

The London Borough of Haringey Wards Corner Regeneration Project
Compulsory Purchase Order 2016

WITNESS STATEMENT OF QUALIFIED OBJECTOR FERNANDO ESGUERRA

1. I am Fernando Esguerra and I am a trader at the Seven Sisters market. I have seven units: 13-14-19-20-22-24-25. I am 43 years old and my business is called Restaurante Manantial. A supermarket operates there too.
2. I am Colombian and I came to England 19 years ago. I am in the process of requesting British citizenship.
3. I do not speak fluent English, but I understand about 40%.
4. I have worked at the market for 13 years: in my supermarket business and also as a butcher and in my bakery, which is part of the supermarket. I pay my taxes to the Inland Revenue, business rates (£1,700 a year). I employ four heads of family.
5. If I did not have the market [to work in] it would affect me in every way: in terms of morale and psychologically, because I depend entirely on my business.
6. The fact that there are a lot of businesses of Latin American origin in a single place makes a great difference to the possibility of doing business and earning a living. Moving to a place without a Spanish-speaking environment would not be the same. We would lose everything we have worked for. I've invested an enormous amount in improvements, making it a welcoming place for my clients and building a successful business. In addition, this is a successful market. If we are dispersed we will lose everything we have worked for, the community of clients who use the market, and everything that we have nurtured here.
7. I studied Systems Technology at university in Colombia, though I was unable to complete my studies. I worked at the same time as a businessman

in Colombia. I sold cassava and plantains. I was 27 when I was involved in that business. When I came to London I worked first as a kitchen porter but I wanted to have my own business. One day I set up a business with a partner, importing products from Colombia. To an extent this also provided a service for the community.

8. That was how I arrived, one day, at the market. I opened my first unit in 2004. I sold Colombian products. I paid £14,000 for the small shop that I started. I paid little by little. My business does several different things. I have a shop selling products (a kind of supermarket), a butchers, and a restaurant and sometimes it serves as a discotheque. Often when people get together they spice it up with dancing. It's very Latin American.
9. Here in my business we sell products that are essential to the Latino community, such as the Colombian, Peruvian, Brazilian, Argentinian, Ecuadorian, Dominican and Bolivian communities. For example, from Colombia, I sell traditional *arepas* [a maize cake], *panela* [raw cane sugar], Colombian flours (maize, plantain, broad bean); from Peru I sell Inca Cola. I sell a range of Latin American soft drinks; I sell Latin American sweets, like *dulce de leche*, *membrillo* [quince], *matata*, guava, biscuits from across South America, Colombian and Brazilian coffee. I also sell different kinds of chilli: *ají panca*, *rocoto*, *ají amarillo*. I work from 7 in the morning to 8 at night, from Monday to Thursday. On Fridays and Saturdays I work from 9 in the morning to 11 at night. My mother, my younger siblings and my father, who are all in Colombia, depend on my work.
10. With respect to Haringey's plans for the market: Haringey council ignores us completely. We have some information now, but not enough, and we have no guarantee that what they say will correspond with what they do. I feel insecure and I do not trust them. We do not have a clear idea of what will happen to us, who is going to manage the market, how much the rent will be, what the business rates will be. It is not clear how much the increase will be. The council did not provide the level of information required for a real consultation. They did not do things correctly from the start. At the beginning they provided no information at all, in order to manage things to their advantage. They have also installed an authoritarian management team. Owen is pretty cutting. He doesn't look for solutions in his conversations with the traders. He uses insulting language against them. When one of the traders made a complaint he called her a "fucking bitch".
11. I have felt discriminated against. The council has discriminated against us because they did not take into account the fact that this community has been together for many years, and they did not consult with us, nor tell us that they had plans to evict us.
12. The market is important for my social and cultural life. This market means everything to me. I have my friends here, the people I work with.

13. When I was a boy I had an accident. I cut my face with a wood cutting machine. Thank God I was able to save myself. It affected me. I had to be operated on several times. I started school later than normal. I have had to have 15 operations here. I stopped working immediately after each of these operations, in order to recover from the surgery. Having an independent business has been good for me.
14. It would be difficult to start over again. I have reinvested everything I have earned in my business. I've sorted everything out. In my home country I was pursued by the paramilitaries. Here I have found a new start. In past I have lived with uncertainty, but I was able to settle down here.
15. I am accepted here. I feel I can prosper with my family. I can't imagine doing anything else. My entire life revolves around this market. One of my ideas is to set up a centre for learning English and Spanish. That is important because I have seen many Latinos who have arrived and needed that. The service would not be for profit and would be to benefit the community.

Statement of Truth

I believe the facts in this witness statement are true.

Name: Fernando Esguerra

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fernando Esguerra' in a cursive style.

Date: 20 June 2017

Annex 1: The trader Fernando Esguerra in his business.