



ROMAN ROAD E3

**ROMAN'S BARGAIN STORE
569 ROMAN ROAD**



Can you tell me where and when you were born? Are you local?

I was born in Lebanon and have been living in London for 35 years. This shop belongs to my husband and it has been here for 14 years. I started working here with my husband four years ago. We do not live here, we live outside of Bow.

What are your connections with this area? Do you know this area very well?

Not much since we do not live in this area. I only know our customers.

Tell me a little bit about your shop. What time does it open?

We open the shop at 9.30 AM to 6.00 PM from Monday to Saturday, we are closed on Sundays and after 6.00 PM when the shop is closed, my husband would start delivering the appliances to our clients. Our clients are working clients thus they prefer the appliances to be sent at this time.

Do you shop in Roman Road? What about lunch, do you eat at the restaurants nearby?

Yes, but it's usually a quick one so I only do takeaways, like salmon sandwich or pizza. I have to take care of the shop and be here all the time.

Have there been many changes in this area? Has the high street changed much?

From what I heard from my customers, Roman Road used to be a very busy market. A lot of new shops may appear now but nothing beats the market. In the past years, the market was a very happening place; people were coming from other places, not in the Bow area. Things have been a lot slower here compared to the past years. Maybe it is due to online shopping.

How are your customers like, are they local?

We have regular customers around Bow, Poplar, Hackney and anywhere close to this area. Plus, my husband does not deliver items too far away as that would take a lot of his time. So, no Central London or North London. The furthest would be Islington.

Do you extend your shopfront to the market?

No, we just extend the appliances at the front. My husband would move some appliances outside. It takes him about 10 minutes to do it. Sometimes you don't need to have a strong body to be able to do it, just a strong mind, a little bit of thinking.

What kind of support do you get around here?

Mostly from the customers I must say. Council? They do not help us. They only need money. They charge us for bin, even if we would like to place it outside of our shop, we will get taxed for that. They would charge us per month. It is hard to deal with the council especially if you own a business; the rates and the taxes are making it hard for the business to run well.

Do you think your voice will be heard if you were to speak up about this?

I don't think so. We got tricked last year, but rate scammers saying that we could pay our rates at a lower price. They said they are linked to the Council. So we paid £600 for this and then these people disappeared. We lost the money for nothing.

**BELL PHARMACY BOW
534 ROMAN ROAD**



Can you tell me where and when you were born, is it local?

I was born in Nairobi in Kenya and I've lived and run my shop since 2009. I studied the pharmacy in Liverpool School of Pharmacy and Florida Board of Pharmacy.

What are your connections with this area? How long have you known this community?

I am a pharmacist so I have loads of connection with this community since 2009.

Have there been many changes in this area? Has the high street changed much?

There is a lot of changes. As you might can see, there are some high rise apartments, located behind the market street.

How do you think the high street and your shop could become a more integral part of the community?

I think that my shop is pharmacy so local people are frequently come and visit to my shop and in order to become a more integral part of the community with my shop, The British Council and NHS should support my shop to improve.

How has your business developed in the High street over the years and why?

I've run for about eight years and usually people come to get some drugs and consultation with me related to health in my pharmacy and People take some prescription which took from NHS.

We would like to get a sense of how the high street features in people's lives. Do you think you could put down in a piece of paper, whether in the form of a drawing, map, or words how it fits into your present, past or future life?

I don't know but there are so many chain-store such as Costa Star bucks and we are losing identity of this area. Young riches just rend and open these kinds of shops and we can't stop this phenomenon and it is a common problem but sometimes people who want to get harmful drugs and needle come to my shop.

How would you describe your community? Do you have a sense of community here, do you know your customers?

I think it is a mixture community. And I know a lot of customer they are usually buy some jungle juice and needles and those people come to my shop total 20 times in a day. Sale of needles in a day is twelve and sales of jungle juices is eight.

Do you think you play a role in your community? Do you have a sense you belong here?

Yes. I campaigns for people's health and to improve public health and prevent drug and alcohol abuses, I usually put up posters associated with that issues.

Do you feel your word counts when it comes to changes and developments in this area?

I don't think so.

How can the High street support your shop?

Council can support my shop in terms of facilities like car park.

What is the role of the shop window for you? Do you think about how it can help your business?

It is important. Because I put up poster of public advertisements in NHS and pharmaceutical companies. My main role is to improve and promote public' health so windows is crucial part to show and inculcate how drug and alcohol abuses can affect your body and health.

Is there any difficulties when you run your shop?

Nothing.

Who is your main customer? Young people or old people?

A mix of both.

How many times your customers visit to your shop in a day?

Usually 50 people in a day and when market open, about 100 people come to my shop.

How about day and night on the street?

In daytime, the place is full of vitality however in night time, there is no people in here except drug dealers and drunken people. It is like a ghost town at this place.

Do you think opening the market every Tue, Thu and Sat affect your business? Which points?

Yes. We have more patients and customers that come here. When it comes to holding the market.

SOLINKA
518 ROMAN ROAD



First of all, what's your name and how old are you?

My name is Ewa and I am 27.

Where you are from?

I am from Poland and came to England in 2004 when I was 16.

What made you come to London?

I just came to visit but I just loved London as a city and decided to move here.

What did you do before running 'Solinka'?

I worked a lot in retail, worked for Zara and other high street stores. I spent a bit of time volunteering for London Metropolitan Police and also recently completed a Masters in Criminal Law.

What made you come to Roman Road?

Well I actually it's was my Dad's idea. He got the keys to this place and asked me to run it.

How has this affected things for you?

I've had to change my career path slightly as I can't pursue the Criminal Law interest at the minute so I'm concentrating more on business management.

When did you take over the shop?

I moved in in February 2015.

What do you think of Roman Road from a business point of view? Is business good?

Yeah, business is good, mainly because we don't have that much competition in this area.

Who usually uses this shop? Do you have a set of regular customers?

We mainly get Polish families because all our stock is the same as they would have at home, everything is exported from Poland. However, we do get people who come in to ask questions and who are just interested.

What are your thoughts about the Roman Road?

I like the collection of the different local businesses in one place, such a cultural diversity.

Do you get along with the other businesses?

Yeah, everyone is so friendly. When I first arrived, I had people coming in, saying welcome and introducing themselves. I talk a lot with the Café next door.

Do you think of any way of improving Roman Road that may bring more people to the area?

Well I haven't been here that long to notice any major problems but I feel the place is so run down, doesn't look inviting, maybe by refurbishing the streets and cleaning them up, it might bring more people here.

What are your plans as a business for the future?

I want to expand the business and bring it to non-Polish areas like Canary Wharf. I like the mix of culture and I want to bring the Polish traditions and culture to more parts of London.

**SWEET TREATS
597 ROMAN ROAD**



Can you tell me where and when you were born, is it local?

I was born at Bangladesh, in 1980.

What are your connections with this area? How long have you known this community?

I am local, I used to live in somewhere near Whitechapel for almost 20 years.

Have there been many changes in this area? Has the high street changed much?

Yes it has changed a lot, there are more people, much more of a diversity then it was before. When I first come here there were shops closed and now you see them open. There used to be only food and vegetable shops now you have got more cafes and TESCO as well.

How do you think the high street and your shop could become a more integral part of the community?

The main thing that can help the community is the car park, at the moment people tend to park outside the shop they want to go to and get into the shop really quickly and leave straight away without having the luxury to take their time and look around. They do not go to small shops. Market days are a problem because of how messy it gets. For instance, during market days there is supposed to be gaps between stalls, we do not have that anymore. That affects people from visiting these shops as the market blocks the view and entrance of these shops.

How has your business developed in the High street over the years and why?

Before being a sweet store it was like a traditional clothing shop but it wasn't doing very well, there were also many shops closing in the area due to the same reason so we decided to change it to something more attractive to people, and at the moment kids are our main customers. It is not that great but it survives.

How would you describe your community? Do you have a sense of community here, do you know your customers?

Yes, I know most of my customers, most of them are regular customers. When I first came here it did not took me long before I knew everyone of them. People tend then to have more time to talk to you.

Do you think you play a role in your community? Do you have a sense you belong here?

I do believe I play a role in my community, I get a lot of people coming in to just have a chat, so yes.

Do you feel your word counts when it comes to changes and developments in this area?

To an extent I guess yes, once or twice I had to call the council about a few things. Once there was a rubbish bin left behind my shop. Possibly left from the market people.

How can the High street support your shop?

This street is actually closed as is just one way, so maybe we can put like a label with the name of all shops so people apart from locals can know that there are shops here as well.

What is the role of the shop window for you? Do you think about how it can help your business?

Yes, deffinetly especially it is the shop like mine which is all about attracting people into it - shopfronts are very important.

DHARMA TATTOO STUDIO 529 ROMAN ROAD



Where are you originally from?

Born and raised in Melbourne, Australia. I came to the UK 5 years ago. I am married and my wife is from the East End.

What are your onnections with this area?

My tattoo shop has been around for 3 months now, I have a real good relationship with a shop called a local cafe called Maxiam, we are planning to merge a Vegan Cafe and our tattoo shop together

How are you involved with the area apart from work?

Locally we worked with a local surgery down the road, by giving £40 tattoo of the band Misfits to people who feel out of society or does not fit in, this is in connection to the charity Bow Heaven and Stone wall UK . The reason we did this is because we believe body art is a form of individual liberation and heightens self-esteem.

How long have you known this community?

4 years now although tattoo studio has just open recently this year.

Have there been any changes in this area while you are here?

Crime rates have dropped, the market has slowed down, before the market used to be flooded with people are good quality of products used to be sold, but due to recent parking restrictions no visitors can come in and they all go to Westfield shopping centre.

Has the High Street changed much?

Yes, a lot. The fruit and vegetable shops are really getting badly affected, due to the TE-SCO opening up.

How do you think the High Street and your shop could become a more integral part of the community?

Each and single one of the shop should aim for a modern and interesting look both on the outside and the interiors of their shop. The area could be improved similarly to Shoreditch High Street to invite more visitors.

Can you briefly describe your business start-up?

We had an idea of how we wanted our studio to look like and we are passionate about tattoos, we just went for it. We know the owner of this shop and the flat above, we are lucky to pay cheap rent.

How does your business developed in the High Street over the years and why?

We just opened our shop so it is hard to talk about developments however we have customers visiting us on a daily basis, they are coming for a chat and I like when people are friendly and willing to talk. I would call that an achievement that I'm pleased with.

How would you describe your community?

Friendly and they are interested in what we do.

Do you have a sense of community here in relation with your customers and fulfilling their needs?

Yes, we are offering services that we love doing and we're good at.

Do you have a sense you belong here?

Yes, definitely.

Do you feel your word counts when it comes to changes and developments in this area?

Yes.

How in your opinion can the High Street support your shop?

As I said the area should aim for modern look that would invite people from all over London, for now it doesn't speak to the public and especially for young people. We have some ideas to use the space next to us and invite young people over for them to explore.

What is the role of the shop window for you?

There are plans still to make our exteriors more appealing and interesting, soon we will be going for it. For now we are using our window space as a place where we can show off our art.

Do you think it is affected by the market on the High Street?

No.

How are you feeling about the market and the market days?

It draws people in of course but for us it's not exactly the crowd that we are looking for.

Do you have any competition in the area?

No, that is what makes us original and also that was reason for us to be here too.

Are you aware of any planned developments or its plans? If so where from have you heard about? (e.g. council)

Yes.

**ALI'S FRUIT AND VEG SHOP; WHOLESALE AND RETAIL
601 ROMAN ROAD**



Where are you originally from?

Sylhet, Bangladesh.

How long have you been in this country?

35 years and lives locally for 9 years.

Where are your connections with this particular area?

Work, family and friends.

How are you involved with the area apart from work?

I have a lot of friends here, most of my customers I know them by their name.

How long have you known this community?

9 years.

Have there been any changes in this area while you're here?

There has been quite a lot of changes, for starters there are a lot more people here living and working, it used to be empty. There was a lot of anti-social behaviour especially in the evenings. There used to be a club and now it is converted to Poundland shop. Also there are cameras and CCTV installed all over Roman Road.

Has the High Street changed much?

The market is more famous and safer too nowadays.

How do you think the High Street and your shop could become a more integral part of the community?

High Street should offer not only a cheaper parking rate but more parking spaces. As of now, parking is a big problem and it is one thing that all shopkeepers on the High Street is complaining about.

Why did you pick this location for your business?

I liked this area.

How does your business develop in the High Street over the years and why?

The business is going well but it was much better before the opening of TESCO. I think, many of the shops are suffering because of that.

How would you describe your community?

International.

Do you have a sense of community here in relation with your customers and fulfilling their needs?

Yes.

Do you have a sense you belong here?

Yes I am spending more of my time here at work than at home but it's bread and butter here, like a family for me.

Do you feel your word counts when it comes to changes and developments in this area?

Yes but no one is listening our complains about the car park spaces.

How in your opinion can the High Street support your shop?

I would keep it as it is only with additional parking spaces.

What is the role of the shop window for you?

There's no window in front of the shop, there is stock places in front of the shop and it is secured at night with shutters.

Do you think about how it can help your business?

Products are more accessible for the public that way and I would like to keep it as it is.

Do you think your shop is affected by the market on the High Street on market days?

No.

How are you feeling about the market and the market days?

It is good but it does not bring me more customers.

Do you have any competition in the area?

Yes, there are three other shops like mine.

If so does it bother you because it affects your business?

I am not bothered.

Are you aware of any planned developments or its plans? If so where from have you heard about?

Yes. For now council has to help me out with paying the rent for this shop as I am struggling paying it. It wasn't like that before however I wouldn't say that they are doing their best because they are not supportive.

**FRUIT & VEG LTD. WHOLESALE AND RETAIL
578 ROMAN ROAD**



Can you tell me where you are from, are you local?

Yes, I am local.

What are your connections with this area? How long have you known this community ?

I've known this place for about 40 years, but not just this place, the Tower Hamlets, actually. I've known this community for a very long time, I've been doing business on Roman Road for 10 years now. The shop is mine.

Have there been many changes in this area? Has the high street changed much ?

There is a lot of changes. For example, there are many people coming and moving in to the new buildings, there are new shops opening too. Some old buildings have been demolished. The new buildings are mostly for the new generation as they come with better facilities, so better options for them.

Do you shop on Roman Road?

Sometimes I would have my breakfast and lunch over here.

What is the opening hours for your shop?

My shop opens from Monday to Sunday, at 10am to 7pm.

How has your business developed in the High Street over the years and why?

I can say that business is okay. However, profit decreases slowly since last year. We have TESCO nearby and people prefer to go there to shop. My business? It goes up and down. You can never tell.

What is the difference between 10 years ago and now ? And what difference is it gonna make for the next 10 years?

We see differences 10 years ago in technology. Business wise? Well, products were cheaper and the road used to be not as busy. I cannot predict what would happen in 10 years time.

Do you have regular customers ?

Yes, I do.

Do you think you play a role in your community?

No. I do not join communities because they are based on politics. Although we have festivals during the summer, it does not really attract people. Roman Road is getting dead lately. The main problem is that there's no parking.

What is the role of the shop window for you? Do you think about how it can help your business?

I change the layout sometimes. We do buy our products everyday so I check the prices everyday. I do Christmas decoration. It is important to have a display to attract people. Sometimes we do offers.

How can the High street support your shop ?

I have friends on the High street and also local, regular customers. The market helps sometimes.

ROMAN BATHS
82-84, ST. STEPHENS ROAD



Can you tell me where and when you were born, is it local?

I was born in India and I have been in London for many years now. I am currently living in Bow.

What are your connections with this area? How long have you know this community?

I started my business in 2000 and got to know about the community since then. However, I do not have much connection to the local community.

Have there been many changes in this area? Has the high street changed much?

This area has changed a lot compared to years before. The local shopkeepers used to be a family where we would greet each other every other day. Not anymore ever since the new shops started to come in.

How has your business developed in the High street over the years and why?

My business is under the contract of Barrett Home company. My business started from Roman Road where the market's traders would come and buy things from my shop.

How would you describe your community? Do you have a sense of community here, do you know your customers?

Yes, of course my clients are mostly local contractors and new home design traders.

Do you feel your word counts when it comes to changes and developments in this area?

No, that never happens. I don't believe this. I have been saying what I want and I get nothing in return.

How can the High street support your shop?

The High Street cannot support my business because I cannot push the clients to buy what I am selling.

What is the role of the shop window for you? Do you think about how it can help your business?

My shop window is simple, I just show what I sell.

**DEAR DEER CAFE
504 ROMAN ROAD**



Can you tell me where and when you were born, is it local?

I was born in Lithuania, but I moved to London when I was 11 and I have lived here ever since. I always wanted to open up a coffee shop in London ever since I was little. However my parents wanted me to study. So I did. I went to University and got a first in business and marketing. I worked but I was never really happy. So I saved up some money, quit my job and came here.

What are your connections with this area? How long have you known this community?

I only joined 504 Fashion pretty recently. Its been 6 months since I have come to Roman Road. I actually wanted to open a coffee shop in Hackney but it was really expensive, so I searched for the closest thing. Roman Road appealed to me because its future is quite up in the air at the moment. It could either become the next Hackney or Dalton or just disappear and pretty much fail. I am taking a chance by opening up my coffee shop here and so far it's working out well.

Have there been many changes in this area? Has the high street changed much?

Yes, it has changed quite a lot since I've moved here. They like to redo the floor outside from time to time. Crime numbers are starting to decrease but it is still there. Hopefully it will go for good!

How do you think the high street and your shop could become a more integral part of the community?

Well, in the summer there was a festival in Roman Road which was really good. It was a big turnout and everyone got together. I gained a few new returning customers and it put us on the map. So, maybe by having more events, that could help?

How has your business developed in the High street over the years and why?

Well I've only been here for 6 months. So it hasn't really developed much. I share my shop with a fashion store, an art gallery and a office upstairs so its kind of like moving in to a flat share. We are re all good friends now. I've got regular customers too so maybe that's how?

We would like to get a sense of how the high street features in people's lives. Do you think you could put down in a piece of paper, whether in the form of a drawing, map, or words how it fits into your present, past or future life?

Ah, well... I think I will stay here a bit longer. Like I said before, Roman Road could become a new hip and trendy area or forgotten. Quite a few places have opened up here. Like this really cool coffee place. I think it's Muxima. Its getting there. I believe it will.

How would you describe your community? Do you have a sense of community here, do you know your customers?

Well when I first came here, I was really hesitant. I heard that it wasn't exactly crime free. After I opened my shop here I realised it wasn't that bad. I like my customers. I find that Roman Road has this rough authenticity which I find oddly appealing.

Do you think you play a role in your community? Do you have a sense you belong here?

Like I said, I share with three other people. But I have my customers so I feel like I do.

Do you feel your word counts when it comes to changes and developments in this area?

I don't have much say in the grand scheme of things and not really in my own coffee shop apart from my menu (laughs). It's fine though, as long as I have my shop I'm okay.

How can the High street support your shop?

We can have more events like the one we did over the summer. I think that would help.

What is the role of the shop window for you? Do you think about how it can help your business?

I pretty much don't have much say in that either (laughs). I guess it brings customers in. We have a really nice interior I think so that attracts customers.



Can you tell me where and when you were born, are you local?
I was born in South London and I am local, I live in this area.

What are your connections with this area? How long have you known this community?
I have been living in this area for 40 years and this shop of mine is a family business.

Have there been many changes in this area? Has the high street changed much?
There are a lot of changes. Shops are always changing, new shops coming in, some old ones are closing and there is no parking area for the cars therefore sometimes it gets crowded.

How do you think the High Street and your shop could become a more integral part of the community?
It has always been part of the High Street. There is no fishing shop except mine.

How has your business developed in the High street over the years and why?
Business is very bad due to no parking area which affects my business. If this problem is improved, I would definitely earn more and my business would improve too.

We would like to get a sense of how the high street features in people's lives. Do you think you could put down in a piece of paper, whether in the form of a drawing, map, or words how it fits into your present, past or future life?
It doesn't affect my business and it is just a piece of paper.

How would you describe your community? Do you have a sense of community here, do you know your customers?
There is a sense of community here in the past and it is no longer like that now. People come and go. I run my shop offline as well as online, so that helps. I know some people, local friends, regular customers. This area is more secured compared to the past. There is less sense of community in this area, now, people do not take their time to look around, they usually drop by for a bit, and then leave.

Do you think you play a role in your community? Do you have a sense you belong here?
I don't think so. I just run my fishing shop and that's about it.

Do you feel your word counts when it comes to changes and developments in this area?
The council does not care much, they only focus on money.

How can the High street support your shop?
I have no idea about this.

What is the role of the shop window for you? Do you think about how it can help your business?
It does not matter because I run online shop as well so people can visit my shop on my website. Main problem is car parking. Our market place is getting dry due to parking problems as many of them travelling with their cars to visit this place.

Do you like to go fishing? And if you like, where fishing spots do you go usually?
Yes, I like fishing. There are a lot of fishing spots in London. But quite far from here. I usually go to Walthamstow Reservoirs and Perch Pond that are located in East London.

Have you tried to fish in River Lea?
Yes I do and I go there whenever I am free.

Are there any fishing clubs in this community?
There used to be but unfortunately but they are all closed down now as most of the members have moved out to other places.



Can you tell me where and when you were born, is it local?

I am from Cairo, Egypt, but I have lived in London for about 30 years now.

What are your connections with this area? How long have you known this community?

I have been in this road for 15 years but I do not live here. I work here and travel to work by car.

How did Roman Road look 15 years ago, how does it look now and how will it look in 10 years do you think?

In the past Roman Road used to be much more alive, it was buzzing, there were people coming from the whole London to do shopping in the market here. Now you don't see as many people as there used to be. I think it is mainly due to the fact that there is no parking around here and the closest tube station 20 minutes away by foot and there is just one bus around here. I think it is the main disadvantage of this area. If I knew the future, I would be a millionaire.

Do you have a sense of community here; do you have regular customers?

I have customers that come here regularly but I don't really connect with the community here, since I don't live here.

What can you say about the high street or the people here?

The government put a lot of money to upgrade this area, especially after Westfield and Olympic City and you can see around you so many new buildings. They have demolished the buildings, which have been built during WW2. So many new buildings have been built in the last few years. Now at least they are not vacant, like they used to be before, people move in, they start their own businesses here.

Do you think it is important to put your clothes outside? Do you decorate your shop? How do you attract the customers?

It is important to keep my clothes outside because people can notice my shop. I don't decorate my shop but I have promotions.

Are there any difficulties/ problems of the area?

Yes, the main one is that there aren't enough parking spaces for people who come shopping here. Since restriction in parking, nobody has been coming here. This is one of the main reasons that kills my business because I keep having less and less customers.

Q8. Do you think if you speak up to the council, you will be heard?

The council is a different world. I've tried millions of times to speak to them but they just don't listen. Last week an accident happened that one of the stores of the market fell down and it almost killed someone. I wrote a complaint to the council but they still haven't replied. My friend, who owns a jewellery shop down the road has been trying for 40 years to speak to the government but without any result.

So do you get any help from the government?

Nothing. The council won't do anything to make changes in the area because they need money.

Do you extend your shop to the market?

No, joining the market means more cost for me. However, I keep my clothes in front of the shop and due to the fact that this is a private property, I must pay every month for keeping them outside. The market kills the business of the shopkeepers here because they cover every storeholder with their market; nobody who is in the market can see the street with the shops. I wish they could turn the market to me...

Do you have any friends, like other shop owners?

You have to form some kind of relationship with people around you who are doing the same job as you, even if you don't want to. You have to talk to the people. I must make friends around to keep my business going.



Can you tell me where and when you were born, is it local?

I was born in Sidcup, Bexley in 1982.

What are your connections with this area? How long have you known this community?

My grandfather started to work in this business in 1950 and then it has passed down to my dad, and then, me. We have always lived in Sidcup. We come through this way.

Have there been many changes in this area? Has the high street changed much?

Yes. In the seventies and eighties the Roman Road Market was really popular. It is not really like that anymore.

How do you think the high street and your shop could become a more integral part of the community?

There is too many same shop down there. There is not enough variety. There is too many groceries, too many estate agents. Its need to be more different food shops not just coffee shops. It could be few more different restaurants, maybe some more nice cloth shops. It needs just more variety of different shops. There is one flower shop actually in this bit so we are okay, but it needs to be more variety and more shops to attract people.

How has your business developed in the High street over the years and why?

I suppose with the reputation we have been a good florist. The business grove with a reputation, because we have been here so long. We have got people reputation, so more and more people come back to us. Also, we changed with the variety of flowers, the shop changed, we kept it trendy.

We would like to get a sense of how the high street features in people's lives.

Well, It fits in to my life because I 'work' here. I mean, i don't really shop here. Only time I shop down here is to buy lunch and just staff for the home. Because we don't live here.

How would you describe your community? Do you have a sense of community here, do you know your customers?

It is very diverse. It is the mixture of the communities. A Big mixture, all different countries. Yes, we do know our customers. We do weddings, we do funerals, we do the Asian weddings. We get all different types of customers from all countries.

Do you think you play a role in your community? Do you have a sense you belong here?

Yes, definitely yes. We get to know customers, customers come back. We have good relationship with the customers.

Do you feel your word counts when it comes to changes and developments in this area?

Our word doesn't count, no. That is up to the council. They do what they want without asking.

How can the High street support your shop?

By providing more parking lots.

What is the role of the shop window for you? Do you think about how it can help your business?

Yes, definitely. That is what i am doing now. It is nice to have the nice window that people walk pass to bring people into the shop. We changed with the seasons as well. So now, it's an autumn, I am doing the autumn window. In November, I will be doing the Christmas window.

SNAP 465 ROMAN ROAD



Where are you from?

I'm from Bolton, but I've been here for about fifteen years.

What made you open the shop here?

I'd lived here for quite a long time, and it's something I'd thought about doing so I started to look at different areas. Areas that I could afford, where I thought the right customer base was. The rents were relatively cheap and I couldn't afford to go to Spitalfields or Shoreditch. I guess that as I live here, I felt that this is a shop that people living in the area would shop in. I saw the kind of demographic and felt that they would use a shop like this.

How have you found business since you opened?

Growth has been steady: It's changing. There have been more businesses opening while I've been here. There have also been more businesses closing. One of the problems with the high street is that the residential value of property in London is so incredibly high- that's kind of eaten up the high street. The rents are sometimes too high for businesses to sustain themselves. The growth has been much slower because we are in an area that doesn't have a tube station nearby. We're not really a destination shopping area at the moment. It's getting better. I think the market is upping its game and Tesco has just opened so it's becoming a bit more of a centre again but it will take time.

Can you tell me how you feel about other businesses in the area?

Anything new, generally catering to the same customer base as your own is good because it draws attention to the road. Maybe they haven't come to the area to find my shop but they're coming to the area because their mate has opened a café or they've heard about a café. It all feeds off each other. The more shops and businesses we have that are open, the more that are interesting, the better chance there is that people will come.

Who, would you say, is your customer?

I have a relatively broad appeal but my customer base is generally what I expected. A lot of young professionals. There are schools in the area so a lot of my regular customers are teachers. A lot of people who work shifts, who maybe aren't working in town.

Do you find that the market impacts your sales, either positively or negatively?

Market day does not have a massive impact either way. The road is quite tight so people can easily miss us, and this road does not necessarily have any landmarks on it. It's a very long road, with no centrepoint. When people ask "where are you on the road?" I refer to other businesses. I would refer my customers to Thompson's, because it's opposite me and everyone who knows the area knows Thompson's. When I started looking at shops, I looked at some on the market but they felt blocked in by the stalls. They are all quite close to the pavement and they all face inwards so you are blocked. I felt like this was a better shop, really.

Do you feel a sense of community here?

I feel more connected to the area I live in now than I've ever felt. I feel like the other business owners are my friends and work colleagues. Some of us don't use each other's businesses but we all get on and we all have a chat. I feel like I know what's going on in the area because we are always sharing information. At Mono, Adam and I have become quite good friends because we see each other everyday and we chat a lot. The guys in the chippy, I see them every single day and I chat to them; the guys' next door at the tattoo shop- we are kind of like all parts of the same thing. It's who's around you and what you use on a regular basis. I don't have a tattoo everyday but they are next door. I'm constantly in Thompsons. It's a lifesaver.

Can you tell me a bit about your time at university?

I studied Fashion, Promotion and Illustration at Epsom University. I lived there for three years. The course was quite creative and the Internet had not really kicked in at that point so it was quite practical. From there I went to be a window-dresser for various companies. But my first job out of university was in a fancy dress shop.

What kind of fancy dress shop? What did you do there?

When I say fancy dress, I mean a high-end fancy dress shop. They make costume for the Film and TV industry and then they have a fancy dress shop. It's called Angels on Shaftesbury Avenue. My job was to dress people up. After that it was window-dressing, various sales jobs, working at trade shows. Before I opened Snap, my last job was working for a small business selling fake trees and fake plants for private homes and for commercial properties and things but mainly for private homes.

I know you live nearby; do you mind talking about your home in more detail?

I live in Bow Church, in a low-rise flat. There are three stories. It's a new build, a new build as in it's about thirteen years old. I came up from Epsom to London. I moved from Lewisham to Bethnal Green then Stepney, and then moved into the flat when it was brand new. So we all knew each other's names, which was really nice. When we moved in we all moved in at the same time. Not everybody's still there, a lot of people have moved on but there are a few of the originals. Which, I guess, is quite a surprise for London.

Who are your suppliers?

We have lots of different suppliers. I did a count the other weeks and it's something like 30 different people. Some people are just big trade show suppliers who you find by going to the main places but a lot of people come into the shop and ask if they can sell there stuff and seeing that development has been really interesting. One lady started making cards and wholesaling them to me, and now she's wholesaling to other businesses and she's in a few more shops. Someone else did a range of London Cards and I asked her if she could do a Roman Road card for us. And we've got our E3 t-shirts, some guys nearby did those. I'm learning about products and suppliers and things and watching the range grow, and change and evolve is really fun. Smaller suppliers are open to suggestions so you're in a position to say actually what people are always asking for is this, and a lot of the guys are really open to ideas. Not everybody, but quite a lot of them. It's a real cross section. There are some very big suppliers who stock very big stalls as well but they're still a team, you still get to know them, you meet them at trade shows. The trade shows are usually in West London at Olympia or in Birmingham. Trade shows that are specific for the gift industry so small independents like me will be looking alongside people from Liberties and places like that. For some people it's the first trade show they've ever shown their goods at and for other people they just do them all, they're big suppliers. I don't sell much online, but it's a useful signpost for the shop. I think there's a misconception that the online world is the be all and end all but I've spoken to a lot of people who haven't had a great success with websites. There's a huge amount of competition online.

Can you tell me about some of your favourite places in the area?

I spend a lot of time eating and drinking so The Greedy Cow, The Lord Morpeth behind the shop, the Eleanor Arms is a good pub; we've been to the Turkish restaurant quite a few times at the top of the road. Obviously the cemetery is amazing. It's one of the big ones they built in the Victorian times but it's now mainly a nature reserve but it's incredible because you just feel like you're in a forest. I'm quite a fan of Mile End Park that goes down to the canal. I quite like that because it's an eco park. I think the planting is actually really interesting and it feels a bit different to your standard park. You can see Canary Wharf, you can see the City but it's a little strip of green.



Can you tell me where and when you were born, is it local?

I was born and pretty much raised in Ukraine but as I got older I wanted to travel so I lived in Germany, and lived there for a while, Then San-Francisco for a few years then Japan in which I learnt how to speak the language and finally settling in London.

What are your connections with this area? How long have you known this community?

I haven't been here long but working at Muxima his like being part of a family. Everyone is really friendly towards me. Also because we get quite a lot of repeat customers I feel like I belong. Although I am really bad with names though *Laughs

Have there been many changes in this area? Has the high street changed much?

It hasn't changed too much, They do some renovations everyonce in a while but theres no real difference

How do you think the high street and your shop could become a more integral part of the community?

Well we don't have much staff here. We used to have just 6 and now we have 10 so we opted to sort of make the shop window almost invisible, in order to deal with demand. So there is no sign, and the lights are dimmed you can't really see the interior. However I think that worked against us since now we get a lot of customers coming who were recommended. So we're a sort of accidental secret coffee shop and in that we have found our place.

How has your business developed in the High street over the years and why?

We barely have staff so we don't like to advertise but that inadvertently helped us develop our profile and it has continued to grow.

We would like to get a sense of how the high street features in people's lives.

Well I have always been interested in different cultures which is why I travelled and lived in a lot of different places. London for me is particularly special because it truly is a mix of different cultures and ideals and creeds. Its the most diverse city I have ever lived in.

How would you describe your community? Do you have a sense of community here, do you know your customers?

It's really cool and diverse. Im bad with names but I have a lot of repeat customers and I recognise most of them so yeah I feel like I belong.

Do you think you play a role in your community? Do you have a sense you belong here?

I don't think I have much say. We are sort of playing life by the ear so to speak. However I do feel like I am part of the community.

Do you feel your word counts when it comes to changes and developments in this area?
Well not really no. However it would be nice I think.

How can the High street support your shop?

I don't know really, I mean we can get to know each other more I think. So anything along those lines

What is the role of the shop window for you? Do you think about how it can help your business?

Well By hiding it from sight, We are showing it off. Its a way to advertise and express the individuality of your business.

SCRIVENS OPTICIANS - THE HEARING COMPANY
531 ROMAN ROAD



Where are you from?
London.

Where exactly in London?
Used to live in the area but recently moved to Canary Wharf.

Where are your connections with this particular area?
I am here just for the job only.

How are you involved with the area apart from work?
No

How long have you known this community?
25 years.

Any additional connections? (gym, other activities etc.)
No.

Have there been any changes in this area while you're here?
Recently there has been a big decline; a lot of shops have closed due to opening of Tesco last year. Asian shops are completely gone from what I can remember. It has been crowded back then.

Has the High Street changed much?
Yes, to the point that I have lost my interest in shopping here because the quality of what sells at the market is poor.

How do you think the High Street and your shop could become a more integral part of the community?
There should be more unusual shops, which now have all disappeared. That might bring people from different areas. Also we have a huge problem with parking spaces.

How your business developed in the High Street over the years and why?
We are offering a service and we are selling glasses and frames it just a matter of having more customers, we are testing three to four people per week and we have to stay open on Saturday.

Did any of your business plans didn't work out due to this particular location? If so why is that in more details?
No.

How would you describe your community?
Friendly.

Do you have a sense of community here in relation with your customers and fulfilling their needs?
Yes but we have limited selling designer glasses as it is a risk to have these in stock on the other hand this is what people want.

Do you have a sense you belong here?
Yes but I wouldn't move back to live here.

Do you feel your word counts when it comes to changes and developments in this area?
Yes.

What is the role of the shop window for you?
We are using a window space for posters, which advertise our services and prices of eye tests alongside with the glasses frames. I wouldn't place glasses directly on a display because we had a break in before.

Do you think about how it can help your business?
No, as we are relying on word of mouth and we do have our website.

Do you think it is affected by the market on the High Street on Tuesdays/Thursday/Saturday?
No.

How are you feeling about the market and the market days?
It draws people in, however, it doesn't help us as much in gaining new customers. It most definitely should be improved especially the quality of what sells there, in my opinion most of it is rubbish. Once you buy something and then change your mind about your purchase, there's no way that you can replace it or to have your money back.

Do you have any competition in the area?
Yes, but I am not bothered.

Are you aware of any planned developments or its plans? If so where from have you heard about?
Not especially but I do know where to find information. One of my concerns is the price of parking which are ridiculously expensive. It used to cost just five pounds for a whole year, for a customer now it costs three pounds per hour stay which stopped visitors from coming in to the area.

BARONE SANDWICH BAR
576 ROMAN ROAD



Where are your connections with this particular area?

I work here.

How are you involved with the area apart from work?

No.

How long have you known this community?

Around 2 years which is the duration that I have my shop here.

Any additional connections?

No.

Have there been any changes in this area while you're here?

Nothing in particular apart from the opening of Tesco Express nearby.

Has the High Street changed much?

No.

How do you think the High Street and your shop could become a more integral part of the community?

There is not much of a variety of different shops on the High St. especially where the market is situated. There is Costa that I am competing with in some way and many fruit and veg shops. There is no special reason of why people would want to come to Roman Road. For example if you are in Shoreditch you wouldn't come here just to get some vegetables. There is no reason to come to this road.

Reason for this location?

My shop is here.

How your business developed in the High Street over the years and why?

The business in general is going well; it is much busier during the weekends. To attract different people there should be a club for your people especially.

How would you describe your community?

Multicultural.

Do you have a sense of community here in relation with your customers and fulfilling their needs?

Yes.

Do you have a sense you belong here?

Yes.

Do you feel your word counts when it comes to changes and developments in this area?

Yes, I would like to think that but that could be improved.

How in your opinion can the High Street support your shop?

It would be beneficiary for all business holders to have a good parking space. In the evenings this road is a ghost town; therefore there is absolutely no reason to come here.

What is the role of the shop window for you?

I am using it just to pin up some adverts like what offers on food we do.

Do you think it is affected by the market on the High Street on Tuesdays/Thursday/Saturday?

No.

How are you feeling about the market and the market days?

I don't think that it is a good market.

Do you have any competition in the area?

Yes but I don't feel that I have any competitors.

If so does it bother you because it affects your business?

I am not bothered.