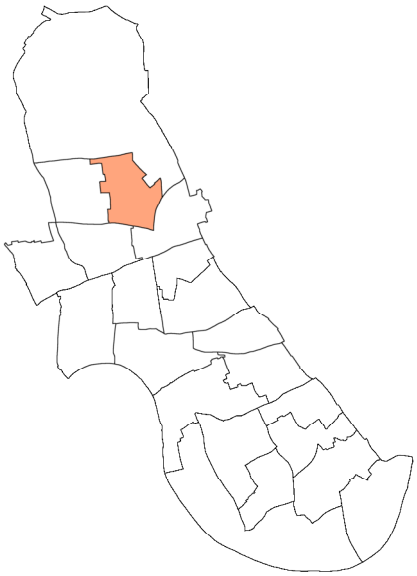
White City ward

The words of the Song "Pure Imagination" from the Gene Wilder musical version of Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory could, instead, have been the theme-tune of the Great White City: the massive exhibition centre that stretched from what is now the Holland Park roundabout north to the Westway.



"Come with me and you'll be in a world of pure imagination. Take a look and you'll see into your imagination. We'll begin with a spin travelling in the world of my creation. What we'll see will defy explanation.

"If you want to view paradise simply look around and view it. Anything you want to, do it! Want to change the world? There's nothing to it.

"There is no life I know to compare with pure imagination. Living there you'll be free if you truly wish to be."

The Willy Wonka of White City was Imre Kiralfy. Imre Close off Ellerslie Road is named after him: an impresario who dreamt big and turned this space that had been brickfields and small-holdings into a site of white marble and plaster pavilions with echoes of the Ottoman-inspired Brighton Pavilion of John Nash. A British equivalent of the American Phineas Barnum of "Greatest Show on Earth" fame, perhaps.

There were canals lined with gondolas, ornate carved bandstands, gardens, a funfair and toboggan ride, historic exhibits recreating old London, and even mechanised displays; one requiring fifty tonnes of machinery to demonstrate how a flood destroys a village.

Here were staged huge Imperial exhibitions to celebrate great British triumphs; the first being the Franco-British Exhibition over the summer of 1908, marking the signing of the Entente Cordiale in 1904. There followed three further great exhibitions before the enterprise became a victim of the outbreak of war: the Japan-British exhibition in 1910 (the reason there is a Japanese garden within Hammersmith Park), the Brussels Exhibition and the Anglo-American Exposition of 1912.

Next door, on the site now occupied by the bland, technocratic buildings of the former BBC Media Village, stood a huge stadium within which the 1908 Olympics were staged.

Dorando Close, which is the ward boundary, is named after Dorando Pietri - the Italian runner who collapsed just shy of the finishing line and, having been helped across it by officials, was subsequently disqualified.

One of the last uses of the stadium was the 1934 British Empire Games (the forerunner of the Commonwealth Games). These were meant to have been staged in South Africa but the international condemnation of the country's apartheid regime meant they had to be relocated. It is in recognition of these games that many of the roads through White City have Commonwealth associations like Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the city of Bloemfontein, where the games would have been staged.

The exhibition site never recovered after the war and the stadium became less and less used (briefly by QPR before their permanent move across the road). It eventually became a greyhound-racing stadium before the London Plan widened the Westway, necessitating the stadium's demolition.

The London County Council, by this time long controlled by Labour and intent on clearing away the slums and providing decent new homes for London's working class, discovered this affordable land right on the periphery of its administrative boundaries and began to plan a utopian estate.



It cost £1,729,126 (almost £36 million in today's money) had many critics right from the outset. From the left, the battle was between those who rejected blocks of flats in favour of cottage estates - a battle that was played out right here between the White City and Wormholt estates. The side arguing for blocks won.

They did so not because they rejected the arguments of the garden city estate advocates but because the needs of a rapidly-growing London meant that building to a much higher density than cottage garden estates was essential, in their view.

But even so, the uniformity and tightly packed plan of White City, which before the landscaping developed gave some allusion to the layout of prison cell-blocks, was also criticised: some demanding a wider variety of architecture on the estate: perhaps some tower blocks and some houses, within the overall footprint of units needed.

To be fair, the estate is not entirely uniform (and has diversified further as new sections have been added). There are blocks like Bentinck House in the north with direct access to flats from individual stairwells; and the more common design of long communal balconies. But nonetheless, it is the sheer uniformity of so many blocks clumped together that makes the White City estate feel somewhat oppressive.

The other criticism, which council Architects Departments have made again and again was to focus solely on the provision of housing without any attention to what the residents of these new homes were to do with themselves when they arrived. Leaving residents isolated and feeling abandoned inflicted far more economic blight on the estates they planned than the built environment itself.

That does not just mean local amenities like parks and clubrooms, nurseries and schools and gardens but employment opportunities and, short of that, quality, quick public transport to get resident to where the jobs were. Too often - and White City was a case in point - housing estates were built on land at the far-flung edges of London.

These estates also uprooted their new residents from their families and friends, communities and support structures. That was another reason why, no matter how modern and spacious than the places they were leaving, and with secure tenancies, many struggled to adapt to this new estate.

It may sound odd, today, to talk about White City, now surrounded by homes and a football club, and offices and the shops of Uxbridge Road, and Hammersmith Park as "isolated", but it was back when it was opened. To an extent it still is today.

The White City estate was troubled from the very beginning and, at least initially - Labour's opponents, hoping to win here in its first elections, tried to exploit these problems. Problems with repairs, problems with vandalism and anti-social behaviour, race problems, complaints about the level of rents and the standard of caretaking.

A search through newspaper cuttings concerning the estate can be sorted into three main clusters: reports about crime or criminals from White City; reports about structural problems with the estate or services being withdrawn; and reports of residents complaining that the estate's poor reputation wasn't deserved.

As with many estates with the reputation the White City gained, its nadir came in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

80th Year of Publication.

ESTABLISHED A.D. 1855.

THE

West London Observer.

COUNTY PAPER FOR LONDON, MIDDLESEX AND SURREY.

Independent. Impartial.

Friday, May 31st, 1935

White City as Housing Estate.

The decision of the London County Council to acquire by a Compulsory Purchase Order some fifty acres of the old White City Exhibition Grounds at Shepherd's Bush for a housing estate will do much towards relieving the slum problem in many parts of West London. The cost of the site, including its partial development as a housing estate, is about £500,000 and the scheme provides for the erection of 2,500 dwellings for a population of 12,500 persons. This action of the County Authority is the culminating point of an agitation put forward years ago when the housing shortage question and the conditions of overcrowding were much more acute than they are to-day. It was then strongly advocated that both the old White City Exhibition Grounds, which had been up for sale for many years, and those of the old Earl's Court Exhibition Grounds should be acquired for housing purposes, but the negotiations that ensued led to nought.

* * * *

Since then these derelict sites, once the unsurpassed pleasure haunts of London, have remained eyesores in their idleness and mass of debris, whilst a great clamour has existed for land so that better housing accommodation could be provided for thousands of poor families living under appalling overcrowded conditions and many of them having to sleep in underground rooms. It has remained for the present County Council to take the drastic step of acquiring by a Compulsory Order a large portion of the White City grounds and to transform it into a colony where people being dehoused in overcrowded areas can be comfortably housed. The housing scheme will result in the disappearance of the greater part of the exhibition grounds, about 35 acres being left untouched. The Stadium has for years led an independent existence and the part of the White City buildings which will remain to recall the past is the large entrance hall and the Court of Honour where each year the British Industries Fair is held.

* * * *

Many of the problems came from the fact that councils had been focussed almost exclusively on constructing new homes and paid insufficient attention to maintaining them.

Maintenance is wider than just the flats themselves but also the communal parts of the estate and the wider facilities that make an estates more than just a collection of flats. In the case of White City things like clubrooms and washrooms - because this estate was built before homes had utilities like washing machines and central heating. When those appliances did arrive the flats were often too small to accommodate them. A whole bunch of problems converged during this era:

- A backlog of repairs
- Government trying to curb the spending of the GLC and local councils
- The lack of controlled entry systems making it easier for burglars to gain access to flats, and to itinerants, muggers and drug addicts sheltering in stairwells
- The 1977 Housing Act, which obliged councils to prioritise homelessness over all other criteria, thereby altering the nature of occupancy on the estates from the mainly working to what might contentiously be called an underclass
- The failure of police to sufficiently impose law and order, and the permissive tolerance of petty crime and anti-social behaviour that made people feel less safe than they reasonably were
- Racial tensions as original residents complained that the estate was being used as a dumping ground for "immigrants"

Hammersmith and Fulham Council - Conservative-run in 1981 and keen to restrain Rates and spending, and for whom services to Labour-voting council tenants were hardly their top priority - did not welcome the transfer of responsibility for 3,000 flats here (plus the newer Bayonne estate in Fulham).

The reputation of council estates - especially large council estates like White City, never really recovered. There is a commonplace slander that council estates are violent and dangerous, crime-ridden, sinks of deprivation and despair, graffiti-strewn. If you are minded to disagree, think back to the last portrayal of a council estate in a book, newspaper, film or movie that was positive. The estates are always where the bad people come from and where the bad things happen and where the architecture is alien, frightening and unsafe.

It the vast majority of cases it isn't true. Perhaps it stems from the embedded British narrative that home ownership is the only valid housing tenure; that anyone who is a council tenant is a failure, lacks ambition, is not a participating citizen, has failed at life.

After the war, both main political parties were aligned on the goal of building a lot of council housing: to clear slums, to rebuild after The Blitz, and to finish the promise still incomplete from the aftermath of the First World War: Homes Fit For Heroes.

But as that consensus faded; as Labour's Housing Act of 1978 dramatically reshaped who was eligible for council housing, removing ability to pay from the criteria and also all-but halting the amount of council house building (there was no money left in the era of IMF loans), housing became a deeply partisan dividing line. Conservatives began to see Labour as weaponising council house-building to swing wards its way. In this borough Addison, Gibbs Green (West Kensington) and, arguably, Normand (Lillie) had their political trajectories swung in Labour's favour through the building of council housing. Much later on that would be true of Sands End and housing association housing.

When the Conservatives came to power nationally, their introduction of Right To Buy (a policy first tested by the Labour-run GLC) was seen by Labour as not just an attack on the supply of council homes (as councils were banned from replacing the homes sold to their tenants) but a devastating political attack. Of course, the problem with Labour's interpretation of the politics of Right To Buy was that it was turning Labour-voting council tenants into Conservative-supporting leaseholders not through any alchemy but simply because it was a wildly popular policy. Labour's trenchant and clumsy opposition to the scheme lost them as much support as the policy itself did.

But this housing culture war was disastrous. The council housing stock reduced substantially - nowhere near as substantially as in Wandsworth, but there the council did everything in its power to encourage Right To Buy, and had a much larger stock of homes to sell. But if the pool of homes reduces and the need for those homes remains steady or increases, the level of points - the level of need - needed to get to the front of the queue for a home increases too. If the need - and we're not just talking financial need but also social need - of the people housed on an estate increases, the number of problems on that estate likely increases to.

And, instead of the very mixed, diverse council estates of the 1950s which thrived, the Conservatives were able to start claiming that council housing itself was failing: that estates were becoming sinks of deprivation.

That, of course is a circular argument: it is not council homes themselves that are sinks of deprivation but those being allocated - by law - to them that are creating these deprivation hotspots. The Conservatives - any party - could change that by changing the eligibility criteria and building new homes.

Hammersmith and Fulham Conservatives wanted to repeat what their neighbouring Tories in Wandsworth had done in respect of council housing - which was to reduce the number of council homes, sell off entire estates to property developers, and dampen turnout of voters from council estates.

They attempted to sell this partisan agenda by arguing that house prices in Hammersmith and Fulham were so high that there was a hole in housing policy where many local residents were: people wanting to get on the housing

Burden of a bad estate — by MP

MP Clive Soley has raised questions about the plight of people living on White City estate.

Mr Soley, MP for Hammersmith North, appealed for assurances that Hammersmith Council will have enough resources to run the estate.

The GLC are to hand over White City — described as very unpopular by Mr Soley — to Hammersmith Council next April.

But the MP is worried the council will not have the staff or the money to run it.

He is also anxious that tenants are given up to date information on the transfer.

Mr Soley told the House of Commons last week: "The White City Estate is now a very unpopular estate as a place to live.

"The introduction of modern domestic methods such as spin dryers and washing machines started the decline.

"The kitchens and bathrooms were too small for the machines to be installed and the usual problem of decay took place.

"Major attempts are being made to refurbish it and bring it up to standard.

"If an estate of that nature is to be transferred to a local authority, one needs to be sure the authority has the resources to deal with it.

"I have also had numerous people coming to me and asking what is happening on the estate.

"There is total uncertainty, which leads to rumours and to fears. I understand well the anger of the tenants."

Mr Soley said the tenants were to hold a special meeting about the takeover which he would attend.

He was speaking during a debate on the GLC General Powers Bill a bill which gives extra power to the GLC to transfer their resources.

Houses 'left empty'

AN MP has claimed in Parliament that houses in Hammersmith are being kept empty in the hope of selling them.

North Hammersmith MP Clive Soley claimed people were being pushed down the housing list to help the Government policy of selling council houses.

The MP was speaking during a House of Commons debate on the GLC (General Powers) Bill.

Meanwhile ten members of Hammersmith and Shepherds Bush Women's Voice, picketed Glenthorne Road Housing Centre on Friday in a protest about the amount of empty houses in the borough.

ladder but without the sort of homes within their financial range. They argued that there were plenty of homes for the very poorest, even if not enough, and plenty of homes for the very richest, but very little in between: and that was to be their priority. They argued that several estates - such as the West Ken, such as Queen Caroline and such as White City - were reaching the end of their lives and could be rebuilt as part of big private sector "regeneration" schemes.

The Conservatives were right that housing policy did fail the sort of resident they had indentified. The unaffordability of homes in London isn't just a problem the Tories identified: it was a key Green Party campaign in 2026, after all.

And the Conservatives identified it but did nothing whilst in government to fix it. If anything, their Help To Buy scheme, the Stamp Duty holiday following the Covid pandemic, and their failure to even consider more council house building, made the problem worse.

It isn't possible to build "affordable" homes to buy because the same problem besets that idea as it does Right To Buy. It's affordable for its first buyer but any discount is then immediately lost: when the home is sold it's at the same market value as any other house in the neighbourhood. The lucky first buyer nets the entire profit.



THE WEST LONDON OBSERVER, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1955

NEW HAMMERSMITH PARK ON WHITE CITY ESTATE

THE opening of Hammersmith Park on the White City Estate today (Friday) at 3.30 p.m. will mark a further achievement in the L.C.C's drive for more parks and open spaces in London.

Among representatives of the L.C.C. and Hammersmith Borough Council will be the chairman of the L.C.C. (Mr. Norman Prichard), who will open the park, the chairman of the Parks Committee (Mr. Edwin Bayliss), the Mayor and Mayoress of Hammersmith (Cllr. T. A. Keating, J.P., and Mrs. Keating), and the M.P. for Hammersmith North (Mr. F. Tomney).

Hammersmith Park, which is situated in South Africa Road between the new B.B.C. Television Centre and the L.C.C.'s White City Housing Estate, covers about 7½ acres and is designed to meet the long-felt needs of a heavily populated neighbourhood.

The amenities now include three tennis courts and a bowling green (both of which are served by a pavilion), a children's playground, a paddling pool, and a large dry playground—each adequately served with shelter and conveniences. The lay-out also includes a small refreshment house which, it is hoped to build soon.

Beyond the tennis courts are spacious lawns planted with trees and further on a rock and water garden. Stone from the Forest of Dean was used to make the garden, and two streams, with many waterfalls, feed a pool, spanned by a typical lakeland pack-horse bridge.

Where the park is now, a 100 years ago, when Shepherds Bush was still a mere village and the land immediately west of Wood Lane was part of Old Oak Farm, there probably still remained a few of the oak trees which at one time covered much of the area, including the whole of Wormwood Scrubs.

Later came the world-famous White City Exhibition sponsored by Imre Kiralfy. After his successful exhibition halls, first at Olympia and then at Earls Court, he opened a Franco-British Exhibition in 1908.

The Court of Honour stood partly on the site of the present park, and the very popular Japanese garden in the 1910 Japanese-British Exhibition stood where the rock garden now stands.

WORLD FAMOUS

The outbreak of the first world war saw the end of the last exhibition of the type which had made the White City famous.

More recently during the past two or three years, after the Army's withdrawal shortly after the end of the last war, the area was once again allowed to return to its derelict state and, apart from the sports stadium, the cracked and crumbling plaster mask which had once transformed the brickfields into the world-famous White City was all that remained of the former glory.

In 1947 this area, about 20 acres, was purchased for housing, road widening and development by the B.B.C., leaving 7½ acres for use as a park. When finished, it is expected to cost nearly £50,000.

The existence of large areas of reinforced concrete, deep foundations, and considerable underground piping and drainage works have made the site a difficult one to develop.

YOUR HEALTH IN FULHAM:

Infectious diseases show 'a marked decline,' says M O H

Infectious diseases showed a "marked decrease" in Fulham, states Dr. Mary I. Adams, Medical Officer of Health for Fulham, in her annual report for 1954, just published.

The number of notifications of measles was down by 849 and whooping cough by 415 on those of 1953, says Dr. Adams, and

Shared ownership was an attempt to fix this: allowing occupants to purchase a share of the property and to increase that share as they saved or earned more, while paying rent on the remainder. This scheme was quite popular but it was also hugely costly for the owner-tenant with huge leaseholder charges, and lenders charging far higher mortgage rates on such properties (because, if there was a default they could not reclaim the home: it remained owned by the housing association). The combined mortgage payment plus rent often ended up considerably more than either just paying a mortgage or just renting.

In other words, it's all but impossible to create a policy that creates permanent affordable homes to buy. The least complex way of helping that pool of voters is to build more council homes and widen the eligibility criteria so that young professional couples could live in low-rent housing why they save up a deposit to buy. But that would never be a policy entertained by modern day Conservatives - even though, when estates were much more mixed they got a larger vote from them.



TERROR OF THE HOODED GANG

A TEENAGE terror gang named the Condor Legion netted more than £40,000 in a two month series of burglaries and street crime.

The four strong gang, two of them schoolboys, spread a reign of terror over their Shepherds Bush neighbourhood, Knightsbridge Crown Court heard on Friday.

The hooded gang, who ransacked homes, left their name — taken from a Nazi air squadron — daubed on the walls of a local junior school they broke into, said Mr Howard Vagg, prosecuting.

One victim, rail guard Anthony Remidos, 60, of Auckland House, White City Estate, awoke in the early hours of the morning to find a hooded raider standing over him brandishing a meat cleaver and a dagger.

He was threatened and robbed "and subjected to a terrifying experience," said Mr Vagg.

A stretch of homes favoured by the gang backed on to a railway at Sinclair Road, West Kensington.

"They would walk along the tracks, which ... to the homes. The...

SHEPHERDS BU...

Ga...

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1987 Tel: 993 5921

Tenants get what they ask for to improve White City life

Estate's £14m facel...

Going to the people — p3

Estate's children speak out

CHILDREN were not forgotten when the Town Hall decided to ask people living on an estate for ideas for improvements.

Youngsters from three primary schools voiced their concerns for White City Estate, Shepherds Bush, in a special exercise.

The seven- to 11-year-olds came from Canberra, Ellerslie and Pope John schools.

They said they wanted like more playgrounds and shops but less dog dirt, graffiti and litter.

One youngster added: "We haven't much space to play. All we do is ride our bikes on the road which isn't safe."

Another added: "You can only play football on the rubbish patch next to Hammersmith Park. All the green spaces between the flats have signs that say: 'No ball games'.

"I would put up a sign saying people with dogs must stop them fouling the streets."



Work begins at the White City Estate

IMPROVEMENT ... million are to b... West London's ... estates.

The scheme at t... Shepherds Bush, w... by Hammersmith ... Already £3 millio... for immediate repair... over the next three y...

Major repairs to ... ing up of security a... ments planned for t... on the 1940's estate.

The scheme was ... ter meetings between ... councillors over t... months.

By NOREEN C...

A tenants' report ... published and last ... tenants told council ... they wanted at a pe... in the White City ... centre.

Their most seri... were home-repairs, ... lighting, animals alk... wild over the est... cumulation of rubbi... children's playgrou... control and parking...

Council housing ... Kenner agreed with ... essential home re... come first and impr... er.

He said the Tow... carry out a numbe... make life better on...

These include: r... dows and fitting d... fitting telecoms and ... curity, cleaning bu... building new roofs.

White City – the dumping ground for immigrants?

THE THORNY question of whether or not the White City Estate is being used as a dumping ground for black families may be answered in a special GLC report due out next year.

Probe into housing discrimination claim

One thousand lettings over the past 12 months are being examined by GLC officials in an at... tempt to gain ...

not discriminate and we keep no records."

President of the ... Tenant...

carry out their duties properly, then you cannot have a slum."

Mr. Clinton Sesley, an executive member of the Hammersmith Council for Community Relations, attacked Bill Goble for his "underlying assumption that black people are problems."

"What ratio of black to white here would be satisfactory to the Tenants' Association?" he asked.

"Race relations is to do with people and I hope the tenants are seeing it in terms of people and not colour."

Bill Goble replied: "We live in a multi-racial society and as ... indigenous population ...

being condemned as racialist."

It was the race relations experts themselves who had suggested discrimination, he said.

"They simply ask why there are so many black people on this estate. The GLC have given no answer at all."

Hammersmith's two community relations officers, John Rafferty and Ray Cruikshank, declined to take part in the debate.

But Mr Rafferty told the Gazette after the meeting: "The HCC R does want records kept. Our stated policy is that it doesn't matter where blacks are housed so long as the accom...

New crime crackdown on White City Estate

By JOY PERSAUD

POLICE are building new community links on a council estate as part of an initiative to crack crime.

The White City Estate's troubled reputation is the target for local community police officers, who point out that fear of crime makes the situation appear worse than it is.

It is hoped the initiative will reduce those fears and help trap criminals such as the arsonists who torched the bowling green store near the estate on Monday last week.

Community groups and the council were consulted about the pilot programme; so far, feedback has been encouraging. If everything runs according to expectations, all buildings on the estate will be incorporated into the policing project.

Rhodes House and Luguard House are two blocks that have been targeted for Neighbourhood Watch. Since the installation of entryphones last year, the number of burglaries has halved.

Police are working in conjunction with the council's housing department to improve basics such as lighting and the layout of walkways in a bid to deter loiterers.

A property-marking drive is also underway to deter burglars and so that stolen goods can be returned to their rightful owners.

PC Richard Flynn, one of the two officers in charge of the project, said he wants to dispel the fear felt by so many residents who will not set foot outside their front doors after dark.

He said: "The people that live here deserve to have peace of mind. We aim to strengthen the links we already have with the community. This estate suffers from an image problem, but there are estates in London which are far worse.

"Changes will start very soon. This is a long-term approach which will reap benefits in the future. Our ultimate aim is to reduce crime using a commun... approach."

A Business Watch scheme ... concentrate on establishments ... estate is also being set up.

Last Monday, the coun... bowling green store near ... Adegoke Recreation Cent... Africa Road was the target o... Someone broke into an ... and started a fire, possibly ... speed up the destruction ... estimated to be around £25...

Chairman of the ... Residents' Association, T... "The fire was awful. Lo... are devastated. Where w... "We don't feel safe, ... good idea to have ... Neighbourhood Watch ... teenage gangs going a...

EALI...

TERT...

Spring clean for an estate

By Jane Ratford

A RUN DOWN housing estate is to get a £1.6m cash bonanza from the death of the GLC.

The money for improvement work is a goodbye present from the Greater London Council to the 1930s built White City estate in Shepherds Bush.

Most of the money will go on repairs to leaky roofs, damaged windows and security improvements in the 47 blocks, £50,000 of the money will be spent on improvements to the White City Adventure Playground and a mums and toddlers group, the One O'clock Club.

An extra £400,000 will go to former GLC housing estates in Hammersmith and Fulham.

Doubt hung over the money last week when Westminster Council tool legal action to stop the GLC's final spending spree before abolition on April 1.

But the £43m earmarked for old GLC estates throughout London was released last Friday. Westminster has gone ahead with an appeal to stop the GLC giving away £25m to various voluntary groups.

The 2,000 families on the estate will also see other improvements this year. Last year the GLC announced it would give the borough £500,000 for a new council housing office in Bloomfontein Road, new heavy duty doors on the estate and maintenance.



White City estate . . . £1.6m for repairs.

£1.6m farewell gift from the GLC

Chairman of the GLC Housing Committee Tony McBrearty said: "London boroughs have been saddled with huge burdens of repair work by the Government, without any attempt to offer extra resources to pay the bills.

"The GLC intends to ensure that money for housing repairs will go into the homes where it is desperately needed."

Labour councillor Ivan Gibbons, who represents the estate, said: "This is a tribute to the persistence of White City tenants and their efforts to get work donw on the estate."

SPRING ENTE...



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Pay £5 life membership and get 1 free 1 hour JVC or Fuji blank tape!

(offer lasts: 14th March to 14th April)

KING'S MO...

Summary of White City ward results

	Con	Lab	LD	Grn	Oths
1949	32.6	60.1			7.3
1951 By	35.8	64.2			
1953	19.8	75.2			5.0
1956	7.4	82.3			10.3
1959	11.1	88.9			
1959 By	13.9	86.1			
1962	14.3	85.7			
1964	13.0	79.9			7.1
1967 By	16.5	48.0	31.4		4.2
1968	32.5	44.2	17.3	4.3	3.2
1968 By	21.3	55.3	15.7		6.7
1971	15.0	79.7			5.3
1974	14.9	73.6			11.5
2022	9.9	63.3	10.5	16.2	
2026	7.0	52.0	3.8	29.7	7.5

No, the Conservative way in Hammersmith and Fulham was the way they had done things in Wandsworth: decant estates, net a big capital receipt for the empty estates, watch as new, far denser, private housing with an element of housing association-managed units within it, was built and then reap the political reward of Labour voters cleared out and Conservative voters bussed in.

The plan failed: the Tories didn't believe they'd only have eight years to implement this fairly long-term agenda and by the time they lost in 2014 the plans weren't far enough advanced to prevent Labour from unpicking them. None of the estates were decanted, let alone demolished.

But the irony is that, even where the Conservatives did allow new private developments: Chelsea Creek, Fulham Riverside, Lillie Square, Queen's Wharf, Fulham Reach, Sovereign Court: all these developments are turning out not to be the deep vats of Conservative votes expected of them. They are low-turnout. They are fairly high turnover. They contain huge numbers of renters, not owner-occupying leaseholders. And they are "cost of living" Londoners who have been looking to parties on the left to help them rather than the Conservatives - especially since Brexit.

Anyhow, we digress from the story of White City: an area far larger than just one large council estate.

South Africa Road divides the estate from the rest of the area: immediately to the south is Queen's Park Rangers' Loftus Road stadium. Next door the fantastically-named Batman Close council estate. Beyond that is Hammersmith Park: along with Wormholt Park the only public open space between Uxbridge Road and the Westway. There is the Army Reserve Centre, home to the B Company 4 Parachute Regiment and then the Wood Lane estate and the former BBC Television Centre; now a huge complex of residential apartments.

The rest of White City comprises long, densely-packed terraced streets running north from Uxbridge Road: Frithville, Stanlake, Tunis, Abdale, Loftus, Arminger, Ingersoll and Bloemfontein, as well as Ellerslie, which runs east to west.

These streets come in a mixture of styles but generally are large townhouses sub-divided into flats. There has been a bit of gentrification since the days of the old Hammersmith borough council White City ward when they were almost as good for Labour as the estate was. A fair few of the Conservative votes when they won a seat in Shepherd's Bush Green - and these roads were in that ward at that time - would have come from this part of that ward. But there are far more renters than owners here, and so there are nowadays plenty of Green voters here too.

Because of the redevelopment of the BBC Television Centre into a very large new residential estate, and other building projects in the vicinity, the White City area was projected to be entitled to two extra councillors by the 2022 elections. By reallocating a councillor from Wormholt, which became a 2-councillor ward, it was possible to resurrect White City as a council ward after a 44 year hiatus.

The revived White City includes almost everything east of (and including) Bloemfontein Road through to Wood Lane - the exception being the Wood Lane estate whose residents asked to remain in College Park and Old Oak ward. To balance electorates with next door Wormholt it also includes all of Bloemfontein Road: the residential terrace near Uxbridge Road, the new Cranston Court, the Wormholt estate cottages and Joslings and Creighton Closes, up by the Westway.

Across London in 2022 Labour struggled in its very safest wards despite its advances in Conservative leaning neighbourhoods. This was no different in Hammersmith and Fulham, even as the rest of the borough was swinging towards Labour: their vote fell in College Park and Old Oak, Coningham, Shepherds Bush Green and Wormholt, as well as in White City.

White City poll is judgement day on Tories

THERE IS just over one week to go to the White City by-election — the first since the Tories swept to power on Hammersmith Council in May this year.

Political pundits will be watching events very carefully on November 7.

The result could mean a loss to both major parties.

To the Tories it will be a yardstick as to how their reforms are being received in the boroughs.

The electorate of White City has been given the first opportunity to either show the Tories their support or no confidence.

The Labour Party could be in trouble because of Mr. Arthur Ingram's Independent stand. He was the former Labour councillor for White City and could capture many of the Labour votes.

Confidence vote is Tory target

MR GORDON BRIERLEY will be asking the people of White City for a show of confidence in the new Tory-controlled Hammersmith Council next week.

Mr. Brierley, who is 25 and has lived in Hammersmith all his life, is the Tory candidate in the White City by-election.

If he is elected it will be interpreted by the council as public support for the "winds of change sweeping through the Town Hall" since the Tories took office in May this year.

Mr. Brierley will be fighting for the support of the Tory policies now being vigorously implemented in Hammersmith after 30 years of Labour rule.

His election would be a sign to the Tories to continue full steam ahead with their task of "putting Hammersmith right."

Mr. Brierley, a surveyor and estate agent, is one of the managers of St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Primary School in Hammersmith.

He is also the Vice-chairman of the Coningham Ward of the North Hammersmith Conservative Association.

'Go with Gould' — Communist

ACTIVE TRADE UNIONIST Mr. John Gould is urging the people of White City to "Go with Gould" at the by-election and vote Communist.

Mr. Gould, who is married with four children, is aiming his campaign particularly at housewives, council tenants and young people.

He offers a change of policy and if elected, promises to express the militant voice of tenants, parents and the homeless.

Mr. Gould, 29, is the President of the Shepherds Bush First Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers.

He deplored the prospect of rent increases and said that people needed improvements to their homes not rent increases. They needed lifts in their flats and modern electric fittings.

"I am for the council building on every suitable site," he declared.

Mr. Gould condemned the stopping of new housing developments in Hammersmith, the sale of council houses and attacked the education and social services in the borough.

Former Mayor Labour's choice

FORMER HAMMERSMITH MAYOR Mrs. Cicely Liardet has been chosen to represent the Labour Party in next week's by-election.

Her election platform will be an attack on the new Tory-controlled Hammersmith Council plus a promise of an attempt to get a modern health and welfare centre in the White City Ward.

Mrs. Liardet, who was once chairman of Hammersmith's Welfare Committee, will be hitting out at the Tory policy of selling council houses and depriving the needy people on the council housing list of a home.

She deplores the Tory policy of cutting back on the social and welfare services in the borough in an attempt to secure a rate saving.

She accuses the Tories of being cheesepairing and attacks them for abandoning development schemes to private speculators.

And she will be taking up the question of developing the waste land in White City for recreation and will also suggest a sensible parking policy to solve the problem in this area.

She will also promise to get something done about dumping and burning refuse in the area.

Housewife is the Liberal

HOUSEWIFE AND COUNCIL TENANT Mrs. Violet Coombes will be standing for the Liberal Party in the White City by-election next Thursday.

Mrs. Coombes has promised to champion the cause of the council tenants and ratepayers of the borough. She has pledged herself to vote against every rent increase for council tenants and every rise in the rates.

Mrs. Coombes, who lives on the William Church Estate, was involved in a row with the council about parking earlier this year, and received notice to quit her home.

She is still living there, but claims she is standing for council because of the unsatisfactory treatment she received over a point of principle.

LABOUR VOTE UP

Ex-Mayor back

FORMER LABOUR Mayor of Hammersmith, Mrs. Cicely Liardet, swept to victory with a large majority at last week's White City by-election. The Tory vote was down on the May total.

The Tories polled second in White City last week as they did in the May Council elections. Labour's increased majority was a huge boost to their morale.

Confidence in the Labour Party was probably at its lowest ebb when the May elections took place. The parties ran a much closer race for White City then.

Mrs. Liardet said she would be putting up a good fight to try and continue the work she had started in Hammersmith.

Perseverance

She pledged to serve the people of White City as best she could. "There is a definite need for a health centre at White City," she said. "I am going to fight for one. Perseverance will get all things in the end."

Mrs. Liardet promised to stand firmly by her election address. She said she would take on any problem or point that was brought to her, big or small and do her best to do something about it.

Mrs. Liardet was thrilled with the result. The following morning she said: "I was delighted. I thought we would win, but I didn't expect so many votes because of the bad weather."

But she added: "I think people are beginning to realise now what they didn't in May."

Only 26 per cent of the electorate went to the poll.



Hammersmith Conservative Alderman Mr. Seton Forbes-Cockell, congratulates Mrs. Cicely Liardet after her victory at the White City by-election

How they voted

VOTING in the White City ward by-election:

Mrs. CICELY LIARDET (Lab.)	908
Mr. Gordon Brierley (Con.)	350
Mrs. Violet Coombes (Lib.)	258
Mr. Arthur Ingram (Ind.)	72
Mr. John Gould (Comm.)	54
Labour majority	558

The swing was towards either the Greens or the Lib Dems, not the Conservatives - and it was perhaps in part due to low turnout. Just 27.5% of voters participated in the 2022 elections. Of those who voted, Labour won 63%, the Lib Dems 10.5%, Conservatives 9.9% and the Greens 16.2%.

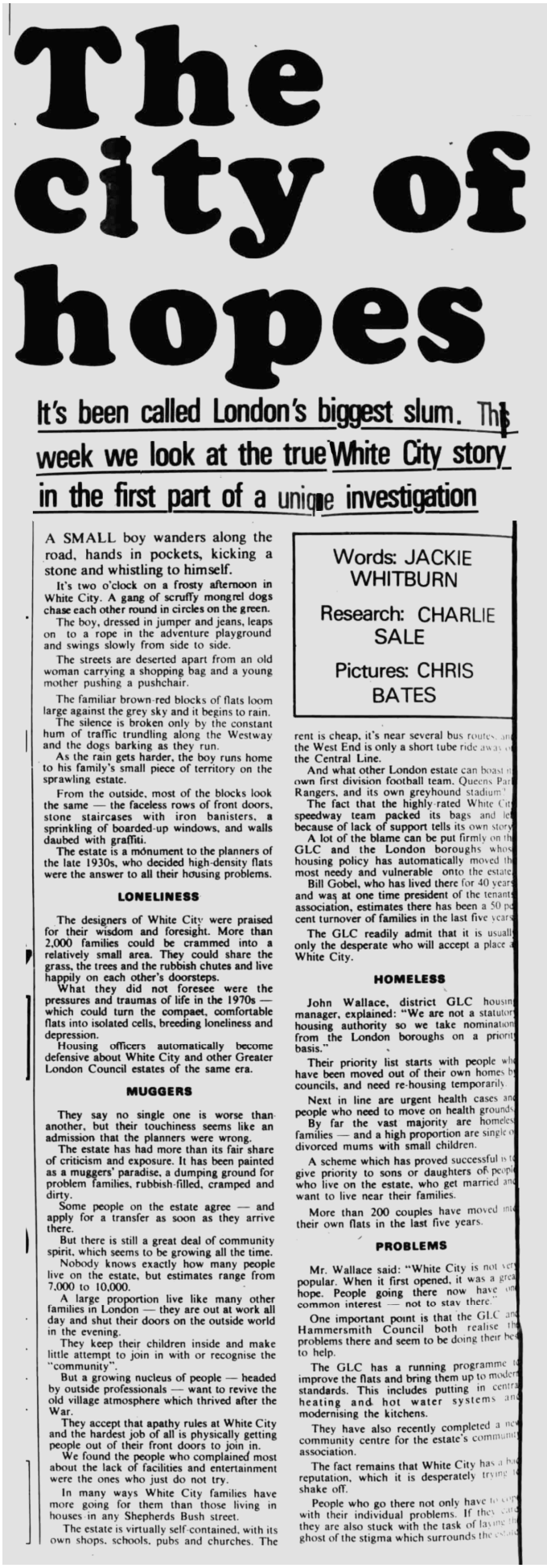
That 16.2% was the second-best Green Party performance in Hammersmith and Fulham in 2022. Their best: 19.7% was in Coningham. But whereas they had put all their campaigning effort into Coningham - their target ward that year, their White City share had come about without any effort whatsoever.

Following the election of Zack Polanski as Green Party leader in the late summer of 2025 - an election he'd fought on moving the party sharply left and to campaign on a far wider social justice and international agenda, the party surged in support. No doubt some of its new recruits were Jeremy Corbyn supporters alienated and actually encouraged to leave Labour under Sir Keir Starmer's leadership.

But yet more were youthful, ideological younger voters who felt as strongly as Reform UK voters that Labour and the Conservatives were a "uniparty" offering minor deviations from a "neo-liberal" policy agenda that focussed on enriching "baby boomers" at their expense; that supported Israel's "occupation" of Gaza, and that was enabling billionaires to enrich themselves while inequality ran rampant through society.

In the years of Conservative government, the Greens had begun doing very well in rural, normally very safe Conservative wards in the south east: places like Ashfield, Mid Suffolk, Herfordshire, Lewes, Folkestone. With a Labour government, it was going to become much harder to continue energising the non Conservative vote in rural areas and, with Labour's support plummeting to unprecedented lows, much easier to win in urban, "progressive", left-leaning areas.

London had its share of very promising areas for the Greens: notably Hackney, Walthamstow, Lewisham, Southwark, Lambeth and Tottenham. They were far weaker on the western side of London: their only noticeable group of councillors was in Richmond-upon-Thames where their six seats had been "gifted" to them through a pact with the Lib Dems.



The city of hopes

It's been called London's biggest slum. This week we look at the true White City story in the first part of a unique investigation

A SMALL boy wanders along the road, hands in pockets, kicking a stone and whistling to himself.

It's two o'clock on a frosty afternoon in White City. A gang of scruffy mongrel dogs chase each other round in circles on the green.

The boy, dressed in jumper and jeans, leaps on to a rope in the adventure playground and swings slowly from side to side.

The streets are deserted apart from an old woman carrying a shopping bag and a young mother pushing a pushchair.

The familiar brown-red blocks of flats loom large against the grey sky and it begins to rain.

The silence is broken only by the constant hum of traffic trundling along the Westway and the dogs barking as they run.

As the rain gets harder, the boy runs home to his family's small piece of territory on the sprawling estate.

From the outside, most of the blocks look the same — the faceless rows of front doors, stone staircases with iron banisters, a sprinkling of boarded-up windows, and walls daubed with graffiti.

The estate is a monument to the planners of the late 1930s, who decided high-density flats were the answer to all their housing problems.

Words: JACKIE WHITBURN

Research: CHARLIE SALE

Pictures: CHRIS BATES

LONELINESS

The designers of White City were praised for their wisdom and foresight. More than 2,000 families could be crammed into a relatively small area. They could share the grass, the trees and the rubbish chutes and live happily on each other's doorsteps.

What they did not foresee were the pressures and traumas of life in the 1970s — which could turn the compact, comfortable flats into isolated cells, breeding loneliness and depression.

Housing officers automatically become defensive about White City and other Greater London Council estates of the same era.

MUGGERS

They say no single one is worse than another, but their touchiness seems like an admission that the planners were wrong.

The estate has had more than its fair share of criticism and exposure. It has been painted as a muggers' paradise, a dumping ground for problem families, rubbish-filled, cramped and dirty.

Some people on the estate agree — and apply for a transfer as soon as they arrive there.

But there is still a great deal of community spirit, which seems to be growing all the time.

Nobody knows exactly how many people live on the estate, but estimates range from 7,000 to 10,000.

A large proportion live like many other families in London — they are out at work all day and shut their doors on the outside world in the evening.

They keep their children inside and make little attempt to join in with or recognise the "community".

But a growing nucleus of people — headed by outside professionals — want to revive the old village atmosphere which thrived after the War.

They accept that apathy rules at White City and the hardest job of all is physically getting people out of their front doors to join in.

We found the people who complained most about the lack of facilities and entertainment were the ones who just do not try.

In many ways White City families have more going for them than those living in houses in any Shepherds Bush street.

The estate is virtually self-contained, with its own shops, schools, pubs and churches. The rent is cheap, it's near several bus routes, and the West End is only a short tube ride away on the Central Line.

And what other London estate can boast its own first division football team, Queens Park Rangers, and its own greyhound stadium?

The fact that the highly-rated White City speedway team packed its bags and left because of lack of support tells its own story.

A lot of the blame can be put firmly on the GLC and the London boroughs whose housing policy has automatically moved the most needy and vulnerable onto the estate.

Bill Gobel, who has lived there for 40 years and was at one time president of the tenants' association, estimates there has been a 50 per cent turnover of families in the last five years.

The GLC readily admit that it is usually only the desperate who will accept a place at White City.

HOMELESS

John Wallace, district GLC housing manager, explained: "We are not a statutory housing authority so we take nominations from the London boroughs on a priority basis."

Their priority list starts with people who have been moved out of their own homes by councils, and need re-housing temporarily.

Next in line are urgent health cases and people who need to move on health grounds.

By far the vast majority are homeless families — and a high proportion are single or divorced mums with small children.

A scheme which has proved successful is to give priority to sons or daughters of people who live on the estate, who get married and want to live near their families.

More than 200 couples have moved into their own flats in the last five years.

PROBLEMS

Mr. Wallace said: "White City is not very popular. When it first opened, it was a great hope. People going there now have one common interest — not to stay there."

One important point is that the GLC and Hammersmith Council both realise the problems there and seem to be doing their best to help.

The GLC has a running programme to improve the flats and bring them up to modern standards. This includes putting in central heating and hot water systems and modernising the kitchens.

They have also recently completed a new community centre for the estate's community association.

The fact remains that White City has a bad reputation, which it is desperately trying to shake off.

People who go there not only have to cope with their individual problems. If they care they are also stuck with the task of laying the ghost of the stigma which surrounds the estate.

In Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster: the boroughs that comprise the West Central London Assembly constituency, there were no elected Green councillors and no obvious targets.

So they decided upon a "kamikaze" strategy for 2026: targeting the very safest Labour wards in these boroughs. In Westminster that meant Harrow Road ward (73% Labour in 2022); in Kensington Golborne ward (70% Labour) and in Hammersmith - presumably because of that 16% Green vote, White City (63% Labour).

Three prominent young Green activists were selected who came replete with the social media skills that accompany election campaigns in the 2020s, along with big campaign days where Green members from across south west London were urged to come and help canvass.

While White City on paper looked the most vulnerable of those three Labour wards, it was considerably different to Harrow Road and Golborne. It has far less council housing: those two are effectively council estate wards. While White City has the largest Muslim community of any Hammersmith and Fulham ward, it is much smaller than those in Harrow Road and Golborne.

On election night the Greens very nearly won seats in both their other West Central targets, but came nowhere near winning White City. They increased their vote to 29%: impressive in comparison to the landslide margins Labour typically won this ward by. But Labour still polled 52%, down eleven points on 2022 but still over half the vote. The only election Labour has ever won less than that here was 1968. There were several wards in which the Greens got closer to Labour - there's a list in the Shepherds Bush Green ward profile. All that Green effort was for naught.

The Greens did best in the streets off Uxbridge Road - and that means that they should have targeted wards where similar streets comprise a much larger proportion of a ward. They might have done well in the BBC Television Centre development but getting in to talk to its residents is very difficult and turnout of voters there was the lowest in the borough. To win White City they would have needed a large majority of those voters and a large turnout. And then to do far better on the White City estate - which remained resolutely Labour.

The Green surge in 2026, even if relatively unthreatening in Hammersmith and Fulham compared to the London boroughs that party now runs, did reshape the electoral map of this borough somewhat. White City is no longer the safest Labour ward: none of the wards in Shepherds Bush are.

That's because the Greens, even when not coming close to winning, still took chunks off Labour's majorities. In contrast, Labour was more resilient in wards where the Conservatives remained their main challenger: Grove, Ravenscourt, Fulham Reach, so they have leapfrogged ahead of White City in that league table. That does not mean this Labour is at risk of losing White City - of course they aren't. The Greens need to look elsewhere for their first elected councillors in Hammersmith and Fulham.

Rollcall of White City ward councillors

2026
- Andrew Jones
- Natalia Perez
- Frances Umeh

2022
- Andrew Jones
- Natalia Perez
- Frances Umeh

1974
- Randolph Beresford
- Janet Hathaway
- Barry Stead

1971
- Randolph Beresford
- David Murray
- Barry Stead

1968B
- Cecily Liardet

1968
- Randolph Beresford
- David Murray
- Brian Powell

1964B
- Arthur Ingram

1964
- Randolph Beresford
- Dorothy Heaks
- Fred Williams

1962
- Dorothy Heaks
- Jack Pearce
- Fred Williams

1959B
- Thomas Morris

1959
- Dorothy Heaks
- Jack Pearce
- Edward Worne

1956
- Dorothy Heaks
- Jack Pearce
- Edward Worne

1953B
- Ena Freeman

1953
- Frank Hewett
- Jack Pearce
- Edward Worne

1949
- Frank Hewett
- Thomas Morris
- Jack Pearce