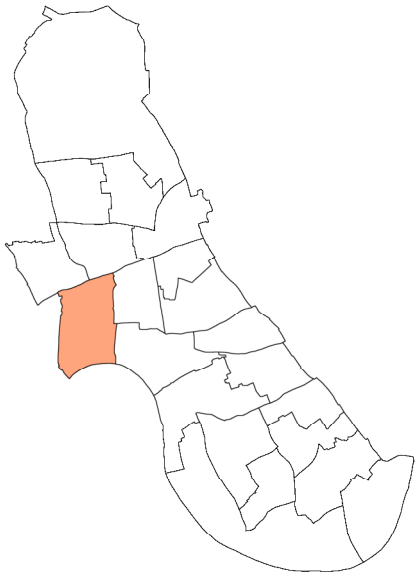
Ravenscourt ward

Hammersmith west of the Town Hall changes. King Street, for example, switches from being a relatively narrow one-way street; Hammer-smith's High Street, into a much wider, Plane Tree lined road with fewer shops, some mansion blocks, the modernist Polish Centre and the Latymer Upper and West London Free Schools.



Goldhawk Road narrows from a busy four-lane throughway towards Shepherd's Bush into a residential street before turning south to head towards King Street, or becoming Stamford Brook Road straight on.

The change is less along the Hammersmith Riverside but Furnivall Gardens splits Upper Mall from Lower Mall. Once through Dove Passage, Upper Mall rapidly starts to feel more like Chiswick than Hammersmith.

There isn't a hard border between Hammersmith and the neighbourhoods to the west: Chiswick, Acton, Stamford Brook, Bedford Park. That's not true in the south, where the boundary is the river Thames, or the east where you cross the West London Line into Chelsea and South Kensington.

It very much is a blur: the borough boundary is opaque. If, walking along the river's edge, you reach Chiswick Eyot then you've transitioned to Hounslow, but only just: some of Chiswick Mall is in Hammersmith, just beyond the blue plaque-adorned Hammersmith Terrace.

British Grove is the borough boundary; a narrow side street that runs from King Street down to the river - or at least it did before planners drove the A4 through the neighbourhood. There is still a British Grove South, as there are still southern sections of many of the roads that spur off from King Street, but it is tucked away behind Millers Court.

All of this area: a big slab down the western side of Hammersmith, is Ravenscourt ward.

The juxtaposition of the very old and quite new is a feature of riverside Ravenscourt because a lot of housing had to be demolished to make way for the dual carriageway; and in its place some modern housing blocks were built - like Lord Napier Place or Samels Court, named after the long-serving Hammersmith Conservative councillor Bertie Samels.

But the most famous residence on the riverside is Kelmscott House in Upper Mall, the home of the arts and crafts movement's most prominent figure: William Morris. Now a museum just a few metres upriver from the Dove Public House where Rule Britannia was composed, Kelmscott House shares Upper Mall with the Old Ship and Black Lion Pubs plus boathouses for Latymer Upper School and the London Corinthians.

This neighbourhood was planned as Hammersmith's genteel suburb - away from the overcrowded, semi-industrial, grimy Hammersmith town nearer the bridge. Here can be found - in St Peter's Square - the only residential square in Hammersmith with a landmark private central garden around which grand villas are positioned. Here too is the listed St Peter's Church, perched perilously right on the edge of the A4.

There is another Ravenscourt square with a green as its centrepiece - Westcroft Square - but it is of a different style and character altogether. St Peter's Square was deliberately planned and designed to be a piece of Mayfair in the west and, before the A4 drove tens of thousands of carts and horses through the middle of this neighbourhood, it was seamless, upper class Victoriana.

St Peter's Square was home to Sir Marshall Hays, one of the early council leaders of the old Hammersmith borough, and five-time Mayor. His picture hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.

St Peter's Parish covers the southern sections of Ravenscourt: the north is dominated by and oriented around the park itself. The park was once the manorial grounds of Ravenscourt House; owned by the same family that developed St Peter's Square and its surrounds: the Scotts.

When the Scotts eventually left the area, the grounds of Ravenscourt House were scheduled - a little like the Grove neighbourhood to the east - to become streets of terraces for the working classes.

But the householders living around along the western boundary of the grounds - in the road called Ravenscourt Park - determined to stop this. They demanded vast sums to buy out their leases which contained a clause preventing the building of housing opposite their abodes.

The ploy worked; the land became much less valuable to the freeholder and the Municipal Board of Works: the forerunner of the London County Council, purchased the grounds for the sum of £58,000 (£8 million in 2020 money) - of which Hammersmith Vestry contributed half. Ravenscourt Park was established.

'VOTE RIGGING' ROW AT TOWN HALL

By MIKE PARKINSON

LABOUR chiefs faced gerrymandering allegations this week after approving plans for a controversial housing development in Hammersmith.

If substantiated, the Conservative group's claims threaten to expose the council to echoes of the Westminster Council scandal.

Earlier this year, Westminster Council was accused by its district auditor of manipulating voting patterns with its 'designated sales' housing policy.

Tory councillors say that private leasing and housing association schemes approved by Labour in Ravenscourt ward are changing its voting pattern.

They believe the new tenants will vote Labour in gratitude for being given new homes. Many new tenants will be homeless families currently living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

At the 1990 election, the Conservatives polled just 150 more votes than Labour in Ravenscourt ward. Housing association schemes at the former Chambon factory site and 225 Goldhawk Road will bring up to 250 new voters into the ward.

Although the impact of these new voters will not be felt until 1998, 180 homeless people living in flats leased by the council in Hamlet Gardens are eligible to vote next month. Secret minutes of a Labour group meeting circulating among Tory councillors reveal that Ravenscourt has been targeted for a takeover.

Anger over plans for 84 new homes at the Chambon site off King Street erupted into a furious row at a meeting of the planning applications sub-committee on Monday.

Labour whip Colin Aherne was heckled and jeered when he accused 40 neighbours of the site of branding the new tenants as criminals.

His comments followed calls from some protesters for extra policing if the scheme went ahead.

"I call it shameful that you imply that every tenant of a housing association is a potential criminal," said Cllr Aherne. "I think that's absolutely shameful.

"This is a very good development. It takes people out of disgusting bed and breakfast property that costs this council millions to keep them in."

Earlier in the meeting, Ravenscourt Cllr Bill Smith appealed to Labour to defer the plans.

"I'm not ashamed to plead with the opposition," he said. "This is a brutal assault on the character of south Hammersmith."

Referring to Hamlet Gardens, Cllr Smith said: "This council has dumped on us a segment of humanity that's causing great anxiety. If you're setting out to destroy this part of south Hammersmith you will do immeasurable damage."

Cllr Smith's speech was cheered by the protesters, but there was even more applause for Tory leader Gerald Wombwell's speech.

After criticising the Chambon site consultation exercise and suggesting Labour had rushed the application through, Cllr Wombwell accused his opponent of forcing the developer to build affordable homes by turning down a planning application for private homes on the same site.

"This council has blackmailed the developer. It's an absolute disgrace. It's quite monstrous what you are doing to residents and we will most certainly overturn it after the 5th of May," he said.

After the meeting, one protester said neighbours had dubbed the proposed scheme 'Fort Apache' because it has 'barrack-style' terraces surrounded by four taller 'watchtower' blocks.

Deputy council leader Andrew Slaughter accused the Tories of 'cheap and nasty electioneering tactics'.

"The Tories may be up to gerrymandering in Westminster, but their efforts to lay the charge against us here are totally unsubstantiated," he said.

"The vast majority of schemes are in so-called 'safe' wards, both Tory and Labour, anyway, rendering the Tory argument obsolete."

The story of how the park came into being - that is, the story of how the wealthy surrounding the park acted to prevent this area from being built over for homes for the working classes is interesting because, in 1992 - history almost repeated itself.

When the Chambon Company - which manufactured printing machines in a factory just behind King Street - closed, local residents in that area backed by the ward's Conservative councillors, attempted to prevent the building of affordable housing on that site as well - claiming that it was a gerrymander to turn the ward Labour.

These "gerrymandering" allegations came shortly after the Westminster Homes for Votes scandal had broken. The Conservative-run council there, led by Dame Shirley Porter, had forcibly moved suspected Labour-voting council tenants in marginal wards like Bayswater and Little Venice into asbestos-riddled tower blocks in safe Labour wards. They then sold off their old flats to what they hoped would be Conservative-voting leaseholders.

Their hopes came true and all the marginal wards went Conservative in the 1990 elections, turning a Tory majority of four seats into one of thirty. The scam was exposed by Labour councillors and the District Auditor and the councillors responsible were disqualified and surcharged millions.

It is grossly silly to compare the forced march of low income families into asbestos riddled, decaying tower blocks with a plan to provide new housing association homes in the fourth-most expensive borough in London. It approaches the issue by putting the presumed voting intentions of new residents ahead of the housing need of the borough.

Indeed, the smearing of the would-be housing association tenants were even more defamatory, as the Gazette article covering that clash indicates.

The councillor at the forefront of that campaign - a councillor well accustomed to controversy - was Bill Smith. He, among all the others who have represented Ravenscourt, is the councillor most closely identified with the ward.

Ravenscourt ward was first created in 1949, taking the western end of the abolished River and The Grove & Ravenscourt wards.

Smith represented this ward for all but three of the fifteen years it existed (first time around) - it was abolished when Hammersmith amalgamated with Fulham in 1964. He then was elected an Alderman in 1964, and then won Starch Green (which is basically the current Wendell Park but also included the northern half of Ravenscourt) in the 1968 Conservative landslide.

He was then immediately re-elected an Alderman, which gave him six years' tenure on the council rather than a councillor's three. But he had to resign his council seat upon that re-election as Alderman, incurring a by-election which the Tories held with 61% of the vote in a straight fight with Labour.

As Alderman with that 6-year term he didn't need to stand in 1971: just as well as the Conservatives won no seats in Hammersmith that year. In 1974 he returned as a councillor for Brook Green, defended that seat in 1978, and then controversially won a seat in Wormholt ward in 1982.

He lost that seat in 1986 but was returned for Ravenscourt in 1990, twenty six years after he last represented the ward.

During that 41-year tenure, Smith was also leader and deputy leader of the Conservative Group on the council, and he was mayor for the first three years of the turbulent Conservative-Liberal coalition, 1978 to 1981.

An irony of Smith's vociferous campaigning against the Chambon affordable housing was that in 1994 he lost his Ravenscourt seat to Labour not because of this housing - it hadn't yet been built - but because of the national disaster John Major was driving his party towards, and because, as Smith rightly noted, the demographics of Ravenscourt were changing irrespective of whether a handful of housing association homes were built.

Despite those Conservative outbursts of outrage at Labour for attempting to gerrymander Ravenscourt, the ward has among the least public housing in the borough. The only council estate of any size is Flora Gardens which lies between Dalling Road and Ravenscourt Road. The Chambon site ended up with nowhere near as much housing - of any sort - on it than was mooted by the Conservatives: it is two cul-de-sacs of townhouses and some three storey blocks of flats at each entrance.

PROFILE . . . Cllr. W. Smith



LEADER OF THE UNDERDOGS

IN the councils of the great today the bloc vote is used o destroy logic and demoralize opponents. At less exalted heights men struggiing with social consciences see their ideas trampled underfoot by a colossus created through the twin evils of a democracy—public apathy or emotion.

That is why the liberal-minded and the protagonist of fair play must sympathize and support the pleadings and arguments advanced by Cllr. Bill Smith as he leads his Tory band of six in their monthly forays against the entrenched Socialists in the Hammersmith Council.

A flourish of activity at the end of a wordy debate; a sign from the Party whip, a forest of hands and the minutes record against him another defeat.

Mr. Smith is not a man who matured in an atmosphere of cut-and-dried politics. He was born in 1918 while nations were still counting up their dead; was educated in those years when the depression was earmarking its world-wide victims, and started his work-life to a background of pacifism at home and sabre-rattling abroad.

He opposed pacifism and added weight to his principles by joining a territorial unit in 1937. He was also interested in the Church, in scouting and politics.

★

AUGUST 1939 ended an era of appeasement and Mr. Smith found himself a gunner en route with the 64th Field Regiment to the Middle East. He carried with him memories of the proud service given to the Crown by his soldier-father while under Indian skies.

At his flat in Askew-road, Shepherds Bush, his father's brush with military greatness is retained on the face of a medal. It was one of those struck to commemorate Sir Francis Younghusband's successful expedition over the Himalayas into Tibet to forestall Russian activity in the area. His father made the trek.

Mr. Smith's service never reached these heights. He was in Irak, Egypt and the desert campaign. He went to Greece, saw hostilities end there against the Fascist forces only to see it re-appear in the civil sphere. He was wounded here in a brush with the Communists.

Back in England he was demobilized. He returned to the firm he joined on leaving North Hammersmith School back in the thirties. I.C.I., he adds, holds his fortunes.

★

IN 1947 his views hardened against Socialism in the atmosphere of discussion groups. The same year he joined the North Hammersmith Conservative Association and became an organizing secretary for his party in the same year.

In the next two years he fought a willing but losing fight for two Local Government seats. But in 1953 he entered the arena with the retirement of the Conservative representative in the Ravenscourt Ward. He found out his battles had only just begun.

His clarity of mind and capabilities as a speaker have been sharpened by several campaigns and many public appearances as a stump orator. By the side of Conservative stalwarts Tom Gee and John Howard he learnt national and local affairs. It has stood him in good stead.

★

MR. BILL SMITH believes today that he is a representative—and a proud one—of a party which is no longer "die-hard"; which has infused a living liberalizm into its social thinking, yet remained aloof from the popular dogmas.

Minority parties gain few laurels. But when checking the profit and loss account of his trading in local government affairs, Mr Smith remembers his group's exposure of the issue involving a consultant firm.

His searching criticisms spotlighted a blind policy by councillors which cost the ratepayers several thousands.

He remembers the outbursts against him when he suggested a differential rents scheme. He was sneered at for presenting a solution which savoured of the Means Test.

Two months later his critics ushered the scheme into existence. These are the thoughts he retains when facing the bloc vote. Men can, and do, change their opinions.

Let Mr. Smith finish his own profile: "We, on our own side, don't act under directives. We vote according to conscience and to commonsense.

"Despite the defeats we suffer and the abuse we accept, our path is quite clear. We will continue to defend just measures and attack the unjust.

"In this chamber we aim to be democracy's watchdog."

The redevelopment of Queen Charlotte's Hospital in Goldhawk Road also provided a mixed development of relatively affordable homes for sale, as well as some supported accommodation. It is not council housing that puts Labour in play in Ravenscourt: it is the changing voting behaviour of occupants in the mansion blocks, in particular, that has changed things.

There are three significant sets of mansions in Ravenscourt: Hamlet Gardens; adjacent King's Court, and Stamford Court in Goldhawk Road. Hamlet Gardens is somewhat like Queen's Club Gardens in Baron's Court; terracotta late Victorian four- and five-storey blocks. King's Court is a 1930s ten-storey art deco block of very small flats; as is Stamford Court, arranged in a horse-shoe shape.

Until the 1990s these sorts of blocks could churn out Conservative votes by the bucket load: they were the sort of apartments affluent professionals lived in for years and years. But, for whatever reason, this type of accommodation became outdated and somewhat unfashionable; many of the leaseholders became absentee landlords and the occupants became short-term tenants; younger, more indifferent to party politics.

It also became much harder for the blocks' managing agents to let these homes - and the growing housing shortage in London meant councils needed to look at flats in private blocks to meet its obligations to homeless families: these were the least unaffordable types of property for them to procure.

Deals were done between the council and housing associations to rent many of the flats and this of course changed their nature. In some ways this spurred further problems with the blocks; the flats not leased by housing authorities became harder still to let and there were increased problems of anti-social behaviour and crime, including an arson attack in 1998.

But Conservative problems here go beyond just changes in tenure to mansion blocks, which are hardly the most prevalent type of home here.

Again we return to the phenomenon of demographically similar wards which, in Fulham, are comfortably Conservative but in Hammersmith they find far harder to hold.

This phenomenon; of there being far more very affluent households with a very much more liberal outlook than you might find in Fulham - boosted by Hammersmith being a significant centre for media and what Americans call the liberal arts - was limiting Conservative reach in Ravenscourt long before identity politics polarised matters to their further disadvantage after the Brexit referendum in 2016.

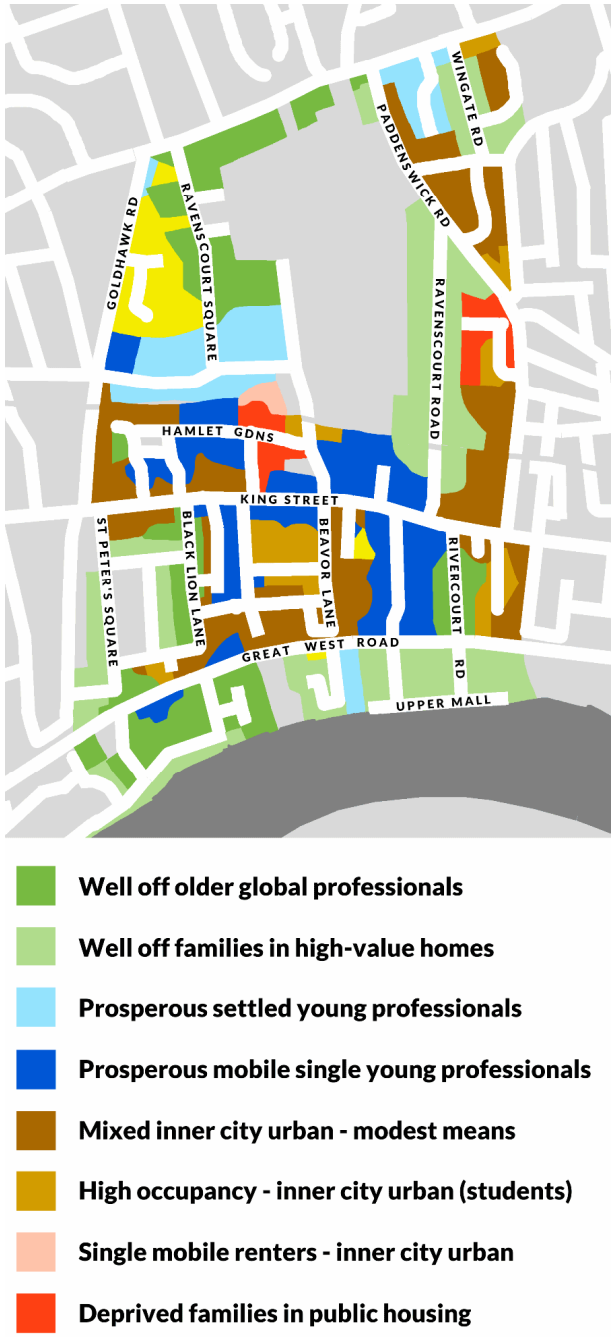
A look at the dominant Experian "MOSAIC" demographic categorisations says it all:

- Along the riverside and around St Peter's Square: *"Well off older global professionals"* and *"well off families in high value homes"*
- Between the District Line and the A4: *"Prosperous Mobile Single Young Professionals"* and *"Mixed Inner city urban - modest means"*
- Around Ravenscourt Park: *"Prosperous Settled Young Professionals"*
- Leaving just Flora Gardens, patches of Hamlet Gardens and the Queen Charlotte's site: *"Deprived Families in Public Housing"* or *"Families in Manual Occupations"*

The Ravenscourt of the 1950s was always a reasonably safe Conservative ward which they were able to win by between 15 and 25 percentage points.

When the ward was divided its Conservatism was enough to make Starch Green a highly marginal ward between 1964 and 1978, and to at least give the Tories a decent base of support in River or Broadway - even if that was simply too deprived a ward for them to win.

When Ravenscourt was resurrected in 1978 it went Conservative massively: by 66% to 31% Labour and 2% for the National Front (a somewhat strange choice of ward to contest). 1978 was a high water mark year for the Conservatives with Labour tanking in the polls and on course to be ejected from power for eighteen years. It was also notable for the absence of a Liberal Party challenge.



That changed in 1982. The Alliance won one quarter of the vote - and it came almost entirely from the Conservatives. Labour dropped 4.9%; the Tories by 16.7%. Only in Coningham was there a larger Conservative loss of support. Arguably the Alliance should have done even better here: easily beating Labour in an era when the party was fractured by the Bennite left and the SDP right.

Yet Labour's vote held up when you might have expected an affluent, liberal ward like this to shun a party seen as too far to the left: an era when the Conservatives got very close to winning Hammersmith constituency.

The Conservatives still won Ravenscourt easily: by over twenty per cent. But all of a sudden there was a significant third party presence, which in recent years has become a four-party presence including the Greens. And what that Alliance strength did, given it was more taken from the Conservatives more than 3:1 more than Labour, is pull the Tories down to levels where Labour - if they could escape their national unpopularity - might be able to challenge for the ward.

That's precisely what they managed in 1986, with the Alliance holding onto to almost all of the vote share they won in 1982. Labour gained more than ten points of support, essentially making the ward neck and neck, and Patricia Migdal became the first ever Labour councillor for Ravenscourt on these boundaries.

By 1990 the Alliance of the Liberals and SDP had ended and the new Liberal Democrats were so weak that they didn't even contest Ravenscourt. But both the breakaway SDP and the Greens did and, between them, they won 16% - still 7 points lower than the Alliance had in 1986. That seven points difference all returned to the Conservatives and so they regained the seat they'd lost. Then came those Tory claims of gerrymandering. But Bill Smith was right that the ward was changing, regardless of the Chambon site.

It was a demographic change but it was far more than that because Labour was attracting genuine switchers: people who had been Conservatives now being quite content to support a more progressive party. In other words, whereas Labour had needed a big centre party vote to pull the Conservatives to within reach, we were now entering an era where the party was growing strong enough to win Ravenscourt regardless of who else stood. It was the beginning of a trend that is still realigning this part of Hammersmith 30 years later.

Labour regained a seat in Ravenscourt in 1994, defeating Bill Smith for the final time in his long political run and despite the Lib Dems polling just 11%. Then they comfortably won both seats in 1998, taking over half the vote (and with the Lib Dems unchanged on 11).

That was a big win, seeing off Angela Clarke: the Conservative councillor here since 1982. It is a measure of how fraught Hammersmith and Fulham politics was in the period when Clarke was first elected - remember the council was then 25 Labour, 23 Conservative and 2 Liberal Alliance - that she may have had the birth of one of her children induced so she could make it to a council meeting and keep her party in power.

So far, the trend-line of Labour growth in Ravenscourt has been clear and steady. But two factors then intervened. The first was the boundary review before the 2002 elections. In this review the Conservative prevailed with their proposal to create a 3-councillor Ravenscourt Park ward. This expanded Ravenscourt two ways: in the western side of Grove ward, generally somewhat more Conservative-leaning than Grove overall was.

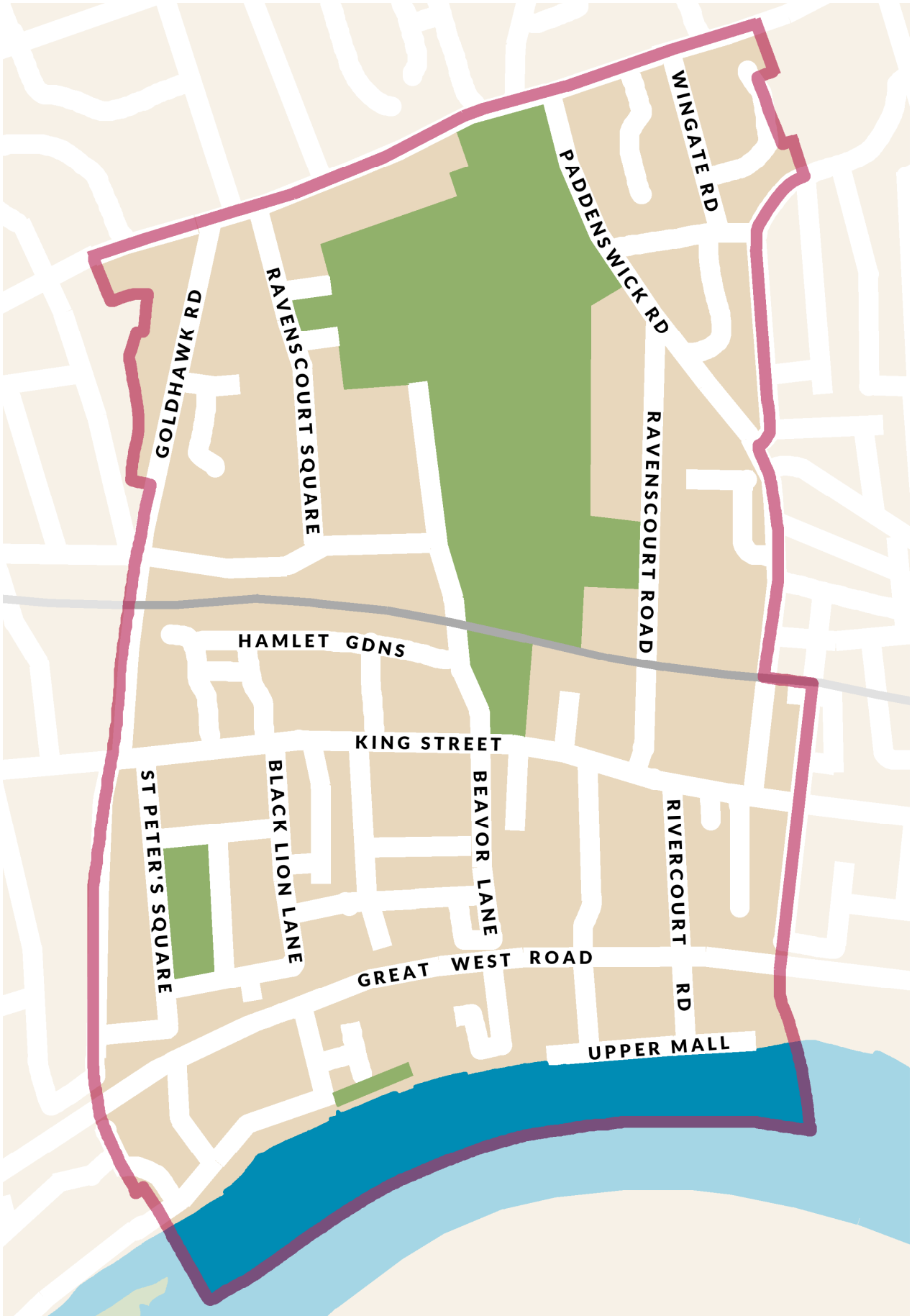
More consequentially, it encroached into the southern half of the abolished Starch Green ward, and this half was where the bulk of the Conservative vote in that ward was located. The Ashchurches: Ashchurch Grove, Ashchurch Park Villas, Ashchurch Terrace, and surrounding roads like Rylett Crescent and Binden Road, contain long terraces of pretty and quite grand villas - essentially a continuation of the Ravenscourt neighbourhood north of Goldhawk Road.

The Conservative plan also carefully excluded the Kelmscott Gardens council estate, just in front of Ashchurch Grove to ensure they could wring every Tory vote out without giving Labour a look in.

That better boundary for the Conservatives plus the already declining popularity of the Blair Labour government before the Iraq Ward had even happened, put Ravenscourt back in play. But only just: they could still only win one of the three seats in 2002, with 1998 Labour councillors Fiona Evans and Chris Allen (displaced from Grove) being elected alongside Caroline Donald. The defeated Labour candidate that year was Greg Jackson - later the founder of Octopus Energy.

The Lib Dems targeted Ravenscourt Park in 2002 and surged to 27% - most of which, atypically, came from Labour and certainly cost them that third seat here.

Caroline Donald died in 2005 causing the only by-election this ward has ever seen. 2005 was a stronger Conservative year than 2002 - even though the by-election took place just a month after the general election they had lost, which may have dampened some of the enthusiasm of Tory voters. But they easily held onto the seat, with a 7% swing from Labour. The Lib Dems only slipped back a little: they were still sapping huge amounts of votes that would more likely have gone Labour if there had been a forced choice.


WINGATE RD
PADDENSWICK RD
GOLDHAWK RD
RAVENSCOURT SQUARE
RAVENSCOURT ROAD
HAMLET GDNS
KING STREET
ST PETER'S SQUARE
BLACK LION LANE
BEAVOR LANE
RIVERCOURT RD
GREAT WEST ROAD
UPPER MALL

Then the second of the road-bumps in Labour's ascendancy. Following the Conservatives' 2005 general election defeat, the party chose David Cameron as leader: just about the optimal pick to attract progressive, liberal voters towards the party as Labour's baton passed from Tony Blair to Gordon Brown. By 2006, Labour's popularity had collapsed and Hammersmith and Fulham was firmly in the sights of this "Hug-a-Hoodie", "Vote Blue, Get Green" Cameron Conservative Party.

In the 2006 Conservative landslide, Ravenscourt Park was firmly in the majority, swinging further than it did in the by-election ten months earlier. The Tories won just over half the votes with Labour on 34%. Labour was only down 2% on 2002 - their least decline of any ward that year. But the Lib Dems had decided to try their luck in another ward: this time Askew, and they lost twelve points of support here as a result.

In 2010 the Conservatives won re-election in Hammersmith & Fulham, the election that coincided with the general election which that party came out ahead in too. Labour halved the Tory majority in Ravenscourt Park and the Lib Dems rebounded - back to the usual pattern of when the Lib Dems are up the Conservatives are down.

Yet in 2014, despite Ravenscourt Park being eminently winnable there was almost no swing and the Conservatives held on, even as Hammersmith and Fulham returned to Labour. Then there was the EU referendum and Conservative support collapsed in hugely Remain-voting wards like Ravenscourt Park in 2018. Labour finally won all three seats in this ward that year - and by almost twelve percentage points.

The next boundary review before the 2022 elections essentially returned Ravenscourt to its pre-2002 boundaries. Set aside the political consequences of that, which clearly favoured Labour: Ravenscourt Park was simply an ugly, badly drawn ward that split neighbourhoods. The smaller, 2-councillor Ravenscourt ward put all of the so-called "Brackenbury Village" back in Grove, and all of the neighbourhood surrounding Wendell Park back in Starch Green (now renamed after that park, but on identical boundaries to old Starch Green). It is a much cleaner representation of the west end of Hammersmith.

Labour won the redrawn Ravenscourt by a landslide amount in 2022: a majority almost three times larger than they had the last time it elected on these boundaries in 1998. Back then the ward voted 51%-36%; this time 54%-23%. So Labour hadn't gained that much in the intervening 24 years: it was the Conservatives who had crashed. It wasn't the Lib Dems who benefited: they won about 11% both times. Instead the Greens came third with 12%, having not stood in Ravenscourt Park in 2018.

This ward is perhaps a case study in how the places the Green Party targets are defined by the political outlook they espouse. Should not the party that most embodies environmentalism do well in an affluent, liberal ward where conservation and the preservation of green spaces, the cleanliness of, and expanding access to the Thames, the quality of new buildings being proposed for an area, matter - and that's before we even consider national and local Green priorities like climate change and net zero.

Look at the lists of officers for the Hammersmith Society, the Fulham and Hammersmith Historic Buildings Group, and they will be heavily populated by Ravenscourt residents. The Chair of the Hammersmith Society is former Ravenscourt councillor Angela Clarke (though she lives in Grove ward); the long-running chair of the Historic Buildings Group was Angela Dixon: another Ravenscourt resident. These are among the most politically engaged Hammersmith residents around: people who would be probably be at least receptive to progressive Green candidates canvassing them.

But probably far less receptive to the sort of Green agenda pushed by Zack Polanski's version of the party: a more widely far left agenda, down-playing environmentalism and characterising the sort of wealthy types who live in St Peter's Square or Ravenscourt Road as the font of all the country's ills.

In 2026, despite the surge in membership, the Greens found only one candidate to stand in Ravenscourt and all their campaigning resources were directed at White City. As a result they didn't do badly in Ravenscourt, but then they didn't tank anywhere in the borough. 18.6% is nowhere near their best vote share though: in nine other wards they polled higher.

Such was the plight of the Conservatives, though, that this was enough for the Green candidate to split their two candidates, effectively winning the same amount. Labour was down as well: again, they performed significantly better in Ravenscourt than the borough as a whole.

As a result Ravenscourt became the second best Labour ward in Hammersmith and Fulham - just behind Grove - a

result that looks inexplicable if approached from any conventional political angle: that affluence equals Conservatism and deprivation equals Labour support.

But we are in an era when affluence is no marker of party affiliation - at least in most of London; indeed lack of affluence in the country beyond London became a marker of Conservative and then Reform UK support, especially in areas that voted for Brexit.

The reason why Brexit is still crucial in understanding politics a decade and more after the EU referendum, is because that issue is just a marker for a raft of demographic trends that speak to values, not just wealth. If you attended university you are far more likely to have voted Remain - and beyond that have a range of political opinions that lean to the liberal end of the spectrum.

If you value mobility and travel you are again more likely to have voted Remain - one of the ironies of the referendum was that Remainers tend to leave the place where they grew up and travel, valuing mobility; Leavers tend to stay rooted in their communities of birth, childhood and adolescence. Hammersmith and Fulham is a borough of significant population churn and diversity, and so contains a horde of voters who look like they should be Conservatives, measured on their economic activity, but in fact are not - sometimes viscerally not.

This is the only way to understand why Ravenscourt now sits at the top of the Labour firmament in this borough. It's why the Conservatives are in long-term decline in very affluent wards like while Labour has found the going increaasingly tough in its traditional strongholds like Durham, South Yorkshire and the West Midlands.

It should still be noted that a majority of those who voted in Ravenscourt did not support Labour. But the non-Labour vote was evenly divided: 19% Conservative, 19%

Summary of Ravenscourt results

	Con	Lab	LD	Grn	Oths
1949	62.2	37.5			
1953	57.6	42.4			
1956	65.3	34.7			
1959	55.0	34.1	10.9		
1962	59.9	40.1			
1978	66.0	30.9			3.1
1982	49.3	27.0	23.7		
1986	39.4	37.7	22.9		
1990	46.7	37.3	3.7	12.3	
1994	42.0	43.0	11.2		3.8
1998	37.3	51.3	11.4		
Ravenscourt Park ward					
2002	36.0	36.9	27.1		
2005B	44.3	31.4	24.3		
2006	50.6	34.1	15.3		
2010	43.5	33.0	23.5		
2014	40.6	33.8	7.9	17.6	
2018	34.5	45.8	19.7		
Ravenscourt ward					
2022	23.0	53.5	10.8	12.6	
2026	19.2	47.5	8.1	18.6	6.7

Green, 8% Lib Dem, 6% Reform, and it's the gap between first and second that ultimately matters under First Past The Post.

I've concluded other ward profiles by suggesting that the only way back for the Conservatives will be a significant political event that makes their messaging resonate locally again. That is true here as well - but even that may not be enough in Ravenscourt to refloat their boat. Labour has shown it has a high floor and a relatively fixed ceiling to its vote, which is solid and resilient. The Conservatives seem much more dependent on the waxing and waning of support for smaller parties here.

Rollcall of Ravenscourt ward councillors

including Ravenscourt Park ward (2002-2022)

2026
- Natalie Lindsay
- Harry Brackley

2022
- Liz Collins
- Patrick Walsh

2018
- Jonathan Caleb-Landy
- Bora Kwon
- Asif Siddique

2014
- Charlie Dewhirst
- Lucy Ivimy
- Harry Phibbs

2010
- Charlie Dewhirst
- Lucy Ivimy
- Harry Phibbs

2006
- Lucy Ivimy
- Harry Phibbs
- Eugenie White

2005B
- Lucy Ivimy

2002
- Chris Allen
- Caroline Donald
- Fiona Evans

1998
- Fiona Evans
- Hefin Rees

1994
- Angela Clarke
- Huw Davies

1990
- Angela Clarke
- William Smith

1986
- Angela Clarke
- Patricia Migdal

1982
- Lady Rosemary Belhaven
- Angela Clarke

1978
- Michael Christopher
- Clement Jarvis

1962
- Cyril Arnold
- Gladys Powers
- William Smith

1959
- William Smith
- Donal Thorpe
- Betty Wildman

1956
- William Smith
- Donal Thorpe
- Betty Wildman

1953
- William Smith
- Donal Thorpe
- Betty Wildman

1949
- W. Cook
- Benjamin Martin
- Bertie Samels