Conservatives 11%) and fourth place in Dagenham and Rainham (Reform 45%, Green 17%, Conservatives 16%, Labour 15%).

These figures - anything remotely in the same ballpark as these figures - would not be survivable by Labour in a council election. People can vote radically differently in different types of elections. The MRP may be wrong. Most importantly, not all these parties will have the activists to enable them to contest every seat in May.

Barking and Dagenham is the borough Reform is most likely to win after Bexley. Havering would be - and there's not much in it - but the long established and deeply embedded Residents Associations there complicate Reform's path to power. If all three boroughs fall, that's one apiece gained from Conservatives, Labour and Residents. With the correct demographics Reform can beat anyone.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	G	O
May 22 council election result		51			
Dec 22 defection: Lynda Rice (Longbridge) - Lab to Ind		50			1
Mar 23 by-election: Heath - Lab hold (Lab -11.5)		50			1
Sep 23 by-election: Mayesbrook - Lab hold (Lab -22.3)		50			1
Nov 24 by-election: Village - Lab hold (Lab -27.2)		50			1
Nov 24 by-election: Northbury - Lab hold (Lab -12.1)		50			1
Feb 25 by-election: Whalebone - Lab hold (Lab -14.5)		50			1
Jul 25 by-election: Thames View - Lab hold (Lab -28.8)		50			1
Sep 25 defection: Lynda Rice (Longbridge) Ind to Con	1	50			
Sep 25 defection: Victoria Hornby (Barking Riverside) - Lab to Grn	1	49		1	
Sep 25 defection: Moin Qadri (Goresbrook) - Lab to Grn	1	48		2	
Sep 25 defection: Faruk Choudhury (Longbridge) - Lab to Grn	1	47		3	

# BARNET



**The first of Labour's three London gains in 2022 was Barnet and, of those three, it is the one they have the best chance of retaining.**

That is not certain because there is plentiful evidence from by-elections (including Burnt Oak in this borough) that Labour is struggling to turn its vote out. But Conservative performance has been unimpressive here too: notably failing to win by-elections in the key wards of Barnet Vale and Whetstone.

This is because Reform is making a few waves in Barnet: not enough to win, but more than enough to pull enough former Tory voters away in the marginal seats. They've made a point, mostly to needle the Conservatives, of nominating former Tory councillors who've defected in two of the by-elections.

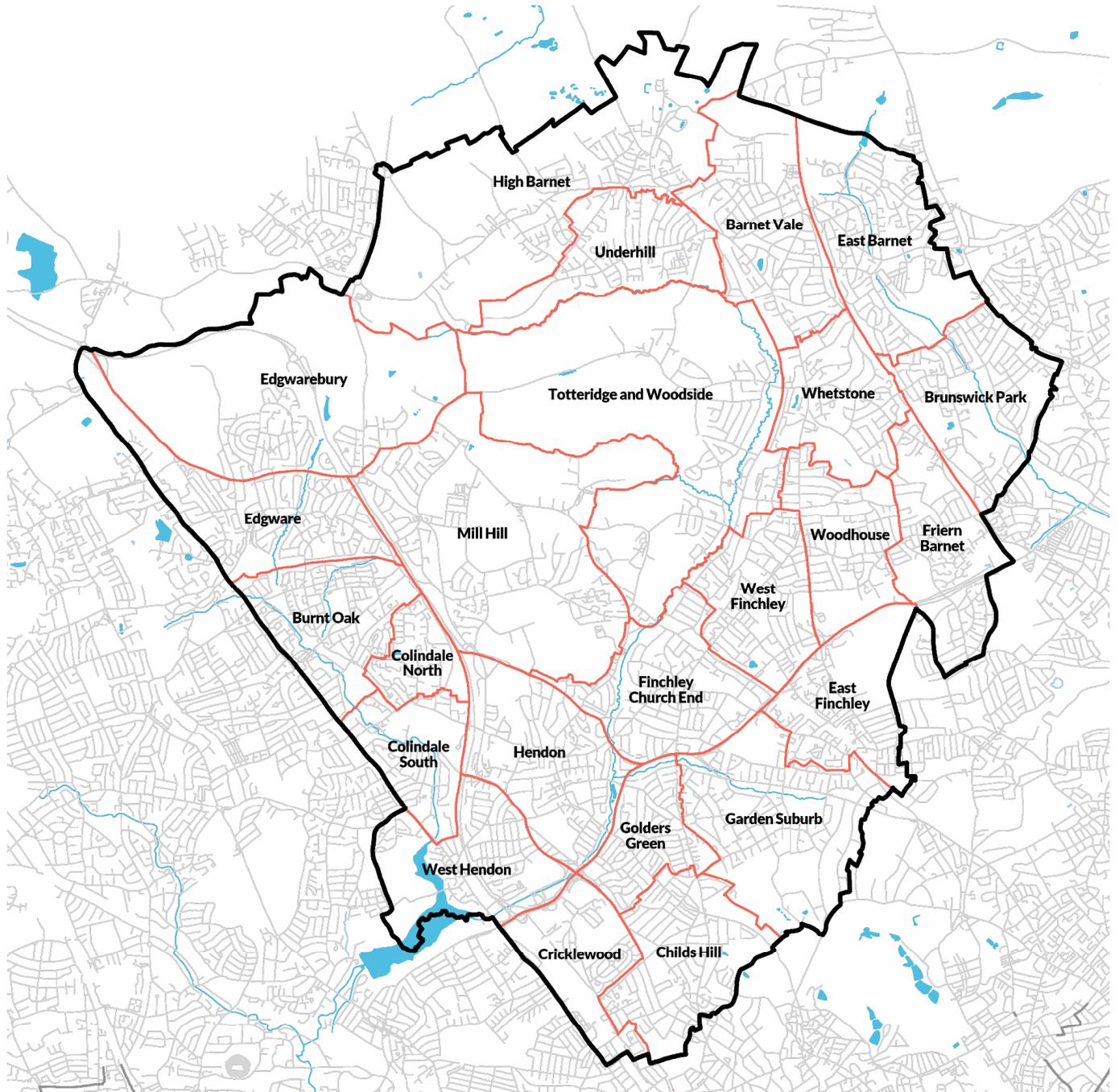
Two serving Tory councillors, one in Finchley Church End, one in Hendon have also defected. Whereas beyond London that might suggest wily individuals sensing which way the electoral winds are blowing and switching before being obliterated, here they're unlikely to survive.

The Conservatives did badly out of the ward boundary review that preceded the last elections. Those changes alone switched four seats from Tory to Labour - eight off their already not-overwhelming majority.

Massive new housing developments (approved by the Conservatives) created additional seats in safe Labour areas like Colindale and the dowdier Cricklewood end of Childs Hill where the IKEA superstore is. Tory seats in safe wards like Garden Suburb and Golders Green were abolished. New swing marginals were created like Barnet Vale.

## Marginal seats in Barnet

councillor	ward	maj	%maj
Richard Barnes	Barnet Vale	38	0.7
Lachhya Gurung	Edgwarebury	42	1.1
Nigel Young	Childs Hill	98	2.1
Sarah Wardle	Edgwarebury	100	2.6
Simon Radford	East Barnet	113	2.6
Marianne Haylett	Barnet Vale	176	3.3
Matthew Perlberg	Childs Hill	190	4.1
David Longstaff	Barnet Vale	246	4.5
Laithe Jajeh	Mill Hill	218	4.6
Edith David	East Barnet	285	5.2
Tony Vourou	Brunswick Park	275	5.5
Philip Cohen	East Barnet	318	5.8
Giulia Innocenti	Childs Hill	315	6.8
Elliot Simberg	Mill Hill	344	7.3
Liron Velleman	Whetstone	289	8.2
Paul Lemon	Brunswick Park	435	8.7
Giulia Monasterio	Brunswick Park	463	9.3
Val Duschinsky	Mill Hill	445	9.4
Richard Cornelius	Totteridge	540	12.1
Caroline Stock	Totteridge	551	12.3
Daniel Thomas	Finchley Church End	675	12.5
Jennifer Grocock	Finchley Church End	690	12.8
Paul Edwards	High Barnet	540	12.9
Emma Whysall	High Barnet	547	13.0
Alison Cornelius	Totteridge	606	13.6
Ella Rose	Whetstone	562	15.9
Eva Greenspan	Finchley Church End	892	16.5
Rishi Chakraborty	West Hendon	734	19.1
Shuey Gordon	Edgware	1,075	19.8
Ernest Ambe	West Hendon	764	19.9



But the Conservatives didn't lose Barnet in 2022 because of the boundary changes: they lost because their national unpopularity cost them wards they should have won: the new Whetstone for example, or High Barnet, or Childs Hill shorn of its best Labour territory.

Labour ended up with twice as many councillors as the Conservatives and led by a clear eight percentage points in the popular vote. But Barnet remains a marginal borough. At the 2024 general election Labour won all three constituencies but Hendon has their smallest majority in the entire country: just fifteen votes.

Chipping Barnet fell to Labour for the first time but by just 2,914, while Finchley & Golders Green - the most polarised of the constituencies - has a 4,581 Labour majority.

Ward estimates suggest that very little changed between the local and general election, with the Tories holding the wards in which they won all the seats and Labour holding theirs plus the splits. The gap between the parties didn't change either and, given that 2024 was a poorer year for the Tories than 2022 nationally, that suggests a tiny swing back in Barnet. But nothing to write home about.

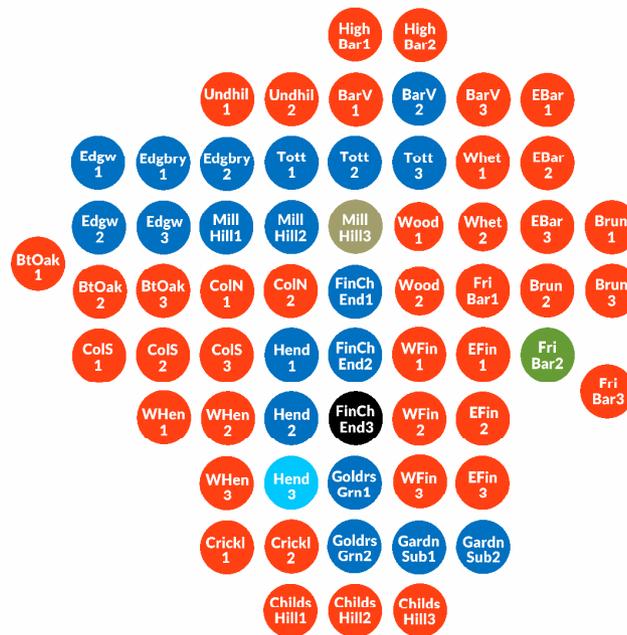
Ward	Housing			Religion		Ethnic	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	Muslim	Jewish	White British	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Barnet Vale	63.6	8.0	27.6	6.4	7.1	48.6	63.6	36.4	50.4	12.4
Brunswick Park	70.6	9.5	18.7	11.4	3.7	38.3	56.5	43.5	44.8	15.2
Burnt Oak	37.6	33.2	27.7	19.7	1.1	23.1	35.0	65.0	35.2	23.4
Childs Hill	43.2	9.5	46.6	13.0	19.9	32.0	62.2	37.8	53.9	14.5
Colindale North	27.2	42.4	26.9	25.1	1.4	19.0	40.7	59.3	41.6	20.0
Colindale South	34.8	18.0	43.0	22.4	1.4	15.0	55.0	45.0	51.3	14.8
Cricklewood	35.2	23.5	39.7	27.5	2.5	21.2	44.3	55.7	41.1	20.5
East Barnet	62.6	9.3	27.6	8.5	4.7	49.9	55.2	44.8	44.0	15.2
East Finchley	47.6	23.1	28.4	9.6	8.1	42.8	66.0	34.0	56.5	12.6
Edgware	60.0	8.8	29.4	11.7	28.8	36.5	58.1	41.9	49.5	15.4
Edgwarebury	62.6	13.2	23.3	12.1	28.4	41.0	54.2	45.8	43.3	16.3
Finchley Church End	57.4	4.7	37.5	7.8	30.1	38.7	66.8	33.2	56.2	13.3
Friern Barnet	51.8	14.8	32.8	12.0	4.2	36.8	54.9	45.1	47.4	15.9
Garden Suburb	69.3	5.4	25.0	6.3	40.9	47.4	77.9	22.1	64.9	8.4
Golders Green	43.9	7.9	47.7	5.8	49.7	44.2	58.0	42.0	42.8	16.8
Hendon	42.6	9.8	47.2	9.4	32.6	35.6	51.9	48.1	46.8	15.6
High Barnet	67.1	10.4	21.7	6.4	7.0	56.5	68.3	31.7	52.1	13.4
Mill Hill	63.9	8.8	26.6	12.8	21.5	40.5	62.8	37.2	50.9	14.0
Totteridge and Woodside	66.5	9.2	23.3	9.3	18.8	38.4	72.9	27.1	59.6	10.7
Underhill	56.6	24.6	17.2	8.2	2.7	48.1	55.8	44.2	42.9	17.4
West Finchley	52.3	6.0	41.2	10.1	9.2	31.6	63.5	36.5	55.6	13.4
West Hendon	41.5	14.3	43.3	18.6	6.3	19.3	45.9	54.1	44.3	19.9
Whetstone	64.3	9.1	24.4	8.2	8.8	41.7	65.9	34.1	52.9	13.5
Woodhouse	50.2	10.6	37.5	12.3	4.7	34.1	55.8	44.2	47.6	17.6

There's everything to play for. The critical issue in 2026 across most Conservative-Labour London borough battlegrounds is whether Labour will lose more votes to abstention or parties to their left than the Tories lose to Reform. And here it seems there's very little in it.

That's why Labour may be slightly favoured to hold Barnet: in the battle of who could not care less, the Tories are ahead...or behind - whichever way you want to look at it.

And to complicate things further, what if one side of the borough is moving away from Labour while the other is still giving them the benefit of the doubt? What if the Tories fare better on the Hendon side than the Barnet side?

That would mean they could regain wards like **Childs Hill** and maybe pull off surprises in **Colindale South** and **West Hendon** while making insufficient headway in **East Barnet**, **High Barnet** or **Barnet Vale**. That would be a real problem for the Tories because there are far more marginals in the east - but it would explain, for example, why Labour could defend Whetstone comfortably enough in that ward's by-election.



### By-elections: change in party share

	Con	Lab	LD	Ref	Grn
Finchley Church End	+1.0	+4.4	-2.5		-2.3
Barnet Vale	-1.1	+3.6	+0.2		-2.6
Golders Green	+4.2	+3.2	-19.2	+10.5	-4.2
Whetstone	-9.0	-16.2	+6.1	+20.5	-5.7
Burnt Oak	-1.8	-18.1	+3.9	+18.4	-5.4
Hendon	+3.4	-12.9	-2.2	+30.2	-2.8

*Italics show party that didn't contest the 2022 elections but did stand in the by-election so, strictly speaking, they're not increases: just the actual vote share won in the by-election*

There is one other spectre Labour had believed it had slain in 2022: and that is a renewed antagonism within the (huge) Jewish population here. Under Jeremy Corbyn it was widely perceived that anti-Semitism among some Labour members tipped several wards away from the party.

Today it is the government's over-dependence on its Muslim constituency, the backlash Jews have experienced over the

Gaza conflict and the perception of two-tier policing and dishonest spin about issues like the banning of Maccabi Tel Aviv fans from their match with Aston Villa in Birmingham.

All the wards with the really large Jewish populations are already Conservative held so the electoral impact is lesser in council elections, but **Childs Hill** and **West Hendon** may have enough Jewish electors to swing the result.

In contrast, the wards with the largest Muslim communities - which are growing - are Labour held. How much does that electoral reality for Labour affect their approach to the two communities?

Barnet still looks very much like a two-party fight. The Lib Dems briefly surged during those turbulent Corbyn years with defector Lucianna Berger winning second place in the 2019 general election in Finchley and Golders Green.

The Lib Dems failed to follow through in the 2022 council elections, getting fairly distant runners-up spots in **East Finchley**, **Finchley Church End** and **West Finchley**, but declining in wards they won relatively recently, like **Childs**

**Hill** and **Mill Hill**. The cause of their failure beyond those core Finchley wards was the decision by those who wanted the Tories out to align behind Labour. So it was Labour that ran the Tories quite close even in wards like **Mill Hill** and **Totteridge and Woodside** despite never challenging there before. Now Labour has ousted the Tories the momentum has faded and opportunities for others will emerge.

At the front of the queue is Reform. Where might they compete strongly? The demographic changes that shifted Chipping Barnet from a safe Conservative constituency to one Labour won fairly handily harm Reform just as much.

Had Reform been a national presence thirty years ago, it might have challenged somewhere like **High Barnet**, **Edgware** or **Whetstone**. I don't think these are likely Reform wards anymore: they simply contain too many voters who'd vote for almost anyone other than Nigel Farage.

Maybe Reform's best chance is the large ward in the middle of the borough: **Totteridge and Woodside**. Despite the near 10% swing to Labour in 2022 they were nowhere near winning. Travelling along Totteridge Common is like being in the country, though the ward's main population centres are next to Whetstone and North Finchley in the south east.

Two Conservative councillors defected to Reform: one in **Hendon** ward, the other in **Finchley Church End** (who's subsequently quit the council). These are definitely Reform possibilities though there was a by-election in Hendon ward in November 2025 and, while Reform won a strong 30% of the vote, the Conservatives held them off. **Finchley Church End** covers adjoining and pretty similar territory to Hendon but is a bit less Conservative.

**Mill Hill** might also be a potential target: somewhat more suburban than Hendon; more mixed than Hendon and somewhere that had a habit of not electing Conservatives when they were last very unpopular in the 1990s. Did Mill Hill vote Lib Dem because it's intrinsically liberal? I don't think so.

This is one of those areas that valued hard-working, visible pavement-politics councillors. Mill Hill also gained a chunk of the old marginal Hale in 2022, so there is quite a potent non-Conservative vote there.

## Possible target wards

### Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Barnet Vale (1 Con)
- ▶ Edgwarebury (2 Con)
- ▶ Friern Barnet (1 Grn - defec)
- ▶ Mill Hill (3 Con)



### Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Barnet Vale (2 Lab)
- ▶ Brunswick Park (3 Lab)
- ▶ Childs Hill (3 Lab)
- ▶ Colindale South (3 Lab)
- ▶ East Barnet (3 Lab)
- ▶ Hendon (1 Ref - defec)
- ▶ High Barnet (2 Lab)
- ▶ Mill Hill (1 Ind - defec)
- ▶ West Hendon (3 Lab)
- ▶ Whetstone (2 Lab)



### Reform UK hopefuls

- ▶ Edgware (3 Con)
- ▶ Finchley Church End (2 Con, 1 vac)
- ▶ Hendon (2 Con)
- ▶ Mill Hill (2 Con, 1 Ind - defec)
- ▶ Totteridge and Woodside (3 Con)
- ▶ Underhill (2 Lab)



### Green hopefuls

- ▶ Cricklewood (2 Lab)
- ▶ East Finchley (3 Lab)
- ▶ Friern Barnet (3 Lab)
- ▶ Woodhouse (2 Lab)



### Liberal Democrat hopefuls

- ▶ Childs Hill (3 Lab)
- ▶ Finchley Church End (2 Con, 1 vac)
- ▶ West Finchley (3 Lab)



Reform could try its luck in Labour wards too, though they will almost certainly come up short. The Labour vote in **Burnt Oak** - a big council estate that has always been one of their strongest wards in London - collapsed in a 2024 by-election and it all seemed to go to Reform. But even though Labour won less than 50% for the first time, and could fall further in May, they were still miles ahead there.

**Colindale North** might be a bit better: another safe Labour ward adjoining Burnt Oak and containing most of "old" Colindale but a few notches weaker. Colindale North now contains more public housing than Burnt Oak, though that's not as useful a measure of Labour strength as once it was.

Reform might have a shot at **Underhill** in the borough's north. This ward, the former home of Barnet FC football club, is fairly white, not especially affluent and evenly balanced between ABC1s and C2DEs. It's not the most accessible area so it hasn't had the influx of younger liberal professionals that has swung much of Chipping Barnet to Labour. If Reform is going to win a Labour ward in Barnet I'd tip **Underhill**.

That leaves the Greens. Their indifferent performance across the board in Barnet last time means that, if they win anything,

it'll be a surprise. As the demographic profile of their vote is almost the mirror of Reform's look at the wards closest to London predominantly Labour-held, with ethnically diverse populations: **Friern Barnet, East Finchley, and Cricklewood**. These are safe Labour wards but the spine has gone from their vote: it's now weak and could slide to the Greens.

The Greens could also entice enough voters from Labour in some marginals to throw the result to the Tories. Look to wards like **Brunswick Park, East Barnet, Barnet Vale, High Barnet** and **Whetstone** if this happens. The same is true of Reform regarding the Conservative vote but in a borough like Barnet (and especially its eastern side) the Greens should exert a greater pull than Respect can.

I began by stating that Barnet is the most likely of the three boroughs Labour gained in 2022 to stay faithful to the party. And it is. But that's not the same thing as saying Barnet definitely will stay with them. Maybe their comfortable majority will be resilient. The fact the Tories are struggling almost as much as Labour right now helps. But Labour's polling trough is so deep that they may not be able to cling on, even though they possibly could.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	G	R	O
May 22 council election result	22	41			
Jan 23 defection: Linda Lusingu (Friern Barnet) Lab to Ind	22	40			1
Feb 23 by-election: Golders Green - Con hold	22	40			1
Jul 24 by-election: Barnet Vale - Lab hold	22	40			1
Oct 24: defection: Laithe Jajeh (Mill Hill) Con to Ind	21	40			2
Feb 25 by-election: Burnt Oak - Lab hold	21	40			2
Feb 25 defection: Mark Shooter (Hendon) Con to Ref	20	40		1	2
Mar 25 by-election: Finchley Church End - Con hold	20	40		1	2
May 25 by-election: Whetstone - Lab hold	20	40		1	2
Jun 25 defection: Daniel Thomas (Finchley Church End) Con to Ref	19	40		2	2
Oct 25 by-election: Hendon - Con hold	19	40		2	2
Dec 25 vacancy: Daniel Thomas (Finchley Church End) resigned	19	40		1	2
Feb 25 defection: Linda Lusingu (Friern Barnet) Ind to Grn	19	40	1	1	1

# BEXLEY

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3

Go to the Electoral Calculus website and, right now, it is forecasting that in a general election, Reform UK would win every ward in the Bexleyheath & Crayford constituency: the central chunk of Bexley borough; plus Belvedere in the north.

It's conceivable Electoral Calculus is wrong: **Erith**, **Northumberland Heath** and **Northend and Slade Green** could also fall to Reform: only very different **Thamesmead East** does not look like a ward that would consider that party of the populist right.

The London boroughs that are most promising for Reform: Bexley and Havering are the ones least like the rest of the city. Both are apart from London: Havering across the green corridor along the valley of the river Beam; Bexley by Oxleas Wood and Avery Hill.

Both share similarities with places that for the past couple of decades at least have heavily favoured the Tories, joined in the 2024 backlash against them by



swinging to Labour as the best means of ousting them, then rapidly got buyers' remorse. Now they're giving serious consideration to Nigel Farage's Party - a party that culturally is far closer to their values than Labour has been for three decades at least.

There is a case to be made for the Conservatives to at least do better than expected. This is not a borough with a moribund Conservative organisation as Richmond, Sutton and Kingston were when the Liberals began organising there. Bexley has seen waves of threat to Conservative control from Lib Dems and Labour but were either been seen off or the Tories rebounded rapidly.

Labour won council majorities as recently as 2002, though their collapse among more affluent, white communities across the centre of the borough, coupled with boundary changes that substantially shrank the council to just 45 seats, relegated the party to the industrialised Thames-side wards.

In 2021, following the death of Conservative MP James Brokenshire, the party relatively easily defended Old Bexley and Sidcup, winning over half the vote while Reform (Richard Tice was their candidate) polled just 7%. Reform managed 22% at the 2024 General Election but were more than 7,500 votes behind the Conservatives.

Despite the real threat to their seats, no Bexley councillor has defected to Reform. That suggests a united group confident that their management of the council and their roots in their communities are strong. But it will be a huge achievement to turn back Reform in an election many voters will view as the best chance to kick the government rather than weigh up the merits of their local council's leadership.

So the working class nature of much of Bexley has been strong enough to elect Labour on occasion. But it also has a fondness for the "none of the above" option.

Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	White Brit	Black	Muslim	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Barnehurst	73.2	15.0	10.6	71.1	9.0	3.4	43.6	56.4	28.4	18.5
Belvedere	56.5	16.1	26.6	47.3	17.4	4.6	40.2	59.8	33.4	20.1
Bexleyheath	78.8	6.7	13.3	70.3	5.0	3.2	48.9	51.1	31.1	17.8
Blackfen & Lamorbey	83.0	4.3	12.2	79.9	3.0	2.8	47.6	52.4	27.9	16.7
Blendon & Penhill	85.7	3.6	10.1	80.7	3.2	2.9	48.8	51.2	28.1	16.1
Crayford	61.8	20.9	15.2	70.5	8.6	4.0	44.0	56.0	29.4	18.7
Crook Log	77.0	6.1	16.0	67.3	4.2	3.4	51.1	48.9	33.3	17.0
East Wickham	74.9	11.8	12.5	62.2	6.3	4.3	44.3	55.7	29.9	20.5
Erith	45.9	27.8	19.9	46.0	22.8	6.0	42.0	58.0	35.7	18.5
Falconwood & Welling	79.2	4.9	14.9	62.9	6.6	4.4	46.0	54.0	31.2	17.4
Longlands	74.0	11.9	13.3	79.5	2.6	2.4	55.1	44.9	34.3	15.1
Northumberland Heath	70.2	16.3	12.7	66.9	10.0	3.2	40.4	59.6	26.8	20.3
St Mary's & St James	75.1	11.1	11.8	78.1	4.1	2.0	56.5	43.5	34.0	15.8
Sidcup	62.5	15.8	19.6	74.9	4.7	2.9	52.7	47.3	33.1	17.4
Slade Green & Northend	48.1	34.2	16.2	47.3	27.6	5.8	39.4	60.6	35.0	21.2
Thamesmead East	33.6	43.5	22.0	30.2	39.9	7.8	34.6	65.4	37.7	19.3
West Heath	83.8	6.3	9.0	68.2	6.6	3.0	46.0	54.0	29.0	18.2

Despite not being a remotely liberal area, parts of Bexley have a history of electing centre party councillors - sixteen of them in 1994. Whatever was left of any fondness for the Lib Dems broke in 2016 when the party campaigned so noisily for Remain in the EU referendum. 63% of Bexley voted Leave.

For years, the neighbourhood of Welling was where the BNP had its headquarters which generated unwanted far-right activity and counter protests.

In 2014, UKIP won three council seats, in **Blackfen & Lamorbey, Colyers** (Barnehurst) and the East Wickham ward of **St Michael's**. Across the borough UKIP polled 22% but polled around 30% in wards like **Falconwood & Welling, Belvedere, Blendon & Penhill** and **Longlands** in Sidcup.

So there is a broad and deep reservoir of support ready to vote Reform. Given that the party is polling twenty percentage points stronger today than UKIP managed in 2014, a Reform landslide might seem inevitable.

But if the Conservatives are a little bit more competitive, this record of fighting hard ward by ward for years, rather than just resting on their laurels and rarely contacting their constituents, could keep enough seats in their column.

Indeed, harking back to Electoral Calculus, in the autumn of 2025 the website was forecasting not just every ward in Bexleyheath and Crayford would vote Reform but all in Old Bexley and Sidcup would too. Today it's suggesting the Conservatives would outpoll Reform in all the wards in this constituency at a general election.

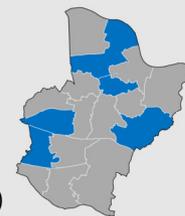
Forecasts like this need to be taken lightly. Their forecasts pertain to general not local elections. We are still probably more than three years from a general election. And there is a greater difficulty in accurately polling local elections - which, again, Electoral Calculus isn't attempting to do.

But let's assume it's correct for a moment. It would mean 19 Conservatives would win, plus 9 Labour from Thamesmead East and Erith wards. That would leave 17 Reform councillors and a hung council. It would probably compel the two right-of-centre parties to come to some arrangement.

## Possible target wards

### Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Belvedere (3 Lab)
- ▶ Blackfen and Lamorbey (1 Ind - def)
- ▶ Crayford (1 Ind - defection)
- ▶ Falconwood and Welling (1 Ind - def)
- ▶ Northumberland Heath (2 Lab)



### Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Barnehurst (2 Con)
- ▶ Crayford (3 Con)
- ▶ East Wickham (3 Con)



### Reform UK hopefuls

- ▶ Barnehurst (2 Con)
- ▶ Belvedere (3 Lab)
- ▶ Bexleyheath (3 Con)
- ▶ Blackfen and Lamorbey (3 Con)
- ▶ Crayford (3 Con)
- ▶ Crook Log (3 Con)
- ▶ East Wickham (3 Con)
- ▶ Erith (3 Lab)
- ▶ Falconwood and Welling (3 Con)
- ▶ Northumberland Heath (2 Lab)
- ▶ Slade Green and Northend (2 Lab)
- ▶ West Heath (2 Con)



As for Labour, they have been hindered by three factors: a big reduction in the size of the council, very unhelpful boundary changes in 2018, and the growing void between the cultural values of the party and the residents of most of Bexley.

Bexley, except for the wards Labour holds, is not typical of London. You do not find wards that are 80% white British anywhere in the boroughs further to the centre, as **Blendon and Penhill** ward is.

A far smaller proportion of Bexley residents hold degrees than is typical for London. But this doesn't denote relative poverty - it's simply that the borough is populated with more of those who left school at 16 or 18 and went to often quite lucrative skilled manual work. There are lots of white van drivers in Bexley.

That's why the proportion of ABC1s: the statisticians' way of describing those in so-called "top" jobs: the engines of commerce and the professions, isn't especially high here either. If you have a skilled, high-paying job, you get bracketed as a C2 - even though you likely earn more than a lawyer, doctor or civil servant with similar years in their job.

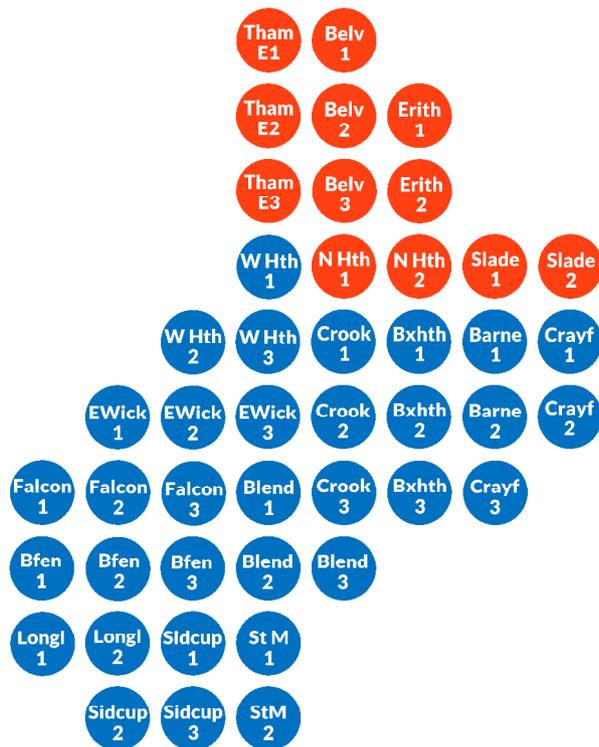
In every Bexley ward, C2DEs outnumber ABC1s. That doesn't make Bexley poor or "deprived". In Islington - ranked as a borough with far worse deprivation than Bexley - the reverse is true, by a long way. Bexley has far more in common with Dartford and Gravesham and Medway than it does with Greenwich and Lewisham and Southwark.

The link between statistics measuring affluence and academic qualifications have lost a lot of salience as the metropolitan rich have swung to Labour while culturally the party has moved away less affluent, working class voters.

Of the Bexley wards Labour holds, only **Thamesmead East** is truly mid-term election disaster-proof. This is the Bexley side of the huge GLC estate built on reclaimed marshland. A council estate ward in a borough not known for vast quantities of council housing, with a black population larger than its white one - again anomalous.

Labour can then nearly always rely on **Erith and Slade Green and Northend**; and somewhat less dependable **Belvedere**.

**Northumberland Heath**, their fifth ward, is marginal because it is the closest Labour-held division to the norm in Bexley.



It would be a little surprising if Labour held on here and they might also struggle in **Slade Green and Northend, Erith and Belvedere**.

Labour held a seat in **Belvedere** in an autumn 2024 by-election - before the government's rapid loss of popularity had kicked in, but even then the Labour vote was down seventeen points and the combined Conservative-Reform vote was nearly 50%: significantly more than Labour won.

If, however, Labour was to defy the odds and make gains, where might these come from?

The most marginal Conservative-held ward is **Crayford**, which used to be solid Labour but fell to the Conservatives in 2006 and has never returned.

Labour was less than a hundred from winning here in 2022 and only didn't because the Tory vote rose almost as much as theirs. **Crayford** is far more likely to vote Reform than Labour this year.

Then, tucked south of Plumstead and across Shooters Hill from Woolwich is **East Wickham** which Labour missed out on by just 43 votes in 2022. East Wickham might prove slightly more resilient to the allures of Reform than Crayford and thus give Labour a better chance of a gain, but if they do it'll almost certainly be with a vote much lower than they managed last time.

In the 2018 council boundary review the number of councillors was cut to just 45 - down from 63. Fewer councillors meant wards became a lot larger. And that in turn meant that Labour enclaves which contained enough votes to get their party elected in smaller wards were engulfed by surrounding Conservative neighbourhoods.

Labour used to be able, in pretty decent years, to win the old Cray Meadows ward in Sidcup. But that relatively small ward

got amalgamated with St Mary's - the safest Tory ward in the borough - and this amalgam Labour cannot get close to.

There used to be a Lesnes Abbey ward on the borough border with Plumstead which was usually Labour. But the best Labour bits of Lesnes Abbey were moved to Belvedere and the rest became **West Heath** - similar to the old Bostall ward - which is fairly comfortably Conservative. Labour-leaning Colyers became Conservative-leaning Barnehurst.

But because beyond those aberrant northern wards most of the rest of Bexley is socially, economically and demographically very similar, if a party can break through in one ward it could well mean that a whole slate of adjoining wards move the same way at the same time.

So, beyond Crayford and East Wickham, Labour lost several wards by about similar amounts: **Barnehurst, Bexleyheath, Falconwood and Welling, Crook Log, West Heath and Blackfen and Lamorbey**. Labour isn't going to win these this year but the same reality serves Reform as well as Labour: if they get one they'll probably get a load.

And this is why Bexley is Reform's best target in London: the Conservatives will not be able to defend every one of their seats. When one gets breached, a whole lot will likely fall.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	R	O
May 22 council election result	33	12			
May 24 defection: Nigel Betts (Falconwood and Welling) Con to Ind	32	12			1
Jul 24 defection: Felix De Netimah (Crayford) Con to Ind	31	12			2
Oct 24 by-election: Belvedere Lab hold (Lab -15.6)	31	12			2
Feb 25 suspension: James Hunt (Blackfen and Lamorbey) Con to Ind	30	12			3

**Brent began as a battle between fairly Labour Willesden and massively Conservative Wembley. You wouldn't know that looking at the 2022 results where just five Tories clung on against a phalanx of forty-two Labour councillors.**

It's worth reflecting on how much Brent has swung to Labour through demographic change: Preston and Northwick Park wards gave the Tories 70% of the vote as recently as 1990, Kenton: 74%, Barnhill: 75%.

The Conservatives were also competitive in the borough's east: the old Brentwater, Brondesbury Park, Cricklewood, Gladstone and Mapesbury wards, for example.

There were also very safe Labour neighbourhoods, mostly running along the southern edge of the borough like Kilburn, Kensal Rise, Harlesden, Stonebridge and Alperton.

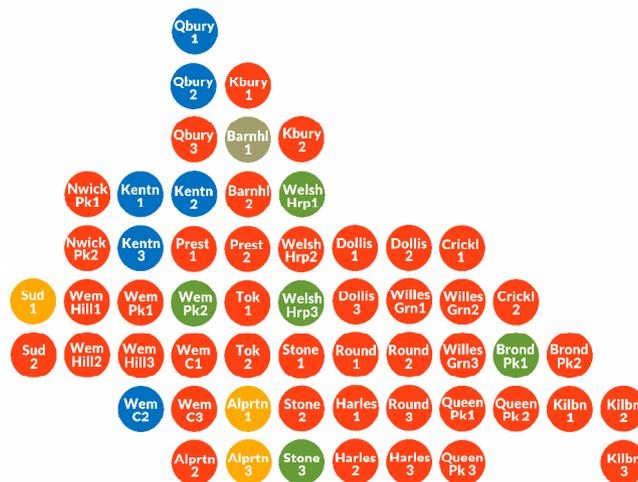
But the Conservative strength in Brent usually appeared greater than it was because this was one of Labour's "loony left" boroughs and voters who, elsewhere, would have been loyally Labour often turned out to keep Labour from power, or at least prevent their wins from becoming landslides.

Brent see-sawed politically. Labour lost its majority in 1982; regained it in 1986, lost it in 1990 (kept in power by the Lib Dems); then ousted in 1991. In 1994 the council remained hung and eventually the Conservatives cobbled together an administration only to lose it in 1996 when one of their councillors died. Labour returned in 1998 but lost again in 2006 following the Brent East by-election during the Iraq War backlash. Since 2014, however, Labour's majority has surged to record margins.

This frequent change in administration fuelled the sense of crisis and rapid changes of policy direction also did not help deliver stability for the borough's residents.

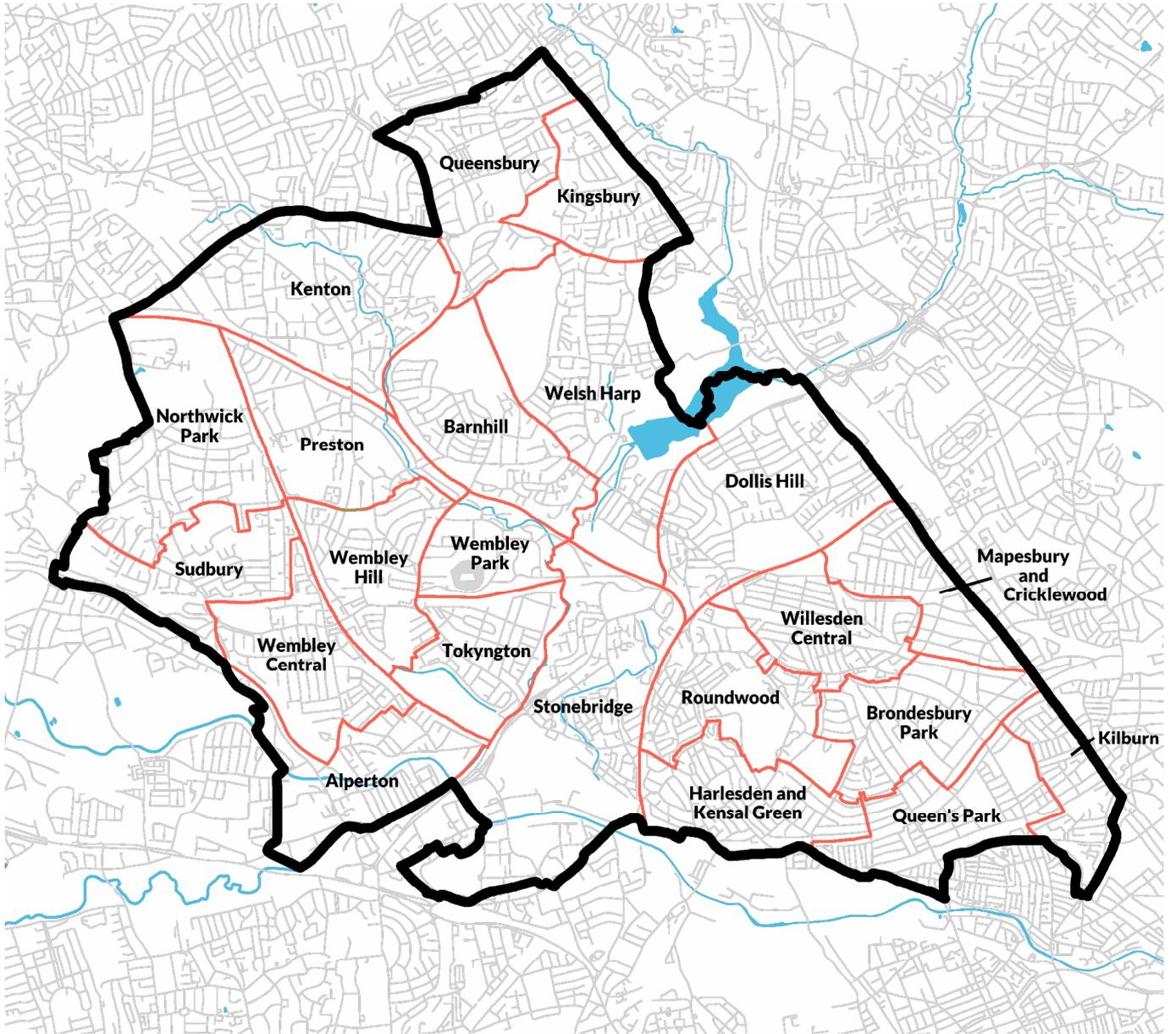
It wouldn't quite be accurate to say the political dynamics of Brent were unique within the firmament of councils run by the left. But unlike, say, Haringey or Hackney and to a lesser extent Lambeth, Brent was a genuinely competitive borough back in the day.

You might think that the threat of losing power might act as a moderating force. It did not - on either side. The Conservatives were as equally confrontational and determined to implement as aggressive an agenda that appealed to their voters as Labour was.



There were also the more complex issues of race in Brent - again, not completely different from other deprived urban London boroughs, but in their wider diversity here even more turbulent. So much of this was about identity and how Labour managed those tensions.

How, for example, the larger black community of Caribbean heritage interacted with the smaller African community, became crucial when in 1991 two African councillors quit



Labour and voted the Conservatives into power, partly in exchange for the sinecures of committee chairs but also, they alleged, because of bullying by Labour Caribbean councillors.

There was also a large and growing community of Asians - principally of Indian Hindu and Sikh origin, but also Ugandans; and a large established Irish community in Kilburn.

Much of the tabloid coverage of Labour's antics in Brent focussed on race rather than other totems (though posturing on nuclear-free zones and poor financial management leading to rate-capping existed here too) because this was the flavour of Labour radicalism here. Brent in the 1980s and early 1990s was still a mostly white borough that could be irritated by too great a focus on minority communities.

Brent council elected Britain's first black council leader: Merle Amory, in 1986. She was succeeded by Dorman Long. Brent South's Paul Boateng was one of the four ethnic minority Labour MPs - alongside Diane Abbott, Keith Vaz and Bernie Grant - elected for the first time in 1987. Brent has been led by Mohammed Butt for fourteen years. Ensuring that Brent's minority communities were represented within the town hall was central to Labour's mission - and they succeeded: this became the first council with a majority ethnic minority workforce.

But, as seen with those defectors who shunted Labour out of power in 1991: Nkechi Amalu-Johnson and Poline Nyaga, Labour's councillors have been somewhat volatile.

There was Latikaben Patel - Labour's deputy leader, who switched to the Conservatives in 1994 and won election for his new party in Tokyngton.

There was Bertha Joseph, who was retained the mayoralty of Brent after crossing the council chamber to the Tories.

In late 2025 Raja Rajan-Seelan in Wembley Central became another Labour defector to the Conservatives while five Labour councillors switched to the Greens (four after deselection).

## Possible key wards

### Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Alperton (2 LD)
- ▶ Barnhill (1 Ind - defec)
- ▶ Brondesbury Park (1 Grn - defec)
- ▶ Kenton (3 Con)
- ▶ Queensbury (2 Con)
- ▶ Stonebridge (1 Grn - defec)
- ▶ Sudbury (1 LD)
- ▶ Welsh Harp (2 Grn - defec)
- ▶ Wembley Central (1 Con - defec)
- ▶ Wembley Park (1 Grn - defec)



### Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Barnhill (1 Lab, 1 Ind)
- ▶ Kingsbury (2 Lab)
- ▶ Northwick Park (2 Lab)
- ▶ Preston (2 Lab)
- ▶ Queensbury (1 Lab)
- ▶ Tokyngton (2 Lab)
- ▶ Welsh Harp (1 Lab, 2 Grn - defec)
- ▶ Wembley Central (2 Con)
- ▶ Wembley Hill (3 Lab)



### Liberal Democrat hopefuls

- ▶ Alperton (1 Lab)
- ▶ Sudbury (1 Lab)



### Green hopefuls

- ▶ Brondesbury Park (1 Lab)
- ▶ Cricklewood & Mapesbury (3 Lab)
- ▶ Harlesden & Kensal Green (3 Lab)
- ▶ Queen's Park (3 Lab)
- ▶ Wembley Park (2 Lab)
- ▶ Willesden Green (3 Lab)



Why there is quite such turbulence isn't obvious other than that it might be a consequence of Brent being an artificial borough concocted in a Whitehall fever dream and then imposed on residents who got no say in the amalgamation of some very different areas.

That the difference has diminished as the demographics of Brent have continued to change and Labour's leadership has become more staid and stable does not mean that Brent now works well as an administrative entity.

Earlier we looked at the political ping-pong Brent endured for almost a quarter of a century: from the early 1980s to 2010. The political realignment that caused that switch from chaos to one-party stability was the collapse of Brent's Tories.

In 1997 Labour ousted the Tory controversialist Sir Rhodes Boyson on a huge swing of 19%. Barry Gardiner, the seat's first Labour MP, has been in place ever since. While he won, Wembley's Conservative councillors stayed in place for a further decade before losing in 2006 and 2010.

The Lib Dems gained Brent East in that grim mid-term by-election caused by the death of former council leader, then MP, Paul Daisley. They won 27 council seats in 2006 off that by-election and Labour's even deeper unpopularity, mostly in the east of the borough but also in Tokyngton.

Lib Dem MP Sarah Teather then held the rejigged constituency of Brent Central before she stood down in 2015 and the Lib Dem vote collapsed by 35 percentage points.

Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Ethnic	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	Hindu + Sikh	Muslim	Black	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Alperton	43.5	14.5	37.6	45.1	14.0	10.3	28.1	71.9	31.0	30.1
Barnhill	40.1	26.3	32.4	13.2	29.9	17.2	44.2	55.8	42.5	20.6
Brondesbury Park	41.6	21.1	36.1	4.9	19.5	10.6	63.5	36.5	51.1	16.3
Cricklewood & Mapesbury	32.6	20.8	45.1	2.6	23.1	11.8	50.6	49.4	46.6	19.6
Dollis Hill	39.8	19.9	38.6	6.3	35.6	17.1	35.3	64.7	32.8	26.7
Harlesden & Kensal Green	28.4	32.4	37.6	3.3	19.7	25.3	42.8	57.2	38.2	22.6
Kenton	57.5	13.6	28.0	31.8	13.7	6.5	48.3	51.7	43.2	20.8
Kilburn	24.1	40.9	33.4	2.1	22.1	21.7	56.9	43.1	49.2	16.7
Kingsbury	49.9	16.6	30.1	14.4	23.8	11.3	41.6	58.4	39.3	20.3
Northwick Park	61.9	11.7	25.6	26.6	20.2	9.1	51.5	48.5	45.9	16.3
Preston	45.5	15.0	37.5	21.2	21.5	9.8	39.5	60.5	40.9	20.3
Queens Park	43.6	21.6	34.1	3.1	8.7	11.6	67.0	33.0	55.9	12.9
Queensbury	53.6	11.3	32.7	30.1	15.9	7.5	38.8	61.2	37.7	24.0
Roundwood	22.5	41.6	32.0	4.0	27.8	29.2	35.0	65.0	33.3	24.1
Stonebridge	17.7	55.9	22.7	4.9	36.2	38.7	36.2	63.8	33.1	23.8
Sudbury	44.9	13.2	39.7	30.7	19.9	11.7	34.1	65.9	38.3	22.5
Tokyngton	59.0	8.0	32.0	22.5	18.2	17.2	31.0	69.0	30.8	26.3
Welsh Harp	46.1	17.2	34.9	13.3	23.8	14.0	34.8	65.2	33.9	24.9
Wembley Central	41.5	16.3	40.7	47.1	13.5	8.7	28.7	71.3	30.4	30.0
Wembley Hill	38.0	13.8	46.0	19.7	17.3	11.3	33.6	66.4	36.1	22.8
Wembley Park	14.2	18.5	61.7	13.4	14.9	12.2	66.9	33.1	56.1	6.0
Willesden Green	31.9	22.5	43.9	4.5	21.4	12.3	47.7	52.3	43.6	20.0

But the Lib Dems could not bed down in Brent the way they managed in Bermondsey for decades. Labour got serious running this borough and the impact of "white flight" (long term white residents moved out to more homogenous more spacious areas beyond the capital) made once unreachable wards for Labour winnable.

Labour regained control of Brent in 2010 with a workable majority of 17, taking nine seats off the Tories and ten off the Lib Dems. In 2014, that majority surged to 49 and in 2018 57: no Lib Dems and just three Tories in Kenton that year.

In 2022, following boundary changes, there was a little swing away from Labour: Tories won two seats in **Queensbury** and the Lib Dems won back seats in **Alperton** and **Sudbury**. Huge housing development in Wembley, especially around the national stadium, created new two new seats there as the council was reduced by six councillors.

The Conservatives have high hopes of winning a larger group of councillors in Wembley. First, they will want the third seat in **Queensbury**.

They will then look to take one of the "new" Wembley wards: **Wembley Hill**, which they (rather surprisingly) only lost by 91 votes in its first outing.

**Wembley Park** looks very safe for Labour on the 2022 numbers but it had a tiny electorate back then and it probably isn't that secure. This may also be a Green target because of the demographic profile of the sorts who are attracted to this type of housing and this type of neighbourhood.

The same factor: a lot of new electors not here in 2022, is true of **Wembley Hill** too though to a lesser extent because it contains more "old" Wembley. But 2022 may not have been a "normal" result there either.

Then things become a lot harder. **Northwick Park** and **Preston** probably represent the tip of Tory expectations, at least in one go: both require a swing of just over 10%.

But if Labour's fortunes really do crater there are there are four wards with broadly similar majorities: **Kingsbury**, **Welsh**

**Harp**, **Brondesbury Park** and **Barnhill**, which all fall on swings of 13% or less. That'd be a massive surprise with the Conservatives polling so poorly nationally. But they're not quite out of the question, especially if the "Stanmore" factor that turned demographically very similar wards in next door Harrow Tory in 2022 replicates here.

The Lib Dems have every expectation, following their thumping by-election win in **Alperton**, that they can take the third seat there plus the seat they don't hold in neighbouring **Sudbury**. But these five seats nowadays represent the sum total of their hopes. But they might try to put **Queen's Park** back into play: an affluent, liberal, middle-class suburb.

The remaining wards are - or at least should be - very safe for Labour. In most of them the Green Party was a very distant runner-up. There is potential for affluent and cosmopolitan **Queen's Park** to spring a surprise - voters there have turned to the Lib Dems when they want to kick Labour and during the years Sarah Teather was Lib Dem MP **Queen's Park** was one of the stronger wards for her party. But with such particular disillusion with Labour on the left of politics, surprises can be sprung.

Brent is another multicultural borough where Reform is unlikely to have much traction anywhere: winning a single seat here would be quite a surprise. The ward with (by far) the highest white population (38%) is Queen's Park, and that's not remotely the sort of white voter who'll turn to Nigel Farage to fix whatever problems they perceive Brent has.

Which leaves the Greens with their relatively new cohort of five councillors. How they do depends on the three types of area they could, in theory, prosper in. If they do well in all three there could be a big Green contingent on Brent council after May 7th.

The first is those new build wards: principally **Wembley Hill**, **Wembley Park**, **Wembley Central** and then parts of **Stonebridge**, **Tokington** and **Alperton**. These areas are part of the vast Park Royal regeneration zone, which spans Brent, Ealing and the Old Oak area in the north of Hammersmith - where the HS2 terminus is being constructed.

Park Royal is not an idyllic neighbourhood: its history is as a light industrial and warehousing zone through which runs the Grand Union Canal and the river Brent. Some argue that the Manhattan-style housing that's gradually replacing it isn't all that much better, but it's coming anyway: thousands of garish new high rise private apartment blocks close to tube hubs.

The occupants of these blocks are one of the demographics - younger progressive but transient professionals - who may switch heavily to the Green Party in May.

Another group Greens are expected to pick up a hefty sack of votes from are older, more established, affluent professionals of the sort who live in **Queen's Park**, for example. While this may be a Lib Dem target, it wouldn't be shocking to see it go Green either. This type of voter is present, to a lesser extent, in **Cricklewood & Mapesbury** and **Brondesbury Park**.

**Kilburn** ward straddles all three Green target demographics. There are terraced streets that have gentrified. There is the regeneration zone of South Kilburn where a run-down council estate is being "regenerated". And there is the third group the Greens might do well with: the principally black neighbourhoods in the south of the borough, including those left in the South Kilburn estate blocks yet to be demolished.

Brent's African and Caribbean community is mainly concentrated in four neighbouring wards: **Harlesden and Kensal Green** (25%), **Kilburn** (22%), **Roundwood** (28%) and **Stonebridge** (39%). These all look phenomenally secure for Labour based on the 2022 results, but those results are almost meaningless in 2026. Labour will still be favoured but perhaps one or two could split?

The Greens are working wards similarly ethnically diverse in Hackney and Lewisham and, though their membership in Brent hasn't grown quite as spectacularly, if they can win there, they can win here. If Labour loses **Stonebridge** though there aren't going to be many (any?) of their councillors left.

Brent doesn't appear on too many electoral seismographs. Maybe that's because Labour has become so dominant, because it's now seen as broadly competent, or because their traditional opponents, the Conservatives, are in as big a mess. But it's worth keeping an eye on. Labour's majority is broad and fairly deep in some wards, but nowhere near as deep as in Lewisham or Lambeth: and they're seen as under threat.

Labour should hold Brent: in any other year it wouldn't be in question - but this year could produce another of those electoral revolts for which the borough used to be renowned.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	G	O
May 22 council election result	5	49	3		
Jul 24 by-election: Queen's Park - Lab hold (Lab -11.9)	5	49	3		
Feb 24 by-election: Alperton - LD hold (Lab -19.3)	5	49	3		
Jun 25 suspension: Kathleen Fraser (Barnhill) Lab to Ind	5	48	3		1
Oct 25 defection: Raja Rajan-Seelan (Wembley Central) Lab to Con	6	47	3		1
Dec 25 defection: Tony Ethampemi (Stonebridge) Lab to Grn	6	46	3	1	1
Dec 25 defection: Harbi Farah (Welsh Harp) Lab to Grn	6	45	3	2	1
Dec 25 defection: Erica Gbajumo (Brondesbury Park) Lab to Grn	6	44	3	3	1
Dec 25 defection: Mary Mitchell (Welsh Harp) Lab to Grn	6	43	3	4	1
Dec 25 defection: Iman Moghaddam (Wembley Park) Lab to Grn	6	42	3	5	1

# BROMLEY

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**Reform UK has its sights set on Bromley but, on its ladder of winnability, Bromley is the fourth rung up - and there's a bit of a gap between the lower three - Bexley, Barking and Dagenham, and Havering - and this one.**

That's because Bromley is a much larger, and somewhat more diverse borough than certainly Bexley. It does not have the uniformity of neighbourhoods that means if one ward falls, a whole stack of them goes with it.

There are certainly several wards that Reform is favoured to win - it's just not obvious that they can win enough across the borough. They may not even emerge as the largest party - it's just about conceivable that the Conservatives could keep that status which they've never lost in Bromley. But it's poised on a knife-edge and it depends not just on the fortunes of the two right of centre parties but also Labour, the Lib Dems and the four independents/residents elected in 2022.

Bromley is geographically London's largest borough by a fair bit, stretching from Crystal Palace - which feels like suburban inner London - through Beckenham and Hayes and out past Orpington to the rolling fields of the Kentish borderland. **Darwin** ward alone (12.6 sq m) could easily accommodate the entire square mileage of the city of Westminster (8.29 sq m), for example. Nearly all of the borough is historically strongly Conservative, with Labour only competitive in Penge, Mottingham and the two Cray wards tucked beneath Sidcup.

The Conservatives have only lost a majority in Bromley once: the 1998-2002 term when the Liberal Democrats made big gains across the borough and there were enough Labour councillors to form a coalition to lock the Tories out for four years. But typically the Conservatives have swept the bulk of the borough with one or two Labour enclaves and one or two Lib Dem footholds.

Bromley has not been immune to the demographic changes that have pushed Labour's power into the suburbs because the inner end of the borough has decent public transport into central London and some of its housing remains comparatively affordable. You get more bang for your buck in Bromley than in Fulham or Camden Town. Younger, Labour-voting professionals have moved outwards and brought their political preference with them.

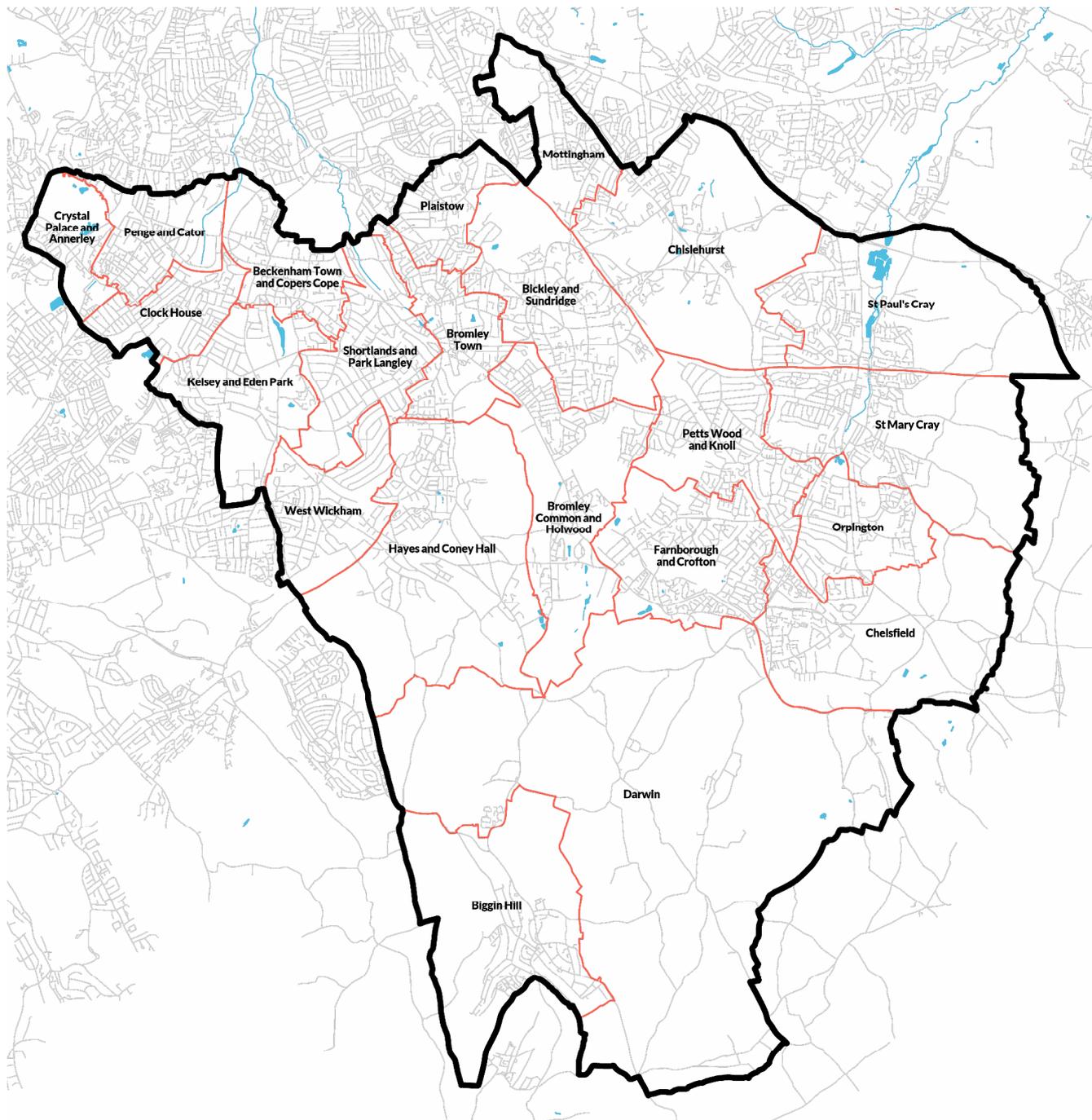
That's a way of saying that while Reform has a decent shot at winning lots of seats here, it isn't a viable victor everywhere. As the demographics have changed, more wards have become competitive. Across Bromley there are different electoral trends playing out.

There are three-way marginals like **Bromley Town** and **Beckenham Town and Copers Cope**.

There are wards the Lib Dems used to have a lock on, then swung heavily to Labour but where there is now a Green challenge: principally **Crystal Palace and Anerley** but maybe also **Penge and Cator** if Labour is really getting kicked.

There are four independents and residents' association councillors - three in **Chislehurst**, two elected in **Biggin Hill** but one's joined the Conservatives: these have been two-way battles with the Conservatives but both are Reform targets.

There are three working class, white, wards which Labour used to hold but where they have faded: **Mottingham** and then **St Mary Cray** and **St Paul's Cray**. These used to be three party battlegrounds between Labour, Liberals and Conservatives. Then they became three party battlegrounds between Labour, UKIP and Conservatives. This year they will be three party battlegrounds with Reform.



What these two sets of battlegrounds, separated by several miles, have in common is they all have high amounts of what statisticians call "deprivation" which is just a way of saying a high level of joblessness, fewer opportunities, poorer health outcomes and households more dependent on benefits. The two Crays also have the highest numbers of people identifying as part of the traveller community in London - mostly of Irish origin but some Roma too.

There is the newly created **Plaistow** ward along the southern edge of Lewisham, which has swung heavily to Labour, but which the Conservatives may have a chance of gaining this year. This is precisely the sort of area I was referring to earlier: Inner London adjacent but attracting young professionals looking either for more affordable homes or homes larger and in more leafy, spacious areas than they have been able to afford toward the centre.

There are the suburban Beckenham wards the Conservatives have a weakening grip on: **Kelsey and Eden Park, Shortlands and Park Langley** and **Hayes and Coney Hall**. I say maybe because, while Labour has been closing the gap in these three wards, now the party is in government and its popularity has slumped they are probably beyond its grasp. That is also why **Plaistow** is in play: the Conservatives only lost by 124 votes there last time and the gap between the two parties in London has narrowed by far more than that since.

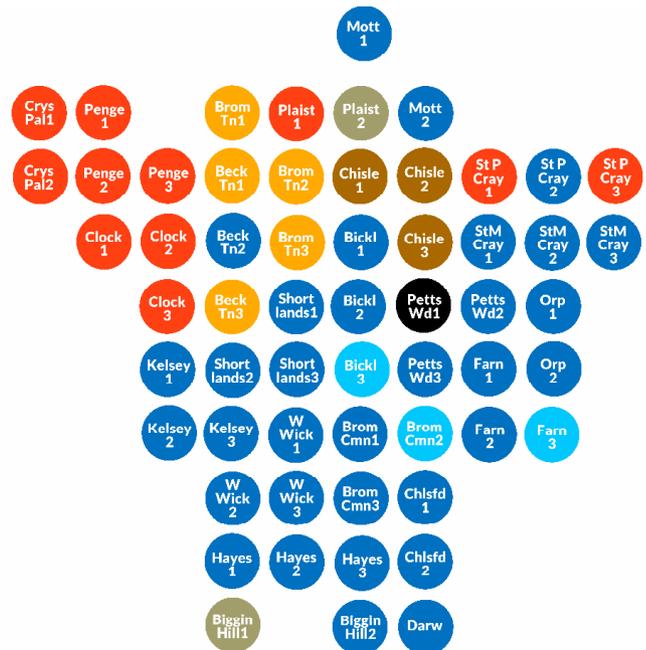
Finally, there is that biggest set of wards: the Reform targets, covering the most outlying suburban and semi-rural wards. These include **Bickley and Sundridge, Biggin Hill, Bromley Common and Holwood, Chelsfield, Chislehurst, Darwin, Farnborough and Crofton, Hayes and Coney Hall, Mottingham, Orpington, Petts Wood and Knoll** and **West Wickham**. Of these, the wards that are the Conservatives' strongest are Bickley and Sundridge, Darwin (the ward where Nigel Farage lives) and Petts Wood and Knoll.

Reform already has two councillors in this set: one won in a by-election (the party's first by-election win in London) at Bromley Common and Holwood, and a defector in Bickley and Sundridge.

Several of these wards arguably have an electorate too affluent to switch on a large enough scale for Reform to win. Theoretically, at least, Reform might take enough votes in wards like Orpington - once held for a twenty-year stretch by the Liberals - to allow the Lib Dems back in. They were 600 votes short there in 2022 which is quite a lot, especially for a two-councillor ward, but if the right of centre vote is roughly equally divided it could happen.

There could also, of course, be a genuine Conservative to Lib Dem swing - but the latter's strength was from a different era when the Alliance and its successors were seen as a non-ideological protest vote. That party is now viewed differently which is why it's so much weaker than it was in the 1980s.

It seems likely that, given that the vast majority of seats that are vulnerable to Reform are Conservative-held, that the only way the Tories have the least chance of hanging onto a majority is by gaining seats held by others. There are six potential pickup opportunities for the Conservatives.



Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	White Brit	Black	Muslim	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Beckenham Town & Copers Cope	56.3	8.7	33.5	58.7	6.7	3.4	66.9	33.1	54.0	10.0
Bickley and Sundridge	75.3	7.8	16.5	67.4	4.3	2.9	68.1	31.9	48.9	11.2
Biggin Hill	86.6	4.7	8.2	89.4	1.9	0.6	47.6	52.4	26.6	16.4
Bromley Common and Holwood	69.7	14.1	15.5	68.8	5.5	3.3	58.5	41.5	38.5	15.3
Bromley Town	56.2	9.3	32.8	54.3	6.3	4.4	65.2	34.8	52.5	10.1
Chelsfield	83.3	5.8	10.6	71.8	2.7	1.7	63.0	37.0	42.4	13.4
Chislehurst	77.1	7.2	15.0	73.0	3.3	3.6	67.9	32.1	45.4	13.2
Clock House	65.8	11.7	21.3	61.4	8.9	3.6	64.6	35.4	51.1	11.3
Crystal Palace and Anerley	36.3	29.4	32.4	44.0	18.1	5.8	60.3	39.7	51.6	14.3
Darwin	83.4	5.1	11.0	85.2	1.3	1.2	55.9	44.1	31.1	17.9
Farnborough and Crofton	82.4	8.4	9.0	75.1	2.8	2.1	60.9	39.1	39.6	13.6
Hayes and Coney Hall	87.2	3.8	8.6	79.8	2.3	1.9	59.0	41.0	38.2	12.1
Kelsey and Eden Park	77.4	9.1	12.9	67.9	5.4	3.4	61.4	38.6	42.7	13.3
Mottingham	54.7	27.7	16.5	61.2	9.5	4.1	47.8	52.2	34.9	19.2
Orpington	71.7	15.4	12.0	66.9	6.4	3.5	54.7	45.3	38.7	15.4
Penge and Cator	46.7	28.0	23.9	49.9	15.5	6.7	59.6	40.4	49.7	13.8
Petts Wood and Knoll	84.1	3.6	11.9	72.9	2.3	1.8	65.8	34.2	45.7	11.1
Plaistow	65.1	16.1	18.1	56.4	10.6	4.3	57.4	42.6	44.0	14.5
Shortlands and Park Langley	71.5	6.2	21.9	64.1	4.6	3.3	67.1	32.9	51.2	9.5
St Mary Cray	64.1	21.2	13.0	68.2	8.2	3.0	47.3	52.7	31.6	19.5
St Paul's Cray	53.9	33.1	11.7	66.4	9.5	3.3	41.8	58.2	29.1	21.3
West Wickham	84.3	4.7	10.5	75.4	3.3	2.4	61.6	38.4	39.9	12.3

The easiest is **Plaistow** given how close it was last time, even though the demographic trend is working against the party here. There are two seats available here.

Their next opportunities are those twin town centre wards: **Beckenham Town and Copers Cope**, and **Bromley Town**, where there are five Lib Dem seats (all three in Bromley, two out in Beckenham). The Lib Dems have proven better able to fend off Reform elsewhere in the country since the right-wing populist party began its surge at the start of last year.

Lib Dems present this as proof they are an antidote to Reform: that voters should back them as the only party able to keep the populists out. But they're often confusing cause

and effect in this argument: areas that are sympathetic to electing Liberal Democrats are far less likely to be areas sympathetic to electing Reform than previously Labour or Conservative ones.

Both Beckenham and Bromley town centres also lie along the boundary with inner London and so, aside from having a history of Liberal Democrat campaigning they're also commuter dormitories: the parts young professionals have been moving to. So these are not likely Reform prospects.

There will probably be enough Tory to Reform switchers to prevent the former improving in these wards - but might they just be susceptible to a "stick with nurse for fear of worse"

argument: that re-electing Conservative councillors is the only way to block a Reform majority.

Harder still, because unlike those two town centre wards the Reform threat here is real and probably strong enough to win are the two wards held by **Chislehurst Matters** (CM) and **Biggin Hill** Independents. Both wards cover distinct neighbourhoods which urban sprawl hasn't enveloped. They have a stronger identity which might keep them out of Reform's hands.

Independents won **Biggin Hill** in 2018 and held it in 2022, though the Conservatives were close behind both times. But the end may be nigh: one is now a Tory councillor, the other is retiring. Chislehurst Matters organised just before the 2022 election so this is the end of what they hope will be their first term. They scored a big win last time, gaining majorities of over a thousand, and in a ward that traditionally was one of the safest for the Conservatives.

Reform had a pretty strong record of overwhelming independents and residents groups at the 2025 county council elections: they seem to fish in the same pond of voters and Reform's message that the country needs radical change appears more potent than the "we're local" argument.

The Conservatives will hope that a radically splintered vote in both these wards enables them to win almost by accident on a vote share much lower than they achieved in 2022.

There are also the two Cray wards - in reality only **St Paul's Cray** because **St Mary Cray** (just) went Conservative last time. Labour won two of the three **St Paul's Cray** seats in 2022 which was a little surprising as these types of neighbourhoods, less common in London, have drifted from the party. That's despite them resembling what would once have been solid Labour areas measured on economic terms.

But politics is more about cultural values in these outlying wards with lots of public housing: the same sort of swing away from Labour has occurred in similar neighbourhoods like New Addington, Crayford and Harold Hill.

## Possible key wards

### Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Beckenham Town & Copers Cope (2 LD)
- ▶ Bickley and Sundridge (1 Ref - defec)
- ▶ Biggin Hill (1 Ind)
- ▶ Bromley Common & Holwood (1 Ref)
- ▶ Bromley Town (3 LD)
- ▶ Chislehurst (3 Res)
- ▶ Farnborough and Crofton (1 Ref - defec)
- ▶ Plaistow (1 Lab, 1 Ind)
- ▶ St Paul's Cray (2 Lab)



### Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Kelsey and Eden Park (3 Con)
- ▶ Mottingham (2 Con)
- ▶ Plaistow (1 Ind - defec)
- ▶ St Mary Cray (3 Con)
- ▶ St Paul's Cray (1 Con)



### Liberal Democrat hopefuls

- ▶ Beckenham Town & Copers Cope (1 Con)
- ▶ Chelsfield (2 Con)
- ▶ Orpington (2 Con)



### Reform hopefuls

- ▶ Biggin Hill (1 Con, 1 Ind)
- ▶ Bromley Common and Holwood (2 Con)
- ▶ Chelsfield (2 Con)
- ▶ Chislehurst (3 Res)
- ▶ Darwin (1 Con)
- ▶ Farnborough and Crofton (3 Con)
- ▶ Hayes and Coney Hall (3 Con)
- ▶ Mottingham (2 Con)
- ▶ Orpington (2 Con)
- ▶ St Mary Cray (3 Con)
- ▶ St Paul's Cray (2 Lab, 1 Con)



### Green hopefuls

- ▶ Crystal Palace and Anerley (2 Lab)
- ▶ Penge and Cator (3 Lab)



The last time Labour won a seat in **St Paul's Cray** was 1998 and back then they were fighting the Lib Dems. In 2022 Labour won with less than 40% of the vote: this year's winners will perhaps need even less.

Both Cray wards are a demographic dream for Reform so, again, the only way the Conservatives - or Labour - can hope to emerge with councillors is via some bizarre fluke. But far more likely is that they will be provide some of the larger Reform majorities in Bromley.

Let's take a look at the dozen seats Labour won last time - now down to eleven after a Plaistow councillor moved to independent. In three they won thumping majorities: **Clock House, Crystal Palace and Anerley** and **Penge and Cator**. The Conservatives represented **Clock House** until 2018 but Labour absolutely thumped them in 2022, finishing almost 2,500 ahead with two-thirds of the vote. In just four years **Clock House** swung from being Labour's most marginal Bromley ward to its safest.

After years of being the best Liberal ward in Bromley, **Crystal Palace and Anerley** switched to Labour in 2014 and, as with Clock House, they have built up a healthy lead. Were this any election other than a mid-term where Labour is plumbing historic lows, Crystal Palace and Anerley would be safe for them. But in 2022 Lib Dems gained a seat on the Croydon side of this divided neighbourhood (Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood ward) while the Greens polled 20% on the Bromley side. The Greens would need around a 20% swing to defeat Labour in Bromley's Crystal Palace ward.

During the last few years of the Conservative government that party could pull off "spectaculars" - election wins coming from nowhere on huge swings in wards that had nearly always been faithfully Tory. Now, Zack Polanski's only path to embedding the Greens as a serious force in the country is to do the same thing in Labour strongholds - especially the more affluent, higher turnout, more engaged communities that self-identify as progressive. Such a community is **Crystal Palace and Anerley**.

Finally, in this set, there's **Penge and Cator**, the one ward in Bromley that has more or less consistently elected Labour councillors throughout the borough's history. Like Crystal Palace, the Greens came second here last time and have a similarly sized Labour majority to overturn.

Penge, though, is a different neighbourhood to Crystal Palace: it's often described as much dowdier, more working-class, much less of a progressive nirvana. There's a Gail's Bakery - that ultimate status symbol of middle class utopia - in Crystal Palace (albeit the Croydon side). There's no Gail's in Penge: not likely to be, even though Penge has gentrified. While a Labour loss in Penge is harder to envisage than one in Crystal Palace, it's not totally beyond possibility: there have been surges against Labour in this ward before. So Labour could be down to just Clock House but should win more.

This preview began by placing Bromley fourth on the list of Reform targets. That's because the borough is more politically diverse than the three above it in the list. The pool of Reform winnables is proportionally shallower.

But that's not the same as saying Reform can't win Bromley: it'll just be harder for them. There are more wards Reform can win than that they can't. They are very unlikely to sweep all the seats they could potentially win. Some of them are, even after 2022, still safely Conservative. In some, Reform aren't facing Conservative incumbents. Some just won't break in Reform's favour.

The Conservative majority has been whittled down to nine already through by-elections and defections, having been thirteen immediately after the 2022 elections. It's almost baked-in that the Conservatives will lose five seats - probably quite a few more than five - and that's their majority erased. Can they pick others up to offset those losses? If they can win the largest group of councillors, even if short of a majority, there's a chance they'll stay in power.

Bromley has become a multi-party democracy with six parties or descriptions now represented on the council: a big change from only three elections ago. It's likely that trend will be

reversed in May: a sizeable Reform bloc; a sizeable Conservative bloc and a very few others.

One last thing to consider. The Electoral Calculus general election MRP conducted in December produced some interesting results for the three Bromley constituencies.

In Beckenham Labour was on 28%, Reform on 21%, Conservatives on 18%, Greens on 17% and Lib Dems on 13%.

In Bromley and Biggin Hill, Reform led - but only just - with 32.8%. The Conservatives were on 32.6%, Labour on 14% and the others all got less than 10%.

But in Orpington, where most of the Reform target wards lie, the Conservatives were leading with 43%, Reform on 34% and all the others again below 10%.

These three constituency results taken together suggest both that the Conservatives are holding onto a lot of support in Reform target wards and that Labour is robust in its Beckenham strongholds. But, of course, this was a general election MRP: not for the council elections. And voting patterns can differ radically between the two quite different sets of elections.

<b>Events 2022-2026</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>LD</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>O</b>
May 22 council election result	<b>36</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>		<b>5</b>
Dec 23 by-election: Hayes and Coney Hall - Con hold	36	12	5		5
May 24 by-election: Shortlands and Park Langley - Con hold	36	12	5		5
Jul 25 by-election: Bromley Common and Holwood - Ref gain from Con	35	12	5	1	5
Oct 25 defection: Christopher Marlowe (Farnborough and Crofton) Con to Ref	34	12	5	2	5
Nov 25 defection: Alisa Igoe (Plaistow) Lab to Ind	34	11	5	2	6
Nov 25 defection: Sophie Dunbar (Biggin Hill) Ind to Con	35	11	5	2	5
Dec 25 defection: Kira Gabbert (Bickley and Sundridge) Con to Ref	34	11	5	3	5
Dec 25 vacancy: Keith Onslow (Petts Wood and Knoll) Con, deceased	33	11	5	3	5

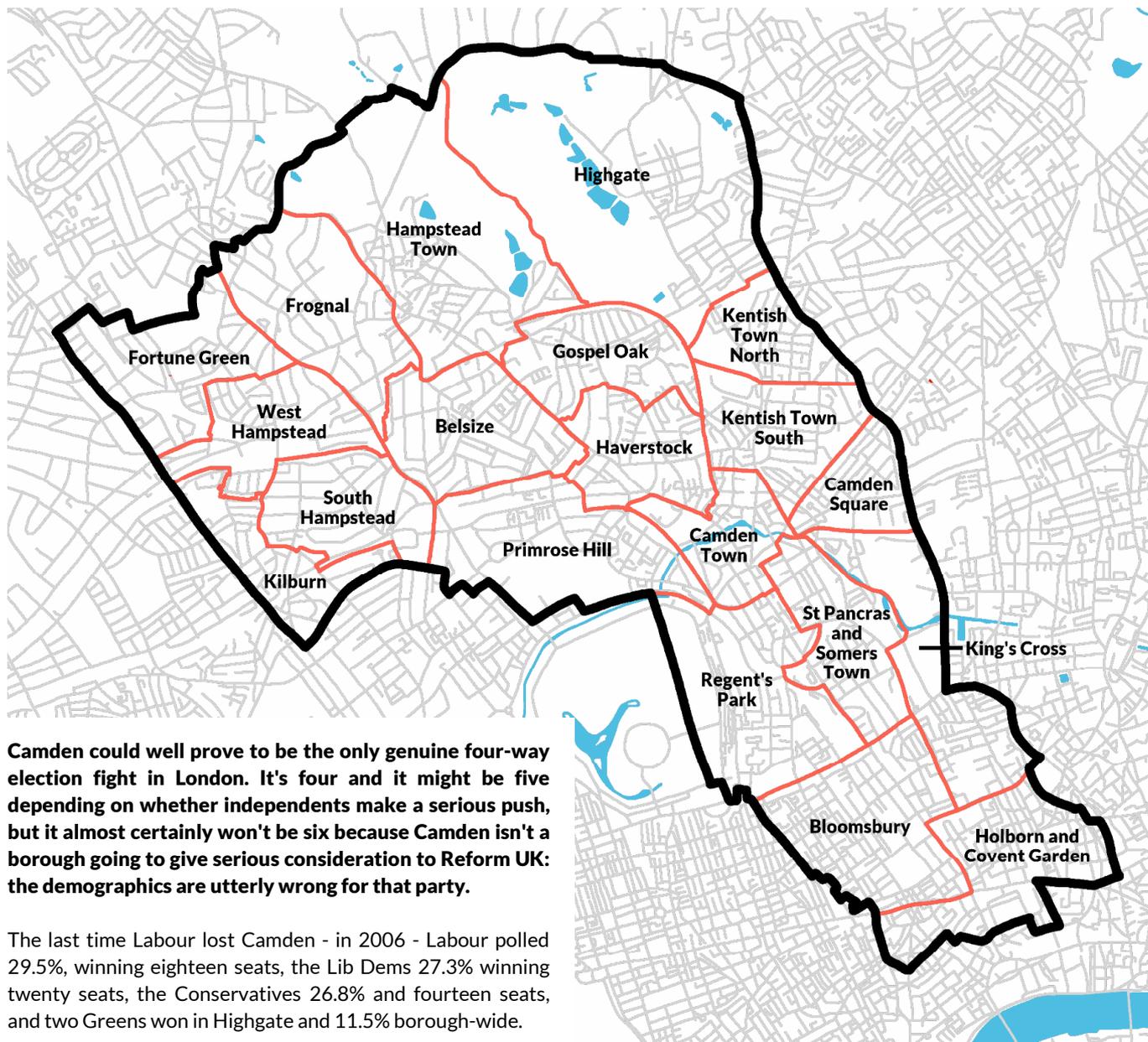
# CAMDEN

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**Camden could well prove to be the only genuine four-way election fight in London. It's four and it might be five depending on whether independents make a serious push, but it almost certainly won't be six because Camden isn't a borough going to give serious consideration to Reform UK: the demographics are utterly wrong for that party.**

The last time Labour lost Camden - in 2006 - Labour polled 29.5%, winning eighteen seats, the Lib Dems 27.3% winning twenty seats, the Conservatives 26.8% and fourteen seats, and two Greens won in Highgate and 11.5% borough-wide.

The percentages will be different this time around: Tories possibly a lot lower, Greens higher, and with Reform making a small impact in votes but no impact in seats - but essentially this year's election has exactly the same ingredients as the one twenty years ago.

To many in Labour, Camden is what Westminster used to be to the Conservatives: a flagship borough. It covers similar central London territory - though, of course, large parts of Camden are much less affluent and much more diverse. But the two boroughs split many of London's crown jewels.

Westminster has Hyde Park, Regent's Park, St James's Park, Green Park and Kensington Gardens. Camden has Hampstead Heath, Primrose Hill and Parliament Hill.

Westminster has Little Venice, but the canals continue onwards through bohemian Camden Town and beyond.

Westminster has Soho; Camden has Camden Town market.

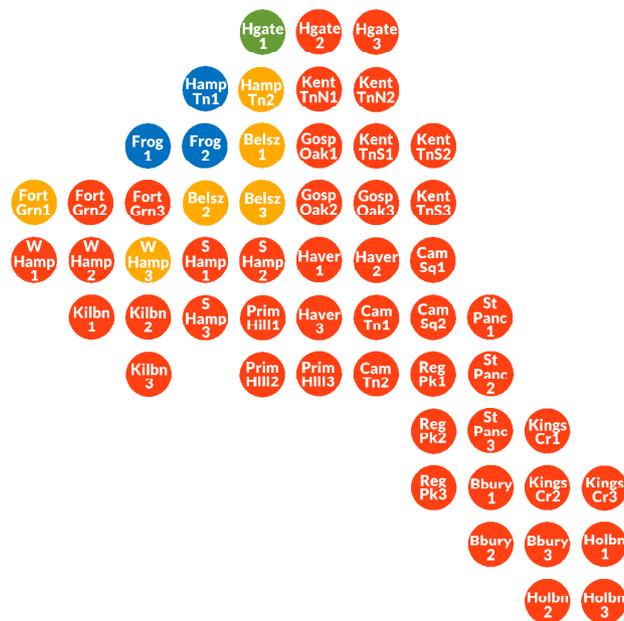
Westminster has Paddington and Victoria stations, Camden has Euston, King's Cross and St Pancras.

Westminster has the heart of government; Camden has the heart of academia with Senate House and much of the University of London campus.

Camden also shares with the City of London the heart of the legal system: Lincoln's Inn and Grays Inn. And while Westminster has the biggest art galleries Camden has both the British Museum and the British Library.

But perhaps the greatest source of pride to Labour is the quality of the council housing built in Camden. This is not a borough of high-rise Brutalist tower blocks in the main - the Ampt Hill estate near Euston station being the exception.

There's the Alexandra & Ainsworth estate with its V-shaped ziggurats rising from a central pedestrian boulevard; the Brunswick Centre by Russell Square, Highgate New Town, Branch Hill, Maiden Lane and Gospel Oak. All modernist but attractive and well-designed, human-scale - based on streets not in the sky but on the ground where they belong.



So Camden is a jewel in Labour's London crown and it would grieve the party sorely to lose it. The 2022 result and even the two by-election losses Labour has suffered since, still don't give the appearance of risk. They have a commanding majority of 35 seats. Yet the council leader, Richard Olszewski, has switched wards this year - from marginal **Fortune Green** where his majority was only 139 over the Lib Dems to what he hopes will be safe-enough **Bloomsbury**.

As 2006 showed, when Camden goes awry for Labour, it goes awry all over the place - there will be different challengers in different parts of the borough. Its best chance of keeping control in Camden is that Greens and Lib Dems divide their vote equally so Labour can come through the middle, and that the Conservatives will be kept down by Reform.

That could happen. But Labour's troubles at the moment - epitomised by the fact that our hugely unpopular Prime Minister is MP for half of this borough - suggest it's unlikely. How better to send a message to Labour by kicking them in his own back yard?

While there won't be in Camden the sort of pact the Lib Dems and Greens drew up in Richmond: the larger party "gifting" the other a few seats in return for a clear run everywhere - nor does there need to be here - an understanding; an entente, would be mutually beneficial.

There are clearly wards like **Fortune Green** and **West Hampstead, Hampstead Town** and **Belsize** where the Lib Dems are favourites to beat both Labour and the Conservatives. There are other wards: most obviously Highgate but running down the spine of the borough alongside Islington, like **Kentish Town North** and **Kentish Town South**, or **King's Cross** where the Greens will be the principal challenger. The Conservatives have something of a chance in **Primrose Hill** and **South Hampstead**; and they will have a big fight with the Lib Dems for **Hampstead Town** and **Belsize**, which they'll probably lose.

In 2006 the Conservatives won **Gospel Oak** and a seat in **Bloomsbury**. These Labour-held wards may fall again but if so they won't be to the Conservatives.

The December 2025 Electoral Calculus MRP model had Holborn and St Pancras: the Prime Minister's constituency, voting 33% Green, 26% Labour, 18% Reform, 7% Conservative and 6% Lib Dem in a general election.

The Greens were also ahead in the other Camden constituency: Hampstead and Highgate. Its Labour MP, Tulip Siddique, has troubles of her own having been at best embarrassed by and at worst benefited from the alleged corruption of her aunt Sheikh Hasina, the deposed prime minister of Bangladesh. There the Greens were on 28%, Labour 27%, Reform 17%, Tories 13% and Lib Dems 12%.

For comparison, Labour polled 52% in Camden in 2022. They polled over 60% in nine wards and over 70% in **Camden Square** and **St Pancras and Somers Town**. Yet look how Labour's vote tanked in the Camden Square by-election: a 29% drop. And that occurred not long after the general election when many voters were still giving Labour the benefit of the doubt.

## Possible key wards

### Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Fortune Green (1 LD)
- ▶ Hampstead Town (1 Con, 1 LD)
- ▶ West Hampstead (1 LD)



### Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Belsize (3 LD)
- ▶ Hampstead Town (1 LD)
- ▶ Primrose Hill (3 Lab)
- ▶ South Hampstead (3 Lab)



### Liberal Democrat hopefuls

- ▶ Bloomsbury (2 Lab)
- ▶ Fortune Green (2 Lab)
- ▶ Hampstead Town (1 Con)
- ▶ West Hampstead (2 Lab)



### Green hopefuls

- ▶ Camden Square (2 Lab)
- ▶ Camden Town (2 Lab)
- ▶ Gospel Oak (3 Lab)
- ▶ Haverstock (3 Lab)
- ▶ Highgate (2 Lab)
- ▶ Kentish Town North (2 Lab)
- ▶ Kentish Town South (3 Lab)
- ▶ King's Cross (3 Lab)
- ▶ Primrose Hill (3 Lab)
- ▶ Regent's Park (3 Lab)
- ▶ St Pancras and Somers Town (3 Lab)



So Labour's best chance is for their opposition to divide its vote evenly. In 2022 there were lots of Camden wards where that happened: Labour far ahead and everyone else scrabbling around for crumbs. If the votes Labour loses spray around all over the place evenly, it'd be possible in a few wards for their vote to collapse by thirty - maybe even forty - percentage points and still cling on.

In **Camden Square**, for example, if Labour's vote dropped forty points they'd be on 36%. Allocate thirty points of that forty point drop to the Greens (who didn't stand here last time) and ten to the Lib Dems, taking them to 23%, and you can see how Labour wins despite losing more than half its vote. And that's assuming the Conservatives or another new entrant don't take their own chunks out of Labour.

Labour loses its majority if seventeen seats fall from its grip.

They will have already written off the two Labour seats in **Highgate**, the two in **West Hampstead** and the two in **Fortune Green**. Where to find the next eleven?

The Conservatives cannot be relied on to win the six seats available in **Primrose Hill** and **South Hampstead** - they may just be too weak in Camden these days. They almost gained South Hampstead in that ward's 2023 by-election but more because Labour's vote slumped than their vote climbed: they barely surpassed 30%. In an election where votes splinter that might be enough for them to win - or another party could overtake both of the top two from further back.

The Tories do still have some strength left in these affluent wards along the St John's Wood boundary with Westminster. Whether they go Conservative, Lib Dem or Green, let's chalk another five seats off. Six more to find.

Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	White Brit	Black	Muslim	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Belsize	40.7	8.9	49.9	36.2	1.9	4.4	84.3	15.7	75.5	5.6
Bloomsbury	23.4	32.8	42.5	29.3	5.2	12.2	72.3	27.7	47.9	8.5
Camden Square	25.3	40.8	33.1	38.5	11.6	18.4	67.0	33.0	54.4	12.5
Camden Town	23.4	37.9	37.6	34.4	10.2	17.4	67.9	32.1	54.3	12.5
Fortune Green	38.4	17.7	42.9	36.5	6.3	12.7	72.7	27.3	64.5	10.4
Frogna	47.7	8.8	42.5	35.9	2.9	7.4	82.9	17.1	70.1	7.7
Gospel Oak	29.4	46.7	22.9	41.0	8.7	15.9	68.2	31.8	54.7	14.3
Hampstead Town	52.7	8.8	37.9	46.3	1.9	3.3	86.7	13.3	75.7	5.4
Haverstock	24.6	46.8	27.7	36.5	11.3	21.6	63.4	36.6	49.9	15.6
Highgate	46.7	33.2	19.1	55.7	6.2	7.9	74.5	25.5	61.6	10.2
Holborn and Covent Garden	18.8	45.6	34.5	31.2	8.0	20.6	66.7	33.3	54.3	13.0
Kentish Town North	34.8	29.9	34.3	49.6	6.3	8.5	74.4	25.6	63.4	9.8
Kentish Town South	30.5	38.7	29.4	40.7	10.2	15.3	69.7	30.3	54.6	13.1
Kilburn	19.4	42.0	37.2	26.4	13.7	27.0	58.4	41.6	47.5	18.4
King's Cross	18.1	45.9	33.3	23.7	9.5	23.7	63.2	36.8	49.0	12.3
Primrose Hill	36.8	27.5	35.2	36.8	6.6	12.6	76.7	23.3	63.1	10.5
Regent's Park	18.2	51.4	29.6	28.8	11.2	26.3	59.4	40.6	44.9	15.5
St Pancras and Somers Town	12.0	63.7	22.9	26.3	13.9	31.8	48.9	51.1	38.9	18.5
South Hampstead	30.9	21.2	46.4	31.6	6.0	13.2	78.0	22.0	68.3	8.9
West Hampstead	29.0	22.7	47.4	34.9	6.9	11.8	75.8	24.2	65.3	9.4

The Greens will fancy their chances in both Kentish Town wards where there are five seats. They could also surge in **Camden Town** and **Haverstock**, and then in the part-regenerated but still gritty **King's Cross** and **St Pancras and Somers Town**: usually the core of Labour's vote in this constituency. **Regent's Park** is another - a very different ward from the Westminster version of the same name. These are all wards with a lot of council housing and ethnic diversity.

### Camden by-elections: change in party share

	Con	Lab	LD	Grn
Hampstead Town	-11.8	-14.9	+20.1	+4.6
South Hampstead	+4.5	-18.9	+7.8	+11.9
Highgate	-1.4	-17.3	-1.7	+20.4
Frognaal	+2.3	-1.2	+3.4	-4.6
Camden Square	-5.7	-28.9	+7.7	-5.3
Kentish Town South	-2.8	-13.9	-1.8	+2.7
Kilburn	+4.7	-16.7	-5.5	+17.5
West Hampstead	-6.1	-24.9	+16.9	+7.0

*Italics show the shares for parties that didn't contest the 2022 elections but did stand in the by-election*

How will a refined, liberal, academic ward like **Bloomsbury** respond to Labour's loud yet unfruitful attempts to reduce immigration? Bloomsbury rallied to the liberal Conservatism of David Cameron but had been repelled by the party since.

Labour took over two-thirds of the vote in Bloomsbury last time and this is the new berth into which the council leader hopes he'll be able to dock. But it wouldn't be hugely shocking if Labour is so unpopular with the Bloomsbury Set that they elect Lib Dem or Green councillors this time.

Zack Polanski's Greens will be hoping for some form of power in all three inner north London boroughs of Hackney, Islington and Camden. They may win outright in Hackney but have to settle for some form of power sharing in Islington and Camden: opposition to Labour in these two is more diffuse.

Would Keir Starmer be able to survive as PM if Labour lose Camden? He won Holborn and St Pancras with a majority of over 30,000 in 2017. If he did depart the premiership voluntarily or otherwise, he probably wouldn't contest his seat at the next general election. That would be testament to the velocity of our politics - that an MP newly elected in 2015 could become Prime Minister after just 9 years and be done after 14. Perhaps one lesson to learn is that a few more years' experience before reaching the top is a good idea?

It's very difficult to locate a Camden ward Labour would be a nailed-on certainty to hold. Maybe **Kilburn**? Maybe **Holborn and Covent Garden**? Maybe **Gospel Oak**? It's not credible that Labour will be wiped off the council: it's just not possible to say which seats they'll hold. And that's remarkable.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	G	O
May 22 council election result	3	47	4	1	
Jul 22 by-election: Hampstead Town - LD gain from Lab	3	46	5	1	
Jun 23 by-election: South Hampstead - Lab hold	3	46	5	1	
Nov 23 by-election: Highgate - Grn hold	3	46	5	1	
May 24 by-election: Frognaal - Con hold	3	46	5	1	
Sep 24 by-election: Camden Square - Lab hold	3	46	5	1	
Sep 24 by-election: Kentish Town South - Lab hold	3	46	5	1	
Sep 24 by-election: Kilburn - Lab hold	3	46	5	1	
Aug 25 by-election: West Hampstead - LD gain from Lab	3	45	6	1	

# CROYDON



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**The 2026 local elections are unusual insofar as it's far easier to make a case for both main parties losing seats than either gaining them.**

The 2022 contest - which saw Croydon's first election for a directly elected mayor - produced a split verdict. The Conservative leader, Jason Perry, edged the mayoralty by less than 600 votes in the second round after Labour had endured a turgid four years in power.

But the Tories failed to win a council majority: they and Labour won 34 seats apiece with 2 Greens winning in the central Fairfield ward, and 1 Lib Dem in Upper Norwood.

Four years on, the Conservatives have made absolutely no progress fixing the systemic problems rotting this council from the inside out: the finances are in a worse state because interest rates on the colossal debt are adding to the pile quicker than asset fire-sales can clear it. And Council Tax has increased by massive amounts on the Tories' watch even if Labour created much of the financial black hole.

Perry is a mediocre mayor, not best placed to work with a Labour government to get a deal that sets Croydon on a stable footing. And, with government commissioners taking all the major financial decisions, he is little more than a figurehead (as will be whoever wins in 2026): getting the flak but having insufficient say. The government has turned Croydon: the largest of London's boroughs, into a quango coated in a veneer of democratic accountability.

It is far from apparent, though, that four years has been sufficient for voters to let Labour off the hook for their rampant incompetence. So, again, it's easy to make a case why voters don't want either of them. But they'll end up with one, regardless.

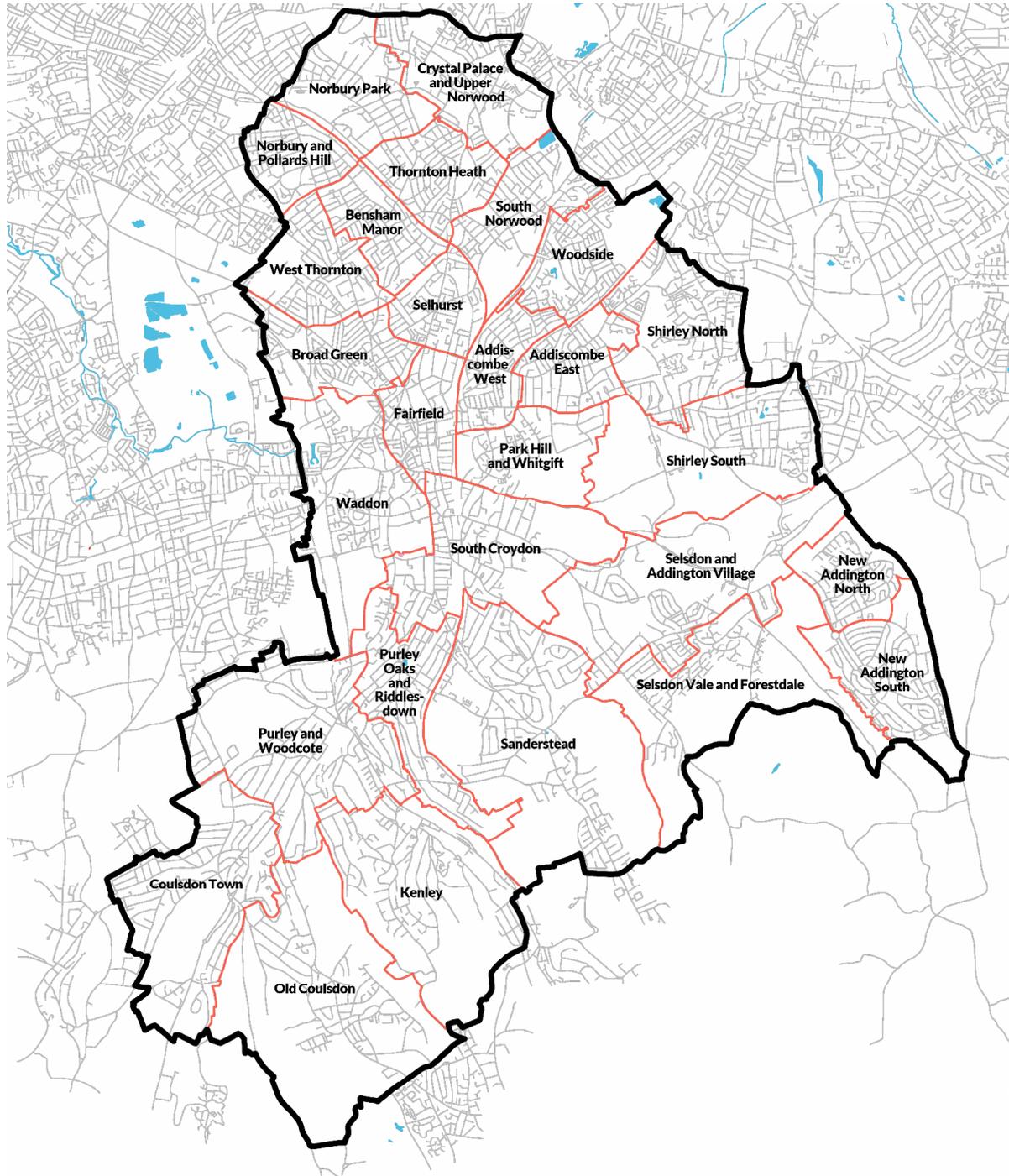
The government's reversal of using first past the post for mayoral elections won't take effect for May's election. The Supplementary Vote (SV) system was introduced by Labour to boost the chances of a so-called progressive candidate winning - and it's why they're bringing it back. But there is now likely to be a sizeable Reform vote that might have transferred to the Conservatives in the second round under SV. Reform is likely not strong enough to finish in the top two. But don't rule it out entirely given the lack of trust in either "legacy" party.

Perry led by just over 2,000 in the first round last time but by 589 after second preferences had been added on, so by that measure, FPTP might seem to benefit the Conservatives. But this depends entirely on how big a hit the Tories take from Reform. And whether there is significantly lower turnout in the Labour north compared to the Tory and Reform south of the borough.

On the council side of the ledger both parties face challenges. The Conservatives won three of the four seats in the outlying New Addington council estate last time: **New Addington North** and **New Addington South**. All four are certain to fall to Reform. And it's by no means clear that New Addington is the only part of the borough where Reform is a threat.

Even though these southern wards have vast Conservative majorities, they date from a pre-Reform era. It isn't all that hard to imagine Reform snatching seats here and there.

**Old Coulsdon**, for example, has something of a Lib Dem tradition but is no more liberal an area than its neighbours: this Lib Dem vote stems more from pavement politics slogging it out, year after year. A sizeable non-Tory vote has built up but if the area has little intrinsic loyalty to



the liberal tradition, why wouldn't it collapse to a party far more in keeping with the political outlook of the Surrey gin and tonic golfing belt?

**Selsdon Vale and Forestdale** isn't safe: its predecessor: Heathfield, once a Tory fortress, looked pretty shaky in its final election back in 2014 (Croydon had boundary changes in 2018 rather than 2022).

There are two wards the Tories split with Labour: the long-term marginal **Waddon** and 2-councillor **Addiscombe East**.

**Waddon** is the ward of Labour mayoral candidate Rowenna Davis and is the sort of outlying, cottage-garden estate where Reform may reap quite a vote. But it may come evenly from both parties there.

Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	White Brit	Black	Muslim	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Addiscombe East	61.5	11.3	26.2	41.0	17.1	8.4	53.0	47.0	43.8	14.6
Addiscombe West	42.1	16.1	39.7	31.7	17.6	10.3	53.2	46.8	46.2	15.3
Bensham Manor	51.2	13.0	34.0	13.8	30.9	17.4	38.1	61.9	37.0	19.2
Broad Green	36.9	26.7	33.5	15.6	24.2	17.1	35.3	64.7	34.4	21.0
Coulsdon Town	76.8	8.3	12.3	58.2	9.0	6.0	61.3	38.7	45.5	11.6
Crystal Palace & Upper Norwood	54.7	17.6	25.9	43.8	18.2	6.7	61.6	38.4	51.9	12.1
Fairfield	22.5	16.7	57.7	23.9	20.6	10.6	56.5	43.5	52.8	12.7
Kenley	77.2	10.4	10.9	61.5	7.8	5.5	61.4	38.6	43.7	11.3
New Addington North	29.6	60.6	9.1	45.4	28.6	9.0	28.4	71.6	24.4	27.0
New Addington South	48.9	39.6	10.2	58.5	19.0	5.3	33.4	66.6	25.2	26.2
Norbury and Pollards Hill	52.8	15.5	30.3	19.8	21.4	18.2	44.1	55.9	41.0	18.1
Norbury Park	65.8	13.9	19.5	22.9	19.2	21.4	50.6	49.4	42.1	17.2
Old Coulsdon	78.9	13.9	6.3	71.0	6.3	2.7	54.1	45.9	35.7	15.7
Park Hill and Whitgift	53.2	8.9	37.6	29.0	10.8	12.0	66.1	33.9	57.6	11.0
Purley and Woodcote	66.7	11.3	19.8	47.6	9.9	8.7	64.3	35.7	49.2	12.4
Purley Oaks and Riddlesdown	69.9	8.5	20.0	48.5	11.0	7.8	59.3	40.7	48.0	10.6
Sanderstead	83.9	5.5	10.1	65.2	5.4	4.7	62.0	38.0	43.7	11.9
Selhurst	33.8	29.7	34.3	20.6	30.5	13.4	38.5	61.5	35.3	19.8
Selsdon and Addington Village	77.5	11.4	10.4	53.9	11.9	7.6	50.9	49.1	37.1	15.2
Selsdon Vale and Forestdale	76.0	6.1	17.0	65.8	8.6	5.4	48.9	51.1	34.5	14.1
Shirley North	70.9	18.0	10.7	49.8	15.5	7.0	48.3	51.7	34.5	17.5
Shirley South	71.2	20.2	8.2	49.3	17.1	9.3	49.9	50.1	36.3	16.2
South Croydon	50.9	11.5	36.0	41.7	14.7	7.3	55.8	44.2	48.2	12.1
South Norwood	41.7	22.7	34.5	28.5	30.7	9.1	48.5	51.5	42.8	16.6
Thornton Heath	50.8	18.7	29.0	21.3	35.1	11.9	42.1	57.9	37.9	17.8
Waddon	44.6	25.2	28.1	31.6	21.3	10.4	45.6	54.4	39.9	17.1
West Thornton	45.4	20.0	32.6	11.4	26.9	21.9	35.5	64.5	35.6	20.0
Woodside	50.5	20.6	26.9	31.4	29.6	8.2	48.1	51.9	40.5	14.9

**Addiscombe East:** the edges of Shirley, is not really a Reform area and is still the fault-line in Croydon where Labour's advance has stalled, for now.

**South Croydon** - the old Croham - is teetering for the Conservatives and might fall this year, especially if Reform takes a chunk out of the Tory vote. The single-member **Park Hill & Whitgift**, and then **Shirley North** would also be potential Labour gains if a) they were still in opposition nationally and b) weren't plumbing the depths of public opinion and didn't have the millstone around their neck of the last time they were in charge locally.

Then there is the threat to Labour. The Greens want all three **Fairfield** seats. This one's incredibly hard to call because it is a very new ward: the town centre has seen vast tower blocks constructed in the past decade, then development got stalled by the pandemic shutdown. But the high rises continue to rise. A large share of the electorate in Fairfield won't have been here in 2022 making it difficult for its councillors to build a personal vote. But Labour unpopularity and Green activism here will probably tip all three seats to the latter.

The Lib Dems gained a seat - not in Old Coulsdon with its Conservative incumbents but in the northern, Labour-held ward of **Crystal Palace & Upper Norwood**. If they can win the other two seats, it's highly unlikely Labour can find a path to a majority on the council.

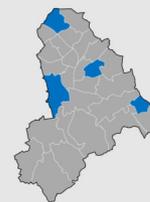
While the Greens are also trying their hand at **South Norwood** they could also knock the Lib Dems out in this ward. The other half of the Crystal Palace neighbourhood in Bromley borough is a Green target and already has a decent Green vote: it may rub off, and voters dithering between the two may just prefer the one with momentum and dynamism than the one fronted by a slapstick clown.

This time Labour has deselected a couple of its black councillors. Whether that will be a further disincentive for these significantly ethnically diverse neighbourhoods to turn out for the party or motivates new parties remains to be seen.

## Possible key wards

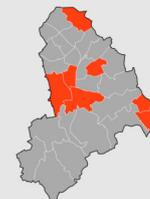
### Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Addiscombe East (1 Lab)
- ▶ New Addington North (1 Lab)
- ▶ Norbury Park (2 Lab)
- ▶ Waddon (2 Lab)



### Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Addiscombe East (1 Con)
- ▶ Crystal Palace & Upper Norwood (1 LD)
- ▶ Fairfield (2 Grn)
- ▶ New Addington North (1 Con)
- ▶ New Addington South (2 Con)
- ▶ South Croydon (3 Con)
- ▶ Waddon (1 Con)



### Reform UK hopefuls

- ▶ Kenley (2 Con)
- ▶ New Addington North (1 Con, 1 Lab)
- ▶ New Addington South (2 Con)
- ▶ Old Coulsdon (3 Con)
- ▶ Selsdon and Addington Village (3 Con)
- ▶ Selsdon Vale and Forestdale (2 Con)



### Liberal Democrat hopefuls

- ▶ Crystal Palace & Upper Norwood (2 Lab)
- ▶ Old Coulsdon (3 Con)



### Green hopefuls

- ▶ Crystal Palace & Upper Norwood (2 Lab, 1 LD)
- ▶ Fairfield (1 Lab)
- ▶ Norbury and Pollards Hill (2 Lab)
- ▶ Norbury Park (2 Lab)
- ▶ South Norwood (3 Lab)



The reason Labour lost the mayoral race was because voters in the ethnically diverse north of the borough swung away from the party in 2022. Labour's vote share plummeted 16 points in **Norbury & Pollards Hill**, 18 points in **West Thornton**, 19 in **Broad Green**, 23 in **Selhurst** and 25 points in **Bensham Manor** and **Thornton Heath**.

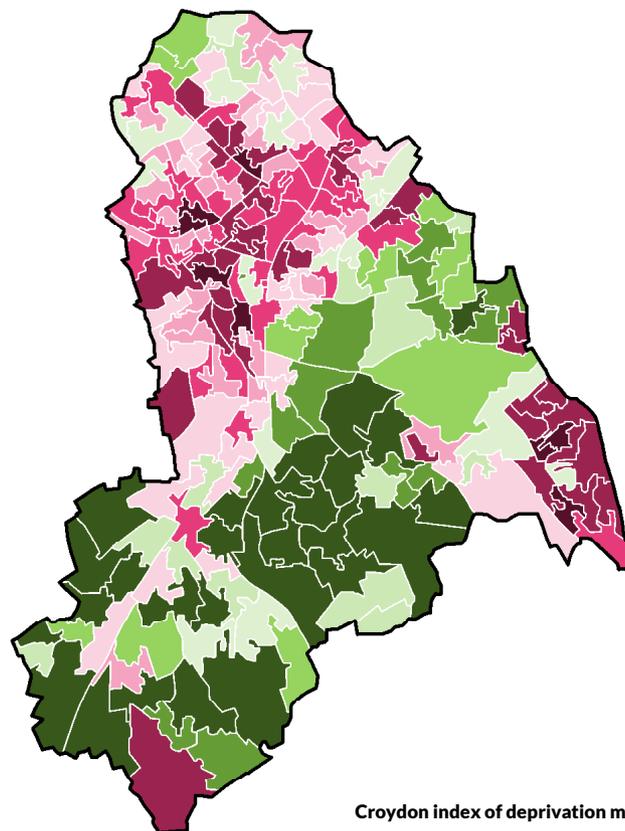
Those big drops in support did not benefit any one opponent: the spoils were shared around - so Labour still won these wards easily enough. But just because it went that way last time doesn't mean it must this time. The general election MRP model by Electoral Calculus has the Greens winning Croydon West and Streatham and Croydon North.

While a lot of Green strength in the latter will come on the Streatham side of the border, where might they be polling strongly enough in the west? It won't be **Waddon** but it could be **Norbury Park** and **Norbury and Pollards Hill** - and maybe even **Thornton Heath** too.

**Thornton Heath** has the largest African and Caribbean community in Croydon - over a third - and while they are the least hostile to Labour at present (for more see the Lambeth profile) they are even more favourable to the Greens.

So maybe this time the splintering of the anti-Labour vote in all directions won't actually benefit Labour this time, but just bring the party down to within striking distance.

There comes a point in the electoral system - and Labour is now below it - where its vote is so weak that perverse outcomes occur. Because the party is nationally as well as locally unpopular and because Labour always struggles to drive out its vote when in government, things might get dicey.



Croydon index of deprivation map

If a strong opponent (almost certainly not the Tories - not anymore, at least beyond **Norbury Park**) emerges, there could be a surprise or two in the north, just as Reform may spring a few surprises in the south.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	G	O
May 22 council election result	33	34	1	2	
Jul 22 by-election: South Croydon - Con hold	33	34	1	2	
Nov 22 by-election: Selsdon Vale and Forestdale - Con hold	33	34	1	2	
May 24 by-election: Park Hill and Whitgift - Con hold	33	34	1	2	
May 24 by-election: Woodside - Lab hold	33	34	1	2	

# EALING

57

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4

1

## Why is it that Labour's better chances of retaining power in the crazy London elections of 2026 are found in boroughs that were traditionally battlegrounds?

Boroughs like Barnet and Wandsworth might not return to the Conservatives despite Labour's dreadful poll ratings. Boroughs like Hammersmith & Fulham and Ealing might be safe. This is not normal.

It's because politics is no longer determined by how many affluent, Conservative, wards versus deprived, Labour, wards there are. If that were the measure, "middle London" Ealing would be heading for a Conservative landslide.

Elections in London haven't been determined along economic lines for some years. The first examples of wealthy areas voting along cultural lines in the capital can be found way back to the 1970s. Today it is the poorer areas; the whiter - and more recently less white - working-class areas that have swung away from Labour while the party's hold on wealthier, more "progressive" enclaves is comparatively very strong. So it's little wonder that London has become their strongest area and they have a decent chance of retaining a borough like Ealing - a stereotype of middle class suburbia.

Labour goes into May with a thumping 46 seat majority: unprecedented for this borough. And, rather than looking confidently to make major gains, the Conservatives face the prospect of further losses - maybe a wipe out. It shouldn't quite play out because while Conservatives are likely to lose their remaining **Hanger Hill** seat **Ealing Broadway** is considerably more secure that way.

The Conservatives might lose that one seat to the Lib Dems while taking seats off Labour. Yet it's hard to find enough competitive wards to eradicate Labour's huge majority, let alone replace it with one for another party.

Consider what the Tories won the last time they took power in Ealing: Acton Central (North Acton), Elthorne (Hanwell Broadway), Hobbayne (North Hanwell), Northolt Mandeville, Greenford Broadway, Perivale, East Acton (to select just a few). These wards have Labour majorities exceeding 1,000.

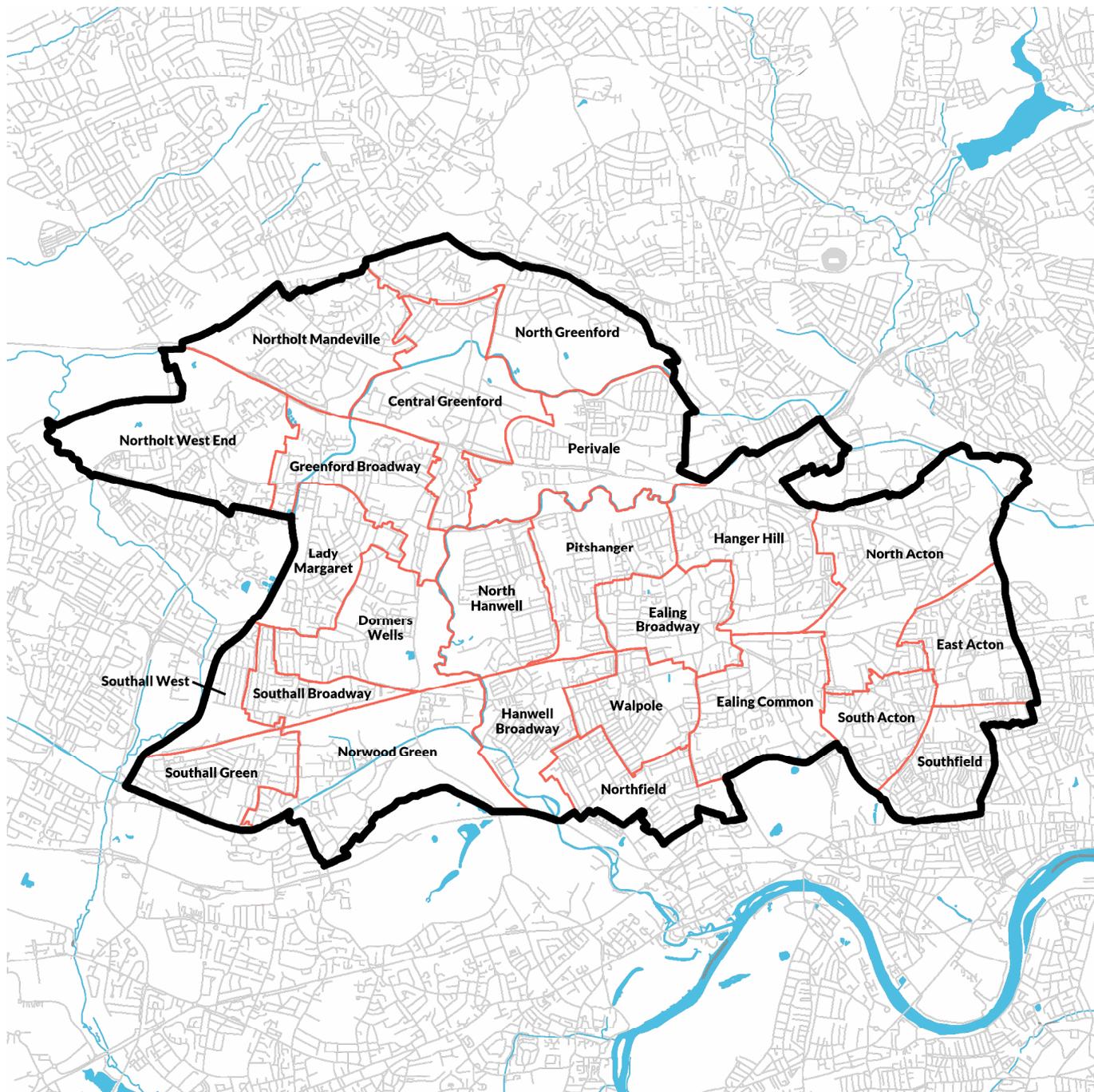
Even the most marginal Labour-Conservative wards: **Pitshanger**, **Northfield** and **Walpole** have Labour majorities of up to around 700. The substantial effort it will take just to pick off the lowest hanging fruit is a measure of how bad things have got for the Conservatives.

Aside from **Ealing Common** which for years was another Conservative-Lib Dem marginal but switched to a Labour-Lib Dem fight last time, the Liberal Democrats just aren't positioned well in Labour wards.

Their highest vote share in 2022 was in **Pitshanger** (16%) and **Walpole** (18%): principally Conservative targets, so again their main purpose this time might be to block the Tories from regaining the most promising seats. There would need to be huge momentum behind the Liberal Democrats to break into these wards themselves which there isn't.

Beyond central Ealing itself where the party has basically won everything it's going to win, this borough is not especially liberal. The working-class majority of Acton isn't. Southall isn't. Greenford isn't. This is not Hampstead. It is not Richmond. There is no path to a Lib Dem majority: only to entrenching themselves as a not-really-opposing opposition to Labour.

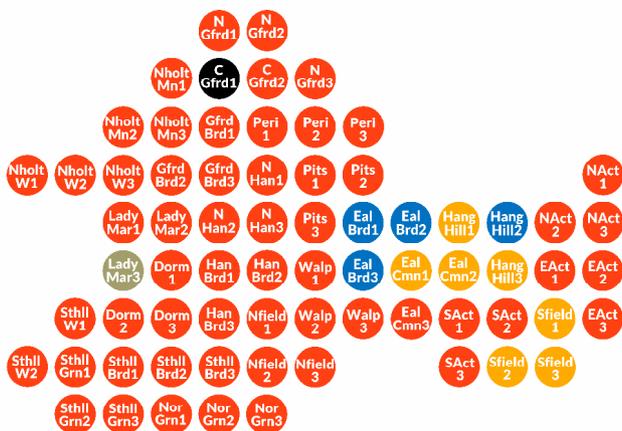
So Labour is in a fairly strong position because it has been a borough designed to swing between Labour and the Conservatives. When one side of that swing is broken and hasn't been replaced Labour wins by landslide margins.



Since 1964, control of Ealing has switched eight times: 1968, 1971, 1978, 1986, 1990, 1994, 2006, 2010 - always from one party directly to the other; never to no overall control. That's because there has never been an especially strong third party and because clumps of wards are very similar: if one falls, a bunch fall.

If, for example, the vast Hindu and Sikh vote in **Southall Green** switched away from Labour, **Southall Broadway**, **Dormers Wells**, **Norwood Green**, **Lady Margaret** and **Southall West** would probably follow (unless there was some unique factor at play in that specific ward).

Likewise, there is very little difference - some, not that much - between **Central Greenford**, **North Greenford**, **Perivale** and **Northolt Mandeville**.



There are slight differences between **East Acton**, **North Acton** and **South Acton**, but they are essentially similar; as you might expect. Gentrified **Southfield**, which many regard as an adjunct to Chiswick rather than Acton, is the exception within this set.

Demographic change has affected the borough, especially its western side. Decades ago, the streets of Southall became a popular destination for families from the Indian sub-continent to flock to. This wasn't just an accident of Southall's

proximity to Heathrow. Had Southall been a town of high rise Brutalist council blocks, these immigrants would have gone elsewhere.

It was because Southall had long terraced streets in racks and grids - much better for building a community where neighbours know each other and congregate than blocks with only perhaps four flats to a floor, where space for getting together may not exist - and because Southall was affordable, that it became the centre of London's Indian community.

There are six core Southall wards: **Dormers Wells**, **Lady Margaret**, **Norwood Green**, **Southall Broadway**, **Southall Green** and **Southall West** - all now have populations of Indian sub-continent origin of above 60%: in the newly created ward of Southall West it's 75.2%. All these wards have been safely Labour since the 1970s. But will they stay that way?

One of the ways we now have to approach these unprecedented, unpredictable elections is almost to upend the 2022 results and interrogate whether the wards that gave Labour their biggest majorities last time might be among their more vulnerable this year.

Labour has never been so unpopular with ethnic minorities in polling history: negative 28 points among those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin; negative 33 among Indians. And Labour already lost a lot of support in these wards in 2022.

An 8% swing in **Lady Margaret**, 11% in **Southall Green**, 14% in **Southall Broadway**. That bloc of Southall wards are still Labour's safest - and their opponents will need bigger swings than that this year to oust them. But they are only safe as long as the residents within them turn out for them. If they stop - even worse if they turn out and vote for someone else - there's nothing "safe" about them.

The rest of Ealing beyond Southall used to be divided thus: Greenford and Northolt were heavily white working class areas that swung massively behind the Conservatives in the Thatcher era, then massively back to Labour during the Blair years - and more or less have stayed with Labour.

These are the key swing wards: when Ealing wants rid of Labour the bulk of them go Conservative. All twenty one seats here are Labour-held but go back to 2006 and twelve went Conservative, nine Labour. Rewind further to 1990 and sixteen were Conservative, three Labour, two Lib Dem. All these wards had fairly comfortable Labour majorities in 2022, but they're not earthquake-proof.

Central Ealing is traditionally the Conservative stronghold where once they could lock-down wards like **Ealing Broadway, Ealing Common, Hanger Hill, Pitshanger** and, more often than **Northfield** and occasionally **Walpole**. The Tories were usually not strong enough to win what is now **Hanwell Broadway** - the old Elthorne - but even here they could win the odd seat now and then.

But today, just **Ealing Broadway** and one seat in **Hanger Hill** have Conservative councillors. They are not too far behind in Northfield, and Walpole is a quite erratic ward: once thought to be comfortably Labour (it was represented by Hilary Benn for years) but switching to the Conservatives in the David Cameron years.

The thing to watch for in **Walpole** is whether its return to the Labour fold was a reassertion of business as usual or simply a reaction to an unpopular Conservative government. Given the Tories are less popular now than in 2022, this election may not provide a clear answer, but it's not a ward the Conservatives can give up on. **Hanwell Broadway** was the strongest Green ward in 2022, having not long before been one in which the Lib Dems won a seat.

To win control, the Conservatives need a 15% swing. They are nowhere close to that sort of number in London. Unless, of course, we do what I talked about above: upend the numbers. What if the Southall wards really turn on Labour?

The Electoral Calculus General Election MRP from December has Southall going to the Greens on a three-way split: Green 25%, Labour 24%, Reform 22%; Conservatives down on 12%.

## Possible target wards

### Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Ealing Broadway (3 Con)
- ▶ Ealing Common (2 LD)



### Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Central Greenford (3 Lab)
- ▶ Ealing Common (2 LD, 1 Lab)
- ▶ Hanger Hill (2 LD)
- ▶ North Hanwell (3 Lab)
- ▶ Northfield (3 Lab)
- ▶ Northolt Mandeville (3 Lab)
- ▶ Perivale (3 Lab)
- ▶ Pitshanger (3 Lab)
- ▶ Walpole (3 Lab)



### Liberal Democrat hopefuls

- ▶ Ealing Common (1 Lab)
- ▶ Hanger Hill (1 Con)



### Green hopefuls

- ▶ Ealing Common (2 LD, 1 Lab)
- ▶ Hanwell Broadway (3 Lab)
- ▶ Northfield (3 Lab)
- ▶ Norwood Green (3 Lab)
- ▶ South Acton (3 Lab)
- ▶ Southall West (2 Lab)
- ▶ Walpole (3 Lab)



### Reform hopefuls

- ▶ Northolt Mandeville (3 Lab)
- ▶ Northolt West End (3 Lab)



That would give the Greens **Hanwell Broadway** easily and probably **Northfield**, being the more affluent south side of Boston Manor. It might also suggest a shot at **Southall West**: a ward created in 2022 and containing a lot of brand new apartment block housing (the so-called "Green Quarter") alongside Yeading Brook - not all of which is yet occupied.

There's also been a large amount of new housing development around Southall station in **Southall Green** ward; in fact alongside the rail tracks in **Norwood Green** ward too as warehousing districts are turned into new medium-rise housing estates. But this is a less significant

proportion of these wards than in **Southall West**. Still, it should be a boost to the Green Party if the sort of young first-time buyer professionals are a group that turns out heavily for them.

But then lets also consider that Reform share of 22% Electoral Calculus believes existed in Southall in December. Unlike the Green vote here, which has the potential to be concentrated strongly enough in one or two wards, Reform's support is likely evenly spread and less likely to net them seats. But where's it coming from?

Ward	Housing			Religion		Ethnic	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	Muslim	Hindu & Sikh	White Brit	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Central Greenford	53.1	10.0	35.0	18.3	15.9	19.5	39.7	60.3	38.1	19.0
Dormers Wells	44.4	25.3	28.1	28.6	35.1	7.1	31.3	68.7	28.8	26.6
Ealing Broadway	38.2	10.8	49.0	8.6	5.9	33.7	70.4	29.6	65.6	9.4
Ealing Common	43.9	14.7	40.2	12.1	4.7	37.8	66.6	33.4	59.5	11.3
East Acton	33.1	24.2	40.3	25.5	2.3	24.5	51.3	48.7	47.8	15.8
Greenford Broadway	45.4	23.3	26.2	23.0	12.6	21.3	37.1	62.9	34.9	20.8
Hanger Hill	50.9	5.8	41.8	19.3	6.0	26.4	63.6	36.4	57.9	11.9
Hanwell Broadway	44.0	19.8	32.6	14.6	4.1	36.4	56.7	43.3	48.7	15.0
Lady Margaret	58.4	8.9	31.9	20.6	46.6	7.2	34.4	65.6	30.6	25.1
North Acton	35.0	17.4	45.1	17.9	3.0	27.0	54.3	45.7	46.0	14.1
North Greenford	58.3	11.9	29.0	18.5	19.5	16.7	40.7	59.3	39.3	18.9
North Hanwell	50.1	25.0	23.2	16.8	6.2	31.6	50.3	49.7	42.4	17.1
Northfield	63.7	6.9	28.8	6.7	4.2	46.3	68.4	31.6	60.5	9.5
Northolt Mandeville	47.9	23.5	26.7	18.3	13.7	22.5	37.1	62.9	35.4	21.2
Northolt West End	40.8	32.5	25.0	25.6	13.5	22.7	34.0	66.0	31.7	23.9
Norwood Green	38.3	30.8	25.0	24.6	35.7	10.9	42.3	57.7	34.4	24.0
Perivale	54.8	8.7	35.5	23.4	5.6	16.5	39.7	60.3	38.7	20.1
Pitshanger	50.2	21.3	27.0	17.8	14.8	34.8	61.9	38.1	52.9	12.6
South Acton	32.2	29.4	33.5	22.3	2.4	29.2	59.7	40.3	52.4	14.9
Southall Broadway	45.7	13.6	40.0	25.3	43.6	2.3	26.3	73.7	25.8	30.3
Southall Green	39.9	13.4	45.2	19.7	48.6	2.5	23.5	76.5	24.3	31.1
Southall West	40.5	20.6	34.9	30.2	45.0	2.7	26.5	73.5	24.3	30.1
Southfield	52.2	10.5	34.6	7.6	2.3	45.8	73.7	26.3	66.2	8.1
Walpole	51.4	12.2	35.3	10.1	5.2	43.3	68.7	31.3	60.4	10.7

If assumptions about Reform's vote: older, whiter, more working class are correct, they aren't getting close to 22% in Southall. The number of white residents left in Southall is miniscule: below 3% in the three named Southall wards and 7% in **Lady Margaret** and **Dormers Wells**. It's higher in **Norwood Green**, and considerably higher at the Hanwell end of the constituency so some may come from there; but these are more affluent middle-class neighbourhoods relatively disdainful of Reform's message.

That must mean that Reform is claiming a lot of the Indian vote in Southall that went Conservative in 2022 AND taking another - even larger chunk from Labour. It seems odd, perhaps, that a party which wants to curtail immigration might poll well in one of London's first immigrant neighbourhoods. But if now long-established communities are experiencing the same problems accessing good public services, and see new build estates going up in their area but which are out of their children's reach then is it so beyond belief that they might be attracted to Reform's message?

Nonetheless, Reform probably has better prospects in the north of the borough. The Electoral Calculus MRP has Reform winning Ealing North albeit on another incredibly divided result: Reform 28%, Labour 23%, Green 22% and Conservatives 14%. Again, the Greenford and Northolt end of the borough has changed massively from the days when right-winger Harry Greenway - an earlier incarnation of Nigel Farage, just less posh - won thumping majorities for the Conservatives. Ealing North was then the archetype of a Margaret Thatcher-loving working-class constituency.

Today it is much less white, though no more affluent than it was back then. Reform's best shot here - and this may seem an odd pick given it's the best Labour ward in this cluster - is **Northolt West End**. This is the whitest of the wards and, with its proximity to RAF Northolt air base (which is in Hillingdon), home to a few military families. It's a mix of inter-war suburbia (as is much of Greenford and Northolt) but with more council housing. Labour took over 62% here in 2022 but it's precisely the sort of area where the party will shed votes to the right; maybe less so the Greens.

There was little sign of a substantial Reform vote in the three Ealing by-elections that took place in October 2024: one in **Northolt Mandeville**, one in **South Acton** and one in **Hanger Hill**. This was before the Reform surge that began in early 2025 but still: 271 votes in Northolt (11%); 159 in Acton; just 98 in Hanger Hill. Clearly, Northolt Mandeville was their best area of these three but still not great back then.

Interestingly, despite Reform standing there, the Conservatives still managed to grow their vote by just over four points while Labour was down eleven. Labour still held Mandeville by just under 400. But it suggests either that the Tories did still lose votes to Reform but gained many more than it appears from Labour; or that both right-of-centre parties can take votes off Labour in these outlying wards.

Finally, let's look at the Ealing and Acton end of the borough. Electoral Calculus has Labour retaining - surprise, surprise - the most affluent of Ealing's three constituencies. But even here its support is very weak: Labour 24.9%, Green 24.8%, Reform 19%, Conservatives 14% and Lib Dems 12%. This constituency gained two of the safest Labour wards in next door Hammersmith and Fulham at the last general election: College Park and Old Oak and Wormholt. Excluding those two, Labour would have been behind in this constituency too - maybe by four percent or so.

If you count **Hanger Hill** as an Acton ward there are five: two pretty affluent (Hanger Hill and Southfield), one stable, working class (East Acton) and two pretty deprived, both undergoing vast "regeneration" (North Acton and South Acton). The redevelopment of **South Acton** - by which I principally mean the demolition and replacement of the huge South Acton council estate - is almost complete: a redevelopment that has taken about two decades.

That there is so much new housing here, interspersed with some interwar semis and some leafy avenues closer to **Ealing Common**, gives the Greens a real chance in a ward that has been rock-solid Labour since 1982. **South Acton** still has the highest proportion of council housing of any Ealing ward but it's below 30% now.

**North Acton** is somewhat different because a large part of it is the huge - literally square miles of it - warehousing and light industrial district of Park Royal, one of the major redevelopment zones in London.

The transformation of Park Royal - which is so big parts of it are in Brent and Hammersmith - is still in relatively early stages so right now it is one of those quite eerie areas where you find a few new residential towers in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by industrial units and major roads, and little else. The epicentre of what's been built so far is Victoria Road, near North Acton Central Line station: massive tower blocks visible for miles around because this isn't a corner of London that has any experience of high-rise buildings.

The Greens may therefore have a chance in **North Acton**, where Labour polled more weakly than **South Acton** last time: only 45%. In **South Acton**, the Greens were clearly second but further behind.

Can the Conservatives recover at all in **Hanger Hill**? The 2022 result suggests they could and should because they still held two seats even after a big swing to the Lib Dems. But the 2024 by-election says they can't.

In 2022, **Hanger Hill** was a three-way marginal with Labour on 24%, the Lib Dems on 31% and the Tories on 32%. Compare this result, incidentally with how the ward voted in

1990: Conservative 68%, Labour 22% and Lib Dem 10% as another example of how far the Tories have fallen across especially affluent London.

But in the by-election the Lib Dems were especially successful at persuading voters of a "progressive" lean to lend them their votes, and so surged by twenty-one percentage points, to defeat the Conservatives by more than 2:1. The Conservatives fell six points but the combined Labour and Green decline was more than nineteen.

A by-election is a snapshot, not a trend, and there was quite a lot of effort to encourage people to defeat Reform, less so the Conservatives: instilling almost a moral panic that Nigel Farage had the least chance of winning there. As we've already seen, Reform didn't even get one hundred votes. Hanger Hill will almost certainly return to being more competitive than in that by-election, but Conservative prospects here really aren't good.

It is that inherent Conservative weakness that could save Labour in Ealing. This borough is not a cast iron guaranteed Labour hold and being attacked by different parties in different wards could cost Labour its majority at a push. But Labour's vote is remarkably weak - and weak in places it never really has been before, so we could be looking at a radically different looking political map of this borough on May 8th.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	G	O
May 22 council election result	5	59	6		
Oct 24 by-election: Hanger Hill - LD gain from Con	4	59	7		
Oct 24 by-election: Northolt Mandeville - Lab hold	4	59	7		
Oct 24 by-election: South Acton - Lab hold	4	59	7		
Nov 25 defection: Swaran Padda (Lady Margaret) - Lab to Ind	4	58	7		1
Feb 26 vacancy: Central Greenford - death of Cllr Ayesha Raza, Lab	4	57	7		

# ENFIELD

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**In a city as large as London results never wholly move in one direction. In 2022, while Labour was gaining boroughs in which it had never won a majority, Enfield swung to the Conservatives. This was true in both seats (eight moved from Labour to Conservative) and votes (a 5% swing from Labour to Conservative).**

Yes, Labour kept control with a 13 seat majority (down from 29) and it will still be fairly tough to dislodge enough seats to oust them from power, but it's not impossible. Not with both national and local unpopularity dragging Labour down.

The reasons for Labour's poor result four years ago are several. The group spent the four years up to 2022 seriously split, changed its leader immediately after the 2018 results and several councillors were suspended or resigned over the next four years. Ward boundary changes also benefited the Conservatives by recreating several smaller two-councillor wards where Tory-inclined areas that had been outvoted in larger Labour-supporting divisions could elect the councillors they wanted.

And Enfield was another of those boroughs where Labour lost support in ethnically diverse safe seats. Swings of 10% or higher in wards like Ponders End - just 16% white British; 7% in Haselbury - 18% white British. **Bowes** ward, south of the North Circular and not all that distinguishable from the Wood Green wards in Haringey where Conservative support has disappeared swung to the Tories by 17%. That one is 20% white British. Labour held them but they won't for much longer if they continue swinging away like that.

It isn't obvious at all that the problems that beset Labour in 2022 have been remedied; and Labour has added to them by winning the 2024 general election then losing half its support so rapidly. Enfield Conservatives are brash and visible with a strong social media presence, whatever good that will do them.

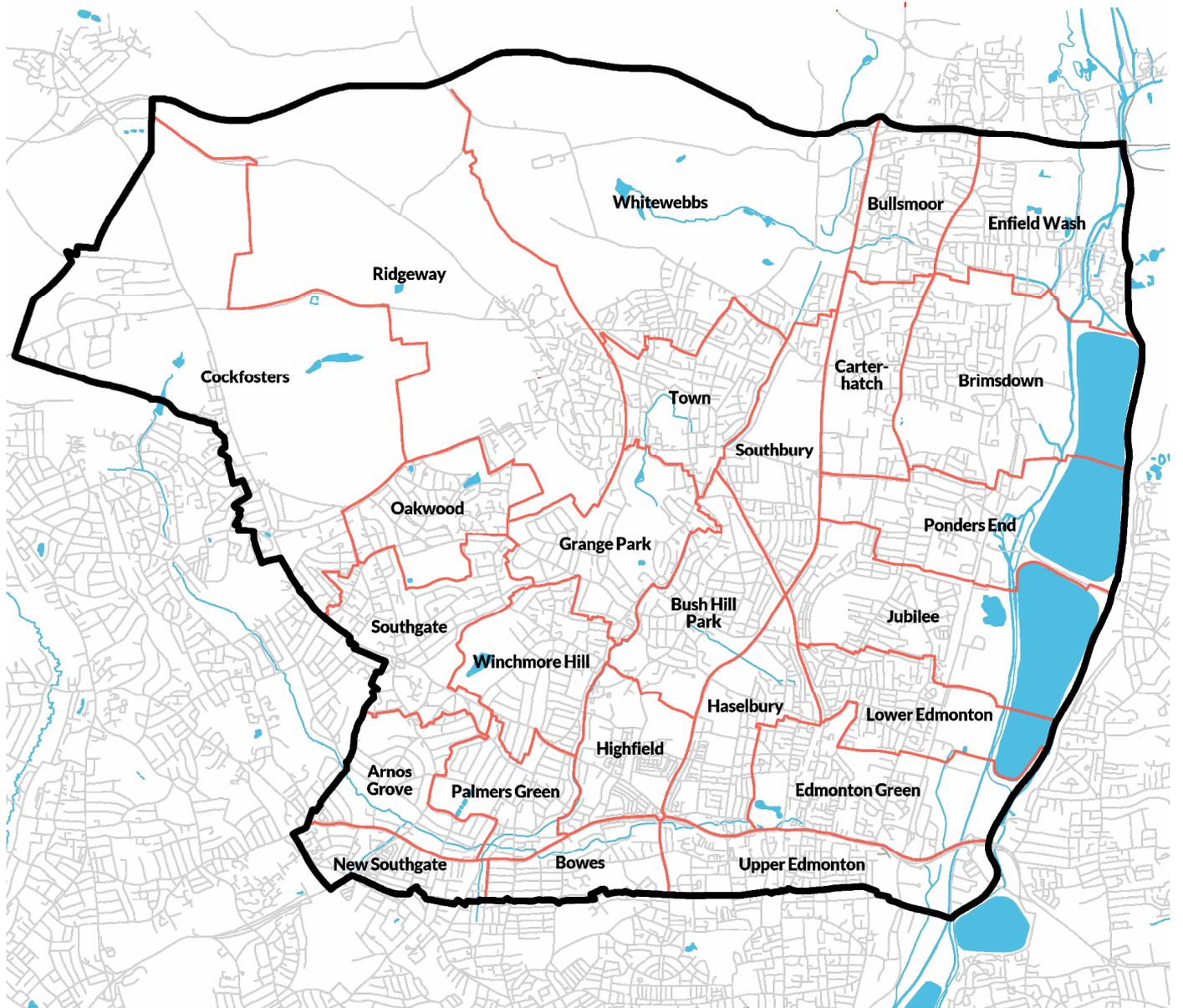
Enfield can be divided into three distinct parts.

There is Edmonton and the wall of wards running along the edge of the river Lea: reservoir country! Edmonton proper comprises **Lower Edmonton, Edmonton Green, Upper Edmonton, Haselbury** and **Jubilee** whereas **Ponders End, Brimsdown, Caterhatch, Bullsmoor** and **Enfield Lock** are the working class side of Enfield town. I'm also going to include **Southbury** in this set even though it's on the wrong side of the A10, partly because it will be isolated as we go through the other clusters but also because it is quite similar to the Lea-side Enfield wards.

The days when Enfield was a geographically separate town from Edmonton are long gone: there is now an unbroken urban sprawl up the side of the borough. The wards are not all that dissimilar: each has a large population of African and Caribbean origin: 30% in **Edmonton Green, Lower Edmonton** and **Ponders End** and 29% in **Upper Edmonton**.

Where these two areas differ a lot is in housing tenure. Edmonton has a lot of council housing; Enfield town (with the exception of Carterhatch: its council estate ward) does not. Council and housing association stock comprises 39% of Edmonton Green's properties, 33% of Upper Edmonton and 28% of Lower Edmonton. Carterhatch's figure is 34% but most of this is different to Edmonton's: cottage estate of houses or low rise tenements in Enfield; high rise blocks in central Edmonton. There is nothing anywhere else in Enfield borough like the three 27-storey Edmonton Green estate tower blocks just behind the shopping centre.

This eastern wall of wards are typically Labour's strongest, though some swung from the party in 2022 and will probably do so again. Because of those - in some cases quite large - swings against Labour last time, these wards don't look marginal but they are not quite invulnerable anymore either.



**Enfield Lock** has elected Conservative councillors in six past elections. In **Edmonton Green** two independents took 866 and 648 votes in 2022, causing Labour's vote to crash twenty percentage points. This is the last ward Labour should expect to lose but it is one third Muslim (the highest in Enfield) and the party's support is tanking with ethnic minority voters. It is also the ward of the current council leader Ergin Erbil which may motivate Labour's opponents to try harder.

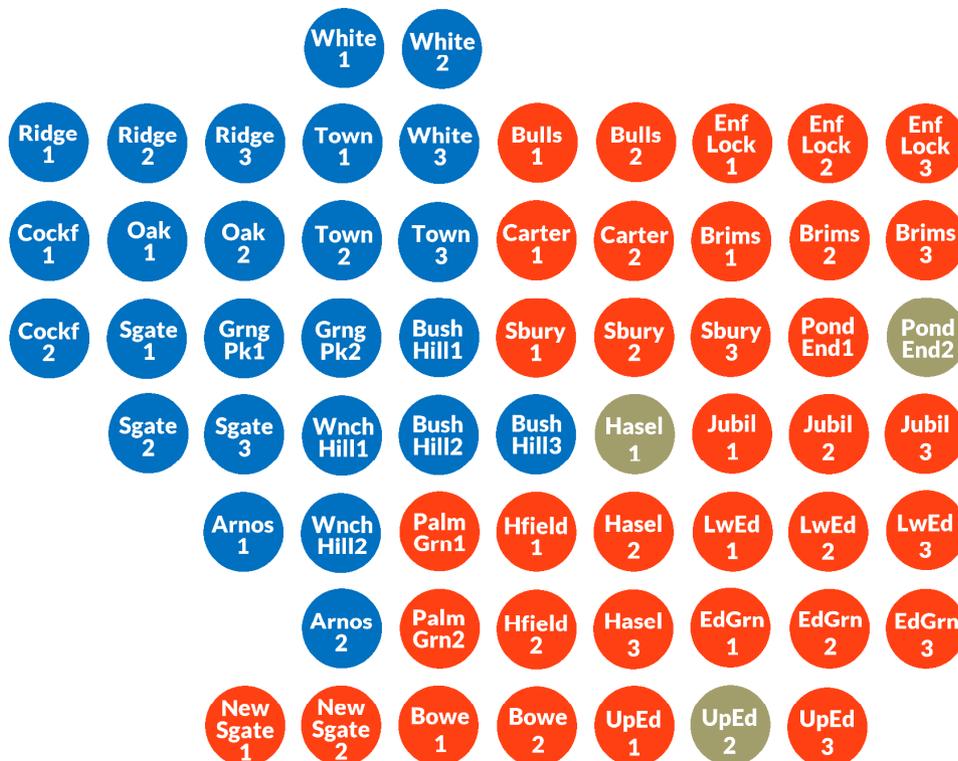
In a by-election in **Jubilee** ward in 2024 - the tipping point when support for Labour following the general election really deserted, there was a 12% swing to the Conservatives on top of the 2022 swing. The Tories only fell short by 162 votes: 32% to Labour's 39%. This was the by-election caused by former council leader Nesil Caliskan resigning after being elected MP for Barking.

This one matters because **Jubilee** would not have been on any list of Conservative targets after 2022 - it was way beyond the easiest seats they needed for a majority. If **Jubilee** is vulnerable, then so too are wards on that eastern side like **Ponders End, Brimsdown** and **Enfield Lock** - which all have very similar majorities.

Ponders End going Tory would be stunning and almost certainly won't happen: but watch it! In parliamentary boundary reviews the Conservatives and Labour often battled over where Ponders End should go, because it's typically so heavily for Labour that it matters. The Tories wanted it in Edmonton which they can't win any more; Labour wanted it in marginal Enfield North because it would literally change who won that constituency.

Southbury is also important because this one was near the top of the Tory targets list following 2022. Southbury is a bit on an incoherent ward with a northern suburban residential section and then a much more urban south interspersed between industrial estates; the two separated by Enfield playing fields.

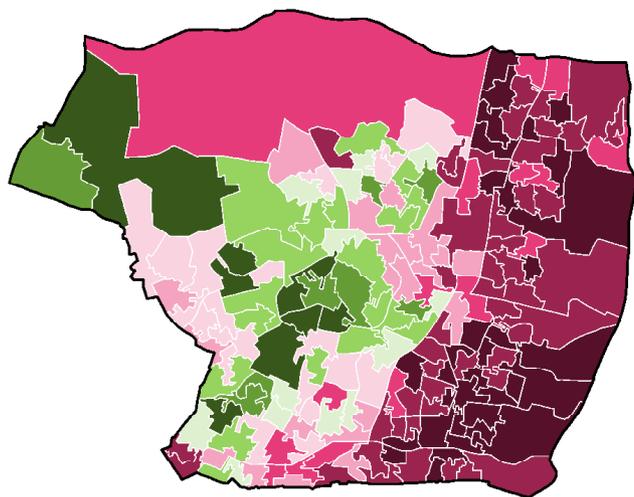
Southbury notionally registered a huge swing from Labour in 2022: 10% - but this isn't quite accurate because most of what is now Carterhatch - that new safe Labour council estate ward - was part of Southbury in 2018. The removal of all that council housing makes Southbury much better territory for the Conservatives. They were about fourteen percentage points behind last time; just under 500 votes give or take. The Conservatives have to win this one if they are going to take power in Enfield again.



But perhaps this is one of the few wards Reform might do well in: it is fairly white: at least for London, and most of its housing is owner occupied but is far more affordable than the Conservative wards to the west. A strong Reform showing will almost certainly block a Conservative win.

Bullsmoor - mostly the old Turkey Street ward (and before that...Bullsmoor!) - is a neighbourhood that stretches across the borough and London boundary into Waltham Cross in Broxbourne district. This is one of many Enfield wards that was once safely Conservative but swung heavily to Labour.

The long-term deterioration in the Tory position shows in the ward swinging 7% towards them in 2022 and yet still getting nowhere close. They need another 12% swing this year to take this ward back for the first election since 2006.



Enfield index of deprivation map

Enfield is another deeply unequal borough. The eastern side contains the same extreme levels of deprivation found in Tottenham immediately south. You may say that this is hardly surprising: entrenched poverty does not respect boundaries. Yet it does. It does in Haringey where it halts at Hornsey. Here it does at the A10. There's a little seepage across the Cambridge Road but essentially if you live west of it you are

significantly better off on a basket of measures than if you live on the Lea-side of it.

Here, thirty-three of the Lower Super Output Areas - a census measure that is meaningless other than that it divides the country into units containing the same number of people - are in the most deprived decile there is; and a further forty-one are in the second most deprived 10%. That's in the whole of England, not just of Enfield or London.

In contrast, if you live in a cluster of output areas centred on Enfield Golf Club in the centre-west of the borough, or in Cockfosters in the far west, you are in the least deprived 20% in England.

Although the link between affluence and Conservative votes has been breaking down for decades in London (just as its less true that voters in relative poverty vote wholesale for Labour nowadays), it isn't surprising that nearly all the Tory seats on Enfield council lie in this group of very affluent output areas.

There are the three wards covering Enfield Town: **Town** itself, **Whitewebbs** and **Ridgeway**; and then a band of affluent wards just to the south: **Cockfosters**, **Southgate**, **Oakwood**, **Grange Park**, **Bush Hill Park** and **Winchmore Hill**. Enfield Southgate is now a Labour constituency - safe Labour while it's paired with a hefty chunk of Haringey - but Southgate and this central strip remain Conservative-leaning.

All currently have Conservative councillors and all bar **Southgate** and **Whitewebbs** should be secure, unless Reform makes far bigger inroads into the Tory vote than expected. The Tories failed to exceed 40% of the vote in **Southgate** ward in 2022 but Labour fell below 30% and so lost two seats.

If both main parties' support fell where did their votes go?

To the Greens who polled 24%, barely behind Labour. **Southgate** was, by some distance, the best Green ward last time. The only question about their ability to win here is whether their more viscerally left-wing positioning will resonate quite as well in these sort of affluent middle class

wards. It probably won't will repel enough voters to rule out the Greens winning, while Labour-held wards might now be looking more promising, despite weaker 2022 Green votes.

Are any Enfield wards likely to vote Reform? The answer is yes - though they aren't quite in the same category as the party's top targets in a borough like Bexley. It's also not obvious which ones are Reform targets.

Are the geographically huge outer wards of **Whitewebbs** and **Ridgeway** winnable because they're the least typically London-like? Perhaps, but they are only so large because they divide up Enfield Chase and nobody lives there. They are in fact the outskirts of Enfield town: **Whitewebbs** the northern outskirts and **Ridgeway** the western parts. If they go Reform then so too is **Town** and probably **Grange Park** and **Oakwood**, though these are somewhat different wards in the orbit of Barnet which is very not Reform territory.

Of course, Reform could do that well: **Whitewebbs** in particular contains a Reform-friendly blend: almost 50% white, almost 60% home-owners, but nowhere near as affluent as, say, **Cockfosters**. It is also the most marginal of all the Tory-held wards: they won with just 37% last time, with Labour on 26, the Lib Dems on 21 and Greens on 7. You can infer from those figures what sort of vote share whoever wins this year is going to need when Reform enters the fray.

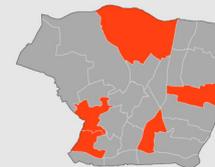
Wards like **Cockfosters**, **Oakwood** and **Grange Park** on the one hand have something of that retired golf club member caricature that might suggest the sort of Reform voter that has been with Nigel Farage since his days in UKIP; but honestly: they are perhaps too affluent to desert the Conservatives. Meanwhile **Southgate**, **Winchmore Hill** and **Bush Hill Park** are too London-like; populated by more young professional families looking for less expensive housing close to decent, quick public transport into the centre of town.

On paper, the profile of these inner suburban wards isn't that different from the wards I've just speculated could go Reform's way but then so are wards across the borough

## Possible target wards

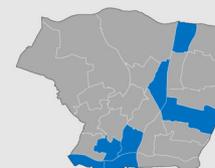
### Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Arnos Grove (2 Con)
- ▶ Haselbury (1 Ind - defec)
- ▶ Ponders End (1 Ind - defec)
- ▶ Southgate (3 Con)
- ▶ Whitewebbs (3 Con)



### Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Bowes (2 Lab)
- ▶ Bullsmoor (2 Lab)
- ▶ Highfield (2 Lab)
- ▶ Jubilee (3 Lab)
- ▶ New Southgate (2 Lab)
- ▶ Palmers Green (2 Lab)
- ▶ Southbury (3 Lab)



### Reform UK hopefuls

- ▶ Bullsmoor (2 Lab)
- ▶ Oakwood (2 Con)
- ▶ Ridgeway (2 Con)
- ▶ Southbury (3 Lab)
- ▶ Town (3 Con)
- ▶ Whitewebbs (3 Con)



### Green hopefuls

- ▶ Edmonton Green (3 Lab)
- ▶ Haselbury (3 Lab)
- ▶ Lower Edmonton (3 Lab)
- ▶ Southgate (3 Con)



### Independent hopeful

- ▶ Edmonton Green (3 Lab)



Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	White Brit	Black	Muslim	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Arnos Grove	69.2	4.8	23.6	35.1	4.9	13.3	60.5	39.5	49.0	15.4
Bowes	49.1	13.8	35.9	19.8	10.9	19.8	39.3	60.7	34.5	25.1
Brimsgate	46.0	22.2	30.7	26.2	21.6	22.9	33.9	66.1	28.2	28.5
Bullsmoor	45.4	26.6	26.6	33.0	20.0	18.7	34.8	65.2	27.4	28.1
Bush Hill Park	77.0	3.9	18.8	44.2	7.3	11.6	54.9	45.1	40.2	17.7
Carterhatch	37.8	33.9	26.9	27.3	22.8	24.3	33.4	66.6	26.4	28.7
Cockfosters	66.7	10.7	21.0	42.0	4.8	11.0	62.8	37.2	44.7	18.1
Edmonton Green	26.5	39.1	31.9	16.0	29.8	31.3	31.2	68.8	27.6	29.9
Enfield Lock	39.9	24.4	32.0	25.8	26.3	18.8	37.4	62.6	30.8	25.7
Grange Park	72.4	3.1	24.2	49.6	5.0	8.0	63.6	36.4	47.4	14.1
Haselbury	45.6	18.2	35.5	17.8	22.5	25.0	32.6	67.4	28.4	27.6
Highfield	66.5	11.6	21.6	24.8	11.3	20.2	46.9	53.1	35.7	23.0
Jubilee	49.0	14.8	35.0	20.2	23.3	28.5	33.3	66.7	27.8	29.0
Lower Edmonton	35.7	28.0	34.9	16.7	29.7	26.3	30.4	69.6	27.9	28.5
New Southgate	48.7	13.3	36.7	32.1	9.2	12.6	50.4	49.6	46.1	17.6
Oakwood	68.9	6.6	22.9	37.2	5.7	11.3	60.0	40.0	46.7	14.7
Palmers Green	54.0	7.4	37.7	35.2	6.8	11.6	54.6	45.4	47.8	17.6
Ponders End	36.8	24.1	36.3	16.2	29.6	35.7	32.3	67.7	29.3	28.5
Ridgeway	67.4	8.3	23.9	54.6	6.1	7.6	59.3	40.7	43.7	15.3
Southbury	55.0	15.8	28.1	36.8	13.8	14.2	47.3	52.7	38.2	18.9
Southgate	59.1	7.4	32.9	35.2	4.8	12.2	56.9	43.1	46.7	17.0
Town	66.5	8.1	24.6	52.6	7.7	7.6	55.7	44.3	42.5	15.2
Upper Edmonton	33.8	31.7	33.0	14.8	28.6	29.9	32.5	67.5	29.5	28.6
Whitewebbs	59.8	19.4	19.5	54.8	9.9	9.0	50.9	49.1	36.8	18.6
Winchmore Hill	69.0	4.0	26.7	46.7	4.2	8.0	63.4	36.6	50.0	14.5

boundary in Barnet like Brunswick Park and Whetstone that decidedly will not. It depends on the political outlook of the white, home-owning residents.

If they are conservative leaning and older, Reform has a shot; if they are liberal leaning and younger, they do not. But then neither should the Conservatives and, while relatively competitive, they hold them. It's about the relative mix rather than saying a ward is full of gammons or woke trans-allies.

The third ward cluster is the one that has decided which party runs Enfield since Labour's breakthrough win in 1994. These are the inner suburban wards - wards including **Arnos Grove**, **New Southgate** (not much like old Southgate), **Bowes**, **Palmers Green** and **Highfield**. Most of these wards had either become very strongly Labour or been happily inching that way, election after election, until 2022.

In 2022 the Conservatives easily regained **Arnos Grove** (the successor to Southgate Green), came within a whisker of

winning **Highfield** (the eastern end of a heavily redrawn Palmers Green ward) and pulled off that massive 16% swing in **Bowes**, which hadn't voted Conservative since 1982.

It's still some way from doing so again, but it's at least visible as a target on the horizon and if the Greens, who didn't contest the ward last time, take a big chunk out of Labour's vote it could be interesting.

Labour comfortably won **Palmers Green**, shorn of its clearly much more Conservative east end that went into Highfield, but even with these favourable boundary changes there was a clear swing to the Tories last time.

**Palmers Green** was the sort of area that made Enfield Southgate such a safe seat for Michael Portillo up until 1997 and a very marginal but Labour-leaning marginal thereafter. Like Bowes, immediately to the south, it should these days be beyond the Tories' reach but it's just about conceivable that some freak Tory gain could occur here if the Greens can make deep inroads into Labour's vote.

Enfield is at the furthest end of Conservative dreams for this year's London elections. If they gain it, they should have won back the three totemic boroughs they lost in 2022 and continued their recovery in ethnically diverse wards elsewhere in north and west London.

Four gains in what is now the Tories' weakest region in England by far would see off whatever threat remains to Kemi Badenoch's leadership. They might even steal the headlines from Reform.

But as the index of deprivation map shows, Enfield no longer looks like a borough the Conservatives should win and, more widely, it's also why they are struggling in London. It is not that stable communities have simply switched their vote: it is that there has been mass emigration from London of "old" white Londoners and mass immigration of very different demographics in terms of age, race and employment.

There are weird contra flows throughout London: next door Waltham Forest, for example, is getting generally more affluent because it started off largely deprived and is gentrifying. Enfield, with a few exceptional neighbourhoods, was never a massively affluent borough - it's what sociologists might have described as lower middle class suburbia in the 1950s, but nor was it poor. It's slid as some of the wealth it had has migrated.

For a long time Enfield has been a two-party borough: just three non-Labour or Conservative councillors have ever been elected here. This might change in May but the borough will still be dominated by the two big parties. That the Conservatives have a shot: and they do, even if it's a long-shot, is a statement of the mess Labour has got itself in nationally and locally.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	R	O
May 22 council election result	25	38			
Apr 23 by-election: Bullsmoor - Lab hold	25	38			
Nov 23 by-election: Jubilee - Lab hold	25	38			
Feb 24 suspension: Thomas Fawns (Upper Edmonton) - Lab to Ind	25	37			1
Aug 25 defection: Mohammad Islam (Ponders End) - Lab to Ind	25	36			2
Sep 25 defection: Mustafa Cetinkaya (Haselbury) - Lab to Ind	25	35			3

# GREENWICH

52

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**The Royal Borough of Greenwich is the quintessential quiet, Labour-run London borough that has just got on providing services, not headlines for the tabloids.**

Labour comfortably maintained control throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s when none of the borough's three constituencies were Labour-held (two went to the SDP, Eltham was Conservative) and, other than the 1968 Labour disaster, has always won handily.

Travel back to 1931 for the last time the Tories, standing as Municipal Reform, won a majority (of one seat) on Woolwich council; and 1922 for old Greenwich borough. Right now Labour has a 48-seat majority.

This is largely because the borough comprises masses of the four core groups that have comprised Labour's national coalition of voters since the 1970s.

There are the affluent liberals who live in old Greenwich and Blackheath: once one-nation Conservatives, now Labour. They populate wards like **Blackheath Westcombe, Greenwich Park, and Eltham Park and Progress.**

There are the residents of the big council estates that dominate the Woolwich and Thamesmead skyline, in particular. **Charlton Village and Riverside, Eltham Page, Thamesmead Moorings and Woolwich Common** are the largest of these now that the notorious Ferrier estate has been demolished and replaced by **Kidbrooke Village.**

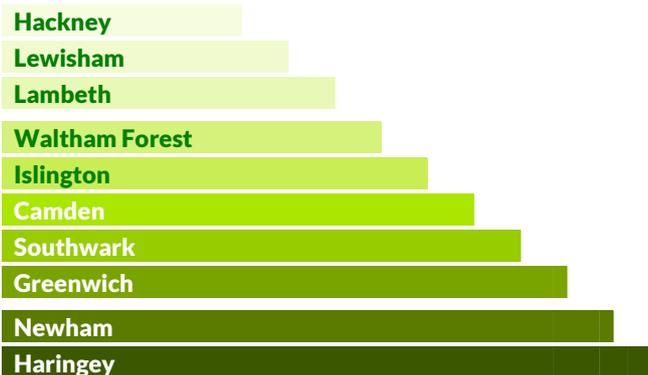
There are the working class and sometimes ethnically diverse neighbourhoods of Plumstead and **East Greenwich** and **Woolwich Dockyard** plus the western side of Eltham - which is a planned cottage garden council estate, nothing like the modernist high-rise council estates of Woolwich.

And nowadays there are the younger professionals living in newly built apartment blocks along the riverside, at Woolwich Arsenal, by Greenwich Creek, in Kidbrooke and down-river of the O2 Arena on the Greenwich Peninsula.

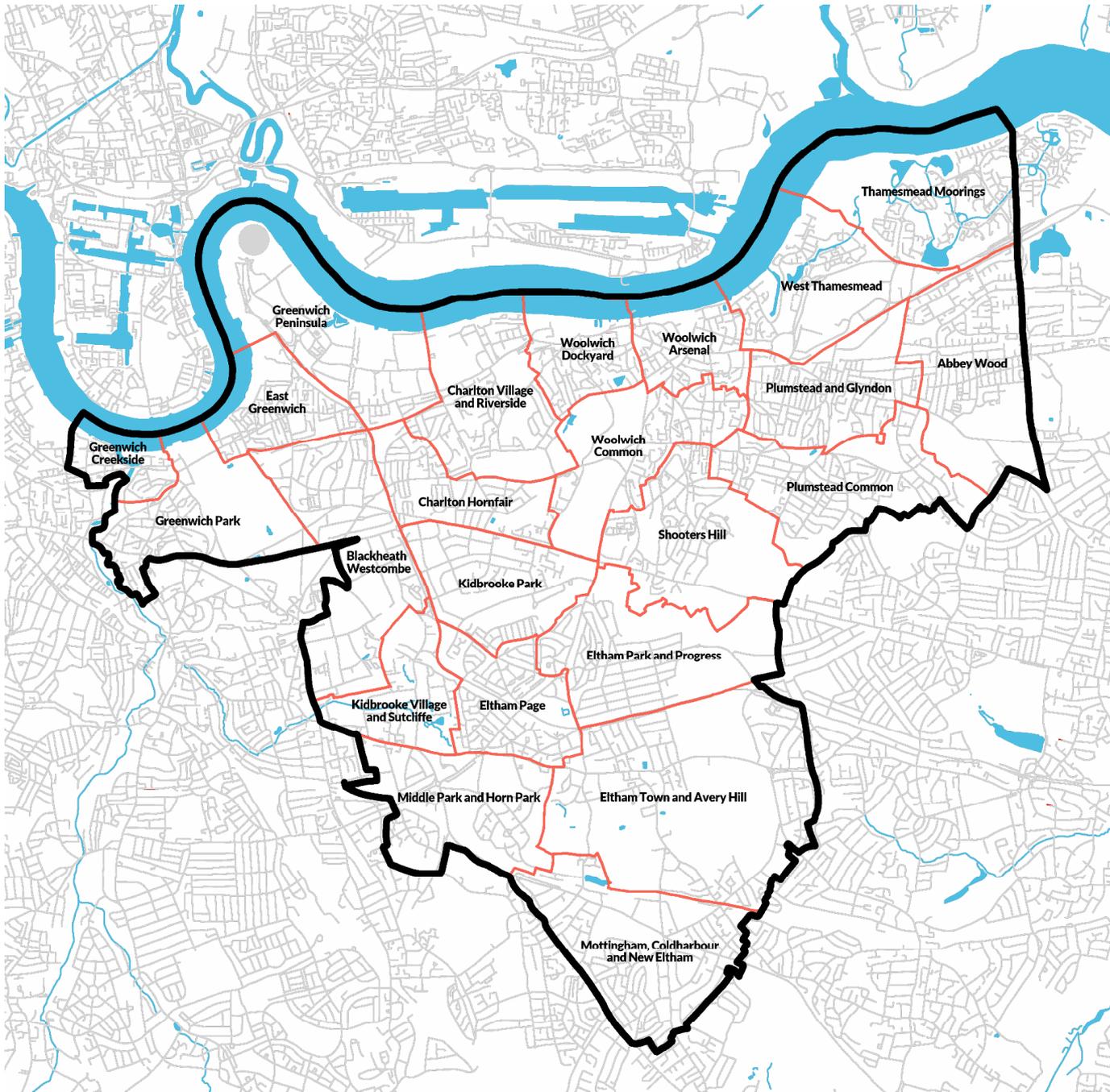
The last two or three elections have left the Conservatives representing nothing other than affluent, suburban Eltham - and they've been pushed to near extinction there.

The question is: can Labour keep that coalition together? It doesn't look too promising.

Reform and the Greens have ladders of electoral progress - each rung or borough getting harder to climb. The Green Party ladder looks like this:



Hackney and Lewisham their best shots, followed not too far behind by Lambeth. These three are boroughs the Greens shouldn't just do well in but have a real shot of winning a majority. The next cluster are boroughs where the Greens probably aren't favoured to win a majority of seats but may be the largest party and will almost certainly have a functional group of councillors. The darkest green Greens are those councils where it's very hard for them to win a majority but will expand their councillor groups.



The history of much of Greenwich - unsurprisingly, given its huge riparian boundary - is linked inextricably to the river and the navy.

Greenwich Creek, more or less the western boundary of the borough in Tudor times was an armoury for Henry VIII's soldiers, off to fight to keep Calais English. The first English power station to generate energy for public use stood at the mouth of the creek; and one of the largest builders of paddle steamers of the Victorian era was based there.

Only slightly further along there is the Cutty Sark, the domed entrance to the foot tunnel to the Isle of Dogs and historic Greenwich town. Even today it's still not all that difficult to imagine the characters of a Horatio Hornblower story rushing around preparing for their next battle with Napoleonic France or the Spanish Dons.

Beyond that is the Greenwich Naval Observatory and the Meridian. Then Greenwich Hospital, founded by Queen Mary as a retirement home for injured Royal Navy sailors.

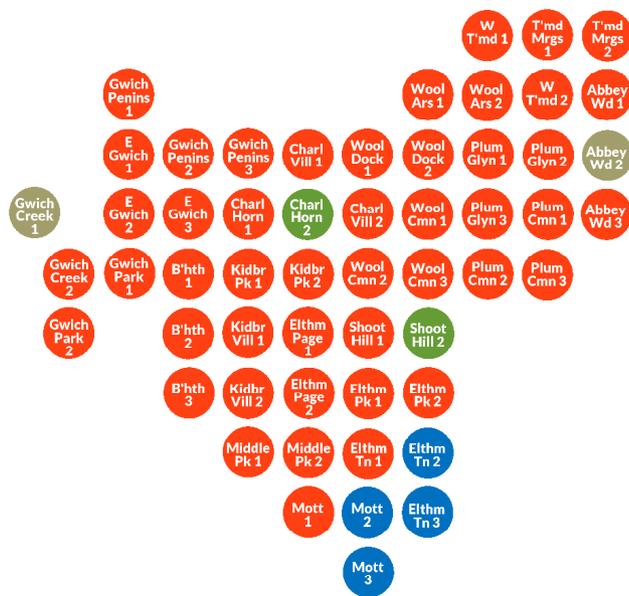
Then you are into the peninsula: the old Trafalgar ward, where executed pirates' bodies hung in cages near the foreshore to encourage their fellows to choose a new career. After the peninsula was drained it became the main manufacturing site and store for the Royal Ordnance - the producer of explosives, until residents petitioned the navy to move this deadly ammunition away. London's original NIMBYs? We look more at **Greenwich Peninsula** and **East Greenwich** wards later, as they both contain target seats.

Beyond the peninsula is Charlton with its football club and Jacobean mansion, plus the Thames Barrier, opened in 1984 - and then ever more naval-related history as we reach Woolwich. The ward covering Woolwich's riverside reverted to being called Dockyard in the last boundary review and that Thames frontage remains a mix of industrial sites and relatively new housing.

Then there is the Woolwich Ferry, transporting passengers to North Woolwich, which is now - as you might expect - part of

the north London borough of Newham but was once within Woolwich borough and constituency.

Next up is the Royal Arsenal: the original base of the football team now based in Highbury. The Arsenal employed upwards of 80,000 people around the time of the First World War - hence even the history of the area away from the Thames is still tethered to the river. These boroughs came into being because they were home to so many of those who helped forged England's naval history. The Arsenal has now been regenerated into an exclusive housing development.



We've still not reached the eastern end of the borough.

Thamesmead was, until the most recent spur of regeneration, the newest neighbourhood in Greenwich: marshland drained in the 1960s and developed into a massive outlying Brutalist council estate, replete with aerial walkways and built around a huge lake. Thamesmead is so large that it spans the borough boundary with Bexley.

The spur for this latest long-running regeneration of the borough was the questionable decision by John Major's

Conservative government and completed by its Labour successor to commemorate the year 2000 by building the Millennium Dome.

This was a much bigger undertaking than just building a few angled pylons and stretching a tarpaulin over it, which is what the Dome resembles. The industrial heritage of the peninsula had left it heavily contaminated and the costs of cleaning it up were higher than the land was worth as warehousing. The peninsula was industrial wasteland with a road to and from the Blackwall Tunnel tearing through the middle.

Getting the peninsula back into productive life was, in hindsight, a dry-run for the regeneration of Stratford for the Olympic games just over a decade later. It was about repurposing and reclaiming swathes of land that held so much potential now it was just across the Thames from the Canary Wharf financial district. The Dome provided a focal point around which to bring people to the area, and new neighbourhoods to meet London's surging housing need arose around it.

So much new housing has been built across the borough that, in the Greenwich ward boundary review prior to the last council elections, four essentially new wards were drawn to accommodate it: **Greenwich Creekside**, **Kidbrooke Village**, **Woolwich Arsenal** and **West Thamesmead**.

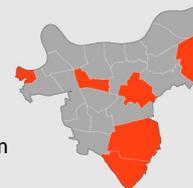
The population of **Greenwich Peninsula** was so large by that point that an entirely new ward: **East Greenwich**, was drawn entirely within its boundaries. East Greenwich, however, contains most of the established, older housing on the western side of the peninsula so, somewhat confusingly, the new ward within Greenwich Peninsula IS Greenwich Peninsula.

The whole eastern side of the peninsula south of the O2 Arena is now huge housing estates of towering riverside apartment blocks plus two brand new, conjoined parks: Southern Park and Ecology Park. There's also a new linear Central Park inland a bit, that feels a lot like Park Lane a swath of green in between lanes of traffic.

## Possible target wards

### Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Abbey Wood (1 Ind, defec)
- ▶ Charlton Hornfair (1 Grn, defec)
- ▶ Eltham Town and Avery Hill (2 Con)
- ▶ Mottingham, Coldharbour & New Eltham
- ▶ Greenwich Creekside (1 Ind, defec)
- ▶ Shooters Hill (1 Grn)



### Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Blackheath Westcombe (3 Lab)
- ▶ Eltham Park and Progress (2 Lab)
- ▶ Eltham Town and Avery Hill (1 Lab)
- ▶ Mottingham, Coldharbour & New Eltham (1 Lab)



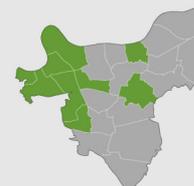
### Liberal Democrat hopeful

- ▶ West Thamesmead (2 Lab)



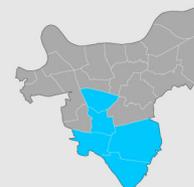
### Green hopefuls

- ▶ Charlton Hornfair (2 Lab)
- ▶ East Greenwich (3 Lab)
- ▶ Greenwich Creekside (2 Lab)
- ▶ Greenwich Park (2 Lab)
- ▶ Kidbrooke Village & Sutcliffe (2 Lab)
- ▶ Shooters Hill (1 Lab)
- ▶ Woolwich Arsenal (2 Lab)



### Reform UK hopefuls

- ▶ Charlton Hornfair (1 Lab, 1 Ind)
- ▶ Eltham Page (2 Lab)
- ▶ Eltham Park and Progress (2 Lab)
- ▶ Eltham Town & Avery Hill (2 Con, 1 Lab)
- ▶ Kidbrooke Park (2 Lab)
- ▶ Mottingham, Coldharbour & New Eltham (2 Con, 1 Lab)



Development here has more or less reached Bugsby's Reach on the edge of Charlton before it starts off again, creating an uncomfortable boundary between the new housing estates and the tracts of industrial estates to the east and the huge out-of-town superstore lots throughout the centre of the peninsula.

This all adds up to a weird landscape: futuristic high rises around the edge, a major road tearing through the middle, never-ending construction sites, the O2's vast, open car parks serving the and the remaining industrial, warehousing and superstore sites all pocketed off with that spiked aluminium fencing that is so alienating.

It's also far from obvious yet that all this gated off high-rise riverside housing is turning into a functional neighbourhood. Although the peninsula has the Jubilee Line extension running to North Greenwich, this is still a neighbourhood in the middle of nowhere. A house is not a home, the song goes, and the peninsula is not yet a community.

Where are the local shops, the pubs and public gyms and community centres and schools and GP surgeries? The peninsula still feels incredibly isolated and fragmented. Maybe it will change once the cranes and cement mixers have left for good.

Pretty much all the riverside has returned Labour councillors for decades. The exception was the ward that covered "old Greenwich": the former Vanbrugh ward and now **Greenwich Park**. But the last time the Conservatives won there was 1982. In 2002 the ward was merged with Greenwich West and any Tory hopes, if they still existed, vanished. **Greenwich Park** is essentially a re-creation of Vanbrugh, but by 2022 the party was down to just 12% with the Greens nipping at Labour's heels.

There was an even more promising ward for the Conservatives: today their only hope of representation in Greenwich, and that was Blackheath, now **Blackheath Westcombe**. This ward split its representation five successive times between 2002 and 2022 before Labour

could finally snatch its last seat last time. The Conservatives lost by a clear margin last time: 45% to 26% but this is still just within their range, unless their vote collapses to the Greens.

Slightly to the east of Blackheath, right in the centre of the borough, is Kidbrooke Park: a ward that is usually solid for Labour but can go haywire in years when the party is unpopular.

### By-elections: change in party share

	Con	Lab	LD	Grn	Ref
Mottingham	+3.6	-5.3	-6.4	+3.5	+8.1
Eltham Town	+12.1	-8.5	-2.9	-8.7	+9.3
Shooters Hill (1)	-0.6	-1.1	-0.1	-5.1	+9.9
West Thamesmead	-6.0	-16.3	+23.8	-10.4	+8.9
Shooters Hill (2)	-2.3	-28.9	-3.8	+19.2	+13.1

*Italics show party that didn't contest the 2022 elections but stood in the by-election so, strictly speaking, they're not increases: just the actual vote share won in the by-election*

Then we reach Eltham. This is where the remaining four Conservative councillors are dug in, both in wards that split with Labour in 2022. They will hope for a recovery in May, in part justified from two of the by-elections that occurred in these split wards: the mouthful that is **Mottingham, Coldharbour and New Eltham**, and the somewhat less cumbersome **Eltham Town and Avery Hill**. That ward, when it was Eltham South, was represented for four years by one Liz Truss from 2006 to 2010.

In Mottingham, just before the 2024 general election, there was a 4.5% swing, but in Eltham Town, which happened a few months after that election there was a swing of over 10% with the Conservatives gaining the seat.

A 10% swing replicated in May would, of course, return six Conservative councillors for these two wards plus their northern neighbour: Eltham Park and Progress. "Progress" refers to the Progress estate, which is another reference back to the riverside. It was built to house workers at the Royal Arsenal.

This is by some stretch the most affluent of the Eltham wards, so of course these days it votes Labour.

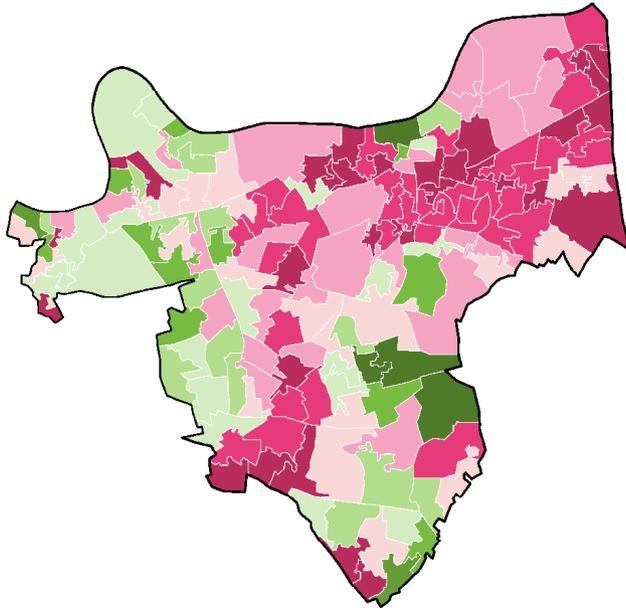
This ward, the old Eltham North, was solidly Conservative in 2014; Labour then gained one of its seats that year, two in 2018, and then the redrawn, smaller ward lost a councillor in 2022 and it was the Tory who was ousted. But the Conservatives were less than two hundred votes off the second Labour seat, and less than five hundred off the top: both would fall on a 10% swing. If the Conservatives can achieve it. But they face a real threat in Eltham from Reform UK. This is because Eltham is atypical of inner London.

While the borough of Greenwich voted to remain in the European Union in the 2016 referendum 56%-44, Eltham voted Leave by the same proportion as the UK: 52% to 48%. It was the only inner London constituency so to do.

The area is mostly very white, even today, and massively so by London standards: Eltham Park 71% white, Eltham Town 64%, Mottingham 62% and even Eltham Page - which is the old Eltham West: the council estate ward, is 54% white. Middle Park and Horn Park - which might also be called Eltham Palace, is 52%.

Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	White Brit	Black	Muslim	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Abbey Wood	40.1	35.3	23.9	34.2	29.2	9.2	36.2	63.8	36.8	21.3
Blackheath Westcombe	51.9	20.9	25.6	59.9	5.9	3.5	73.5	26.5	62.9	10.1
Charlton Hornfair	43.1	35.8	19.8	43.6	16.8	7.2	53.9	46.1	47.8	16.4
Charlton Village and Riverside	36.0	42.5	20.6	40.6	18.6	11.7	48.5	51.5	42.4	18.2
East Greenwich	41.2	28.9	25.9	44.7	12.7	6.1	70.9	29.1	62.7	10.3
Eltham Page	42.2	42.2	12.8	53.8	12.1	7.8	41.4	58.6	32.9	24.6
Eltham Park and Progress	71.4	16.4	11.5	70.5	4.3	2.9	56.8	43.2	40.9	15.3
Eltham Town and Avery Hill	59.2	21.1	18.0	63.6	6.7	5.1	54.1	45.9	38.7	16.9
Greenwich Creekside	24.3	33.6	37.3	35.1	15.3	8.6	70.6	29.4	60.5	9.4
Greenwich Park	41.3	28.0	29.1	48.0	12.8	4.6	70.0	30.0	61.9	10.4
Greenwich Peninsula	34.0	20.7	39.5	28.1	12.4	8.4	72.6	27.4	67.8	7.0
Kidbrooke Park	52.0	28.5	18.9	43.1	15.4	8.1	53.5	46.5	41.7	18.4
Kidbrooke Village and Sutcliffe	37.3	20.0	36.1	39.4	12.7	6.7	68.4	31.6	59.0	12.0
Middle Park and Horn Park	47.0	39.9	12.1	51.5	14.9	6.8	43.7	56.3	34.4	22.7
Mottingham, C'harbour & New Elt	62.3	24.4	12.7	61.8	8.6	5.5	48.8	51.2	35.3	19.2
Plumstead and Glyndon	33.8	32.5	32.7	23.3	22.3	13.7	34.1	65.9	34.9	23.2
Plumstead Common	51.5	26.4	20.9	42.6	18.1	6.9	44.7	55.3	37.6	20.0
Shooters Hill	45.1	30.6	22.8	38.5	26.8	10.1	50.9	49.1	43.9	15.4
Thamesmead Moorings	28.0	46.7	22.5	28.6	40.1	9.1	35.4	64.6	39.6	19.5
West Thamesmead	29.8	25.0	40.4	24.4	32.8	12.2	43.0	57.0	41.1	15.9
Woolwich Arsenal	22.7	25.6	45.4	29.2	18.7	10.7	62.4	37.6	59.4	11.5
Woolwich Common	25.2	43.6	28.6	29.4	26.5	13.4	42.8	57.2	39.2	20.1
Woolwich Dockyard	20.5	55.3	22.6	27.2	30.5	15.2	39.3	60.7	38.7	21.5

Of this set only **Kidbrooke Village and Sutcliffe** ward - the new neighbourhood that replaced the former Ferrier estate - which is arguably beyond Eltham anyway, is more ethnically diverse - but still 43% white. London was 37% white British at the 2021 census.



**Greenwich index of deprivation map**

Contrast that with the eastern neighbourhood of Plumstead which is about 20% white across its three wards, or Greenwich Peninsula: 28% white.

So Eltham is a much whiter neighbourhood than the rest of Greenwich and while it is also more affluent - though not uniformly - than the borough, it is not super-rich. It is not Notting Hill or South Fulham or Wandsworth Common. It is also culturally conservative - reflected in that EU referendum vote but in other ways too, not least the fact it is still the only part of the borough still voting for the Tories.

The December 2025 Electoral Calculus MRP has Reform winning the cross-borough Eltham and Chislehurst constituency with 30% of the vote compared to Labour's 24% and the Conservatives' 19%, with the Greens on 15%

(Kidbrooke Village and Blackheath probably being the main source of their votes). Their ward predictor suggests that in a general election Reform will win **Eltham Town** and **Mottingham etc.**, with **Eltham Park and Progress** staying Labour.

That didn't happen in the two council by-elections there. In **Eltham Town** Reform polled just 9% to the Conservatives 49% and the picture was essentially the same in **Mottingham, Coldharbour and New Eltham**. These by-elections both predated the Reform surge that's lasted over a year now but equally that's a big lead for the Conservatives and the party is well organised in this long-term marginal constituency.

But if Reform either succeeds in closing the gap or takes so much of the Conservative vote that Labour comes through the middle, that's the Tories off the council for the first time ever. Even in 1945, seven Municipal Reform councillors were elected in the two preceding boroughs.

Reform could also win, incidentally, Eltham Page: that traditionally incredibly safe Labour ward and maybe Middle Park and Horn Park: though those are probably the party's ceiling in this borough.

So let's return to the start: how well are the Greens likely to fare in Greenwich? Their top targets - ones that would establish their group but not get them close to a majority, are:

- East Greenwich (3 seats - 6.2% Labour majority)
- Greenwich Park (2 seats - 26.6% Labour majority)
- Shooters Hill: where the Greens gained a seat in June last year on a massive 24% swing

Labour won Shooters Hill by 59% to the Greens' 15% in 2022: it was one of their safest wards then (though this used to be a Labour-Conservative marginal). There are two seats there.

There were specific local issues that damaged Labour in that by-election: the sitting councillor resigned after being sanctioned by her group for trying to block the sell-off of a council-owned equestrian centre and linked bungalow.

An earlier by-election in the ward seven months earlier had resulted in an easy Labour hold: the party won with 58% of the vote. The difference seven months make.

Local issues clearly mingled with dissatisfaction with the government to make the subsequent by-election a debacle for Labour, but it was their impressive showing in Shooters Hill that gives Greens hope of a much wider breakthrough in Greenwich.

A 24% swing away from Labour in May would, of course, decimate the party's ranks. So let's continue a run-through of the wall of Labour wards the Greens have to surmount.

**Woolwich Arsenal** takes us beyond a 15% swing: the Greens need 15.5% to win there. Then up to 18.5% to win **Kidbrooke Park** and **Kidbrooke Village and Sutcliffe, Greenwich Peninsula** and **Greenwich Creekside**.

Everything beyond requires swings in excess of 20%. But those twelve seats plus the seven in the first tranche would take the Greens to nineteen.

Whereas last time the Greens polled evenly across the wards they contested, this time there could well be a much more uneven distribution of Green votes - which would help them.

They could surge, for example, in the wards that have seen a lot of new housing development, and maybe in wards with lots of council housing. If that happens keep an eye on **Charlton Village and Riverside, Woolwich Common** and **Woolwich Dockyard**, maybe **Abbey Wood** and **Thamesmead Moorings**. These wards were massively safe for Labour in 2022 though.

The Lib Dems also performed well in one of the "new" wards in a by-election in **West Thamesmead**. They achieved a 20% swing in the ward that includes the Belmarsh high security prison, though only its remand prisoners would have had the chance to vote. Labour still won though, which is another testament to just how safe so many of their wards are.

We could see another pincer movement against Labour. If the Greens win more than fifteen seats, the Lib Dems the two in West Thamesmead and the Tories or Reform ten or so in Eltham, Labour loses Greenwich. Just. It's that tight.

Labour will feel very hard done-by if that is the outcome of the election because of its record of just getting on and providing local services without (more or less) much fuss or ideological silliness. But it's just about conceivable.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	G	O
May 22 council election result	3	52			
Jun 24 by-election: Mottingham, Coldharbour and New Eltham - Con hold	3	52			
Oct 24 by-election: Eltham Town and Avery Hill - Con gain from Lab	4	51			
Nov 24 by-election: Shooters Hill - Lab hold	4	51			
Dec 24 by-election: West Thamesmead - Lab hold	4	51			
Mar 25 defection: Majella Anning (Greenwich Creekside) Lab to Ind	4	50			1
Jun 25 by-election: Shooters Hill - Grn gain from Lab	4	49		1	1
Sep 25 defection: Ann-Marie Cousins (Abbey Wood) Lab to Ind	4	48		1	2
Jan 26 defection: Lakshan Saldin (Charlton Hornfair) Ind to Grn	4	47		2	2