

# Section 1 – Introduction

The first section of your Independent Investigation should introduce the reader to what your research will aim to do and give a focus to your whole research process. Your planning stage will have given you a clear idea of a broad research area as well as some more detailed research questions which you will aim to answer.

One of the first things you can do in your introduction is state the broad **Aims of the Study** – what at things you hope to achieve and, very briefly, how you hope to achieve them. Before stating the more detailed research questions or hypotheses, it may be a good idea to provide the geographical context to your study through a discussion of what you have read in your background reading. Formally this can be called a **Literature Review**. Citing from a wide range of sources, a Literature Review should aim to:

- Show what is already known about your topic by geographers
- Show any models or theories in relation to your topic
- Show where gaps in the existing geographical knowledge occur (and how your study aims to fill them)
- Suggest why it is important to study this particular topic

In order to avoid plagiarism, it is important to remember to reference any published work which you are using in this section.

If well written and comprehensive, the Literature Review should naturally lead the reader to consider the **Research Questions and Hypotheses**, and no further explanation of their inclusion should be needed.

The introduction should also include a **Justification for the Investigation**. This should explain to the reader why it is important that studies such as yours are done and what value they might hold in the wider geographical world.

The **Location** of your study should also be explored. This can be done through a written description as well as visually through a series of linked maps, showing the location of the research at increasingly more detailed scales. Use of mapping websites can be useful here as can GIS packages; ask your teacher about what is available.

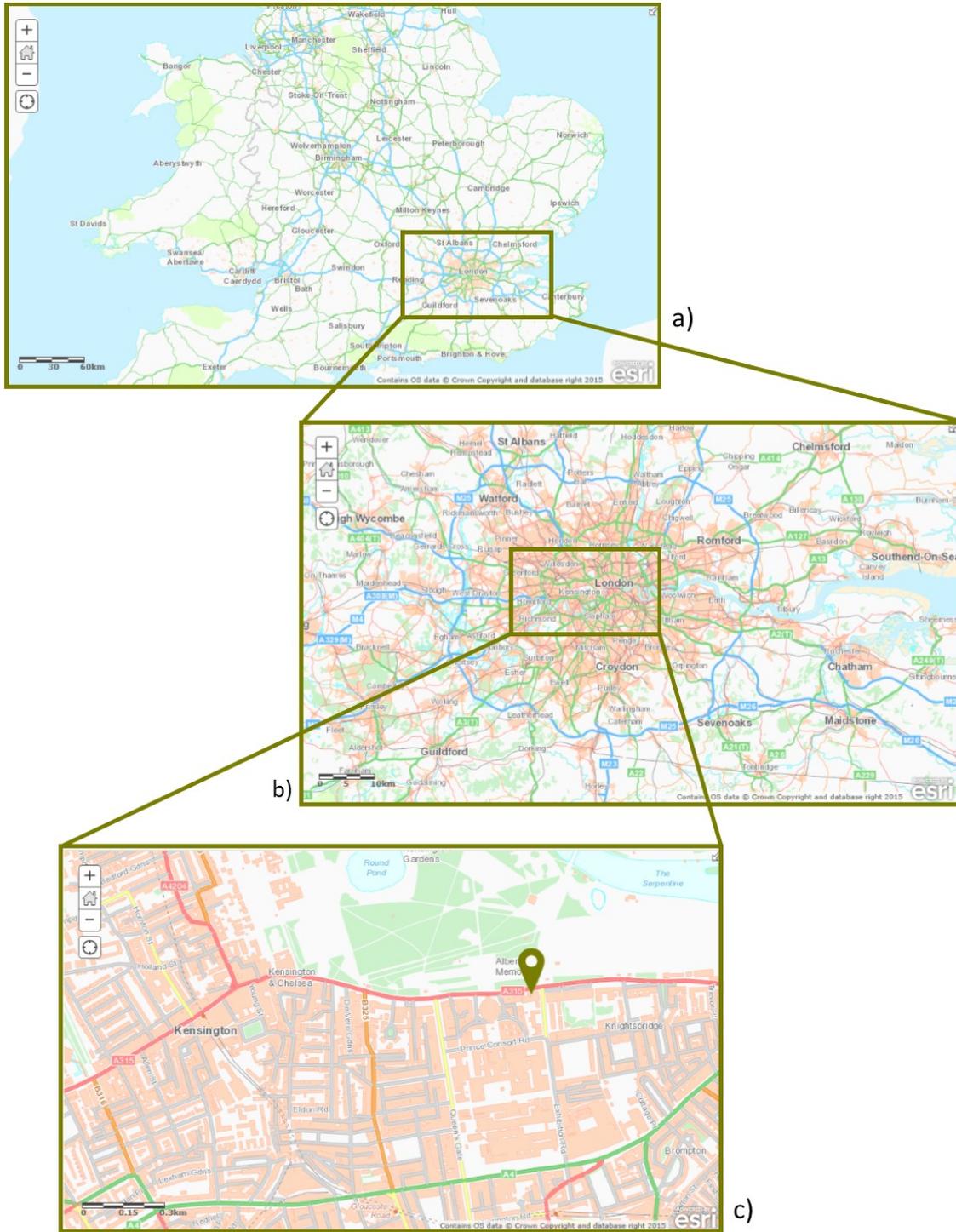


Figure 1: The location of the study site in the context of the UK (a), London (b) and Kensington (c).

Map Source: ArcGIS Online

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The introduction can also include a **Study Framework** showing the different stages you are going to go through in order to meet your aims and be able to answer your research questions. This framework may be presented graphically in the form of a flow diagram, so the reader can clearly see how your thought processes will develop through the research procedure. It may read a little like a list but should not appear as one; a simple discussion of what you are planning to do at each stage of the Independent Investigation is sufficient.

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### **Common Pitfalls:**

- **Discussing your study location as if the examiner knows it intimately.** Your teacher may know where you plan to carry out your Independent Investigation but few others will be able to locate a site by name unless you show them its location on a map.
  - **Justifying your study by claiming it will change all geographical thinking.** As much as you might value your study and fully believe in it as a piece of 'original' research, it is unlikely to change the course of geographical history. It is far better to speak modestly of possible outcomes and describe how it may inform others to research the topic in more depth.
  - **Repeating a research question that you have already found the answer to in your Literature Review.** If you have already read about it, there is little value to your research. Instead, why not see if someone else's theory holds true in your own location?
  - **Using research questions that are either too vague or too closed.** Make sure your research questions and hypotheses are actually answerable by providing them with the right wording and level of detail.
  - **Discussing possible conclusions in your Study Framework.** If you have not yet carried out the investigation then it is not possible to draw conclusions, even if you do have a strong idea about what the outcome might be.
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