

Ealing

01

SINCE 2022 34

02

LOCAL LANDSCAPE 40

03

ELECTORAL PROSPECTS 46

- ↗ ACTON 47
- ↗ EALING CENTRAL 47
- ↗ HANWELL AND WEST EALING 47
- ↗ SOUTHALL 47
- ↗ NORTHOLT, GREENFORD AND PERIVALE 47

04

WHAT TO WATCH FOR 54

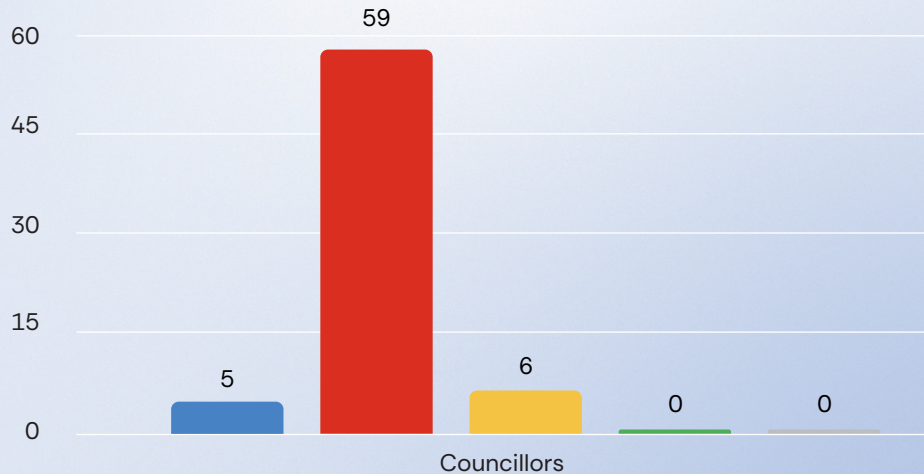
Since 2022

Labour Defence

Ealing’s political complexion used to change like the nation’s, but since 2010 it has got redder and redder. Labour won a lion’s share 59 of its 70 seats four years ago, leaving the Liberal Democrats (six) and the Conservatives (five) to console themselves with crumbs.

The former deprived the latter of one of theirs in an October 2024 by-election. On the same day, Labour retained two of its seats, sustaining a vote share drop in only one of them. In November, a Labour councillor decided to become an Independent and in February, a long-serving Labour councillor died, leaving her seat vacant for the time being. Nothing else has altered since May 2022. Unlike most Labour-run boroughs, the “Queen of the Suburbs” appears fairly serene.

Ealing Council result May 2022 | Total seats: 70



By-elections since May 2022

10 OCTOBER 2024	HANGER HILL	LD GAIN FROM CON
10 OCTOBER 2024	NORTHOLT MANDEVILLE	LAB HOLD
10 OCTOBER 2024	SOUTH ACTON	LAB HOLD

Reform UK and the Greens will hope to increase their vote, though, and the latter stand a chance of winning seats, but Ealing isn’t a big target for either. Any erosion of this particular red wall seems likely to be limited and perhaps counterbalanced by a general further fraying of Tory support in the few parts of the borough where the party is still in the game.

Local landscape

Ealing is shaped like an open-mouthed, short-legged dog trotting west from Hammersmith to Hillingdon. In political terms, its scarlet coat is disrupted only by a splash of different colours towards its tail. It hasn't always been this way: the Conservatives have come out on top in five of the 16 full sets of elections held in Ealing's history, including as recently as 2006. But larger London trends have overwhelmed them.

The borough contains seven distinct towns. At its eastern end is Acton, a mostly residential place which includes the 2,000-home, 1960s-built South Acton estate, currently going through a large and lengthy regeneration that began at the end of the last century. Acton is highly and historically multicultural, with Polish, Irish and Japanese in its mix.

The Ealing metropolitan centre contains a Central line western terminus and platforms for the very old District line and the very new Elizabeth line as well as the Civic Centre, the Broadway shopping centre, the Questors Theatre and the modern version of the Ealing film studios where, for decades, cinematic, often famously comedic, depictions of London and England were produced.

Ealing Council elections since 2002						
Year	Con	Lab	LD	UKIP/Ref	Green	Other
2002	17	48	4	-	-	-
2006	37	29	3	-	-	-
2010	24	40	5	-	-	-
2014	12	53	4	-	-	-
2018	8	57	4	-	-	-
2022	5	59	6	-	-	-

Much of the north of Ealing is a mix of public and private housing strung along the A40 and the Great Western railway line. Perivale is synonymous with an Art Deco architecture icon, the former Hoover Factory, now a branch of Tesco. Leafy Greenford contains a stretch of

the Grand Union Canal, which has a new, mixed-use waterside development. To the north west, Northolt contains an RAF base and a noted memorial to Polish airmen who fought for Britain in the Second World War. It pokes its wet nose into the side of Hillingdon next door.

Local landscape

Further south, Hanwell, replete with parks, lies to central Ealing's west. To Hanwell's west, the River Brent creates a line between it and the seventh town, Southall, known for its large South Asian community and, historically, for violent street battles between anti-racism demonstrators and the National Front and the police in the 1970s. A growing percentage of Ealing residents report their country of birth as India (8.7 per cent at the last Census).

A variegated borough, then, where Labour's London voter coalition has become formidable. You have to remind yourself that the old Greenford and Northolt wards voted Leave in the 2016 Referendum and others were only marginally for Remain. Ealing's politics tend to be temperate, though. The popularity of Conservatism has receded in parallel with that party's embrace of nationalist populism. Twenty-five Ealing Community Independent Party candidates will run in eleven wards, making the familiar hard Left pledges to end "austerity, cuts and privatisation", to disinvest from pension

funds that might have connections with Israel and simultaneously to resist "overdevelopment" and get more social housing built. There is no pact with the Greens, which means they will be vying with them to take Labour votes.

Under Peter Mason, the council's leader since he successfully challenged his predecessor in 2021, Ealing has won praise from the Local Government Association for an effective and collaborative approach. Mason inherited considerable public opposition to a radical pandemic-period Low Traffic Neighbourhood and cycle lane programme and similar dissent against plans for high-rise housing, seen by critics as being at odds with local character.

A determined "Stop The Towers" movement has campaigned against new high-rise dwellings, reportedly supported by environmental activists and Greens. There have been setbacks and the borough, like most others, has been falling short of its London plan housing targets.

But not by all that much. And Ealing has lately seen more affordable homes started than any other borough as supply across the capital has slumped.

Mason has long been mindful that changing work habits, hurried along by Covid, have had implications for Ealing. A Local Plan commitment to "sustainable polycentrism" is being pursued through a blend of community development approaches, combining new housing, workspace and a "20-minute neighbourhood" approach to local travel and provision of amenities. In population terms, Ealing has been growing a little faster and a little older than the London average. In is a borough in transition, seemingly managing the tensions that come with it expertly.

 EALING

Electoral prospects

As with every other borough, Labour will face pressure from several directions. However, there is no one party with enough of a base or sufficient potential for growth likely to threaten the party's large majority. The interest in Ealing concerns which of Labour's rivals will make the largest inroads into its majority, and where. To assess that, it is helpful to split the borough's 24 wards into five groups.

Acton

12 seats

Acton was absorbed into the borough of Ealing in 1965 but still retains a sense of being a bit different. While Ealing is suburban, Acton is an urban landscape of Victorian terraces and 20th Century council estates. It is crisscrossed by mainline, Overground and Underground lines and there is new high-density development in South Acton and North Acton - the high rise “Manhacton” - in particular. It has a diverse population.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
East Acton	Lab	Lab	Lab	17.9	50.1	7.6	16.4	8.0
North Acton	Lab	Lab	Lab	18.6	44.5	10.7	18.1	8.1
South Acton	Lab	Lab	Lab	14.9	48.8	9.9	20.3	6.1
Southfield	LD	LD	LD	16.2	20.2	47.4	16.2	-

The southernmost ward, Southfield, is a bit different. It adjoins Chiswick and is mostly filled by the highly attractive model estate, Bedford Park. It is also a liberal intellectual enclave, with graduates accounting for 66 per cent of its residents.

Acton well in the 2024 by-election. The Conservatives won six seats out of 12 in 2006, but seem out of the running now. The Greens might hold out some hopes, though the Ealing Community Independents have three candidates in South Acton.

Electoral behaviour can be read off from the social composition – three Labour wards and Lib Dem Southfield, all of them pretty safe. Labour held South

Ealing Central

9 seats

These wards are in the centre and east of Ealing, forming part of the Ealing Central & Acton parliamentary constituency. They are the plush suburban wards and, not coincidentally, the least Labour part of Ealing. The entire Conservative group comes from here. They held all the seats in Ealing Broadway in 2022, but by an unimpressive margin.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Ealing Broadway	Con	Con	Con	36.9	28.0	15.2	19.9	-
Ealing Common	LD	LD	Lab	18.4	28.4	35.3	16.1	1.8
Hanger Hill	LD	Con	Con	31.7	23.6	31.4	13.4	-

The Lib Dems won a seat in Hanger Hill on a huge swing in 2022 and continued to advance by gaining another seat there in the 2024 by-election. Ealing Common was split three ways between Conservative, Labour and veteran

(since 2002) Lib Dem Jon Ball, but the Tories lost their seat to the Lib Dems in 2022. It seems likely that Sir Ed Davey's party will advance further in 2026.

Hanwell and West Ealing

15 seats

There is a range of different sorts of neighbourhoods within this block of wards, from council-built estates to suburban avenues to terraces of commuting professionals. All of them are majority white, two of them – Walpole and Northfield, to the south west of central Ealing – by large margins.

There was a Labour wipe-out in 2022, but that was not a typical result and the Conservatives remained competitive in the three closest to central Ealing. Although the trends are against them, local activism and a split left-of-centre vote, with Ealing Community Independents running in Pitshanger (one) and Northfield (two), might see them revive. Hanwell Broadway, on the other hand, could see a Green challenge to Labour.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Hanwell Broadway	Lab	Lab	Lab	17.5	41.7	12.0	28.8	-
North Hanwell	Lab	Lab	Lab	18.6	48.3	10.5	19.1	3.5
Northfield	Lab	Lab	Lab	32.1	41.7	11.6	14.5	-
Pitshanger	Lab	Lab	Lab	27.7	38.1	16.2	16.1	1.9
Walpole	Lab	Lab	Lab	27.5	41.2	17.8	13.5	-

Southall

16 seats

Southall, like Acton, became part of the borough of Ealing in 1965 but has a distinctive identity. It is famed as a centre of British Asian (particularly Indian) culture. The last Census found that over 60 per cent of the populations of the three core Southall wards - Broadway, Green and West - are of South Asian heritage while White British accounted for below three percent, the smallest in London. The other three Southall wards are over 40 per cent South Asian.

The predominant religion is Sikh, although there are significant Hindu and Muslim communities. In built environment terms, central Southall is mostly Victorian terraces, but further out there are suburban avenues and council estates (the latter particularly in Norwood Green).

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Dormers Wells	Lab	Lab	Lab	15.1	58.4	7.2	9.1	10.2
Lady Margaret	Lab	Lab	Lab	17.6	62.1	7.6	12.7	-
Norwood Green	Lab	Lab	Lab	13.4	64.4	5.7	12.9	3.6
Southall Broadway	Lab	Lab	x	20.6	59.6	5.6	7.0	7.2
Southall Green	Lab	Lab	Lab	16.6	68.1	3.8	6.1	5.4
Southall West	Lab	Lab	x	17.9	58.1	4.2	7.5	12.3

Southall has been a rock for Labour candidates in most recent elections, remaining solid even at Labour's nadir in 2006. However, the party's vote shares dipped somewhat in 2022 from the stratospheric levels of 2014 and 2018, and the Conservative share twitched up a bit, perhaps echoing what was happening in wealthier Hindu communities in Harrow and Brent.

An end to Southall's Labour era seems unlikely, but the right Tory or Independent candidates might be able to make a dent. Green candidates are thin on the ground here, but Ealing Community Independents are standing for every seat in all of these wards except Lady Margaret. Council leader Peter Mason is defending Southall Green.

Northolt, Greenford and Perivale

18 seats

The inter-war suburbs along the A40 north of central Ealing used to have a mixture of white working-class and middle-class residents, but they are now only around 40 per cent white (and 20 per cent White British). They are, though, still fairly working-class by comparison with central and west Ealing or Acton.

Labour has enjoyed a monopoly since 2014, but the wards used to be marginals and might now qualify for that description again. The party's winning margins in 2022 were comfortable but in Central Greenford and Perivale, not overwhelming. Ealing Community Independents have two candidates in Greenford Broadway and one in Perivale. Meanwhile, this might be one of the more Reform-friendly bits of a generally hostile borough, though it is hard to see them winning a seat.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Central Greenford	Lab	Lab	Lab	25.9	49.5	9.4	12.1	3.1
Greenford Broadway	Lab	Lab	Lab	21.4	55.9	6.9	11.8	4.0
North Greenford	Lab	Lab	Lab	22.6	53.8	11.0	12.6	-
Northolt Mandeville	Lab	Lab	Lab	24.8	56.0	6.3	12.8	-
Northolt West End	Lab	Lab	Lab	17.3	62.2	7.8	12.8	-
Perivale	Lab	Lab	Lab	27.7	51.3	7.3	11.0	2.7



EALING

What to watch for

Ealing is likely to produce one of Labour's better results. There is not the same potential for the Greens, Lib Dems or Independent Left candidates as in many inner London boroughs. Neither is it far enough out nor demographically conducive to a major swing to the Right. Labour's majority will surely be reduced, but the well-organised local party should withstand that.