

London Docklands / Pimlico Quality of Life Comparison

Hypothesis

‘The quality of life at the Boardwalk in Docklands is better than at Churchill Gardens in Pimlico.’

Introduction

To prove or disprove the above hypothesis, we must first attempt to define ‘quality of life’. Put simply, it is how content people are with their lives and the environment in which they live. However, quality of life is much more than that, it encompasses not just a person’s contentment, but the way they live and the place where they choose to live. There are many factors that contribute to ‘quality of life’, among them are crime, climate, background, education, access to transport and services, living conditions and employment. However, for the purposes of this investigation, many of these factors are immeasurable. This is what makes quality of life so hard to define and gauge - the fact that there are things which clearly have great worth to some but others take for granted, and also that many of the elements of quality of life can only be measured when compared to those of a different place. For example, the quality of life in a developed country will easily exceed that of a developing country, but the same developed country could have a lower quality of life when compared to an even more highly developed country.

We used a wide variety of fieldwork techniques to come to our conclusions. These included doing traffic counts and local service surveys, using bi-polar diagrams and collecting environmental quality data. Each of these techniques were used for specific reasons:

- **Traffic Counts:** To observe how busy and congested the areas’ roads were. Also to examine factors like noise and transport access. These were carried out on the nearest roads to the test sites for 5 minutes, measuring the type and quantity of the traffic.
- **Local Service Surveys:** To analyse how resident-friendly the areas were in terms of offering a wide range of useful services. We measured the types and quantity of the services we saw.
- **Bi-Polar Diagrams:** To give an overall profile of the two areas and their quality of life. Scores between 1 and 8 were given in the following categories: Noise, Litter, Space, Transport Access, Services, Air Quality, Accommodation Size, Employment, Homelessness, Crime, Education, Traffic, Places to Worship, Open Spaces and Youth Facilities. A score of 8 means the area is excellent in that field, eg. very spacious, no crime.
- **Environmental Quality Data:** Used to examine and compare how environmentally sound the two areas were. The sites were ranked out of 10 in the following categories: noise, air pollution, litter, natural surfaces and areas for wildlife. A score of 10 indicates that the area is excellent in that particular class, eg. very quiet or litter free.

History of the Sites

London Docklands

For nearly 200 years, the docks of London's East End were the commercial heart of the world's largest empire. At the beginning of the 1960s, one-third of all Britain's trade passed through the Port of London and there were jobs for 28000 dockers. However the start of containerisation in the 1960s marked the beginning of the end for London as a major port. The docks were found to be too small and shallow to handle the huge container ships that were quickly overtaking the docking business in a bid to cut overheads by major shipping companies. By shipping more bulk the container ships quickly proved their worth. They could be loaded or unloaded in a fraction of the time and more cheaply using large cranes and fewer dockers. This containerisation started a rapid decline in the docking industry in London. The first dock to close was St. Katherine's Dock in 1967. Other closures followed in quick succession, the last three (Royal Docks) closing in 1981. The end of London's docking industry (excluding Tilbury, the new container dock near the mouth of the Thames where nearly 2000 people are employed) had grim consequences for the whole of the Docklands area, left virtually derelict. It has been estimated that for every job lost on the docks, three other jobs disappeared in the linked industries of ship repair, manufacturing and transport (the multiplier effect). In 1985 male unemployment in London's Docklands reached 32%. This had the effect of driving people away as young, richer and better educated people moved away in search of employment.

In an attempt to halt the Docklands' rapid degeneration the government set up the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) in 1981. Their brief was to make the Docklands more attractive to businesses and generally rejuvenate the area. Largely, this has worked very well. By making the Docklands an enterprise zone (an area free of normal planning restrictions with tax incentives to develop) the LDDC has made the Docklands a new ultra-modern extension of London's business district. The industries of printing, media, communications, retailing, leisure, tourism, commerce and finance have all set up major bases in the Docklands recently. Land and house prices are now reaching a peak as rich young people with highly paid jobs in the City of London are now moving in. The LDDC also orchestrated the building of the London City Airport (a short take-off and landing airport) and the Docklands Light Railway, connecting Docklands with the rest of central London.

The Docklands look to have a bright and wealthy future, having adapted well to once again become a major centre for industry and business, but of a different sort than would have been expected forty years ago. However, this 'new money' is perhaps resented by some of the area's older residents despite the money it has injected into their local economy.

First Impressions

We found Docklands a richly gentrified area, full of modern architecture and continuing construction. The apartments on the Boardwalk are very new and modern-looking (see photographs). They overlook a small marina of expensive boats, with views east and west of the Millennium Dome and Canary Wharf respectively. The apartments are fashionably constructed of a combination of glass and brickwork, with residents' secure parking below.

Churchill Gardens, Pimlico

Churchill Gardens estate in Pimlico was built shortly after the end of the Second World War, opening in 1951. It was built with a distinct purpose in mind - to house the local overspill population whose homes had been damaged or destroyed in the war. Despite being built so rapidly, no decisions were rushed as the local council (City of Westminster council) sought to make the estate a nice place to live. Experts from many different places with similar schemes were consulted and eventually their design came into being, in the form of the current estate.

The estate itself seems atypical of the expensive Victorian houses that characterise the rest of Pimlico, but is even more densely populated. An old Victorian public house still survives within Churchill Gardens, as a symbol of the area's past.

The estate remained roughly the same from when it opened up until the 1980s when a conservative government initiative entitled 'the right to buy' was started, allowing the residents to buy their own flats from the local council. Many people took up this offer, and lots of flats were bought up in large blocks by landlords seeking to make money from rent-paying tenants.

Recently lots of money has been spent on regenerating the area, including the building of new youth sports facilities. This was much needed as the area was beginning to fall into disrepair, but is now one of the best estates in London to live on, having won numerous awards.

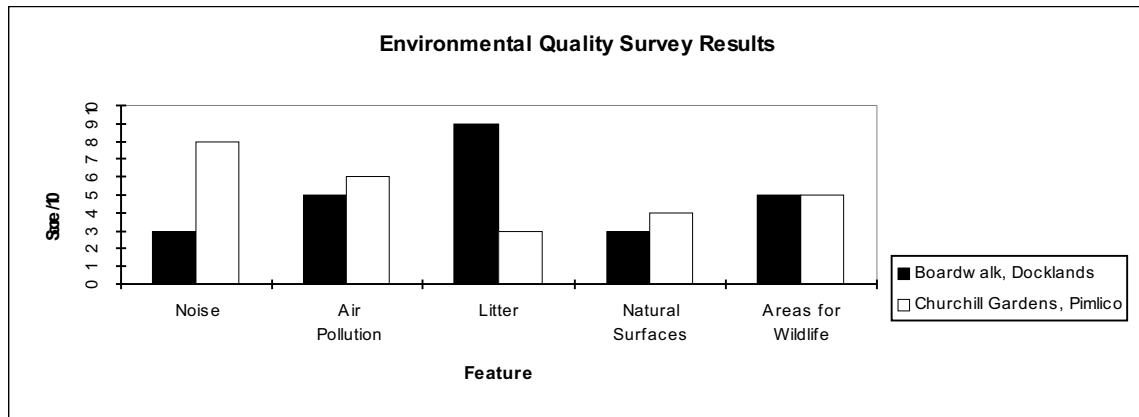
First Impressions

The vast size of the Churchill Gardens estate is what makes the biggest initial impact. The estate itself is made up of many tall blocks of flats, interspersed with green areas of grass and trees. The blocks are mainly constructed of bricks, metal and glass but because of their age look far from modern. However, they do not look very run-down or vandalised overall. Some very small estate roads dissect the estate but it is largely quiet.

Pimlico and Docklands are roughly 5 miles apart, but are incredibly different places.

Results

Environmental Quality



In the above graph, high scores (near 10) represent the best environmental quality.

eg. Noise: 0 = Noisy

10 = Quiet

Totals:

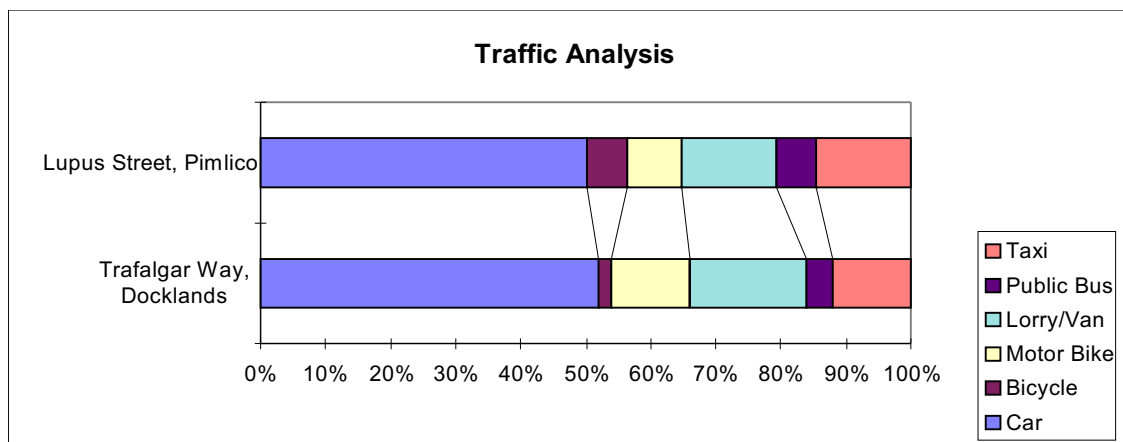
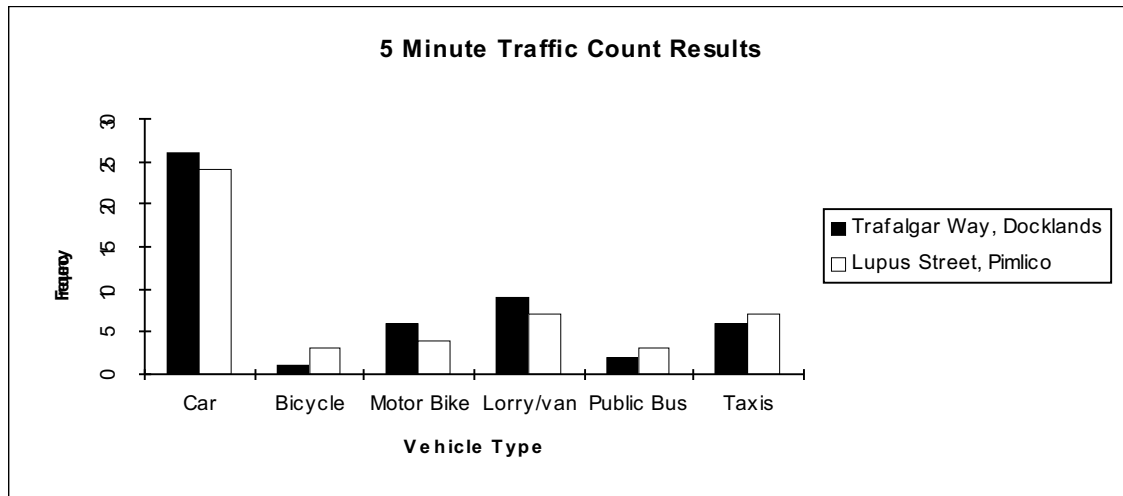
Boardwalk, Docklands: 25

Churchill Gardens, Pimlico: 26

These totals show that Churchill Gardens has a higher overall environmental quality when assessed on the basis of noise, air pollution, litter, natural surfaces and areas for wildlife. However, this trend is not quite complete. The Boardwalk had far less litter, which made the total figures much closer.

The Boardwalk is a much newer environment. The beds were freshly planted with some expensive plants (including tomato plants) and looked well looked after. In contrast, at Churchill Gardens most of the natural areas were open spaces of grass and some quite old trees, but nothing looking very designer-produced and somewhat more natural in appearance despite the small squares of grass. This is due certainly in part to the age of the environment, and also to the way it is looked after.

5 Minute Traffic Count



Total Vehicles

Trafalgar Way, Docklands: 50
 Lupus Street, Pimlico 48

Average Vehicles per minute

Trafalgar Way, Docklands: 10
 Lupus Street, Pimlico: 9.6

The above graph and figures show that Trafalgar Way, Docklands was a busier road for traffic at the time it was surveyed.

This survey was not truly fair, as the sites were tested at different times of day, yet neither time would obviously be busier. Trafalgar way was surveyed from 1401 to 1406. Lupus Street was surveyed from 1102 to 1107. Both roads were surveyed on the same day, Friday 22nd October 1999.

As the Traffic Analysis shows, in Trafalgar Way a greater proportion of the vehicles were in the sections 'Lorry/Van' and 'Motor Bike'. This could have had an impact on the noise

level of the area, as these two types of vehicle probably produce the most noise individually.

Pedestrians

Despite not doing formal pedestrian counts, we found that on the whole both areas were quite empty. This obviously had a lot to do with the time of day, but the area around Churchill Gardens, Lupus Street in particular was surprisingly busy. On the other hand, Docklands was found to be very quiet and empty, perhaps promoting what some of the locals have been complaining about as a lack of atmosphere and community spirit amongst the large, impersonal modern architecture.

Local Service Survey

Service	Boardwalk and Trafalgar Way, Docklands	Churchill Gardens and Lupus Street, Pimlico
Station	1 (Docklands Light Railway)	Within Walking Distance (Victoria Line)
Supermarket	0	1
Petrol Station	0	1
Secondary School	0	2 (1 private)
Primary School	0	1
Post Office	0	1
Library	0	1
Corner Shop	0	7
Bus Stop	2	5
Public House	0	1
Laundrette/Dry Cleaners	0	1
Sports Court	0	2
Post Box	1	2
Telephone Box	2	4
Totals	5	33

The above table tells us not only what type of services each area has, but also how important its services are. The more important services (a matter of opinion) are at the top, leading down to the least important at the bottom. As you can see, Churchill Gardens definitely has a broader range of services and is especially well equipped in the medium to low order service range, from corner shop to telephone box. This is good, as high order services are often only required singularly (eg. station), yet more than one corner shop or school gives to resident a better choice.

Despite coming off so badly in this survey, the quality of life of the residents of the Boardwalk is unlikely to suffer due to a surfeit of services. Instead, the rich residents of the Boardwalk are more likely to eat out or travel further away from their house, into the City or around on business, creating less demand for what the residents of Churchill Gardens would see as their essential local shops.

Conclusions

Somewhat surprisingly, our original hypothesis was disproved by our results, which overall show that the quality of life in Churchill Gardens was at least as good, actually slightly superior, to the quality of life on the Boardwalk. I fully expected the Docklands site to greatly exceed the quality of life at Churchill Gardens. However, the results of the traffic count, local service survey, environmental quality data collection and even the bi-polar diagram were all closely in favour of Churchill Gardens.

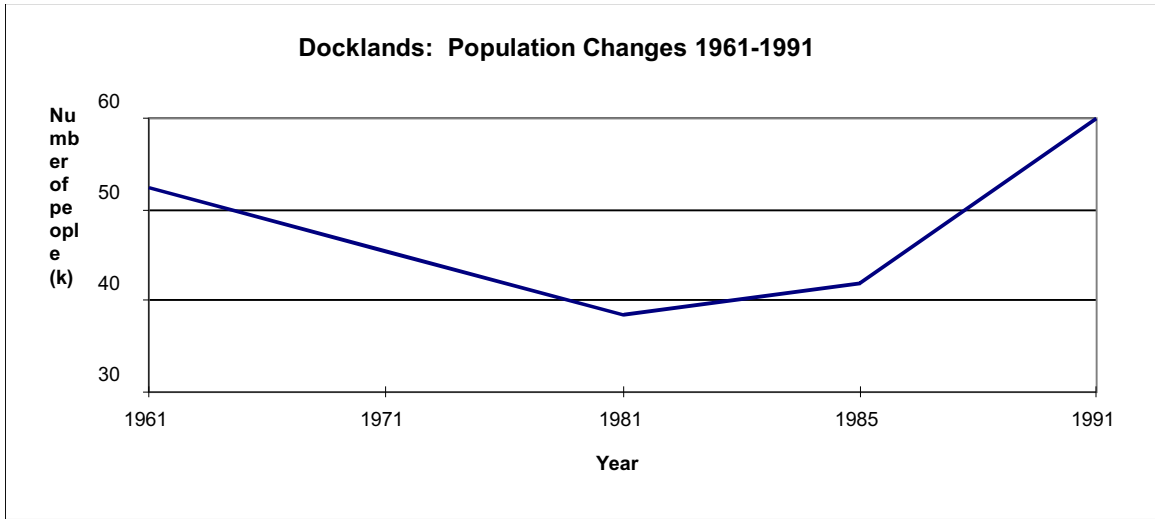
Despite all this strong evidence I would still say the Boardwalk has a higher quality of life because of its residents' greater spending power. In my opinion income, housing and money available are actually the greatest possible indicators of quality of life. Nevertheless, I was very impressed with the thought and effort that has obviously gone into making Churchill Gardens a good place to live. It seemed well designed and I got the feeling that the council really does care about its residents. Docklands on the other hand, appeared quite disjointed and artificial to me.

The hypothesis on 'quality of life' was always going to be difficult to prove or disprove, but in the end the research techniques we used seemed to favour Churchill Gardens. Analysing data on average incomes and typical housing prices from the areas would have favoured Docklands, as would looking at data on residents' education and unemployment rates.

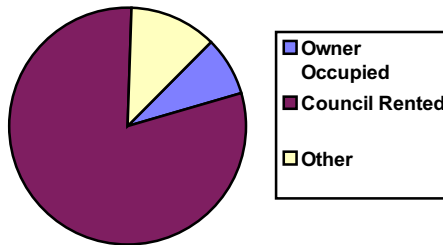
Docklands is an area with huge promise for the future and the residents of Pimlico also have reason to be optimistic, but for different reasons. However, they are both very important areas that need to be supported and maintained as two of London's many interesting places.

Background Information

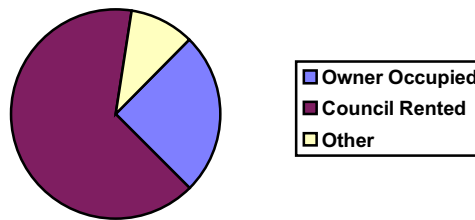
Docklands



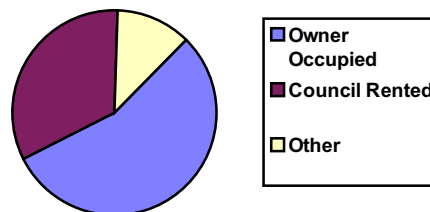
**Docklands: Home Ownership
1981**



**Docklands: Home Ownership
1985**



**Docklands: Home Ownership
1991**



Evaluation

This investigation could have benefited from a survey of local residents, as this can put forward interesting ideas from the people who know the area best. In the form the investigation eventually took it seems possible that the questions we asked may have been biased towards Churchill Gardens and did not fully take into account all the good points of Docklands. At the same time they may have highlighted the areas of Churchill Gardens which have been worked on most by the authorities. However, this could be seen as a good thing, showing that the Churchill Gardens authorities know what the most important areas are.

As already mentioned, I believe that Dockland's higher average incomes would have reflected well on the area if we had tested this. However, this ultimately comes back to the initial question: what is Quality of Life? By the criteria used in this investigation Churchill Gardens was found to have a superior quality of life, but with different criteria Docklands may well have fared much better.