

# Redbridge

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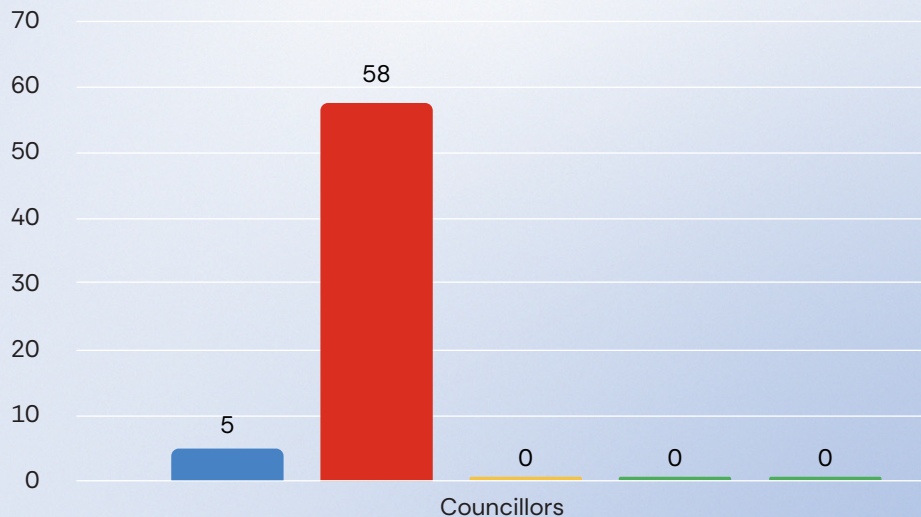
# Since 2022

## Labour Defence

Labour's huge win in 2022 was the continuation of a steep upward trend for the party. The Conservatives were driven back to just three wards in the north of the borough, and in two of those they had to share the seats with Labour. The party hasn't won a majority in Redbridge since 2006, despite its being largely suburban in character and sharing a long border with Essex. It is, though, the measure of the peril Labour faces that the scoreboard for 2026 seems bound to look very different.

The three by-elections held in Redbridge during the past 18 months have revealed some of the ways the anti-Labour winds are blowing.

Redbridge Council result May 2022 | Total seats: 63



Conservative Labour Liberal Democrat Green Other

### By-elections since May 2022

14 NOVEMBER 2024	WANSTEAD PARK	LAB HOLD
27 MARCH 2025	MAYFIELD	ILFORD IND GAIN FROM LAB
01 MAY 2025	HAINAULT	LAB HOLD

The first, in November 2024, saw a comfortable Labour hold with a diminished margin, though nothing too alarming for the party at that time. But in March 2025, a candidate running as an Ilford Independent blasted them out of a seat in Mayfield ward with a huge 45-point swing. The winning candidate sits as an Ilford Independent but has been campaigning for the Redbridge Independents party, which is expected to make a big challenge for council seats. The most recent by-election saw Labour cling on by a single vote thanks to a much bigger right-wing bloc being split three different ways.

Labour's ranks have also been depleted by three resignations (one of those councillors has since resigned from the council too, leaving a pre-elections vacancy). For a while, this meant there were four Independent councillors including the Ilford one, though they never formed a single group and would not, in any case, have outnumbered the Conservatives, who have endured as the five-member opposition. They, along with Reform UK, the Greens and Redbridge Independents, will be hoping to profit from Labour's problems. Let the fragmentation games begin.

# Local landscape

Stretching from the busy town of Ilford in the south to leafy villages in the north, Redbridge is a borough of deep contrasts. It has an array of suburbs along with forests and parks, which between them cover a quarter of its geographical area.

Redbridge has seen spectacular demographic changes this century, both in size and composition. Over 320,000 people live there, compared with around 280,000 as recently as 2011. The South Asian population has boomed, partly through outward migration from inner London, following a long-established pattern. Getting on for a third of its people are Muslim, slightly more than are Christian.

The borough has been opened up by the advent of the Elizabeth line, which has three stops in it, at Ilford, Goodmayes and Seven Kings – four if you count Chadwell Heath, which straddles the border with Barking

& Dagenham. The latest London Plan monitoring report shows Redbridge had one of the higher numbers of new housing starts in 2023–24.

All of this has paralleled and perhaps contributed to Labour's rise and rise, which can be traced back to the elections of 2010. The Conservatives won the most seats in the No Overall Control outcome of that year, but Labour picked up seven and ran them close. In 2014, Labour overthrew the Con-Lib coalition that had been running the show to take majority control of the borough for the first time in its history. For the next two full sets of elections, the only way was up. But now Labour must brace itself for abandonment on a large scale.

The Redbridge Independents, a party registered with the Electoral Commission in March 2024, poses a major threat in several wards. It is altogether contesting 15 of the 22, with full slates in all but one. The party has

received the endorsement of Jeremy Corbyn and aligned itself with Your Party. It is campaigning on foreign policy issues (Gaza and Iran) and trying to tap into disquiet about healthcare and crime. It is also demanding more social housing while at the same time opposing the redevelopment of a Tesco site in Goodmayes, which would produce 1,280 more homes, 35 per cent of them affordable.

The winner of the Mayfield by-election will have been helped to her huge win by the context in which the contest took place. It was required because former Redbridge leader Jas Athwal, elected as MP for Ilford South in July 2024, had stood down from the council. Before that, soon after he entered the Commons, it was disclosed that he owned 15 rental properties, some of them infested with ants and mould.

# Local landscape

The backdrop to Labour’s subsequent single-vote hold in Hainault was even grimmer from a Labour point of view – one of its councillors had resigned following his arrest for indecent exposure (he later received a suspended prison sentence).

The runner-up was a well-known local Independent candidate offering Reform-like nostalgia. The actual Reform candidate came third and the Tory, fourth. Between them, this trio got over 1,000 votes more than the Labour winner. No wonder Reform will hope to break through in northern parts of the borough where the British National Party won a seat in 2006 and Nigel Farage’s UKIP got significant vote shares in 2014.

Redbridge Council elections since 2002						
Year	Con	Lab	LD	UKIP/Ref	Green	Other
2002	33	21	9	-	-	-
2006	34	19	9	-	-	1
2010	30	26	7	-	-	-
2014	25	35	3	-	-	-
2018	12	51	-	-	-	-
2022	5	58	-	-	-	-



# Electoral prospects

Labour's massive majority looks at serious risk in 2026 with threats of different kinds from several directions. Groups of wards in different parts of Redbridge will be battlegrounds on which the party will face quite different challengers.

# Woodford Green

8 seats

Woodford, lying north of the North Circular, is a pleasant suburban area bordering on Epping Forest that becomes more affluent the closer it is to Essex. Monkams has, for London, a high proportion of households in detached houses (32 per cent) which gives a flavour of this very plush outer suburb. Although Redbridge’s demographic trends are apparent here, these are still the most White British wards in the borough at 46 to 55 per cent.

Woodford is traditionally the most Conservative part of Redbridge. But even here the rising Labour tide made the Tories a minority party in 2022. Labour went from winning just one seat in 2018 to winning five, gaining two seats in both Bridge and Churchfields. Monkams stayed Tory, but there was a hefty pro-Labour swing of 11 per cent.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Bridge	Lab	Lab	Con	33.3	37.0	7.9	14.7	7.1
Churchfields	Lab	Lab	Lab	33.7	42.8	16.3	7.1	-
Monkams	Con	Con	x	58.6	30.7	10.7	-	-

However, that trend could be about to end. A clue lies in the general election result in the parliamentary seat covering this area, Chingford & Woodford Green. It would have gone from Conservative to Labour in 2024, but for the anti-Conservative vote being split by an Independent who had originally been Labour’s candidate but was deselected at the last minute.

She has lately given her backing to an organisation called Chingford & Woodford Green Community Independents. Members of it are contesting Churchfields ward (as well as two wards in neighbouring Waltham Forest), though

they are listed on the ballot paper simply as Independent candidates. There are no candidates for the Greens or the Redbridge Independents in this ward (the Redbridge Independents aren’t contesting any of this group of three). If the Independents are recognised and embraced as alternatives to Labour for Left-leaning voters there, the red tide might again ebb to the Tories’ benefit.

### Historical footnote

Lewis Baston’s late father-in-law was elected as a Conservative councillor in the Woodford area in 1974, receiving over 3,000 votes.

# Wanstead

8 seats

Wanstead is in the west of Redbridge and somewhat separate from the rest of it. Similarly, the South Woodford ward is carved off from the rest of Woodford by a very wide stretch of the North Circular near the complex junction where it meets the M11. This area is well-served by Central line stations and, possibly as a result, is a popular part of Redbridge for professionals and graduates.

It has more metropolitan demographics than most of the borough and is diverse rather than particularly Asian (18 per cent) or Muslim (14 per cent). It also has the highest proportion of atheists (29 per cent) in a borough where faith is held strongly.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
South Woodford	Lab	Lab	Lab	36.2	44.9	9.2	9.7	-
Wanstead Park	Lab	Lab	x	18.6	53.2	8.8	19.4	-
Wanstead Village	Lab	Lab	Lab	22.5	47.5	19.9	10.1	-

The Wanstead & Woodford constituency that existed before 1997 was firmly Conservative, but this area is now part of a safely Labour combination with Leyton. Wanstead Park is quite Labour, as the party's pretty untroubled November 2024 defence of a seat there showed. The other two wards were marginal at their creation: in 2018, Labour's majority for the third

seat in Wanstead Village was only 10 votes and the Conservatives won two of the three in South Woodford. But the Tories dropped away in 2022, winning nothing in South Woodford and falling well behind in Wanstead Village.

# Gants Hill

12 seats

Three of the four wards in this group converge at the roundabout at Gants Hill, with its Moscow-style Central line station underneath. This area is in the Ilford North parliamentary constituency, though Cranbrook and Valentines were in Ilford South until the 2024 boundary changes.

In the postwar period there was a large migration of East End Jews to the suburbs of north Ilford, taking institutions as well as people outwards. For example, the Stepney Green Jewish School moved to Ilford in 1970. By the 1970s there were 30,000 Jews in Redbridge and the community was concentrated around Gants Hill.

But London demographics do not stay still and the Jews have largely moved on, some to Chigwell and Loughton across the border in Essex, some to Barnet or Hertsmere. Clayhall and Barkingside are now five per cent Jewish, 20 per cent Hindu and 35 per cent Muslim as another generation of people with immigrant origins becomes wealthier and moves to the suburbs.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Barkingside	Lab	Lab	Lab	37.4	44.4	9.1	-	9.0
Clayhall	Lab	Lab	Lab	36.2	52.8	11.0	-	-
Cranbrook	Lab	Lab	Lab	28.7	59.7	-	-	11.7
Valentines	Lab	Lab	Lab	21.5	67.2	-	-	11.3

As the demography has shifted, so has electoral behaviour. Jewish Gants Hill leaned towards the Conservatives back in the day (although possibly by less than comparable well-off suburbs in 1974) but in the 2010s the area swung strongly to Labour. In 2014, when Labour first won a majority in Redbridge, this area was split six-six between them and the Conservatives, but Labour swept the board in 2018.

There was, however, hardly any swing from Conservative to Labour between 2018 and 2022, and the 2024 Ilford North parliamentary election, which almost saw

the defeat of a senior Labour national figure, Wes Streeting, suggests that Labour's coalition is fragmenting. Conservative, Labour and Redbridge Independent candidates all have a chance of winning here. In Clayhall ward there are two candidates running under the banner Redbridge Matters: Independent Voice for Change, which could be a complicating factor.



# Fullwell and Hainault

12 seats

The outer suburbs of north Ilford along the Hainault loop of the Central line are (with Chadwell) the part of Redbridge where demographic change was fastest between 2011 and 2021. The White British share of the population in Fairlop fell by 22 percentage points during that period (only six London wards had steeper falls).

Three of the wards are traditional owner occupied inter and post-war developments, a mixture of terraces in the cases of Aldborough and Fairlop and semi-detached in the case of Fullwell. Hainault contains one of the London County Council's cottage estates which rehoused people from east London when it was built between 1947 and 1953.

In local elections at least – the general election in 2024 was a bit different – the demographic change has had

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Aldborough	Lab	Lab	Lab	34.7	50.7	7.2	-	8.1
Fairlop	Con	Con	Lab	47.2	43.3	9.5	-	-
Fullwell	Lab	Lab	Lab	40.9	59.1	-	-	-
Hainault	Lab	Lab	Lab	43.8	49.0	-	-	7.2

a muted political effect. The area has shifted to Labour, but Fairlop, for instance, was two Conservative, one Labour in 1998 and again in 2022. The Tories retained a viable overall vote share – enough to nurture thoughts of recovery in a bad year for Labour when the anti-Tory vote could be split.

Hainault has an interesting electoral history. It was strongly Labour even in bad election years for the party until the Conservatives broke through in 2002.

This is where a BNP councillor got in in 2006. Labour recaptured it in 2014, but it has always been a battle to retain it. The single-vote Labour hold in the May 2025 by-election suggests the ward is likely to go at least partly to Reform.

# Central Ilford

14 seats

Central Ilford is a strongly Asian and Muslim area, part of the band of territory also stretching through Tower Hamlets and Newham. Clementswood, a grid of terraces just south of the town centre, is one of only 11 majority-Muslim wards in London. The other three are over 40 per cent Muslim. There is considerable social and economic deprivation – Clementswood and Loxford are both among the top 14 wards in London for “long term unemployed and never worked” residents, as found by the 2021 Census.

The wards’ demographics are quite extreme in other ways too. Ilford Town, where development has added over 3,000 people between 2011 and 2021, is the sixth most private renting ward in London (57 per cent, beaten only by parts of Westminster and some other new-build wards). Mayfield has, unusually for London, a lot of bungalows.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Clementswood	Lab	Lab	Lab	15.8	84.2	-	-	-
Goodmayes	Lab	Lab	Lab	23.5	76.5	-	-	-
Ilford Town	Lab	Lab	x	17.8	82.2	-	-	-
Loxford	Lab	Lab	Lab	23.5	76.5	-	-	-
Mayfield	Lab	Lab	Lab	14.5	71.1	7.4	-	7.0

The central Ilford wards have been heavily Labour for decades other than Mayfield, and it last elected Conservatives in 2006. Clementswood had the highest percentage share for Labour of any ward in London. Ilford Town was in second place. There was only one other ward (Peckham in Southwark) where Labour, or any other party, topped 80 per cent.

Turnout was on the low side at around 27 per cent. But the Ilford Independent who gained a Mayfield seat so emphatically in March 2025 showed how large has been the rupture between Labour and many erstwhile Muslim supporters. What happened in Mayfield could happen in other wards too.

# Seven Kings

9 seats

These wards are in a more suburban area to the north east of Ilford town centre. It is well-connected, with its Elizabeth line stations at Goodmayes and Seven Kings and the Central line stop at Newbury Park.

They share many political and social patterns with the town centre wards although, for example, the proportion of Muslims is about 10 percentage points smaller. Newbury has quite a large Hindu community (19 per cent), although there are Hindus and Sikhs throughout Ilford as well as Muslims. Chadwell has been in rapid demographic transition (it was the Redbridge ward with

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Chadwell	Lab	Lab	Lab	25.2	58.0	-	16.8	-
Newbury	Lab	Lab	Lab	25.6	64.6	9.8	-	-
Seven Kings	Lab	Lab	Lab	15.5	55.3	-	-	29.2

the largest increase in the South Asian proportion of the population between 2011 and 2021) but the rest are established Asian areas.

These wards did not return such mountainous Labour majorities in 2022 as those of central Ilford, but they were safe enough and haven't given Labour any trouble

since it gained Chadwell from the Lib Dems in 2010. Yet the Redbridge Independents are will offer serious competition in 2026.



## REDBRIDGE

## What to watch for

The previously safe Labour wards in central Ilford could go to Redbridge Independents, who are also a threat in the suburban wards whose allegiance to Labour is more recent. If they fall short in those, they could nonetheless take enough of Labour's vote to let in Conservative candidates. Reform should win Hainault. Wanstead has Green potential. All told, Redbridge could end up as one of London's more chaotic hung councils.