

Changing tides: Did the 2010s gentrify Hastings?



By James Prentice

Report Summary:

The report finds that gentrification has occurred within the Hastings borough, but only within specific parts of the town. These areas tend to be the central coastal parts of the town, defined as Central St Leonards, Central Hastings (Castle), Gensing, Bohemia, Braybrooke and Tressell. Areas north of Braybrooke tend to not display that many signs of gentrification.

The signs that gentrification has occurred can be summarised as followed:

Housing:

If gentrification has occurred there should be clear shifts within the housing market, thus enabling newer different groups to move in and replace longer-term traditional groups.

- A rapid increase in housing within once low-priced areas, signalling an increase in desirability and new people moving in: House prices within the Hastings area have increased 76% in the last decade (2012 – 2022). Since 2017 they have increased 36.8%. Since 2017 they have increased 27.2% and since 2020 they have increased 19.6%.
 - Average Central St Leonards house prices have increased 81.8% since 2012 and 48% since 2017. In 2012, prices were £110,000, 2015 - £120,000, 2017 - £1350,000, 2019 - £163,000 and 2020 - £170,000. This represents a much bigger increase than the Hastings average, indicating these areas are partly driving changes in housing prices within the local borough.
 - It also indicates that these areas have increased in perceived desirability, bringing new people in with money, which in turn has escalated property prices, which this study also notes has also increased rental prices. Therefore, these changes in property prices do have the capacity to force out longer-term residents, a key component of gentrification.
- A change in bedroom numbers, indicating that the structure of the local housing market is changing: The number of one-bedroom flats has decreased quite significantly in Central St Leonards, Gensing and Castle. These have been mostly replaced with 2 bedroom and 3 bedroom flat increases. This would indicate HMOs are being replaced with large single houses, apartments and flat units. This also indicates that people who have the ability to afford bigger housing units and prefer to buy such property are moving in.

- There have been increases in one-bedroom flats within the poorer parts of the town away from the town centre, such as Baird, Ore, Hollington etc. This indicates there has been dislocation from one-bedroom occupants from the centre of town towards the outskirts of the town. This dislocation indicates gentrification occurring.
- If newer individuals are wealthier and able to gentrify the town they should disproportionately be able to afford to buy property: There has been a large decrease of individuals privately renting in the Central St Leonards, Gensing, Central Hastings, Braybrooke and Old Hastings area, whilst at the same time there has been an increase in private ownership. As housing units are getting bigger, this indicates people who can afford to buy larger more expensive housing units are replacing those who can't afford to live in smaller housing units increasing in value.

Social Demographics:

Gentrification often brings dramatic social changes, with noticeable changes in the social composition of a locality. If gentrification has reshaped these areas we should see large changes in age, education and social diversity:

- Central St Leonards, Gensing, Castle and Braybrooke have seen large increases in the median age. This would indicate that younger residents have been pushed out by older people moving into the area. This would indicate that those who can afford to buy property, which tends to be older people, have pushed out groups that tend to rent more, most commonly younger people.
- Central St Leonards, Castle, Gensing, Old Hastings and Braybrooke have all witnessed large increases in the proportion of residents that have obtained level 4 and above qualifications.
 - Fewer residents in these wards have lower levels of qualifications than compared to 2011. This indicates that those with higher qualifications are moving in and those with lower qualifications are being moved towards the edges of the town.
- Central St Leonards and the Central Hastings area (Castle) are becoming less white and more ethnically diverse. More households have multiple ethnic groupings living within the same unit.
- There has also been a greater increase in diversity in terms of the LGBT population.

Economic shifts:

Gentrification tends to bring great economic change, where an area is regenerated by wealth flowing in from outside the locality. Such wealth can derive from property sales from outside areas that are significantly wealthier than the deprived locality that is being gentrified. This wealth is transferred into the local economy and is used to substitute income as the low-income areas being regenerated can't sustain the increase in economic activity without outward wealth flowing into the area.

- If newer people moving into the area have the potential to gentrify the locality they should be less likely to live in deprivation: There have been large increases in the number of housing units defined as having no dimensions of deprivation in the Castle, Central St Leonards, Gensing and Tressell areas. This has been caused by a large drop in households that are recorded as having two or more dimensions of deprivation.
- These people will also be more likely to work in higher income and status jobs: Central St Leonards, Silverhill, Braybrooke, Castle, Gensing and Tressell have all seen large increases in the proportion of residents defined in managerial and self-employed occupations (professional and middle-class jobs).
 - Central St Leonards, Silverhill, Braybrooke, Castle, Gensing and Tressell have all witnessed decreases in the proportion of residents defined as working in lower supervisory and routine/ non-skilled work. As this has occurred alongside an increase in residents working in middle-class professions, this would indicate that longer-term residents are being pushed outwards, again indicating gentrification has occurred.
- If newer residents are living off the surplus of their property transfer then they should be able to afford to work fewer hours: Central St Leonards, Gensing, Braybrooke, Castle and Tressell have seen increases in the amount of people working part-time (less than 30 hours). As newer arrivals can afford higher property prices but are working fewer and more flexible hours, this would indicate they are able to do this partly due to surpluses gained from property sales when moving into the town.
- These newer residents should also display signs of generating greater levels of economic activity as they invest their money in their new home: Gensing, Central St Leonards, Old Hastings, Braybrooke, Tressell and Castle have all seen large increases in the number of people defined as “economically active”. This represents a healthier economy and partly

explains the economic investment seen within places like central St Leonards. Yet, as newer arrivals are working fewer hours but can afford to make investments in the local economy, this would again indicate disposable income from property sales is supporting new arrivals.

- There haven't been large increases in income since 2012. Central St Leonards, Braybrooke and central Hastings have only seen a £3,300 increase in their income levels. Again, without large increases in income from new arrivals, the increase in economic activity and investment is partly driven by outside wealth moving into the area.

Introduction:

In the last census, 2011, Hastings could be described as a traditional seaside town suffering from high levels of deprivation. Some parts of the town could be characterised as being made up of a large number of HMOs, whose residents were more likely to live in deprivation. This deprivation often would cover more than one social area, such as health, education and access to services. Areas high in deprivation would have relatively affordable house prices, with rent prices also being low for the South East area. The local economy was dominated by seasonal work and industries that are more precarious, low-skilled and undervalued. Therefore, people would reside in low-income working-class jobs and would work long hours for little pay, and as a result, would more likely be renters rather than owners of property.

Additionally, such areas would often be described as lacking diversity, with there being a limited BAME and LGBT population. Further, like most seaside towns, there was an ageing population who were more likely to be property owners as even those on relatively low incomes could afford property as they were able to buy before prices became unaffordable.

When the last census was published few would have argued that these underline trends would change in a notable way. Yet, within the last five years, there has been increasing debate that the town is being transformed due to Gentrification, with town meetings even being hosted to discuss how best to deal with these changes. Those arguing that gentrification has occurred argue the housing crisis that has developed in our cities had forced new arrivals into the town. Wealthy city areas within the South East, such as Brighton and London, have simply become unaffordable to many, creating an exodus. Further, the pandemic has caused many to reconsider their quality of life, with people reconsidering where they wanted to live being part of this trend. This flow of people has to arrive at a final destination and Hastings has been argued to be one of these locations. As prices were low for the South East and the town had retained high-quality Victorian and Edwardian housing, it has been argued Hastings has been a key destination for DFLs. Further, with a long promenade and beautiful seaside views at an affordable price, post-pandemic it has been argued this trend has deepened as people look for a change in scenery from the city, with this trend being likely to continue. Locally, this trend has fuelled debates about the extent to which Gentrification is occurring, where local housing campaigners have urged action on the matter, arguing that it was pushing many long-term residents into hardship. Specifically, such campaigners have argued that the arrival of new

individuals with wealth has pushed out long-term residents who lived in areas that have historically suffered from high deprivation levels.

Campaigners argue that specific areas within the town have been most greatly affected. They argue that the central parts of the town close to the coast have been most greatly impacted as these areas had low-value high-quality property located within desirable locations, providing newcomers were willing to move into an area of high deprivation and invest in repairs. Due to the large gains that can be made from selling housing in London and moving to cheaper areas in Hastings, campaigners argue that this financial incentive has attracted a disproportionate amount of movers from the city over the course of the last 10 years, thus gradually pushing out longer-term residents and radically changing these area's demographics.

Yet, is Hastings really changing in such dramatic terms? What is the evidence that Gentrification is occurring? Is Gentrification widespread in the town or limited to the select areas new arrivals have chosen to relocate to? This report provides insights into this question by analysing the socio-economic changes in the Hastings population. It finds that there are signs Gentrification has occurred, but this is isolated to certain areas within the town. Generally speaking, areas in the southern central parts of the town that had managed to keep desirable old housing, especially along the coastline, have been the areas most affected whilst areas north of Braybrooke have been less affected.

Methodology and sources:

The main source of the information in this report is the 2021 census for the Hastings Borough area. By comparing the 2021 census to the 2011 census, it compares the change in key demographics to highlight what population change has occurred. It takes key measures which can be argued to indicate changes in demographics and compares the census figures to show a growth or decrease for key demographic groupings. Using R, it then plots a heat map to show where in the town has seen the biggest demographic changes, thus illustrating if some areas have been more impacted by population changes than others. The variables most associated with changes in gentrification are used when making this comparison. These include changes in age, education levels, diversity (such as BAME and LGBT groupings), housing ownership, the type of housing (such as the apartment size), deprivation levels and economic activity.

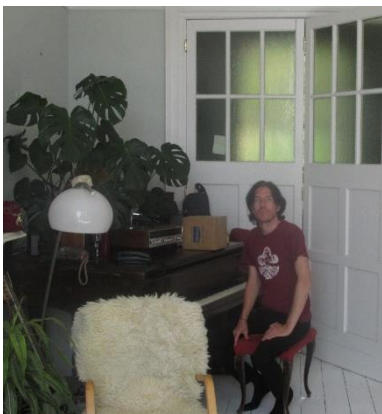
This report also used statistics recorded by the government on estimated trends in property and rental prices. This is used to estimate the extent that people moving into the borough within the

last five years have increased house prices, especially in the areas most argued to have been gentrified.

Age:

Younger age groups:

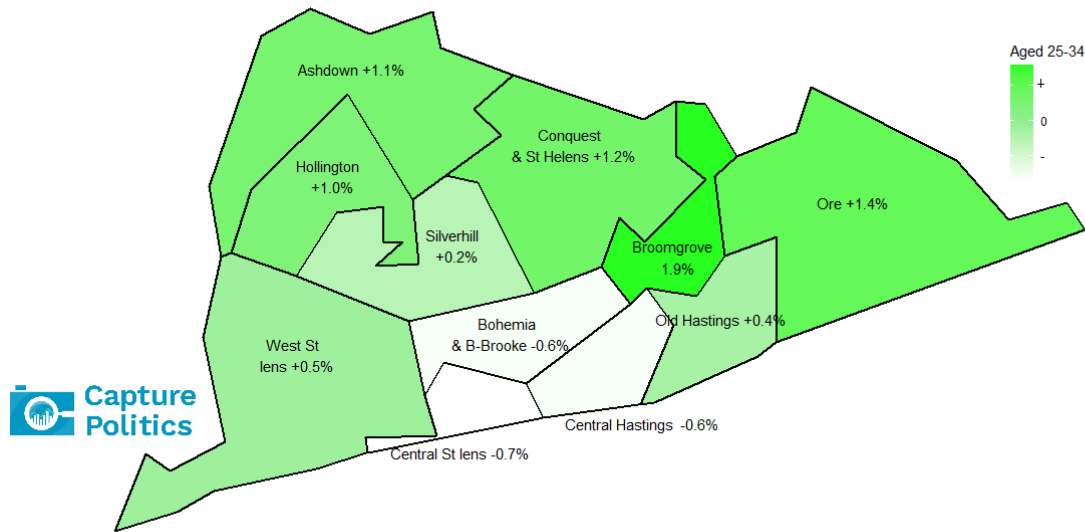
If the gentrification theory is correct, then areas affected by such trends should see a decrease in younger people as such people tend to not own property and, therefore, are the ones most likely to be pushed out by new arrivals buying previously rented accommodation. Interestingly, across Hastings and St Leonards the proportion of the population aged from 25-34 has increased by half a percent, representing a slight increase of younger people living within the town than compared to a decade ago. Yet, this trend has not been shared throughout the borough as there are isolated pockets that have witnessed a decline in the younger working population. This change occurred within the centre of the borough, with central St Leonards, Central Hastings, Braybrooke and Bohemia seeing a decrease in the proportion of residents falling within younger age brackets, see figure 1. For example, Central St Leonards witnessed a decrease of 0.7. These areas are most associated with gentrification, indicating that the theory that states people are being pushed out of certain areas of the town could be accurate. Elsewhere, some areas displayed noticeable increases in the proportion of residents falling within younger age brackets. Ore, Broomgrove, Conquest, St Helens and Ashdown appear to be getting younger. Therefore, this does raise the possibility that younger people who once could afford to live within the central parts of Hastings might be being pushed out to the outer edges of the town by new arrivals. As we shall see later, the areas that are getting younger are also renting more and have lower levels of ownership, indicating that younger renters are being pushed towards the periphery of the Borough so new arrivals can move in.



Bill Darlington – Long-term Hastings resident:

“I have noticed a trend of young musicians gravitating to the area since the nineties and a lot of social places have arisen from this. Yet, recent changes have driven younger people out certain parts of the town”. “I do not like the way current change has driven out some creatives and artists, a trend that I feel will continue.”

Hastings - Change in proportion aged 25-34 (young people) 2011 - 2021.



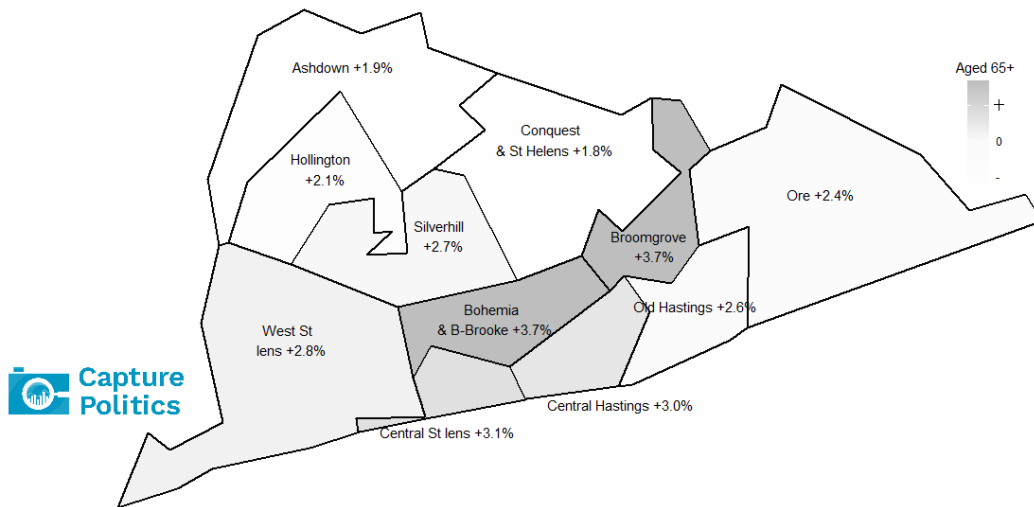
The map shows Age demographic change 2011 - 2021 within Hastings, the more Green an area is the greater the increase in Youth

Figure 1: Change in the proportion of residents aged 25-34 in the Hastings Borough per area between 2011-2021. Source: 2011 and 2021 census.

Older age groups:

As Britain has an ageing population every ward is on average getting older. Yet, interestingly some of the biggest increases in the proportion of older residents have occurred within areas that saw large decreases within the 25-34 demographic. For instance, Central St Leoanrds displayed a 3.1% increase in the proportion of residents defined as older, with the Bohemia, Braybrooke and Central Hastings localities also displaying over a 3% increase. This would indicate that younger professionals are being displaced by older residents moving into the area, see figure two. This trend was also similar for those aged 55-64, again indicating that there has been an upwards shift in the average age of residents living within these wards. The increase in these demographics would suggest an increase of individuals coming to the end of their careers, or who have already retired, are coming into the area. This influx of new residents would have an impact on local housing and would require previous residents to move out of the area so they can move in. This would again support the theory of gentrification that some residents have argued has been developing within the Hastings area since 2015.

Hastings - Change in proportion aged 65 and over 2011 - 2021.



The map shows Age demographic change 2011 - 2021 within Hastings, the more Grey an area is the greater the increase in elderly residents

Figure 2: Change in the proportion of residents aged 65 and over, 2011 – 2021 in Hastings, per area. Source: 2011 and 2021 census.

Education:

Individuals with higher qualifications:

Another key measurement of gentrification is an educated class moving into the area. Typically, individuals with enough wealth to move away from expensive city areas tend to have acquired higher levels of education and could secure jobs that were well-paid enough to allow them to buy property in a much more affordable era. Further, especially as technology has developed, these skills have given them greater flexibility, allowing them to move more freely without suffering a loss of income. Additionally, as such individuals can sell property and buy new accommodation at a much cheaper price in deprived areas, such as Hastings, this financial incentive creates a pull effect. Further, higher educated individuals are further drawn to places like Hastings as when they approach retirement they can afford to retire early as they can survive off the income generated from the surplus of their house sale. Additionally, the pandemic also may have caused people to reassess their surrounding environment and higher educated individuals who have greater flexibility in their movement will have likely decided to move to more scenic towns, such as Hastings.

Figure three demonstrates that this key trend of gentrification has occurred. Whilst all areas have become more educated due to the increase of younger generations going to University, there are some areas that have seen increases of higher education significantly over the average.

The average increase across Hastings in the proportion of residents who have obtained a university-level education (or equivalent) was 7%. However, in the centre of the borough, it was significantly over this, with central St Leonards being a particular hot spot (seeing a 13% increase). In Central Hastings (Castle) and Gensing, there was also over a 10% increase in the proportion of residents who had obtained a university-level education. Vivaly, these changes have occurred in the areas most associated with gentrification, indicating that there are clear signs that select areas of the borough are being gentrified.

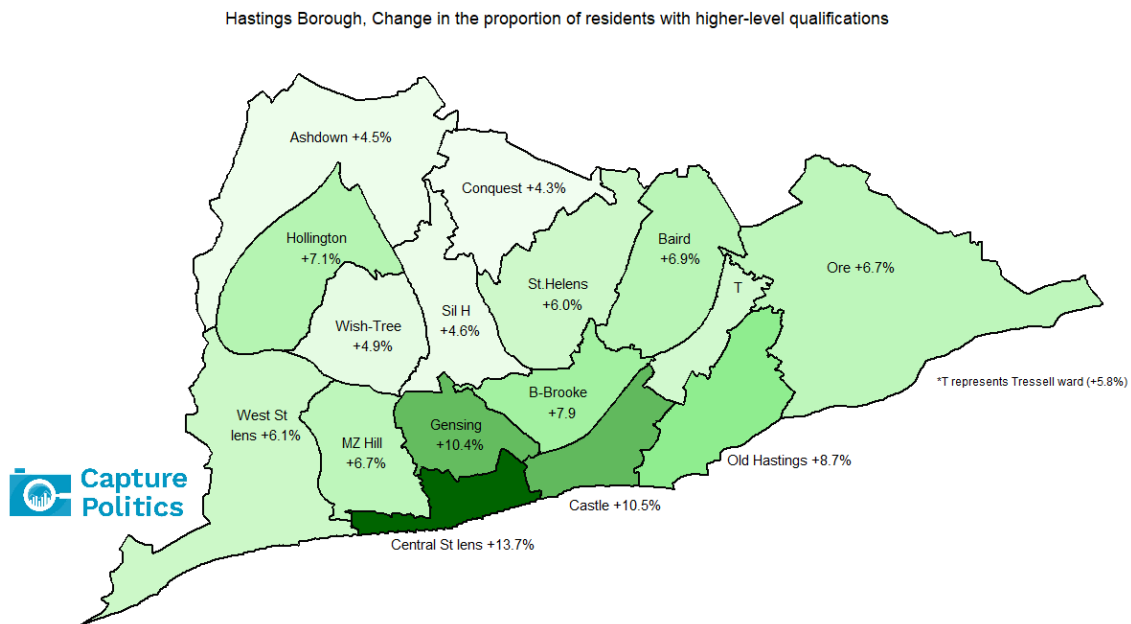


Figure 3: Change in the proportion of residents with higher-level qualifications within Hastings per council ward. Source: 2011 and 2021 census.



Navraj – New resident to St Leonards:

“I think that the changes are a lot more complex than just about affordability, age and class. I think that the people who are moving into the area would identify as many different classes, and perhaps most would describe themselves coming from a working-class background despite having benefited from higher levels of education.”

Individuals with lower qualifications:

Another component of gentrification is that longer-term individuals are shifted outwards to make way for new arrivals. One sign that this may have occurred can be found in lower

education trends. This is because individuals who have only secured lower qualifications tend to be on lower incomes, and consequently are most likely to be pushed out by rising rental and mortgage costs. Lower education, defined as having only obtained GCSE (level 2) or no qualifications, census data shows that such people have particularly shifted from the wards that most displayed a rise in the level of university-level education. Instead, Ashdown, Baird, Hollington, Wishing Tree and Ore displayed an increase in the proportion of individuals who have only obtained low-level qualifications, see figure 4. The average change between 2011 and 2021 for the proportion of residents only having obtained low-level qualifications for Hastings was a decrease of 1.7%. This also goes against the national trend, where a younger more educated population is slowly replacing an older generation who did not attend university. This would indicate that longer-term locals who have not acquired a university-level education are being pushed out towards the edges of town, possibly because the centre of town has become increasingly unaffordable to this social grouping.

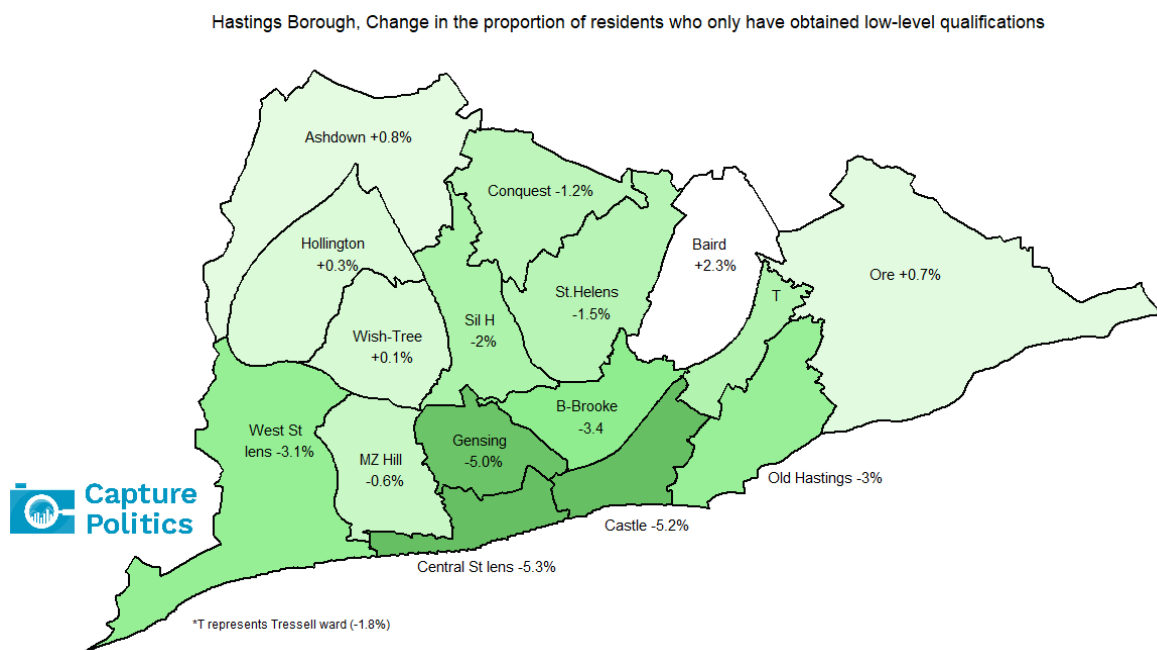


Figure 4: Change in the proportion of residents who have only obtained low-level qualifications in the Hastings Borough per ward. Source: 2011 and 2021.

Greater diversity:

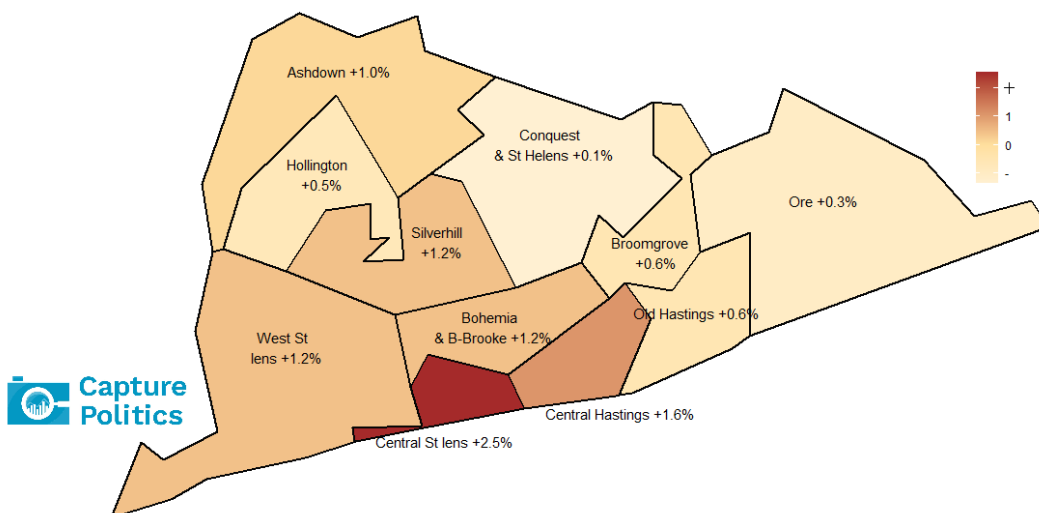
BAME:

With the alleged increase in the DFL population, there should have been a rise in the BAME population as London has a disproportionately high BAME population. Across Hastings, there

was an average increase of around 1% in the BAME population. However, figure five demonstrates that the areas most associated with gentrification in Hastings have seen the biggest demographic shifts. Central St Leonards and Central Hastings displayed a well above average increase, with Central St Leonards seeing the largest increase in the BAME population, a 2.5% increase.

Therefore, this would again indicate that a London-based flow of people has arrived in the town in the last ten years, again signalling that gentrification may have occurred within the central parts of the Hastings Borough in recent years. However, this increase in diversity can also represent the increase in net migration levels the UK has witnessed in the last decade, meaning that whilst this does signal gentrification has occurred it is not definitive proof as there may be other factors behind these trends. Yet, even if gentrification has been part of this process it has only boosted the gradual increase in diversity the town has experienced since the 1980s.

Hastings - Change in ethnic diversity 2011 - 2021 - change in BAME population.



The map shows Ethnic demographic change 2011 - 2021 within Hastings, the more brown an area is the greater the increase in ethnic diversity

Figure 5: Change in the level of ethnic diversity within the Hastings Borough per area between 2011 and 2021. Source: 2011 and 2021 Census.

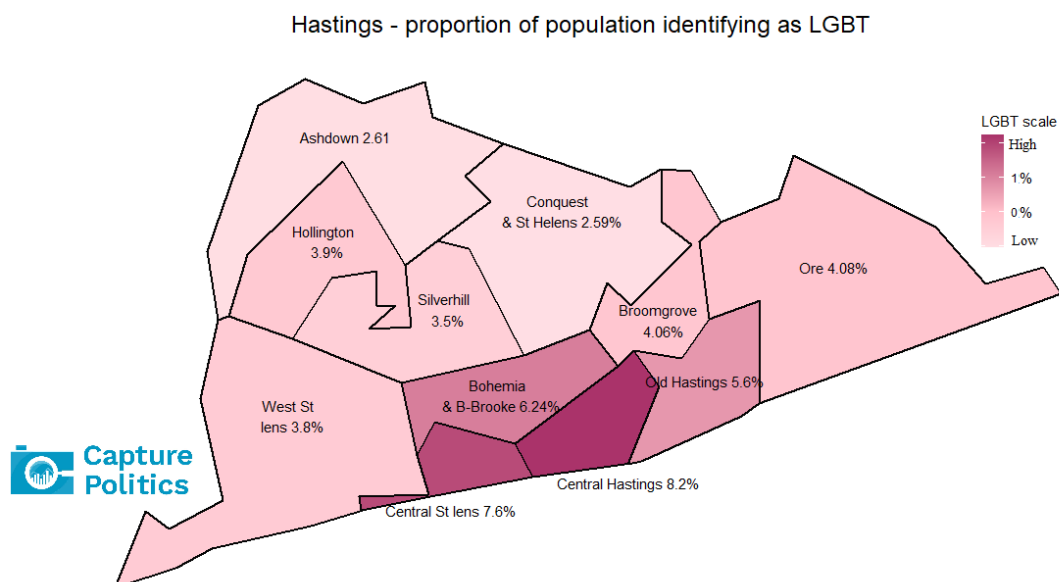


Leroy – Central St Leonards artist and resident:

“The people moving in have set up community projects, cultural projects and new businesses, the place is becoming more diverse”.

LGBT:

Another sign that diversity is increasing can be seen in the proportion of the LGBT population. Whilst these figures have only been recorded in the latest wave of the census, the spread of the LGBT population can still be compared to see where diversity is greatest in the town. Interestingly, the proportion of the LGBT population is clearly greatest within the central parts of the town, with this group having much greater visibility in these areas than a decade ago. Figure 6 outlines that Central St Leonards and Central Hastings by far have the biggest LGBT populations, with roughly 8% of the population identifying as LGBT. Again, the areas on the extreme ends of these trends are the areas argued to have been most impacted by gentrification. These high figures in the LGBT population would indicate the arrival of new people who display different demographics to the previous mono-culture of Hastings. Whilst it is not possible to compare the growth of this demographic to 2011 figures, it can be argued that there has been a growth in this population due to the group's greater presence. For example, there have been regular Hastings pride events held for the first time within the last decade, with this event growing in popularity with each passing year. Further, there has been a greater expression of this group's existence in the town's culture, such as in the local arts scenes. As some of the people who have been pushing for this group's greater role in the town are new to the area, such as those promoting the expansion of the pride event, this would indicate new arrivals are changing the town, again possibly signalling gentrification.



The map shows the proportion of LGBT residents within Hastings, the more pink an area is the greater the LGBT population

Figure 6: The change in the proportion of the population identifying as LGBT between 2011 and 2021. Source: 2011 and 2021 census.

Change in housing:

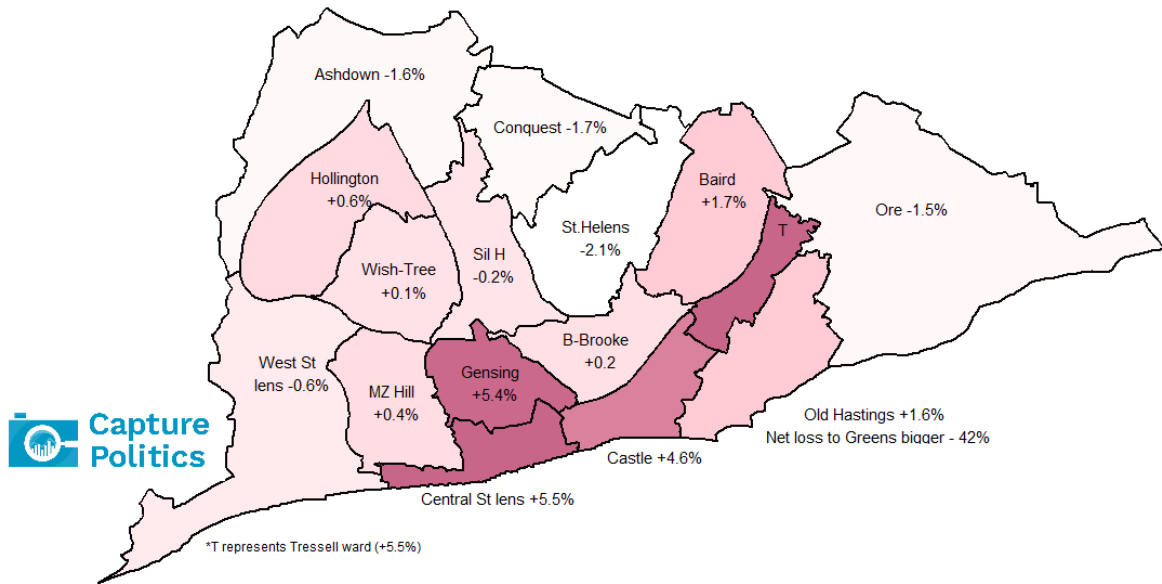
Bedroom numbers:

Historically, parts of the Hastings Borough have seen relatively high levels of HMOs dominated by one-bedroom housing units, especially within the central areas of the town thought to have been gentrified. If gentrification was to have occurred then one sign would be the reduction of such housing units as these smaller flats would have been renovated and converted into larger apartment units in order to appeal to the new audiences arriving into the town. Vitaly, figure 7 shows that this has occurred, with the areas most thought of as being gentrified displaying the largest increases in the number of housing units that have two or more bedrooms. Vitaly, these areas have also witnessed large declines in the number of housing units that only have one bedroom.

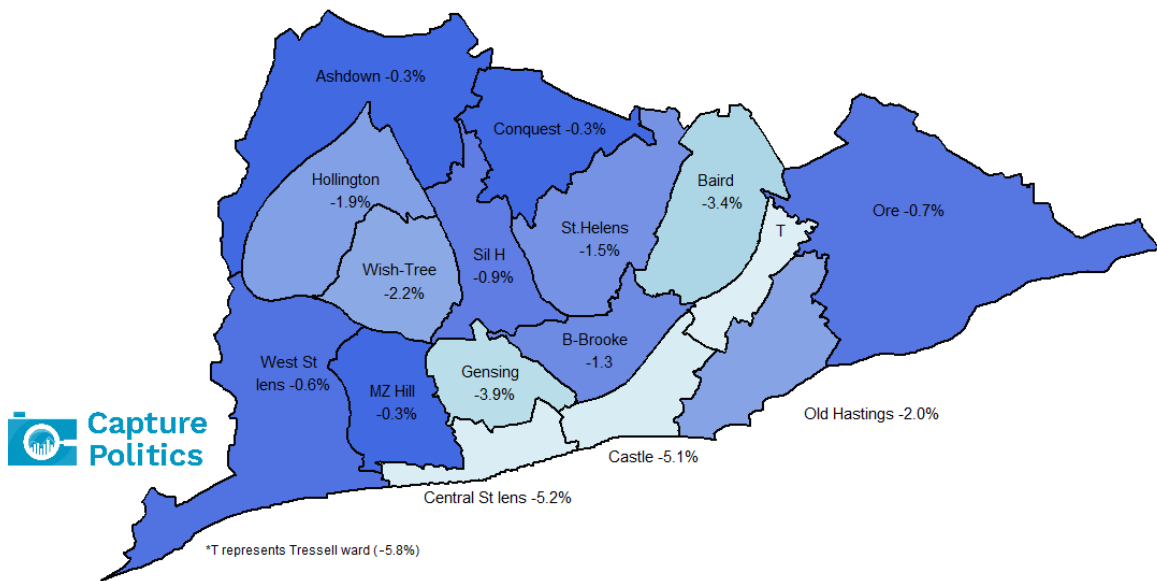
Central St Leonards witnessed a 5.5% increase in the proportion of housing units with two or more bedrooms and also saw a decrease in the number of one-bedroom housing units of 5%. As the level of house building across the town has been relatively low, this change is most probably not because of new buildings changing the housing market. Instead, this trend does support the theory that housing has been adapted to cater for new arrivals who demand a different type of accommodation. It would indicate that larger HMOs have made way for single housing units or larger apartments. This could have arisen from people moving in from more affluent areas being sold two or more flats as one household unit as landlords who purchased HMOs at rock bottom prices have sought to cash in from the rapidly rising prices in the central parts of the town. As the number of one-bedroom flats has decreased in these central areas more of these units have not been made available elsewhere, putting pressure on the rental market. This trend has coincided with rapidly rising rental prices, particularly for the one-bedroom rental market. From this, the council has recorded dramatic increases in the number of residents requiring help with housing costs, with more than 1,000 people requiring such support for the first time in the council's history. This has increased the yearly housing support budget from £0.7m to over £5.6m, putting the council's budget under severe pressure.

Therefore, whilst it is hard to prove that an influx of new people has been responsible for this change in the housing market the arrival of new people has coincided with dramatic changes in the type of housing available. This change would again support those who argue that Hastings is going through the gentrification phenomenon.

Hastings Borough, change in the number of two+ bedrooms per house in each ward.



Hastings Borough, change in the number of one bedroom houses in each ward.



Figures 7: The change in bedroom numbers within properties in the Hastings Borough area per council ward between 2011 and 2021. Source: The 2011 and 2021 census.

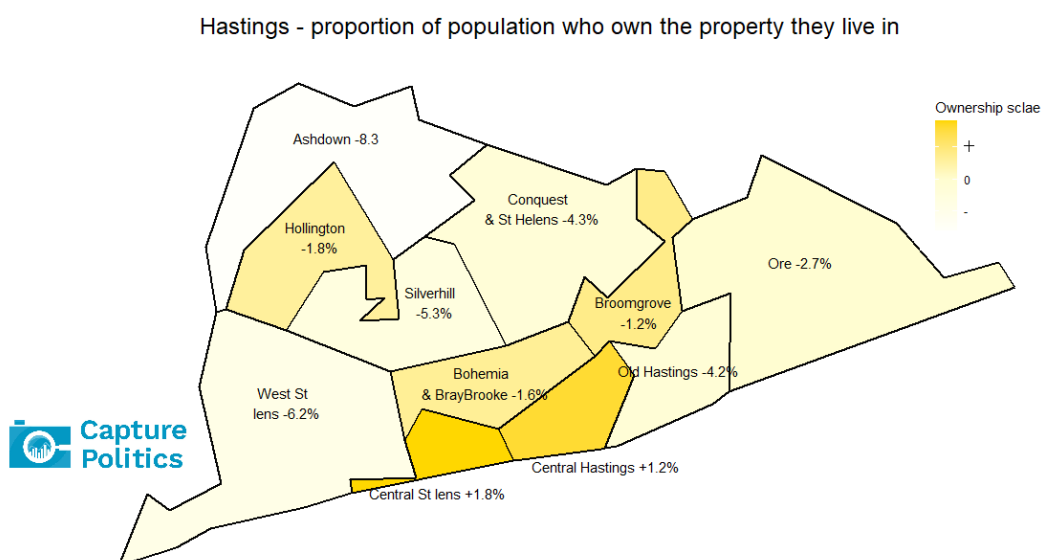


Jon Clements - Estate agent from M & W: “From our experience of selling houses in the last two years, we have seen large changes in people moving in, and we have a 20% to 80% ratio of local to non-local buyers. They are owners buying larger units and setting down roots, they are here for the long-term”

Housing tenure:

In terms of changes to the housing market, a core theme of gentrification is that property buyers from wealthier areas seek to move into newly desirable cheaper areas. This enables the property owners to create the lifestyle changes they want whilst also creating a greater income for themselves from the surplus they gain over the property transfer they make. Therefore, if gentrification has occurred it would be expected that the areas theorised to be affected by this development will have seen increases in the amount of properties that are owned by the residents living within the property.

Due to the housing crisis, most areas across the country have seen a decrease in property ownership. Hastings has been no exception, with there being an average decrease in ownership of 3%. Interestingly, there has been a growth in the private rented sector to counteract this change in ownership. Whilst most areas have reflected this decline in ownership, there have been isolated pockets where ownership has increased. Again, these outliers tend to have featured in the parts of the Borough most thought to have been affected by new arrivals, the central parts of the Borough. Ownership in Central St Leonards and Central Hastings, Bohemia and Braybrooke all have seen increases in ownership of over 1%. Elsewhere, other areas have seen quite large drops in ownership, with Ashdown, Conquest, Silverhill witnessing 4% or more decreases in ownership, see figure 8. This would indicate that new arrivals are buying property and that this trend is pushing out residents that do not own property into the edges of the Borough, where they are mostly seeking to rent at more affordable prices.



The map shows the proportion of residents who own property within Hastings, the more yellow an area is the greater the ownership level is.

Figure 8: Change in property ownership levels across the Hastings Borough per areas, 2011 – 2021. Source: Census 2011 and 2021.

Change in Deprivation

One common criticism from the anti-gentrification camp is that although Gentrification may decrease deprivation and social problems this is largely because it relocates those suffering from multiple deprivation out of the area. Therefore, the town is improved by relocating people rather than dealing with the underline social problems that affect society. However, others argue that the decrease in deprivation allows for a better economy which in turn will benefit the whole town.

Regardless of an individual’s viewpoint on the effects of gentrification, if gentrification has occurred we should see a decrease in the proportion of residents living in multiple deprivation and an increase of households not registering any deprivation. According to the census, this particular sign of gentrification is present and is strongest in the areas most argued to have been exposed to the gentrification phenomenon. Figure 9 shows Central St Leonards, Gensing and Castle have all seen a strong increase in the proportion of residents being identified as not living in a deprived household. Central St Leonards and Gensing have both seen an increase of 10% of households not registering any deprivation. The average for Hastings was only a 4.8% increase, indicating that again the areas most argued to have been gentrified are bucking the overall trends, possibly due to the influx of new people being concentrated within these areas.

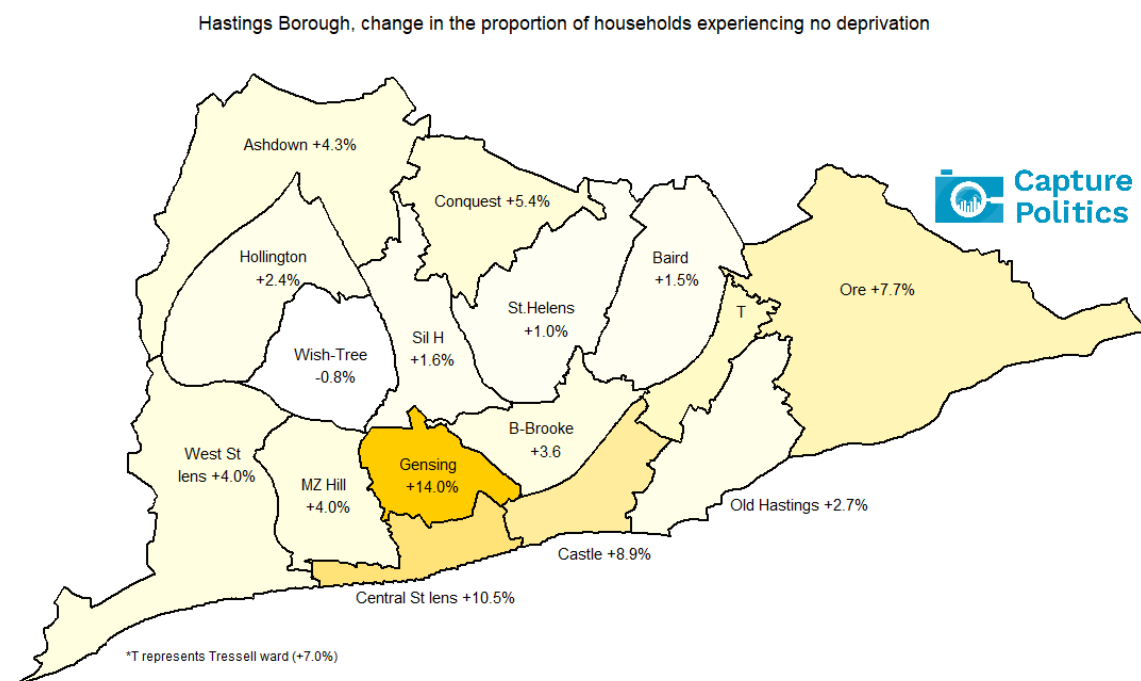


Figure 9: Change in the proportion of households experiencing no deprivation in the Hastings Borough per ward, 2011 – 2021. Source: 2011 and 2021 census.

Further, the number of households showing as experiencing multiple deprivation (defined as two or more measures of deprivation), also displays signs of displacement. Whilst multiple deprivation households declined in the last decade, with the average across Hastings seeing a -7% decrease, some areas saw significantly greater declines. Again, Central St Leonards, Gensing, Castle and Tresell, all saw declines above the average, with Central St Leonards, Gensing and Castle witnessing declines of more than 10%, see figure 10.

This would again support the side that argues Hastings has been gentrified as it indicates that newer arrivals who are less likely to experience deprivation are moving into the borough and that within select areas this may be pushing longer-term residents across the town or out of the town completely. Yet, this is difficult to prove as there are other factors that may have caused these changes in deprivation levels, such as greater economic growth when compared to the time the last census was conducted. Further, the cost of living crisis may reverse these trends and newer arrivals might have moved as they were seeking to avoid economic hardship themselves, meaning that the recent uptick in the cost of living may limit any increase in prosperity new arrivals have brought to the town.

Without locating individuals who have been pushed out of the town and conducting interviews to explain their reasoning for leaving the area, and identifying if they left because other people purchased their rental accommodation, these trends can't give concrete proof that gentrification has occurred. However, these trends do again favour those who have theorised gentrification has created demographic change through bringing new people in and forcing longer-term residents out.



Ellen – Recently moved into the town:

“A lot of great quality homes left in poor conditions have been renovated and this has helped the regeneration of the area.”

“Some progress in tackling social problems has been made but investment is still needed. But, if investment keeps on coming the town it could get towards a position that sees it fully regenerated and returned back to its historical seaside roots.”

Hastings Borough, change in the proportion of residents living in households experiencing two or more deprivation measures

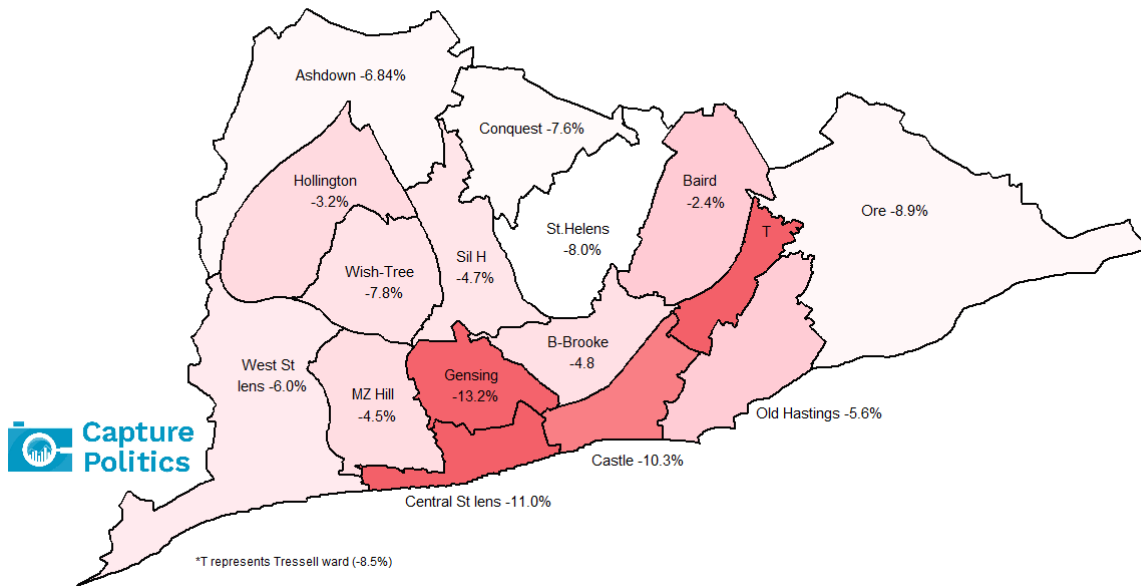


Figure 10: Change in the proportion of residents living in households experiencing more than two measures of deprivation between 2011 and 2021 in Hastings per ward. Source: census.

Change in economic conditions

Occupations:

If more educated higher-income wealthier individuals have moved into the town then there should be an indication that a greater number of individuals working in middle-class and professional occupations have moved into the locality. This should especially be the case post-pandemic when individuals who have greater flexibility in their working patterns are looking to move away from the city to improve their quality of life. Further, it is often asserted that part of gentrification involves a more creative-minded middle-class moving into the area who then impose their more diverse culture onto the mono-culture they have moved to.

Looking at figure 11, it can be argued there is evidence that these types of workers have moved into the area. Across the borough, there has been an average increase of 3.7% in middle-class professional workers. The central areas of the town have again displayed higher than average increases, with Central St Leonards, Castle and Braybrooke displaying 5% increases of individuals working in professional-level occupations. This again would indicate there has been an insertion of new people into the town who fit the profile the gentrification thesis would predict. Further, there is some evidence that these new professional middle-class arrivals may have displaced longer-term working-class residents. Across the borough there has been a

decline of 3.8% of individuals registered as working in manual and lower-skilled jobs, typically described as working-class jobs. Again, there have been bigger declines within the central parts of the town, with Central St Leonards and Castle wards displaying over a 5% decrease of such voters. Again, this would fit the gentrification theory, which would argue that longer-term working-class residents with a low income were being displaced by wealthier new arrivals.

Yet, although this is a sign that gentrification has occurred it does not necessarily constitute proof that gentrification has occurred. This is because other factors may have contributed to this trend. For instance, the working class have been declining as a proportion of the population for some time now and the latest wave of the census may reflect this continuing trend. Further, the increase in higher education is changing the nature of work for many, consequently meaning fewer individuals fit into this working-class category. Yet, although this is the case, the larger than average shifts in the population within the central part of the town do indicate that some of these changes in demographics are probably due to the cultural phenomenon of gentrification.

Hastings Borough, change in the proportion of people working in professional (middle class) occupations

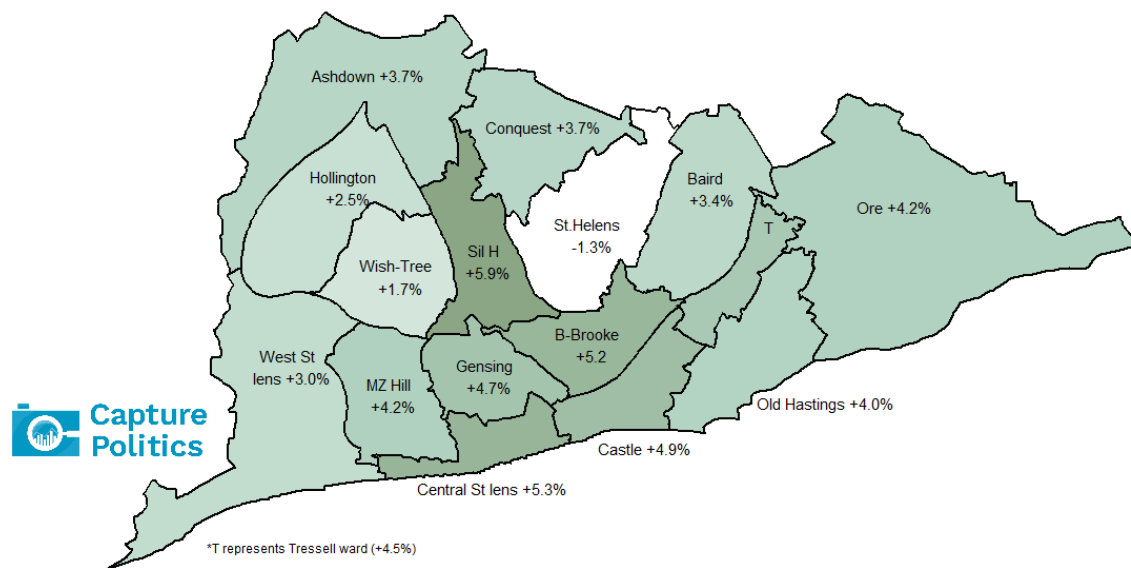


Figure 11: Change in the proportion of people working in professional middle-class occupations between 2011 and 2021. Source: Census 2011 and 2021.



Anton – St Leonards Market organise: “The market started to really change around early 2015 where we started to sell vintage items. Over time we have become a lot more economically and culturally diverse, offering unique and more high-end market products”.

Economic activity:

Another sign that there have been demographic change is through the proportion of residents who are defined as economically active, thus able to contribute to local economic growth. Those less concerned with the impacts of gentrification tend to cite an increase in economic activity as one of the benefits of this social phenomenon. As deprived areas are in need of regeneration, some argue that gentrification is a positive process and only by attracting people with wealth and a higher income into the area can the local economy gain the needed investment to improve. Further, the need to attract higher-income skilled people to regenerate the local economy is also important for regeneration. Additionally, if such residents use their skills and interests to create a more vibrant economy then this will produce longer-term economic benefits as well as jobs.

Again, whether or not an individual agrees with this proposition, the question we must ask is there any sign that these economic trends are occurring? Figure 12 suggests that this is occurring and particularly so within the central parts of town. These figures are also backed up by developments on the high street where whilst most high streets have declined shopping areas within the central parts of the town have improved. The increase of creative independent businesses has improved footfall and breathed new life into the high street. This visible increase in economic activity, and residents who are able to be economically active, has improved the local economy. Whilst the debate will rage on regarding if longer-term residents can benefit from and participate in this improved economy, one thing is for sure, this is again another sign that gentrification has occurred within the Hastings Borough in recent years.

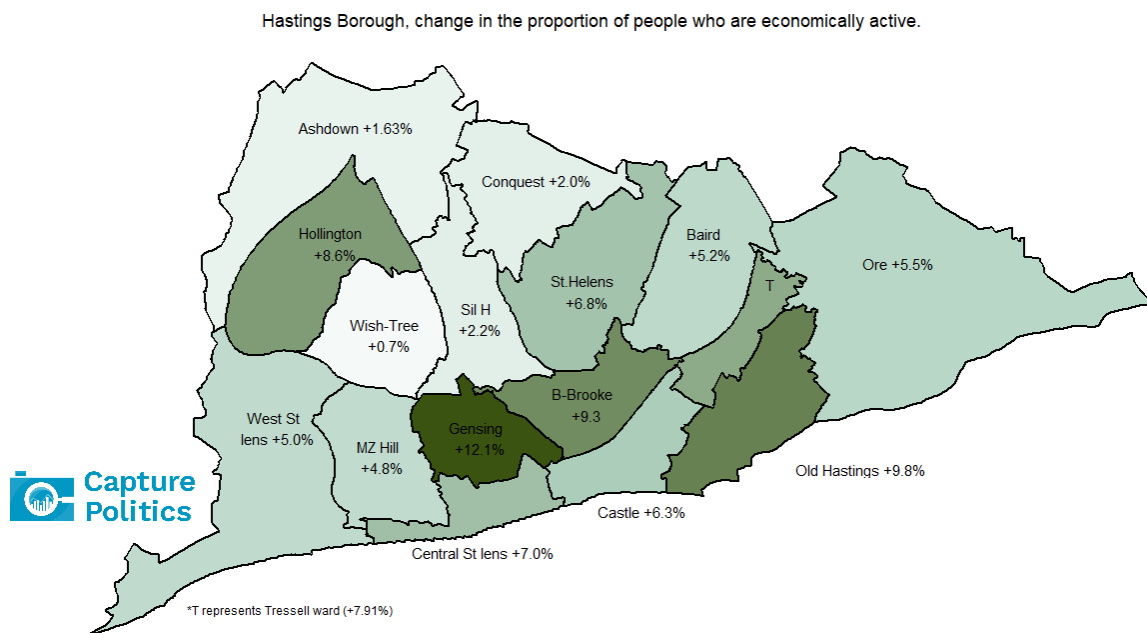


Figure 12: Change in the proportion of people who are defined as economically active between 2011 and 2021 in the Hastings Borough, per ward. Source: 2011 and 2021 census.

Working patterns:

One criticism made of gentrification is that although it does bring in wealthier individuals who are willing to invest in the area they do not always work a sufficient number of hours and those that set up commercial units are often not trading, creating a sense of inactivity and emptiness on the high street. Therefore, it is argued the economic benefit of gentrification is not as great as some claim it to be.

Whether or not you subscribe to this particular view of gentrification, it does have to be said that there is some evidence supporting it. Across the Hastings and St Leonards area, there was a 2.5% increase in the numbers working part-time. Yet, figure 13 highlights that within the central parts of the town, this increase was much bigger, with Central St Leonards and Gensing displaying over a 5% increase in such workers. Interestingly, this does support the argument that some have made locally that new arrivals are not working full-time hours and that their work is highly flexible, which sometimes leads to high street shops not opening some days of the week. This could help explain the limited increase in economic activity in the high street despite the investment that has gone into such areas. Further, this supports the theory that such people moving in have been able to make enough money from their property sales to not have to work full-time hours and are choosing to work fewer hours to top up their income when needed.

Additionally, ONS predictions of local income show there haven't been large increases in income since 2012. Central St Leonards, Braybrooke and Central Hastings have only seen a £3,300 increase in their income levels. Importantly, this indicates that the increase in economic activity within these select high streets is not necessarily being driven by people with higher incomes moving into the area. Instead, this would indicate that it is wealth flowing to these central coastal areas that is driving the very visible changes seen in the high street and the overall regeneration of the area.

It should be mentioned that the reasons for part-time working could be multiple in nature and that these trends are not solely down to changes in demographics. But, again it should be said that the changes in the local economy and working patterns do indicate gentrification is present. This is because new arrivals can afford to buy bigger and more expensive property units despite working fewer hours and not on average having significantly bigger incomes than longer-term

residents. This indicates that wealth inflows are driving economic growth and regeneration whilst also potentially pushing out those without such wealth, a key sign that gentrification has occurred.

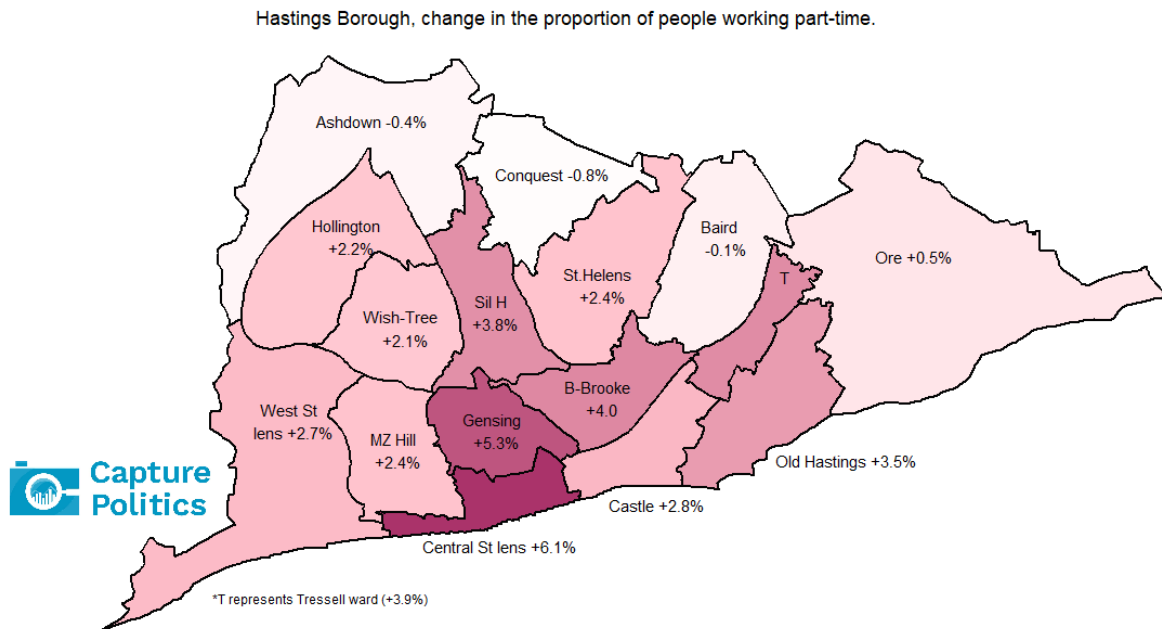


Figure 13: Change in the proportion of people working part-time, 2011-2021 in Hastings per ward: Census data 2011 and 2021.



Darren French - Hastings social housing worker

“More niche market areas are developing. More shops I never thought would come to Hastings are opening up with increased frequency. Some of these part-time shops I would see in Brighton and London and I never thought they would work here, but they are succeeding. I would say this change has been increasing steadily in the last 5-8 years, with change now coming much quicker. I think the local economy is recognising the changes and money coming into the area. Prices are going up, which in turn is increasing house and rent prices”.

Hotspots

Using the latest census it is possible to drill further into the data and visualise how the trends discussed so far vary within a single council ward. This will enable us to examine the extent to which gentrification has taken hold of the council wards that so far have been most identified as being gentrified. This report will use the case studies of Central St Leonards and Central Hastings to identify if Gentrification is widespread or if these trends are limited to select areas within these council wards.

Not all census data is available below a council ward level, but this report will use all available data to examine the extent gentrification has occurred within a single council ward. From the data that is available, there is again evidence that gentrification is occurring, but interestingly this has only occurred within specific areas. Vitaly, these locations tend to be the areas that are perceived to be the most desirable for new incoming residents, indicating that gentrification is located in isolated and sporadic fashionable hotspots.

In Central St Leonards desirable areas are defined as the areas that have a seaside view and had maintained a stock of high-quality housing, such as the Marina area. Further, areas located behind these streets and near the high street, such as Norman Road, Shepherd Street, Gensing Road, North Street and Alfred Street are often seen as desirable areas due to their relative affordability ten years ago and fairly well-maintained housing stock that is situated next to the high street and the beach. Kings Road is also thought to have been gentrified as its property is located within an increasingly popular and vibrant high street. Additionally, the area previously known as the seven streets (Silchester Road, Kenilworth Road, Carisbrooke Road, Pevensey Road, Stockleigh Road, Cardiff Road and Rothsay Road) is also thought to be the latest area to be gentrified due to its large housing units that could be brought at a cheap price due to the historically high levels of deprivation.

In Central Hastings, those concerned about gentrification have argued that the White Rock, Grande Parade, and general Hastings town centre area (such as Robertson Street) have been most exposed to this phenomenon. Again, this is because these areas have kept large Victorian housing units that are high in quality and located in desirable areas (such as along the coastline and near a high street). Although such units were in need of regeneration, if a new buyer was prepared to move into a historically deprived area and renovate their property then those who state gentrification has taken place argue wealthier newcomers will have been incentivised to take over these housing units.

Housing:

Within Central St Leonards, there have been clear changes in the housing market. Earlier it was highlighted how there have been stark changes in property ownership within the central coastal areas of the town. Interestingly, within these outlier areas, there are particular areas that have seen strong rises in property ownership and steep declines in individuals renting accommodation within select streets. Norman Road, Mercatoria, the Marina and nearby areas have seen increases in ownership of over 10%, see figure 14. Carisbrooke and Kenilworth Road have also seen increases of 8%. Kings Road also saw a 7% rise in property ownership. These roads also on average displayed a 9% decrease in the private rented sector, indicating that private rental units are being converted to new property units that are sold to newcomers.



Figure 14: Increase in property ownership (2011 – 2021) – Hotspot areas in Central St Leonards.

In Central Hastings, the trend in the increase in the private rented sector was again driven by particular hotspot areas. For Instance, the White Rock and Grande Parade area had witnessed a decrease of 4% in the private rented sector and a large increase in privately owned units, see figure 15. However, this trend is patchy and areas nearby did not show a decrease in the privately rented sector, yet areas near Alexandra Park, such as Lower Park Road, did display the same trend. This again indicates that signs renters are being pushed out are being driven by key hotspot areas that are deemed to be the most desirable areas by new arrivals from inner cities.



Figure 15: Increase in property ownership (2011 – 2021) – Hotspot areas in Central Hastings.

Bedroom numbers:

The clearest change within the housing market is the number of bedrooms each registered property has. There have been significant decreases in the number of one-bedroom properties in streets most argued to have been gentrified. For instance, figure 16 demonstrates Shephard Street, Gensing Road and Normans Road saw decreases over 10%, 5% more than the Central St Leonards average. Further, this also occurred in Pevensey Road and Kings Road, which saw a 12% decrease in the number of one-bedroom housing units. In contrast, there were some roads that displayed increases in the number of one-bedroom housing units, such as Maze Hill, an area located next to the park and historically thought of as a less deprived part of the borough.

The same areas displayed larger increases in three or more bedroom properties. The biggest increases in housing with multiple bedrooms (three or more) occurred in Shephard Street and the Mercatoria area, where there was an 8% increase in such units. Kings Road also displayed a similarly large increase. Further, Carisbrooke Road, Alfred Road and North Street have seen larger increases. This indicates HMOs are being converted into single housing units within very select areas. Yet, this change in the housing market should not be overstated as there were areas nearby that displayed decreases in housing units with three or more bedrooms.



Figure 16: Hotspot decreases in one-bedroom housing units and hotspot increases in multiple bedroom units within Central St Leonards from 2011 - 2021. It shows Shephard Street and the Mercatoria area have been intensely affected.

In Central Hastings, the town centre and White Rock area have been most affected by the decrease in one-bedroom properties, with most of this area experiencing a 10% decrease in this type of housing unit. These housing units have been replaced by an increase in properties with four or more bedrooms, see figure 7. Robertson Street, Havelock Road and Queens Road, the high streets of the town centre, have seen an increase of over 9% in these types of properties, with the White Rock area also seeing large increases in these types of properties. Again, areas along the coast were affected, for example, Pelham Place witnessed a replacement of one-bedroom properties with units containing four or more bedrooms.

This again indicates that there has been a large decrease in the one-bedroom housing market within this area as the perceived desirability of the area has increased and the new people moving in has led to a conversion of these flats into larger apartments. Again, these trends are limited to perceived desirable pockets, such as near high streets and areas overlooking the coast. In contrast, other areas just north of the Town Centre, such as Braybrooke Road, have not displayed large decreases in one-bedroom housing units, whilst areas next to Alexandra Park, such as Lower Parker Road, have seen a replacement of such units with larger units. This indicates that these gentrification trends are very sporadic and depends on the perceived desirability of an area, rather than entire swathes of the town being taken over by new arrivals.

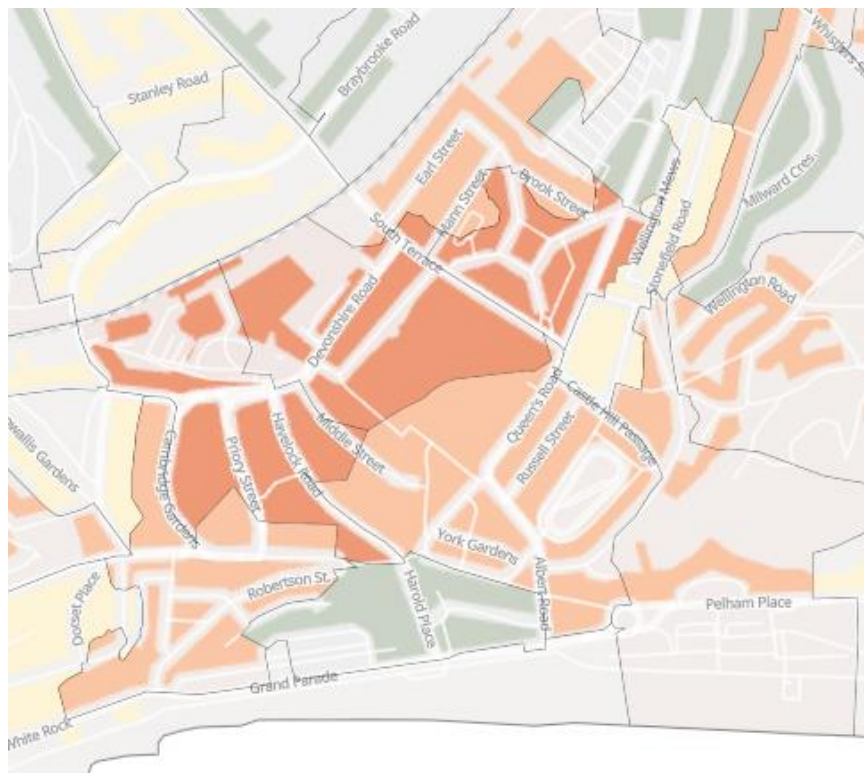


Figure 17: Decreases in one-bedroom housing units within Central Hastings from 2011 - 2021. Hotspot areas. Again, it indicates that areas near the coast and high streets are most affected.



Jess Steele: Affordable housing expert based in Hastings:

“There are specific parts of the town changing very quickly, with HMOs and flats very quickly being sold into single homes and this is rapidly changing the housing market. As a result, more affordability issues exist and people are suffering from rental increases. There has been

an economic dislocation of people where longer-term residents are being pushed out through rented flats being sold, alongside a parallel process of rents going up at the same time. I think there has been an increased trend where people have been taken from poor accommodation and placed in other areas, whilst their original housing has been converted into good quality homes. It does feel like some local residents are being discriminated against.”

Second and holiday home increase?

Another key metric for gentrification is the increase in second homes, particularly in holiday homes and the number of air B and B's. In terms of second homes, there has been no clear indicator of second home increases, with only an estimated 0.2% increase in the number of second homes across Hastings since 2011. Therefore, there is no evidence that the type of gentrification that has developed in holiday destinations within the South West, which has left some localities virtually empty in winter months, has occurred. Instead, this would suggest new arrivals' motivation is much more about setting down longer-term roots rather than buying second homes to rent or use as a personal holiday retreat.

Yet, there has been an increase in homes used for holiday lettings within select parts of the town. Across the Borough, there was only a 1.6% increase in properties being used as holiday homes (defined as being lived in more than 30 days despite the property not being the owner's main address). Yet, within Central St Leonards there was a 3.6% increase, Central Hastings displayed a 3.5% increase and Old Hastings witnessed a 4.8% increase, indicating these changes occurred mostly in the central coastal areas. More interestingly, within the areas where there was a significant increase in these types of homes there were again flashpoints. Figure 18 outlines that in central St Leonards, there was a 25% increase in holiday homes in Shephard Street, Gensing Road and Grande Parade, indicating that areas near the coast within these wards have been particularly exposed to individuals setting up new holiday homes within Hastings.



Figure 18: Large increase in Air B&B's/ Holiday lets, 2011 – 2021. Hotspot areas in Central St Leonards – select areas have been largely affected near the coast and high street areas.

There have also been select areas within Castle Ward that have seen a rise in the proportion of housing units being used for holiday homes and air B&B purposes. Again, areas located near the coast and economic hubs, such as high streets, have seen the greatest change, see figure 19. Robertson Street, Grande Parade and Harold Place all have seen 15% increases in such homes. Again, with Hastings becoming a more fashionable destination and property prices initially being relatively cheap, this produced an opportunity for investors to buy property that could be converted to holiday lets and air B&Bs. It would appear that whilst this opportunity has been taken and may have displaced some residents, these trends are very limited to select areas as some areas within the same council ward displayed no increase in holiday homes. Therefore, it is important not to overstate the rise in holiday homes and it is unlikely that holiday homes alone are causing the trends in gentrification witnessed within central parts of the town. In fact, it is probably more accurate to say newcomers settling in and putting down roots to live in the area are the main cause of gentrification trends.

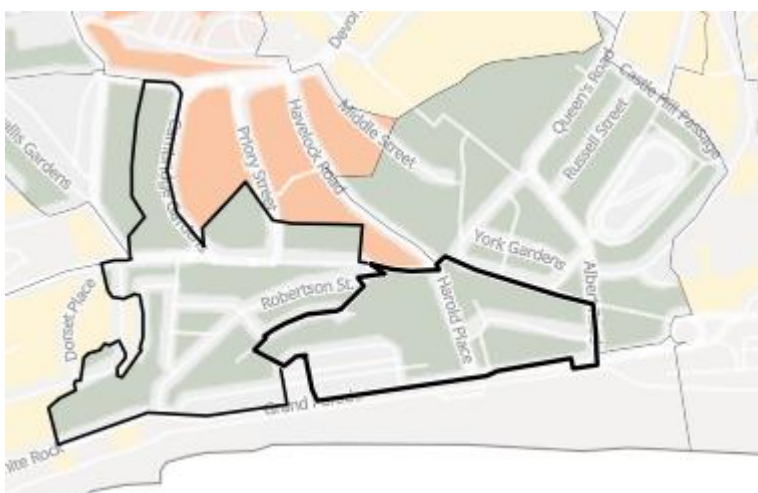


Figure 19: Large increase in Air B&B's/ Holiday lets, 2011 – 2021. Hotspot area in Central St Hastings.

Overcrowding:

With strong deprivation levels, some parts of the Hastings Borough experienced high levels of overcrowding as residents shared accommodation in order to lower housing costs, helping them to meet the cost of living. Overcrowding is defined as more people living in a housing unit than there are bedrooms to sustain them. As the cost of living has become harder, the Hastings Borough has seen an increase of 1% in overcrowding. However, select areas within central coastal areas have seen decreases in overcrowding, indicating those moving in are buying larger properties with more bedrooms, meaning these properties are less likely to be over-subscribed. Figure 20 shows that within Central St Leonards the Marina and Mercatoria areas have seen a decrease of 11% in housing which is listed as overcrowded, indicating that HMOs that have been reformatted into larger apartments are less likely to be overcrowded, and if anything are likely to be under-occupied as there has been a 2% increase in the number of units that have at least one spare bedroom. Further, this has also occurred in Central Hastings within Grande Parade, Harold Place and the town centre, such as Queens Road and Russell Street. Here there has been a 3% decrease in severe overcrowding of housing, whilst the proportion of units within this area that is undersubscribed by one bedroom or more has increased by 6%. This again indicates some big changes in the housing market within perceived newly desirable pockets along the central coastal parts of the Hastings Borough.

This would partly explain how the housing crisis has developed so quickly in Hastings as the number of one Bedroom properties that were partly overcrowded have disappeared off the market and have been replaced by larger apartments that are more likely to be undersubscribed, leaving less competition in the smaller housing rental sector, thus helping to drive up rental prices. This would again indicate that gentrification is present, but is largely being driven by select areas.



Figure 20: Decrease in overcrowding in Central St Leonards and Central Hastings between 2011 – 2021. Hotspot area.

Overall, the localised census housing data shows that even within the parts of the town most associated with gentrification, trends are primarily being driven by a limited number of hotspots and it is important not to overstate how much the town has changed when discussing social change within Hastings between 2011 and 2021. Even within Central coastal parts of the town, there are still areas that have exhibited limited change and the changes outlined in the study so far appear to be driven by very select areas that are deemed to be the most desirable areas for newcomers. These areas tend to be located along the central coastal parts of the town, especially when located near economic centres, such as high streets.

Deprivation:

Within the wards that displayed an increase in households experiencing no deprivation, there are again clear hotspots driving these outliers. Shephard Street, the Marina and Mercatoria all now have over half their households not experiencing any measure of deprivation, see figure 21. This is a reversal of trends witnessed in the previous census where few households were measured as experiencing no deprivation. Again, it can be argued that Central St Leonards has hotspots of Gentrification, again confirmed to be the roads that have been argued to be the most desirable areas for newcomers.



Figure 21: Increase in housing units experiencing no household deprivation within Central St Leonards, 2011 - 2021. Hotspot areas.

Figure 22 also demonstrates this was the case in central Hastings, where the areas that are most associated with being gentrified have displayed very large levels of no households living in deprivation, with few households reporting multiple levels of deprivation. This indicates the decrease in deprivation within these wards is being driven by hotspot areas rather than a total decrease across the council ward.



Figure 22: Increase in housing units experiencing no household deprivation within Central St Hastings, 2011 - 2021. Hotspot areas.

However, it is important not to overstate the decrease in deprivation as these changes are very patchy even within single council wards. Once more, this indicates population change is linked to specific areas as not all areas have been changed. For instance, Central St Leonards, although has increased in affluence, is still within the top 10 most deprived areas. Therefore, gentrification in Hastings should not be portrayed as totally transforming the town beyond recognition. Instead, it is more accurate to say that there are shifts in the population occurring, but these shifts are limited and largely driven by very selective hotspot areas rather than entire council wards.



Pat – Charity Worker, Gizmo:

“The look of people has changed quite dramatically, and there is a new found richness in the town from the new people moving in.” “Since 2014, St Leonards has changed quite dramatically with lots of new people, shops and cultures moving in. People have gone and have been displaced elsewhere”. St Leonards originally was like most deprived sea side towns but with the dramatic changes in retail units we are becoming Kings

Road in Chelsea rather than St Leonards on Sea.

The Economy:

Economic activity:

The increase in economic activity within central parts of the town was primarily driven by select roads, which tended to be placed along the coast or near a high street. In Central St

Leonards there were large increases in economic activity in Shephard Street, Kings Road and the Marina area, see figure 23. In Central St Leonards there were similar patterns, where Grande Parade and high street roads displayed stronger economic activity levels. Yet, areas nearby these roads displayed limited levels of economic activity, indicating that there have been decreases in such activity within these wards. Again, the drive in social and economic change appears to be deriving from select roads rather than from entire sections of the town.

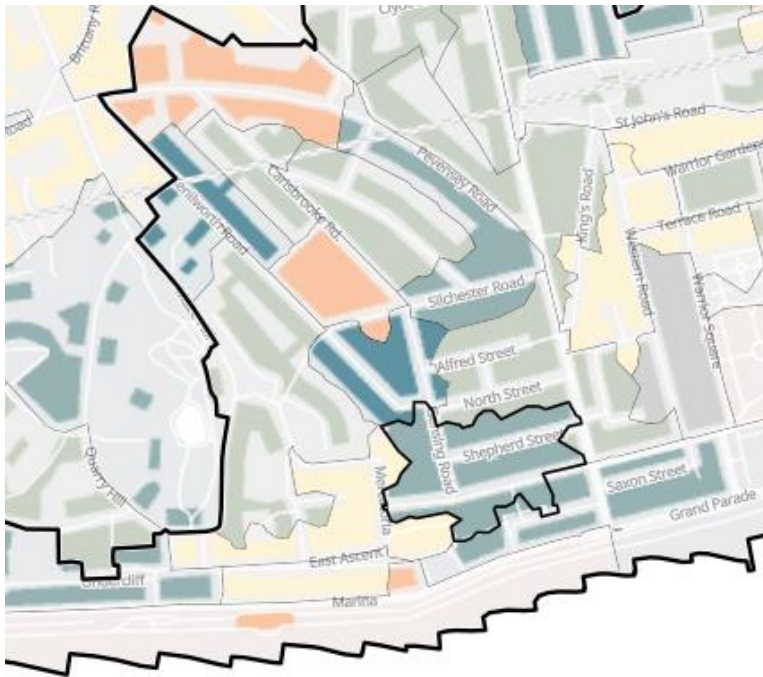


Figure 23: Increase in economic activity in Central St Leonards, 2011 – 2021. Hotspot areas.

The trend of individuals working fewer hours but still being more economically active is also being driven by key flashpoint areas. In Central St Leonards, figure 24 outlines that North Street, Alfred Street, Carisbrooke Road, the Marina and Mercatoria on average displayed a 6% increase in part-time workers, but surrounding areas displayed decreases of part-time workers of up to 5%, again highlighting how the changes to the economic landscape mentioned earlier are being primarily driven by the select new desirable areas. Interestingly, this finding was replicated in the Central Hastings area, where people living near high streets or the coast displayed increases in the proportion of workers working part-time hours. This again indicates that the economy is being altered by new individuals who are moving into the area. These individuals have gained a greater disposable income after selling property further afield and then moving into Hastings, where they can buy a property in a desirable but still relatively cheap area. These new residents use this disposable income to invest in the area, such as setting up new retail units to regenerate the high street, and working fewer hours to achieve the income

and lifestyle they desire. Therefore, these select hotspots can potentially explain how select high streets are seeing a regeneration at the same time as irregular and shorter opening hours for shops occur.

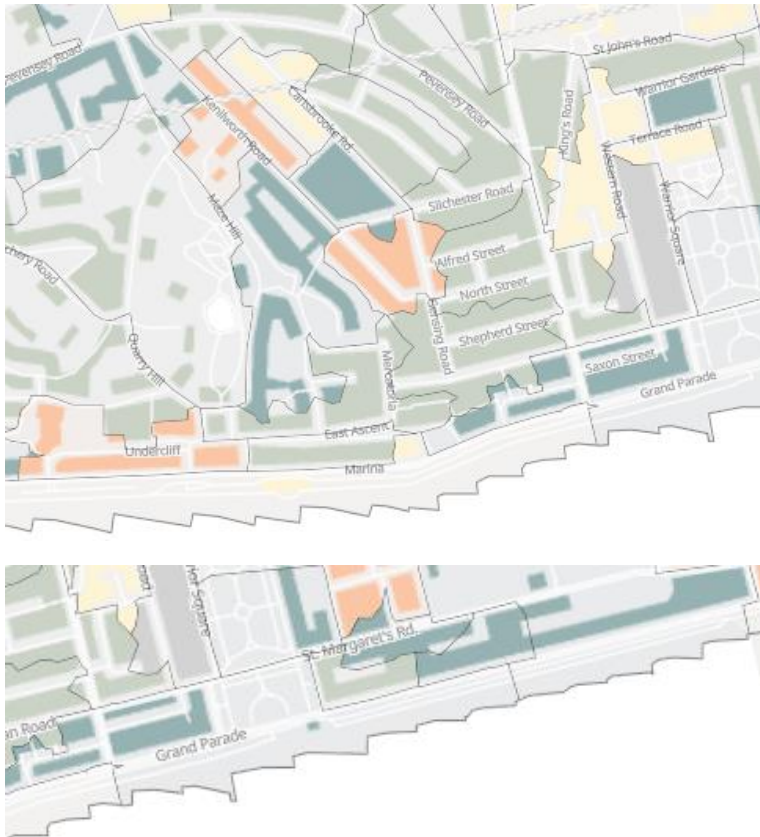


Figure 24: Increase in economic activity within Central St Leonards and Central Hastings from 2011 – 2021. Hotspot areas, again showing areas along the coast and high street are most affected.



Carol – Hairdresser and local business owner:

“I think there is an ever- increasing divide between the smaller trendy areas and larger areas left behind.” “I felt the newbies wanted to change the town, focusing on changing the culture of the place rather than tackling rubbish and social issues that hurt traders.” “If you look at the changing nature of the local economy, the rise in new shops offering similar things, especially in food, coffee, culture and clothing, will be a continuing trend, and this will continue to push out the old traditional seaside economy we had.”

Demographic changes:

Education qualifications

The concentration of highly educated individuals moving into an area can be argued to be a sign of gentrification. Earlier it was found that some wards had displayed greater flows of such individuals than others. Interestingly, these changes have been driven by large concentrations within the select areas discussed in the previous pages. In Central St Leonards, within the select area of Shephard Street, the Marina and some surrounding roads there is now more than 50% of residents having obtained a university or above level of education. Yet, in nearby roads, the trend is nowhere near as strong, see figure 25. Further, in Central Hastings, coastal areas displayed similarly large concentrations of highly educated voters, but, again, with some roads relatively nearby falling nowhere near these high levels. This again indicates that changes associated with gentrification are being caused by very selective areas. This indicates that whilst gentrification has brought changes to the population of Hastings it is important not to overstate the extent to which the town has been changed.



Figure 25: Proportion of residents that have obtained higher level qualifications (Degree and above) in Central St Leonards – Hot Spot areas.

BAME:

There has also been noticeable increases in the BAME population within the select roads most associated with Gentrification, see figure 26. Within Norman Road, Gensing Road, Silchester Road, Carisbrooke Road, Kings Road and the Marina area there has been an increase of over 2% of residents fitting into this grouping. Further, there has been an increase in the proportion of households being defined as having multiple ethnicities residing within them. Yet, in nearby areas, there has been no change in the ethnic diversity of the population. Also, in Central Hastings, there has been the same trend within select roads near the coast and high street, with such areas on average seeing a 3% increase in the BAME population and a similar increase in mixed and multiple ethnicity houses. This again indicates that social changes from any gentrification will have been driven by newly desirable roads that are very selective rather than entire council wards having been radically changed.

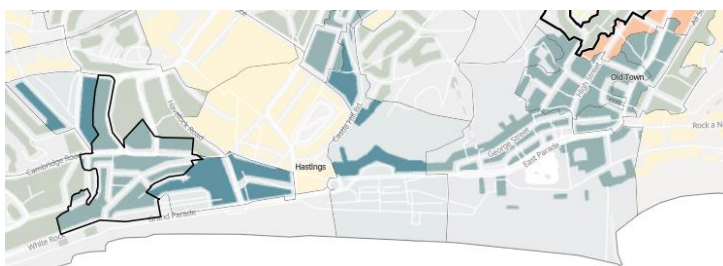


Figure 26: Increase in the BAME population in Central St Leonards and Hastings from 2011 – 2021. Hotspot areas. The largest increases again have occurred near coastal and market areas.



Drew – A local artist: “around 2013-14, that I realised the area was changing and Kings Road was becoming a more desirable and diverse place for creatives to live and work in.” “I felt that Kings Road was developing into something amazing. There was a real multi-cultural feel to the place and it was becoming much more vibrant and full of life. More art galleries started to pop up, filling up

previously vacant units. I managed to get a small workshop, the bunker, which was located next to Susan Diamond’s workshop.”

Why have these trends developed?

Is this Gentrification?

To what extent are the trends outlined in this report being driven by gentrification? Without conducting an in-depth survey or a series of interviews representing the wider population it is impossible to give an exact answer to this question. But, it is right to say that the demographic and economic trends discussed throughout this report have partly been driven by the gentrification phenomenon. This can especially be argued within the central parts of the town which could be consistently identified as an outlier, indicating that something different is happening in these areas to the rest of the town. Whilst the entire town will be experiencing similar socio-economic changes to other small coastal towns across the country, it is clear the central parts of the Borough are experiencing these trends to a far greater extent. Given that these outliers follow the trends the gentrification thesis would predict it is credible to argue that specific parts of Hastings have experienced some gentrification in recent years.

To recap, Central St Leonards, Central Hastings, Gensing, Bohemia, Braybrooke and Tressell are the areas that can be most argued to have experienced gentrification. These areas have tended to display trends much more extreme than the average of the Borough. Such areas have experienced a large increase in the average age and the proportion of residents that have gained higher levels of qualifications. Their populations are also becoming much more diverse, leaving the mono-culture of older times very much in the past. These areas have also become much less deprived than they were 10 years ago, which has brought economic changes. Such changes have seen a rise in the proportion of individuals working in professional (middle-class) occupations, with a greater number of residents being active within the local economy, either

as spenders or investors. Further, a greater proportion of individuals are more likely to work flexible part-time hours. These demographic changes have also coincided with well above average changes in the housing market where central areas have seen a rise in property ownership, whilst the rest of the town has generally experienced decreases. Central areas have seen the largest decrease in one-bedroom properties whilst they have also seen the largest increases in two or more-bedroom properties, again signalling large changes in the housing market.

These large shifts within the housing market do indicate that demographic trends within the central parts of the town are leading to changes in housing within the area, and consequently, who will likely be living in the area. The gentrification thesis would argue that this has led to people being shifted out from the central areas of Hastings to the outer edges of the town, or even further afield. Based on the evidence discussed in this report, there are indications that this may be happening. If so, how has this happened?

How has this happened?

If the gentrification phenomenon has occurred, the main reason for this could be because areas that were once the most affordable areas, and therefore were the easiest place for younger, less qualified and lower-income people to live, have rapidly become unaffordable. Younger people seeking to get onto the housing ladder, or looking for better renting options, have voted with their feet and flocked to areas of the town where property prices and rents have not risen as much. Indeed, the areas on the edge of the town have seen a greater proportion of younger residents renting, indicating this is where younger people may have been pushed to. With hybrid and remote working, not living near commuter zones is not as vital for young people as it once was, producing further incentives for younger people to vacate increasingly expensive central areas. With the cost of living rising post-pandemic, this will have only strengthened these trends as young people will increasingly be searching for a more affordable place to live.

These people are being replaced by older individuals who are moving into the increasingly expensive centre of the Borough. As these people have often arrived from cities, which they themselves may have been priced out of, these people tend to increase diversity as London has a larger BAME and LGBT population than compared to most coastal towns. This may be motivated by such people seeking to sell property in more expensive areas of the South East so they can move to the more affordable Hastings coast, thus giving such individuals a surplus to live off. This may enable these individuals to retire early or to have a more financially secure

and enjoyable retirement. Further, such individuals may have been priced out of places like London as the cost of living increases post-pandemic and older individuals think about quality of life factors, such as their living environment, as they approach their retirement. Such individuals who have been able to acquire property within these expensive city areas tend to have benefited from earlier waves of higher education expansion, meaning that new arrivals from these areas tend to have gained higher-level qualifications, which would also explain the rise in the proportion of residents with degree and above qualifications in the areas that have most likely been impacted by the gentrification wave.

Vitality, trends in the local housing market do reflect this theory. Since 2017, some of the areas in the town that have seen the largest increase in property prices have been the areas that have displayed the largest signs of Gentrification. In particular, Central St Leonards, Central Hastings, Tressell and Braybrooke have seen property prices increase by an estimated 50% within a short 5-year period. Within these key areas, there have also been flashpoint areas that have seen a high turnover of residents, indicating that newly desirable areas (places along the coast and near the high street) have seen a particular rise in house prices and turnover of residents.

A decade ago no estate agent could have dreamt that house prices could have risen as much as they have done in the south of the town, which was once considered the most undesirable part of the town. Yet, according to some estimates, this is where the largest increases in prices have occurred, with prices doubling after the recession of 2007/08 had abated, see figure 27. Therefore, as the largest increase in house prices has occurred within these select areas it is fair to argue that this is partly the reason why these areas have seen the largest change in demographics over the last decade. Again, those who would be most likely to be able to afford to sell property in London and make a surplus when buying a new property in Hastings will tend to be higher-educated people who work in middle-class professional occupations that provide a more disposable income. This means that these people will be less likely to be living in a household experiencing one of the four main deprivation measures, which can also partly help to explain why levels of household deprivation have decreased sharply within the central coastal parts of the borough. It also partly helps to explain the increased levels of investment within the central St Leonards area and the revival of the high street, despite many high streets within small towns facing decline.

Hastings Borough, change in the average house price per ward.

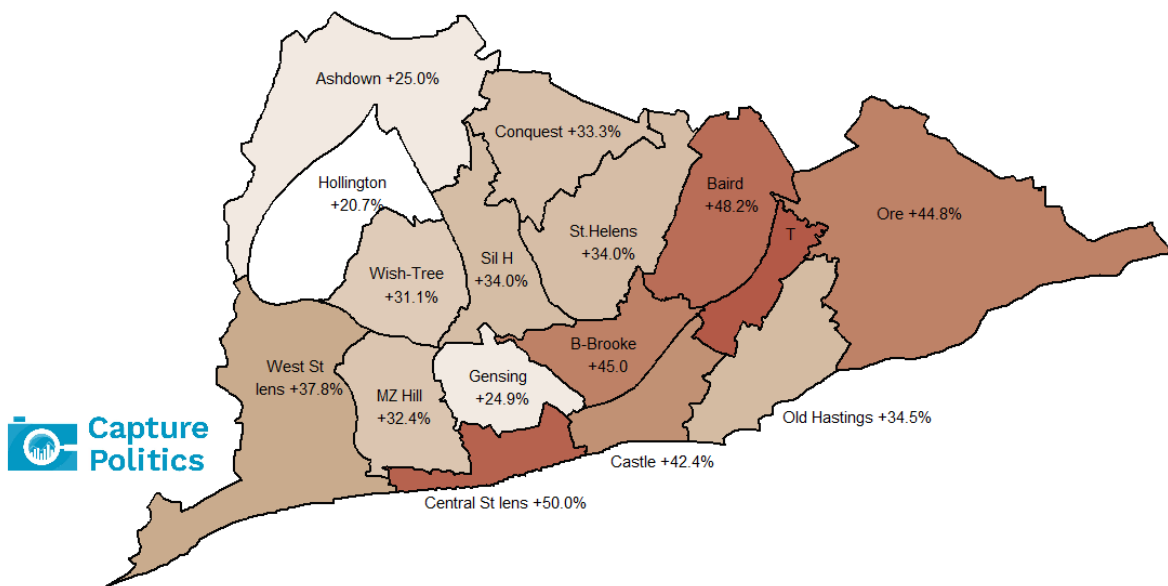


Figure 27: Change in property prices within the Hastings Borough per ward since 2015. Source: ONS property estimates.

More evidence? It has happened elsewhere.

Interestingly, this trend is not isolated to Hastings. This has occurred on a much larger scale within the London area, where residents aged 25-34 have been squeezed out from once deprived central areas and have been pushed to the outer areas of the locality, see figure 28. This has occurred on a larger scale as the cost of living increase in London has been particularly severe, meaning a greater number of younger people have found themselves being compelled to move to more affordable areas. These residents have been replaced by older individuals who can afford the higher cost of living, such as higher property prices, consequently bringing large demographic changes within fairly short periods of time.



Figure 28: Change in younger residents within the London area between 2011 & 2021. It shows these people have been forced out of the area. This has argued to have been caused by rising property prices caused by a gentrification process.

These demographic changes tend to bring a larger amount of higher educated people that have greater disposable incomes and tend to be less deprived than the younger people they are

replacing. This has led to the regeneration of parts of London that was historically considered undesirable, bringing increased economic activity to depressed areas, which in turn has created greater levels of economic growth. In such areas, it is debated whether the rise in property values that prices people out is more harmful than the benefits of the economic growth it brings. In London, this debate and phenomenon has been described as gentrification. As these same patterns have occurred in Hastings, be it to a lesser extent, it can again be argued that there are signs select areas within Hastings have been gentrified.

Its importance?

Firstly, this process matters as it is a sign that the cost of living crisis, and particularly the housing crisis, is spreading further afield. Initially, the housing crisis was located in inner city areas and large towns. However, as the crisis has grown and a greater number of people have either been forced out of the cities or wish to relocate for a better standard of living, this may have produced a knock-on effect on smaller towns that were once dubbed as undesirable as they became an affordable magnet for those looking to relocate. With the quick influx of residents who can afford relatively low property prices, there is the capacity to rapidly increase house prices and with this, rent prices too. This has heightened the cost of living crisis for many in smaller towns, producing greater hardship, especially for younger workers in lower-paid precarious employment. Therefore, Gentrification in London may have caused further waves of gentrification within the South East, leading to younger people being more likely to relocate away from Town centres in smaller towns, further distancing them from economic centres and transport links, which in turn may limit young people's chances and limit their economic potential.

This change in these demographics' access to economic opportunities and an affordable way of living also has impacts on local public services. For instance, when researching the rise in rental prices across the Borough, this study found that Hastings has seen one of the largest rental increases in the south east. At the same time, the council has experienced a large increase in the number of people requiring support with housing costs. This has partly caused the council's housing support budget to go from £0.7m to £5.6m within a three-year period. Further, as these residents are facing a higher cost of living, made worse by the recent spike in inflation, this is making these people more dependent on public services, putting further pressure on the council's budget and services. Critically, this shows that the gentrification

process is partly responsible for worsening council finances and public services that appear to be ever more under severe strain.

Secondly, this could matter greatly as currently the political representation of these areas are either key marginal wards between Labour and the Conservative Party or are solidly Conservative seats. However, if the trend of a greater number of young people arriving into these areas continues then the political balance in these areas could also shift. Currently, according to YouGov, the Conservative Party only have 12% of the vote amongst this group of voters and Labour has over 55%, producing over a 40% gain for Labour amongst this group of voters. Therefore, if a greater proportion of the electorate within these areas are comprised of younger voters this will likely favour Labour over the Conservatives. This could make it easier for Labour to win council seats and for the Tories to lose currently safe seats. These demographic changes might not yet be enough to swing the safest Conservative seats Labour's way, but if these trends continue (which due to the cost of living and continuing rising housing prices they might well do) then further down the line these seats might be tighter contests between Labour and the Tories. Yet, even under the current level of change, key marginal seats could be slightly easier for Labour to win as they may be increasingly being filled by voters naturally more likely to vote for Labour, such as younger, more highly educated voters who do not own property and are seeking to better their standard of living, especially as the cost of living crisis bites.

Report conclusion:

Overall, the report concludes that gentrification has occurred within specific parts of the Hastings Borough. Comparing changes in key socio-economic demographics by using census data, it is clear that areas of the town have gone through considerable cultural change. Central parts of the town show that younger residents who are more likely to rent are less prevalent in these areas and likely have been replaced by older newcomers who own property. Less qualified individuals who were more likely to work in lower-income occupations and experienced deprivation have also been pushed out. The main reason for the trend in these groups' exodus is the trend in property and rental prices, which have been dramatic since 2010. The people who can't afford these rising prices are replaced by the people who can afford to move in, and some cases receive a surplus for doing so. The people who can afford to move in tend to have a greater amount of wealth and are less likely to live in deprivation as they are arriving from wealthier urban areas. They are also more likely to increase the town's diversity

as they are arriving from more diverse areas, seen with the notable increase in BAME and LGBT groups. Therefore, as the people who are incentivised to move in are in some ways in contrast, demographically speaking, to those moving into the area this creates a feeling of a great cultural upheaval.

Naturally, those moving in want to impose their identity onto the area they live and make long-term economic investments into the area. This creates a visual change in the area, with housing being renovated, shops reopening and the market changing the products it offers. Whilst this increased economic activity creates a sense of progress that many are urged to support, others in the town feel priced out, making this regeneration useless to them, and in some cases increases their cost of living. This creates a sense of anger and uneasiness amongst many longer-term locals, with some new arrivals also sharing the same concerns around their impact. However, there is another side of the argument that highlights the large levels of deprivation these central coastal areas faced and urges people to consider how such areas would be regenerated without outward investment being brought into such areas. This regeneration vs gentrification debate won't be ended by this study, merely all it can conclude is that there are signs of people being pushed out and economic progress. Yet, one thing is for sure, the census highlights the exact changes predicted by those that argue gentrification has occurred, indicating that within specific parts of the town gentrification is here and likely to stay.