



# BRINKLEY PROPELLER

UNIT 1, MONTGOMERY WAY, STRATTON BUSINESS PARK,  
BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8UB  
WWW.BRINKLEY-PROPELLER.COM

Central  
Bedfordshire



## THE BUSINESS

Darren Carter's entrepreneurial vision has seen Brinkley Propeller show double-digit growth, including two business relocations within Bedfordshire, one of which was as recently as 2016, to stay within Central Bedfordshire.

Brinkley Propeller is one of Europe's leading propeller repair and overhaul facilities. The company's clients include the Royal Air Force, airlines, and high net worth aircraft owners around the world, including in the Far East.

But the company, which was born as a demerger from Bedford-based Brinkley Aircraft Services in 2007, is much more than propellers. Its Non-Destructive Testing business includes high technology work for the makers of satellite systems.

Darren, the company's joint founder and Engineering Director, employs 22 people at the company's modern 14,250-sq-ft leased premises in the large Stratton Business Park, just off the A1 motorway at Biggleswade.

Stratton Business Park is one of the jewels in the commercial and industrial property crown in Central Bedfordshire, sitting on the A1M just one hour from Central London and Heathrow Airport, but without the high costs of the capital.

Darren first came into contact with Central Bedfordshire Council when he began to consider his property options as the business outgrew its premises in nearby Meppershall.



"We looked at building our own property," said Darren. "So, we made contact with the Council's planning department. They were friendly and helpful by putting us in touch with an Account Manager in the Council's

Regeneration and Business Directorate who has been working closely with us ever since."

"We found that in Central Bedfordshire, the people are open and friendly and they were willing to take us seriously from the beginning."

The Account Manager has been able to help point the way towards not just the new property but how to successfully apply for grant funding to support the move.

*"We found that in Central Bedfordshire, the people are open and friendly and they were willing to take us seriously from the beginning."*

**Be ambitious. Be connected. BeCentralBedfordshire**

## THE REQUIREMENTS



Darren's requirements were to find a modern building with the space in which he and the team can plan the continued growth of his business.

At the same time, he wanted a base close to the UK's north-of-London motorway

network, so the company's engineers can get fast access to clients, is close to Heathrow, so he can attend trade shows around the world, and which is close to where most of the workforce already lives.

The Account Manager was not only able to give advice on available properties, but also on the availability of rate relief, and guidance on the Local Development Order at Stratton Business Park which was is a key attractor for many businesses.

Local Development Orders make achieving medium scale plans, such as including mezzanine floors, so much easier as it includes a host of business-friendly exemptions to the planning system.

The Account Manager was also pro-active in helping Darren make successful applications for grant funding on two big projects.

With the help of Central Bedfordshire Council, the company has won two grants which support companies to innovate and grow. The first was £5,000 from the SEMLEP Velocity scheme, as a contribution toward the £15,000 cost of a new fork lift truck.

The second grant is £15,000 from Innovation Bridge toward the 88,000 Euros cost of a specialist piece of propeller testing equipment. It should allow Brinkley Propeller to bring a vital client service in-house, instead of having to rely on third parties. It also gave them access to academic researchers at the University of Bedfordshire, who helped them to build a business case.

"I wasn't aware of any of this grant money until the Council told us," said Darren. "It would not have happened without the Council. Their help was, and remains, efficient and straightforward."

In addition to supporting the business with funding and relocation support, the Council also introduced Darren to Central Bedfordshire College. This was with a view to developing closer links to understand the skills the company are looking for when taking on new employees.

*"I wasn't aware of any of this grant money until the Council told us," said Darren. "It would not have happened without the Council. Their help was, and remains, efficient and straightforward."*

In turn, Brinkley Propeller were one of the first partners to sign up to support the Council's first "Find Your Future" event, which was aimed at providing young people an understanding of the skill required for various career pathways.

## THE OUTCOMES

Brinkley Propeller has grown at a phenomenal rate. In 2011-12 the company's turnover was £1,013,000, but by 2016-17 that had more than doubled to £2,150,000. With work coming in for the foreseeable future, the outlook is good for the company as it looks to further expand and develop services.

Darren is proud to be at the helm of a growing business which is contributing to the economy of the Biggleswade area, Eastern Bedfordshire, and the wider economy of Central Bedfordshire.

And he says the relationship with Central Bedfordshire Council has been a "very important" factor in the company's growth so far.

"I'm not sure what would have happened without the Council's help," said Darren. "Moving a business is a daunting experience, especially for a small business. To go it alone may have been a step too far but we had them by our side and they put their faith in us.

"I've not done anything like this before, it was a big learning experience and they were a big help."

## THE FUTURE

With a positive short to medium term outlook, a full order book, and room to expand in their commercial premises, Brinkley Propeller is looking to a future where it can continue to grow.

At some stage in the not too distant future, the freedoms allowed by the Local Development Order look set to give the company a new mezzanine floor.




Access to a young and eager workforce from the Biggleswade and neighbouring areas is set to increase the workforce by four or five almost immediately. In the longer term, the company is looking at further growth, perhaps to a headcount of 30.

Darren sees the relationship with the Council as a key one as his ambitious company pushes on to the next level.

As the company faces a different set of challenges, including the as yet unknown impact of Brexit, the only thing he said could be a possible improvement would be "facilitating connections with the education sector" as they look to engage even more young people into considering a future career in engineering.



**Be ambitious. Be connected. BeCentralBedfordshire**

 [www.becentralbedfordshire.co.uk](http://www.becentralbedfordshire.co.uk)  [info@becentralbedfordshire.co.uk](mailto:info@becentralbedfordshire.co.uk)  0300 300 8272

 @BeCentralBeds  **LinkedIn** Search: Be Central Bedfordshire