

# Hammersmith & Fulham



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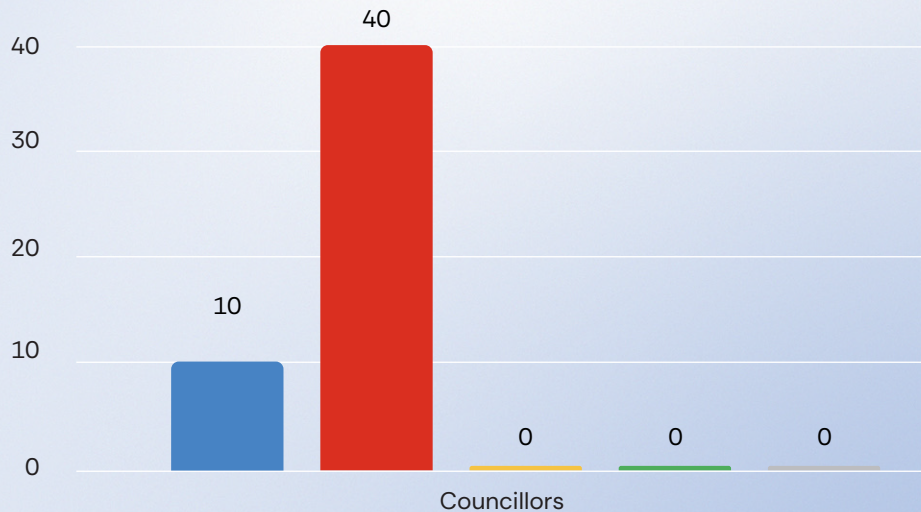
# Since 2022

## Labour Defence

Labour's most recent large winning margin underlined yet again how far the Conservatives have fallen in this borough since the days when David Cameron called it his favourite council and Boris Johnson was the last Tory administration's big chum in City Hall. They seem never to have recovered from the shock of losing power in 2014. Can they prune or overcome Labour's 40-10 seat advantage of four years ago?

Three by-elections, all since the general election, have seen two Labour holds with reduced vote shares in the region of 20 per cent and a more solid Tory hold. But there's been no sign in these results of a consistent swing towards the Tories. They were even pipped for second place in one of them by Reform, whose candidates have got more than ten per cent in each of the trio of contests. Other parties have yet to make such inroads.

### Hammersmith & Fulham Council result May 2022 | Total seats: 50



Labour lost one of its 2022 intake in 2023 – he resigned from the party after being suspended – and two more switched to the Greens last summer. Otherwise, they are intact and looking difficult to beat.

### By-elections since May 2022

20 FEBRUARY 2025	HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY	LAB HOLD
20 FEBRUARY 2025	LILLIE	LAB HOLD
03 JULY 2025	FULHAM TOWN	CON HOLD

# Local landscape

Covering 6.3 square miles, Hammersmith & Fulham is one of the smallest local authority areas in England. Home to about 188,000 people, it is also one of the most densely populated, despite the growth in absolute numbers slowing. It crams a lot into a small space.

At the borough’s southern end, where it meets the north bank of one of the big curves of the Thames, Fulham provides a classic early case of London gentrification. Tight terraces that had been home to workers in old industries were bought up and done up by the professional classes during the 1980s.

That riverfront end also takes in Parsons Green and the Hurlingham private members club and gives access to Wandsworth via Putney Bridge and Wandsworth Bridge. Fulham Football Club, the Premier League’s quaintest, looks out across the water too, including, every spring, at the Oxford–Cambridge boat race passing by. In this territory, we find surviving Conservative support.

Move north, perhaps up Fulham Palace Road or North End Road, and you’re into the more mixed areas of Barons Court, West Kensington and Hammersmith, all strung along a section of the A4 Great West Road that cuts through the borough on its east–west axis. On the west side, where the river forms another part of the

Hammersmith & Fulham Council elections since 2002						
Year	Con	Lab	LD	UKIP/Ref	Green	Other
2002	18	28	-	-	-	-
2006	33	13	-	-	-	-
2010	31	15	-	-	-	-
2014	20	26	-	-	-	-
2018	11	35	-	-	-	-
2022	10	40	-	-	-	-

borough border, find the Riverside Studios culture venue adjacent to Hammersmith Bridge. On the east we find Chelsea Football Club and half of the huge Earl’s Court redevelopment scheme, which aims to fill the space left vacant by the demolition of the famous exhibition centre

of that name under a previous, failed project (the other half is in Kensington & Chelsea next door).

# Local landscape

Keep going, and Shepherd's Bush offers a century-old street market, a much newer Westfield mall and the borough's third famous football club, Queens Park Rangers. White City takes its name from the plaster used in the construction of the pavilions of a separate exhibition site in the early 1900s. A White City Stadium built at the same time hosted the 1908 Olympics. It was demolished in the 1980s and, until recently, the BBC filled the space. Eventually, you come to a piece of the A40 Westway and then the open space of Wormwood Scrubs, a name also attached to a local prison.

The borough's housing is split roughly three ways between social rented, owner occupied and private rented, with the latter on the rise. It is notably expensive. International companies such as Disney and L'Oreal have their UK headquarters in Hammersmith, demonstrating that parts of Hammersmith & Fulham aren't far from the West End. It is cosmopolitan too, with 46 per cent of its residents born overseas – high even by London standards. To the familiar London mix can be added thousands from Italy, France, Spain and the United States. This is not a Brexit borough.

Council leader Stephen Cowan has cemented Labour's position with a single-minded view of what is wanted by his blend of residents. He has declared "ruthless financial efficiency" as a core value and boasts one of the lowest Council Tax bills in the country while giving four out of ten households some form of discount. This year, it's going up by 4.99 per cent, though the borough chose not to take advantage of the "fair funding" dispensation bestowed on it (and four other boroughs) by the government to go above that figure if it wished.

There was an early, wary stance towards the development sector, contrasting starkly with the eager overtures of the Tories Labour replaced. Cowan has, though, been more positive towards the current Earls Court scheme, having fought its predecessor. Its objectives are consistent with the council's industrial strategy, Upstream London, launched in 2017, which seeks investment in new technologies, including in the White City complex.

The councillor who was suspended by Labour and then resigned from the party had been accused of sharing

antisemitic content online. He strongly denied the charge, though local media reported a number of such cases on his Twitter feed, along with endorsements of homophobic views, Covid conspiracy theories and more.

The two who left to join the Greens in July 2025 complained that Sir Keir Starmer had moved the Labour Party to the Right and claimed that the local party would not tolerate debate or criticism and left local residents ignored. In 2022, the Greens attracted over 10 per cent of the vote in the two wards they've come to represent, but there's a lot of catching up to do in both and neither of the defectors is defending their seat.

Hammersmith & Fulham is a good example of a part of London where Conservatism triumphed for a couple of terms early this century, but has since become far less attractive to a range of residents in parallel with its embrace of populist themes that alienate some who would once have been natural Tory supporters. Labour has taken full advantage.

 HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

# Electoral prospects

Although Hammersmith & Fulham has been a mainstay of two-party politics – the last time any other candidates were elected was a couple of Lib Dems in 1994 – it cannot be entirely insulated against the collapse of the Labour–Conservative duopoly. We can expect a bit of splintering and a sharp drop from the combined vote of 81 per cent Labour (with 54 per cent) and the Conservatives (with 27 per cent) received in 2022. But other parties may still struggle to win seats.

# Shepherd's Bush

15 seats

Shepherd's Bush is a strongly and reliably Labour area. Even at Labour's low point in 2006 the Conservatives barely made any inroads. The sole Tory candidate to win a seat that year got home by just four votes, in Shepherd's Bush Green (which had different boundaries at that time). In 2022, voting in these wards was nearly monolithic. There were none where an opponent came within 40 points of the Labour slate.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
College Park & Old Oak	Lab	Lab	Lab	14.4	72.0	13.7	-	-
Coningham	Lab	Lab	Lab	12.9	60.2	7.3	19.7	-
Shepherd's Bush Green	Lab	Lab	x	14.2	70.5	15.3	-	-
Wendell Park	Lab	Lab	x	19.8	62.6	17.6	-	-
White City	Lab	Lab	Lab	9.9	63.3	10.5	16.2	-
Wormholt	Lab	Lab	x	14.9	60.7	9.5	15.0	-

Most of these wards have a large amount of social housing, particularly College Park & Old Oak (51 per cent) and White City (47 per cent). There are large new commercial and residential developments underway in several parts of the area – around Old Oak in the far north, White City and Shepherd's Bush – but these have so far not altered the political balance.

Even if Labour sheds a lot of support in 2026, it is hard to see where an opposition candidate could get much traction. The Greens might be able to get a decent percentage in White City – their target ward in the borough – or Shepherd's Bush Green on the general principle that they do well in newly-created communities and that these wards have relatively large Muslim communities (25 and 18 per cent respectively) for the borough.

# Hammersmith

9 seats

Hammersmith looks almost as massively Labour as Shepherd’s Bush on the basis of the last couple of rounds of local elections, but there is more variety beneath the surface. The Conservatives have won a predecessor version of Ravenscourt Park as recently as 2014 and Fulham Reach in 2010, but their support has been reduced in affluent, cosmopolitan, rather liberal wards like these by Brexit and populism.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Fulham Reach	Lab	Lab	Lab	24.8	63.3	11.9	-	-
Grove	Lab	Lab	x	16.7	66.4	16.6	-	-
Hammersmith Broadway	Lab	Lab	x	18.0	72.7	9.3	-	-
Ravenscourt	Lab	Lab	x	23.0	53.5	10.8	12.6	-

The Labour administration, particularly in the form of its low tax policy, has offered a political approach that goes down well in these areas. But it is still astonishing that wards as plush as Ravenscourt and Grove (which contains the self-styled Brackenbury Village) have returned huge Labour majorities.

Will they survive the ill winds of 2026? The Greens were not geared up to contest the wards in 2022 and it is

not a target seat. There might also be a market for the Lib Dems, but Labour is well organised.

The centre-left block is strong enough in these wards to survive a bit of vote-splitting. Labour comfortably defended its seat in Hammersmith Broadway in the February 2025 by-election, which was notable for a split anti-Labour vote and Reform achieving its first London by-election second place.

# West Kensington

9 seats

The wards between Hammersmith Broadway and Kensington proper, served by Barons Court and West Kensington stations (and Shepherd’s Bush just off to the north), are the traditional high-swing marginal territory of closely-fought Hammersmith & Fulham elections.

The predecessor wards were all Conservative in 2006 and only one Labour councillor was elected in 2010. The scale of the Conservative collapse – and the Labour ascendancy – is apparent from the blowout margins Labour enjoyed in 2022. Only in Brook Green, now the nearest thing to a marginal in the north of the borough, was Labour’s lead a bit less than 30 points.

The key demographic facts about these wards are that they have large numbers of young professionals of

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Addison	Lab	Lab	x	14.9	70.4	14.7	-	-
Avonmore	Lab	Lab	x	23.1	61.4	15.5	-	-
Brook Green	Lab	Lab	x	30.3	57.0	12.7	-	-
West Kensington	Lab	Lab	Lab	20.3	64.4	12.8	-	2.5

diverse backgrounds renting their homes and a reasonable-sized (21–33 per cent) social rented sector that provides a solid anchor for a Labour vote.

The estate demolition plans backed by the Conservatives under the abandoned Earls Court regeneration scheme were an issue in 2014. Also, these wards are home to many EU nationals. Much of the Census’s “Other White” population of 26–30 per cent will be in this category, with settled immigration status granting local election voting rights.

To win, the Conservatives need sufficient strength among Generation Rent. For a while in the past, they had it: they won nine seats to Labour’s none in 2006, eight to Labour’s one in 2010 and still got three out of the nine in 2014, when they lost control of the council. Their hopes this time depend on the centre-left vote fragmenting in Brook Green and letting them in. Winning in the other wards from Labour looks like a stretch for anyone unless the Greens really get their act together.

# West Fulham

8 seats

West Fulham has always been the Conservatives' best area in Hammersmith & Fulham, although even there their vote shares and leads worn thin in 2022.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Fulham Town	Con	Con	x	45.9	27.6	26.6	-	-
Munster	Con	Con	Con	42.4	31.9	25.8	-	-
Palace & Hurlingham	Con	Con	Con	44.1	23.7	14.3	13.4	4.5

The area, mostly terraced Victorian housing with the occasional private mansion block, has long since gentrified and has a very high proportion of professional and managerial workers (55-57 per cent).

owner-occupiers and much less social housing. The Lib Dems made an effort in two of the wards in 2022, but did not make any headway in the July 2025 by-Fulham Town election. This is very much not Reform territory.

It differs from West Kensington or East Fulham by being wealthier and in having a larger settled rich population of

# East Fulham

9 seats

With the exception of Parsons Green & Sandford, stretched along New King’s Road almost like a corridor of affluence between Chelsea and Fulham, these wards are more of a mixture than those in the west. They have a lot more social housing (29-38 per cent) and a White British plurality rather than an outright majority.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Lillie	Lab	Lab	x	25.3	63.5	11.2	-	-
Parsons Green & Sandford	Con	Con	x	55.0	29.3	15.7	-	-
Sands End	Lab	Lab	Lab	39.4	49.8	10.8	-	-
Walham Green	Lab	Lab	x	26.6	52.9	10.2	10.3	-

This area is, like West Kensington to the north, traditionally marginal. The Conservatives won everything in 2006 and 2010, albeit on more favourable boundaries. But the combination of social housing, ethnic diversity and young professional renters has given Labour a decisive advantage in recent elections.

Sands End, which combines the elite Imperial Wharf development with more traditional terraces and estates, is a marginal. The Conservatives held the ward even when

they lost the council in 2014. Labour won in 2018 and 2022 but by much less florid margins than in Hammersmith or West Kensington. It will be a Tory target in 2026.

The Conservatives did well in the February 2025 by-election in Lillie, gaining a 14 per cent swing. This might suggest that the Fulham wards – and maybe Avonmore and Brook Green – could swing back a long way, and with a more fragmented centre-Left vote that might be enough for the Tories to pick off a seat or two.



## HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

# What to watch for

Although a marginal borough in the past, the Conservatives would have to cut deep into some large Labour majorities even to come close, and these metropolitan liberal areas seem unlikely to give them the chance unless there is a collapse in turnout on the other side.