

**PLANNING STATEMENT**  
**139 CAVERSHAM ROAD, READING, RG1 8AU**  
**PRIOR APPROVAL**  
**PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT CHANGE OF USE: RETAIL TO RESIDENTIAL**  
**January 2021**

1. The applicant is Stephen Flint of RES Systems Ltd, headquartered at 14 Cremyll Road, Reading, RG1 8NQ.
2. 139 Caversham Road (the subject property) is a ground floor retail unit comprising circa 41m sq (441.32 sq ft) of net internal space and offering a

- Prominent location with main road frontage;
- Dual aspect to Caversham Road and Swansea Road; and a
- Rear external courtyard.

It is situated approximately half a mile north west of Reading town centre and Reading Railway / Bus Station.

The subject property was originally purchased as a retail outlet for RES Systems Ltd.

3. Caversham Road is a busy link road connecting Caversham to Reading and is characterised by the following uses (as defined by the new use classes in effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020):
  - E(a): retail goods shops;
  - E(b): premises offering the sale of food and drink for consumption on the premises;
  - F2(a): local community shops;
  - C1: hotels; and
  - C3: residential (predominantly terraced houses and flats).
4. The subject property is in a tertiary retail location, offering limited appeal to retailers seeking a high level of passing trade. Whilst Caversham Road is undoubtedly a heavily trafficked vehicular thoroughfare, parking is limited to one vehicular space between the shop front and pavement. Parking is not permitted along Caversham Road and on-street parking in Swansea Road is predominantly resident permit holders only, with just three available nearby spaces for other parking users. The location is therefore not appealing to many retailers as a sufficient level of passing trade cannot be generated.

5. The retail property also only benefits from an external WC, located in the rear yard, and hence does not offer the standard of washroom facilities modern occupiers demand.
6. Whilst the building's external state of repair is satisfactory and commensurate with the age of the property, the interior of the ground floor is in need of refurbishment, including some damp and staining to the rear part.
7. Use by RES Systems Ltd ceased in August 2013 and, after a comprehensive marketing campaign of over a year by Haslams Surveyors LLP, the property was let to a private individual on a five-year lease, commencing 25<sup>th</sup> May 2015 for the purpose of selling revamped furniture. This lease expired in May 2020 and was not renewed.
8. Demand for secondary and tertiary retail units in the Reading area has been poor for some years, but the impact of Covid-19 throughout 2020 and now into 2021 has had a particularly detrimental impact on such locations. No interest has been shown in the property by potential occupiers since the previous lease expired.
9. The applicant wishes to convert the retail unit to residential use under his permitted development rights for occupation in connection with his on-going business in nearby Cremyll Road. This is viewed as a more beneficial use of the property for which the applicant is prepared to undertake the necessary upgrade and decorative work required to convert the accommodation to residential use. The unit is less than 150m sq and the only external works proposed relate to fenestration.
10. The fenestration changes concern the large ground floor window onto Swansea Road and the small window looking out into the rear courtyard, adjacent the existing external WC. The following works are proposed:
  - Removal of the single Swansea Road window and replacement with two smaller windows providing natural light to both the living room and proposed bedroom; and
  - Removal of the northern-most window looking into the rear courtyard from the south western elevation in order to facilitate room for a boiler in the proposed kitchen. The second window on this elevation will be replaced by a larger window increasing the size from 860mm to 1000mm in width, and the existing solid rear door will be replaced by a half-glazed door in order to compensate for the loss of the window.

The brickwork, in making good the changes, will match the existing in terms of style, design and colour, examples of which are provided in the accompanying photographs.

11. With reference to the Environment Agency (EA) Flood Map for Planning, the subject property is, on the whole, located in flood zone 2, with a small part in flood zone 3. A flood risk assessment has been undertaken by Ambiantal and concludes that:

- Under Table 2 of the Flood Risk and Coastal Change Planning Practice Guidance and the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the proposed development is considered “More Vulnerable”.
- The topographic survey of the existing building shows the finished ground floor level of the building to be 38.55mAOD.
- Modelled flood information provided by the EA indicates a flood level of 38.36mAOD could affect the site and surrounding area in the modelled 1 in 100-year +35%CC event. The existing finished floor level is topographically greater than this flood event.
- The Reading Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) recommends floor levels of new developments are set at 300mm above the modelled 1 in 100 annual probability plus appropriate allowance for climate change fluvial flood level.
- In accordance with this guidance, the finished floor level of the proposed dwelling should be set no lower than 38.66mAOD. Given the existing ground floor level is 38.55mAOD according to the topographic survey, this will result in a raise of 0.11m.
- The revised NPPF confirms that for change of use the proposed development “should not be subject to the sequential or exception tests.”

Hence, the development proposals allow for raising the ground floor level by 0.11m.

12. This Prior Approval application satisfies all the requirements for change of use from retail to residential and the proposal meets the specific limitations and conditions set by national legislation.