

CASE STUDY OF URBAN REGENERATION – THE JEWELLERY QUARTER OF BIRMINGHAM

Regeneration within urban areas in the United Kingdom has largely been confined to the centres (Central Business Districts) and inner city areas which are located in a zone surrounding the CBD. Inner city areas saw very rapid growth as manufacturing and residential areas during the industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries. Since the mid 1970s some inner city areas have become less popular as places to live and as locations for economic activities. Residents have moved out because of poor quality of life and unemployment. Factories have closed as a result of an increasingly globalised economy which has seen some types of manufacturing transferred to locations outside the United Kingdom. Sites on the edges of urban areas or close to motorway junctions have generally become more popular locations for manufacturing or new economic activities like superstores. As a result, some inner city areas have often experienced a spiral of decline (Figure 1).

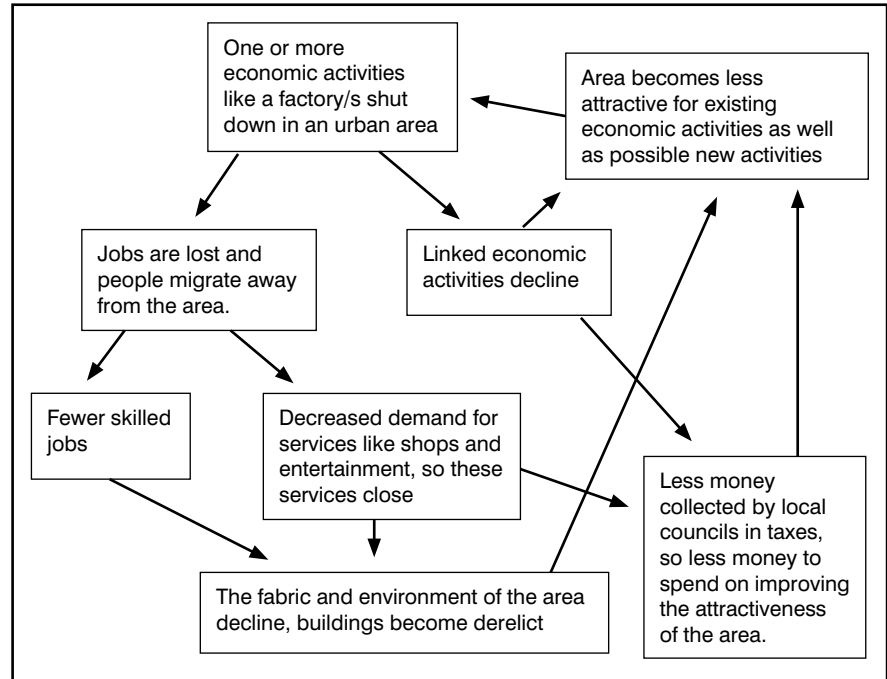
National government and regeneration

The problems of inner city areas have long been recognised and various groups have worked both separately and in combination to try and 'rebrand' these areas by changing their image and by regenerating (renewing or revitalising) to reverse the spiral of decline and to give them a more sustainable and prosperous future. In the last 30 years central government has introduced a variety of schemes in specific parts of urban areas, such as:

- property-led regeneration through urban development corporations
- partnerships between local and national government and privately owned companies
- City Challenge projects
- flagship projects
- sustainable communities

Such regeneration schemes have focused on the economy of the area, largely by the creation of job opportunities or by improvements

Figure 1: The spiral of decline in inner city areas



in communications; on social improvement (eg improving educational and training opportunities) and finally on environmental improvements such as revitalising green spaces or by the creation of new parks in urban areas.

Many urban areas, however, have not been targeted by the initiatives outlined above, and in these areas any regeneration has largely taken place as a result of the work of a number of different interested players or stakeholders. These have included organisations supported by national government, local government, non-governmental organisations like Friends Groups, private organisations and individual residents. These groups can work separately and in cooperation to bring about regeneration both directly and indirectly in an area.

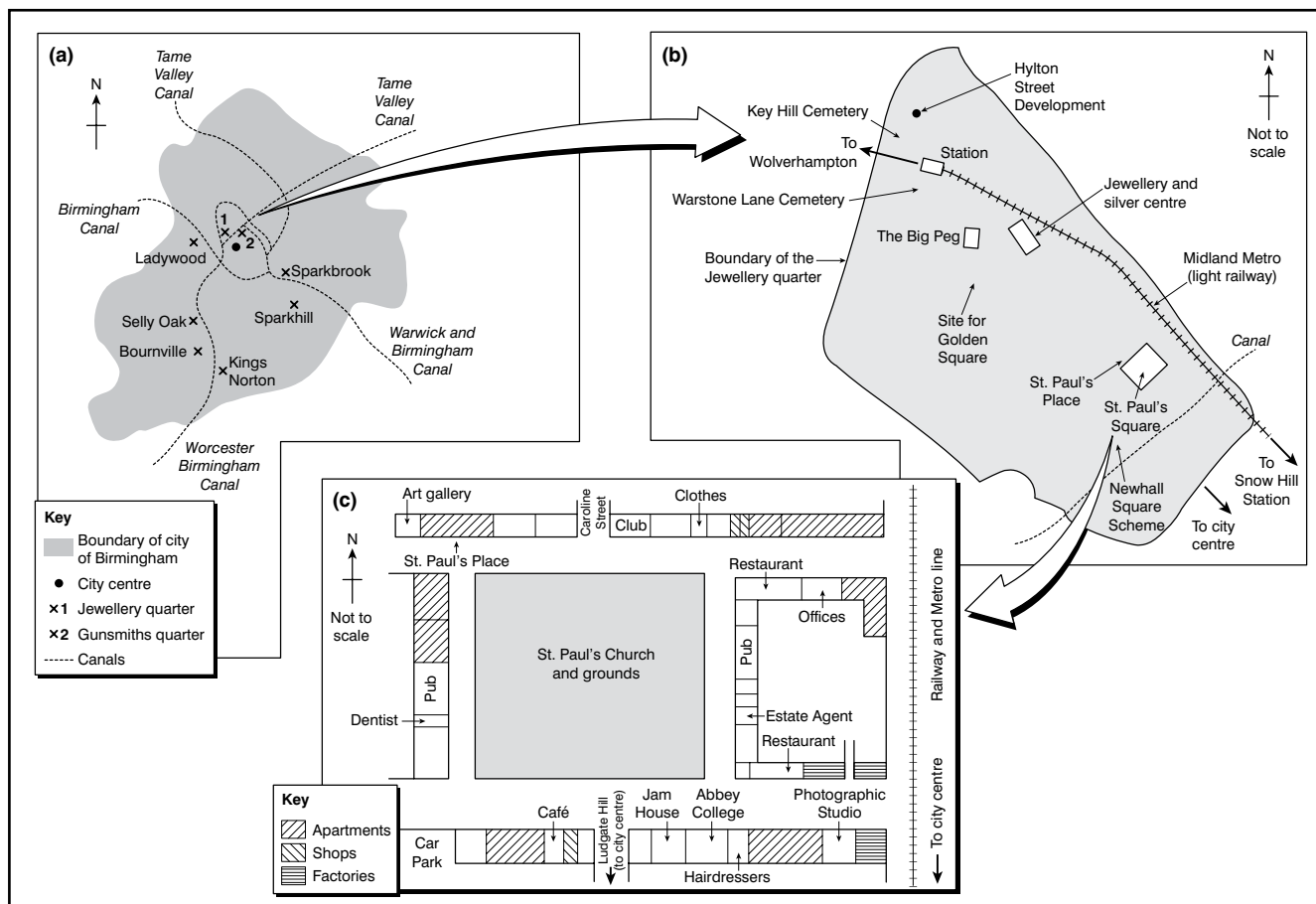
The Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham

One such inner city area where regeneration by a number of different groups or players has taken place is the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham. Originally, it was a wealthy residential area just to

the north west of the centre of Birmingham (Figure 2(a)), but as Birmingham grew rapidly in the 18th and 19th centuries as a manufacturing centre, bedrooms in houses in the Quarter were converted into workrooms, and then many buildings were converted fully to manufacturing or were knocked down and replaced by factory buildings. As Birmingham boomed as a manufacturing city, four groups of industries developed: guns, jewellery, toys and metal working. Some of these industries, like the manufacture of jewellery and the making of guns, tended to locate in specific areas (Figure 2(a)). Manufacturing industry continued to grow in the 20th century, and new so-called 'metal-bashing' industries developed, some of which were also located in the Jewellery Quarter, such as the manufacture of washing machines. However the main manufacturing industry in the area continued to be the making of gold and silver jewellery.

The Jewellery Quarter, as well as the rest of Birmingham, felt the full force of the decline of manufacturing in Britain in the 1970s, with many of the businesses making metal

Figure 2(a): The location of the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham; (b): the location of new developments in the Jewellery Quarter; (c): the pattern of land use in St Paul's Square



products closing down leading to an increasing number of derelict factories. A number of people left the area as well. However the area was considered to have considerable potential for regeneration, because of its location within walking distance of city centre offices and its unique mix of residential properties, small workshops and retail shops selling jewellery, clocks, watches and antiques. There are also offices and a small entertainment/cultural zone containing bars, clubs, restaurants and art galleries. Figure 2(c) shows the pattern of mixed land use in St Paul's Square, which is typical of the Jewellery Quarter as a whole and which makes it such a distinctive area. Today there are approximately 700 jewellery-related businesses in the Quarter, 400 of which manufacture jewellery, accounting for 25% of Britain's jewellery production.

Regeneration through organisations supported by central government – the Hylton Street Development

Regeneration in the Quarter has been encouraged by central government-funded organisations (public partners)

working in combination. One such example of this approach is the Hylton Street Development (Figure 3). The location of this development is shown in Figure 2(b). This will involve the spending of £2.5 million on the redevelopment of a Grade 2 listed building in the Jewellery Quarter (to the left of the picture), to provide 13 living and working units specifically created for jewellery designers and manufacturers to rent. The properties will have separate workshops and living space, with between one and three bedrooms. In the past it was felt that graduate designers and potential manufacturers of jewellery had moved out of Birmingham because of a lack of suitable and affordable units to live and work in. This scheme hopes to reverse that trend. The project is being funded by a partnership of different government-funded agencies and illustrates how these can work together to bring about regeneration in an area. These agencies are:

- Advantage West Midlands. This is one of the nine Regional Development Agencies in England which used government funds to try and

encourage sustainable economic development. (Regional Development Agencies were abolished by the Coalition Government in September 2010 and will be replaced by new bodies called Local Enterprise Partnerships. It is not yet possible to say what effects that might have on this development.)

- The Housing and Communities Agency (HCA). This was set up by the government in December 2008. This Agency has considerable powers and currently has a budget of £5 billion annually. Its aims are to support the development of high-quality housing, improve the infrastructure of areas and develop schemes for regeneration in England.
- Urban Living. This is one of nine Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder organisations set up and financed by the government's Department of Communities and Local Government to develop specific localities. Urban Living covers parts of Birmingham and Sandwell in the West Midlands. These organisations have a 15-year programme to improve

housing in neighbourhoods where there is a shortage of affordable housing.

As well, an organisation called Midland Heart is also involved in the Hylton Street development. This is a housing and regeneration group dating back to the 1920s which owns or manages 32,000 properties across the West Midlands. Its aim is to develop affordable rented housing.

Regeneration through local government – the role of Birmingham City Council

The Jewellery Quarter has not benefited from any of the large-scale central government initiatives such as Property Led Regeneration or City Challenge. However local government has been particularly active in the area. Birmingham City Council has long been an important player in the drive to rebrand the Jewellery Quarter by re-imaging and regeneration. The Council fund the administrative support for, and are an important member of, the Jewellery Quarter Regeneration Partnership, which meets twice a year. Membership of this body includes representatives from businesses in the Quarter as well as residents. This body has produced a Jewellery Quarter Regeneration Charter, which has two aims. The first is to develop a vibrant atmosphere in the Quarter which will attract people to live, work and spend their leisure time there. Secondly, the Charter wants the Quarter to act as a ‘honey pot’ for creative businesses, ranging from jewellery businesses to arts and media. One of the ways the Council

will look to achieve these aims will be through improved marketing of the area by:

- providing an information centre
- developing a website to attract visitors
- providing a tourism guide
- working with other agencies on joint initiatives to liaise with TV and radio, hotels, conference organisers and travel operators.

The Big City Plan

The Council’s latest plans for the area are part of its Big City Plan, announced in October 2010 to redevelop 2000 acres of land in the city centre with the aim of creating 50,000 jobs. As part of this Plan, Birmingham Council has approved a scheme for the building of a new public square (the Golden Square) on land at the corner of Warstone Lane and Vyse Street (Figure 2(b)), which it is hoped will become a new centre for the Jewellery Quarter. Construction of this £1.5 million development will begin in the summer of 2011 and the aim is to complete it by spring 2012. The square will be divided into three parts: a plaza where public events such as concerts and farmers’ markets as well as temporary exhibitions can be staged, a grassed area containing orchard trees, and a promenade. There will also be a canopy at the entrance to the square which will be decorated with gold leaf to reflect the importance of jewellery making in the area. The project will be funded from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which distributes money from the National Lottery to schemes which are important to Britain’s heritage.

Regeneration through non-government organisations like Friends Groups

There are few green spaces in the Quarter, two of the largest being Key Hill and Warstone Lane Cemeteries (Figure 2(b)). Key Hill cemetery is a rare example of an early Victorian garden cemetery. It was opened in 1836 in a former quarry and is the oldest non-churchyard cemetery in Birmingham. Local residents have formed themselves into a Friends Group (a not for profit volunteer organisation) to try and refurbish and maintain the cemeteries, which have become derelict due to long-term neglect. To help bring this about, a scheme has been developed whereby residents can ‘adopt’ old graves which have not been maintained for many years and then plant flowers and bulbs. The group has also secured funding to restore the Icknield Street entrance gates to Key Hill cemetery, which are of artistic and architectural merit. The Friends also hold regular clean-up sessions and are carrying out research into the history of the cemeteries and the people buried there. It is hoped that the cemeteries can also be used as a place of exercise for residents. This group is supported by Birmingham Council and other regeneration groups like English Heritage.

Private organisations and regeneration

There are several examples in the Jewellery quarter of schemes funded by private developers, looking to make money from renting or selling work spaces, housing and offices. These firms are hoping to profit

Figure 3: The Hylton Street Development

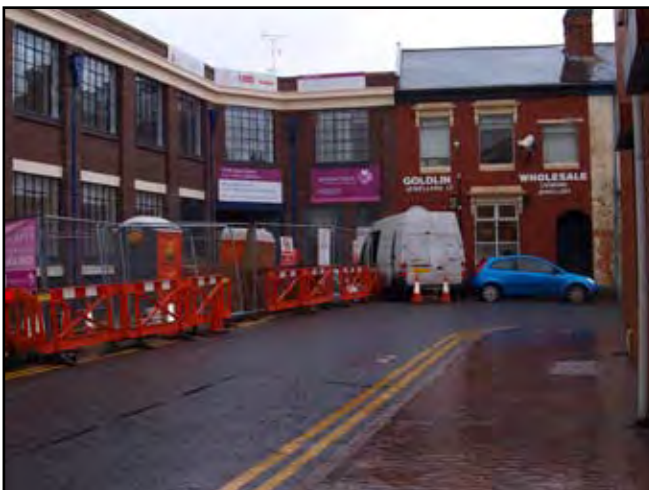


Figure 4: The Newhall Square scheme



from these developments while also playing an important part in the regeneration process, by improving building quality and by bringing people into the area. An example of a private developer looking to create work units is the Society for the Protection of Artistic and Cultural Enterprise (SPACE). This organisation has redeveloped part of the Big Peg building (Figure 2(b)). This building was built originally as a modern office building in 1960 but it had become rather run down in recent years. The SPACE Company (using finance from banks as well as public funds and grants) has refurbished the building, creating new offices and workspaces for arts, media and creative enterprises, including 70 penthouse studios. The building also houses a restaurant and the Big Peg Gallery which hosts art exhibitions.

Two other developments to create housing and offices are the St Paul's Place development and the Newhall Square scheme on Newhall Street and Charlotte Street (Figure 4). The St Paul's Place development (developed by Chord Developments) has seen the renovation of the Thomas Walker Building, a former buckle-making factory, into a series of 177 luxury apartments as well as office space surrounding a landscaped communal courtyard. The development covers 7700 square metres. This development also contains a residents' car park created underground. The Newhall Square scheme is a larger development projected to cost £63 million and covering 9500 square metres. It consists of a mix of apartments (234 are planned), retail units, a car park, offices and a Travelodge Hotel (100 beds) which has already opened (Figure 4). As part of this development, a large public square (as large as five tennis courts) is under construction on land which is next to a canal. This development is on the site of the former Museum of Science and Industry, which closed in 1997.

The role of individual residents in regeneration of the Jewellery Quarter

Residents of the Jewellery Quarter have set up the Jewellery Quarter Neighbourhood Forum, which aims to give local residents a say in issues affecting the Quarter and also works to improve quality of life in the area.

A group of residents have organised a Jewellery Quarter Farmers Market (called 'The 24 Carrots Farmers Market'), which takes place once a month with the primary aim of increasing the number of people visiting the Quarter. This Forum is also the prime mover in trying to secure World Heritage status for the Jewellery Quarter. A World Heritage site is a location listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as a site of special physical and cultural significance; this would raise the profile of the Jewellery Quarter enormously, both in Britain and abroad.

Gentrification

Individual residents also help to regenerate the area, indirectly through the process of gentrification. This involves regeneration through improvement of the quality of housing in an inner city area. It is regeneration brought about by individuals or groups of individuals, not agencies or the government. Like most inner city areas, the Jewellery Quarter was an area of factories and housing mixed together in an unplanned way. Much of the housing was of poor quality, and over time had become occupied by people from low income groups, who could not necessarily afford to maintain it. However the area is close to Birmingham city centre which has been benefiting from re-urbanisation, or the movement of people back into city centres due to urban regeneration, and has become an increasingly popular as a place to live for young well-paid professional people who want to live close to work and the entertainment attractions found in the city centre. The good railway links found in the city centre are also an attraction, as New Street

station is within walking distance and from here people can easily reach airport in London and Birmingham.

Improvement has taken place as a result of the renovation of old housing by new residents, or by the conversion into housing of former non-residential property (see above for examples of this), or by a combination of both.

Gentrification can lead to a change in the character of an area. As the residents are now wealthier, they have more money to spend in bars and restaurants and high-order shops selling expensive products. This tends to make the area more attractive to wealthier people, so a positive multiplier effect can result which can lead to a sustained improvement in the wealth of the area. The development of bars and restaurants in St Paul's Square can be seen as evidence for this. Gentrification can also lead to an increase in house prices, which can price some low-income residents out of the market. As well, with the development of housing for single people or couples, families with children can often find it difficult to find suitable housing. It is hoped that the building of new affordable housing developments might prevent this happening in the Jewellery Quarter.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. With reference to inner city areas, suggest what evidence can be used to show decline, and give the reasons why decline has taken place.
2. Explain what is meant by gentrification, and using an example/s, suggest how effective it has been in the regeneration of urban areas.
3. Using examples of inner city areas, describe the roles of different players who are involved in attempts to rebrand these areas.
4. Using examples, suggest how political factors can affect land use in urban areas.