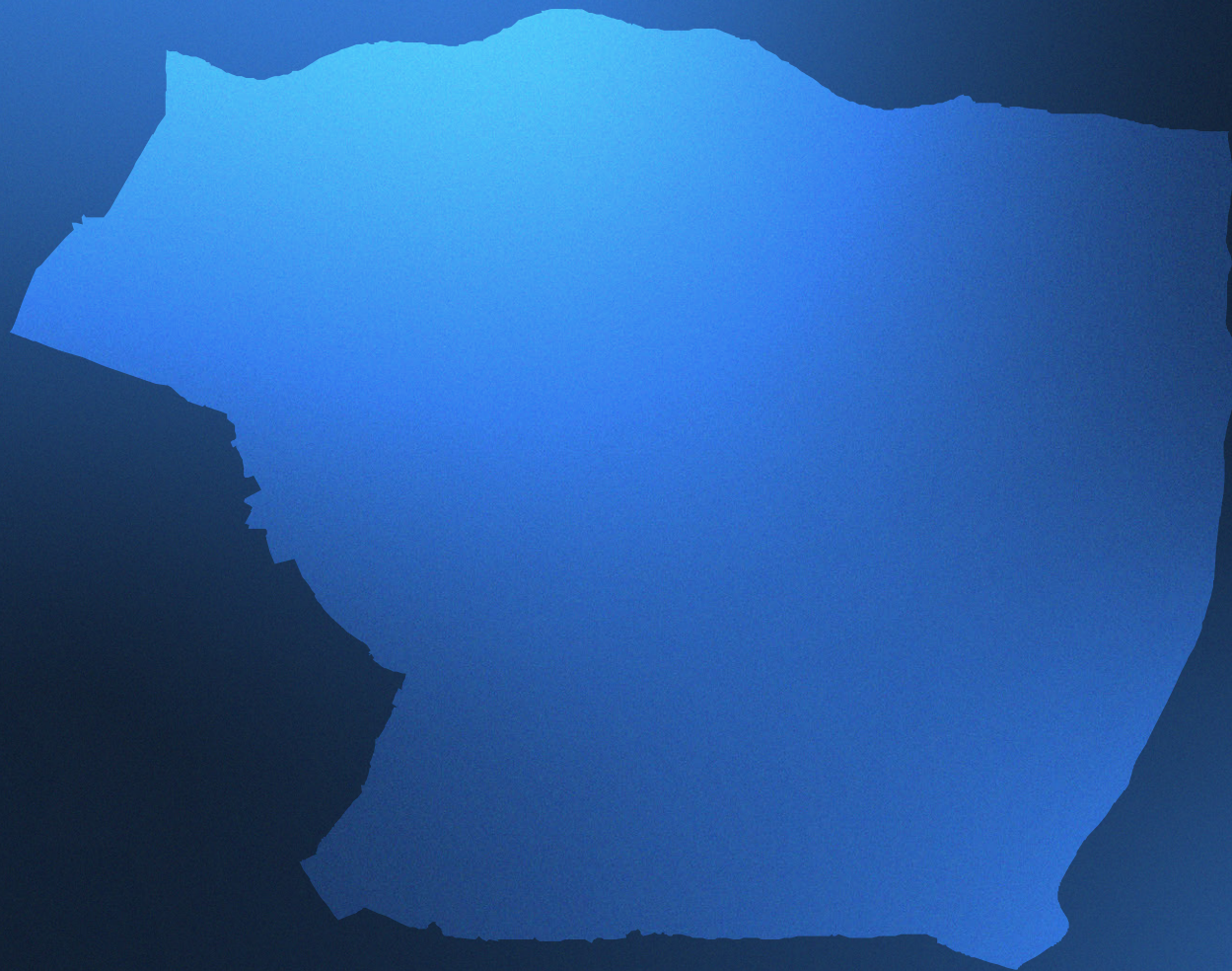


Enfield



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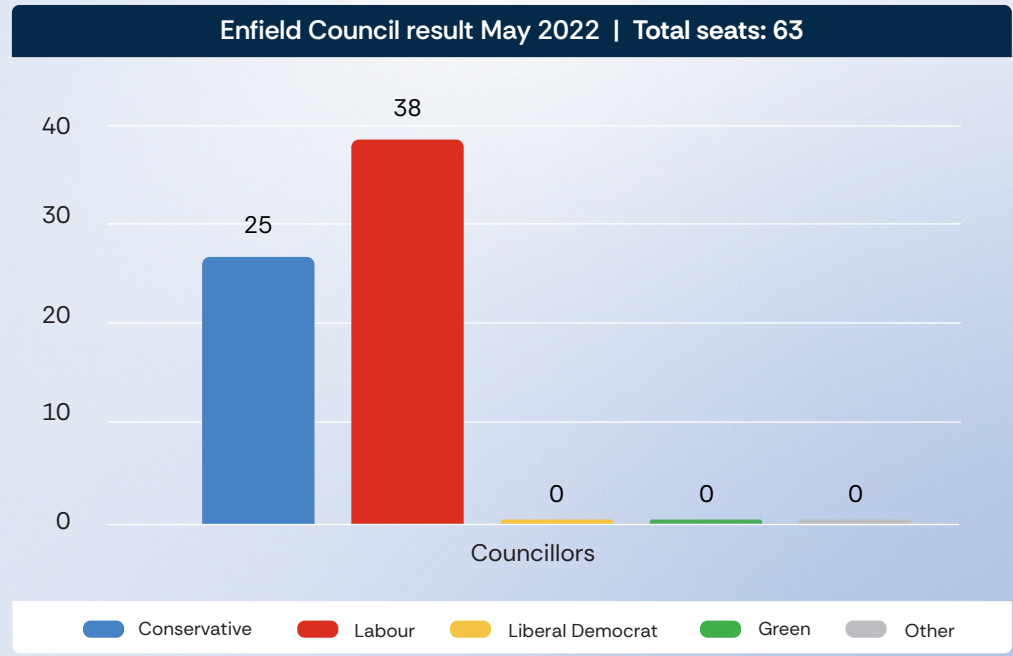
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Since 2022

Labour Defence

They didn't win, but in 2022 Enfield's Conservatives achieved their party's second biggest swing from Labour in the capital and closed the gap on them, securing 25 of the borough's 63 seats compared to Labour's 38. Other parties were barely in contention. The Tories are now thirsting to capture London's northernmost borough for the first time since 2006.



By-elections since May 2022

20 APRIL 2023	BULLSMOOR	LAB HOLD
28 NOVEMBER 2024	JUBILEE	LAB HOLD

Only two by-elections have taken place, producing two Labour holds but with reduced margins. But a great deal else has changed, including the leader of the council. And Labour will start this year's race with an advantage of only ten, as three of their 2022 intake now sit as Independents: one after being deselected and two under clouds. Like almost everywhere else, Enfield's electoral battleground is harder to read than before and the outcome could be finely-balanced.

Local landscape

A sign at Crews Hill station in the north of Enfield directs passengers to trains to London, as if, psychologically at least, it doesn't think it is part of the capital. And to be fair, it serves an area that is replete with garden centres – once described as “Britain’s horticultural mile” – and the line’s next northbound stop is a village in Hertfordshire.

That’s one aspect of Enfield. Others include Edmonton, a town of tower blocks in the south east of the borough that starts just south of the North Circular Road, Southgate, a 1930s suburb with Tube station designs to match, and rural Cockfosters at the end of the Piccadilly line.

Around one third of Enfield residents defined themselves at the last Census as White British, with Black African and Black Caribbean chosen by more than five per cent in each case. Enfield is, though, perhaps more noted for those who identify as Turkish, Turkish Cypriot or Kurdish (over nine per cent collectively in 2021) and for those of Greek or Greek Cypriot heritage (over four per cent). A quarter of all Turkish Cypriots in England and Wales live in Enfield, as do almost a quarter of all Greek Cypriots. Enfield also has the fifth highest Somali population.

Enfield Council elections since 2002						
Year	Con	Lab	LD	UKIP/Ref	Green	Other
2002	39	24	-	-	-	-
2006	34	27	-	-	-	-
2010	27	36	-	-	-	-
2014	22	41	-	-	-	-
2018	17	46	-	-	-	-
2022	25	38	-	-	-	-

It is a prosperous borough in many parts, but poor in others: its overall poverty rate of 32 per cent is in the top half of the borough league table and nearly 21 per cent of its people receive out of work benefits.

Local landscape

Politically, Enfield has become a borough of two halves, with the east and the south (where Enfield meets Haringey) coloured red on the 2022 results map, and the west, north and most of the centre, blue. In line with the London trend, it got redder and redder from 2010, when the last Tory term came to an end. But that went into reverse four years ago, as the Conservatives gained eight seats at Labour's expense with a swing in their favour of 5.3 per cent. Only Barking & Dagenham saw a bigger switch from "Lab" to "Con". Surely, they will finish the job this time. Maybe. But not so fast.

The Labour administration has been troubled by controversy, disruption and scandal. Council leader Ergin Erbil, who took over from Nesil Caliskan in September 2024 after she became MP for Barking, inherited ongoing ructions about Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs), the large and largely stalled Meridian Water regeneration project and, most of all, the council's plans for the development of local Green Belt land for housing – plans Sir Sadiq Khan at first opposed.

That difference of opinion has been superseded by subsequent events as London's housing supply pipeline has dried up. Not only is Khan now exploring Green Belt development, the government has selected Crews Hill

and the nearby area known as Chase Park as one of its first-choice sites for a New Town. If Green Belt building was a hot Enfield topic before, it is an even hotter one now.

Labour has hardly been helped by the circumstances surrounding two of the three councillors it has lost. One was suspended after it emerged that he was the subject of a police investigation. He continues to sit as an Independent. The other was the borough's civic mayor, who had to stand down in August after he was sanctioned for bringing his office into disrepute by using his position to support visa applications for family and friends. He has since complied with a conduct committee order to make a written apology, but he remains an Independent councillor.

None of this has done wonders for Labour's chances. However, the path to a Conservative majority is not straightforward. Some hefty Labour margins will have to be erased and the Tories' task will be made no easier by Reform coming at them from the Right with a full slate of candidates.

Conservative group leader Alessandro Georgiou said in an interview with the Enfield Dispatch newspaper last

June that "Enfield is not a Reformy place" and that if Nigel Farage's party thought it could make gains there it needed its head examined. However, Georgiou has been positioning himself as a fervent grassroots nationalist, including in his other job as a member of the London Assembly. A self-described "mate" of former London Mayor candidate and fellow Tory Assembly member, Susan Hall, he, like Reform UK deputy leader Richard Tice, has revived the insult "Commie" to describe Sir Keir Starmer and defended Tice's party against accusations that it is dangerously right wing.

Displaying considerable ambition, he has even sought to portray the September 2025 "Unite the Kingdom" march through central London, led by far-Right agitator Tommy Robinson, as a glorious demonstration of multi-ethnic unity under the national flag. He has also vowed to do away with local LTNs, despite a recent court ruling relating to Tower Hamlets suggesting doing so might not be straightforward.

Erbil and Georgiou have indulged in impolite social media exchanges, yet have some things in common. Both were born at the local Chase Farm Hospital and grew up in Edmonton. Now, both must maximise support from local residents if they are to win on 7 May.

 ENFIELD

Electoral prospects

The Conservatives need a net gain of seven seats to win a majority on Enfield Council for the first time since 2006. They look on course for two, but after that it gets difficult. Careful targeting could get them over the line, but there is a lot that can go wrong. Reform could take several seats and a share of the right-wing vote in other areas.

Edmonton

15 seats

Edmonton is in the south east of the borough, bordering Tottenham and sharing many of its features. It is an established, highly diverse area. The highest White British proportion in any ward is Jubilee’s 20 per cent. There are large black communities of various origins and, like much of Enfield, many people of Cypriot origin. The Muslim share is 25-31 per cent.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Edmonton Green	Lab	Lab	Lab	11.7	52.1	3.9	9.8	22.5
Haselbury	Lab	Lab	Lab	20.0	55.9	8.1	16.0	-
Jubilee	Lab	Lab	Lab	22.5	54.9	6.7	11.0	5.0
Lower Edmonton	Lab	Lab	Lab	17.6	63.4	7.1	11.9	-
Upper Edmonton	Lab	Lab	Lab	15.7	68.3	6.0	10.0	-

Labour is very strong in these wards. The Conservatives got one councillor elected in Jubilee in 2002 and 2006, but other than that Labour has had a monopoly on representation in this block. The Tories are not completely down and out in Jubilee (they had an 11-point swing in their favour in the November 2024 by-

election), and candidates of the Jeremy Corbyn-backed Enfield Community Independents are contesting all five wards, stressing their desire to unseat the council leader in Edmonton Green. But even in a bad year for Labour, such as this one, most of these wards look safe for them.

Winchmore Hill

9 seats

The four wards of the Edmonton & Winchmore Hill parliamentary constituency that lie west of the A10 arterial road are rather different from the core of Edmonton to the east. These are white majority, owner-occupied suburbia with very little social housing.

Labour councillors were elected in some of these wards under their old boundaries – Bush Hill Park in 2014 and Winchmore Hill in 2014 and 2018 – but the Tories have achieved strong swings and, other than in the newly-drawn Labour marginal of Highfield, they had decent majorities in three of the four wards in 2022. Highfield looks their best bet for seat gains this time.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Bush Hill Park	Con	Con	Con	48.2	28.0	9.7	12.5	1.7
Grange Park	Con	Con	x	54.4	23.3	10.7	11.6	-
Highfield	Lab	Lab	x	36.0	41.6	12.1	10.3	-
Winchmore Hill	Con	Con	x	48.9	26.2	12.2	12.7	-

Palmers Green

8 seats

This is the south-western corner of Enfield, an inner suburb either side of the non-dualled stretch of the North Circular Road. That grimy stretch is unrepresentative as these are generally pleasant suburbs, from Bowes’s neat terraces to the urban parks of Arnos Grove. They resemble middle-class inner London areas like Wood Green in Haringey, just across the border, in being highly diverse and mainly split between owner occupation and private renting. Bowes and Palmers Green are very high in the Other White Census category, reflecting the Cypriot influence there.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Arnos Grove	Con	Con	x	42.9	30.3	16.0	10.7	-
Bowes	Lab	Lab	x	31.1	47.1	8.9	12.8	-
New Southgate	Lab	Lab	x	27.4	49.7	9.5	13.4	-
Palmers Green	Lab	Lab	x	27.0	48.3	12.4	10.9	1.5

On the face of it, this social composition seems unlikely to produce a viable Conservative vote. The wards look like the sort of places where Labour has been on top but is now threatened by the Greens. However, the local politics of Enfield in 2022 produced some decent Tory results: Arnos Grove was a gain (the predecessor ward

Southgate Green was all Labour in 2018) and they did well to get within 20 percentage points in Bowes. The Tories might have hopes of making more progress in 2026 if Labour falls further and the centre-left vote becomes more split.

Southgate

7 seats

These suburbs at the north end of the Piccadilly line returned seven out of seven Conservative councillors in 2022, though Labour had won two out of three in Southgate at the Conservatives' 2018 nadir.

Parts of Cockfosters are quite posh, particularly Hadley Wood off to the north west of the main body of the ward, and the others are affluent and pleasant, a continuation of the suburban belt in Barnet.

The Enfield wards were a bit more Conservative than their Barnet neighbours in the 2022 elections. They do not seem the most likely to be receptive to Reform, so are likely to stay Tory in 2026, although the Greens will be wishing to build on their respectable 2022 Southgate ward result.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Cockfosters	Con	Con	x	56.1	24.1	9.2	10.6	-
Oakwood	Con	Con	x	49.4	28.6	10.5	11.5	-
Southgate	Con	Con	Con	39.8	29.1	7.1	23.9	-

East Enfield

12 seats

Enfield, the town rather than the borough, is rather abruptly divided between east and west. The lower-lying eastern land between the A10 and the River Lea is a working-class area with a manufacturing tradition, although the Enfield Lock gun factory is now a residential development. The White British proportion of the population fell steeply between 2011 and 2021 (around 12 percentage points) and all the wards are now ethnically diverse, with both black and South Asian communities.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Brimsdown	Lab	Lab	Lab	24.7	55.5	6.2	11.4	2.2
Bullsmoor	Lab	Lab	x	29.7	50.7	7.8	9.8	2.0
Carterhatch	Lab	Lab	x	22.7	61.4	6.0	9.9	-
Enfield Lock	Lab	Lab	Lab	24.8	52.9	9.0	13.3	-
Ponders End	Lab	Lab	x	24.9	56.3	8.6	10.2	-

East Enfield usually votes Labour. The Conservatives have had representation there in their better years, but social change may have put them beyond their reach. Ponders End, adjoining Edmonton, and Carterhatch, with its high proportion of social housing, had large Labour majorities in 2022, which was not a very good Labour year in Enfield.

Another element in the northernmost wards – Brimsdown, Bullsmoor and Enfield Lock – is that they are potentially the sort of places where Reform could secure a respectable share of the vote. UKIP got 18 per cent there in 2014. It seems possible that Labour would survive another downward lurch in vote share, but also possible that they could lose to either the Tories or Reform.

Enfield Town

12 seats

The west side of Enfield town is the more middle-class part, clustered around its old church and a rather cosy Overground terminus. The most desirable neighbourhoods are in the Ridgeway ward, furthest west. It, Town and Whitewebbs are the only three wards in Enfield where a majority of the population in the 2021 Census defined itself as White British.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Ridgeway	Con	Con	Con	53.0	21.4	9.3	14.5	1.9
Southbury	Lab	Lab	Lab	31.3	45.0	7.5	13.7	2.6
Town	Con	Con	Con	42.5	30.3	9.0	18.3	-
Whitewebbs	Con	Con	Con	38.2	26.6	21.7	11.8	-

Enfield town is predominantly a comfortable area on the edge of the metropolis with, for London, high levels of car ownership and only average numbers of degree-holders. Southbury is demographically a bit different, an area characterised by a transition from working-class east Enfield. The Crews Hill and Chase Farm New Town developments would fall mostly within the Whitewebbs and Ridgeway wards respectively.

After 2018 it looked as if politics and demography might be shifting Enfield town inexorably to Labour. But the Conservatives managed a partial fightback in 2022, winning Whitewebbs whose predecessor ward, Chase, had returned three Labour councillors in 2018. They also trimmed the Labour majority right down in Southbury. However, in 2026 the Tories might be vulnerable to Reform here too – UKIP polled 17–18 per cent in the wards in this area they fought in 2014.



ENFIELD

What to watch for

The Conservatives could just get over the majority line, but plenty could go wrong: they are still running up a down escalator in terms of demographics and face competition from Reform, which could take several Enfield seats. With Labour likely to slide, a hung council and a Conservative administration governing with the permission of Reform seems like a feasible outcome.