

Gateway to shopping



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Alhambra Shopping Centre is the gateway to Barnsley town centre. Its 480 parking spaces are popular with young mums and other shoppers visiting its mix of high street fashion brands and independent stores, as well as Barnsley Market next door and the town centre.

Parking spaces are spread over six split-level floors of the separate multi-story car

park attached to the shopping centre, plus a gallery level car park on the shopping centre's roof.



Both buildings were opened back in 1991 and bought by property asset specialist F&C Reit in 2011. Dave Probyn has been the centre's operations manager since 2014.

"Alhambra has held the Park Mark award the whole time I've been here," he said. "I

believe we first received the award in 2006. F&C Reit has continued to maintain Alhambra to the Park Mark standard because we see it as an absolute necessity.

"Shoppers and visitors to Barnsley receive better value in our secure and illuminated car park and our hourly rate works out cheaper for those who don't want to park all day."

Alhambra is a popular destination. It has 135,000 visitors each week with 39 per cent visiting at least twice during the week. Among its 41 stores are many national chains including CEX, Vodafone, Next, Iceland, Primark, The Perfume Shop and Wilko.

F&C Reit is continually improving the shopping experience at Alhambra. In 2015 plans include a cinema complex on the roof with nine screens and six additional

restaurants. This will reduce the number of parking spaces.

The heart of redevelopment

The heart of Barnsley is also being redeveloped. The Better Barnsley regeneration project includes a new library around a landscaped town square in front of Alhambra, along with a refurbished indoor market. The square will be large enough for market stalls and public events and designed to create flow between indoor and outdoor shopping.

At least ten older buildings will be demolished by the end of 2016; including the other central multi-storey car park built in the 1970's. It had not received the same level of investment as Alhambra and was deemed out-dated by its local council owner.

Within a week of this council car park closing Alhambra saw a 25 per cent increase in usage as local people and visitors switched to it for parking and shopping.

"Ours aim is to try and give the best service we can so customers continue to return to us as the heart of Barnsley is redeveloped. We are the only Park Mark accredited parking in the centre of town.

"There are various car parks dotted about the town centre, none have the levels of lighting, security and cleanliness that we have," said Dave Probyn.

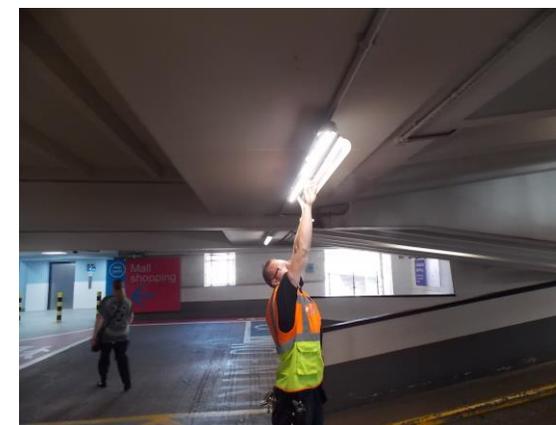
Upgrading to LED lighting

Alhambra's Park Mark award is reassessed each year when BPA North East area manager Phil Taylor visits with a police assessor. They walk round each of the floors checking lighting, surveillance,

pedestrian and vehicle access, traffic flows, cleanliness, signage, staff training, maintenance and record keeping.

"The car parking facility is very good and passed with ease in 2015," said Phil.

Dave Probyn joined Phil after the assessment to give an update on future maintenance plans.



Wiring was original to the 1991 build and fittings regularly developed faults. Dave, a qualified electrician, project managed the upgrade including designing much improved wiring looms.

“Both the car park and shopping areas were not wired logically and faults were difficult to identify. Now we have divided every floor into easily identifiable areas, each has two circuits so users will always have enough light to see clearly, even if one circuit fails,” he said.

Rewiring was completed before the assessment, with sub-contractors installing the LED lights a week after Phil’s visit. They took just over a week on nights, one level at a time.

“We saved thousands of pounds by sub-contracting rather than using direct contractors. We are now using a third of

the energy consumption that we were using previously,” said Dave.

The gallery surface car park currently has street lighting as it is open-air. These will be upgraded once the cinema complex is completed.



Future facelift

During the assessment visit Dave and Phil also discussed wear and tear in the concrete floors and ramps on some levels.

F&C Reit has employed a structural engineer who checked the underlying steel structure with ultrasound testing equipment.

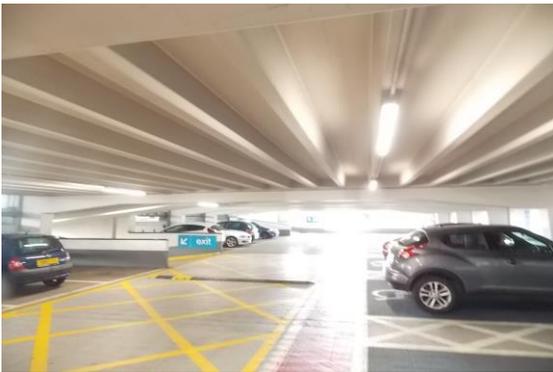
Results showed there are no problems with the steel structure, which is in perfect condition and so the wear and tear is cosmetic. This is caused by carbon from car exhausts infiltrating the very large areas of concrete.

Engineers were not aware of this problem when the car park was built almost 25 years ago. Dave and his team are now preparing a business case for redecorating, including repairing the concrete cracks, which they will present to the building landlord.

“It’s the landlord’s decision, as it is capital expenditure and will give the building a facelift.

"People are aware we have the Park Mark and it gives them confidence we are operating to a minimum standard that is recognised nationally. Retailers see we take health and safety seriously. Every decision that we make is customer focussed."

Dave sums up the ethos at Alhambra Shopping Centre. "If we can get a young mum feeling comfortable in the car park, if she's happy to use it, everyone else will be."



More information:

www.britishparking.co.uk/Park-Mark---The-Safer-Parking-Scheme

<http://www.alhambracentre.co.uk/>

<http://www.leebaron.com/>

<https://www2.barnsley.gov.uk>