

Switched on

Jonathan Morrish reveals how a retail-led lighting scheme was created for Marks & Spencer

Back in 2003, LAPD (Lighting and Product Design) Consultants, a Hertfordshire-based product and lighting design consultancy, was approached by Marks & Spencer to advise on a new lighting scheme for its 'store of the future' concept. The implementation of the first scheme was at the Marks & Spencer retail park store in Speke, Merseyside. The lighting design concept for this retail experience

make consumers sense they had arrived into a food hall of the future. This is achieved using both bespoke and standard equipment, to create zonal areas within a floor architecturally segmented into three departments.

Following the implementation of these 'store of the future' remodels at both Basingstoke and Speke, Marks & Spencer appointed LAPD to roll out the lighting design across its fleet of



used a variation of atmosphere, colour, temperature, light levels and luminaires. The idea was that these variances would drive the vision of creating spaces within spaces, helping consumers subliminally associate themselves with different zones as they casually shop across the floor.

Following the success of the Speke project, LAPD was commissioned once again to create a more exclusive lighting scheme for the Marks & Spencer Food Halls. Basingstoke was chosen as the trial store and the concept here was to

450 stores. The brief was to create a generic look across all store formats, including flagship, high street, retail park, Home and Simply Food. Central to the brief was the desire to minimise the number of lamps, luminaires and manufacturers, in order to make procurement and delivery more efficient.

As a lighting designer, the brief you want is one in which the client describes how they want the space to look and feel. This subjective approach is much more effective than an objec-

tive brief based on figures and lux levels. In this case, the client wanted a light, bright, contemporary and energy efficient retail environment that would entice customers into the store and guide them through the interior.

Understanding that the ceiling is the largest visible working plane within a retail environment helped LAPD to realise the importance of the lighting layout and the central role lighting has in encouraging the direction of the customer journey.

Tightly controlled lines of light, containing both ambient and accent lighting, draw people into the stores. Entrances that cater for the largest footfalls are the starting block for the design concept, this means that upon entry customers can immediately understand and read the store layout. Major soft walkways are delineated using straight runs of light from the front to the back of the store. Running perpendicular to this is a secondary web of luminaires. This entices customers to venture into adjoining departments

and to realise the store's scale and product offers at a glance.

A key feature in all store formats is what is affectionately known as the 'ribbon wall'. Floating above merchandise to the underside of the ceiling, this is an internally lit recess that spans the entire perimeter. This binds the retail offer, creating a clean band of light that encourages the perception of a simple, uncomplicated and bright environment.

Throughout the store, accent lighting punch-

es through the ambient background lighting to create drama and focus. This accentuates the vertical, merchandised areas and creates a sense of arrival by increasing customer awareness of the transition between departments.

While creating this generic design it was also important to consider energy consumption and achieve compliance with Plan A, Marks & Spencer's eco-plan. This involved some significant technical challenges. LAPD had to interrogate all products for their environmental

interiors

Below & bottom | The flagship stores (such as the Cribbs Causeway store in Bristol) represent high-end, aspirational shopping. Here the lighting has to be flexible to allow the various destinations - such as the Deli Bar, Technology department and the restaurant to be seamlessly integrated without altering the generic look.



Redshift photography

credentials and if necessary re-engineer them with the manufacturers or design a completely new product. The fitting used to provide the ambient lighting in each store, for example, has had its light output performance increased from 60 per cent to in excess of 90 per cent. This has been achieved by re-designing the luminaire's reflector system and maximising the light output. This luminaire also uses the latest micro-prismatic diffuser technology to obscure the lamp image, while transmitting nearly all of the light that hits the surface of the diffuser. This increase in efficiency had a significant effect in reducing the energy used by the lighting scheme, and in turn reducing the load on other services such as heating, ventilation and air conditioning.

The process of improvement is ongoing and LAPD recently designed a range of spotlights and recessed downlights for the stores. Ambient light levels in retail environments have historically been high. This, coupled with poor spotlight efficiency, meant the number of spotlights required to create acceptable levels of accent lighting has also been high. Accent lighting is a vital part of a retail design solution - it creates drama and points of interest that draw the customer in. There is therefore often a conflict between the desired environment and energy consumption.

In association with lighting technology company Reggiani, LAPD created a range of fittings



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interiors

Below | Retail park store in Speke, Merseyside.



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Below | Marks & Spencer home store located in Lisburn, Northern Ireland.



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Above | 'Plan A' store in Pollock, Glasgow

that capitalised on the very high efficiency of the IOS (internetwork operating system) reflector system, as designed by Reggiani. LAPD also added the required aesthetic to suit European retail and architectural lighting design schemes. The result is that the light output ratio of this system increased from 60 per cent to in excess of 90 per cent. So, while succeeding in creating the desired lit effect and contrast ratios, a reduction in lamp wattage from 35 to 20 watt has also been achieved. This represents a substantial reduction in both lighting and air con-



Above | White Rose in Leeds is an example of a high street store that uses a lay-in grid ceiling solution, with a modular 600mm square ceiling tile in an exposed tee grid.

ditioning loads as less heat is generated by the fittings. The spotlight was able to qualify for the Enhanced Capital Allowances (ECAs) scheme, which enables a business to claim 100 per cent first-year capital allowances on their spending on energy-saving plant and machinery. The capital cost of the investment in this technology could be written off against the taxable profits of the period during which the investment was made.

Regardless of whether the customer stepped through the door of an out of town store, a retail park or a high street branch, it was very important that the initial visual experience was the same. This was challenging as, for example, each store environment has a different ceiling treatment. So, different solutions had to be devised for each format. For example, the flagship stores, such as the Cribbs Causeway

in Bristol, generally have a plasterboard ceiling and the lighting is typically 1500mm x 200mm fluorescent modules. The modules are cut into the plasterboard and interspersed with recessed adjustable accent lighting. Whilst in the retail stores the lighting is mounted to busbar trunking below the line of the other mechanical and electrical services. This creates a perceived ceiling line that averts the eye from the services above. Accent lighting is supplied by track mounted spotlights, located between each linear run of fluorescents. Moving from the traditional retail park format, both the Home and Plan A stores have partial ceilings with displaced air ventilation. Lighting is still situated on busbar trunking in between the ceiling rafts.

In its role as lighting consultants, LAPD have changed the Marks & Spencer approach to lighting. Throughout the design process every business unit and area of the customer facing shop floor has been considered. Energy efficiency has been maximised by effective product design and features such as daylight linking. But this hasn't been achieved at the expense of the visual impression of the light pattern and decorative details. The overall result is a far more sensual shopping experience. |

Jonathan Morrish is the associate director of LAPD Consultants. He wrote the article with the help of colleagues Simon Fisher and Glenn Campion, LAPD's directors.