

HACKNEY



The Greens' top target in London is Hackney. It was last time too, but then the party spectacularly failed to deliver. Yes, they won two council seats, and were runners-up in all but two wards. But there are no silver medals in politics.

The Greens' 23.1% was their highest borough-wide share in London but it ran up against a Labour share of 53.5% - and a thirty point lead produced another Labour landslide. Of course, there's a massive difference between the 2022 elections and those of 2026. Labour is in government and deeply unpopular. But that's been true before: Labour's hung on. Three things have changed.

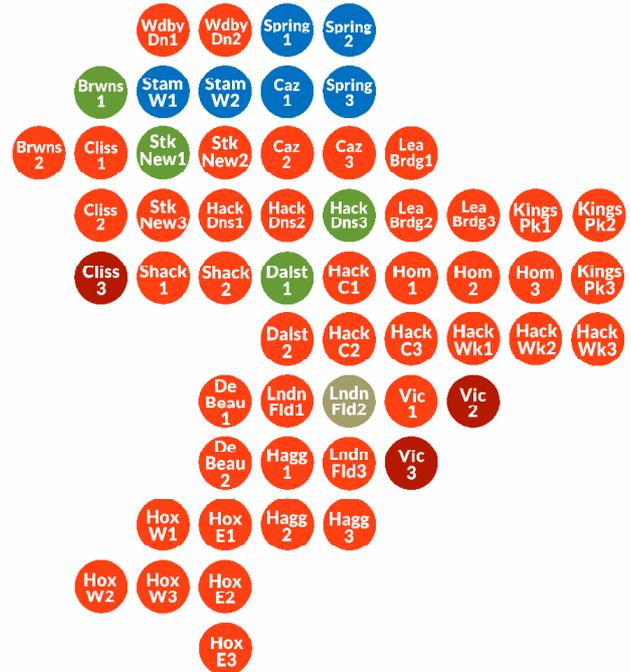
The first is the surge in the Green Party in the past year. Hackney Greens claim their membership surged from 650 to over 3,000 in 2025. The Green candidate in Hackney South and Shoreditch at the 2024 general election won 9,987 votes - their highest vote in London, and they weren't all that far behind that tally in Hackney North and Stoke Newington either (9,275).

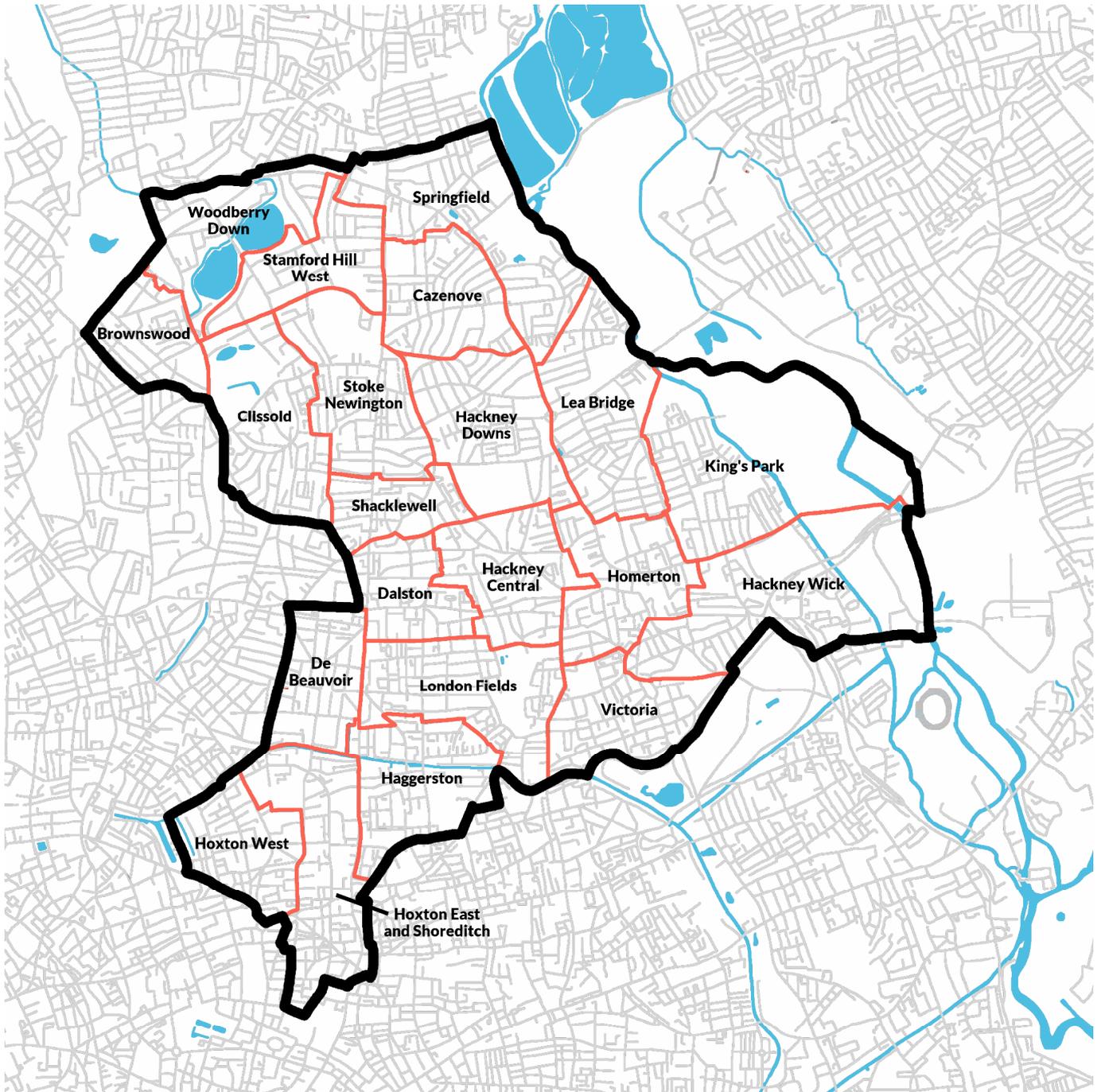
They still lost by miles to Labour, but these were big swings to the Greens. 3,000+ members - and given the demographic profile of Green members probably younger and driven - enables a dramatically bigger campaign. No more one lonely activist having to deliver to thousands of homes, or canvass whole streets without a team to share the load and make things more fun. It's hard to build a campaign from almost nothing to a scale that may well match Labour's in 2026, but it's a good problem to have.

The second is that, while the point of the Starmer "project" (if it deserves such a grand title) was to wrest control of the upper party apparatus from Jeremy Corbyn's allies. But grassroots Labour remained somewhat to the left of the leadership, even when they were willing to stay silent to regain power nationally.

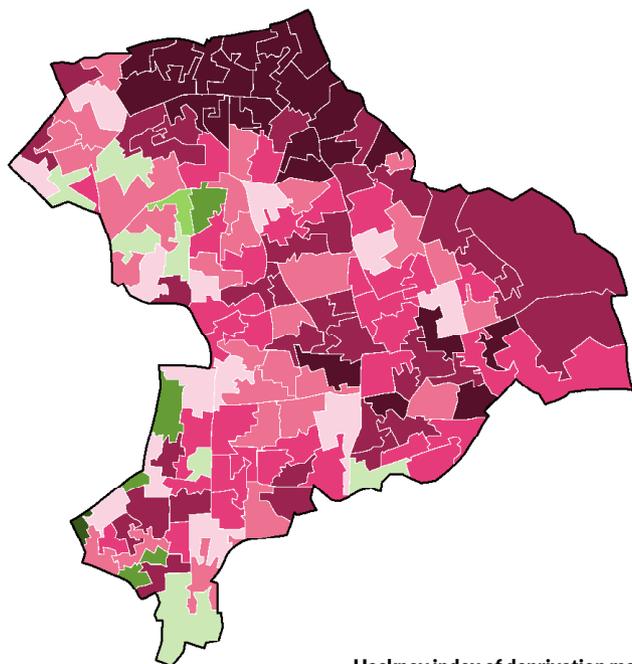
But they've had a taste of what a left-wing Labour leadership looks like now and they yearn for it. Many now see that embodied more authentically in the Greens than Labour. So whereas the left stayed unhappily loyal to Labour in the past when the party was far to their right, there now appears to have been a Rubicon crossed: a large proportion have switched allegiance.

The third is that Hackney is almost a victim of its own success. The borough is changing rapidly: it is gentrifying. There is a slight irony that while one of the Greens' most potent attacks on Labour - at least among council tenants and long-term residents being priced out - is gentrification, this demographic change is also generating Green votes and Green activists.





Gentrification is a double-whammy for the Greens: a stick to attack Labour and a reason their ranks are swelling.



Hackney index of deprivation map

But don't get too swept away with the narrative of "posh Hackney". For one thing, there are only four wards in the whole borough where the number of owner-occupiers exceeds the number of council tenants.

Like Lambeth, Hackney is a borough still dominated by huge council estates. In **Hackney Wick**, **Homerton** and **King's Park**, public housing still accounts for more than half the stock. But Hackney is more like Islington or Camden: with pockets of intense deprivation, rather than like Haringey where two-thirds of the borough experiences the worst deprivation. Very few neighbourhoods in Hackney are affluent.

Labour has had something of a challenging time electorally since 2022. They aren't anywhere close to the shenanigans of

the 1980s and 1990s, which turned Hackney into yet another of the tabloids' "loony left" boroughs.

But things feel like they're shunting back that way: self-indulgence, carelessness with their massive majority, poor candidate selection, too long in power. To read more of the mess Hackney Labour got itself into - and out of - search online for the David Walker and Rebecca Smithers Guardian report: "*Borough of Hate and Hit Squads*", 1999. There is also Luke Akehurst's report on his time as an advisor and then Hackney councillor during this period on Labour List: "*The Darkest Hour Comes Just Before Dawn*", 2017.

A vacancy arose immediately the results were declared when De Beauvoir Labour councillor Tom Dewey, who had been arrested for possessing pornographic images of children after his nomination had been accepted, resigned instantly.

By-elections: change in party share

	Con	Lab	LD	Grn
De Beauvoir (i)	+4.5	-16.9	-6.6	+27.7
Mayoral by-election	+0.2	-9.3	-2.0	+7.4
Cazenove (i)	+47.0	-14.6	-32.3	+2.2
De Beauvoir (ii)	+6.2	-11.0	-7.3	+23.5
Hoxton East & Shoreditch	+2.2	+8.6	-3.6	+6.6
Hoxton West	-5.2	+13.4	-5.7	+1.4
Cazenove (ii)	+28.0	-8.2	-31.9	+11.6
London Fields	+5.2	-8.9	-10.5	
Stoke Newington	-5.6	-14.8	-11.6	+18.0

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

That arrest had far bigger consequences for Labour than it first appeared because Dewey rented a room in Hackney elected mayor Phillip Glanville's house. Glanville was not implicated in Dewey's crime but his proximity to such a deeply unsavoury episode, and the way he handled it, forced his resignation as mayor a few weeks later.

Labour held De Beauvoir by 27 votes, and then the eventual mayoral by-election, though for the first time in Hackney's elections for mayor the Labour vote slipped below 50%.

The knock-on effects continued.

The new Labour mayor, Caroline Woodley, was councillor for **Cazenove**, one of three Stamford Hill wards - the centre of Hackney's significant Jewish community. A councillor cannot serve both as mayor and serve on the council, so another by-election occurred. Long-time Lib Dem (and, before that, Labour) councillor Ian Sharer had represented Cazenove until 2018 when it fell to Labour. This time he stood for the Conservatives and, on a 39.5% swing, won his old seat back.

This was a remarkable result coming at a time of massive Conservative government unpopularity: **Cazenove** or its predecessor ward Northwold, had never previously elected a Tory councillor - not even in 1968.

Hackney has these three strongly Jewish enclaves: **Springfield** - 35% Jewish, **Stamford Hill West** - 39% and **Cazenove** - 24% and nowadays these are the only wards the Conservatives have any chance of holding. But this is not the same sort of Jewish community as in, say, Hendon or Pinner: it is significantly more Orthodox and very much less affluent. Indeed, the Stamford Hill corner of the borough is the most deprived part of Hackney. Yet it largely votes Conservative.

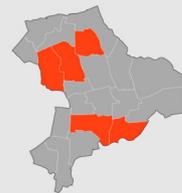
On economic measures, if you still believe there is a link between deprivation and voting intention, Stamford Hill should be the strongest Labour part of the borough. Because it is culturally conservative, it is Labour's weakest. Even here though, remember that the Jewish community isn't anywhere close to a majority and other sources of support keep Labour in contention.

The **Cazenove** by-election was also fraught for Labour because their candidate, Laura Pascal, was suspended from the party post-nomination because of complaints received about allegedly "transphobic" comments. Labour actually ceased campaigning in the by-election, so the huge swing may have been partly down to that, but mostly Sharer's popularity within the community.

Possible key wards

Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Brownswood (1 Grn - def)
- ▶ Cazenove (1 Con)
- ▶ Clissold (1 Ind Soc - def)
- ▶ London Fields (1 Ind - def)
- ▶ Stoke Newington (1 Grn)
- ▶ Victoria (2 Ind Soc - both defs)



Independent Socialist hopefuls

- ▶ Homerton (2 Lab)
- ▶ London Fields (1 Lab)



Green hopefuls

- ▶ Brownswood (1 Lab)
- ▶ Clissold (3 Lab)
- ▶ Dalston (1 Lab)
- ▶ De Beauvoir (2 Lab)
- ▶ Hackney Central (3 Lab)
- ▶ Hackney Downs (2 Lab)
- ▶ Hackney Wick (3 Lab)
- ▶ Haggerston (3 Lab)
- ▶ Homerton (3 Lab)
- ▶ Hoxton East and Shoreditch (3 Lab)
- ▶ Hoxton West (3 Lab)
- ▶ King's Park (3 Lab)
- ▶ Lea Bridge (3 Lab)
- ▶ London Fields (3 Lab)
- ▶ Shacklewell (2 Lab)
- ▶ Stoke Newington (3 Lab)
- ▶ Victoria (3 Lab)
- ▶ Woodberry Down (2 Lab)



Conservative hopeful

- ▶ Cazenove (2 Lab)



In a later **Cazenove** by-election that same year, Labour did campaign and held that seat, albeit despite another big swing to the Conservatives.

In September 2024 two further by-elections: one in **London Fields** in the centre of the borough, the other in **Stoke Newington** in the north-west, were held. These were both Labour seats and the party, appreciative of the Green threat, called the votes on the same day presumably to split their opponents' resources.

It didn't work: the Greens didn't even contest **London Fields** (an independent came second there) and poured everything they had into **Stoke Newington**. On a 16% swing, they gained this seat, giving Hackney its third Green councillor.

It is a measure of how high - perhaps unwisely high - expectations for the Greens have risen that were they to win all the seats in these three wards (**Stoke Newington, Dalston and Hackney Downs**), giving them eight councillors, that would be regarded as a major underachievement. But it is hard to see how they will not do much better this time.

Voters are weary of the Labour dramatics over their candidate choices; the government is deeply unpopular with exactly the sort of demographics that dominate Hackney, and the council isn't especially popular either. For example, there is still considerable resentment about the way Labour handed over masses of publicly owned council estate land to the Berkeley housing conglomerate to redevelop **Woodberry Downs** in the borough's north.

Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	White Brit	Black	Muslim	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Brownswood	29.2	28.3	39.7	37.8	11.4	10.6	72.1	27.9	63.1	11.9
Cazenove	23.8	35.2	39.5	40.3	12.7	15.0	55.1	44.9	41.0	23.8
Clissold	36.8	32.2	29.0	43.5	12.7	9.2	72.4	27.6	61.6	11.9
Dalston	26.6	27.1	43.3	35.6	15.6	10.9	75.4	24.6	65.6	9.9
De Beauvoir	29.2	34.2	32.5	37.7	14.8	11.2	72.5	27.5	62.3	12.7
Hackney Central	21.7	48.0	28.1	29.5	23.2	14.3	63.1	36.9	52.7	16.0
Hackney Downs	27.8	40.3	30.0	30.9	21.1	17.6	63.4	36.6	53.9	15.2
Hackney Wick	21.3	52.0	23.5	33.5	25.0	13.5	58.1	41.9	46.3	18.0
Haggerston	16.9	47.8	30.7	29.2	20.5	15.7	66.5	33.5	55.1	15.9
Homerton	19.1	51.4	25.5	26.1	28.0	15.8	56.0	44.0	48.0	17.9
Hoxton East and Shoreditch	17.0	38.9	41.1	26.8	16.1	11.6	69.5	30.5	58.6	13.5
Hoxton West	18.5	43.9	33.5	26.0	16.6	12.2	66.8	33.2	56.7	14.2
King's Park	28.1	51.2	19.9	26.8	29.9	17.6	56.6	43.4	46.9	18.3
Lea Bridge	33.4	28.8	35.4	33.0	17.6	16.6	65.4	34.6	54.3	15.1
London Fields	25.5	41.7	29.2	35.5	17.3	13.4	69.1	30.9	56.6	15.4
Shacklewell	24.2	42.4	30.7	28.6	20.2	16.5	63.6	36.4	54.5	15.7
Springfield	21.3	39.8	36.0	40.6	14.6	10.6	48.1	51.9	29.8	30.4
Stamford Hill West	23.8	36.1	38.7	50.3	9.5	6.4	52.9	47.1	33.6	28.2
Stoke Newington	36.3	29.7	33.1	40.5	13.3	11.1	70.3	29.7	59.8	12.8
Victoria	23.7	47.4	26.8	37.0	20.2	11.4	65.8	34.2	53.7	15.7
Woodberry Down	14.9	45.7	35.3	26.1	20.0	15.7	61.0	39.0	47.9	19.4

You can still see on Google Maps block after block of boarded-up council housing awaiting demolition while, across the road, private, gated-off high-rise blocks have been built.

Labour argues that when a council has such vast stocks of housing in poor condition, partnering with these construction giants is the only way to meet local housing need. But Herbert Morrison, who was London County Councillor for - and mayor of - this borough, would be spinning in his grave at what Hackney has become.

And it is just one example of why so many are now looking for a more radical party than the one Labour has become.

Let's look at the Hackney battleground.

While the Greens are going flat out to win the mayoralty and a majority on the council, it is also easier to remove Labour from power here than in boroughs like Haringey because, if the Conservatives win the other two Cazenove seats, they'll hold eight. That's a decent landing zone for no overall control if not everything goes the Greens' way. The three Stamford Hill wards are, unsurprisingly, the three the Greens are weakest in and won't be expecting big things from.

The Greens need an 18% swing to win based on 2022 and slightly to remove Labour's majority. Most of Hackney's wards have similar majorities, albeit with different profiles.

Beyond winning the Labour seats in the split wards they already represent: **Brownswood, Dalston, Hackney Downs** and **Stoke Newington** (five seats available) there are only two other relatively close wards: **De Beauvoir** and **Clissold**.

De Beauvoir is only close based on the by-elections: Labour won by miles in 2022. But the by-elections are a reliable portent of how Hackney is swinging. The Greens polled 731 in the first by-election, where there was little enthusiasm for another poll so soon after the local elections, and then 1,197 in the higher turnout second, 2024, by-election held on the same day as the London mayoral vote. In both, the Greens

won over 40% but Labour won 42% and 47%. They wouldn't get anything like that share today.

De Beauvoir is a leafy, planned neighbourhood of townhouses north of the Regent's Canal at the Shoreditch end of the borough. It's not too challenging to imagine it with Green councillors.

Clissold is the western side of Stoke Newington. Much of it used to be part of North Defoe ward (Daniel Defoe, for whom that ward was named, lived there) and this was the first ward in London to elect Green councillors in 1994. **Clissold** has three seats, but one is now held by an Independent Socialist and the Greens aren't contesting her seat.

Sandwiched between Stoke Newington and Dalston - the ward represented by Zoe Garbett: the Greens' GLA member and Hackney mayor candidate, is **Shacklewell**, a 2-councillor ward. This is the next most vulnerable Labour ward where their second candidate has a majority of about 500 (though their first candidate won a lot more votes). If the Greens win both they'll be up to 13 - still miles away from a majority, but with potentially eight Conservatives the opposition would number 21. Labour loses power if others win 29.

But this is where things become haywire because, if the Greens are in with a chance of winning the next band of wards, Labour implodes. There is a massive chunk of Labour seats that all fall on a swing of between 14% and 18%. Those are big swings and, normally, they'd be way out of the question - but not this year.

In the south western corner, on top of De Beauvoir there are **Hoxton East and Shoreditch** (Moorfields), **Hoxton West** - the old Wenlock ward, **Haggerston** and **London Fields**. In the east there are **Victoria** - named after the park (and the queen), **Lea Bridge** and **King's Park**. Plus there is **Brownswood** up in the north by Woodberry Down: the third of the Stoke Newington wards.

In most of the wards the top Labour councillor finished quite a way ahead of their running mates so we could get quite a

few split wards, but assuming they do fall, there'd be over thirty Green councillors returned.

Labour would be returned in **Woodberry Down, Hackney Wick, Hackney Central** and **Homerton** - but these wards are not so different from the ones that would have fallen. If they fall, they could all fall.

That's not really all that likely and it's quite surreal to contemplate Labour competing with the Conservatives over which will have the larger opposition group.

Three councillors have left Labour to become independent socialists: two in **Victoria** ward, one in **Clissold**. Over the last few months Independent Socialist parties have been applying to be registered with the Electoral Commission: they have been founded in Lambeth, Southwark and Hackney.

The Hackney Collective website says that the three are seeking re-election with their new party, and they're also

planning to field two candidates in Homerton and one in London Fields. They also mention an agreement with the Greens not to fight each other, so there'll only be a maximum of 51 Green candidates in May.

It will be interesting to see if a Richmond-type situation replicates in Hackney where the Lib Dems did a deal with the Greens and voters were happy to go along with it, or whether the emerging Green brand works but the independents struggle.

Labour has been in charge of Hackney for almost a quarter of a century now, and "time for change" could be as powerful a message against Labour this year as it was against the Conservatives at the 2024 general election. This council is going to contain a wider variety of councillors than were elected in 2022.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	G	O
May 22 council election result	5	50		2	
Jul 22 by-election: De Beauvoir - Lab hold	5	50		2	
Nov 23 mayoral by-election - Lab hold	6	49		2	
Jan 24 by-election: Cazenove - Con gain from Lab	6	49		2	
May 24 by-election: De Beauvoir - Lab hold	6	49		2	
May 24 defection: Claudia Turbet-Delof (Victoria) Lab to Ind Soc	6	48		2	1
May 24 defection: Penny Wrout (Victoria) Lab to Ind Soc	6	47		2	2
May 24 defection: Fliss Premru (Clissold) Lab to Ind Soc	6	46		2	3
May 24 by-election: Hoxton East and Shoreditch - Lab hold	6	46		2	3
Jun 24 by-election: Hoxton West - Lab hold	6	46		2	3
Jul 24 by-election: Cazenove - Lab hold	6	46		2	3
Sep 24 by-election: London Fields - Lab hold	6	46		2	3
Sep 24 by-election: Stoke Newington - Green gain from Lab	6	45		3	3
Jan 26 defection: M. Can Ozsen (London Fields) - Lab to Ind	6	44		3	4
Mar 26 defection: Soraya Adejare (Brownswood) - Lab to Grn	6	43		4	4

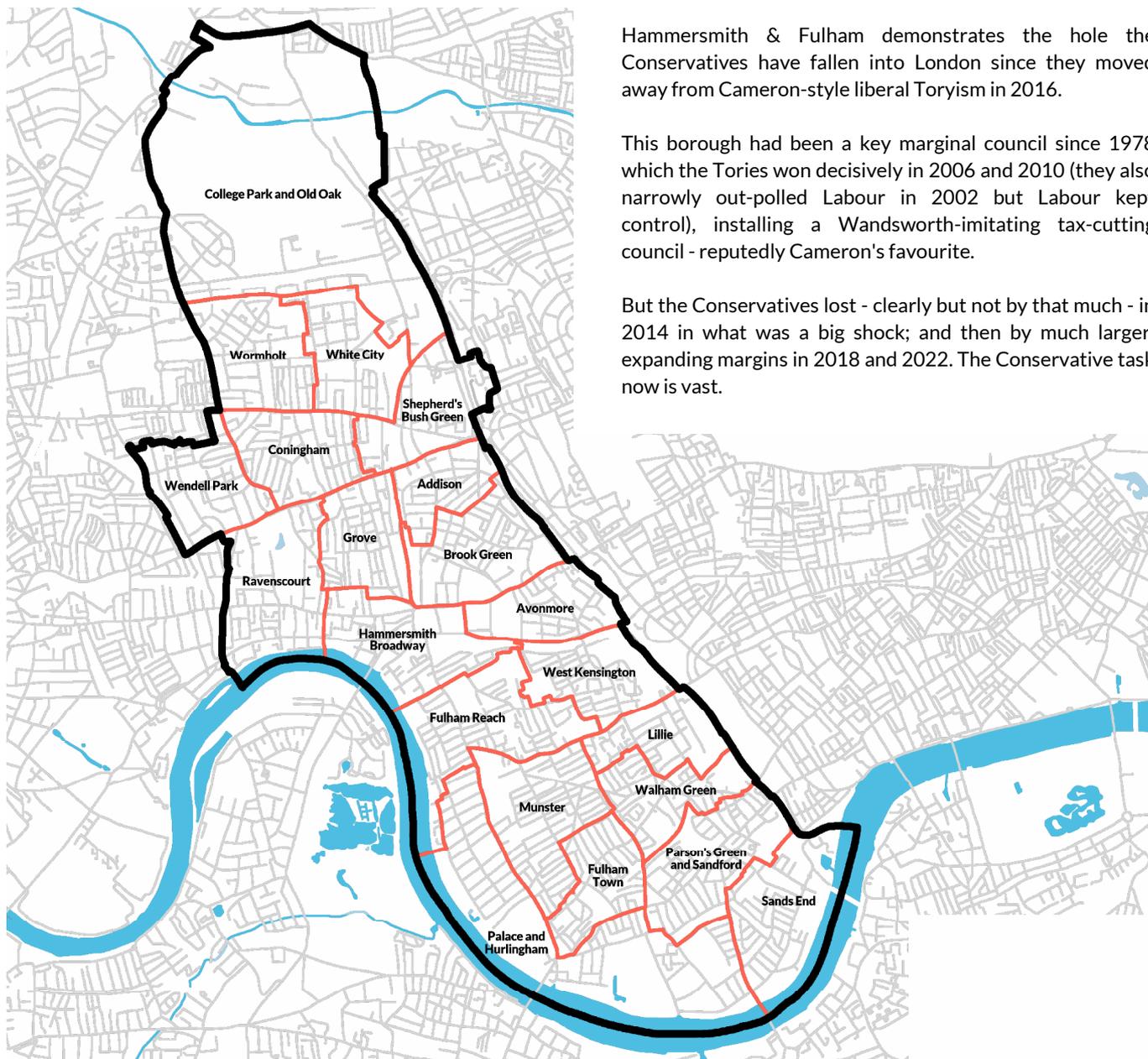
HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM

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Hammersmith & Fulham demonstrates the hole the Conservatives have fallen into London since they moved away from Cameron-style liberal Toryism in 2016.

This borough had been a key marginal council since 1978 which the Tories won decisively in 2006 and 2010 (they also narrowly out-pollied Labour in 2002 but Labour kept control), installing a Wandsworth-imitating tax-cutting council - reputedly Cameron's favourite.

But the Conservatives lost - clearly but not by that much - in 2014 in what was a big shock; and then by much larger, expanding margins in 2018 and 2022. The Conservative task now is vast.

Labour wards in order of margin

Sands End	3 Lab	10.4
Walham Green	2 Lab	26.3
Brook Green	2 Lab	26.7
Ravenscourt	2Lab	30.5
Lillie	2 Lab	38.2
Avonmore	2 Lab	38.3
Fulham Reach	3 Lab	38.5
Grove	2 Lab	39.7
Coningham	3 Lab	40.5
Wendell Park	2 Lab	42.8
West Kensington	3 Lab	44.1
Wormholt	2 Lab	45.7
White City	3 Lab	47.1
Hammersmith Broadway	2 Lab	54.4
Shepherds Bush Green	2 Lab	55.2
Addison	2 Lab	55.5
College Park and Old Oak	3 Lab	57.6

Look at the ward listing above. Just one: **Sands End**, in the south-eastern corner of Fulham, can be called marginal - and even then quite far up that scale. The next closest is **Walham Green** and the Tories require a near 14% swing to win.

It's not even clear whether **Walham Green** can swing that much: it is one of the most polarised wards in the borough and the Tories would need to make big inroads into big estates to find enough votes to win. Labour may sputter on public housing estates these days, but that doesn't mean council and housing association tenants are switching en masse to the Conservatives.

Traditionally reliable Conservative wards: **Avonmore**, **Brook Green** and **Ravenscourt** have swung even further away from them and **Grove** (which would have elected Tory councillors had it existed in 2006 and 2010), requires a 20% swing.

In some ways, strangely, Hammersmith and Fulham may have become too wealthy for the Conservatives. What do I mean by that?

Until the Second World War, Fulham was a mix of undeveloped market gardens and farms, and row upon row of terraced streets with very little council housing. Mostly these were workers' cottages, plenty split into flats. Some, mostly in the south of Fulham were grander, and housed the more affluent citizens - but the post-war consensus produced Labour voters across the board: enough to win a majority on the council and the parliamentary seats.

Then, from the 1950s, politicians built large council estates: Clem Attlee Court, Sullivan Court, Field Road, the West Kensington estate, Walham Green Court, the Townmead estate, the Bulow estate, Lancaster Court, the Lytton estate and the Bayonne estate, all of which initially burnished Labour's plentiful vote in the streets. These complemented older housing estates like the Lewis Trust in Fulham Broadway and Lisgar Terrace, and the Peabody in Lillie Road.

But in the late 1960s London property prices rose as house-building in the centre of the city slowed because there was little left to develop. This rise in property prices rippled out from the centre, forcing those who'd like to have bought in pricier neighbourhoods like Chelsea, but couldn't now afford to, to look further afield. Places like Fulham, parts of Putney and later Battersea.

Coupled with the deindustrialisation of Sands End especially, which had put most of the community that lived in the terraced streets out of jobs, there began a rapid gentrification.

This began in places like the Peterborough estate in Sullivan ward (the largest part of which is now in Parson's Green and Sandford). Sullivan was comfortably Labour until 1978 when it swung to become a ward they could never win again.

So began a Conservative advance that eventually turfed Labour out of control of the council (just) in 1978 and

Fulham into a Tory constituency in 1979. Increasingly, the electoral battle became Labour estates versus Conservative streets.

Hammersmith developed somewhat differently. It had its affluent areas too: around Brook Green and Ravenscourt Park, on either side of the district. Through the middle ran a belt of poverty from the river north to Goldhawk. Even more impoverished was a strip that ran from the north, up by Harrow Road, down the Kensington side of the borough around Latimer Road. Shepherds Bush developed later: long roads of huge houses sub-divided into flats with little green space in-between. White City followed in the 1950s.

Hammersmith has its big council estates too, though - perhaps surprisingly given the affluent suburban image it has - Fulham has far more. There's the biggest of the lot in White City, two cottage garden estates in Old Oak and Wormholt, the Charecroft tower blocks along the south side of Shepherds Bush Green and on the Edward Woods Estate on the edge of Notting Hill.

In the south, Hammersmith Broadway has a blend of council and housing association estates: the Queen Caroline estate, Riverside Gardens and Aspen Gardens, Ashcroft Square, as well as the Guinness Trust and another Peabody estate.

But Labour's support in Hammersmith, historically, has come more from the streets than the estates - at least until Labour's support base in London widened dramatically in the last two decades. This has simply not been that affluent a place overall: Shepherds Bush especially. And it's more multicultural with big Irish and black communities. In this sense it's more like Tooting - or Fulham until the 1980s: Labour less reliant on estates and more reliant on a largely working class population throughout.

The apex of the growth in Conservative support was, in hindsight, the early 1990s. That was the point when Tory voters began replacing Labour voters rather than encroaching further into Labour's core.

Potential target wards

Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Avonmore (1 Ind - defec)
- ▶ Ravenscourt (1 Grn - defec)
- ▶ Walham Green (1 Grn - defec)



Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Avonmore (1 Lab, 1 Ind)
- ▶ Brook Green (2 Lab)
- ▶ Fulham Reach (3 Lab)
- ▶ Lillie (2 Lab)
- ▶ Ravenscourt (1 Lab, 1 Grn)
- ▶ Sands End (3 Lab)
- ▶ Walham Green (1 Lab, 1 Grn)



Green hopefuls

- ▶ Coningham (3 Lab)
- ▶ Ravenscourt (1 Lab)
- ▶ White City (3 Lab)



Lib Dem hopefuls

- ▶ Munster (3 Con)
- ▶ Ravenscourt (1 Lab, 1 Grn)

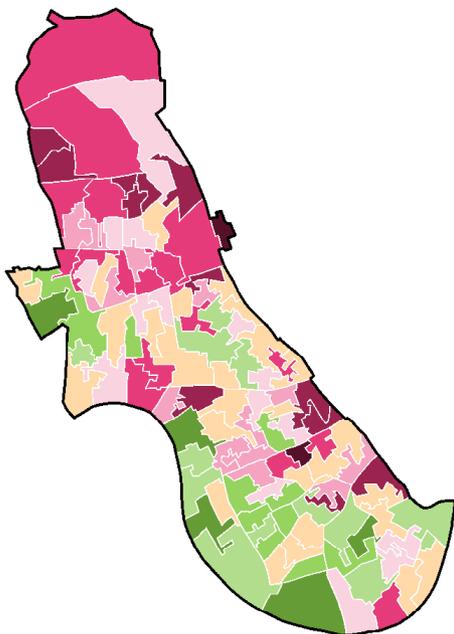


Reform UK hopefuls

- ▶ Wormholt (2 Lab)



Yet parts of Fulham kept getting more and more expensive - to the point when, like South Kensington or parts of Westminster, even big salaries were insufficient to secure a mortgage to move in. Buyers needed an inheritance or a big bonus on top.



Index of deprivation map for Hammersmith and Fulham

A new type of resident appeared: super affluent, often from old Europe or wider afield. And this once again started shifting the political balance in Fulham.

Some were ineligible to vote in Britain, some just weren't interested in issues like slicing a few percent off council tax or to reduce the cost of residential parking permits. They were too wealthy, and too focussed on other matters, to worry about relatively trifling concerns that the Conservatives, especially, laboured on for years.

And this new, less partisan, more indifferent type of resident only really affected the Conservative side of the ledger, because they were replacing motivated, partisan Tory

voters. Wards that Labour had been struggling in became more competitive.

There are still plenty of staunch Conservative types around who'd never skip polling day or consider Labour, but their voting power is not what it was - and that's entirely aside from the support the Conservatives have shed over Brexit or their record in government.

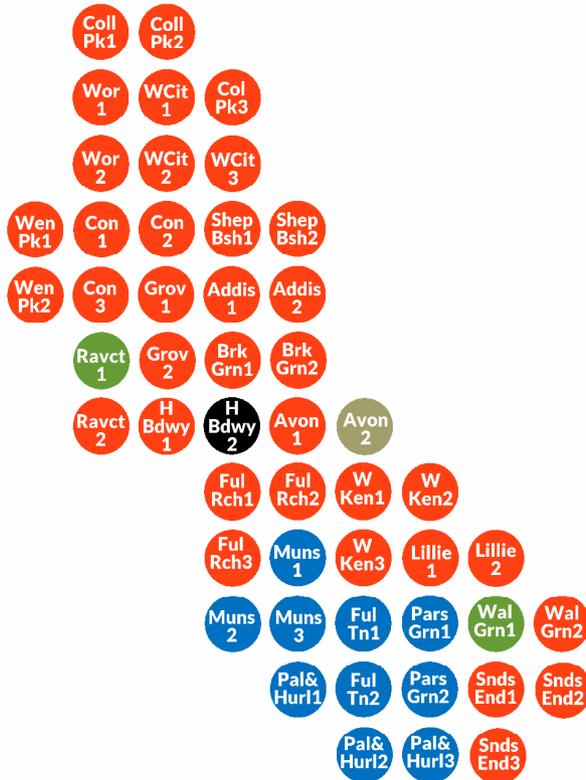
So Hammersmith and Fulham is one borough in which Labour's position appears strong. That doesn't mean they can take re-election entirely for granted.

In the three by-elections that have occurred since 2022, there have been big drops in the Labour vote - massive ones in the two Labour-held wards (**Hammersmith Broadway** and **Lillie**) and a smaller fall to third place in **Fulham Town**.

The council has had some high-profile controversies: the ongoing closure of Hammersmith Bridge being one and highly emotive Low Traffic Neighbourhood-style policies in Sands End (and Ravenscourt to a lesser extent) being another. There have been some cases of over-zealous enforcement action taken against residents for an ever-lengthening list of relatively minor infringements.

The council has a relatively poor record on maintaining its housing stock which, in more competitive times, would have been absolutely fatal to Labour when they were dependent on votes from council tenants. The Housing Ombudsman issued a Special Report into serious housing maladministration in February 2024. And the council does not seem to be as on top of street cleaning and highway maintenance as it once prided itself on being.

But the Conservatives need to be the beneficiaries of nearly all the backlash against Labour to challenge for power. They always were in the past. This time, they don't look close to being so. Reform (more on them later) are taking too many - not many, but too many - votes that the Tories need, even though there are no Reform prospects here.



In **Lillie**, which includes Fulham's largest council estate: Clem Attlee Court, plus a mass of streets east of North End Road, Labour's vote fell 23 percentage points but the Conservatives only rose 5.

In **Hammersmith Broadway** and **Fulham Town**, the Tory vote fell. And that may well be the long-term problem for Conservatives in this and similar boroughs: disillusioned Labour supporters are as likely to vote for parties perceived to be to their left as go to the Tories, even if they know that the only alternative to a Labour council here is Conservative.

But if Labour slumps by the sort of proportions seen in Lillie and Hammersmith Broadway - and especially if they can no longer turn out a once rock-solid vote on council estates, surprising upsets could happen.

In 2025, two Labour councillors defected to the Greens (one blocked from re-standing, the other seemingly more genuinely fed up).

The first represents **Ravenscourt** - a very affluent liberal riverside ward almost custom-made for a Green sortie and which has flirted with the Lib Dems. Even though Labour racked up a huge majority here last time it is a very "swingy" ward which any of four parties could win on a very low vote share. In 2002, for example, it split 37% Labour, 36% Conservative and 27% Lib Dem. In 2006: 51% Conservative, 34% Labour and 15% Lib Dem.

The second, and their leader here, represents **Walham Green**. This ward is the opposite of Ravenscourt. Although the Greens won approximately the same share in both (while not campaigning in either) this is not a promising ward for the party comprising either big estates or extremely expensive streets off North End Road.

The Greens are, apparently, targeting - of all wards - **White City** this time, having tried their hand at Coningham in 2022.

This is likely to be a miscalculation: **White City** is the only Hammersmith and Fulham ward to have always voted Labour and it does not have many characteristics of the current Green demographic beyond the new BBC Television Centre redevelopment. But they came a clear, if distant, second in 2022 without doing any campaigning, which is presumably why they're testing it.

In fact **Coningham** might well be more promising this time round - its predecessor Askew was a three-way marginal (39% Labour, 35% Lib Dem and 27% Conservative) back in 2006, the last dreadful Labour mid-term London election.

Given the Greens are willing to wing it in what look like impregnable Labour wards, **College Park and Old Oak** with its large Imperial College student population and lots of new high-rise housing for young professionals springing up, would also make more sense for them. But their best shot is surely **Ravenscourt**.

Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	White Brit	Black	Muslim	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Addison	27.9	29.0	42.1	32.5	11.1	11.2	66.5	33.5	58.9	11.7
Avonmore	29.1	25.0	44.9	31.5	8.4	12.1	65.9	34.1	59.4	11.4
Brook Green	35.1	20.6	43.6	37.4	6.2	9.0	74.8	25.2	65.7	8.2
College Park and Old Oak	20.7	50.7	25.7	25.9	16.2	17.3	52.3	47.7	46.2	17.9
Coningham	26.2	35.9	36.3	35.8	14.4	13.4	61.6	38.4	53.5	13.8
Fulham Reach	33.5	29.1	36.6	40.5	8.5	6.8	70.2	29.8	57.9	10.9
Fulham Town	38.6	15.6	44.3	49.6	5.2	5.2	76.5	23.5	68.4	7.0
Grove	38.3	23.9	36.4	44.3	7.9	7.2	74.0	26.0	62.6	10.6
Hammersmith Broadway	24.6	38.0	35.9	33.0	12.0	13.5	62.8	37.2	53.0	13.9
Lillie	23.7	37.8	37.3	34.3	11.8	13.1	65.9	34.1	53.8	13.3
Munster	41.8	17.4	40.0	49.5	5.5	5.3	75.9	24.1	63.7	9.1
Palace and Hurlingham	50.2	17.1	31.9	51.7	5.1	6.3	75.4	24.6	62.4	9.1
Parsons Green and Sandford	48.9	16.1	34.4	48.1	4.1	6.5	79.3	20.7	66.4	7.7
Ravenscourt	35.4	25.0	37.4	41.1	8.4	9.8	72.7	27.3	61.6	9.9
Sands End	31.4	28.8	35.1	39.4	10.4	12.3	71.7	28.3	59.9	11.0
Shepherd's Bush Green	17.0	44.8	35.6	25.0	20.2	18.0	54.4	45.6	50.2	15.3
Walham Green	26.3	36.9	35.5	40.7	11.0	11.0	67.8	32.2	56.2	12.7
Wendell Park	43.2	24.4	28.5	43.4	10.8	11.7	68.7	31.3	60.2	10.4
West Kensington	22.7	32.6	43.5	33.5	12.4	13.6	62.4	37.6	55.3	12.6
White City	21.9	47.2	28.9	24.1	24.8	25.1	51.1	48.9	45.5	17.2
Wormholt	33.2	38.2	27.1	34.4	16.0	18.9	55.8	44.2	48.5	15.6

Reform will not win seats in Hammersmith & Fulham. The party did, however, come second in the **Hammersmith Broadway** by-election (winning 14%) and that ward is not their best prospect.

Instead Reform should look at **Wormholt** with its large garden-suburb estate, where the electorate is still relatively white, not especially affluent and relatively geographically isolated. There's enough diversity and affluence scattered throughout Wormholt that Reform can't win but this is the sort of area where they might poll respectably.

There are an extraordinary 18,500 European Union voters eligible to vote in Hammersmith and Fulham local elections. What impact does this huge population of nationals from EU

countries already have on council elections? They are not an especially high turnout segment, being disinterested in the minutiae of English local government, and are a fairly mobile, high turnover bloc. But, because there are so many of them, turnout does not have to be high to have an impact.

Although the national polls make grim reading for both Labour and Conservative, they still represent a swing of between 4% and 7% from Labour in 2022. This is nowhere close to what the Tories need to win Hammersmith and Fulham but, equally, the London swing won't be evenly distributed. A Tory uplift is probably not coming in Newham or Lewisham. It is likely that it will be greater in areas that have a recent history of Conservative competitiveness and organisation.

So, even if the polls say otherwise, the Tories will hope for a big advance in Hammersmith and Fulham. Yet if they only gain three seats (Sands End) don't be surprised, and they may not even get those. But they should, given Labour is in government and their vote is not motivated to turn out - at least to support them.

So the Tories have two objectives. The first is to expand their group as much as they realistically can this year. The second

is to put enough wards into play so they can challenge in 2030.

Doing much more than that will either confound the polls or be because Labour has lost so much support to other parties that the Conservatives win wards narrowly on low vote shares. But that seems pretty unlikely given the huge cushions Labour has in formerly marginal and Conservative-leaning wards. For those reasons, Hammersmith & Fulham is highly unlikely to feature on Labour's casualty list this year.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	G	O
May 22 council election result	10	40			
Mar 24 suspension: David Morton (Avonmore) - Lab to Ind	10	39			1
Feb 25 by-election: Hammersmith Broadway - Lab hold (Lab vote -19.3)	10	39			1
Feb 25 by-election: Lillie - Lab hold (Lab vote -23.1)	10	39			1
Jul 25 by-election: Fulham Town - Con hold (Con vote -2.6)	10	39			1
Jul 25 defection: Liz Collins (Ravenscourt) - Lab to Grn	10	38		1	1
Jul 25 defection: Trey Campbell-Simon (Walham Green) - Lab to Grn	10	37		2	1
Dec 25 vacancy: Patricia Quigley (Hammersmith Broadway) - Lab, resigned	10	36		2	1

HARINGEY

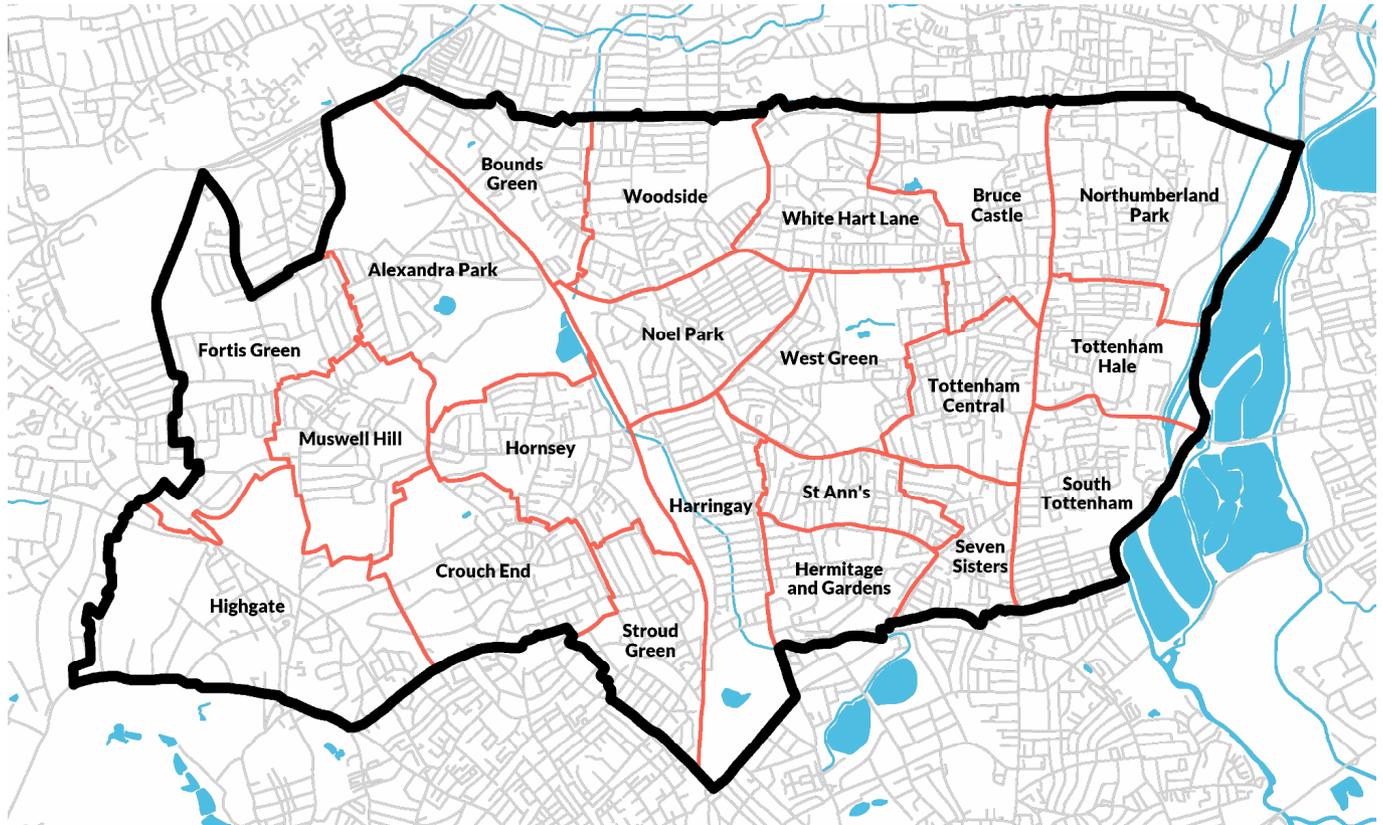
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Just as there is a ladder of Reform hopes in the capital, there is also one - with more rungs on it - for the Greens. While none of the boroughs are going to be easy for the party to win, their best hopes are Hackney and Lewisham; then Lambeth.

Those are the three on which they have the best shot of winning a majority and/or the mayoralities.

Next is Islington - but there we can't yet know whether Jeremy Corbyn-backed "community independents" will impede the Greens' path to a majority.

Guide to the 2026 council elections: London

Then we have a set of six boroughs on which the Greens will find it much harder to win a majority, but where they could win a hefty group of councillors. These are Camden, Greenwich, Waltham Forest, Newham, Southwark - and Haringey.

The thirty two London boroughs were created from twenty-nine municipal boroughs in the centre - the "London County Council" boroughs; ringed by 58 (59 if we count Chigwell) urban and rural districts within what is now Greater London. Plus the City of London.

Haringey was founded by the amalgamation of three urban districts in 1965: Hornsey in the west, Tottenham in the east, and Wood Green in the north.

Sometimes mergers were little more than geographic reality: the old councils had to be adjacent to each other so there were only so many ways to combine them.

Political calculations played their part. These were plans drawn up under a Conservative government and some mergers gave the Tories at least a chance - at that point in history - of winning. Was this a consideration with Haringey? Perhaps, though Hornsey was not as Conservative as Wood Green and Tottenham were Labour so this might have been one where Tory chances were sacrificed. How Hornsey might have longed to go into Camden - but that was an inner London borough.

This was, at its nub, where the battles over "loony left" councils - of which Haringey was one of the most prominent - emerged from. Left-wing councils wanted to raise rates to pay for spending greater than a Conservative government (and its voter base) would allow them to. The Tories objected both to how much Labour wanted to spend and what they wanted to spend (or waste, as they saw it) on.

This was the earliest manifestation of the cultural, identitarian politics of the left. In the 1980s, this was politics that was either ahead of its time or frivolous focussing on a fringe instead of providing good universal services.

Another reason the loony left gave Labour endless headaches was incendiary outbursts. Haringey council leader and later Tottenham MP Bernie Grant was an exemplar.

He became notorious in 1985 following the Broadwater Farm council estate riot provoked by the death of council tenant Cynthia Jarrett while her home was being raided by the police.

The day after PC Keith Blakelock was murdered during the riot, Grant was quoted as claiming that *"The Police got a bloody good hiding."* He was actually explaining to reporters that youths on the estate had told him that was their view of what they'd done.



A third consideration was economic: combining affluent and poorer boroughs ensured the rates could adequately fund services. That mattered in Haringey and it would become a political factor because Hornsey, with its much higher rateable values, simply didn't have the electoral clout to outvote the east of the borough. Hornsey got saddled with the bill for services largely lavished on Tottenham.

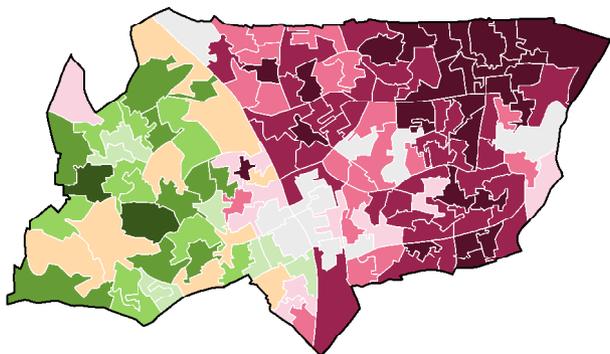
But that deliberate misquotation defined him as one of the left's bogeymen and set Labour back across London and the country.

Council mergers in themselves could create "rotten" boroughs; not in its historic context of places devoid of electors returning MPs as sinecures, but in the sense of councils that simply didn't function well.

Haringey is arguably also the exemplar in this regard: it simply hasn't been well administered. Its leaders have made poor choices; its council estates rapidly became sinks of deprivation and lawlessness; it was not great at the services everyone sees and experiences: clean streets, cared for parks, well-maintained roads.

It failed horribly in some very specific ways - the murder of 17-month-old Peter Connelly (Baby P) in 2007 being the worst example - with its Childrens Care Services found to be failing. Every decade, or more frequently, an example of Haringey failing seems to emerge. A lot of this is politics, but a lot is just down to forcing together two mismatched areas.

The deprivation map of Haringey highlights how different Hornsey is from the rest of the borough: the darker the green the more affluent; the deeper the purple shades the more deprived.



Haringey has undergone demographic change: the growth of a large ethnic minority majority in Tottenham, while the profile and political allegiances of the Hornsey side have also changed. Add in all the political mayhem and, while Labour has - bar 1968 - always won, elections have been turbulent.

In the 1962 elections: the last of the urban district elections, Hornsey elected 7 Conservative and 6 Labour councillors; Tottenham: 11 Labour and 1 Conservative, and Wood Green 4 Labour and 2 Conservatives. That's a combined "Haringey" total of 21 Labour and 10 Tories.

That balance more or less transferred to the first Haringey elections of 1964: 41 Labour, 19 Conservatives. The borough swung strongly to the Tories in 1968 by a landslide 53 to 6 margin, but like all boroughs that had been Labour in 1964, Haringey returned to the fold in 1971 - and the party hasn't lost power since.

Initially, the electoral turbulence affected the Conservatives. Hornsey had a Conservative council and a Conservative MP (for much of the post-war period, Sir Hugh Rossi). Boundary changes in 1983 abolished the Labour Wood Green constituency and put all the old Wood Green district in with Hornsey - creating a much more marginal constituency.

Political allegiances were also changing in the wealthier parts of the constituency as a more socially liberal, progressive set replaced an older, solidly Tory, generation. This began the Conservative dive. 22 of their councillors were returned in 1982, 16 in 1986 and just 2 - from Highgate ward - in 1994. At the 1992 general election Labour's Barbara Roche defeated Sir Hugh Rossi to become Hornsey and Wood Green's first Labour MP.

In 1994 Labour won every council seat in Haringey bar those two Conservatives in Highgate. In 1998 they almost repeated that feat, only losing **Muswell Hill**: another of the affluent neighbourhoods on the Hornsey side.

The winners in **Muswell Hill**, however, weren't Tories. The ward voted Liberal Democrat and one of the new councillors was Lynne Featherstone, heiress to the Ryness chain of high street electrical stores.

This result didn't bother Labour too much - a year earlier Barbara Roche's first defence of her parliamentary seat had given her a 20,000+ majority as part of Labour's 1997 landslide. Featherstone as the Lib Dem candidate came third. Featherstone stood again in 2001 - and again Roche easily won, but a 13% swing to the Lib Dems halved her majority.

In the 2002 local elections, the Lib Dems won another twelve seats, knocking the Tories off the council by winning Alexandra, Crouch End, Fortis Green, Highgate and Muswell Hill. And then the US-British response to the 9/11 terrorist atrocities outraged progressive, liberal sentiment, creating a perfect storm for Lib Dems who had voted against Britain's involvement in the military action.

In 2005, Hornsey and Wood Green, a Tory constituency barely a decade earlier, elected Lynne Featherstone. In the local elections of 2006, the Lib Dems won 27 seats on the 57 seat council. Labour's majority survived, slashed to 3 seats.

The Lib Dems lost because they couldn't crack Tottenham. All bar two of their seats were on the Hornsey side of the borough. Only Harringay ward on the Tottenham side elected a couple of Lib Dems.

Hornsey and Wood Green contained a majority of the council seats, but a party would need to hold all of them to take power. Instead, Labour held five in Wood Green: three in **Woodside** and one apiece in **Bounds Green** and **Noel Park**.

In 2010, despite the outcry over the Baby P tragedy, Haringey stayed Labour. They even regaining four seats from the Lib Dems. Then the Lib Dems entered coalition government with the Conservatives - and Lib Dem support imploded. In 2014 the Lib Dems crashed to just nine seats. And, in 2015, Featherstone reaped the same progressive backlash that she had inflicted on Barbara Roche ten years earlier. Labour was back representing Hornsey and Wood Green.

Haringey then became the sharp end of the Corbynite takeover of the Labour Party. The "Momentum" group that was the vanguard of the left-wing drive to shore up Corbyn was especially strong in Haringey and was highly critical of the council's more moderate Labour leader, Claire Kober.

This criticism centred on the "Haringey Development Vehicle" or HDV: the council's public-private partnership to "regenerate" some of the borough's council estates.

Potential key wards

Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Alexandra Park (1 LD)
- ▶ Bounds Green (1 Soc All)
- ▶ Crouch End (1 LD)
- ▶ Fortis Green (1 LD, 1 Ind, 1 Soc All)
- ▶ Highgate (3 LD)
- ▶ Muswell Hill (1 LD)
- ▶ St Ann's (1 Grn)
- ▶ Stroud Green (1 Ind - defec)
- ▶ Woodside (1 Soc All -defec)



Lib Dem hopefuls

- ▶ Alexandra Park (1 Lab)
- ▶ Crouch End (2 Lab)
- ▶ Fortis Green (1 Ind, 1 Soc All)
- ▶ Harringay (3 Lab)
- ▶ Muswell Hill (1 Lab)
- ▶ Stroud Green (2 Lab, 1 Ind)



Green hopefuls

- ▶ Bounds Green (3 Lab)
- ▶ Harringay (3 Lab)
- ▶ Hermitage and Gardens (1 Lab)
- ▶ Noel Park (2 Lab)
- ▶ St Ann's (1 Lab)
- ▶ Seven Sisters (2 Lab)
- ▶ South Tottenham (3 Lab)
- ▶ Tottenham Central (3 Lab)
- ▶ Tottenham Hale (1 Lab)
- ▶ West Green (3 Lab)
- ▶ White Hart Lane (3 Lab)
- ▶ Woodside (3 Lab)



Conservative hopeful

- ▶ Highgate (3 LD)



Haringey's was one of the earlier iterations of the Labour-driven regeneration agenda - rebuilt council homes in exchange for allowing the private developers to add huge numbers of extra apartments they would sell off. Typically, (but not always) existing council tenants whose homes were demolished were given the option of a right of return to a brand new flat on the rebuilt estate or a move somewhere else; leaseholders were bought out.

For councils, this was a way to deal with ageing council blocks that were reaching the end of their lives, get some extra homes built to meet targets and expand the council tax base. But this didn't come cost free: there are big downsides that councils rarely admit to - and besides; there was no other way of funding extensive housing improvements.

The HDV was the hook upon which Momentum hung "moderate" Labour councillors who had supported these plans out to dry. Most of the pro-HDV councillors jumped before they were pushed, including Kober and cabinet member for housing Alan Strickland (MP for Newton Aycliffe since the 2024 general election).

Momentum had a majority of Labour councillors and Labour kept its majority on Haringey council, so Haringey became the first and only "Corbyn Council". This despite a small loss of seats to the Lib Dems in 2018. The slightly trimmed Labour majority looked like a minor repudiation of Labour but only because they lost seats in marginal Hornsey wards. Labour actually won a lot more votes, going from 48% to 57% borough-wide.

Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	White Brit	Black	Muslim	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Alexandra Park	68.2	9.7	21.5	54.5	5.9	5.0	77.8	22.2	65.6	7.6
Bounds Green	36.0	25.0	37.0	31.3	13.4	11.6	52.2	47.8	46.9	17.4
Bruce Castle	22.9	40.1	32.8	16.5	31.4	19.7	34.2	65.8	32.4	28.8
Crouch End	48.5	13.6	35.6	52.4	5.1	4.3	77.4	22.6	68.4	7.6
Fortis Green	57.7	12.1	29.0	50.2	4.6	5.3	73.1	26.9	63.5	9.0
Harringay	36.8	12.1	50.0	33.5	8.3	11.1	58.4	41.6	54.9	16.3
Hermitage & Gardens	32.1	25.2	40.3	27.7	14.8	13.5	52.2	47.8	49.0	18.4
Highgate	51.1	11.2	37.0	51.2	3.9	3.8	79.7	20.3	71.5	6.6
Hornsey	41.7	26.0	29.5	45.8	10.8	8.0	71.0	29.0	60.1	11.6
Muswell Hill	55.6	7.9	35.7	52.6	3.6	3.7	77.3	22.7	67.9	8.1
Noel Park	28.2	35.3	33.7	22.6	16.7	17.1	41.5	58.5	39.8	22.7
Northumberland Park	21.9	41.0	34.7	13.9	31.9	20.3	28.8	71.2	30.6	28.1
St Ann's	35.1	25.3	37.5	24.6	17.3	16.4	45.1	54.9	41.9	22.4
Seven Sisters	25.5	37.1	36.2	22.7	22.1	15.2	41.3	58.7	38.4	23.1
South Tottenham	26.2	30.2	40.6	28.6	19.8	10.7	41.2	58.8	35.3	25.5
Stroud Green	43.2	23.6	32.4	49.8	9.2	6.8	73.6	26.4	65.3	9.6
Tottenham Central	29.3	27.2	40.8	21.5	23.1	14.6	43.2	56.8	41.0	22.4
Tottenham Hale	28.3	33.2	34.1	18.6	24.5	18.3	40.1	59.9	39.2	21.0
West Green	36.5	26.7	34.9	23.4	17.4	17.9	46.9	53.1	43.3	21.2
White Hart Lane	35.5	39.0	24.2	21.7	19.8	20.3	36.1	63.9	32.9	27.6
Woodside	30.4	25.8	42.3	24.3	13.1	14.5	42.8	57.2	41.6	23.0

In 2022 the opposite happened: Labour's vote fell four percentage points yet they gained eight seats. This was again because the marginals in Hornsey behaved differently to the monumentally secure Tottenham wards. Yet still Labour won well over 50% borough-wide. That is why Haringey is so difficult a borough now for any party other than Labour to win: in ward after ward on the Tottenham side they stack up the votes to skyscraper heights.

In ten wards Labour polled over 60% of the vote and in two: **Northumberland Park** and **West Green** they won over 70%. Unlike in somewhere like Barking and Dagenham, these massive vote shares weren't in wards only they and one other opponent stood: in every ward there were at least three contestants and typically four.

The swing the Lib Dems need to win a majority on Haringey is 23.6%. It would have been statistically impossible for the Greens to win as they didn't stand enough candidates and it's simply unimaginable for the Conservatives.

Six by-elections occurred in the borough over the past four years, two of which occurred after the general election. Of these Labour lost one: the south Tottenham ward of St Ann's, which went to the Greens on a 19% swing. Even that, repeated borough-wide, would not be enough for the Greens to win, but it is close to the ballpark of a swing that would erase Labour's majority - provided the Lib Dems did well in the wards they came second.

On a 10% swing to the Lib Dems, they would gain the split wards of **Alexandra Park**, **Crouch End**, **Fortis Green** and **Muswell Hill**, plus **Stroud Green** and **Harringay** - the ladder of streets in the centre of the borough through which runs the New River. That would produce a Lib Dem group of nineteen councillors.

The Greens only fielded 23 candidates last time which is why we can't accurately measure the swing they need to win: even if all 23 had won they wouldn't have got close to a majority of seats, and none of them were close to winning, anyway.

Given the Green surge in membership, it can be assumed that failing to stand a full 57 candidates (other than through deals with other left-wing parties or candidates) this time round is off the agenda and that they will have the capacity to build on their St Ann's by-election gain.

There is a slight problem in even working out a fantasy swing needed for the Greens to remove Labour from power - short of winning themselves - because they would wipe out the Lib Dems while getting them.

In other words, there is little prospect of Haringey falling to no overall control. Labour will win a majority (probably with some Lib Dem councillors) or the Greens will (without any).

By-elections: change in party share

	Con	Lab	LD	Ref	Grn
Tottenham Hale	-2.6	-9.0	+6.7		-2.2
Hermitage & Gardens	+0.5	-6.3	+8.1		-3.5
South Tottenham	+0.7	+4.3	-1.4		-3.6
White Hart Lane	+4.2	+0.4	+3.2		+13.5
Hornsey		-11.8	-2.7		+10.2
St Ann's	+4.3	-22.5	-3.2	+3.6	+15.6

Italics show party that didn't contest the 2022 elections but stood in the by-election

That is unhelpful for those hoping to oust Labour because, if the Lib Dems were targeting the Hornsey wards and the Greens' best shots were all in Tottenham, no overall control would be an option on the table. And it'd pull down the swing to beat Labour a fair bit. As it is, the Greens need to take the first seat in **Seven Sisters** ward - Labour majority 746 or 40.9% - and everything with a lesser majority.

It's perfectly reasonable to question if this is remotely achievable for the Greens even with Labour breaking unpopularity records and voters in boroughs like Haringey looking for a radical alternative.

That said, the December 2025 Electoral Calculus MRP has the Greens climbing this mountain. It modelled that all three

Haringey constituencies would, right now, elect Green MPs. Tottenham has the Greens on 37.8% with Labour on 25.0%; Hornsey and Friern Barnet: Green 34.4% Labour 32.1%; Southgate and Wood Green: Green 25.9%, Labour 22.9%. Those are insane figures, especially considering David Lammy won over 80% of the vote in the 2017 general election - less than a decade ago.

If the Lib Dems are on track to be crushed by the Greens, is there any other help that might be available to turf Labour out? There are now three Independent Socialist Alliance councillors who left Labour in 2025. But they sit in the same group as the Greens and, if they run for re-election are unlikely to compete against each other. The Socialist Alliance councillors represent **Fortis Green**, **Woodside** and **Bounds Green**. These are very different wards: Fortis Green in the prosperous west of the borough, Woodside and Bounds Green in Wood Green and much less affluent. It will be

interesting to see how much support goes to an explicitly socialist candidate in these different areas. Haringey Socialist Alliance registered with the Electoral Commission in December.

Reform's chances in Haringey are no better than the Conservatives - arguably worse. Given that the Tory vote is still substantial enough in **Highgate** to give them fanciful ideas of sneaking through to win if the Greens take a chunk of Lib Dem votes - just not too many to win it themselves. There are no wards anywhere close to a promising demographic for Reform.

A swing of over twenty percent is colossal, and that's why Labour, even as broken as many voters regard it now, is favourite to retain a borough they have run for fifty five years uninterrupted.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	G	O
May 22 council election result		50	7		
Dec 22 expulsion: Joy Wallace (Fortis Green) Lab to Ind		49	7		1
Mar 23 by-election: Tottenham Hale - Lab hold		49	7		1
Jun 23 by-election: Hermitage and Gardens - Lab hold		49	7		1
Oct 23 by-election: South Tottenham - Lab hold		49	7		1
Oct 23 by-election: White Hart Lane - Lab hold		49	7		1
Nov 23 defection: Mary Mason (Bounds Green) Lab to Soc All		48	7		2
Nov 23 defection: Mark Blake (Fortis Green) Lab to Soc All		47	7		3
Nov 23 defection: Lotte Collett (Woodside) Lab to Soc All		46	7		4
Jul 24 by-election: Hornsey - Lab hold		46	7		4
Apr 25 by-election: St Ann's - Grn gain from Lab		45	7	1	4
Nov 25 defection: Alexandra Worrell (Stroud Green) Lab to Ind		44	7	1	5
Jan 26 vacancy: Mike Hakata, Lab (Hermitage and Gardens) resigned		43	7	1	5

HARROW

31

23

1

At the 2024 general election that reduced the number of Conservative MPs from 344 seats to just 121, the Tory majority in Harrow East rose from 8,170 to 11,680. Yet Harrow East is not an archetype of a super-safe Conservative seat.

For a long time it was the more promising Harrow constituency for Labour, held by them from 1997 to 2010 and in 2001 with a majority (11,124) almost identical to the one Tory Bob Blackman won in 2024.

This contrary general election result was heralded by the 2022 borough election results in Harrow, when the Conservatives gained the council from Labour with a workable but narrow majority of seven seats.

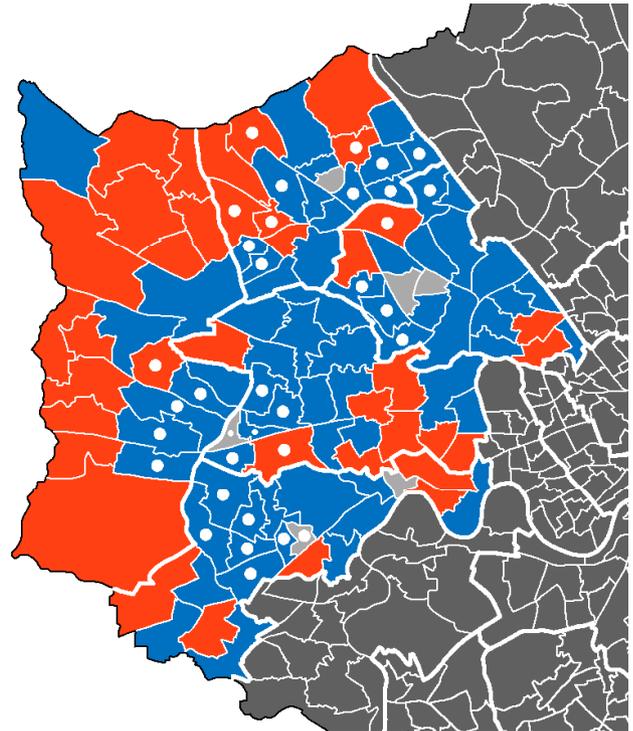
At the time there were reasons to believe the result had been a repudiation of the previous Labour council. It had implemented unpopular Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and presided over fraud in its highways contracts, among other issues. And the vote share changes: Conservatives up just 0.3%, Labour down 6.3%, provide supporting evidence that this was a rejection of Labour, not a surge to the Tories.

The subsequent general election result was clearly both: for the Tories; against Labour. In Labour-held Harrow West, there was also a swing to the Conservatives, though much smaller; as there was in neighbouring Brent West, which shares similar characteristics.

But Harrow was also the most extreme example of those elections of Labour's problems (or Conservative successes) across London in ethnically diverse wards - and particularly ward that have a large diaspora of Hindus and Sikhs. In Harrow, that community is spread across the southern half of the borough - from Harrow-on-the-Hill through Kenton and to Edgware and Stanmore. But there is a corridor running

through west London: those Harrow neighbourhoods, Wembley, Greenford and Southall, Heston and Hounslow.

The map below shows how the wards in the five West London boroughs swung (red denoting a swing from Conservative to Labour and blue denoting one from Labour to Conservatives). The few light grey wards are those that were newly created in 2022, so there was no antecedent to measure a swing. And the wards containing dots are those which have a Hindu and Sikh population of over 25%.



It's clear that a sizeable majority of wards with large Hindu and Sikh populations swung Conservative, across a map where most wards in each borough bar Hillingdon swung that

way, too. The reason this map looks quite different to one showing wards won is that Labour held most of these wards with very large majorities that now only have large majorities. Some are now marginals that Labour may well lose in May.

Despite the Conservatives winning back a majority in Harrow in 2022, their grip on the borough isn't secure. They start as favourites to retain control but it would not take too large a vote for Reform in some of those key wards to flip them back to Labour. Labour only need a 3% swing to win, though given there has been a London-wide swing from Labour to Conservatives since 2022, that will be challenging.

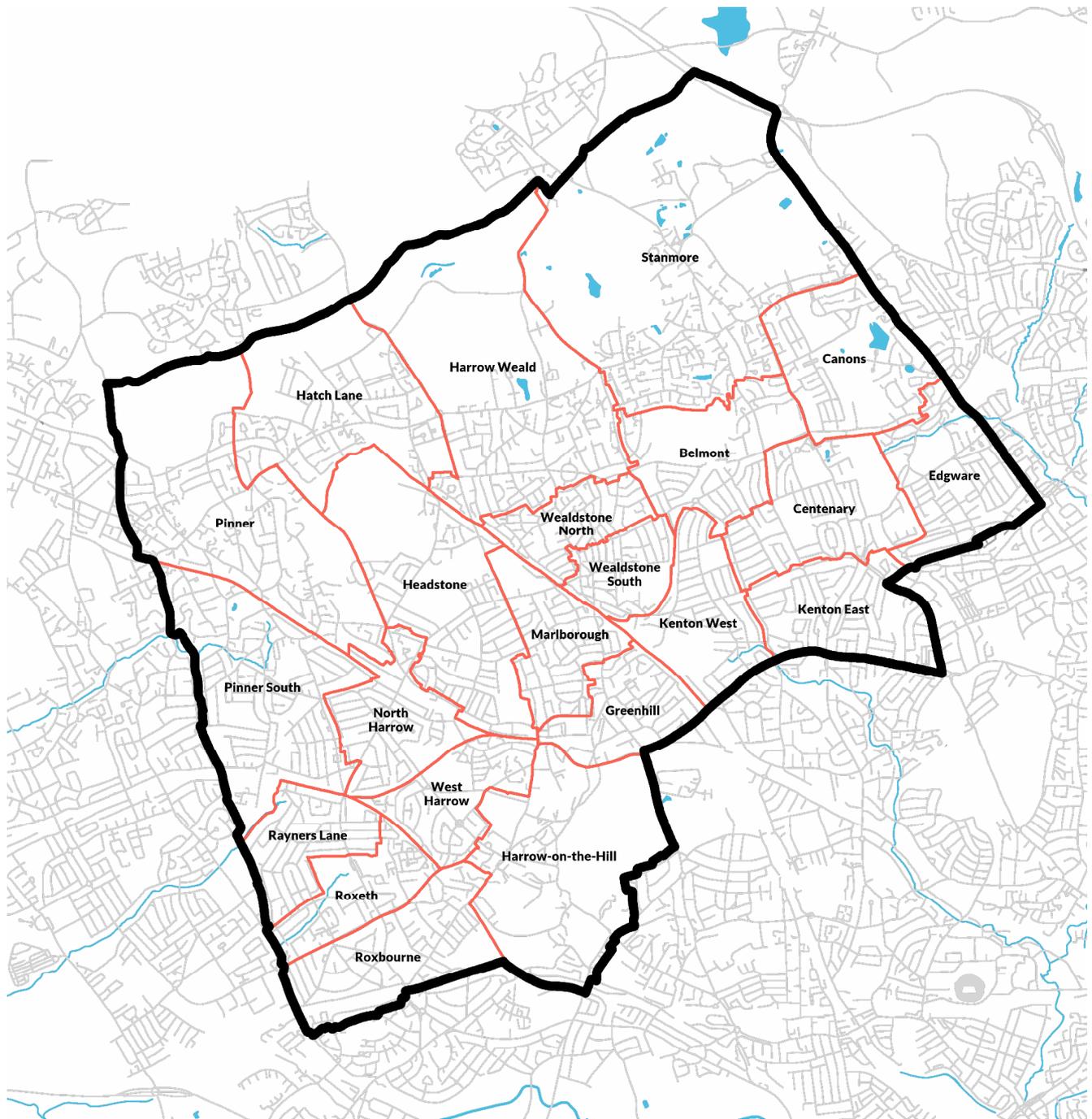
But just look at the list of councillors with majorities of 20% or less, opposite. Of the 38 councillors (that's a clear majority of the council) on the list, 20 are Conservative, 18 Labour. In other words, it wouldn't take very much either for the council to return to Labour or for the Tories to expand their majority a fair bit.

For the Conservatives to advance, though, they principally need to break through in wards in the borough's west where they have struggled far more than on the eastern side.

This is partly to do with both MPs: Conservative Bob Blackman in Harrow East and Labour Gareth Thomas in Harrow West, being well-known and hard-working in their respective patches. Gareth Thomas is a local Harrow lad who was first elected on a colossal swing in the Blair 1997 Labour landslide, so he's coming up for three decades as the seat's MP. Blackman was leader of Brent Council for a while before winning Harrow East back from Labour in 2010. His wife Nicola is now a councillor in marginal Edgware ward and they make a formidable campaigning couple.

If you refer to that map on the previous page, you'll see that the Conservatives did not have everything their own way in 2022. 14 wards swung to the Tories but 7 swung to Labour. Labour's problem was two-fold, though. First, the swings to them were mostly in safe Tory wards - especially in the Pinner area.

	councillor	ward	maj	%maj
●	Janet Mote	North Harrow	5	0.1
●	Thaya Idaikkadar	Rayners Lane	15	0.5
●	Christopher Baxter	North Harrow	28	0.7
●	Stephen Hickman	Harrow on the Hill	52	1.7
●	Eden Kulih	Harrow on the Hill	53	1.7
●	Nitin Parekh	Edgware	79	2.0
●	Yogesh Teli	Edgware	182	4.5
●	Aneka Shah-Levy	Greenhill	157	6.1
●	Ghazanfar Ali	Greenhill	165	6.4
●	Jean Lammiman	Pinner South	369	6.7
●	Salim Chowdhury	Centenary	276	6.8
●	Sasi Suresh	Headstone	381	8.1
●	Nicola Blackman	Edgware	339	8.3
●	Natasha Proctor	Headstone	468	9.9
●	Dan Anderson	Greenhill	263	10.2
●	Kanti Rabadia	Kenton West	335	10.3
●	Hitesh Karia	Pinner South	577	10.4
●	Dean Gilligan	Wealdstone South	186	10.7
●	Simon Brown	Headstone	508	10.7
●	Vipin Mithani	Kenton West	401	12.4
●	June Baxter	Pinner South	690	12.8
●	Kandy Dolor	Wealdstone South	227	13.1
●	Samir Sumaria	Kenton East	573	13.9
●	Rashmi Kalu	Roxeth	569	14.4
●	Peymana Assad	Roxeth	587	14.9
●	Paul Osborn	Pinner	674	15.2
●	David Ashton	Centenary	642	15.9
●	Krishna Suresh	Rayners Lane	513	16.0
●	Kuha Kumaran	Pinner	741	16.7
●	Asif Hussain	West Harrow	548	17.4
●	Norman Stevenson	Pinner	773	17.4
●	Stephen Greek	Harrow Weald	671	18.2
●	Govind Bharadia	Centenary	744	18.4
●	Rekha Shah	West Harrow	596	18.9
●	Pritesh Patel	Harrow Weald	699	19.0
●	Jerry Miles	Roxeth	758	19.2
●	Antonio Weiss	Marlborough	532	19.5
●	Ramji Chauhan	Harrow Weald	737	20.0



Second, the swings to Labour were much smaller than the quite significant ones the other way. The biggest swing to Labour was in **Pinner South**: an impressive 9% - but that only got them close. In next-door **Rayners Lane**, there was a 3% swing to the Conservatives - not in the same league as Labour's advance in Pinner South - enough to gain a seat.

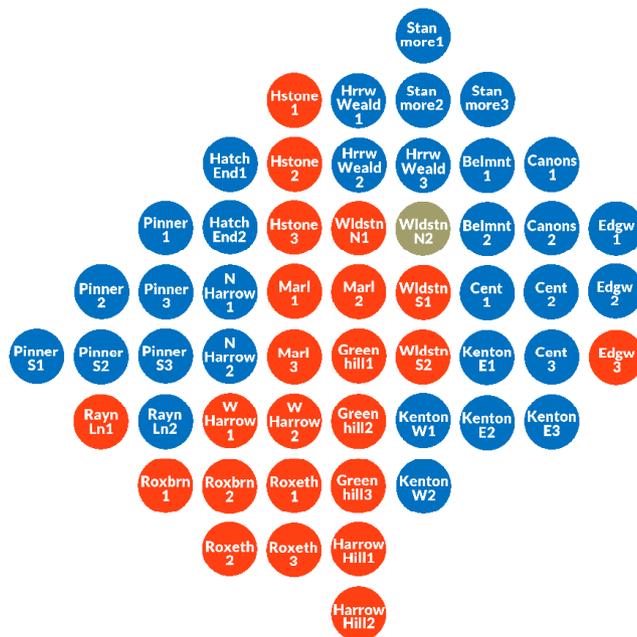
The biggest swings to the Conservatives were 18% in **Centenary** - a Kenton/Queensbury borders ward - which they gained; 13% in **Edgware** - where they gained two seats; and then 11% in **Headstone** and 10.4% in **Roxeth** - both of which stayed Labour but are now as winnable for the Conservatives as Pinner South is for Labour.

The Tories also closed the gap in **Harrow-on-the-Hill**. It's hard to believe that the ward which houses one of Britain's top public schools is now represented by Labour. Perhaps if the boarders there were old enough to vote - and the only electors - it might not be. But this ward is not as affluent as the prestige of Harrow School suggests. It's only 27% white and has, for Harrow, a lot of private renters: 37%.

Harrow-on-the-Hill is also an example of another common trend in this borough last time, which is that the Conservative vote fell a little, but Labour fell a lot.

Here, the Tory vote fell 0.9% but Labour was down 12.7%. In **Marlborough**, the Conservatives were down about 5 points, but Labour fell 18. That's Labour's safest ward, so their councillors still won by loads. In **Headstone** the Tories were down 1 point but Labour fell 22, though that isn't a like-for-like swing: it's a ward with radically changed boundaries. All the wards where both the main parties' votes fell were in Harrow West, by the way.

Clusters of wards in all three constituencies behaved differently. In Harrow East the Conservatives surged and Labour fell. In Harrow West, both parties lost votes. But in the three Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner wards within this borough, there was a clear swing to Labour.



Harrow has an unusual electoral history. It is another of those areas, a bit like Wimbledon, where the Conservatives have always looked more deeply dug in than they were, in part because there was a reasonably strong Liberal vote.

This vote surged past Labour in the 1980s after the formation of the SDP and, in 1994, the Lib Dems won 29 of the 63 seats, having won just 1 in 1978. This Lib Dem strength was why it was especially surprising that Labour won both Harrow constituencies just three years later. Why had voters swung so decisively from Lib Dems in the council elections to Labour in the 1997 general?

Whatever that reason was, the voters then stuck with Labour. In 1998 the Lib Dems crashed to just nine seats: **Harrow Weald**, **Rayners Lane**, two in what is now **Belmont** and one in the old **Headstone North**.

The Lib Dems then shot themselves spectacularly in the foot.

The government had passed legislation protecting political parties from vexatious insurgents calling themselves very similar names - "Literal Democrats" being the most prominent example - to confuse voters into miscasting their votes. The Lib Dems believed this cost them a seat in the 1994 European Elections as the Conservatives held on to a euro-constituency with a majority of 700 while the Lit Dem polled 10,203.

As part of this act, to stand as a candidate for a registered political party they had to be signed off through a number of forms that allowed them to use the party logo on ballot papers for example. They could also only stand under a set number of descriptions, pre-registered with the new Electoral Commission. In Harrow, sixty of the candidates described themselves as "Liberal Democrat Action Team" - but this was not a description the party had registered, so all sixty were disqualified. Only the three in **Harrow Weald** stood as "Liberal Democrats" and were accepted as candidates - and those three won.

But even those three only had one term left. In 2006 just one Lib Dem - their former group leader - regained his **Rayners Lane** seat, but **Harrow Weald** went Conservative and has stayed there ever since. Harrow had returned to a two-party era, with Labour winning the south and the Conservatives the north.

It also became a very competitive borough. Since 1998 Harrow has given Labour a majority four times, the Conservatives twice, and it's been hung once. The borough seemed to be inching inexorably towards Labour. And then it started inching away from them.

There are a lot of reasons for this and they're fairly complex, but they are heavily entwined in how the Hindu and Sikh communities perceive Labour. This perception is influenced by Labour's stance on the Kashmir issue, the increasing importance of the Muslim vote: a much larger community that, until Iraq and then, later, Gaza voted overwhelmingly Labour; and Labour's innate hostility to the Hindu nationalism of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

These are generally, upwardly mobile communities who set up businesses, worked long hours to build savings and push their children to get into university and into the professions. There is a path from arrival at Heathrow to getting a home close to the airport, building wealth and moving up to larger houses - maybe to Wembley, maybe to Harrow, maybe into the home counties.

This is no different to, say, the Ashkenazi Jews who arrived in Tower Hamlets on boats and, as they integrated, moved out to Stamford Hill or Finchley, Golders Green and Hendon. The same is true of most immigrant communities who have come to England and moved on and up.

So it's not just parochial issues of foreign affairs that motivate a shift away from Labour for communities like those that have moved to Harrow. It's issues like being able to build affluence without the state taking too much in tax. It's about being self-reliant not dependent on state benefits. It's about home ownership, not dependent on the council for housing. It's about being able to get children into the best schools - including sending them private. As Labour has been seen as hostile to these values, they have shifted away from it. They were staunchly loyal only a decade or two ago.

And of course, no-one of any background is going to view favourably a council exposed as fraudulent in its issuing of contracts, or which has implemented policies that are unpopular, when Council Tax keeps going up and services down.

For all these reasons Labour has a west London problem (its east London problem is different). And it has grown considerably worse since 2022 because Labour is now deeply unpopular in government.

But might they be saved, or at least salvaged, by Reform's entry onto the field? It's not apparent that they will. There are wards at which Reform might have a shot but the demographics right across Harrow aren't great for the party.

Ward	Housing			Religion		Ethnic	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	Hindu or Sikh	Muslim	White	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Belmont	75.8	4.2	19.6	32.5	12.0	21.1	54.3	45.7	45.5	16.1
Canons	64.9	9.9	24.6	21.7	12.5	28.2	59.0	41.0	49.6	16.1
Centenary	63.9	4.4	29.5	35.9	15.6	12.1	46.7	53.3	42.9	19.6
Edgware	53.9	7.9	37.2	26.2	15.9	12.7	35.7	64.3	35.8	24.6
Greenhill	36.3	14.1	47.6	24.1	16.8	14.4	57.5	42.5	55.3	14.6
Harrow on the Hill	48.6	12.8	37.2	17.7	15.0	27.0	59.0	41.0	50.2	14.1
Harrow Weald	58.0	17.9	23.2	18.7	18.7	26.7	47.3	52.7	39.0	19.7
Hatch End	72.7	5.4	21.4	26.6	15.9	29.6	63.5	36.5	52.1	13.2
Headstone	65.8	6.6	26.4	28.4	14.4	21.1	57.2	42.8	52.0	13.3
Kenton East	54.9	11.9	32.2	38.5	11.1	11.8	35.7	64.3	34.8	25.6
Kenton West	75.1	2.2	21.3	36.6	11.5	13.8	47.4	52.6	42.3	19.1
Marlborough	45.8	7.3	45.5	17.4	21.4	17.0	49.1	50.9	46.7	17.0
North Harrow	65.4	3.9	29.3	32.4	14.1	19.0	57.1	42.9	51.1	13.1
Pinner	67.8	11.1	19.9	23.8	13.3	34.8	65.7	34.3	53.4	12.3
Pinner South	75.5	5.3	18.8	29.8	9.5	31.1	67.5	32.5	57.0	10.5
Rayners Lane	66.9	3.1	29.6	42.4	13.0	14.5	48.1	51.9	44.2	15.7
Roxbourne	44.3	31.0	23.4	29.6	21.3	18.3	41.5	58.5	38.3	19.4
Roxeth	54.9	9.8	34.1	18.3	17.5	15.0	41.3	58.7	38.9	18.6
Stanmore	60.0	15.5	23.1	20.1	19.2	29.3	59.7	40.3	45.4	17.7
Wealdstone North	47.2	15.6	35.5	20.0	26.1	15.7	40.5	59.5	37.0	21.9
Wealdstone South	43.0	13.7	39.8	20.4	18.2	14.1	35.6	64.4	35.8	22.7
West Harrow	51.7	13.7	31.8	20.4	18.5	22.9	49.2	50.8	44.7	15.3

Harrow Weald may be their best shot: it contains more of the type of voters that might be attracted to Reform. There are more C2DEs here than ABC1s, and owner occupation is somewhat lower - though still much higher than the norm in London.

There might also be something odd going on electorally in Harrow. The Electoral Calculus MRP of December 2025 is referenced a lot in these previews - but this time let's do something different with Harrow than just report its constituency modelling. This time, look just at vote share changes since the 2024 general election.

In Harrow East, Reform is on 23.5%. The Conservatives are down 10.4 points but Labour is down 15.9. In Harrow West, Labour is down 19.7 points, the Conservatives down 7.4% (Reform is on 20.1% in West).

Put aside whether the figures are accurate, or likely. Rather, focus on the fact that Reform in Harrow is taking more from Labour than Conservatives. That wouldn't be surprising in a so-called red wall seat in the north, but it's a little more surprising in ethnically-diverse London. So, if anything, Reform isn't helping Labour: it's hurting them.

Two statements about Reform should hold up past election night. First: they are probably slightly more likely not to win any council seats in Harrow than that they will - and if so they

will be a small group. Second: any opposition hopes that Reform might pull the Conservatives down enough to throw a few seats Labour's way on a low vote share are probably forlorn.

Indeed, the Conservatives will have some expectations of extending their majority a bit. They'll want to start with the remaining Labour seat in **Edgware** - majority: 79. In **Harrow-on-the-Hill** Labour's majorities were even smaller: just 52 and 53.

The next most vulnerable ward is **Greenhill** - the eastern side of Harrow town. A fair amount of new housing has been constructed here as well as in neighbouring **Marlborough** which may disrupt how easy it is for the Conservatives to regain it. This new housing may also put the Greens in play in **Greenhill**: they polled 15% here in 2022, a share only exceeded in **Marlborough** (15.6%).

An emerging trend from these elections may well be a strong link between wards with lots of new private housing developments and Green Party strength. There was some evidence of this in 2022 (for example in Croydon's central Fairfield ward) and they've polled well in these types of wards in council by-elections (such as Thames View in Barking and Dagenham).

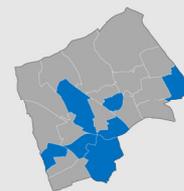
The reason for this is that they contain lots of young, professional, university educated, mostly white Londoners, not happy with the cost of living, of which housing costs are a significant part. These are fertile grounds for pitches about inequality and wealth taxes and cheaper public transport and tenants rights and the like: essentially the Green pitch under Zack Polanski.

Next comes **Headstone**, which is a somewhat weaker version for Labour of the old Headstone South. That ward swung heavily to Labour: it was one of the strongest Labour wards by the time it was abolished in 2022. But there was that huge swing to the Conservatives last time - mostly because chunks of Tory Headstone North had been added. Most of Headstone North is in **North Harrow** ward these days. The Labour majority in **Headstone** is about ten percentage points.

Possible key wards

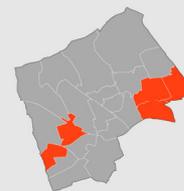
Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Edgware (1 Lab)
- ▶ Greenhill (3 Lab)
- ▶ Harrow-on-the-Hill (2 Lab)
- ▶ Headstone (3 Lab)
- ▶ Rayners Lane (1 Lab)
- ▶ West Harrow (3 Lab)
- ▶ Wealdstone South (2 Lab)



Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Centenary (3 Con)
- ▶ Edgware (2 Con)
- ▶ Kenton East (2 Con)
- ▶ North Harrow (2 Con)
- ▶ Rayners Lane (1 Con)



Reform hopefuls

- ▶ Harrow Weald (3 Con)
- ▶ Roxbourne (3 Lab)
- ▶ Roxeth (2 Lab)
- ▶ Wealdstone North (2 Lab)



Green hopefuls

- ▶ Greenhill (3 Lab)
- ▶ Marlborough (3 Lab)



Lib Dem hopeful

- ▶ Rayners Lane (1 Lab, 1 Con)



Back in Harrow East, the next most winnable ward for the Tories is **Wealdstone South**, but now we're pushing some way beyond the Labour to Conservative swing there appears to have been in London since 2022. But Bob Blackman will have been working hard to chip away at the Labour strength in this ward.

Wealdstone was the ward most loyal to Labour anywhere in Harrow: it's returned Labour councillors every election since 1971. But Wealdstone was split into two wards in 2022 and the northern half is the truer successor to the old Wealdstone (which is why it's the safer ward). **Wealdstone South** contains a chunk of **Marlborough** ward, which was east of the railway line and north of Kenton recreation ground. Kenton was one of the big swingers to the Conservatives in 2018 and 2022, and some of that switch has rubbed off on **Wealdstone South**.

There may be one relatively straightforward pickup for Labour, and that's **Rayners Lane**. Last time the Labour winner finished 437 votes ahead of his defeated colleague. That's a lot, especially in a smaller two-councillor ward. One of the main reasons was that **Rayners Lane** is the ward of long-time Lib Dem leader in Harrow Chris Noyce. Noyce lost by quite a lot in 2022 but still polled 665 votes. Quite a few voters must have split their votes between him and the Labour winner.

We wait to see whether Noyce stands again: he's stood in this ward at every election since 1986, bar his 2002 disqualification debacle. But it may not matter given his vote fell away a lot last time - memories of his service as a councillor are fading. Given how far ahead the Labour winner was of the Conservative winner (over thirteen percentage

points) if voters stop ticket-splitting then **Rayners Lane** could be a gain almost by default.

The ward has the highest Hindu and Sikh population (42%) in the borough so the winners may be the candidates with the highest profile in those communities.

Labour also nearly won the newly created **North Harrow** last time, missing out on one seat by just 5 votes and the other by 28.

Should we perhaps be looking at this from the other end of the spectrum? Which wards can the parties actually be certain they'll hold?

For Labour, the list isn't that long. They are fairly sure to hold **Marlborough, Wealdstone North, Roxbourne, Roxeth** and **West Harrow**. That's twelve seats.

For the Conservatives: **Belmont, Canons, Hatch End, Pinner, Stanmore** and probably **Kenton East** should be absolute bankers. That's 12 seats. They'd argue strongly that Harrow Weald should be included and, subject to a potential Reform challenge there, it should be - so 15.

Both parties will win more than their core wards: the Conservatives probably considerably more and Labour a few. But the relatively small number of seats that are absolutely safe shows why Harrow has been so volatile a borough in the past couple of decades. While it's unlikely to flip again this year, that underlying volatility remains. It is remarkable, however, that in an era where the two main parties have never been more unpopular, there is only a small chance that anyone else will win representation on Harrow council.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	G	O
May 22 council election result	31	24			
Jun 23 suspension: Phillip O'Dell (Wealdstone North) Lab to Ind	31	23			1

HAVERING

30 14 8 3

Essex proved to be one of the best counties for Reform UK at the 2024 general election. As well as returning Nigel Farage himself with an 8,000 majority in Clacton, the party won a tight three-way contest in South Basildon and East Thurrock and wasn't far off winning Basildon and Billericay (1,551) and Castle Point (3,551). They also came 1,943 votes short of Conservative Julia Lopez in the Essex-borders constituency of Hornchurch and Upminster, which is part of the London Borough of Havering.

That makes Havering one of the top two Reform targets in London this year. But, unlike their other prize: Bexley, there is a complication. Here the Conservatives aren't their main adversary, at least in local elections.

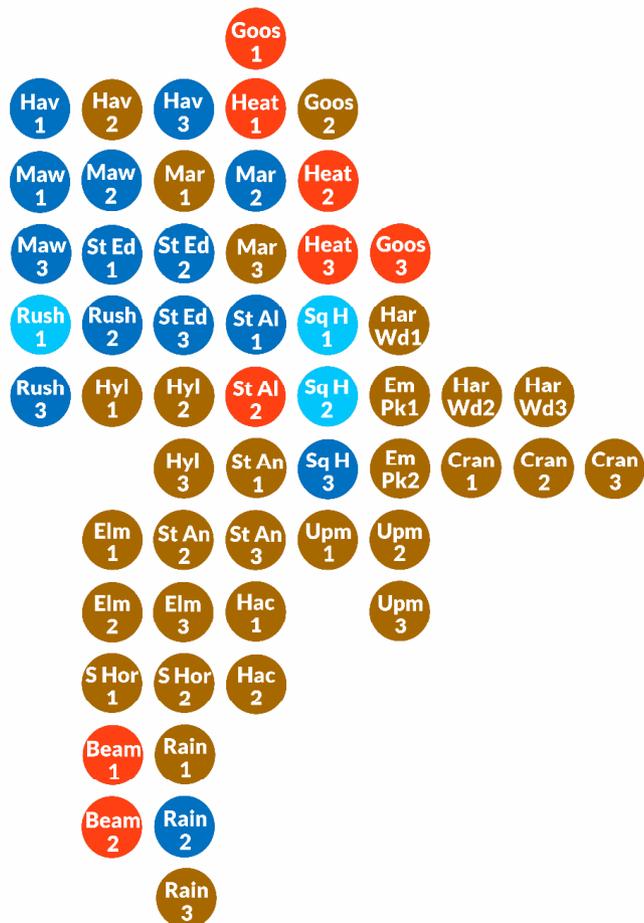
Since 2022, Havering has been run by a collective of local Residents' Associations. And this wasn't some sudden uprising: the residents' associations have been a (growing) feature of Havering politics since the beginning. Cranham and Hacton wards, for example, have only elected Residents' Association councillors since 1964; Upminster since 1990. Gradually, these associations have ousted the established political parties from ward after ward: Rainham, St Andrew's, Harold Wood, Hylands, South Hornchurch, Emerson Park - now even pressing fading Labour in their former fortresses of the Harold Hill estate.

Reform have been somewhat successful this past year at sweeping aside localist parties and residents associations elsewhere. They swept every Nottinghamshire county council division in Ashfield, for example - eradicating Jason Zadrozny's Ashfield Independents. Mexborough First was defeated in Doncaster. Fifteen independents plus all four North East Party councillors were defeated in Durham.

In council by-elections, Reform has taken seats off independents and residents in Portsmouth, Maidstone,

Canvey Island, Morley, Wickford, Herne Bay, Tewkesbury and Newark.

Some of these "other" parties have been around for a while, but none for as long as Havering's. Reform has not yet been tested in councils like this, or Epsom and Ewell - the other long-term Residents Association fixture in local government.





There must have been a great deal of crossover between Reform 2024 general election voters (the RAs in Havering do not stand for parliament) and 2022 Residents Association local election votes. The question, at least as far as Reform's prospects of winning Havering go, is whether these voters will stay with the RAs or switch.

The 2022 elections resulted in a tie for seats between the Residents and Conservatives with Labour holding the balance of power and putting the RAs into power for the first time.

But since 2022, seven Conservatives have defected to the RAs, giving the collective an overall majority. Only three - including Keith Prince, the London Assembly member for Havering and Redbridge and councillor for **Squirrels Heath** - have gone to Reform, two after Rosindell defected. That in itself is interesting: faced with a potentially potent Reform challenge, Conservative defectors have chosen not Reform but the RAs.

The reason for that maybe that they would rather exert influence now as members of the current administration instead of being part of an entirely theoretical (at this point) Reform council from May. Or maybe they've tested the electoral weather and decided the Residents Association has a robust chance of beating Reform. They'll look a bit stupid switching to Reform only to lose to the RAs, after all. Or perhaps they just aren't the sort of Conservatives who regard Reform as a savoury alternative movement for them.

I doubt this: Havering is not the sort of borough where liberalism thrives, either embodied within the Liberal Democrats or in the Conservative Party.

What's also remarkable is that, so far, we've barely mentioned the Conservatives - who ran Havering until 2022 and now face a real prospect of obliteration. They really could lose all 16 councillors they still have, though Reform may not poll as well in the north of the borough (where most of the Conservative seats are located) as the south, which is a more politically competitive area.

Possible key wards

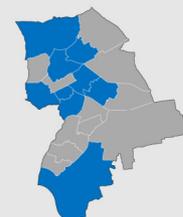
Residents' Association hopefuls

- ▶ Beam Park (2 Lab)
- ▶ Gooshays (3 Lab)
- ▶ Havering-atte-Bower (2 Con)
- ▶ Heaton (3 Lab)
- ▶ Hylands and Harrow Lodge (2 Con)
- ▶ Marshalls and Rise Park (3 Con)
- ▶ Mawneys (3 Con)
- ▶ St Edward's (3 Con)



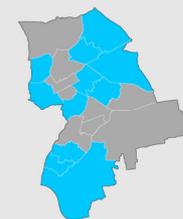
Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Emerson Park (2 Res)
- ▶ Havering-atte-Bower (1 Res - def)
- ▶ Heaton (3 Lab)
- ▶ Hylands and Harrow Lodge (3 Res)
- ▶ Marshalls and Rise Park (2 Res - defs)
- ▶ Rainham and Wennington (2 Res - def)
- ▶ Rush Green and Crowlands (1 Ref - def)
- ▶ St Alban's (1 Lab)
- ▶ Squirrel's Heath (2 Ref - defs)



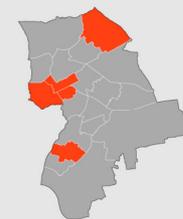
Reform hopefuls

- ▶ Beam Park (2 Lab)
- ▶ Emerson Park (2 Res)
- ▶ Gooshays (2 Lab, 1 Res)
- ▶ Harold Wood (3 Res)
- ▶ Heaton (3 Lab)
- ▶ Hylands and Harrow Lodge (2 Con)
- ▶ Mawneys (3 Con)
- ▶ Rainham and Wennington (2 Res, 1 Con)
- ▶ Rush Green and Crowlands (2 Con)
- ▶ South Hornchurch (1 Con)
- ▶ Squirrel's Heath (1 Con)



Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Gooshays (1 Res - def)
- ▶ Rush Green and Crowlands (2 Con, 1 Ref)
- ▶ St Alban's (1 Con)
- ▶ St Edward's (3 Con)
- ▶ South Hornchurch (2 Res)



But that doesn't mean they can't win in the north: just that their potential wins may well be tighter. Romford is as close to an identikit Reform area as there is: houses with Union Jack-flying flagpoles, overwhelming proportions of homeowners, almost as high proportions of white British residents. At the 2024 General Election the Conservatives outpolled Reform by nearly 6,000 (though their vote still crashed by 30 percentage points) mostly because the area's long-serving MP Andrew Rosindell could out-Reform Reform. Nonetheless, he defected to that party in January 2026.

Labour will struggle too. The party has been on life support in Havering since a disastrous term in power from 1998 to 2002. At the 2002 elections, Labour collapsed from 29 seats to just 9. Even that wasn't rock-bottom: from then on they had to fight to hold their once rock-solid seats on the huge Harold Hill council estate on the edge of London.

At successive elections Labour lost seats to Conservatives, UKIP and the BNP. These were wards in which Labour polled three quarters of the vote in the 1980s, even as Right To Buy was minting a new generation of Conservative voters. Labour has always been a party of either end of Havering: Harold Hill in the far north-east and south Hornchurch down by the Thames-side.

In 2022 Labour finally won enough seats - nine - to form a group that the others had to take notice of, though still founded on barely 20% of the vote. None of these nine is safe and, because of the profile of the electorate in these wards, they will be just as vulnerable to Reform. Labour is now culturally so far from Havering's values that their vote is confined to life-long, ageing supporters who are disappearing.

Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	White Brit	Black	Muslim	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Beam Park	48.6	33.0	13.7	51.0	16.1	13.7	37.7	62.3	30.8	21.8
Cranham	85.1	5.0	9.4	83.8	2.6	1.8	53.9	46.1	29.3	16.5
Elm Park	73.1	12.8	13.5	67.3	7.2	6.8	42.5	57.5	27.8	21.6
Emerson Park	87.6	4.1	8.1	63.5	3.8	6.7	56.5	43.5	33.2	18.5
Gooshays	51.2	35.2	12.2	64.6	9.8	4.8	36.5	63.5	26.7	24.0
Hacton	83.1	5.3	11.0	79.1	3.7	2.9	46.4	53.6	26.1	19.4
Harold Wood	71.1	8.9	17.8	69.1	5.8	4.3	52.0	48.0	34.1	17.1
Havering-atte-Bower	68.5	18.1	12.4	66.9	7.5	6.2	38.0	62.0	24.7	23.3
Heaton	48.4	37.6	13.1	58.9	13.3	6.6	34.4	65.6	27.1	24.8
Hylands and Harrow Lodge	79.6	7.4	12.2	70.7	5.6	5.0	47.2	52.8	28.2	18.3
Marshalls and Rise Park	84.1	4.4	11.0	68.9	4.2	6.3	49.8	50.2	30.3	18.8
Mawneys	73.5	11.6	14.4	64.7	6.5	7.9	40.2	59.8	26.3	21.5
Rainham and Wennington	72.5	9.3	17.4	62.9	10.4	7.3	37.5	62.5	25.3	23.4
Rush Green and Crowlands	55.2	16.5	26.8	45.3	11.5	13.2	44.6	55.4	35.8	18.8
St Alban's	50.6	12.4	35.4	53.6	8.5	9.7	44.3	55.7	35.3	18.1
St Andrew's	73.3	9.4	17.1	78.9	3.5	2.7	47.9	52.1	27.5	20.0
St Edward's	52.1	14.9	29.1	56.6	8.1	7.7	50.1	49.9	37.1	18.5
South Hornchurch	73.4	12.0	13.9	62.2	11.6	8.0	37.8	62.2	25.3	22.6
Squirrels Heath	72.8	7.9	18.5	67.9	5.2	5.0	53.2	46.8	33.4	16.1
Upminster	85.8	2.0	12.0	85.4	1.6	1.6	57.2	42.8	31.4	15.2

Whereas in more inner London boroughs this "old East End" vote is being rapidly replaced by a more affluent, more ethnically diverse electorate, Havering is far out enough to be relatively untroubled by change - even with the District Line running as far as Upminster and the newer Elizabeth Line running through Romford and Harold Wood. 85% of Upminster is still white British; it's 84% in Cranham and 79% in Hacton and St Andrew's.

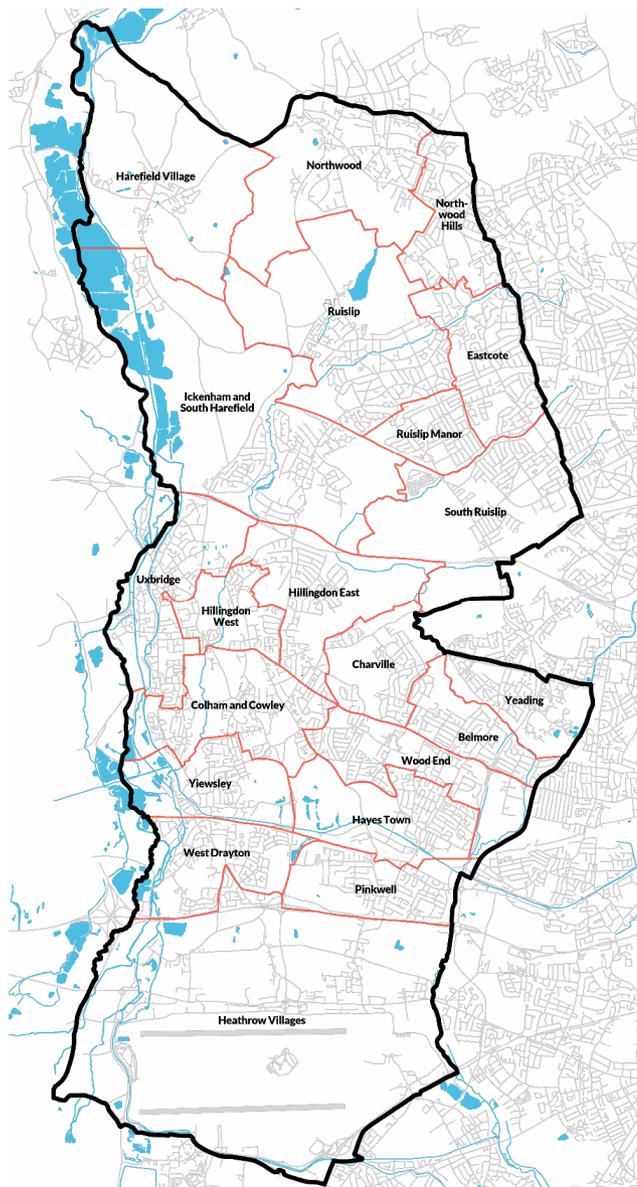
Even next door in Barking and Dagenham, the highest proportion of white British residents is just 53% in Eastbrook and the next highest is 41% in Goresbrook. Havering is very different from any London borough and that's why it votes very differently.

It's entirely possible that, following the May elections Havering council will comprise solely Reform councillors and Residents' Association councillors: it's the exact numbers on each side that are unknowable right now.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	R	Res
May 22 council election result	23	9			23
Sep 22 defection: Sarah Edwards (Rainham and Wennington) Con to Res	22	9			24
Sep 22 defection: Sue Ospreay (Rainham and Wennington) Con to Res	21	9			25
Sep 22 defection: Jackie McArdle (Rainham and Wennington) Con to Res	20	9			26
Aug 23 by-election: Upminster - Res hold	20	9			26
Jan 24 defection: Robby Misir (Marshalls and Rise Park) Con to Res	19	9			27
Apr 24 defection: John Crowder (Havering-atte-Bower) Con to Res	18	9			28
Apr 24 defection: Christine Smith (Hylands and Harrow Lodge) Con to Res	17	9			29
Apr 24 defection: Philippa Crowder (Marshalls and Rise Park) Con to Res	16	9			30
May 24 defection: Paul McGeary (Gooshays) Lab to Res	16	8			31
Jul 24 defection: Jackie McArdle (Rainham and Wennington) Res to Con	17	8			30
Oct 25 defection: Keith Prince (Squirrel's Heath) Con to Ref	16	8		1	30
Feb 26 defection: Robert Benham (Rush Green and Crowlands) Con to Ref	15	8		2	30
Feb 26 defection: Christine Vickery (Squirrel's Heath) Con to Ref	14	8		3	30

HILLINGDON

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One of the harder targets for Reform UK to pick off in London is the west London borough of Hillingdon.

On the Reform ladder that gets progressively harder for the party to climb, Hillingdon is the fifth rung behind Bexley, Barking, Havering and Bromley. From here it's about how many opposition seats Reform can win rather than about their likelihood of controlling the council.

There are plenty of potential targets for Reform, not all of them Conservative-held. Almost as much of this preview will be focussed on Labour's challenges as those of Conservatives facing a Reform threat.

The Conservatives themselves have made life harder than it need be to hold Hillingdon. At the ward boundary review prior to the last council elections, the party (via the council) submission argued for, and got, a big reduction in council size, shrinking from 65 seats to 53. All twelve abolished seats were Conservative held and, as such, their majority fell a lot last time. Turkeys aren't meant to vote for Christmas, but Hillingdon's Conservatives did - for reasons unclear to all.

That error turned a comfortable Conservative majority of 23 into one of just 7. Labour, despite not having an especially remarkable election, found themselves just a 3.2% swing away from power. Gaining the Tory-held seats in split **Charville** and **Uxbridge** would hang the council. They were just 131 votes from winning a seat in **Colham and Cowley** ward. That ward would give Labour a majority on the council.

Fortunately for them, there is typically one party even more disorganised and error-strewn than Hillingdon Conservatives - and that's Hillingdon Labour. That's evidenced by, for example, a group that numbered 23 councillors when elected in 2022 now down to 16 after defections and suspensions. It's par for the course.

Labour's electoral problem in Hillingdon is that its vote is concentrated in the south east of the borough: enough to give it a decent-sized group but impossible to take the party to a majority. Hayes, Heathrow and Harlington are part of a wider corridor stretching to Harrow and Kenton that has become the hub for London's Hindu and Sikh communities.

There is also a Muslim community here, but it's much smaller than East London's. Many work servicing Heathrow airport: warehousing, transporting goods and passengers, loading and unloading planes, securing the airport and its associated buildings.

Belmore has a resident population of Indian origin of 65%; Pinkwell of 60%, Hayes Town 51%, Wood End 50.5%, Yeading of 45% and Charville of 44%. These have been reliable repositories of votes for Labour over the decades but, as we'll question further in the Hounslow preview, there's considerable doubt that they will be this May.

With a neighbourhood so reliant on Heathrow, plans to expand the airport may also be consequential. **Heathrow Villages** ward, which includes the airport and some of the neighbourhoods that will be demolished to build a new runway, is usually Labour leaning. The Conservatives last won seats here in 2010. But now Labour is in government, pushing the expansion, will they shed anti-Heathrow votes - on top of their wider unpopularity? And if so, where will they go?

The only party consistently against expansion is the Greens. They stood here in 2022 but received less than 10% of the votes - though Labour wasn't obviously for expansion last time either. But it's not obvious that the Greens are going to pick up many votes on this issue alone.

Nor is this ward, any more, especially white (24% white, 33% of Indian sub-continental origin) so it doesn't seem to have the demographics that make it great for Reform. That party favours Heathrow expansion as well.



Contrast that profile with two far better prospects for Reform: **West Drayton**: 38% white and 55% C2DE and, **Yiewsley**: 41% white and 58% C2DE. If Heathrow Villages is to spurn Labour, it's probably more likely to opt for the Conservatives, even though they're for the third runway too.

Heathrow expansion, because of the jobs dependent on the airport, is broadly a big net positive in Hayes, Harlington and Uxbridge, so it probably won't swing many votes here as all bar the Greens support it.

Labour's larger problem in Hayes will be the Hayes Independents: a party established by three of the councillors that have left Labour since 2022 - and since joined by two more. Hayes Independents have registered as a political party

with the Electoral Commission which, short of seeing the nominations, is as good a pointer as we can get that they are planning on contesting the elections.

Although Labour's core wards in Hayes and Harlington: **Pinkwell, Hayes Town, Wood End, Yeading** and **Belmore** look very secure on paper, they have not been fought with Labour in government, and with a credible non-Conservative challenger, since 2010.

A few of the defectors to the Hayes Independents are fairly long-serving and presumably quite prominent councillors and the areas they represent do not contain the sort of demographic that would vote Green in vast numbers.

Ward	Housing			Religion		Ethnic	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	Hindu & Sikh	Muslim	White Brit	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Belmore	55.5	11.2	32.2	47.6	17.6	11.6	33.4	66.6	30.0	24.3
Charville	64.0	11.1	22.9	26.7	16.9	32.2	36.9	63.1	30.4	22.2
Colham and Cowley	51.0	21.0	26.4	12.4	15.3	39.7	42.9	57.1	31.8	19.2
Eastcote	75.0	8.8	15.5	22.6	7.0	52.7	60.3	39.7	44.8	12.8
Harefield Village	66.5	19.4	13.4	4.7	3.1	73.2	50.9	49.1	32.7	18.8
Hayes Town	34.3	20.4	41.5	26.6	24.6	15.0	38.1	61.9	35.5	22.1
Heathrow Villages	39.8	13.9	45.6	17.4	15.4	24.1	28.2	71.8	31.1	22.2
Hillingdon East	66.2	13.2	20.0	19.0	13.3	41.3	48.7	51.3	36.3	17.4
Hillingdon West	55.2	14.4	28.5	16.3	14.2	38.7	57.4	42.6	45.4	14.3
Ickenham and South Harefield	75.5	6.8	16.8	15.1	6.3	58.1	61.0	39.0	44.8	12.4
Northwood	59.2	14.0	26.5	20.7	10.2	38.5	67.3	32.7	55.1	11.8
Northwood Hills	61.6	15.4	22.5	20.4	9.8	39.7	57.1	42.9	46.4	15.0
Pinkwell	50.9	17.4	30.6	37.3	22.5	14.5	31.9	68.1	29.9	24.0
Ruislip	70.6	11.2	17.6	9.3	5.0	62.1	60.0	40.0	43.5	13.6
Ruislip Manor	77.9	3.2	18.1	9.4	5.0	57.8	53.3	46.7	39.0	13.8
South Ruislip	67.6	8.5	22.8	13.4	9.7	46.7	51.4	48.6	39.4	14.5
Uxbridge	48.8	19.2	30.3	8.7	15.5	39.4	51.8	48.2	40.6	13.7
West Drayton	46.2	24.2	27.0	14.4	15.6	37.8	44.6	55.4	38.1	19.9
Wood End	43.7	28.9	26.0	26.7	23.8	22.4	34.3	65.7	30.0	24.7
Yeading	45.0	27.6	25.6	22.4	22.6	24.1	34.4	65.6	31.2	22.0
Yiewsley	36.6	28.0	33.0	9.5	16.3	40.6	42.1	57.9	35.6	20.5

Hayes Independents will join the collective of "community independents" - seen as to the left of Labour, for whom the issue of Gaza still features prominently. This co-operative is expected to fight across the capital - Islington, Hackney, Haringey, Newham and Redbridge being the main examples - and gain a lot of votes. They are likely to be endorsed by Jeremy Corbyn's Your Party and will work out non-aggression pacts with the Greens.

Hillingdon borough stretches far beyond Heathrow, Hayes and Harlington, and Labour's support starts to ebb very quickly moving north. The borough becomes much whiter: just two wards beyond Heathrow the ethnicity proportions for **Yiewsley** are the same for **Uxbridge** and Hillingdon, before surging at **Ickenham, Ruislip** and **Northwood**.

Relatively isolated **Harefield Village**, in the north-western corner of the borough, is nearer Rickmansworth than Uxbridge and 73% white. That is an aberrant figure for a London ward in 2026. Harefield is probably the number 1 Reform target, but it's a small ward electing just one councillor. Reform won't take Hillingdon by Harefield alone.

Harefield aside, Reform's best shots are in the centre of the borough: **Yiewsley, Uxbridge, Hillingdon East, Hillingdon West** and **Charville**. These five wards contain twelve seats. Charville is already a closely fought wards where both Labour and the Conservatives are well organised. It's split its representation for 4 of the past 5 elections (the Tories winning all seats there in 2018). 2002 was the last time Labour won all seats in Charville. Of this central cluster Charville is most like Hayes: a much higher Asian percentage and somewhat less affluent than Uxbridge or Hillingdon.

Then there's **Colham and Cowley**. This is essentially the old Brunel ward with its well-regarded university. Reform really doesn't do well with students no matter its somewhat spurious claims that young people have been flocking to the party. That hasn't stopped the Conservatives - also not known for their widespread student support - from winning, but then the ward is much more than just the university.

Possible target wards

Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Charville (1 Lab)
- ▶ Heathrow Villages (2 Lab)
- ▶ Uxbridge (1 Lab)
- ▶ Yiewsley (1 Lab, 1 Grn)



Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Belmore (1 Hayes Ind - defec)
- ▶ Charville (1 Con)
- ▶ Colham and Cowley (3 Con)
- ▶ Hayes Town (2 Hayes Ind - defec)
- ▶ Uxbridge (2 Con)
- ▶ West Drayton (1 Hayes Ind - defec)
- ▶ Yeading (1 Con, 1 Hayes Ind - both defecs)
- ▶ Yiewsley (1 Grn - defec)



Reform UK hopefuls

- ▶ Charville (1 Con, 1 Lab)
- ▶ Harefield Village (2 Con)
- ▶ Heathrow Villages (2 Lab)
- ▶ Hillingdon West (2 Con)
- ▶ South Ruislip (3 Con)
- ▶ Uxbridge (2 Con, 1 Lab)
- ▶ West Drayton (3 Lab)
- ▶ Yiewsley (1 Lab, 1 Grn)



Hayes Independents hopefuls

- ▶ Belmore (3 Lab)
- ▶ Hayes Town (1 Lab)
- ▶ Pinkwell (3 Lab)
- ▶ Wood End (3 Lab)
- ▶ Yeading (1 Con)



A vote strong but insufficient for Reform to win here, coming mostly from former Conservative voters, could tip Colham and Cowley to Labour for the first time since the mid 1990s, but it's a little unlikely given Labour will shed votes too.

The Conservatives should be able to rely on **Ickenham and South Harefield, Northwood and Northwood Hills, Ruislip and Ruislip Manor**, and **Eastcote** despite a Reform challenge. These wards contain 15 seats and while Reform will receive a hefty chunk of votes, these are very safe Conservative wards.

Without a splintered field of candidates taking sizeable chunks of votes away from the Tories and enabling Reform to win with relatively small vote shares, they will struggle in the very affluent north. The Conservatives polled nearly 17,000 more votes than Reform in the Ruislip-Northwood constituency in 2024. Yes, that was before the big uptick in Reform support but a measure nonetheless of how strong the Tories still are in patches of London.

There could be a peculiar electoral map of Hillingdon after May 7th. Labour could be left with just six seats or fewer depending on how well Hayes Independents do hoovering up protest votes against the government.

Reform may get clusters of seats: **Yiewsley and West Drayton**; maybe **Uxbridge and Hillingdon West; Harefield Village and South Ruislip**. If Reform do that well (or better): and those wards are worth up to 15 seats, then the Conservatives will lose control of Hillingdon. But they'll remain - by some margin - the largest party and an essential component of whichever administration emerges. Reform will need to crack the Northwood and Ruislip wards to just about get a majority of seats.

What's highly probable is that, despite coming very close in 2022, Labour will not be gaining Hillingdon in May.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	Grn	Res	I
May 22 council election result	30	23			
Jun 22 suspension: Labina Basit (Belmore) Lab to Ind	30	22			1
May 24 by-election: Hillingdon East - Con hold	30	22			1
Jun 25 defection: Labina Basit (Belmore) Ind to Hayes Ind	30	22		1	
Jun 25 defection: Peter Curling (Hayes Town) Lab to Hayes Ind	30	21		2	
Jun 25 defection: Janet Gardener (Hayes Town) Lab to Hayes Ind	30	20		3	
Sep 25 defection: Scott Farley (West Drayton) Lab to Ind	30	19		3	1
Oct 25 defection: Jas Dhot (Yeading) Lab to Con	31	18		3	1
Oct 25 defection: Rita Judge (Yeading) Lab to Hayes Ind	31	17		4	1
Oct 25 defection: Scott Farley (West Drayton) Ind to Hayes Ind	31	17		5	
Oct 25 suspension: Naser Abby (Yiewsley) Lab to Ind	31	16		5	1
Feb 26 vacancy: Keith Burrows (Uxbridge) Con, resigned	30	16		5	1
Mar 26 defection: Naser Abby (Yiewsley) Ind to Grn	31	16	1	5	

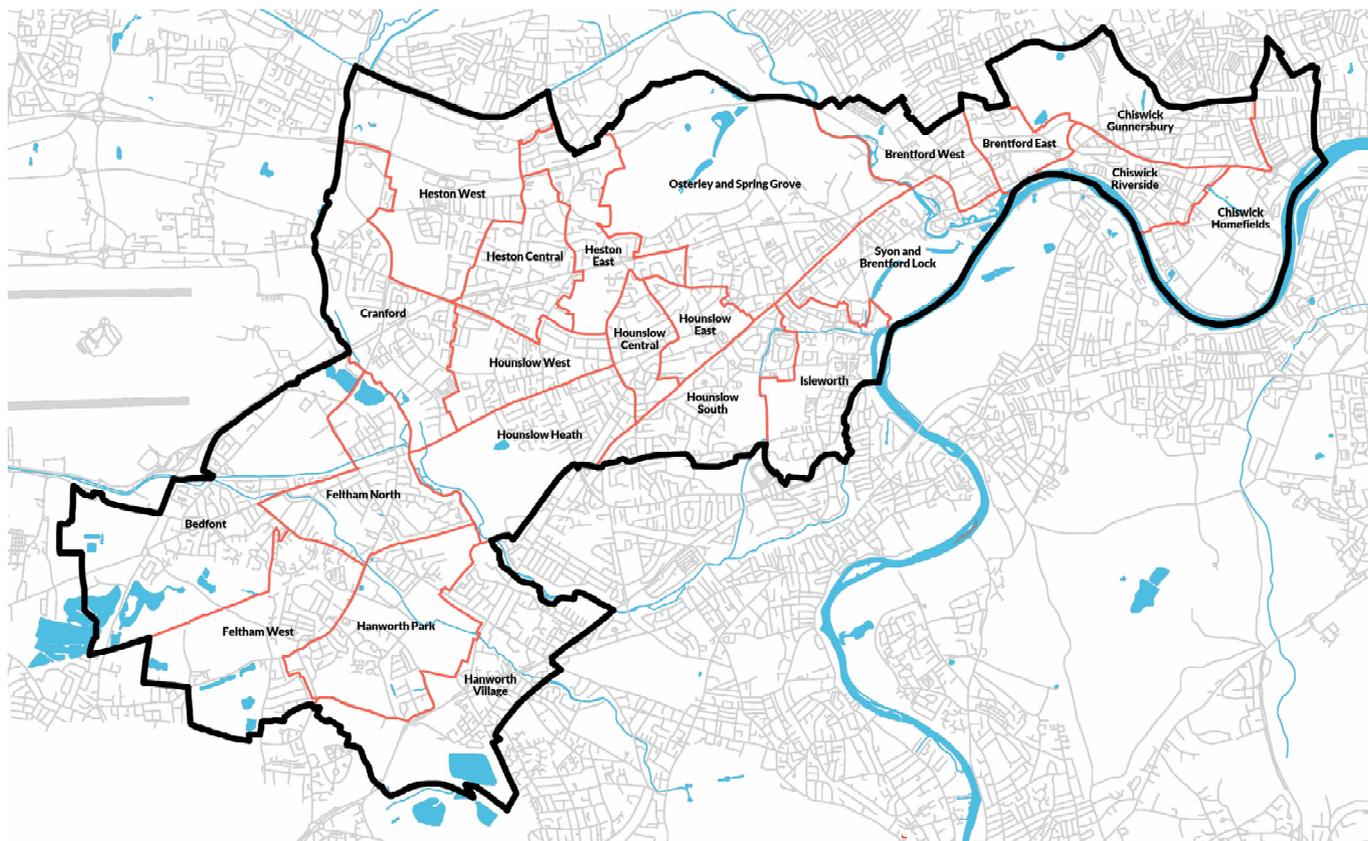
HOUNSLOW

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The West London borough of Hounslow is as wide a borough as Hillingdon is tall. From Chiswick Eyot in the east you can almost - not quite - see Hammersmith Bridge. Were you to exit Hounslow in the west, along London Road, you'd find yourself beyond Greater London, among the vast reservoirs around Stanwell.

The ten miles between Chiswick and Feltham cover several, quite different, neighbourhoods- most of which are relatively poor, ethnically diverse and normally strongly inclined towards the Labour Party.

Hounslow is in the same category of London boroughs as Greenwich and Waltham Forest: boroughs that rarely make the headlines about loopy policies or confronting the government. They just tend to get on with administering the services they are meant to.

Hounslow, though, has looked a stronger Labour borough than it is. In part this is because the party has had a vice-like grip on the central block of wards in Hounslow town and Heston, while the Conservatives stack up votes in Chiswick.

But in years of deep political unpopularity for Labour, like 1968 and 2006, the voters can turf the party out.

2026 could be another of those problematic years despite Labour winning a thumping majority of 42 seats at the last elections. They even managed to crack the last Conservative redoubt: Chiswick, winning a seat in Riverside ward (Strand-on-the-Green) for the first time since 1974.

Even in 2022 Labour didn't have everything all its own way. The Conservatives offset their Chiswick Riverside loss by gaining two seats at the other end of the borough: one in **Hanworth Village** on the edge of Twickenham; the other in **Feltham North** - on swings up to 9%.

	C	L	LD	O
2022	27.5	48.0	8.4	16.1
2018	28.0	52.7	9.0	10.3
2014	25.0	43.6	7.3	24.2
2010	31.2	34.6	15.7	18.4
2006	29.8	29.0	18.7	22.5
2002	29.7	37.9	12.9	19.6

Hounslow borough vote shares 2002-2022

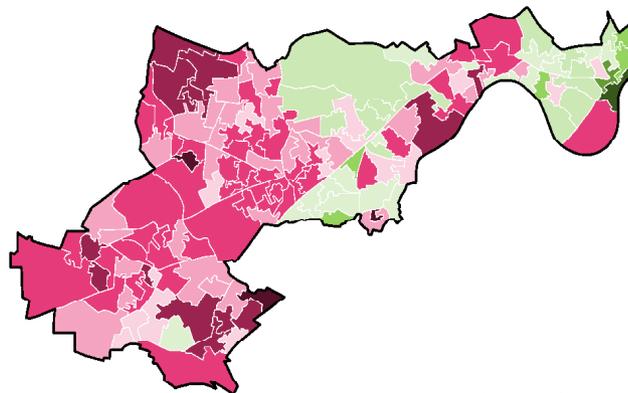
These are extremely different neighbourhoods to Chiswick and they epitomise the story of London in 2022. The Conservatives, weighed down by Brexit and Boris in affluent areas lost seats. More working class, less affluent and more ethnically diverse wards - typically safe for Labour, swung towards the Conservatives but didn't net them many seats.

Of the 13 wards in the west of the borough which cover the neighbourhoods of Hanworth, Feltham, Hounslow town and Heston ten swung markedly from Labour to Conservatives. 2022 was not quite so spectacular an election for Labour in Hounslow as the headline figures suggest.

The 2022 to 2026 term started off following the pattern of previous, unexciting administrations but Labour's skies soon started clouding over.

Guide to the 2026 council elections: London

It started off with a new council leader, Shantanu Rajawat (Heston West) after Steve Curran stood down from the council in 2022 following a cancer diagnosis. The first of ten changes of allegiance went in their favour when the Tory councillor who had gained their seat in **Feltham North**, Kuldeep Tak, switched sides without any public reason.



Hounslow index of deprivation map

Hounslow borough has four distinct electoral clusters. There are the five wards west of the river Crane covering Feltham, Hanworth and Bedfont. There are eight central wards that cover Hounslow and Heston and this is where the bulk of the borough's Asian (principally Hindu and Sikh) population live.

Then there are five wards covering Brentford, Isleworth and Osterley (within which I've included Hounslow South which is demographically quite different from the area west of the railway). This is where much of the new housing development has been concentrated. And there are the three Chiswick wards that vote differently from the rest of the borough.

The first of those clusters: Feltham, Hanworth and Bedfont, elects fourteen councillors, twelve of whom were Labour in 2022. But rewind to 2006 and Labour could only return four from this end of the borough: after Chiswick it is the least secure part of Hounslow for Labour.

Back in 2006 **Feltham North** looked like a safe Conservative enclave with former councillor Iain Bowen winning over 60%

- though he had a big personal vote. What is now **Hanworth Village** was reliably Lib Dem - the political tendencies of Twickenham spilling across the borough boundary.

Feltham, associated with its notorious Young Offender Institution (named in a 2024 inspection report as having the highest levels of prisoner violence in England and Wales) is actually in **Bedfont** ward. It's also white, working class and politically right-wing.

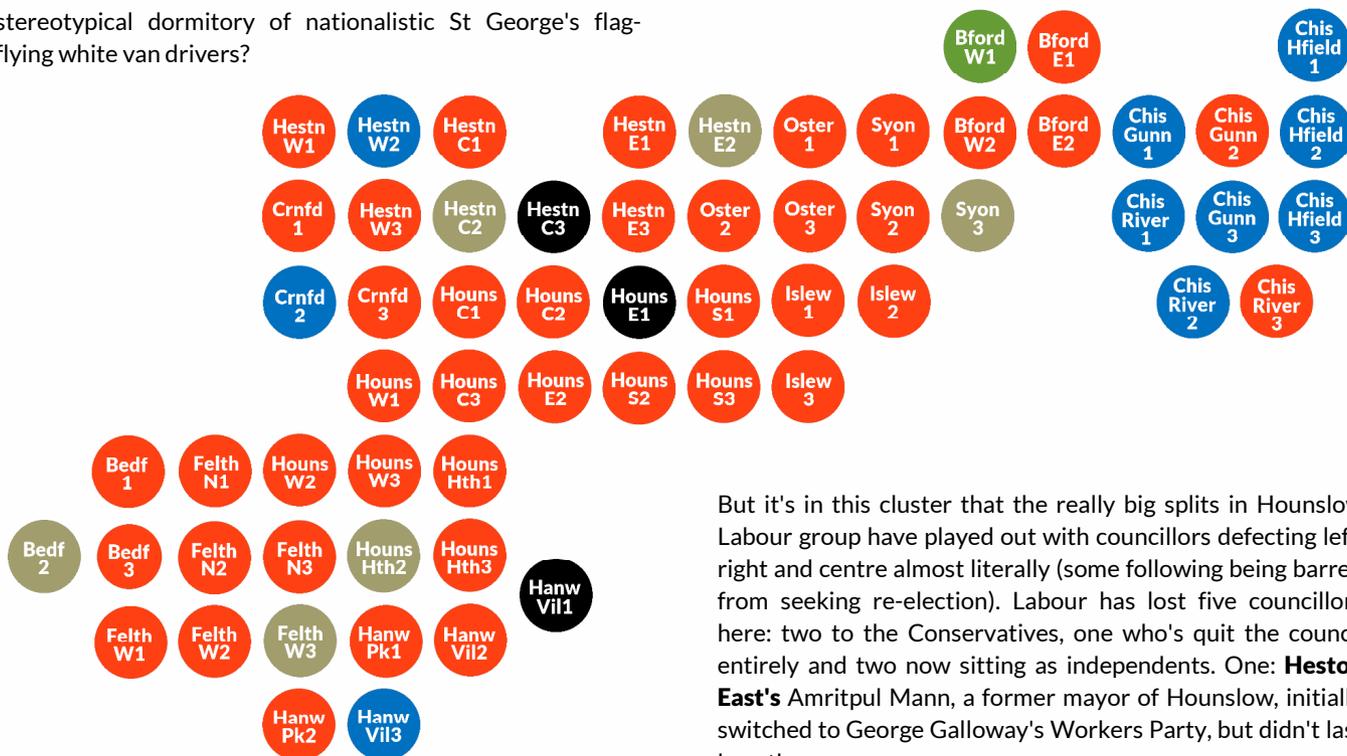
So there is some expectation that the threat to Labour in Feltham and Hanworth - and potentially their salvation if the right of centre vote is evenly split - will come from Reform this year. But how Feltham was in the 1980s isn't an accurate portrait of Feltham in 2026.

Would the Conservatives really have gained a seat in **Feltham North** with an Asian candidate if this was a stereotypical dormitory of nationalistic St George's flag-flying white van drivers?

Eleven of the councillors in this area are Asian right now - including all nine representing Feltham and Bedfont wards. While the Asian population is nowhere close to what it is in the centre of the borough, it's hardly non-existent. Similarly the white British population is nowhere close to a majority: 42% in **Hanworth Park** is the highest.

Reform will still be confident of winning some seats here - but so too will the Conservatives. And whichever of those two triumph, it's likely to be at least as brutal for Labour as 2006.

Heston and Hounslow should be Labour's bedrock. They won all twenty seats comfortably in 2022, including the new one created because of population growth: Hounslow East. **Cranford, Heston West, Hounslow Heath** and **Hounslow West** always vie to be the very safest for Labour.



But it's in this cluster that the really big splits in Hounslow Labour group have played out with councillors defecting left, right and centre almost literally (some following being barred from seeking re-election). Labour has lost five councillors here: two to the Conservatives, one who's quit the council entirely and two now sitting as independents. One: **Heston East's** Amritpul Mann, a former mayor of Hounslow, initially switched to George Galloway's Workers Party, but didn't last long there.

What happens in May depends whether these are merely behind closed doors fallings out within the group or if disillusion with Labour has distilled down to grassroots.

Never forget that the ethnic origin of the vast majority in these wards is not Bangladeshi or Pakistani (so mostly Muslim) as it is in East London but Indian (mostly Hindu and Sikh). While there may be disaffection - deeply felt - with Labour it's not entirely for the same reasons or of the same disdain as is playing out in heavily Muslim areas.

Nonetheless, Labour has its problems with this demographic too. The marked swings against them in 2022 are evidence.

Labour was routed in Leicester in 2023 in both Muslim and Hindu wards and then lost two of the city's three constituencies in the 2024 general election. They also lost control of Slough (in no small part because of the council's financial problems).

Most saliently there is significantly Asian Harrow, which elected a Conservative council in 2022 and gave Bob Blackman MP an increased majority at the general election.

Some of this alienation is because of a surge in Hindu nationalism inspired, to an extent, by the populist Indian government of Narendra Modi. But let's not be so condescending as to ascribe the voting behaviour of British voters to the policies of a government thousands of miles away. It's as much to do with the same alienation as many others have with Labour and an even greater sense that the party has taken their votes for granted for far too long.

Hounslow is not Harrow: it's a good deal less affluent and a lot less suburban. But Harrow (and Wembley in Brent, to a lesser extent) hasn't turned Conservative because it's suddenly become affluent. What has happened there can happen here. But will it?

Again, it depends if the ructions in Labour herald a deep disaffection with Labour. The only electoral evidence we have

is from council by-elections, the most recent of which was **Cranford** in August last year.

Cranford swung 11.5% to the Conservatives in this by-election with Reform polling 17.3%. The combined Conservative plus Reform total was 133 votes larger than Labour's support. And this in a ward that gave Labour over two thirds of the vote in 2018.

By that measure the rupture does seem to be larger than just a falling out of councillors. But for Labour to seriously be hurt, the swings need to be a fair bit larger than that in Cranford. And every Reform vote that comes from 2022 Conservatives might save a seat for Labour.

Continuing to travel east, there are 16 seats covering Brentford, Isleworth and Osterley. This is the opportunity to talk about the prospects of parties and candidates perceived as to the left of Labour. The Conservatives used to be strong here: Spring Grove ward was always Conservative until it was redrawn in 2002, Hounslow South is the posh end of Hounslow, and Syon was usually fairly closely fought.

The last time Labour fared badly in Hounslow: 2006, they could only win two seats here - both of them in Brentford ward which split with a Lib Dem. The Isleworth Community Party of the iconoclastic Phil Andrews, a former National Front member, won both **Isleworth** and **Syon** wards with six seats; while the Conservatives took **Hounslow South** and **Osterley and Spring Grove**.

But times have changed: Conservative chances have been knocked sideways. They were more than 600 votes adrift in Hounslow South and over 500 short in Osterley last time.

In large part it's because this is where the fairly limited population of university-educated, relatively affluent, anti-Brexit professionals is concentrated: the group still most willing to give the benefit of the doubt to Labour.

Ward	Housing			Religion		Ethnic	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	Hindu & Sikh	Muslim	White Brit	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Bedfont	44.1	27.0	23.3	15.1	15.9	37.0	31.7	68.3	29.7	23.1
Brentford East	24.3	42.9	28.2	5.7	20.2	31.2	53.4	46.6	46.1	17.4
Brentford West	47.5	20.4	28.6	3.6	12.8	43.9	58.7	41.3	49.8	13.6
Chiswick Gunnersbury	46.2	14.6	38.4	3.0	9.9	42.6	71.3	28.7	60.9	9.9
Chiswick Homefields	53.5	15.1	30.1	2.2	6.1	50.7	73.4	26.6	62.0	9.5
Chiswick Riverside	52.4	15.0	31.9	2.9	7.3	50.5	73.6	26.4	62.9	8.6
Cranford	36.4	27.7	34.6	27.9	20.5	12.8	29.3	70.7	31.0	24.4
Feltham North	52.3	23.6	22.1	16.2	14.4	32.9	32.8	67.2	30.6	26.0
Feltham West	45.0	25.8	25.7	13.0	12.5	38.9	38.1	61.9	34.2	20.2
Hanworth Park	53.4	20.4	24.1	10.5	11.0	42.1	38.0	62.0	34.7	19.9
Hanworth Village	47.2	32.2	18.0	8.5	18.1	41.4	34.1	65.9	29.9	23.2
Heston Central	49.1	18.0	30.8	34.6	22.3	9.7	37.0	63.0	36.5	21.2
Heston East	48.1	15.0	34.6	40.6	20.9	9.6	40.6	59.4	39.1	20.9
Heston West	47.0	23.9	27.2	42.1	25.3	9.6	34.4	65.6	32.0	25.2
Hounslow Central	28.0	12.6	56.3	27.0	18.8	9.0	40.7	59.3	46.1	17.7
Hounslow East	35.5	23.5	35.8	22.4	22.1	15.3	39.5	60.5	42.3	19.4
Hounslow Heath	38.3	18.3	41.6	23.4	25.3	13.0	34.7	65.3	36.5	20.8
Hounslow South	63.8	10.3	24.9	18.3	13.3	34.3	47.6	52.4	41.7	17.4
Hounslow West	36.7	18.4	42.2	27.8	17.6	9.8	33.1	66.9	36.1	21.4
Isleworth	47.5	27.2	24.1	6.5	16.0	42.3	55.7	44.3	46.3	15.4
Osterley and Spring Grove	56.4	6.7	34.9	22.5	15.9	23.8	56.7	43.3	52.9	12.8
Syon and Brentford Lock	42.0	24.0	29.4	7.3	15.9	37.8	58.7	41.3	49.5	15.0

If anything they are seeking a more radical alternative to Labour. This could be reflected both in the by-election success of former Labour councillor Theo Deniston, who regained a seat in **Syon and Brentford Lock** in March last year, and the switch to the Greens of long-time Brentford councillor Guy Lambert.

The Greens were runners-up in **Brentford West** in 2022, polling a healthy 29%, while Deniston (who also contested a by-election here prior to winning in his "own" ward of Syon later) plus the Greens polled 42% combined there in 2024. That one is clearly in jeopardy.

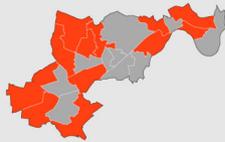
Deniston will have a strong chance as an incumbent in Syon and Brentford Lock, while Reform did pretty well in a **Brentford East** by-election in March 2025, polling 22%. Brentford East is the more working class side of the neighbourhood including the Brentford Towers estate in Green Dragon Lane. Each of those towers is named after engineers who worked at the Brentford pumping station, now the Museum of Water and Steam, near Kew Bridge.

The Conservatives may still have enough residual strength to win seats in Osterley and Spring Grove but they will need every non-Labour vote to line up behind them there.

possible target wards

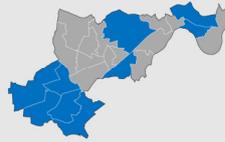
Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Bedford (1 Ind - def)
- ▶ Brentford West (1 Grn - def)
- ▶ Chiswick Gunnersbury (2 Con)
- ▶ Chiswick Riverside (2 Con)
- ▶ Cranford (1 Con - def)
- ▶ Feltham West (1 Ind - def)
- ▶ Hanworth Village (1 Con)
- ▶ Heston Central (1 Ind - def)
- ▶ Heston East (1 Ind - def)
- ▶ Heston West (1 Con - def)
- ▶ Hounslow Heath (1 Ind - def)
- ▶ Hanworth Village (1 Con)
- ▶ Syon and Brentford Lock (1 Ind)



Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Bedfont (3 Lab)
- ▶ Chiswick Gunnersbury (1 Lab - def)
- ▶ Chiswick Riverside (1 Lab)
- ▶ Feltham North (3 Lab, 1 def)
- ▶ Feltham West (3 Lab)
- ▶ Hanworth Park (2 Lab)
- ▶ Hanworth Village (2 Lab)
- ▶ Hounslow South (3 Lab)
- ▶ Osterley and Spring Grove (3 Lab)



Green hopeful

- ▶ Brentford West (2 Lab)



Reform UK hopefuls

- ▶ Bedfont (3 Lab)
- ▶ Feltham North (3 Lab)
- ▶ Feltham West (3 Lab)
- ▶ Hanworth Park (2 Lab)



Independent hopefuls

- ▶ Isleworth (3 Lab)
- ▶ Syon and Brentford Lock (2 Lab)



Hounslow South is a harder ask given they barely polled 20% in 2022. But Reform is unlikely to factor here.

Finally there are the nine Chiswick seats. Labour has done what it can to save their one councillor here by making Amy Croft mayor for this final year. That is a mixed blessing: she'll get the publicity of being out and about and regularly in the news opening things but her politically neutral position may hamper her ability to get out and campaign for herself in **Chiswick Riverside**.

The musical chairs we've seen in the council are manifested by the Labour-to-Conservative defector from Cranford, Vickram Grewal, moving to contest the **Chiswick Gunnersbury** seat that Conservative to Labour defector Ranjit Gill opened up.

Although named "Gunnersbury" and containing the park, this ward is basically the successor to the old Turnham Green. Nonetheless, it's no more secure for the Tories than Riverside has become: Gill won by just twenty three votes last time. But Labour's decline should be more than enough to secure all nine Chiswick seats for the Conservatives this year. If it isn't then Labour will hold Hounslow comfortably.

In 2006 it took a diverse coalition of parties to oust Labour: 23 Conservatives, 5 Lib Dems, 6 Isleworth Community, and 2 Independent Alliance. Few suggest that the Tories are strong enough to win Hounslow alone. But a 2006-style mash-up is just about a credible outcome, albeit with different players to those on the scene two decades ago.

The Conservatives "only" need a 10.6% swing from 2022 to win - the sort of swing they pulled off in the Cranford by-election. So don't be completely shocked if Hounslow falls from Labour's grip this year.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	G	O
May 22 council election result	10	52			
Mar 23 by-election: Heston West - Lab hold	10	52			
Mar 24 defection: Amritpal Mann (Heston East) - Lab to WP	10	51			1
May 24 defection: Kuldeep Tak (Feltham North) - Con to Lab	9	52			1
May 24 by-election: Brentford West - Lab hold	9	52			1
Jul 24 by-election: Hanworth Village - Lab hold	9	52			1
Nov 24 suspension: Guy Lambert (Brentford West) - Lab to Ind	9	51			2
Mar 25 by-election: Brentford East - Lab hold	9	51			2
Mar 25 by-election: Syon & Brentford Lock - Ind gain	9	50			3
May 25 defection: Ranjit Gill (Chiswick Gunnersbury) - Con to Lab	8	51			3
Aug 25 by-election: Cranford - Lab hold	8	51			3
Nov 25 defection: Vickram Grewal (Cranford) - Lab to Con	9	50			3
Nov 25 defection: Harleen Atwal Hear (Heston Central) - Lab to Ind	9	49			4
Nov 25 vacancy: Riaz Gull (Heston Central) - Lab resigned	9	48			4
Nov 25 defection: Afzaal Kiani (Hounslow Heath) - Lab to Ind	9	47			5
Nov 25 defection: Raghwinder Sidhu (Bedfont) - Lab to Ind	9	46			6
Nov 25 defection: Amritpal Mann (Heston East) - WP to Ind	9	46			6
Nov 25 defection: Guy Lambert (Brentford West) - Ind to Grn	9	46		1	5
Dec 25 suspension: Hina Mir (Feltham West) - Lab to Ind	9	45		1	6
Dec 25 defection: Karamat Malik (Heston West) - Lab to Con	10	44		1	6
Dec 25 vacancy: Richard Foote (Hanworth Village) - Lab, deceased	10	43		1	6
Mar 26 vacancy: Junue Miah (Hounslow East) - Lab, deceased	10	42		1	6

ISLINGTON

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Islington is another of those boroughs where Labour's position initially looks - and should be - impregnable.

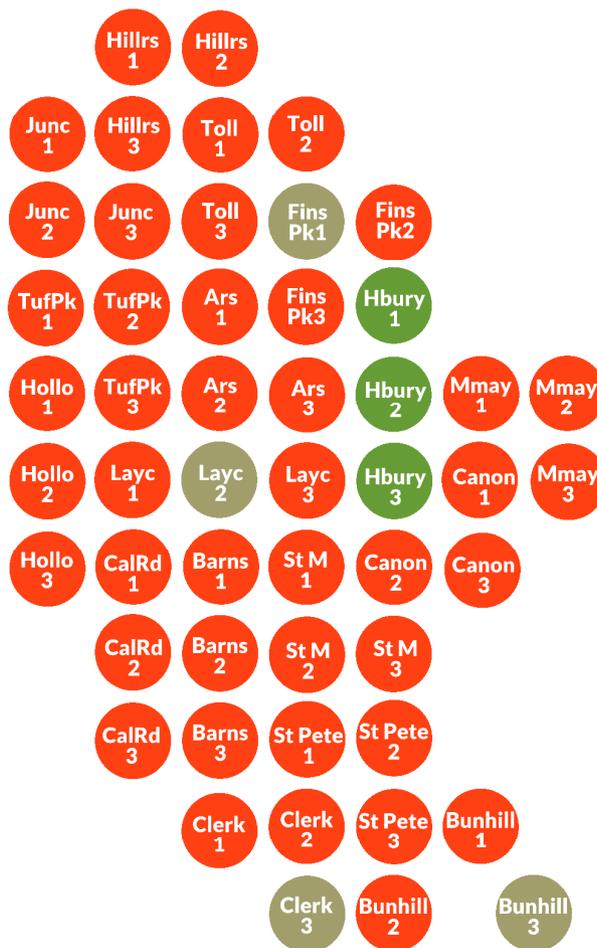
Labour won all but three seats in 2022 with 52% of the vote borough-wide. The Greens came second with 23%, winning all three seats in **Highbury** where they'd won one seat in 2014 and 2018. The Lib Dems polled 13%, winning none for the third election in a row and the Conservatives 11%. They haven't been represented on the council this millennium. Only two other wards were close: **Tufnell Park**, which the Greens almost won, and **St Mary's and St James'** - where the Lib Dems were runners-up.

A fair amount had happened since 2022 - and not just Labour moving from opposition to government. While Labour was winning nationally they were losing Islington North. Former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, expelled from the party by Keir Starmer, won re-election as an independent. Models of how individual wards voted in the general election suggest Corbyn won every ward within his seat - which is certainly possible as most of them aren't so different from each other.

That factor, incidentally, is why Labour has won landslides multiple times, but also why the Conservatives did in 1968 (their only election victory here) and the Lib Dems did in 2002. But it's also a significant complicating factor in previewing how Islington will go in 2026.

Since 2024, Corbyn has founded Your Party, which I've yet to discuss in any detail elsewhere - not least because charting its shenanigans would consume too many pages, but also because it now appears that this party may not contest the local elections this year.

This would be a slightly odd approach for the latest party attempting to break the mould of British politics, but then the hard left has always believed that extra-parliamentary (and



presumably extra-municipal) action is at least as important as winning votes. Anyhow, that doesn't mean the threat to Labour from this quarter is diminished because Your Party and fellow travellers plan to support so-called Community Independents or Independent Socialists.

We don't yet know how many will stand, where they'll stand, or whether they'll all stand on a joint manifesto. Will they also work with the Greens (as they appear to be planning to in other boroughs) or stand against them? That's why previewing this borough isn't straightforward.

We can't just take Corbyn's 49% of the vote in 2024 as a baseline because he has been an active constituency MP for 41 years. We do, however, have the results of three Islington council by-elections: all in Corbyn's constituency. Two were in Hillrise ward: the most northerly ward covering Archway.

The first Hillrise by-election in August 2024 resulted in Labour's vote crashing by 21 percentage points. All that fell went to an independent. Even with that huge collapse, Labour won by 429 - a big margin on a low summer turnout, which shows how entrenched they are here.

The other was in **Junction** and here Labour dropped 25 points, again with an independent coming second from nowhere. And again, despite that tanking in the vote, Labour won pretty comfortably.

The reason there were two **Hillrise** by-elections was that the Labour winner of the first was Ollie Steadman. Unfortunately for him, for Labour and for his alleged victims, The next month Cllr Steadman was arrested for that bizarre episode: the Westminster Honeytrap scandal that happened at the start of 2024.

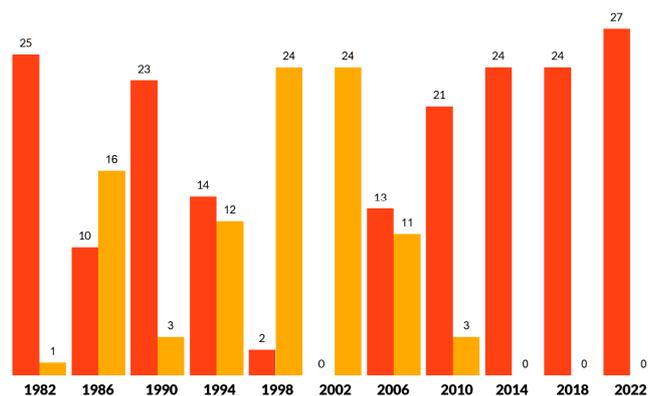
This was when then Conservative MP William Wragg was seduced over a dating app into sending incriminating selfies of himself and then blackmailed into handing over the personal numbers of several MPs and their researchers. Steadman's time as a councillor lasted about six weeks. His trial is ongoing.

Returning to the state of affairs in Islington, this emergence of independents poses something of a quandary for the Green Party. The only seats they hold in the borough are in Islington North. They had prospects before the Jeremy Corbyn saga elsewhere in Islington North.

Community independents could be a road-block to their chances - indeed, they could ensure Labour wins with massively reduced support by splitting the anti-Labour vote.

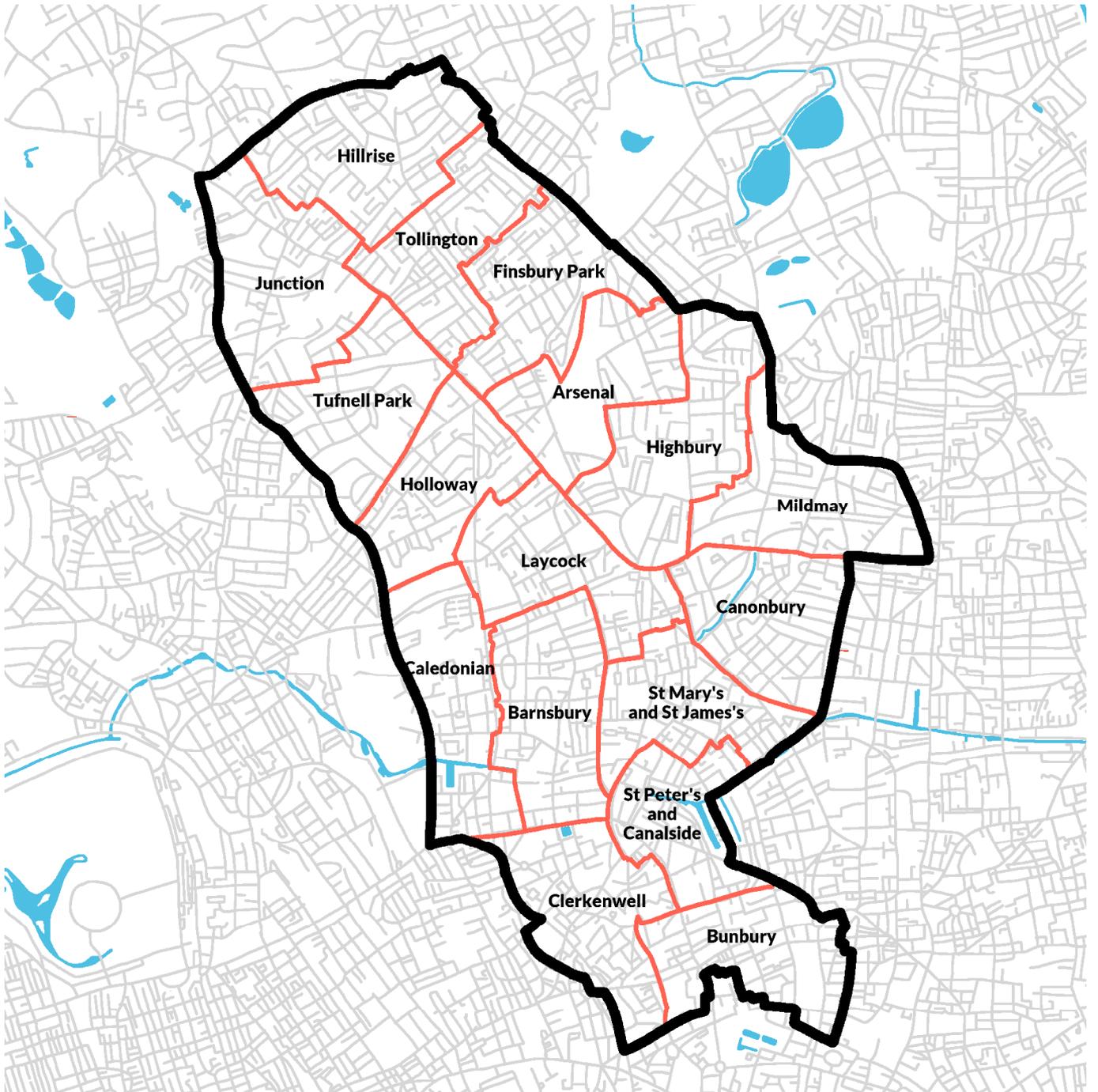
We have no electoral information about what's happening in Islington South - there have been no by-elections. South has been the more volatile end of the borough - it has been the (very much) better constituency for the Lib Dems, which they've come close to winning three times. Whenever Lib Dems have polled well in Islington, most of their seats - and their strongholds - have been in the south.

The rise and fall of the Lib Dems in Islington South



The Liberal Democrats and SDP Liberal Alliance have quite a history in Islington. It all began with the formation of the SDP in 1981. In those days, there were three Islington seats: North, Central and South.

All three Labour MPs defected to the SDP - all of them on track to be deselected by their left-wing constituency parties. They were joined in defecting by enough Labour councillors for the SDP to take control of the council just prior to the 1982 council elections. Islington voters did not take to this well: at the elections Labour defeated every Alliance councillor bar one, in Clerkenwell.



Parliamentary boundary changes reduced the constituencies to the two we have today, give or take. Three into two doesn't go, and the MPs for North and Central both went for the SDP nomination for the enlarged Islington North. Islington Central's John Grant won the SDP nomination but Islington North's Michael O'Halloran stood against him in the 1983 general election as an Independent Labour candidate. Both lost to Jeremy Corbyn in his first election. Grant got 9,344 votes, O'Halloran 4,091 - even combined, their votes wouldn't have beaten Labour.

Things were less fractious for the Alliance in Islington South and Finsbury: the SDP MP Gerry Cunningham stood unchallenged, up against an openly gay (which in those days was controversial and unprecedented) Islington Labour councillor, Chris Smith. Smith was regarded as left wing and his sexuality was an electoral issue. So too was Labour's unpopularity, locally and nationally. Smith squeaked in by just 363 votes.

This new, competitive, status for Islington was confirmed in the 1986 council elections when the Alliance won sixteen seats (all in the south) to Labour's ten. Hence, Smith did well to hold his constituency in 1987 by 805 votes, Cunningham again standing for the Alliance.

Islington joined the list of "loony left" London boroughs with its performative "anti-nuclear zone" and, even more newsworthy, placing a bust of Lenin in the town hall in solidarity with the Soviet Union. Margaret Hodge, who went on quite a political journey to the new Labour and anti-Corbyn end of the spectrum, was council leader. Steven Twigg - who famously ousted Michael Portillo becoming MP for Enfield Southgate - was a deputy leader towards the end of this period.

Islington avoided the endless excesses of Lambeth, Haringey, Brent and Liverpool but still gave its electorate plenty of reasons not to vote for them.

Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	White Brit	Black	Muslim	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Arsenal	29.2	31.6	34.8	40.5	11.8	12.1	75.4	24.6	64.5	10.9
Barnsbury	30.3	35.1	33.3	48.5	7.1	7.1	74.6	25.4	61.6	12.5
Bunhill	20.8	44.4	32.9	34.9	11.5	11.2	69.9	30.1	55.4	12.5
Caledonian	16.8	48.1	33.2	29.9	13.7	16.7	61.5	38.5	49.0	16.4
Canonbury	27.1	44.7	26.5	44.3	10.6	9.0	70.9	29.1	55.8	14.9
Clerkenwell	25.8	42.5	30.5	40.4	9.6	10.5	70.9	29.1	54.7	12.1
Finsbury Park	20.4	41.3	36.9	29.8	17.8	21.5	61.5	38.5	50.6	15.7
Highbury	38.5	29.4	30.6	47.1	9.8	9.6	75.9	24.1	65.3	10.7
Hillrise	30.4	44.4	23.7	40.4	13.5	12.1	63.6	36.4	52.4	15.5
Holloway	22.2	43.7	31.0	34.7	12.2	13.0	64.4	35.6	54.3	13.6
Junction	26.9	40.8	31.1	40.9	11.9	10.0	67.4	32.6	56.7	13.9
Laycock	23.0	47.0	27.8	40.3	11.6	12.7	66.3	33.7	51.5	16.7
Mildmay	26.4	43.2	29.2	41.1	13.8	11.4	68.8	31.2	56.7	14.2
St Mary's and St James'	27.2	38.9	32.5	44.3	8.2	8.6	74.7	25.3	61.2	12.5
St Peter's and Canalside	23.4	40.8	31.8	38.5	10.6	14.0	72.7	27.3	57.7	13.5
Tollington	29.4	33.9	34.8	37.9	13.2	13.0	68.1	31.9	57.8	14.0
Tufnell Park	32.4	36.6	29.6	42.4	10.4	9.0	69.0	31.0	57.5	13.6

The newly formed Liberal Democrats lacked the potency, at least initially, of the Alliance. In 1990 they again ended up with just one ward (this time St Peter's) and in 1992, Smith won by 10,652. The Conservatives came second.

But this restoration of Labour supremacy proved transitory, at least at council level. The Lib Dems began a surge: 12 councillors in 1994, 26 in 1998 and a landslide 38 in 2002. In the 2005 general election, Emily Thornberry's first time as the Labour candidate for Islington South, her majority was again back down to three figures: 484.

This was mostly down to the deeply unpopular Iraq War, with Thornberry scathing about its justification and legitimacy. But the Lib Dems had a more credible line given they'd voted against the invasion in parliament. It was as though the 1980s had returned.

This really was the peak of Liberal Democracy in Islington. In 2006, despite these elections being pretty dreadful for Labour across most of London, they regained 14 seats. The Lib Dems won 24, Labour 23 and 1 Green was elected in then Highbury West - now **Arsenal** - ward. The Lib Dems kept control by the mayor's casting vote.

In 2010 Labour comfortably regained control of Islington (with the Green councillor also defeated) and in 2014 the Lib Dems lost all their seats - they've never since held any council seats. But the Greens regained a seat, this time in Highbury East - the current **Highbury** ward, and they've held that seat in the two subsequent elections, winning the other two in that ward in 2022.

So: 48 Labour councillors elected in 2022 against 3 Greens. 26 seats are needed for a majority in Islington.

Let's assume that there is sufficient an understanding between Greens and Corbyn-backed independents in the borough's north so that the Greens are given a clear run where they believe they can win: say in **Highbury, Arsenal, Mildmay** and **Tufnell Park** - their best chances. Let's say the Greens give the independents a free run in the other four Islington North wards (**Finsbury Park, Hillrise, Junction** and **Tollington**).

Possible target wards

Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Bunhill (1 Ind - defec)
- ▶ Clerkenwell (1 Ind - defec)
- ▶ Finsbury Park (1 Ind - defec)
- ▶ Highbury (3 Grn)
- ▶ Laycock (1 Ind - defec)



Community Independent hopefuls

- ▶ Arsenal (3 Lab)
- ▶ Finsbury Park (2 Lab)
- ▶ Hillrise (3 Lab)
- ▶ Junction (3 Lab)
- ▶ Mildmay (3 Lab)
- ▶ Tollington (3 Lab)
- ▶ Laycock (1 Ind - defec)



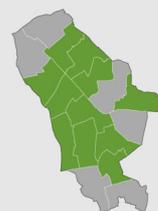
Lib Dem hopeful

- ▶ St Mary's and St James' (3 Lab)



Green hopefuls

- ▶ Arsenal (3 Lab)
- ▶ Barnsbury (3 Lab)
- ▶ Caledonian Road (3 Lab)
- ▶ Finsbury Park (3 Lab)
- ▶ Holloway (3 Lab)
- ▶ Laycock (3 Lab)
- ▶ Mildmay (3 Lab)
- ▶ St Mary's and St James' (3 Lab)
- ▶ St Peter's and Canalside (3 Lab)
- ▶ Tollington (3 Lab)
- ▶ Tufnell Park (3 Lab)



Conservative hopeful

- ▶ St Peter's and Canalside (3 Lab)



Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	G	O
May 22 council election result		48		3	
Mar 23 defection: Matt Nathan (Clerkenwell) Lab to Ind		47		3	1
Nov 23 defection: Asima Shaikh (Finsbury Park) Lab to Ind		46		3	2
May 24 by-election: Hillrise - Lab hold (Lab vote -2.1)		46		3	2
Jul 24 defection: Phil Graham (Bunhill) Lab to Ind		45		3	3
Jul 24 defection: Ilkay Cinko-Oner (Laycock) Lab to Ind		44		3	4
Aug 24 by-election: Hillrise - Lab hold (Lab vote -21.6)		46		3	2
Nov 24 by-election: Junction - Lab hold (Lab vote -25.2)		44		3	4

It is plausible that Labour could lose all their seats in this constituency even though their safest wards - wards they held onto even in 2002 - are here. **Finsbury Park** and **Tollington** are (or at least used to be) the safest of these.

But equally, Labour could hold most of them - maybe the vast majority, depending on three things. First, how much of Jeremy Corbyn's vote is transferable to other independents. Second, whether the Greens and independents divide the anti-Labour vote. Third, how visible and hard-working the Labour incumbents are.

The dynamics in Islington South differ because it lacks the independent presence. Islington South is also more affluent and, though a caricature of a far more complex borough, the epitome of progressive chattering-class north London, of cafe culture around the canals and of wide avenues of multi-million pound townhouses. There are big council estates here, and the ethnic balance across Islington is relatively even, it's just not huge. For a central London borough, Islington remains substantially white, though not majority white.

The Greens haven't carved out unchallenged second places anywhere in these southern wards: **Laycock** being their clearest but miles behind Labour. But if the Greens surge in London, this is where they will explode.

Wards like **Barnsbury**, **Laycock**, **Canonbury**, **St Peter's** and **Canalside** and, maybe, **Holloway** given its proximity to **Tufnell Park** - the best Green prospect in Islington. It may extend as far south as the old Finsbury borough wards: **Clerkenwell** and **Bunhill**, but they have a slightly less Green demographic - though went strongly Lib Dem when they were a factor in this constituency.

It's just about plausible to imagine the Lib Dems regaining **St Mary's** and **St James's** rather than the Greens leapfrogging them. It is barely credible to suggest the Conservatives can win **St Peter's** and **Canalside**, where they were 600 votes adrift in 2022. But then this is their only prospect in the borough - so they can focus whatever activist base they have left there. Reform won't steal too many votes that might otherwise go Conservative. And the result may be decided on a very low vote share.

Because Islington has proven itself to be a quite erratic borough with its Lib Dem surges and Labour resurgences, and the fracture on the left with the expulsion of Jeremy Corbyn has caused, this is a borough to be watched.

The odds of Labour's rupture feeding into a defeat are high. For four elections now, Islington has been electorally uninteresting - dull even, which is how Labour will have liked it. It won't be like that in 2026: it will be chaos and mayhem.

KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

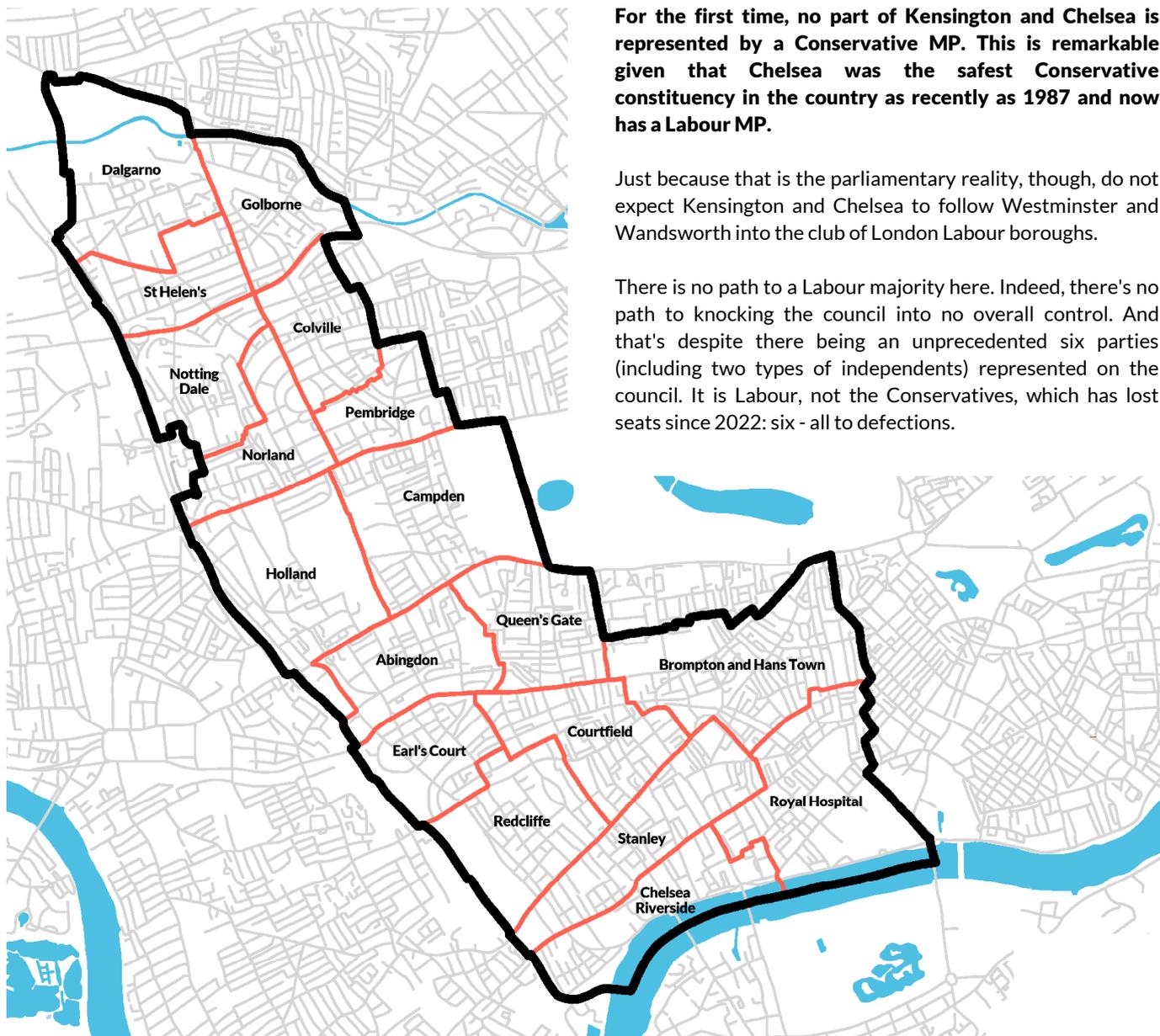
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For the first time, no part of Kensington and Chelsea is represented by a Conservative MP. This is remarkable given that Chelsea was the safest Conservative constituency in the country as recently as 1987 and now has a Labour MP.

Just because that is the parliamentary reality, though, do not expect Kensington and Chelsea to follow Westminster and Wandsworth into the club of London Labour boroughs.

There is no path to a Labour majority here. Indeed, there's no path to knocking the council into no overall control. And that's despite there being an unprecedented six parties (including two types of independents) represented on the council. It is Labour, not the Conservatives, which has lost seats since 2022: six - all to defections.

Although this borough is shrinking fast, and even though the Conservatives have been shedding votes rapidly, they still have a wall of phenomenally safe seats here. The Conservatives polled 69% in **Royal Hospital**, 67% in **Brompton & Hans Town**, 59% in **Abingdon** and 58% in **Stanley**, despite 2022 being their poorest elections ever.

Even though this is a recent phenomenon, the reason Labour can win parliamentary seats in Kensington and Chelsea but not come close to winning the council is that their vote is heavily concentrated in the borough's north. The three London wards with the largest amounts of public sector housing - all over two thirds of the total housing stock - are North Kensington's **Golborne**, **Notting Dale** and **Dalgarno**.

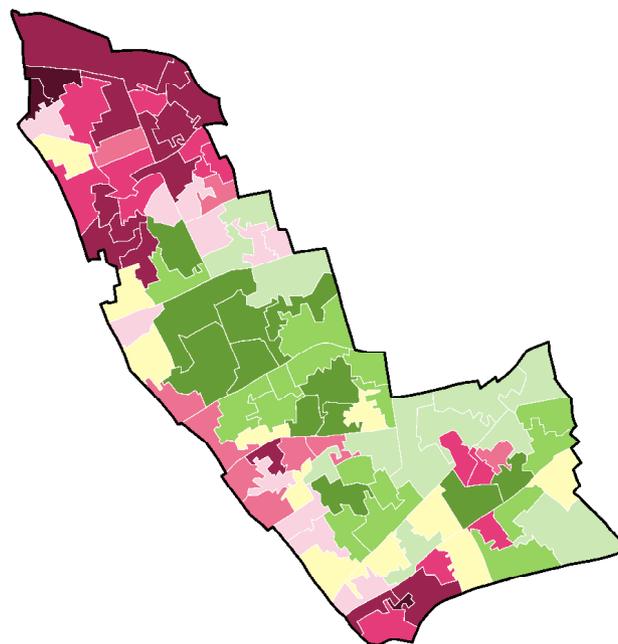
There is such affluence throughout the rest of the borough, and the housing is unaffordable to all but the wealthiest, that Labour's progress is blocked in a way it hasn't been in other wealthy areas like Hampstead, Muswell Hill or Streatham.

Could it also be that there are different tribes within the moneyed classes? If you are wealthy enough to be able to live anywhere, might cultural values help you choose? Those who made their fortunes in the media or public relations, or the very highest paid public sector workers - who vote to the left - might gravitate to Dartmouth Park, Hammersmith, Dulwich or Blackheath. Those whose money comes from the City - who still largely vote to the right despite Brexit - may choose South Kensington, or Chelsea or Fulham. That limits Labour's capacity to expand: it has the wrong type of rich person.

Kensington and Chelsea is the political equivalent of stagnant or frozen: nothing much changes.

For twenty years from 1982 to 2002 the Conservatives and Labour won the same number of seats election after election: 39 Tories, 15 Labour.

Even after the Grenfell Tower disaster of 2017, for which the Conservative council's perceived attitude to its tenants were excoriated nationally, the Tories lost just one council seat.



Kensington and Chelsea Index of Deprivation map. The darker green the more affluent; the darker purple the more deprived

This one loss wasn't even down to the tragedy, even though it came in the adjoining ward to Grenfell: St Helen's. This ward had split its representation in 2014, so the Conservative was already unlikely to survive Labour's stronger vote across London in 2018.

Two other factors make it very difficult for parties to establish roots in the Conservative swathe of the borough.

The first is a fairly high turnover of residents, especially in the slightly less Conservative parts like **Earl's Court**. The other is that lots of residents live behind controlled entry systems or concierges or massive security gates, making it difficult to communicate and campaign effectively.

The Liberal Democrats, after years of trying, gained a seat in Earl's Court in a by-election in 2010. This was after a long-

servicing, somewhat eccentric, somewhat irascible Tory councillor, Barry Phelps, became another victim of some thoroughly stupid comments on social media. He tried to weather the storm but eventually resigned. This was a strange period in Kensington and Chelsea: there were seven by-elections in barely two years.

Even in those propitious circumstances and despite mopping up most of the Labour vote in Earl's Court, Lib Dem Linda Wade only won by 109 votes. But, with dogged determination and hard work, she held her seat in 2014 (holding on by 22 votes) while the other two in her ward stayed Conservative. 2018: same split outcome, bigger Lib Dem majority - 317. In 2022, the Lib Dems could still only wrest one other Earl's Court seat off them. This time, it was the surviving Conservative who clung on, with a perilous majority of six votes. Five more than he needed, of course.

While the Liberal Democrats clearly struggle to bed down in such a churning, bustling, nebulous and hard to access ward like Earl's Court, their now twelve year presence may have had some impact in wider Chelsea and South Kensington.

The party posted some decent results in nearby wards: notably adjoining **Redcliffe** - where there was a 15% swing to the Lib Dems; adjoining **Courtfield** (the area around Gloucester Road tube station) - a 20% swing; **Queen's Gate** (the embassy quarter) - a 14% swing; and in a completely different part of the borough: **Pembridge** (Notting Hill Gate) - another 14% swing.

While specific wards have previously produced shock swings away from the Conservatives, never have a phalanx of safe wards moved so decisively away from the party and towards one specific party. But is there a better demonstration of just how safe these wards are that the Tories could withstand such massive swings and still not be all that close to losing?

Was this swing a one-off for a deeply unpopular Boris Johnson-led Conservative government? Or has there been a real shift from the Tories that the Lib Dems can capitalise on?

Not long before the council elections, planning permission was given for the vast, cross-borough Earl's Court former exhibition centre site which will become a new neighbourhood of around 4,000 homes. It's probably a decade before residents move in and a whole new ward will need to be drawn here. Even more electoral turbulence to come in this corner of South Kensington.

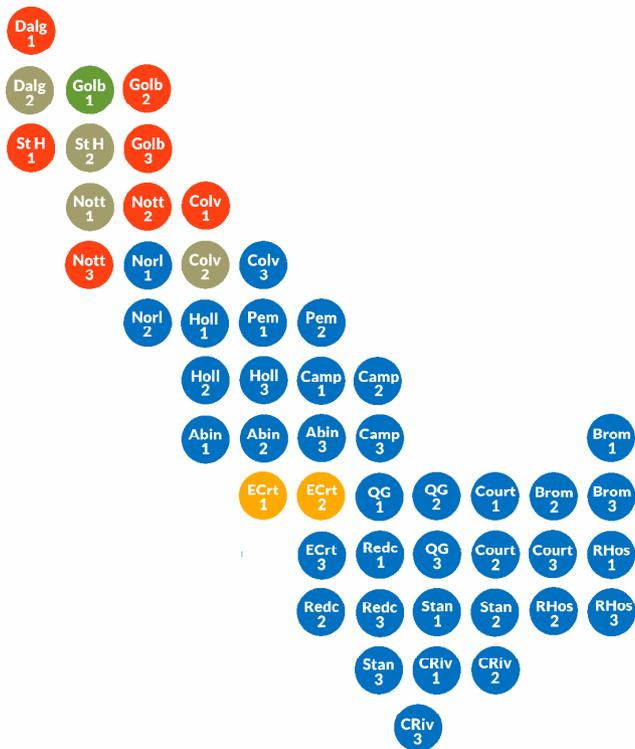
More immediately, can the Lib Dems turf out that final Conservative councillor or will the Tories, no longer taking flak from being in government, recover? It won't help that the second Lib Dem who won in 2022 is retiring.

If it has proved gruelling for the Lib Dems to win and then pin down Earl's Court, it is even harder for them to break into those other wards they advanced in four years ago. These wards are nothing like Earl's Court: they have more stable populations but, more importantly, they are significantly wealthier.

Earl's Court has always been the joker in the pack of Chelsea and South Kensington Conservative wards because it is far less affluent. There are more bedsits, hotels and hostels, and a large, high-turnover migrant population - it's the epicentre of the young, Australasian and South African community. It is densely packed and the mansions are far more likely to be subdivided into flats than stand as opulent town houses.

Part of the reason Earl's Court has always elected Tory councillors is that an (often larger) opposition vote has split fairly equally between Labour and the centre party. Even though the Lib Dems have found a way to win here, they haven't done it by squeezing Labour. In 2022 Labour polled 19%; in 2018 24%.

Neither party of the centre-left has ever persuaded supporters of the other to vote tactically - even when that would have meant Conservative defeat. If the Lib Dems can finally squeeze Labour in 2026, the Tories are toast. But Earl's Court is unique. The blue wall beyond is far more difficult to surmount.



On paper, **Pembridge** might look the easiest Lib Dem target. It's the ward they came closest to winning (9.6% Conservative majority) and it's less daunting to campaign in than the endless squares of massive mansions that characterise South Kensington. The Lib Dems barely tried in 2022 - they only stood one candidate yet still polled over 30% - double what they won here in 2018 (and there were no boundary changes here in 2022 so it's a like-for-like comparison).

Pembridge is quintessential Notting Hill: the posh southern end of Portobello Road, of quiet Mews and leafy avenues of town houses; more liberal and bohemian. There are a few challenges, though.

Since the chunk of Notting Hill that is Labour **Colville** was removed from Pembridge in 1974, no party has really

challenged the Conservatives here. Just because its conservatism is of a slightly different, maybe more liberal, hue than, say, **Queen's Gate's**, it isn't much softer. A larger problem, perhaps, is that **Pembridge** has always been in the Conservative-Labour marginal constituency of Kensington.

No-one would describe Kensington Labour Party as a campaigning behemoth, but the party has always had some presence in Pembridge - and, of course, represents it in parliament. Labour's problems here are confidence and competence. The Kensington party has never believed (with good reason) they can win Pembridge so have always been somewhat half-hearted working here when there are Labour strongholds in the north far easier to campaign in.

As with Earl's Court, Labour's vote didn't collapse in Pembridge: it held steady at 27%. The Labour seam in Notting Hill, while smaller, is as intrinsic as the Conservative strength. All the Lib Dem improvement came from the Conservatives and the disappearance of the Advance party, which stood in 2018 as a party of protest over Grenfell Tower. As with Earl's Court, if the Lib Dems can harness that Labour vote they can win - but they almost certainly can't, so they won't.

So, if the Lib Dems are to build further in Kensington and Chelsea they would probably do better focussing on **Courtfield** (13.7%) and **Redcliffe** (16.4%): the two Earl's Court-adjacent wards. Proximity to wards with existing Lib Dem representation can sometimes lead to a sort of transfer of electoral momentum. Labour is also far weaker - some might say non-existent - at the Chelsea end of the borough and has no core vote in these two wards, unlike Pembridge. It's probably more likely that the Lib Dems won't win than they will. It's even conceivable the Conservative majorities will rebound, as they have in both wards in the past.

Labour is in a far bigger mess than the Conservatives. Having started this term with 13 councillors there are now just 7. Labour hasn't lost a single by-election but two of its councillors have gone to the Greens, one has gone to the Conservatives, two are Your Party-aligned independents,

one's politics defies any attempt to categorise it and one is just disaffected with their former party.

This is a fine way to represent some of London's most deprived neighbourhoods; neighbourhoods that have lined up more or less resolutely behind Labour since the 1930s. Neighbourhoods which have suffered from the most acute, unimaginable housing conditions; that have been neglected and badly planned; where a council-owned tower block was turned into an inferno less than a decade ago; where racial discrimination among landlords has been rife; where Gideon Rachman's property empire ripped off his tenants and left them in deplorable conditions.

So we come to the other Labour problem: competence. When a party has no prospect of winning control of a council, it has the luxury of adopting positions that will never survive contact with the reality of decision making. Couple liberation from responsibility with the guarantee of election by landslide amounts in such freakishly challenging neighbourhoods as North Kensington and you end up with a unique brand of self-indulgence.

Of the five Labour-held wards, **Golborne** - albeit the safest of them - perhaps has the most potential to go rogue if a party perceived to be to the left of Labour works it very hard. The only time in recent history (in fact the only time since 1903) Golborne hasn't elected a full slate of Labour councillors was 1978. Back then the area was being redeveloped at a rapid pace and some in the community were at odds with how the change was being managed - both by the council and its Labour councillors.

Golborne has a unique history: all the North Kensington wards differ from each other and all have evolved radically, but the north-eastern corner of the borough is some way apart from the rest in the specific set of housing, planning and economic problems it faced. Until the 1950s, Golborne was semi-derelict, a semi-industrial area where factories, warehousing and fairly dilapidated housing existed side by side, street by street.

Once the planning obstructions to redeveloping Golborne had been overcome, it was rebuilt as huge council estates, with the imposing Trellick Tower looming over the area. But Trellick Tower is just the most visible of Golborne's estates: there is very little of "old" Golborne left today - most of it around the northern end of Portobello Road.

Golborne councillor Mona Adam was the second councillor to split from Labour - she joined the Greens and a Green message might resonate here if the party has the resource to campaign consistently and strongly.

South of Golborne, under the Westway, is **Colville**. Colville is the Kensington edges of Westbourne Park and includes the central part of Portobello Road. It doesn't have many big council estates - it experienced a lot less redevelopment than the other northern wards. But there are big numbers of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) or council and housing association flats with a big BME population and large numbers of Local Housing Allowance claimants.

Colville is potentially interesting electorally. It now only has one Labour councillor - one having joined the Conservatives and the other, after not being allowed to seek re-election for Labour, to independent Green. But the ward elected two Lib Dem councillors in 2010 during another spasm of Labour self-absorption and unpopularity.

Although Labour won decisively here in 2022 (60% to 25% for the Tories and 15% for the Lib Dems - the Greens didn't stand), its boundaries extended southwards in 2014 and nearly all this new territory should be very poor for Labour. It now stops just before Notting Hill's grandest terrace: Kensington Park Gardens, at the apex of the hill. If Labour's vote slumps, any of four parties could get elected here. Only Reform has no chance.

Crossing Ladbroke Grove, Kensington's most northerly ward is **Dalgarno**; essentially the successor to the old St Charles ward. St Charles Square was moved out of the ward in the 2014 boundary changes, so the long-standing name went too.

Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	White Brit	Black	Muslim	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Abingdon	39.2	9.8	50.5	28.6	3.0	10.4	79.9	20.1	67.2	8.0
Brompton and Hans Town	33.2	10.6	55.6	32.0	3.3	10.3	77.9	22.1	64.2	9.0
Campden	45.4	7.6	46.3	35.5	3.2	5.9	81.0	19.0	71.3	5.9
Chelsea Riverside	30.0	43.8	25.1	37.8	8.4	16.1	66.7	33.3	52.5	14.4
Colville	22.2	47.8	28.9	32.1	11.0	11.6	67.0	33.0	54.9	13.4
Courtfield	35.0	9.8	54.9	29.6	3.5	7.1	82.3	17.7	69.2	7.2
Dalgarno	16.8	65.2	13.8	33.2	15.4	23.3	49.1	50.9	38.3	22.1
Earl's Court	26.1	23.4	49.8	25.8	4.8	9.0	74.8	25.2	62.4	10.0
Golborne	11.8	66.9	19.0	23.8	17.8	27.8	49.8	50.2	42.8	19.0
Holland	37.8	17.5	43.4	25.3	6.2	15.5	73.9	26.1	63.4	9.1
Norland	40.0	26.0	33.1	44.9	5.8	5.5	76.7	23.3	65.8	9.0
Notting Dale	13.7	65.8	16.6	26.5	16.8	22.3	50.6	49.4	40.6	20.8
Pembridge	36.2	11.3	50.9	37.1	2.9	5.4	79.0	21.0	69.5	6.7
Queen's Gate	39.3	4.9	55.3	27.7	1.5	6.9	81.5	18.5	67.5	6.8
Redcliffe	38.5	13.8	47.3	32.0	2.1	5.7	80.1	19.9	65.2	7.7
Royal Hospital	38.4	15.5	45.8	44.4	3.4	5.7	76.0	24.0	64.1	9.8
St Helen's	29.0	46.1	23.6	42.0	13.8	9.9	65.3	34.7	52.9	13.4
Stanley	37.0	25.1	37.0	40.8	4.2	8.5	74.8	25.2	60.4	11.3

St Charles went Conservative in both 2006 and 2010, but Dalgarno is better for Labour - if not so different. The ward is a mix of big tenement (though not high-rise) public housing blocks, and garden-city movement suburban streets.

Labour should be safe, but the party can have real difficulty turning out its vote. One of the Dalgarno councillors is now independent (but identifies as Workers Party - George Galloway's outfit); the other is the Labour group leader but is switching to Notting Dale.

St Helen's is the weakest Labour ward, comprising long streets of Ladbrooke Grove town houses immediately north of the Westway. This is where Lord Cameron and his family lives; why that clique became known as the "Notting Hill Set". This is basically the old Kelfield ward without part of the Lancaster West estate. St Helen's elected a Tory councillor in 2014 but Labour has held it twice now - though not securely.

Former Kensington Corbynite Labour MP Emma Dent-Coad, switched from Golborne to stand here in 2022, but she was the first councillor to quit Labour after the party blocked her from seeking re-nomination as their parliamentary candidate. Although she has declined to join Your Party at the time of writing this would seem the closest fit for her politics. She has announced her intention to stand again. The other seat remains Labour.

Last, but not least, of the Labour-held wards is **Notting Dale**. South-west of the Westway, this is the ward in which Grenfell Tower still stands within its shroud, even as it's being dismantled. This is essentially a council estate ward and the one least likely to slip from Labour's grasp. It will be absolutely safe. One of the Labour councillors elected in 2022 (Mona Ahmed) here is now independent - she resigned over the Gaza conflict; the other two remain in the party.

Labour has two offensive targets in the borough. The first is **Chelsea Riverside**. That doesn't sound much like it should be a Labour ward, does it? But the Conservatives were only 7% ahead of Labour here in 2022, and 13% ahead of the Lib Dems. About a third of this ward is council housing: the huge high-rise, red brick Worlds End estate and the smaller, older tenement Cremorne estate. On paper, Chelsea Riverside has a similar demographic profile to Kensington's Colville ward where Labour polled 60% in 2022 - so why is this one Conservative?

Partly it's because, beyond the estates, Chelsea Riverside is very not Labour. It now includes most of the former Cheyne ward that, in its last election before abolition in 1998, voted 71% Conservative. The western end used to be solidly working class, overshadowed by the Lots Road Power Station that generated the electricity to run the London tube network. But the power station is now luxury flats surrounded by exclusive sky-scrapers and the terraces beneath it have gentrified.

When the ward was just this plus the two council estates - South Stanley - it was comfortably, but not massively, Labour. While Cheyne was voting Tory by that thumping 71% in 1998, South Stanley was Labour by 54% to 37%.

Then in the 2002 boundary review, where wards were drawn to return three councillors, Cheyne was axed and South Stanley took about half of it. It became Cremorne ward and ever since it has elected Conservative councillors. It was further extended east into former Cheyne territory in 2014.

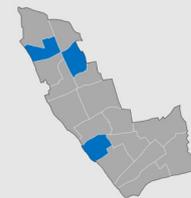
The other reason Labour struggles in Chelsea Riverside is its inherent structural weakness on this side of the constituency. The party won Chelsea and Fulham for the first time in 2024 (and then only just) mainly from votes in Fulham, not Chelsea.

Before Chelsea was twinned with Fulham it was a massively safe Conservative constituency where Labour barely functioned. Just because it has a Labour MP a Rolls Royce party organisation can't just be installed overnight.

Possible target wards

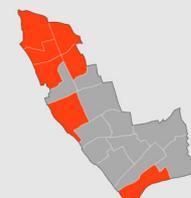
Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Colville (1 Lab, 1 Ind)
- ▶ Earl's Court (2 LD)
- ▶ St Helen's (1 Lab, 1 Ind)



Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Chelsea Riverside (3 Con)
- ▶ Colville (1 Con, 1 Ind - defs)
- ▶ Dalgarno (1 Ind - def)
- ▶ Golborne (1 Grn - def)
- ▶ Holland (3 Con)
- ▶ Notting Dale (1 Ind - def)
- ▶ St Helen's (1 Ind - def)



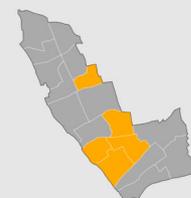
Green hopefuls

- ▶ Colville (1 Lab, 1 Con - defec)
- ▶ Golborne (2 Lab)



Lib Dem hopefuls

- ▶ Courtfield (3 Con)
- ▶ Earl's Court (1 Con)
- ▶ Pembridge (2 Con)
- ▶ Queen's Gate (3 Con)
- ▶ Redcliffe (3 Con)



Independent Socialist hopeful

- ▶ St Helen's (1 Lab)



Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	G	O
May 22 council election result	35	13	2		
Apr 23 defection: Emma Dent-Coad (St Helen's) Lab to Ind	35	12	2		1
Dec 23 defection: Mona Adam (Golborne) Lab to Grn	35	11	2	1	1
Oct 23 suspension: Eva Jedut (Dalgarno) Lab to Ind	35	10	2	1	2
Oct 23 defection: Mona Ahmed (Notting Dale) Lab to Ind	35	9	2	1	3
Mar 24 defection: Dahabo Isse (Colville) Lab to Con	36	8	2	1	3
May 24 by-election: Norland - Con hold	36	8	2	1	3
Oct 25 defection: Toby Benton (Colville) Lab to Ind	36	7	2	1	4

While Chelsea Riverside has always been the focus of Labour's campaigning effort, that effort has been pretty woeful for a long time.

Because there is very little Labour support outside of the council estates, the party needs a massive turnout from within them to win. That's highly unlikely in today's electoral climate. And they also have to contend with the Lib Dems who made all the weather here in 2022: up eighteen points while Labour slipped by a couple and the Tories by about six.

If the Lib Dems can absorb some more of the Conservative vote on the Cheyne side while Labour does what it can on the estates and with what's left of their vote in the Lots Road area, Chelsea Riverside could be close. Likewise, unless the Lib Dems find a way to win votes on the estates - and there's no sign they can - they can't win the ward either.

The other long-shot Labour target is **Holland** (17.8% Con lead). Holland: the area west of the eponymous park plus a strip of mostly new-build apartment blocks down the edge of the borough boundary swung from being a very safe Tory ward to an almost-marginal in one go in 2018, but then stuck in 2022. Is it encased in electoral permafrost just beyond Labour's reach? Almost certainly.

Why did Holland swing so much from the Tories in 2018 and then stick? The new apartment blocks are of a different

character to the rest of Holland and they aren't so staunchly Tory as the bulk of the ward, but they are also hardly a Mecca for socialism either.

There is a lot of comparatively unspectacular housing in the Palladian town houses (almost all subdivided) along seemingly never-ending, heavily trafficked, congested roads like Holland Road and Addison Crescent.

The Conservative decline in Holland coincided with Rock Feilding-Mellon, who was the councillor responsible for the "regeneration" of Grenfell, representing this ward. As the political face of that disaster, he may have dented the Tory vote here even though he stood down in 2018. But most of Holland does not remotely resemble a Labour ward.

There is no borough in London as polarised as Kensington and Chelsea. There is little more than a mile between Golborne and Kensington Palace.

That polarisation isn't really diminishing: the Conservative wards have shrunk, mostly as nationals of countries which don't have the franchise in this country buy up the best mansions. That loss of electorate, rather than any surge to Labour, has been what has narrowed the gap electorally, but it's still a gap of cavernous size.

KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES

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At first glance, Kingston-upon-Thames and Richmond-upon-Thames seem to be identical twins, occupying a continuous strand of ultra-affluent south west London Thames-side and with almost identical Liberal Democrat near-monopolies. But that glance would be mistaken.

They are different in several important ways. Richmond is a homogeneously more affluent borough. The type of suburbia each represents is different:

Richmond does not have any neighbourhoods resembling inter-war Surbiton, let alone Chessington. Likewise, away from the north-western corner of the borough nestled between the river and Richmond Park, Kingston does not have any neighbourhoods that resemble Richmond, Kew, Barnes, Twickenham, Teddington or Hampton.

Liberalism is ingrained amongst the sort of set that makes Richmond their home whereas Lib Dems gained their ground laboriously over years of pavement politics: it isn't so instinctively liberal. It's even possible (though no figures exist) that one or two of the outlying wards in Kingston voted Leave in the 2016 EU referendum.

There are more working-class, less affluent neighbourhoods in Kingston that once voted Labour and which the SDP-Liberal Alliance began its ascent in this borough by co-opting. Norbiton, Tolworth, Chessington, Canbury and parts of New Malden are examples.

Even with Labour ground down to near-extinction, Kingston remains a far more diverse political battleground than Richmond. There is the potential of a (minor) Reform skirmish in outlying parts of the borough: Reform have no hopes in Richmond. There is also Kingston Independent Residents' Group (KIRG), and the Greens can challenge in one or two wards without the Lib Dems gifting them seats. In Richmond,

the battle is and has been since the 1970s relentlessly, monotonously Lib Dem versus Conservative.

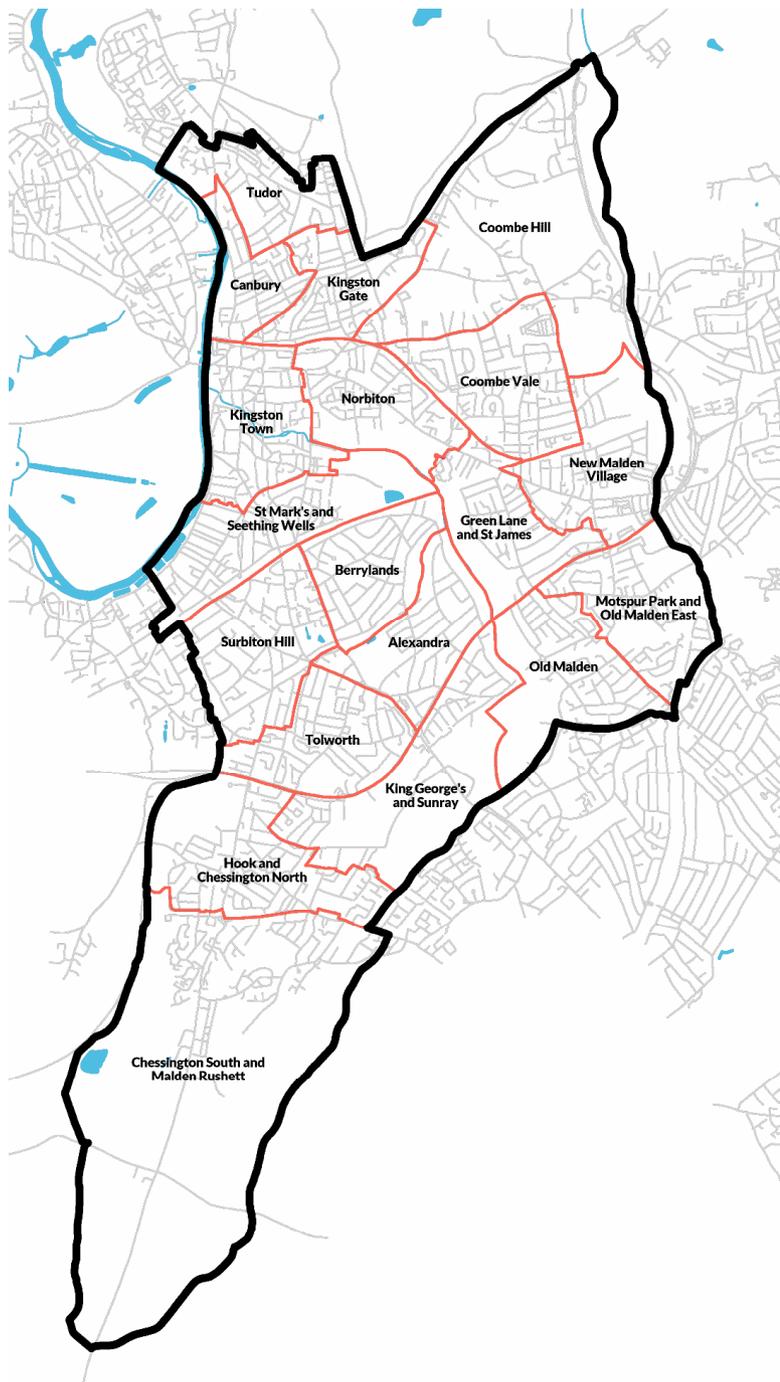
And there has never existed in Kingston the sort of Lib Dem-Green pact that has proved important in pushing back the Conservatives in Richmond, even if that arrangement appears to have ended.

While the Lib Dem majorities in both boroughs are currently similar and massive, in Kingston the Conservatives are nowhere near as far from a rebound - Reform's threat to them notwithstanding - as they are in Richmond.

The Conservatives were almost wiped off Kingston Council in 2022, surviving only in the super-affluent Coombe Hill ward with its gated villas immediately south of Richmond Park. They were slightly hard done by in Kingston because, while their vote slumped four points to its lowest ever 25%, the Lib Dem vote fell too - by slightly more. Yet the outcome was a Lib Dem gain of 5 seats and a Conservative loss of 6 - down from an already dreadful 9.

In part, this was because of new ward boundaries, which were especially radical in the areas in which the Conservatives were strongest. Both Coombe Hill and Tudor - wards in which the Tories held seats - were cut from 3 councillors to 2. Old Malden in the borough's south east: the other more Conservative enclave, was chopped into two 2-councillor wards, both of which they narrowly lost (Motspur Park by 103, Old Malden by 213).

But the blame for there being just 3 Conservatives on a council the party had run just four years earlier cannot be laid on electoral systems or redrawn boundaries. It was the reaping of the Brexit realignment on London, the unpopularity of Boris Johnson's leadership and the resurgent Lib Dems, recuperating from their 2015 general election loss.



Whereas in Richmond the Conservative loss of support directly benefited the Lib Dems, in Kingston the lost Tory vote split in other directions - and could because more parties stood.

The Greens contested about half the wards but there was also that KIRG residents grouping and assorted others. Whereas in Richmond there were just 3.2 candidates contesting each seat, in Kingston the number was 4.1. That may not seem a big difference, but it was thirty more candidates for a council that is six seats smaller.

There was also unhappiness with Kingston's Lib Dem council over a feeling that very high Council Tax was not delivering high-quality services, about poor spending choices and about the regeneration of large sites in the town centre.

Faced with a choice between the Lib Dems unpopular locally and the nationally unpopular Conservatives, it was not all that surprising that a sizeable chunk of voters chose neither. The consequence, though, was an even larger Lib Dem council majority.

But a big majority based on a relatively weak electoral mandate makes a party's grip on power look firmer than it is: the Labour government is evidence of that. That's not to say the Lib Dems don't have a handy cushion in Kingston - it's just that because the principal opposition here was and remains the Conservatives, and that party has been in the doldrums things look a lot more comfortable for the Lib Dems than they are.

Indeed, there may continue to be a move towards other parties, especially with Reform debuting this year. Kingston was a comfortably Remain-voting borough (61% to 39%) in the EU referendum a decade ago but there were probably some quite different outcomes across different wards.

The southern "peninsula" of the borough that is centred on Chessington, plus Old Malden and maybe Norbiton, probably voted much closer to the national result. This gives Reform a faint chance in the borough's south: a slither of opportunity if they campaign very hard.

The seats Reform might look closely at are - probably in this order: **Chessington South and Malden Rushett**, the southern-most ward; **Tolworth** - though this is the safest Lib Dem ward, **Hook and Chessington North** and **King George's and Sunray** - a newly-created ward south-east of the A3. These are all working class, heavily owner-occupied wards - long ago Labour and Lib Dem because of decades of campaigning. They might also do well in **Old Malden** and **Motspur Park and Old Malden East** but their impact there is more likely to stop the Conservatives regaining them.

Then there is Kingston Independent Residents' Group. KIRG is a strange entity. It was founded as a breakaway from the Conservative group and presents itself as a localist party. Yet its leader and first elected councillor, James Giles is on the far left: helping run George Galloway's Workers Party campaign in Rochdale, sitting on the board of Your Party and advising three of the independent MPs who defeated Labour in 2024. He wouldn't win here under his true colours.

KIRG has gained seats since the 2022 election. The first by-election in the borough occurred the following November and in the **Green Lane and St James** ward in which James Giles had gained his seat in May.

The KIRG candidate, Yvonne Tracey, was a former postmaster at a point where national media focus had been on the plight of postmasters falsely accused of fraud because of dodgy accounting software the Post Office provided them with. And local Lib Dem MP (and party leader) Ed Davey had been the minister responsible for this scandal in the coalition government.

The Lib Dems were always going to struggle - and they lost, though not catastrophically. A 7% swing to KIRG gained them full control of this 2-councillor ward.

Possible target wards

Lib Dem hopefuls

- ▶ Coombe Hill (2 Con)
- ▶ Coombe Vale (1 KIRG)
- ▶ Green Lane and St James's (2 KIRG)
- ▶ Tudor (1 KIRG)



Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Alexandra (3 LD)
- ▶ Canbury Gardens (3 LD)
- ▶ Chessington South and Malden Rushett (3 LD)
- ▶ Coombe Vale (2 LD, 1 KIRG)
- ▶ King George's and Sunray (2 LD)
- ▶ Kingston Gate (3 LD)
- ▶ Motspur Park and Old Malden East (2 LD)
- ▶ Old Malden (2 LD)
- ▶ Tudor (1 LD, 1 KIRG)



KIRG hopefuls

- ▶ Kingston Gate (3 LD)
- ▶ New Malden Village (3 LD)



Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Kingston Town (3 LD)
- ▶ Norbiton (3 LD)



Reform hopefuls

- ▶ Hook and Chessington North (3 LD)
- ▶ Chessington South & Malden Rushett (3 LD)
- ▶ King George's and Sunray (2 LD)
- ▶ Motspur Park and Old Malden East (2 LD)
- ▶ Old Malden (2 LD)
- ▶ Tolworth (3 LD)



Green hopefuls

- ▶ New Malden Village (3 LD)
- ▶ St Mark's and Seething Wells (3 LD)



Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	Hindu	Muslim	White Brit	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Alexandra	78.0	3.0	18.6	7.1	6.8	57.1	62.4	37.6	49.1	10.9
Berrylands	65.0	7.2	27.4	3.6	3.3	66.4	67.5	32.5	58.1	8.3
Canbury Gardens	52.2	11.0	33.8	3.4	7.3	49.5	74.5	25.5	65.2	7.7
Chessington S. & Malden Rushett	71.4	12.4	15.4	3.3	4.3	70.0	46.9	53.1	34.3	15.8
Coombe Hill	65.1	5.0	29.4	5.0	16.6	39.0	68.4	31.6	58.8	10.3
Coombe Vale	68.0	6.9	24.8	7.3	8.4	45.9	66.2	33.8	57.7	10.2
Green Lane and St James	60.7	16.4	21.2	8.4	11.6	45.0	55.5	44.5	45.7	15.5
Hook & Chessington North	73.6	12.0	13.5	3.2	5.1	68.9	46.0	54.0	32.8	18.3
King George's and Sunray	70.6	6.3	22.5	8.9	9.7	52.3	42.8	57.2	36.3	15.2
Kingston Gate	56.1	12.7	30.6	2.9	7.5	56.0	70.6	29.4	61.5	9.0
Kingston Town	42.4	14.3	42.5	2.8	6.8	51.5	64.9	35.1	54.7	8.1
Motspur Park & Old Malden East	81.0	4.0	14.8	8.7	11.3	49.1	59.8	40.2	46.6	13.8
New Malden Village	62.0	8.4	28.5	6.4	8.0	45.1	61.9	38.1	54.1	12.9
Norbiton	41.6	27.3	29.7	4.8	11.8	45.6	53.2	46.8	45.9	16.0
Old Malden	70.2	11.2	18.1	7.6	12.8	49.4	55.7	44.3	44.2	13.9
St Mark's and Seething Wells	50.4	6.6	42.6	2.1	4.9	57.4	71.7	28.3	62.1	6.9
Surbiton Hill	46.4	14.7	38.4	3.2	5.6	58.2	66.8	33.2	57.2	11.3
Tolworth	65.2	11.6	22.2	7.8	8.5	53.7	56.0	44.0	46.7	14.5
Tudor	76.8	7.1	15.3	4.2	5.0	55.5	72.1	27.9	58.5	8.8

A **Tudor** ward councillor either expelled or resigned from the Conservatives then defected. He had received national news coverage for circulating a round-robin email to councillors throughout the country demanding they oppose the Gaza intervention or be "named and shamed". This was felt to be threatening by many recipients who complained.

KIRG then picked up a Lib Dem defector in Coombe Vale, though she left the group in early 2026 and now sits as an independent.

For KIRG to become a serious party in Kingston politics it needs to field more candidates (they contested ten wards) and poll better more widely (they only exceeded 20% in two wards) than they managed last time.

The Greens have two prospects: **St Mark's and Seething Wells** where one of their councillors defected but fell 300 votes short of retaining her seat in 2022, and **New Malden Village**, where the Lib Dems won with just one third of the vote. They may also do well in student-heavy Kingston Town, especially if the Labour vote collapses.

The Conservatives require a swing of slightly over 10% to regain Kingston and resume the ping-pong of council control. In itself, that would not be beyond the realms of possibility. But they also need a huge number of seats to win: twenty three, while being far lower in the polls and with Reform competing for the same voters. This is not likely: they'll be doing well to get back to the nine seats they won in 2018.

Yet there are quite a few seats with fairly small majorities. These begin with **Motspur Park and Old Malden East** (Lib

Dem majority 103), **Tudor** (168 - plus the seat of KIRG defector Jamal Chohan), and **Coombe Vale** (262).

Then come **Chessington South and Malden Rushett** - though Reform are more likely to do well here (Lib Dem majority: 248), **Old Malden** (213) and the Surbiton ward of **Alexandra** (222). Those wards contain fourteen seats and would fall on a 6% swing.

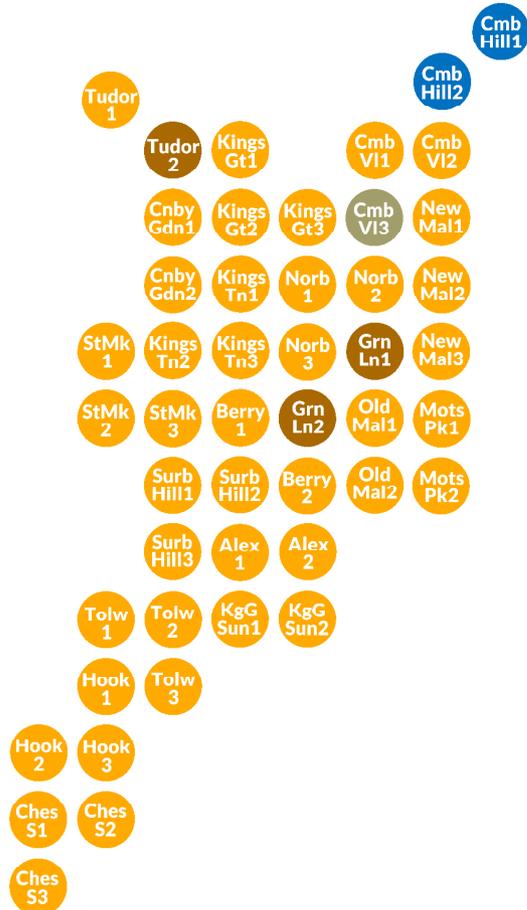
The harder ones for the Conservatives to win are **Kingston Gate, King George's and Sunray, Canbury Gardens and New Malden Village**. Those would just get the Conservatives to a majority on the council - and that would be a major surprise.

A local elections modelling website, Britain Votes Now, has **New Malden Village** going Conservative by a large margin, but none of the more marginal wards.

The Conservatives may no longer have the unpopularity of being in government to cost them votes. That could mean that their tide starts to wax in Kingston again and they could end up with a decent-sized group. But while there has been a Labour to Conservative swing in London since 2022, because the Tories have lost support since those elections too, there has also been a small Conservative to Lib Dem swing.

The Lib Dems maximised their vote spread last time but, despite their landslide many wards remain competitive. They could even win the hold-out Conservative ward of Coombe Hill. If the Lib Dems slip much at all, we are going to see a lot of councillors elected with very low vote shares. and they

won't all be the same as last time. We could end up with a far more diverse council in Kingston than we've had for a while.



Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	KIRG	Ind
May 22 council election result	3		44	1	
Nov 22 by-election: Green Lane and St James - KIRG gain from LD	3		43	2	
Nov 23 defection: Jamal Chohan (Tudor) Con to KIRG	2		43	3	
Jul 24 by-election: Hook and Chessington North - LD hold	2		43	3	
Aug 24 defection: Kamala Kugan (Coombe Vale) LD to KIRG	2		42	4	
Feb 25 defection: Kamala Kugan (Coombe Vale) KIRG to Ind	2		42	3	1

LAMBETH

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In the 1980s several London boroughs regularly generated negative press headlines because of the antics of the so-called "loony left". Of these "loony left" boroughs, Lambeth probably attracted the most attention.

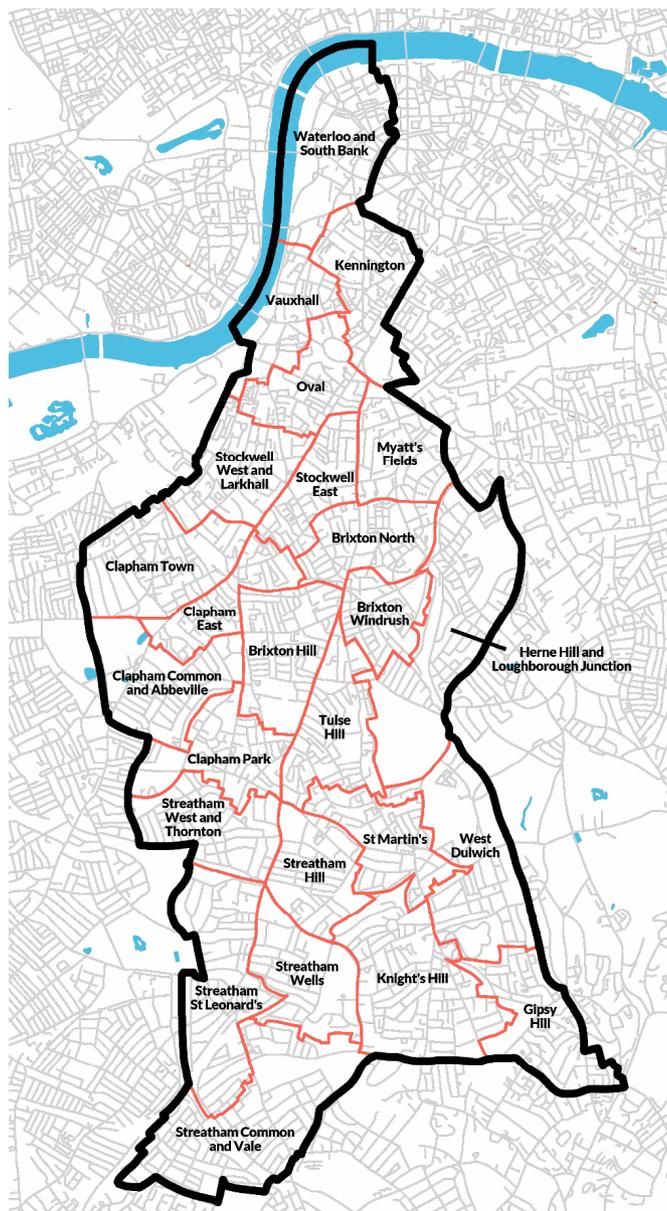
Under the leadership of "Red" Ted Knight - then Linda Bellos and Joan Twelves, Lambeth revelled in its attempts to antagonise the government across the river and showcase its radical socialism.

The hard left began taking control of Lambeth Labour in the early 1970s. It began in the Norwood constituency: the south-eastern third of the borough and the most politically mixed neighbourhoods. Ted Knight and Ken Livingstone were both elected for (aptly enough) Knight's Hill ward in 1974 but in the early stages the priority for the left was to seize power in the branches and constituencies so that their supporters could be selected as candidates next time.

In 1978 there was a big swing to the Conservatives in Lambeth, but they piled their votes up in safe Tory wards while missing out on the marginals that would have brought them close to a majority. Despite losing by just 2.3% borough-wide the Tories finished with only 22 seats (up 8 from 1974) with Labour winning 42.

That first hard left Labour administration proved so popular that, in 1982, they lost power and the council fell to no overall control: 32 Labour, 27 Conservatives and 5 SDP/Liberal Alliance councillors. The Conservatives attempted to run Lambeth in the minority but only lasted six months before SDP councillor Gordon Ley defected to independent. That handed power back to Labour.

In 1985, Lambeth refused to set a rate because Labour wanted to set it higher than the government-permitted cap. This action was unlawful. The District Auditor stepped in, surcharged all 32 Labour councillors who voted not to set a rate and disqualified them from elected office for five years.



The left didn't back down. The Bellos administration was chaotic, filled with Labour councillors with no experience of running a council, and it often failed to provide decent services to Lambeth residents most dependent on them. In 1990 Joan Twelves and, aptly enough, twelve other Labour councillors attempted to repeat the Ted Knight brinkmanship by refusing to set a Community Charge (poll tax).

Labour's national leaders were long-tired of their poor election results in the capital. At that point there were just five Labour constituencies in south London: Tooting, Peckham, Vauxhall, Norwood and Deptford. It attributed the rout to the gesture politics of the hard left and so immediately suspended these councillors, eradicating Labour's majority in Lambeth and removing Twelves as leader.

Labour had kept control of Lambeth in 1990 but by 1994 voters had tired of the poor services, allegations of corruption, the splits and posturing and suspensions of councillors within Labour and the constant feeling that Labour had created a council under siege.

The Lib Dems surged from 4 seats to 24; Labour fell from forty to 24 also; and the Conservatives dropped from twenty to sixteen.

The map of the borough from that election is remarkable: a Lib Dem north (Waterloo, Kennington and Stockwell), a Labour centre (Brixton and Clapham) and a largely Conservative south (Streatham and West Norwood).

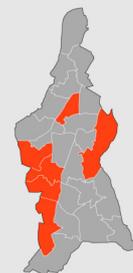
Joan Twelves was the only Labour candidate defeated in Brixton's Ferndale ward and survivors of the 1985 surcharge battle like Lloyd Leon also went down to defeat.

This was a far more stable non-Labour majority; defection and by-election proof. It was the beginning of the end for the hard left in Lambeth. It was also the start of the Tory decline towards eradication from the council, though it was not obvious at that point.

Possible target wards

Labour hopefuls

- ▶ Clapham Common & Abbeville (1 LD)
- ▶ Clapham Park (1 Ind - defec)
- ▶ Herne Hill & Loughborough Jnct (1 Grn)
- ▶ Streatham Hill West and Thornton (2LD)
- ▶ Streatham St Leonard's (1 Grn - defec)
- ▶ Stockwell East (1 LD - defec)



Lib Dem hopefuls

- ▶ Stockwell East (1 Lab)
- ▶ Streatham Wells (2 Lab)
- ▶ Waterloo and South Bank (2 Lab)



Green hopefuls

- ▶ Brixton Hill (3 Lab)
- ▶ Brixton North (3 Lab)
- ▶ Brixton Rush Common (3 Lab)
- ▶ Brixton Windrush (2 Lab)
- ▶ Clapham East (2 Lab)
- ▶ Clapham Common & Abbeville (1 Lab, 1 LD)
- ▶ Clapham Park (1 Lab, 1 Ind)
- ▶ Clapham Town (2 Lab)
- ▶ Gipsy Hill (2 Lab)
- ▶ Herne Hill & Loughborough Junction (2 Lab)
- ▶ Kennington (3 Lab)
- ▶ Knight's Hill (3 Lab)
- ▶ Myatt's Fields (2 Lab)
- ▶ St Martin's (2 Lab)
- ▶ Streatham Common and Vale (3 Lab)
- ▶ Streatham Hill East (2 Lab)
- ▶ Streatham St Leonard's (1 Lab)
- ▶ Vauxhall (3 Lab)



Conservative hopefuls

- ▶ Clapham Town (3 Lab)
- ▶ Clapham Common & Abbeville (1 LD, 1 Lab)
- ▶ West Dulwich (2 Lab)



The see-saw election results: Labour out, then back in before 1982; then out in 1994, then back in again in 1998, continued in 2002.

This time Labour and Lib Dems got 28 seats each with the Tories down to just 7: 3 in Thurlow Park (now **West Dulwich**), 3 in **Gipsy Hill** and 1 in **Clapham Town**. 2002 was a mediocre year for Labour across London: a lot poorer than 1994 and 1998, but nowhere near as horrible as 2006 for them. They shouldn't have lost Lambeth - should never lose Lambeth.

And yet, when 2006 arrived, Lambeth bucked the trend and returned to Labour. This was a gain of seats not matched by votes: Labour won a slightly smaller vote share in 2006 than 2002. But both Lib Dems and Conservatives lost a lot more, mostly to one of the earliest Green surges in London. The Lib Dems lost 11 and the Tories lost Clapham Town, but they held their other 6 seats. The Greens gained their first ever Lambeth seat in Herne Hill while Labour gained 11 for a majority of 15. They have never since lost their majority.

In 2010 that majority increased to 25 and in 2014, following four years of the Lib Dems in national coalition with the Conservatives, Labour almost won a monopoly. No Lib Dems won, there were just 3 Tories and 1 Green - this time in St Leonard's: once the safest Tory, then safest Lib Dem, ward.

In 2018, the Greens won four additional seats while the Tories were ground down to just one councillor in affluent Clapham Common. And in 2022? Another Labour landslide, knocking the Greens back to just two seats but seeing the Lib Dems regain a foothold in **Streatham Hill West and Thornton** and taking the last Conservative seat in **Clapham Common & Abbeville**.

Since 2022, Labour has lost one seat, once again in Herne Hill, through a by-election and another to the Greens through a defection, making all three seats in Streatham St Leonard's Green once more. The Lib Dems have gained one defector: long-serving **Stockwell East** councillor Tina Valcarcel, who had been deselected.



One Labour councillor from Clapham Park was suspended from the Labour group. But that still leaves a Labour majority of 45.

So is Lambeth safe for a sixth consecutive Labour term? The answer is no. This is a top Green target.

Ward	Housing			Ethnicity		Relig	Employment		Education	
	Owner Occ'd	Public rented	Private rented	White Brit	Black	Muslim	ABC1	C2DE	Degree upward	No quals
Brixton Acre Lane	31.6	30.5	36.4	47.2	18.2	5.2	71.4	28.6	63.5	10.9
Brixton North	20.2	53.5	22.9	23.8	33.5	11.7	50.2	49.8	46.2	17.2
Brixton Rush Common	32.6	36.6	29.1	35.3	25.6	7.4	61.9	38.1	56.6	13.0
Brixton Windrush	22.3	45.8	27.7	31.3	32.1	9.6	62.6	37.4	56.6	11.8
Clapham Common and Abbeville	44.8	17.3	37.4	56.6	7.5	3.5	80.2	19.8	73.8	6.3
Clapham East	25.0	35.9	38.2	43.2	18.6	7.9	69.6	30.4	62.8	11.5
Clapham Park	28.9	38.1	28.9	35.1	23.8	8.9	58.9	41.1	53.9	13.5
Clapham Town	34.6	27.1	36.8	48.9	13.5	4.7	74.0	26.0	65.9	9.4
Gipsy Hill	36.2	38.8	23.8	40.7	23.9	7.5	59.4	40.6	49.6	14.9
Herne Hill & Loughborough Junct.	37.5	32.2	28.6	41.7	21.5	8.1	66.6	33.4	60.9	11.3
Kennington	26.1	47.8	23.5	34.7	23.0	8.8	62.0	38.0	54.3	14.5
Knight's Hill	43.0	31.6	24.3	37.5	22.7	6.9	57.4	42.6	48.6	15.1
Myatt's Fields	24.2	51.8	20.6	30.1	31.4	9.6	57.0	43.0	50.1	16.1
Oval	25.5	36.0	37.7	36.4	18.2	7.0	62.3	37.7	57.4	14.2
St Martin's	29.9	38.6	29.8	30.5	27.6	7.9	54.3	45.7	48.5	15.0
Stockwell East	27.7	38.1	32.4	36.8	25.2	7.2	63.7	36.3	58.6	12.9
Stockwell West and Larkhall	21.0	47.3	30.2	28.0	27.0	10.8	53.6	46.4	50.1	16.0
Streatham Common and Vale	49.8	17.4	31.4	30.6	18.9	12.8	51.8	48.2	46.0	16.8
Streatham Hill East	39.8	28.8	30.2	35.8	21.7	8.9	60.9	39.1	54.3	13.9
Streatham Hill West & Thornton	47.8	17.3	33.8	53.3	10.0	4.8	75.3	24.7	68.0	8.5
Streatham St Leonard's	41.2	14.1	42.9	38.6	13.2	10.4	60.8	39.2	55.6	14.0
Streatham Wells	45.5	17.1	35.6	38.4	15.5	9.2	61.6	38.4	56.0	13.0
Vauxhall	21.8	31.4	41.3	28.1	16.0	8.9	69.4	30.6	61.4	9.9
Waterloo and South Bank	21.0	36.2	41.2	32.0	12.6	7.7	68.7	31.3	55.1	11.8
West Dulwich	47.6	24.6	26.8	50.9	14.2	4.2	70.2	29.8	61.6	10.9

23 Labour seats need to switch . There is a little low-hanging fruit. There is one split ward and one wholly Labour ward that are the best opportunities for both opposition parties.

For the Lib Dems, the split is **Clapham Common and Abbeville**, where the Labour councillor has a majority of just 41. Their next best chance is **Waterloo and South Bank** - their old Bishop's stronghold, where the Labour majorities are 67 and 128.

The Greens should easily retain **Streatham St Leonards** and then there is split (since the by-election) **Herne Hill and Loughborough Junction**.

What aids them is that the Labour resignation that caused the by-election was that of Jim Dickson, now MP for Dartford. He was the most popular and long-serving Herne Hill councillor. With him gone the ward is easier to win. And they've already won it - more recently than Labour.

The best wholly-Labour ward for the Greens is **Gipsy Hill** which they missed out on by 51 and 186.

Where next? Let's segue and talk about the Conservatives. They were not completely out of the picture in two wards. **Clapham Common and Abbeville** remained a three-way marginal in 2022. Given there's been a small Conservative to Lib Dem swing, as well as a Labour to Conservative swing since the last council elections, they probably can't regain their seat. Yet Clapham can often vote a little perversely - so it's not entirely implausible that they'll win back a seat or two.

The other ward is **Clapham Town**. This is more tricky, and boundary changes last time didn't help them by bringing in a chunk of the abolished Larkhall ward: strongly Labour. The Tories need a swing of about 7% to win Clapham Town but the Greens will also fancy their chances of leapfrogging from third to first.

The Conservatives have one last joker in the pack. You may have seen some of the controversy about a Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) in Dulwich which a court has ruled the council implemented unlawfully. That LTN is not in the London Borough of Southwark: it's in **West Dulwich** - part of Lambeth.

West Dulwich ward is much of the old Thurlow Park: one of the last Conservative wards standing. They've fallen back a lot: Labour was about 30% ahead in 2022 which should make it safe. But if you want to kick the council and Labour, the Lib Dems and the Greens all support LTNs, who is left to vote for?

The Conservatives won a 2024 by-election on the back of anti-LTN feeling in Cambridge: a city that has turned its back on the party to at least the same degree as Lambeth. Could the same thing happen here? It's unlikely but possible. Those three Lambeth wards are the only Conservative prospects and all three are very tough. But they exist.

Back to the Greens' path to power. If both they and the Lib Dems have plucked their low-lying fruit that's nine fewer Labour seats. But that means their majority's still 27.

The Labour wards from this point on clump together in terms of majority as well as geographically. They are **Brixton Rush Common, Brixton Acre Lane, Stockwell East, West Dulwich, Kennington, Waterloo and South Bank, Vauxhall** and **Brixton Windrush**.

If the Greens are winning these, they'll also possibly leap from fourth to first in **Clapham Common and Abbeville**, and from third in **Streatham Hill West and Thornton**. They need swings of around 15% to win this little trove.

But the Greens don't need to win every seat in all these wards: there are 24 seats and they only need 14 to wipe out Labour's majority. I say "only" but it's incredibly difficult. The largest Labour majority in **Kennington**, for example, is 1,357. Labour's vote there last time was almost three times the Greens'. But Labour is so unpopular right now that it's conceivable.

Labour has one saving grace in boroughs like Lambeth where the principal ethnic minority is not from the Indian subcontinent. Here it is Afro-Caribbean and concentrated in that central band of wards including Brixton, parts of Clapham, Stockwell and Kennington.

Brixton Acre Lane, Brixton Windrush and **Myatt's Fields** (the former Vassall ward) are a third black; both **Stockwell** wards, **Brixton Rush Common, Gipsy Hill, Clapham East, Kennington** and **St Martin's** are around a quarter black.

Why does this matter? It is because Labour's support among minority ethnicities has withered the least among those with African or Caribbean heritage (and especially Caribbean, which is the larger community in Lambeth).

In October 2025, Labour's favourability among the black community was plus 14 (favourable: 51%, unfavourable: 37%). Among the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, it was -28. Among Indians it was minus 33. And among white communities (though probably not the sort of white communities living in Lambeth) it was minus 41.

That's the good news for Labour. The bad news is that the level of turnout among blacks - especially - of Caribbean origin is low. And while Labour's favourability with them is okay, the Greens are even more popular. So maybe not quite such good news for Labour after all.

Lambeth is almost as good a "Goldilocks" borough for the Greens as Hackney. In fact, they need a smaller swing from 2022 to win Lambeth (16.3%) than Hackney (17.4%). Only Lewisham (14.3%) is easier.

Lambeth is another iconic borough for Labour: for the party's left because of the fights they fought and for new Labour

types because they sorted it out and it's become a very safe, stable borough.

Labour's Communities Secretary, Steve Reed, was leader of Lambeth from 2006 and now represents Streatham in parliament. Recently departed Downing Street Chief of Staff Morgan McSweeney was Lambeth Labour organiser when they recaptured the borough. So there is a direct link from Lambeth across Westminster Bridge to Whitehall.

A Labour loss here would hurt, badly, especially as a loss of Lambeth would likely be just one of a set of dreadful results. Starmer's grasp on power is now so weak that this could simply terminate his premiership.

Events 2022-2026	C	L	LD	G	O
May 22 council election result		58	3	2	
Oct 23 by-election: Vauxhall - Lab hold		58	3	2	
May 24 by-election: Knight's Hall - Lab hold		58	3	2	
May 24 by-election: Streatham Common and Vale - Lab hold		58	3	2	
Jul 24 by-election: Streatham Common and Vale - Lab hold		58	3	2	
Jul 25 defection: Irfan Mohamed (Clapham Park) - Lab to Ind		57	3	2	1
May 25 by-election: Herne Hill and Loughborough Junction - Grn gain from Lab		56	3	3	1
Aug 25 defection: Martin Abrams (Streatham St Leonard's) - Lab to Ind		55	3	3	1
Sep 25 defection: Martin Abrams (Streatham St Leonard's) - Ind to Grn		55	3	4	
Nov 25 defection: Tina Valcarcel (Stockwell East) - Lab to LD		54	4	4	