

Geography Fieldwork looking at the Gentrification of Brighton

Introduction:

Maps:

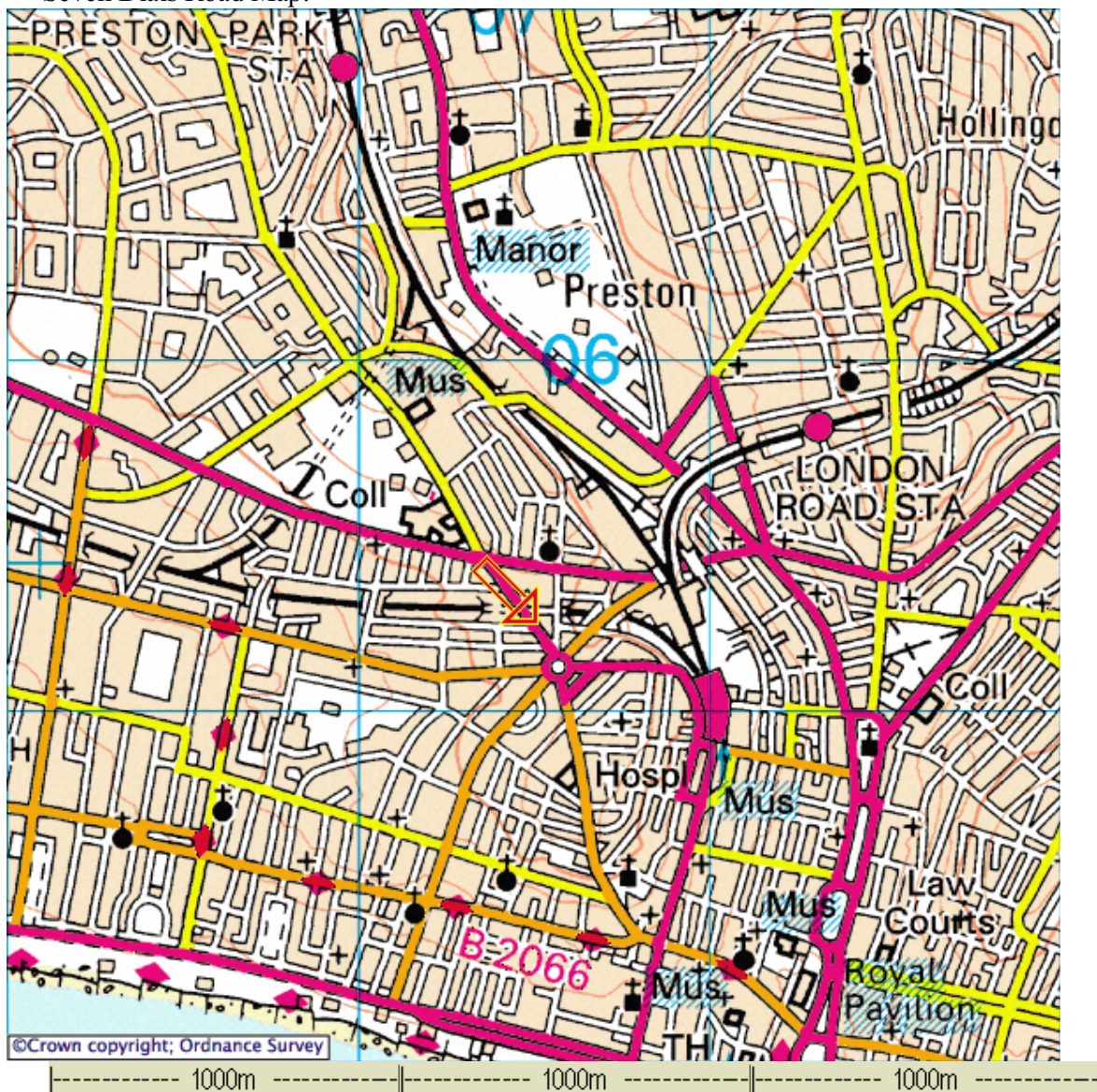
National Location:



General map of the whole of Brighton and Hove:



Seven Dials Road Map:



Brighton began as a small fishing village. The town changed from a small fishing and farming village when it was claimed by Dr Richard Russell to have an amazing sea-water cure. Almost overnight it became the fashionable weekend and holiday resort of London's high society. When George, Prince of Wales at that time, decided to make his home there, Brighton's popularity soared. The town underwent an amazing transformation and many local people capitalised on this and made money. Therefore, the majority of development of the area was in Regency times, which explains the majority of housing having Victorian and Edwardian architecture (Victorian and Edwardian terraces). This was in the early 19th and late 18th century. Brighton's current population is about 260,000. After its boom in the early 19th century, the area declined significantly and until recently (30 years ago) it was in need of much development and renovation. The study area is around OS grid reference 530735,104797.

Aims:

- The overall aim is to investigate the process of gentrification and to look at its impact on Brighton and especially Seven Dials.
- To see whether building and environmental quality changes on different roads of Seven Dials and to subsequently explain why any differences occur.
- To look at a good example of gentrification as it is going on at one period of time.
- To see whether the shops and services have changed since 1947.
- To see what the most important factors were that led to people moving into this area of Brighton.

Hypotheses:

- The level of gentrification will be directly proportional to the distance from the station.
- Services and shops will change as the type of people who live there change.
- Gentrification, although quite progressed in Seven Dials will still not be complete.
- The most expensive rental rates will be near to the station, and the most expensive house prices will be further away from the station up to a certain point.

Before you can look at gentrification, you must know what the process of gentrification is and how it occurs.

The Process:

Definition: the process by which some run-down areas of cities become transformed when middle and high-class professionals move in. It is another way of describing a way of improving the inner city, but cannot be planned. It occurs when market forces and changing fashions affect people.

It occurs in several important stages everywhere:

1. A 'pioneer group' moves in first. These people are low income professionals and they move into an area for cheap house prices. As in Seven Dials, house renovation was also needed which these people could afford. They tend to be young and although they have no children, want to be near the city centre for improved access to their jobs.
2. This group will start to improve the environmental and building quality because they want to live in an attractive area. Group specific services started to flourish in Seven Dials (e.g. wine bars, delicatessens) because there was a threshold population for business to be profitable in a once ailing and depopulating area.
3. The area subsequently becomes fashionable and now attracts the higher socio-economic groups and the high income bracket professionals, like executives and their families. Large plots of derelict land are also bought by developers and blocks of flats. This increases the chances of population increase because there is free housing and more shops and services can grow. The rate at which housing is bought and improved also increases.
4. The higher socio-economic group who are well educated and are powerful, create a pressure group which pressurises the local authorities to improve council services. Better policing, street cleaning and better upkeep are the most frequently requested things.
5. Now the area has been completely transformed from a low-income area, to one which is trendy, with good services, and above all expensive.

Now we have seen how it occurs, it is necessary to know why it occurs so that it is possible to understand why Seven Dials has gentrified to a greater extent than other areas of Brighton with higher multiple deprivation score:

Why gentrification is more likely to occur in an area:

- 1) Proximity to high status area. This is because when people move to an area, they want to live in a nice attractive area. However, since most people are moving to the area to escape high housing prices in other areas, it is unlikely they will have enough money to afford to live in the best area of Brighton. Therefore, they decide to live on the outskirts of a gentrified area, Preston which is adjacent to Seven Dials where they will live. When they move to an area which is less gentrified, they would want to improve the area and therefore, it will undergo gentrification.
- 2) Attractive older housing. This is important because it is often an important 'pull' factor for people because if they cannot afford attractive older housing where they live currently, they will look elsewhere for it. People who are willing to move will do it because it will improve their standard of living. In general, people will not move to an area with bad housing because it will be an unpleasant place to live.
- 3) Proximity to good transport links. This is also important since when people move away from an area which is very close to their place of work, to a more distant location, they would still want to get to work easily. If transport links are nearby it will minimise any extra and unnecessary commuting time

The factors which deter gentrification:

- 1) High crime rate. Crime rate is very important as a factor to deter gentrification because people do not want to move from an area in which they are safe, to one where they might suffer muggings or burglaries. People also view crime rate as an indicator to show the quality of atmosphere of the area and as an indicator to see how deprived an area is.
- 2) Proximity to large high rise council flats. Council flats are considered to be ugly, and havens for crime and poverty. Unless people are desperate, they would not want to live in a high rise council flat primarily because of its image and because it is not considered to be a comfortable environment or place to live.
- 3) Poor and inaccessible transport links. Without good transport links, people cannot get to the area easily, as well as leaving the area for their work. This is only an important concern for commuters, but is still not going to improve the area's chances of attracting people from the pioneer group who will start gentrification.
- 4) Proximity to heavy industry. Heavy industry creates much pollution. In addition to the air pollution, sound and sight pollution is created which not only makes the area unattractive to the eye, but also bad for your health.

Therefore, all of the factors which encourage gentrification to occur are all factors which either improve the environment, or make it a more appealing place to live. These factors 'pull' people to the area. However, all the factors which deter gentrification are all detrimental to the environment and atmosphere of the area which makes it unappealing to everybody, even the pioneer group. The detrimental factors all 'push' away those who might gentrify the area.

Techniques of Data Collection Table

Method	Sample Size	Study Area	Day/Date	Weather	Own/Group
Questionnaire Survey	81	Seven Dials	05/09/01	Patchy cloud but mostly sunny	Group
Land use/ house age	104 different measurements taken	Seven Dials	05/09/01	Patchy cloud but mostly sunny	Group
Environmental + Building Quality	104 different measurements taken	Seven Dials	05/09/01	Patchy cloud but mostly sunny	Group
Functional Survey	Shops on Bond Street, North Road, Kensington Gardens and Gardner Street	Seven Dials	05/09/01	Patchy cloud but mostly sunny	Group
Secondary data, Kelly's directories	Same as functional survey, but data from 1947	Shops on Bond Street, North Road, Kensington Gardens and Gardner Street	N.A.	N.A.	Group
House Prices, census and National Statistics	(At least 20 houses, but ideally 50)	Brighton and especially Seven Dials	N.A.	N.A.	Group
Functional Survey of King's Road	From corner of Beaufort Street to Sloane Square	Shops from corner of Beaufort Street to Sloane Square	N.A.	N.A.	Own
Questionnaire survey on King's Road	100				Own

Methods

The methods of this project are designed to investigate the impact of gentrification in the Seven Dials area of Brighton. The area was run-down, but now signs of gentrification are appearing, especially near the station. Therefore, to fulfil the aims of the project, two important factors must be taken into consideration to create the best method. Firstly, we must look at the change in demand for different services over time, and secondly, the quality of both the buildings and environment which are the direct forms of gentrification.

Primary data collection methods:

Functional survey: Onto tables, the functions of shops and services of the main Seven Dials shopping areas were written down and the street numbers allowing us to compare with the data in Kelly's Directories for other years.

Why it is appropriate and explanation: By doing the functional survey, it allows us to get a good picture of what services and shops are provided to the local population today, which can then be directly compared to data from the past. The function of a shop describes either what it is selling, or what it does, e.g. restaurant, computer shop, bank etc. It is appropriate because it shows whether a threshold population for certain services exist and when gentrification happened. This can be used in conjunction with the questionnaires to give a more accurate date for the start of gentrification.

Environmental quality survey: Onto base maps, the housing types, the quality of buildings and the quality of the environment will be written with scores from 0 to 60 (60 being the best). This is done for each street, but sometimes twice if the street is long or is not uniform in quality over its whole length.

Why it is appropriate and explanation: This is necessary to satisfy the second general aim of this project because the building quality is directly proportional to the level of gentrification on a street, and the environmental quality survey is also directly proportional to the level of gentrification, but also to the chance that gentrification will take place on that street. The housing types were classified by age and whether they were terraced, semi-detached or detached. The building quality refers to whether the buildings were renovated and in good shape or not, and the environmental quality refers to how nice the atmosphere of the road is. Therefore, roads with scores of 60, and 60 are the best. The penalty point marking scheme is below:

Building Quality marking scheme:

	None	Little	Some	Much
Deterioration of walls	0	1	3	5
Paint peeling	0	1	2	3
Displaced roof material	0	1	5	9
Broken/boarded up windows	0	1	3	7
Broken gutters	0	1	3	7
Structural damage	0	3	6	11
Rotting timber	0	2	4	8
Sagging roof	0	2	6	10

The points awarded are then subtracted from 60. The scores can be generalised to show that a street is:

Score	Physical condition of buildings
50-60	Excellent
40-49	Satisfactory
30-39	Generally unsatisfactory
20-29	very unsatisfactory – improvement needed
Below 20	Need to demolish or rebuild buildings

Environmental Quality mark scheme:

Feature	Penalty Points	Maximum Penalty
Landscape quality: Pleasing	0	8
Not much greenery	4	
No landscaping or greenery	8	
Derelict land: No unused sites	0	10
A couple of unused sites	4	
Much undeveloped land	10	
Litter/Vandalism: None	0	8
Some, mainly sporadic	4	
Everywhere graffiti and litter	8	
Industrial Premises: None	0	10
One or two buildings	5	
Majority of area is industrial	10	
Traffic flow: None	0	6
Regular but occasional traffic	3	
Constantly congested	6	
Noise: None	0	5
Some	2	
Very noisy	5	
Air pollution: None	0	8
Something fishy in the air	8	
Access to public open space:	0	3
Easy or no access.	3	
Access to shops + primary school:	0	5
Shops nearby, a short walk or a	2	
15 minute walk or more	5	

The penalty score will be subtracted from 60. This will give a similar indicator to the building quality survey. Therefore, the areas with the best environmental quality will be near 60, and the worst will be below 20.

Questionnaires: People were asked certain questions to find out about their work and place of work and finally why they decided to move to Seven Dials in Brighton by considering several important factors which might have influenced their decision to live there by using a scale of 1 → 5. The criteria were whether affordable housing, houses in need of renovation, schools, attractive housing, houses near the station, city centre or park, trendy areas and relatives were important or not in their decision. The sample size was 81 questionnaires.

Why it is appropriate and explanation: This is appropriate because it shows exactly what type of people moved to Seven Dials, and what type of people are gentrifying the area. It is also necessary because it shows why people moved there. By doing this, we can then deduce what Brighton offers people which might pull them from other cities, e.g. London. It will also show when gentrification started to occur in Seven Dials.

Secondary data collection methods:

Kelley's Directories: Look up the shop functions from 1947 and then compare with the data collected in 2001.

Why it is appropriate and explanation: This is appropriate because it allows us to directly compare the shops in 1947 and the ones in 2001 which then means that it will be possible to see how the shops and services changed. This will give an indication of when gentrification began in the area.

House Prices: House price magazines were collected in Brighton from Estate Agents. The information used was only for the houses situated in the Seven Dials area.

Why it is appropriate and explanation: It is appropriate because it allows the comparison of similar houses which makes it possible to see in which areas of the city housing is in the greatest demand. It will also allow us to see whether the distance from the station is directly proportional to the price of the house. This will answer one of my hypotheses.

Government statistics: This was gathered from the internet, and I concentrated on getting indices of deprivation in Seven Dials and unemployment figures for Brighton,

Why it is appropriate and explanation: This will show the areas of Brighton which are in the greatest need of gentrification because they are so run-down, and also the areas which might start to gentrify shortly even though the process has not started yet, and the areas which have completely gentrified.