Case Study: Swansea (CBD, Inner Zone and Suburbs)

Factories/Industry (transitional)

CBD

Inner Zone

Medium Class Residential

Outer Suburbs

Swansea’s CBD (Central Business District):

* The CBD of Swansea has about 450 different shops including a mix of high-order and low-order goods shops, department stores and small specialist shops.
* Some high-order shops are not available anywhere else within 50 km.
* It is the regional centre for the whole of south west Wales.
* The oldest commercial area is High Street, which runs south from the railway station.
* To the west are the largest shops in the centre which were rebuilt after bombing during the Second World War. Most of the area is now pedestrianised.
* The Quadrant Centre, opened in 1979, is linked to a multi-storey car park.
* Four kilometres north of the CBD is Llansamlet Retail Park which has 40 large stores. This part of the Lower Swansea Valley was once the world’s greatest copper producing area. It was closed in 1980. It became a polluted waste land and an area of high unemployment.
* The government made the area an Enterprise Zone to encourage firms to create jobs there.
* One-third of all money spent by shoppers in the UK is now at out-of-town centres.
* In many cities, out-of-town shopping has become preferred in comparison to the CBD, where there are now fewer shops. Possibly due to the recession but some have been replaced by charity and second-hand shops.
* More streets in Swansea’s CBD are now traffic free.
* Castle Gardens has been extended and planners are trying to introduce housing into the city centre, particularly on the fringe and above shops.

Swansea’s Inner Zone:

* Swansea used to be a trading port at the mouth of the River Tawe before the industrial revolution. Its population was 6000 people.
* As the area developed into the world’s major producer of copper, new docks were built and the population increased twenty times.
* Workers came for jobs based in the new industries based on metal and coal.
* There was a great need for more housing. Areas close to new industries and the docks, such as St Thomas (terraced houses area) were built. Many of these buildings are old now and were not built to last so long.
* Most of the houses are terraced with little or no front garden. They have two bedrooms upstairs and two rooms downstairs. Often the ground floor extends back into the garden to provide a kitchen, coal shed and toilet.
* Some of the houses were demolished if it would cost too much money to bring them back up to modern standards.
* Many terraced houses in St Thomas now have a toilet and bathroom inside normally as an extension.
* In some parts of Swansea’s inner zone, terraced houses have been replaced by flats.
* When the flats were built, they seemed to offer much better living conditions nut aren’t very popular with families. They lack gardens and garages; some are noisy, lifts are sometimes vandalised and residents can feel trapped. There are also few places for children to play safely and it is harder to build a community.
* Two areas of Swansea’s inner zone have seen major changes. The first is between the CBD and river. The Parc Tawe development is a mixture of shopping and leisure uses, such as a cinema and ten-pin bowling.
* The second is between the CBD and the beach. South Dock was a prosperous area of ships, warehouses and coal hoists a century ago. When the dock was closed in 1969, Swansea Council bought it. It has now become the Maritime Village with hotels, shops and restaurants. There are 1500 new homes, mostly apartments overlooking the old dock, which is now a yachting marina. One of the warehouses has been turned into a museum and next to it; a new Leisure Centre has become the most visited tourist attraction in Wales.
* So far, about £500 million has been spent on the Maritime Village.

Swansea’s Suburbs:

* Half of the population of the UK live in the suburbs. They are areas of houses and gardens of similar size and type near the city. Many suburbs were built in the 1920s and the 1930s. Most houses are either detached or semi-detached.
* The Swansea suburb of Townhill was built by the council in the 1920s on steep slopes.
* Now long-term unemployment is high at about 45%. 40% of household with children are single-parent families, most relying on state benefit.
* Townhill has a young population. Almost half of the 13 500 people who live there are under 30.
* There are few places for children to play and the crime rates are high.
* School truancy is the highest in Wales and many 16 year olds expect never to have a full-time job, contributing to the percentage of long-term unemployment.
* £9 million is being invested in Townhill.
* Some money has been spent on the road network. New pedestrian crossings and better street lighting are making Townhill safer.
* To reduce unemployment, local colleges are offering training. There are grants for local businesses which promise to give interviews to Townhill residents.
* The suburbs on the edge of the city include houses built more recently than Townhill.
* Killay was originally and separate village. Its shopping centre offers a bank and travel agency as well as shops for low-order goods. Most houses in Killay are privately owned, have garages and open-plan front gardens.
* Across the Clyne valley form Killay is Upper Killay, 1 km away. The jouses are built along the roads but behind the houses there is farmland. (Ribbon development).
* To control the growth of cities the government set up green belts. These are areas where new building is not normally allowed.