

HOW TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND FOOTFALL IN CAR PARKS



The benefits of effective line marking in car park management.

ABSTRACT:

HOW TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND FOOTFALL IN CAR PARKS THROUGH SELF-DELIVERY.

Car parks are essential for allowing customers to access retail centres. So, when a parking facility is not running efficiently or safely, this can have a major impact on customer experience and footfall. Revenue generation will be threatened, for the car park itself, and the surrounding businesses that it aims to support.

To address this, car park owners must look at the organisation of their parking facility and respond to innovations happening within the motor industry. By improving traffic flow, demarcating space for cars and pedestrians, way-marking, and responding to the requirements of modern vehicles, they can improve their overall offer.

This white paper examines how car park owners can improve the customer experience through enhanced surface markings. This in turn supports improvements in safety, productivity (return-on-investment) and operational efficiencies.



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INTRODUCTION:

IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR MAINTENANCE AND REDESIGN TO BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF EVERY CAR PARK OPERATOR'S BUSINESS PLANS.

The challenge in the effective management of car park and multi-storey car park assets is creating and preserving a safe, organised and aesthetically pleasing environment for customers. This in turn helps improve traffic flow and subsequent footfall, which underpins the aims of the retail and employment destinations car parks support.

However, despite this important role, car parks often do not get the attention to detail or maintenance required to allow them to work at their optimum efficiency. This can cause issues for asset owners in terms of increased safety risks, restricted traffic flow and dulling facility aesthetics. Once customers lose confidence in a parking facility, footfall and revenue will reduce.

Furthermore, should accidents happen as a result of poor maintenance or safety precautions, car park operators could find themselves in breach of the Occupiers

Liability Act and Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, which requires them to ensure their facilities are safe to use.

Therefore, it is essential for maintenance and redesign to be at the forefront of every car park operator's business plans. This white paper investigates the areas for attention and presents compelling arguments for reviewing car parking facilities regularly and investing in excellent line markings.



THE BENEFITS OF ROBUST MARKINGS IN CAR PARKS:

Surfacing and surface paint have an important part to play in car park safety and efficiency. Car parks are exposed to a larger number of vehicle movements or “wheel passes” than many clients appreciate. Large numbers of daily movements require heavy duty marking materials to ensure they last for a long time and save reoccurring costs for car park owners.



For example, if a car park’s line markings are unclear or not marked to the right specifications, this will lead to confusion over space usage and parking tickets may need refunding. In extreme cases an inspection could find a car park to be unusable due to incorrect or unclear marking. Losses could be incurred if an accident happens within the car park and unclear marking was deemed to be the cause.

THE BENEFITS OF ROBUST MARKINGS IN CAR PARKS:

Bright and clear markings ensure the visibility of safe routes for pedestrians and vehicles to minimise any risk of accidents. They can also add to the retail centre and car park experience, ensuring visitors get a positive first impression of your facility and the businesses it supports. Furthermore, using durable, slip-resistant materials will maximise the surface life and safety for pedestrians and drivers.



WHERE TO FOCUS:

High streets and retail outlets are finding competition from internet retailers increasingly challenging. In 2018 alone, 43 companies folded with 2,594 of their stores across the UK being affected (Source: Centre for Retail Research). At the same time a study by Royal Mail found that online shoppers claimed to now make 80 per cent of purchases - excluding groceries - online (Source: Retail Gazette). The UK high street is under pressure to halt a drop off in visits and attract customers back.

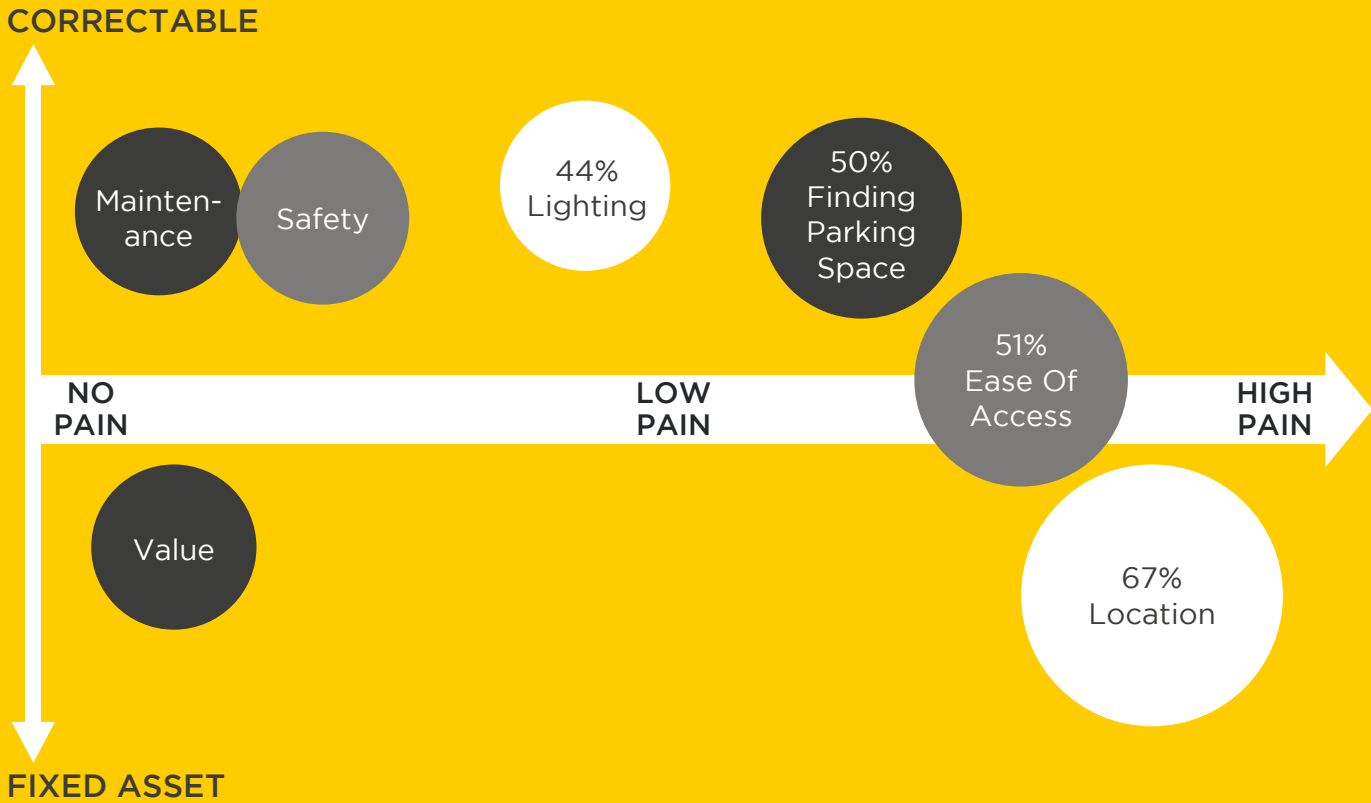
The change in shopping habits and reduced footfall is having a knock-on impact for the estimated 20,000 UK car parks, creating a more competitive environment. Car park owners must focus on customer experience, making their facility more efficient, and adapting to advances in automotive technology in order to sustain their business.



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE:

A British Parking Association (BPA) survey in 2017 (Source: Telegraph) revealed that 44 per cent of motorists say finding somewhere to park is stressful. When asked what would improve their experience, customers said location (67 per cent), ease of access (51 per cent) and bright lighting (44 per cent) were the most important factors for them when looking for a good place to park. This is reflected in similar research by Park Mark (Source: Safer Parking Scheme Survey), which found drivers' top parking priorities were location and personal safety. (See table graphic below)

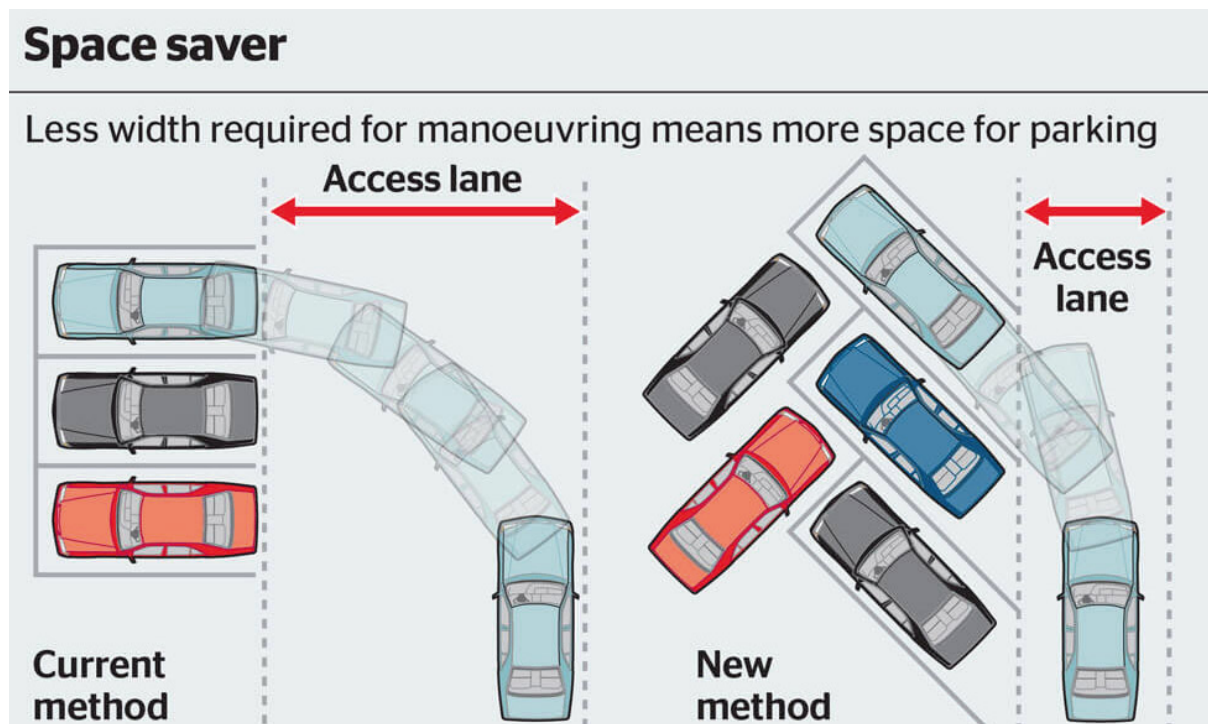
This points to several actions car park owners can do to improve customer experience at their facility:



ADD CAPACITY THROUGH BETTER LAYOUT

Finding a lack of parking spaces when you arrive at your destination is a bugbear for nearly 50 per cent of drivers (Source: BPA). While it can be impossible to add extra surface area to an existing car park, it is possible to maximise the use of space and increase capacity.

Research by Professor David Percy at the University of Salford (Source: Urban Maths article) has found that designing parking bays in a diagonal grid, as opposed to a rectangular grid, can add more than 20 per cent capacity to a car park.



If a change in car park layout can also accommodate increased bay sizes, this will allow owners of larger modern vehicles to park with confidence. They are more likely to choose a car park where they know there is less chance of damage from other people denting in their doors.

ADDRESS DAMAGED PARKING BAYS :

Customers are less likely to use parking bays with potholes or poor drainage. They may also avoid spaces adjacent to a pillar, wall or fence which make it more difficult for them to manoeuvre into or out of the space. Not only are these less attractive spots a frustration to customers, they are also making a loss for the car park.

Based on the average cost of off-street parking in the UK (Source: City Base) poor quality parking spaces cost up to £4,818 in lost revenue over a period of a year for car parks operating over a 12-hour day, 365 days a year.



IMPROVE CAR PARK DESIGN FOR PEDESTRIANS :

Pedestrian walkways make customers feel safer by giving them a clear walkway that is separated from traffic, rather than forcing them to walk alongside, in front of or behind moving cars. It also reduces the risk of accidents caused by drivers not seeing someone who is walking near their vehicle.

On top of this, pedestrian walkways can greatly contribute to the aesthetics of your car park. They help to way-mark, making it easier for pedestrians to safely navigate through the facility and locate their vehicle. This greatly contributes to the efficiency of car parks. See case study 1 in Appendix (page 24).

CAR PARK AESTHETICS:

As a customer's first point of contact with a destination, a car park has to make a good impression. Some car parks are also in particularly prominent positions beside busy highways and routes into urban areas. It is in the wider community's interests that the design of the facility is well considered, including functional, durable and clear line markings. See case study 2 in Appendix.



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CAR PARK TO SHOPPING CENTRE TRANSITION:

The entrance to a shopping centre is as important as the interior when it comes to customer experience. The same goes for the transition from car park to retail outlets.

One of the common areas of simple aesthetic improvement is through adding some smart and distinctive colours to the surface. This can be either trafficked areas, parking bays, walk ways or even inaccessible areas.

Area coating systems can be simple to install and come in various forms with opportunities to increase anti-slip properties at the same time.

Resin aggregates provide an aesthetically pleasing and effective surface, in colours and blends that can complement the style of the building. See case study 3 in Appendix.



DISABLED AND PARENTAL PARKING BAYS:



Providing adequate parking bays for customers with varying mobility is a legal requirement under the Equality Act 2018. It also goes a long way to making facilities more attractive and increasing footfall. A recent study by Anchor (Source: Older generations to rescue the high street), said the value of attracting just one section of the reduced mobility market – the ‘grey pound’ – back to the high street equates to as much as £4.5bn.

If your car park has more than fifty spaces, four percent of these should be designed for disabled drivers. Even small car parks should offer at least one disabled parking bay. The location of these, and parental spaces, should be considered, making it easy for people to exit and re-enter the car park and find payment facilities.

Customer satisfaction will increase when adequate disabled and parental parking bays are provided, are distinguishable, and are easily accessible.



IMPROVING TRAFFIC FLOW:

Navigating car parks is a significant concern for drivers with 27 percent saying they have difficulty knowing which way to go (Source: BPA). Clearly the efficient flow of traffic and pedestrians through a car park contributes greatly to customer satisfaction, safety and footfall.

This can be improved though well-marked vehicle routes, bays for different car park users, pedestrian walkways and way-markers directing people to retailers and businesses.



Bespoke solutions can be designed for individual car parks to support the needs of customers and surrounding businesses. These can be implemented as part of the facility design process or retrofitted. Maintenance is key to ensure continued efficiency. Heavy duty marking solutions are the best long-term option.

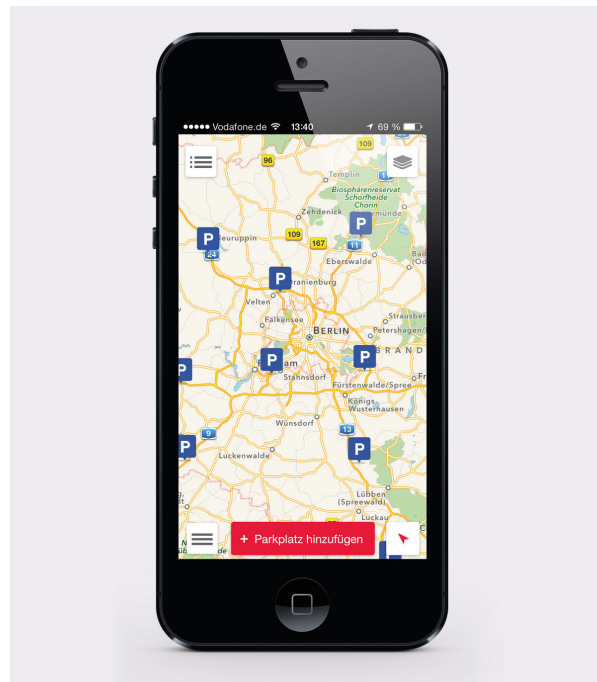
INNOVATIONS IN CAR PARK EFFICIENCY:

Smart parking technology has been found to reduce the amount of time it takes to find a space by 45 percent (Source: Government Europa), with a 30 per cent reduction in miles driven and greenhouse gases produced. Here are some of the innovations in car park management that are bringing about these efficiencies:



PARKING APPS:

Smart-phones and parking apps are helping drivers to find car park spaces and manage payments, which is in turn easing congestion in facilities. Customers can see where spaces are available before starting their journey and pay for the most suitable duration of parking without queuing at a machine. For car park operators, they can also increase revenue as customers can be reminded when their parking session is about to expire and add additional time to their stay at the click of a button.



COLOUR CODING:

Colour coding parking zones, pedestrian routes, and bays for people with specific needs all add to a positive customer experience in car parks.

- Coloured walkways help people find the exit or entrance they require
- Coloured parking zones help customers find their car at the end of their visit
- Coloured parking bays can denote whether they are designed for disabled users, people with children, or electric powered vehicles..



SOLAR POWERED CAR PARKS:

Four years ago, Nottingham Council installed the UK's largest solar powered car park bringing benefit to customers with electric cars who can charge them on site, plus revenue from power being fed back into the National Grid. Since then many existing car parks, as well as new ones, have followed the trend; adding to a growing demand from customers to provide facilities for electric cars. Car park owners can highlight these facilities by using surface marking. See Bentley UK solar car park installation below by [Flexi-Solar](#).



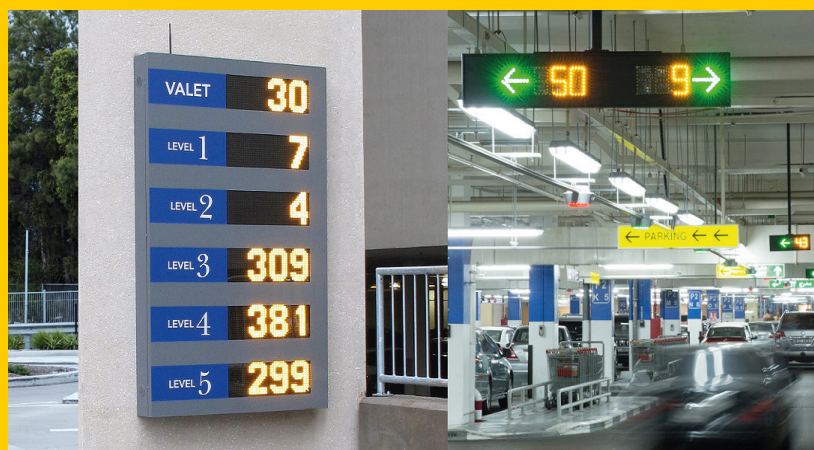
LIGHT GUIDANCE PARKING:

According to Park Mark (Source: Key Issues for Drivers) it can take drivers between 10-15 minutes to find somewhere to park.

Light guidance systems in car parks make it easier for people to find parking spaces by guiding them to available bays. Red and green lights along the ceiling signal where spaces are available by using sensors to recognise if bays are occupied or not.



This system is highly efficient and negates the need for drivers to search the whole car park for a space. This in turn reduces traffic and speeds up the parking process.



RESPONDING TO MOTOR INDUSTRY INNOVATIONS:

Modern vehicles are not only larger – making parking them in older car parks more challenging for customers – they also come with new technology that needs to be taken into consideration when re-designing car parking facilities.



ELECTRIC CHARGING BAYS:

Within the next 20 years all new cars sold will be electric. Now is the time for car park operators to start providing electric charging bays to meet growing public and legislative demand. Plus, they must be accessible to all.

NCP is the first operator in the country to provide dual disabled and electric charging parking spaces in its Salford car park (Source: Telegraph).

The idea came about after a proposal by Helen Dolphin MBE and Libbie Bilyard, founders of the People’s Parking accreditation, which aims to drive up standards in the parking industry. They highlighted the difficulty disabled drivers would have accessing a charging facility in a standard-sized bay.



Both wired and wireless electric charging bays are options. Wireless bays use charging pads fixed in the centre of parking bays and provide a more seamless experience.

At the moment, charging stations are commonly found in small groups in a section of the car park. However, more facilities will need to be dedicated to electric cars in the future. These can be highlighted using bespoke surfacing. For example, see case study 4 (in Appendix page 25).

SELF-PARKING CARS:

Another motor industry innovation affecting the management of car park facilities is self-parking vehicles. At the push of a button, drivers can instruct their car to analyse an available parking space and move into the bay on auto-pilot. As with all automated technology, it is only as good as the data it receives. Painted lines in car parks are a factor in the algorithms of self-parking cars, as they help calculate manoeuvres in confined spaces. Poor line markings will make

it more difficult for this technology to do its job, leading to frustrations for car owners reliant on it.



SELF-OPENING DOORS:

Jaguar Land Rover has created a prototype car door that automatically opens when a driver approaches their vehicle (Source: TransportXtra). This innovation is intended to make its vehicles more accessible to disabled drivers but there are obvious implications when this type of technology is used in car parks for the first time. Disabled parking spaces must be a minimum of 3.3m wide to accommodate automated doors and avoid collisions with other vehicles. Furthermore, this technology may be fitted to all vehicles in the

future. This could result in accidental damage when doors automatically open when parked in standard 2.4m wide spaces.



DURABLE LINE MARKINGS:

Car parks receive hundreds, if not thousands, of visitors each day, depending on the size of the adjoining retail or business centre. Therefore demarcation must be able to withstand this, in order to keep it clear and readable. Avoiding any confusion caused by poor surface markings will result in long-term cost savings for facility managers and reduce the risk of an accident occurring.

The material used must be bright and highly visible for motorists to be able to see exactly where to go day and night.

There are a few reliable product options for durable line markings, see below.

GOOD	BETTER	BEST
Epoxy Systems	Acrylic Systems	Methyl Methacrylate (MMA) Systems
For use in external applications only.	Ideal for internal and external use when budget doesn't allow for MMA.	Ideal for outdoor use, particularly in high stress area.
Ideal for use on tight budget projects.	Rapid and economical application, short dry times, good service life	Offers the best value in terms of lifetime cost because of its durability
A versatile paint for easy use in a range of situations.	Car park markings using this will offer a bright and crisp edged marking	Can be applied to give the most accurate and clear markings possible
Use for: Low traffic areas, kerb markings, car park bay markings.	Use for: Car park lines, walkways, floor guidance, hazard areas, hatchings.	Use for: Junctions, pedestrian crossings, transverse lines, high use areas.

All these line marking options above can be used alongside anti-skid, slip resistant coatings for both vehicle areas and pedestrian zones to reduce the risk of accidents. The pedestrian zones of a car park are equally as important as the vehicle areas, as they show pedestrians the best routes to walk and provide crossings to ensure their safety.

Depending on budget, there are various options to add durable line marking to car parks.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR CAR PARK?



Take a look at the pictures above.

Now take a couple of minutes to rate your car park against the questions below.

For **Needs Attention**, mark **2** in the box.

For **Satisfactory**, mark **3** in the box.

For **Perfect**, Mark **4** in the box

Once you have complete the questions, total your score.

	NEEDS ATTENTION	SATISFACTORY	PERFECT
Clear unbroken parking bay markings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colour coded disabled and Parent/child parking bays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear directional markings for vehicular traffic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clearly visible pedestrian signage and walkways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Electric charging bays installed or a plan to do so	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		TOTAL =	_____ _____

IF YOUR TOTAL SCORE IS BELOW **15** AND **YOU ARE** CONSIDERING WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR CAR PARK, PLEASE **GET IN TOUCH**. WE WOULD BE HAPPY GUIDE YOU THROUGH SOME POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS.

If your score exceeds 15: Have you got measures in place to keep your car park facility perfect? We'd love to hear them.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS:

It is clear that in order to meet customer demand and remain competitive in a challenging retail climate, car park operators must be prepared to take a fresh look at their facility.

Research shows that making parking easier for drivers through improvements to car park layout, accessibility and adapting to new technology will increase customer satisfaction and footfall, as well as safety and efficiency.

The next step for car park operators is to undertake a review of their facilities. Start by photographing your current car park site, picking out the positives to be built upon and the negative areas to be addressed.

Ask yourself: are surfaces safe and are markings clear; is the lighting suitable; does the current parking bay layout maximise use of space; are parking spaces for disabled drivers and parents accessible; is there capacity to add charging bays for electric vehicles?

Next, take a look at your competitors in the area. Are your facilities better or worse? What can you learn from them? Go armed with a camera to capture ideas for improvements you can make.

Once you have an idea of the changes that can be made to move your car park forward, it is important to create a financial business case. You can do this by working out the square meterage of your site and dividing it by the revenue it generates. If the number of spaces could be increased by 20 per cent by changing the layout of parking bays, your revenue per square meter will increase. Calculating the square meterage of spaces that are unusable or less attractive to customers will also tell you the cost of missed revenue opportunities.

Your business case for improvements can be completed with CAD drawings of your site and the design options that will meet the needs of customers and generate additional revenue.

Why not consider self-delivery of line markings? There are compelling economic reasons for this, including reduction of costs, the ability to react quickly to any flagged issues with faded lines and the ability to fit lining works into your schedule.

PROVEN WAYS TO VISUALLY IMPROVE YOUR CAR PARK:



Meon offer a wide range of high-quality lining and marking materials, including line repair, suitable for both indoor and outdoor applications.

Products include paints, taping, stencils, sprays and additives – suitable for many industries and complex problems requiring specific solutions. It also offers professional quality line marking and removal machines for purchase and hire.

Contact **Chris Reynolds** for further information about the line marking services Meon can offer your car park facility. chris.reynolds@meonuk.com

APPENDIX – CAR PARK SURFACE AND LINE MARKING BEST PRACTICE

Case study 1: Bluewater Shopping Centre:

Years of use and wear made it necessary for a major project to re-surface the car park at Bluewater Shopping Centre in Kent. As part of this, an area of more than 11,000m was redesigned with 13,000 parking spaces and new way-marking using Bluewater brand colours and fonts. This provided a clear visual message that visitors could read and understand, making it easier for them recognise where they were and to locate their vehicle faster.



Case study 2: Tipner Park And Ride:

An example of where line markings were successfully deployed in a new car park project is at the Tipner Park & Ride in Portsmouth. This was part of a wider redevelopment plan for the area. The site was clearly visible from the M275 motorway, with thousands of motorists passing every day, so appearance was a priority for the council and project team. The car park would experience heavy use with double decker buses, as well as domestic vehicles, so materials used needed to be durable. The surface also needed to be safe and easy to clean due to high pedestrian use.

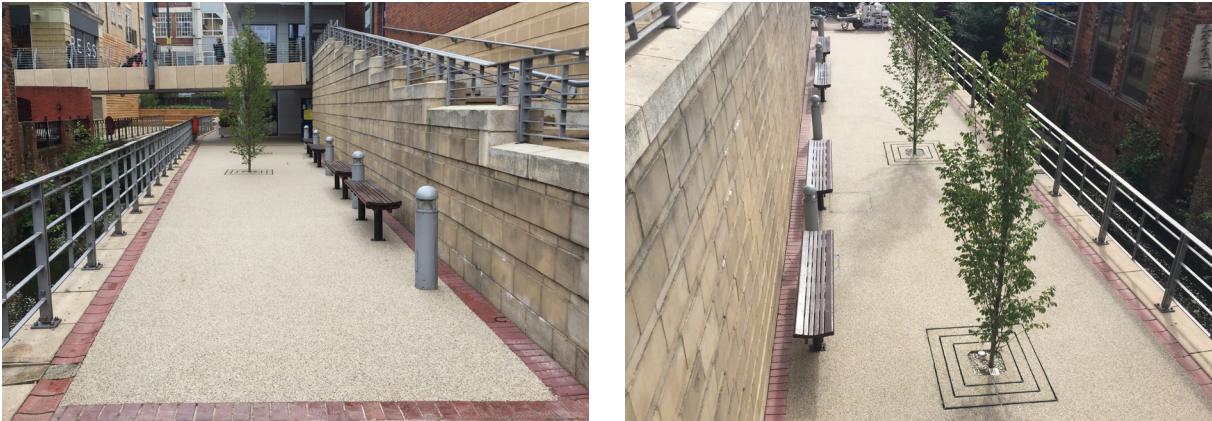


APPENDIX - CAR PARK SURFACE AND LINE MARKING BEST PRACTICE

Case study 3: Oracle Shopping Centre:

A retro-fitted resin aggregate surface worked particularly well in replacing the uneven stone slabs at the entrance to the Oracle Shopping Centre in Reading. The paving in this high footfall area had become uneven, creating a health and safety risk.

The resin aggregate used to replace the paving slabs addressed the safety concerns and improved the aesthetics of this high pedestrian traffic retail space.



Case study 4: Tesla Bluewater Shopping Centre:

Bluewater Shopping Centre is a car park that already offers dedicated parking for electric vehicles. Its Tesla charging points are designed especially for these super charged cars and have been visually designed in line with the brand. A hard-wearing base surface had a design using MMA (Methyl Methacrylate) in black and Tesla red, and a white line applied over the top. This resulted in a textured and anti-slip surface coating that will be up to the task of servicing an increasing number of visits by electric cars.



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NOTES:



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Chris has been involved in the facilities and car park sector for over 15 years, and it is a market he is deeply interested in.

Connect with Chris today on LinkedIn to discuss anything you may have found of interest in this white paper.



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