



Case study

ToughGlaze

Specialist glass producer
future-proofs in Central Bedfordshire.

One of the UK's leading producers of toughened and laminated glass, ToughGlaze distributes a wide variety of products throughout the country. The company's exciting growth plans demanded an increase in production space, enhanced logistics and more people. Relocation to Central Bedfordshire ensured ToughGlaze had the resources it needed for the future.

Demand for toughened and laminated glass is continuously high. Put to all kinds of commercial building uses, including external and internal glazing, partitioning balustrading and flooring, it's a vital construction material. Society depends on it, for light, shelter, privacy and protection.

Founded in 1993 by brothers Ashok and Bharat Varsani and close friend Vipul Vora, at a time when toughened glass was hard to come by or on very long leads times, Toughglaze set out to process high quality toughened glass to support its own sealed unit business and to fulfil demand from other local companies.

It produced its first product at Rose House, a 3,000 sq ft factory in Kingsbury, North West London, having made a huge investment in the company's first toughening furnace, purchased from EFCO. High demand saw ToughGlaze working 7 days a week, late into the night, to process orders, cut, arriss, toughen and deliver its toughened glass.



Case study
ToughGlaze

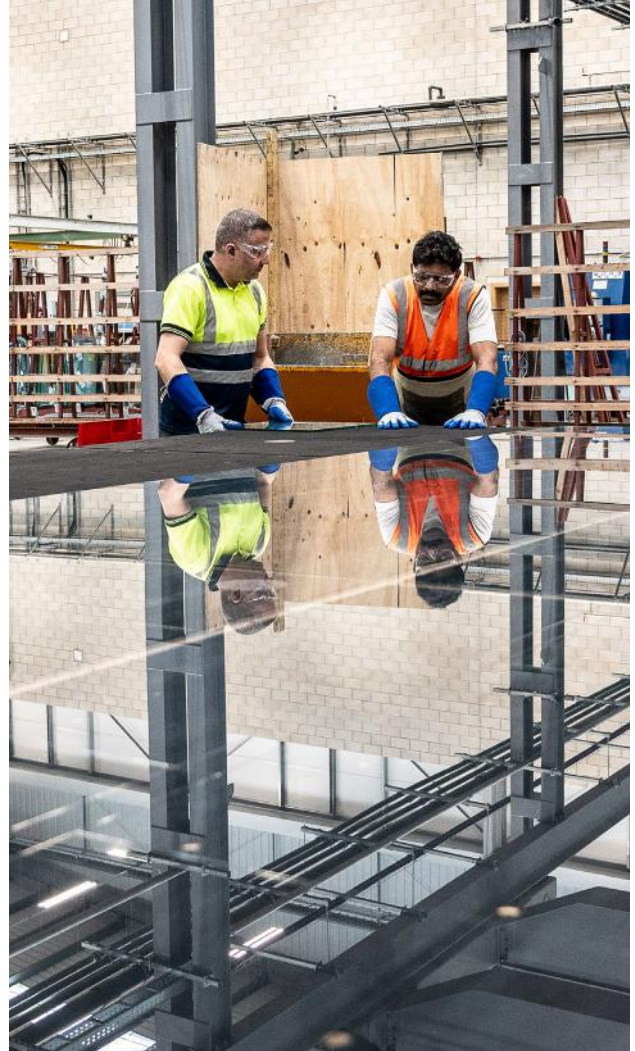
The ToughGlaze founders' passion and commitment in the early years laid solid foundations for a bright and successful future. Within a few years the company made a short move to a 70,000 sq ft state-of-the-art production facility at Park Royal, North Acton, where it continued to invest and grow successfully for more than 25 years.

Becoming one of the UK's leading glass processors, ToughGlaze eventually outgrew the site in 2020. The company would need to relocate once more to continue its expansion and begin a new stage in ToughGlaze's evolution.

More space

"The product we produce is inherently bulky and quite fragile, so the production process ideally needs a lot of manufacturing space. We're operating some of the most advanced glass processing equipment in the world and the workflow has to be right to maximise efficiency", Kieran Stroker, Sales and Marketing Manager at ToughGlaze.

"We found our ideal location for growth in Brogborough, Central Bedfordshire, and made the move in January 2021. The new facility provided us with all the production space we needed, with plenty of room for expansion as well."



ToughGlaze's new home in Central Bedfordshire includes a 100,000 sq. feet production facility housing the complete manufacturing line, comprising cutting, polishing, drilling, toughening and laminating processes as well as extensive clean room facilities. Importantly the premises brought the company an extra 30,000 sq. feet of space to accommodate new machinery and processes, helping it to further expand its range of services.



Case study
ToughGlaze



Enhanced logistics

Manufacturing such a vast range of different glass products for architects, building contractors and installers throughout the UK means good logistics is also of paramount importance to the ToughGlaze business offering, as Kieran explained:

“For obvious reasons nobody wants to store glass products on a building site for any length of time. That’s why it’s always last to arrive on site. This means production lead times can be very short, often measured in days rather than weeks. So in-house logistics and distribution operations need to be as efficient as possible, to mirror our just in time production process.

He continued, “We can produce more than four thousand pieces of cut glass each and every day, a mix of toughened glass and laminated glass products. As you can imagine, operating in North London just wasn’t ideal from traffic perspectives. Now, being right next door to the M1 we’re logistically perfect – for both delivering finished product and receiving raw annealed glass from national and international suppliers.”

We’re operating some of the most advanced glass processing equipment in the world.

Kieran Stroker

Sales and Marketing Manager at ToughGlaze.

ToughGlaze’s new headquarters in Central Bedfordshire now has 11 articulated loading bays and the company operates as many as 30 different vehicles, including HGVs, class 2 trucks, including flat beds with mounted fork trucks, and smaller commercial vehicles for hard to access deliveries.

Case study

ToughGlaze

Recruitment

Operating at the forefront of cutting-edge glass processing technology, ToughGlaze was also very aware of Central Bedfordshire's location at the mid-point between Oxford and Cambridge, a zone with a reputation for high-performance technology, engineering and innovation.

Through the development of strategic partnerships with leading LCD and LED technology providers, the ToughGlaze product range already included switchable (clear to frosted) smart glass and security glass products, as well as high-spec fire resistant, bullet- and even blast / bomb-resistant glass products.

Kieran said, "As an independent, family-run business, we pride ourselves on our philosophy of promoting from within. We provide people with the opportunity to start on the shop floor, learn new technical skills and work their way up through the entire manufacturing process. And new technology and product innovation makes that very exciting."

"We currently have more than 120 skilled staff working at the new site and we will certainly need to recruit new people as we continue to expand. Our intention is that the local area will bring us the right calibre of people and the skills we will need going forward."

Central Bedfordshire Council is currently working with ToughGlaze to help identify and recruit the new personnel they need.

Kieran also acknowledges the quality-of-life offered by Central Bedfordshire as being an important factor in attracting new recruits.

"While we've actually only moved 40 miles from our old factory in North London, there's no doubt that the new location brings its advantages. There's more countryside, far less traffic and much more affordable housing. Instead of commuting, a number of our staff have already relocated into the area, and more are expected."

Representing a substantial investment, the relocation of ToughGlaze from North London to Central Bedfordshire is about future-proofing a great family business, attending to clients' strategically important requirements and resolving them effectively.

The company is naturally very proud of its long-term relationships with discerning customers throughout the UK, on repeat business founded on good experiences, and of providing the highest quality glass products on-time. The move will ensure ToughGlaze continues to lead the way long into the future.

To find out more about Central Bedfordshire as the ideal location for your high-performance technologies business investment, contact our inward investment team at

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