

# Bromley

## 01

CONSERVATIVE DEFENCE 54

---

## 02

LOCAL LANDSCAPE 56

---

## 03

ELECTORAL PROSPECTS 58

---

- ↗ THE METROPOLITAN CORNER 59
- ↗ CENTRAL BROMLEY AND BECKENHAM 60
- ↗ BROMLEY SUBURBS 61
- ↗ ORPINGTON 62
- ↗ THE 'COUNCIL ESTATE' WARDS 63
- ↗ THE RURAL FRINGE 64

## 04

WHAT TO WATCH FOR 65

---

# Since 2022

## Conservative Defence

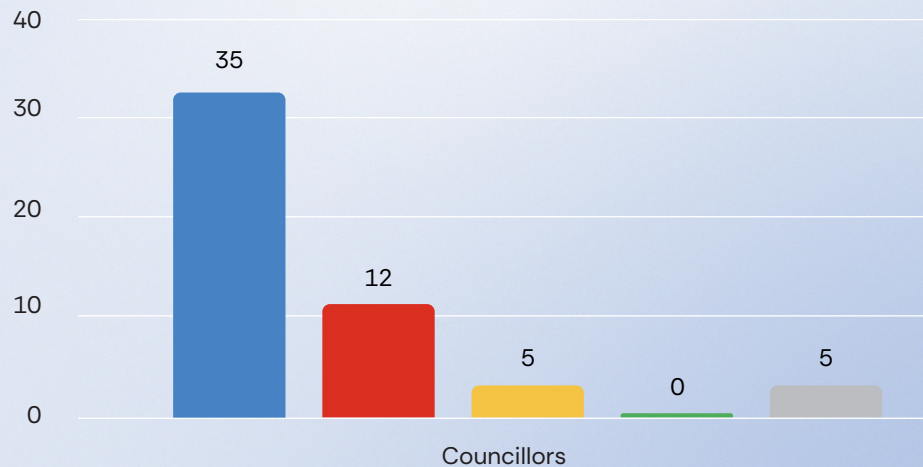
In 2022, the Conservatives' habitual huge majority was substantially eroded as Labour, the Liberal Democrats and local Independents made gains mostly in the north of the borough. The Tories won 36 seats out of 58, three times as many as Labour in second place but with their margin of victory reduced to 14. And now comes the threat from Reform UK.

Bromley looks like promising territory for them. It was not one of the five boroughs that voted Leave in the 2016 EU Referendum, but it was only 51 per cent Remain. UKIP at its strongest in 2014 won two Bromley seats. Nigel Farage has a house in a Bromley village. And Reform won its first ever London council seat there at a by-election last summer (as distinct from having councillors defect to them from other parties).

### By-elections since May 2022

07 DECEMBER 2023	HAYES AND CONEY HALL	CON HOLD
02 MAY 2024	SHORTLANDS AND PARK LANGLEY	CON HOLD
24 JULY 2025	BROMLEY COMMON AND HOLWOOD	REFORM GAIN FROM CON

Bromley Council result May 2022 | Total seats: 58



Conservative Labour Liberal Democrat Green Other

Since May 2022, the Conservative majority has shrunk to just eight. In addition to that by-election loss, the Tories have suffered two defections to the populist Right party. Another of their councillors died in December and his seat will remain vacant until 7 May. The Tories have, though, recruited an erstwhile Independent. Meanwhile, the 12-strong Labour group elected in 2022 sustained a loss when, in November, one of their number resigned and became an Independent instead.

The current councillor line-up is therefore: Conservative 33, Labour 11, Libs Dems five, Independents five, Reform three and one seat unoccupied. All sorts of permutations appear possible on 7 May. A shake of the kaleidoscope looks probable.

# Local landscape

With its very True Blue history and lingering urges to secede from Greater London and join Kent, London's geographically largest borough has long projected Conservative vibes, stoutly and stubbornly suburban. Only once in its electoral history has it produced anything other than a Tory triumph. That was in 1998, when it came under No Overall Control, and even in that year the Tories won the largest number of seats, with the Lib Dems three behind.

The median age of Bromley residents is 41 and rising, making it, jointly with Richmond, London's oldest borough. Unusually for London, its age profile is also slightly higher than that of England as a whole, largely due to its 50 to 64 group growing significantly. Ethnically, Bromley is very much a white borough, with 76.5 per cent of residents describing themselves as such in the 2021 Census. Almost 90 per cent aligned themselves with at least one UK national identity (British only, English only, Wales and British only etcetera...).

It has, at 68.5 per cent, a very high rate of home ownership. Around half of it is designated Green Belt,

embracing part of the North Downs. Swathes of its 58 square miles are covered by the detached and semi-detached family houses of areas such as Keston, Eden Park and Chislehurst. The towns of Orpington and Bromley itself are firmly Kent-ish middle-class.

This is the heart of the heart-shaped borough Reform believes it can invade. Its historic first incursion took place in July 2025, when Alan Cook, won a seat for Bromley Common & Holwood ward, defeating the Conservative defender by 181 votes (and by a vote share of 34 per cent to 29) despite Kemi Badenoch making a polling day appearance.

Cook had had a recent spell in Badenoch's party, before despairing of what he termed its "global socialist view" coming before the national one. Within a month, backed by Farage, he was calling for Bromley to break away from Greater London.

This placed him in a long-running Bromley tradition. The borough has long rebelled against Londonwide layers of government. In 1983, it made a successful legal challenge

to the Greater London Council's Fares Fair policy, which subsidised large reductions in public transport fares through an increase in what we used to call "the rates". It was also one of the boroughs that tried (unsuccessfully) to block via the courts the expansion of the London-wide of the Greater London Authority's Ultra-Low Emission Zone. Biggin Hill in the south of the borough, with its Battle of Britain associations, was a hotbed of anti-ULEZ criminality.

Cook said he'd "pushed over the first Tory domino", a claim that sounded less hubristic later in the year when the two defectors from the Tories joined him to create the Reform council group.

# Local landscape

How strongly is the wind blowing in Reform’s favour? On the strength of that July win, not overwhelmingly or decisively. In other words, the Conservatives should not be written off. And maybe they can take encouragement from holding their seat in the earlier by-election in next-door Hayes & Coney Hall ward, even as the steep decline in Conservative national popularity was underway.

Another thing to keep in mind about Bromley is that it is a bit more socially varied than it looks at first glance, and increasingly so. It shares a border with Sevenoaks to the south but also a long border with Lewisham in the north. Famously, it at one point intersects with three other boroughs at the same point: Croydon and two more inner London authority areas, those of Lambeth and Southwark.

A steady increase in Labour’s representation since 2014 can probably be attributed to influxes of Left-leaning, young and diverse households in Crystal Palace and Penge. Bromley’s white population, though still very much a majority, decreased by 7.8 per cent between 2011 and 2021. During the same period, the small Asian and black percentages ticked up.

Bromley Council elections since 2002						
Year	Con	Lab	LD	UKIP/Ref	Green	Other
2002	41	6	13	-	-	-
2006	49	4	7	-	-	-
2010	53	3	4	-	-	-
2014	51	7	-	-	-	2
2018	50	8	-	-	-	2
2022	36	12	5	-	-	5



 BROMLEY

# Electoral prospects

In 2022, it was possible to joke about Labour winning Bromley, while noting that it might only be a matter of time. Labour's current unpopularity undermines that caveat, and locally the Lib Dems have not rekindled their old strength. It's going to be mostly a Right-on-Right election. Where that will leave either option is hard to say with certainty. Bromley's wards divide into several groups, defined by geography and by demographic and political trends.

# The metropolitan corner

8 seats

Bromley has always had an inner London zone with more metropolitan characteristics than the rest of the borough. Penge has a London (SE20) rather than Kent postcode, and was in the old County of London from 1888 until 1900 before returning from Kent to the embrace of County Hall with the reorganisation of London government in 1965. The corner of the borough near Crystal Palace – hence Crystal Palace & Anerley ward – has an Overground station and trams run through Clock House. The Lib Dems used to do well in these parts.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Clock House	Lab	Lab	Lab	19.7	65.9	14.4	-	-
Crystal Palace & Anerley	Lab	Lab	x	10.9	60.8	8.2	20.1	-
Penge & Cator	Lab	Lab	Lab	11.6	57.2	7.6	23.5	-

This area has become increasingly like core London over the past 20 years, with more young people, renters, graduates, ethnic diversity and independent coffee shops – the whole package. This has been reflected in its voting behaviour. It swung by 14.4 per cent towards Labour between the elections of 2002 and 2018, and although boundary changes cloud the comparison it took another jump to the Left in 2022. The Greens came second in two out of three wards that year.

The metropolitan corner is probably sufficiently liberal that a well-organised Green campaign could win a seat or two, although they would be lucky to achieve the sort of turnover in their favour that seems possible for them in some inner boroughs.

# Central Bromley and Beckenham

14 seats

Bromley Town covers the town centre including its two stations and areas on either side of the A21 road and has a more typically London demographic than Bromley further out, making it fruitful for the Lib Dems four years ago. Suburban Kelsey & Eden Park, by contrast, recorded a full house of three for the Tories, with Labour not too far behind.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Beckenham Town & Copers Cope	LD	Con	LD	32.0	24.9	32.9	10.1	-
Bromley Town	LD	LD	LD	31.9	15.5	41.2	11.3	-
Kelsey & Eden Park	Con	Con	Con	45.1	38.2	14.4	-	2.3
Plaistow	Lab	Lab	x	37.8	42.4	8.8	8.7	2.2
Shortlands & Park Langley	Con	Con	Con	45.3	30.3	21.1	-	3.3

The area has followed the trend of a lot of built-up outer London town centres that are well-connected to the centre by public transport. They become younger, more educated, more diverse and are also where councils tend to want to put new, high-density developments. This has happened in Beckenham and the core of Bromley, creating potential for a centre-left party to gain seats from the Conservatives.

The Lib Dems translated this into seats in 2022 and stand a good chance of consolidating in 2026. Labour led the challenge in the three more residential wards in this block. In Kelsey & Eden Park and in Shortlands & Park Langley they made progress, though not enough to win.

Plaistow (not to be confused with the place in Newham) is an interesting ward, containing part of the

Downham estate, location of the infamous “class wall” that separated it from privately developed Alexandra Crescent from 1926 until 1950. Labour gained it in 2022 following boundary changes but it is, unlike the rest of this group, potentially vulnerable to Reform as well as to the Tories in 2026.

# Bromley suburbs

15 seats

The Conservative vote fell sharply in most of these five wards in 2022, but other than in Chislehurst, where the localist Chislehurst Matters Independents (CMI in the table below) stormed to victory, there was no challenge strong enough to defeat them.

The Labour share of the vote has trended slowly upward over time, suggesting that the same forces that have been working on closer-in wards are being felt in this lush suburbia. But whatever the long-term future, 2026 is not going to be the year Labour breaks through.

Alan Cook won the Bromley Common & Holwood by-election with 34 per cent of the vote, leaving the beaten Conservative with 29 per cent. UKIP got around 20 per cent in all these wards in 2014, suggesting a reasonable

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Bickley & Sundridge	Con	Con	Con	47.9	21.6	16.4	14.1	-
Bromley Common & Holwood	Con	Con	Con	42.2	27.3	15.1	15.4	-
Chislehurst	CHM	CHM	CHM	30.2	9.5	5.2	-	55.0
Hayes & Coney Hall	Con	Con	Con	44.6	23.8	12.8	18.7	-
West Wickham	Con	Con	Con	45.2	24.9	11.7	15.5	2.7

foundation for a Reform vote. One of the defectors from the Tories who joined Cook in Reform had been elected for Bickley & Sundridge.

Other than in Chislehurst, the contests look like being between Reform and the Conservatives, though note the 18.7 per cent the Greens got in Hayes & Coney Hall.

Bickley & Sundridge is probably the least favourable for Reform because of its relatively diverse and educated demographics, although we shall see what impact an incumbent councillor might have. The Conservatives were defeated but not blown away in the by-election, suggesting that the results in these wards could include some split verdicts.

# Orpington

10 seats

Orpington was the scene of a famous Liberal Party by-election victory in 1962 and the Liberal tradition continued for a long time. They ran the Tories close in 2001, but declined rapidly after that, losing most of their seats in 2002. Sporadic efforts at revival have not produced the desired results, although the Lib Dem vote is still above what might be expected from an area with Orpington’s demographics.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Chelsfield	Con	Con	x	48.9	14.5	24.0	12.7	-
Farnborough & Crofton	Con	Con	Con	50.7	18.8	18.7	11.8	-
Orpington	Con	Con	x	48.4	21.4	30.1	-	-
Petts Wood & Knoll	Con	Con	Con	55.4	20.2	24.4	-	-

It is older, whiter and less educated than most of London suburbia, characteristics that have predicted Conservative support in the past but more recently point to potential for Reform. The latter polled 19 per cent in the Orpington parliamentary constituency in 2024, and in 2014 UKIP won 28 per cent in Chelsfield and around 20 per cent elsewhere.

The Orpington wards are the most attractive targets for Reform other than the “council estate” wards. But it is possible that a Lib Dem or two might slip through against a divided right-wing vote.

# The ‘council estate’ wards

8 seats

Judging by their demographic and social background and bearing in mind the contours of UKIP support in 2014, the Bromley wards most likely to vote Reform are the ones based on the large “out-estates” built by London councils in the mid-20th Century and settled by white working-class people.

Stretching the definition slightly to include privately developed lower cost housing alongside the estates in the Cray valley, they are Mottingham (two seats), St Mary Cray (three seats) and St Paul’s Cray (three seats).

There are examples of these in several outer London boroughs: see also Barnet, Croydon, Havering, Redbridge, Sutton and Merton and the intriguing parallels in their electoral histories. These were formerly Labour

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Mottingham	Con	Con	x	41.1	34.4	9.4	10.5	5.6
St Mary Cray	Con	Con	Con	47.1	40.6	12.3	-	-
St Paul’s Cray	Lab	Con	Lab	36.1	37.4	10.0	-	16.4

strongholds but their solidarity started weakening a long time ago under the impact of the Right to Buy. This was particularly attractive to residents of these estates, which were often just public-sector versions of the property-owning dream of Metro-land suburbia.

The demographics of the estate wards have changed somewhat in the last decade, making their reputation as white enclaves increasingly inaccurate. But by London standards they have older, whiter, less highly-educated and more car-owning populations. This puts them squarely in the Reform target zone.

UKIP polled 26.6 per cent across the equivalent wards in 2014 and won two seats. If Swanley, just across the county boundary in Kent, voted 42 per cent for Reform in the 2025 county council elections, can the Crays not be expected to do likewise in 2026?

It is probable, therefore, that Reform will gain all eight seats in this category. That would be six gains from the Conservatives and two from Labour. If Reform lets any of them slip, though, they will be falling well short of their ambitions.

# The rural fringe

3 seats

Bromley has more genuinely rural territory within its borders than any other borough. Much of the acreage is in the single-member Darwin ward which covers the village of Downe, home of Nigel Farage. Biggin Hill is a small free-standing town with two councillors.

You might think that this little corner of rural England would be loyal to the Conservatives. You would be wrong. The Tories could only rely on Biggin Hill between gaining it from the Lib Dems in 2006 and losing it to the two ex-Tory incumbents who stood as Independents in 2018 following a messy selection process.

## Ward-level results (2022)

	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Biggin Hill	BHI	BHI	x	36.0	8.9	10.0	-	45.1
Darwin	Con	x	x	56.6	10.0	7.9	5.5	20.1

The Biggin Hill Independents (BHI in the table) held on comfortably in the 2022 elections, but it is one of their number who has since switched to the Tories. The other one is not defending her seat. Darwin ward has remained Conservative.

The rural wards gave UKIP their highest vote shares in Bromley in 2014 – 34.1 per cent in Darwin, 32.2 per cent in Biggin Hill – and they are demographically suitable for Reform.



BROMLEY

## What to watch for

The Conservatives will be lucky to still have majority control of Bromley after 7 May, although, one way or another, they might still end up forming a minority administration.