

Lambeth



01

SINCE 2022 246

02

LOCAL LANDSCAPE 247

03

ELECTORAL PROSPECTS 248

- ↗ NORTH LAMBETH 249
- ↗ STOCKWELL 250
- ↗ BRIXTON 251
- ↗ CLAPHAM 251
- ↗ STREATHAM 253
- ↗ NORWOOD 255

04

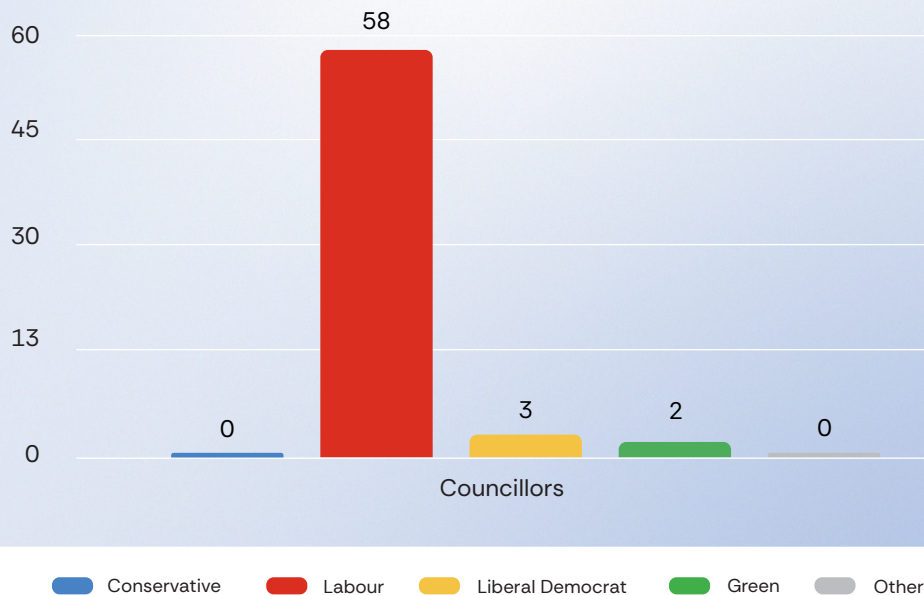
WHAT TO WATCH FOR 256

Since 2022

Labour Defence

The Greens lost ground in Lambeth last time round, dropping from five seats won in 2018 to two. The Liberal Democrats did better, winning three seats. The Conservatives were wiped out and Labour's victory was monumental, with 58 triumphs out of 63. The question this time, as in other inner London Labour controlled boroughs, is how much more damage a resurgent Greens might inflict on Labour than they have achieved before.

Lambeth Council result May 2022 | Total seats: 63



Some of the five by-elections held since May 2022 have been instructive. A comfortable Labour hold in autumn 2023 was followed by two more on general election day, though one of them saw a big drop in vote share as locals made known their annoyance with a newly-installed Low Traffic Neighbourhood. A second by-election took place in one of the same wards two months later, due to an incumbent becoming an MP. Labour's defence that time was far easier. But the most recent by-election, held in May 2025 – also caused by a Labour councillor ascending to the Commons – saw the Greens knock Labour out. The swing wasn't huge but, from Labour's point of view, perhaps ominous.

By-elections since May 2022

05 OCTOBER 2023	VAUXHALL	LAB HOLD
02 MAY 2024	KNIGHT'S HILL	LAB HOLD
02 MAY 2024	STREATHAM COMMON & VALE	LAB HOLD
04 JULY 2024	STREATHAM COMMON & VALE	LAB HOLD
01 MAY 2025	HERNE HILL & LOUGHBOROUGH JUNCTION	GREEN GAIN FROM LAB

The Greens have also picked up a defector from Labour. So have the Lib Dems, taking both parties' totals up to four. Labour lost another councillor last July after criminal charges were brought against him. He became an Independent. Labour, then, was down from 58 to 54 out of 63 as the formal campaigning period began. Don't expect it to go back up.

Local landscape

Lambeth stretches southwards from a slanting Thames waterfront studded with major cultural attractions through a succession of progressively more suburban neighbourhoods such as Streatham and west Dulwich before coming to a halt at its border with Croydon and Outer London. It is linked to the north side of the river by Hungerford rail bridge, the Golden Jubilee pedestrian bridges that flank it (often known as the Hungerford foot bridges) and by four famous road bridges: Waterloo, Lambeth, Vauxhall and Westminster, the last of which ushers you towards Parliament Square.

The borough is served by the Northern and Victoria London Underground lines, the latter terminating at Brixton in the heart of Lambeth with its famous market and imposing Town Hall. Lambeth in the 1980s was marked by political and social turbulence. These were profound, yet also masked the borough’s more tranquil and harmonious characteristics. Like other inner London boroughs, Lambeth has seen rapid gentrification during this century with a variety of effects, including protests against it.

Politically, Labour has dominated Lambeth for most of this century, and increasingly so since 2014. The exception was 2002, which saw a Lib Dem–Conservative coalition emerge from a No Overall Control result.

Lambeth Council elections since 2002							
Year	Con	Lab	LD	UKIP/Ref	Green	Other	
2002	7	28	28	-	-	-	
2006	6	39	17	-	1	-	
2010	4	44	15	-	-	-	
2014	3	59	-	-	1	-	
2018	1	57	-	-	5	-	
2022	-	58	3	-	2	-	

The council has been led since 2021 by Claire Holland, who in 2024 was elected chair of London Councils, the influential cross-party body that represents all of the capital’s local authorities. Holland has been a keen advocate of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and “active travel” policies, some of which have encountered resistance both from the public and the law: in June 2025, the High Court ordered the council to immediately remove an LTN in West Dulwich after concluding that it hadn’t been implemented correctly. Holland, however, remains committed to this direction of transport travel,

arguing that it contributes to her wider pro-growth and pro-development objectives for the borough.

Electorally, she and Labour now face a major challenge from the Greens, who have made small inroads in every full set of elections since 2014 and will be hoping for much bigger ones this time – perhaps even a majority. Most of Labour’s Lambeth heartland has much the same social mix and political orientation. It looks like a solid wall, but if one part of it can crumble, so can many others.

 LAMBETH

Electoral prospects

A lot of Lambeth wards generated similar electoral patterns in 2022: Labour won something like 55 to 60 per cent of the vote with the Greens in distant second places, around 35 to 40 points behind. On the face of it, such seats are safe for Labour. But a 20 per cent swing from Labour to Green would make all of them close contests, with the Greens having the edge.

A very rough projection of ward results on that basis yields 18 Labour councillors, 39 Green and six Lib Dems. In other words, a Green-led council with a comfortable majority secured with a smaller movement away from Labour than the party achieved to win the Gorton & Denton by-election.



North Lambeth

8 seats

Lambeth is one of a number of boroughs formed on a radial pattern – a pie slice with the narrow bit near central London and the wide crust out in the suburbs. The thin end of the wedge is the area around Waterloo, Vauxhall and Kennington stations.

Vauxhall has been massively redeveloped in recent years. The top of Wandsworth Road has become a gleaming cluster of high-rises, part of the wider Nine Elms area. Vauxhall's population grew by 3,000 between 2011 and 2021 and will have continued to rise rapidly, with 95 per cent of residents living in flats. But that ward and its neighbours have established communities as well, both of the professional middle classes, who have long cherished the Georgian streets of Kennington, and occupants of council estates. Kennington is 48 per cent social renting, Waterloo & South Bank 36 per cent.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Kennington	Lab	Lab	Lab	10.3	56.1	10.7	22.9	-
Vauxhall	Lab	Lab	Lab	15.8	55.7	11.8	16.8	-
Waterloo & South Bank	Lab	Lab	x	10.7	41.7	36.7	10.8	-

This area has a fascinating history of competition between Labour and the Lib Dems (and their forerunners) going back to the 1920s. Bishop's ward (the predecessor to Waterloo & South Bank, named for Lambeth Palace) and Prince's (Kennington/Vauxhall) were the first Lambeth wards where the SDP-Liberal Alliance broke through in the 1980s, although Labour gained Prince's in 2006 and Bishop's in 2014.

In 2022 the Lib Dems concentrated their campaign in Waterloo & South Bank but fell 67 votes short of winning a seat. They did respectably in the Vauxhall by-election of October 2023, taking a 28 per cent share to Labour's 42, although they might have to tussle with the Greens for the anti-Labour mantle in 2026.

Stockwell

10 seats

Stockwell is an inner-city area between Brixton and Vauxhall. For our purposes it includes Myatt’s Fields (which is arguably north Brixton) and Oval. It is a densely populated area with a high proportion of social housing stretching from the estates off Wandsworth Road in the west to the 1970s Myatt’s Fields estate in the east. It also has strong transport links and an attraction for young professionals – a typical inner London mosaic.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Myatt’s Fields	Lab	Lab	x	8.5	62.7	9.2	19.7	-
Oval	Lab	Lab	Lab	11.8	57.2	13.2	17.8	-
Stockwell East	Lab	Lab	x	12.3	52.9	13.9	21.0	-
Stockwell West & Larkhall	Lab	Lab	Lab	10.5	59.6	9.7	17.3	2.8

Stockwell has tended to return Labour councillors, but with less solidity than Brixton in years when Labour is not winning a borough-wide landslide. The Lib Dems have been the main challengers and won Oval and Stockwell wards in 2002, but were wiped out in 2014 and have struggled to come back. Their November 2025 defector from Labour represents Stockwell East.

Brixton

14 seats

Brixton is known for its long-established black community and its Caribbean presence since 1948 is recognised in the name of the Brixton Windrush ward (essentially Brixton Central). But Brixton is also an example of the difference between London and cities in the United States – nowhere is equivalent to the “ghetto” or single-community neighbourhoods to be found there.

The Nazi terrorist who bombed Brixton in 1999 confessed he was surprised there were so many white people there. Brixton is now 51 per cent white and 30 per cent black according to the 2021 Census, with a high proportion of people who described themselves as being of mixed race. The proportion of professional and managerial workers has risen too. Brixton remains both a centre of black London and a home for people of all ethnicities.

The Brixton wards have, with one exception, been the most loyal part of Lambeth for Labour.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Brixton Acre Lane	Lab	Lab	Lab	10.4	54.9	8.4	19.5	6.9
Brixton North	Lab	Lab	Lab	7.7	65.2	6.6	20.5	-
Brixton Rush Common	Lab	Lab	Lab	6.5	60.5	8.2	24.7	-
Brixton Windrush	Lab	Lab	x	5.4	62.3	5.9	26.4	-
Herne Hill & Loughborough Junction	Lab	Lab	Lab	5.4	51.4	4.2	37.5	1.5

Radical ward boundary changes make comparisons over time problematic, but from majority social housing Brixton North to the more middle-class Acre Lane and Rush Common they have long Labour histories. In the past, Brixton has stuck with Labour when the party has been having a bad time, as in 1994 and 2002.

However, the 2026 elections could provide a stiff test of that loyalty. The Greens could capitalise on local and national disillusion with Labour among Brixton’s left-wing

residents. They have long been a force in the Herne Hill & Loughborough Junction ward area – essentially a long name for Brixton East, which is why it belongs with this group geographically – winning a seat in its predecessor Herne Hill ward in both 2006 and 2018. That is why their May 2025 by-election win was not quite the shock it was portrayed as. Note too that the swing against Labour was relatively small at a time when the national government was very unpopular. The Greens could do very well in the Brixton wards, yet some Labour councillors might survive.

Clapham

10 seats

The wards around Clapham Common on both the Lambeth and Wandsworth sides form one of London’s concentrations of the highly educated professional classes. Clapham Common & Abbeville is the sixth most professional-managerial ward anywhere in the city, rivalling Hampstead. Clapham Town is a bit more mixed but still has elite demographics. However, a lot of this consists of the precarious middle-class, renters rather than homeowners.

Clapham East, on the Brixton side of the High Road, sees another step down the social ladder. Clapham Park is based around a large council-built estate to the south east of the rest of Clapham on the border with Brixton Hill. Local issues range from large-scale estate regeneration to the interests of the yuppie – if we still use that word – nightlife strip along Abbeville Road.

The hypothetical man on the Clapham omnibus was always supposed to be a model of common sense.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Clapham Common & Abbeville	LD	Lab	x	25.6	32.2	33.0	8.3	0.8
Clapham East	Lab	Lab	x	10.3	55.7	11.4	20.8	1.7
Clapham Park	Lab	Lab	Lab	11.4	60.2	8.8	19.5	-
Clapham Town	Lab	Lab	Lab	27.5	44.8	11.5	16.2	-

If that can be equated with London’s recent centre-Left consensus, the political choices of the people of Clapham can be said to have reflected it. Whatever, it has led to the Conservatives’ elimination from Lambeth Council. They won just one seat in 2018, in the old Clapham Common ward. In 2022, they won none.

With the Streatham and Norwood seats that used to be their suburban strongholds now well beyond their reach, Tory hopes will be focused on the two Clapham wards

where they polled more than a quarter of the vote last time. But the Lib Dems have a base in their strongest one and the Greens will be competing for high-earning young renters.

Streatham

12 seats

This is a suburban area lying either side of the A23 as it passes between Brixton and Thornton Heath. Its peculiarity within Lambeth is (except for Streatham Hill East) its low proportion of social housing in a borough that otherwise has a lot of council estates. Its residential properties range from mansion blocks in the north, to subdivided suburban villas, to the terraces of Streatham Vale.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Streatham Common & Vale	Lab	Lab	Lab	16.1	57.5	11.4	15.0	-
Streatham Hill East	Lab	Lab	x	13.9	56.7	9.1	20.3	-
Streatham Hill West & Thornton	LD	LD	x	6.5	40.4	42.9	10.2	-
Streatham St Leonard's	Green	Green	Lab	8.8	39.6	6.2	45.4	-
Streatham Wells	Lab	Lab	x	9.4	48.6	25.2	14.9	-

Streatham has been the basis of a Labour parliamentary seat, sometimes with mountainous majorities, since 1992. Yet it is also the part of Lambeth that has given most consistent support to non-Labour council candidates.

In the 1994–2014 period the Lib Dems had a strong presence on the council thanks to usually winning three

of the four core wards of Streatham at that time. Streatham Common & Vale ward, in the far south of Streatham where it meets Merton and Croydon, is usually the safest bit for Labour. It is the most Muslim ward in Lambeth, though that group only accounts for 13 per cent.

Streatham

12 seats

The former Thornton ward, predecessor to Streatham Hill West & Thornton where Streatham shades into Clapham, has often been competitive between Labour and the Lib Dems. The latter did well to win both seats in 2022. It has a very high proportion of graduates (68 per cent) and, for Lambeth, white people (71 per cent).

St Leonard's, the area around Streatham station and the complicated road junction sending cars up suburban avenues, is an interesting microcosm of how certain parts of inner suburban London have evolved politically. It used to be extremely Conservative back in the days when Cynthia Payne became famous for running a brothel on Ambleside Avenue, voting 61 per cent for the Tory slate in 1982.

But the Conservative vote, weakening for a while, collapsed in 1998, as the Lib Dems won the old St Leonard's ward and the Tories came in third. In 2006, they finished fourth despite a generally reasonable London-wide showing. The coalition-era Lib Dems crashed to defeat in 2014, losing all their Lambeth seats, but the winners in St Leonard's were two Labour candidates and one Green.

The Greens won all three seats in 2018, but it was split two Green and one Labour in 2022. The Tories took just nine per cent of the vote. The Labour councillor defected to the Greens in August 2025 after being in disciplinary trouble over his vote on a Green motion about Gaza.

Norwood

9 seats

Norwood is a vaguely defined area spanning the border between Lambeth and Croydon. These four wards stretch from Tulse Hill (St Martin’s) uphill towards the corner at Crystal Palace where Lambeth meets Croydon, Bromley and the southern tip of Southwark. West Norwood station is in Knight’s Hill ward. There are large council estates in Gypsy Hill and St Martin’s wards, and fewer graduates and young professionals than in the rest of Lambeth.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Gypsy Hill	Lab	Lab	x	6.0	48.6	2.6	42.7	-
Knight’s Hill	Lab	Lab	Lab	9.6	63.0	6.8	20.5	-
St Martin’s	Lab	Lab	x	10.8	58.9	9.7	20.6	-
West Dulwich	Lab	Lab	x	19.6	51.6	9.9	18.8	-

Norwood like Streatham is an example of the long-term decline of the Conservatives in most of inner London. Thurlow Park, the predecessor to West Dulwich, had been a safe Conservative ward until Labour suddenly gained a seat in 2010 and then wiped them out in 2014.

Gypsy Hill was usually a Conservative ward until Labour gained all three seats in 2010. The Greens entered the picture when their candidate ran Labour close in a June 2016 by-election and won a seat in 2018. Labour regained the seat in 2022 after a close contest.



LAMBETH

What to watch for

The electoral system means that, unless some meticulous targeting goes on, Lambeth is a cliff-edge borough. Labour can afford to lose a lot of popularity and still retain a strong council majority. But if the swing against the party is large enough and uniform, a lot of seats will fall and the Greens will be the beneficiaries.