

## Autoquake drives forward with Vickers move

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By Ian Briggs - Deputy Editor



(l-r) Chris Mathewman, area manager for Autoquake, and Rupert Visick

A GROWING online used car retailer is aiming for expansion after opening a northern base at a former Yorkshire tank factory.

Autoquake.com, which had five million hits to its website in January, has taken a five year lease at Radial Park in Leeds.

The 250,000 sq ft site, the former home of the Vickers Tank factory, has the capacity to store 1,000 vehicles at a time.

The factory ceased manufacturing in 1999 before which it had been used by Vickers Defence Systems for the manufacture of Challenger II tanks.

Autoquake has taken the space, which comprises an indoor six acre area and is a quarter of a mile long, from owner Threadneedle Property Investments.

Headquartered in London, Autoquake has moved its northern operation from Bradford to Leeds following a period of growth which has seen it launch a site in Birmingham.

The company, established in 2005, publishes full details of all available cars online, including up to 50 photographs and full history, dispensing with traditional showrooms and sales people.

Once a customer has chosen a vehicle and it has been booked through its ecommerce system and either collected or delivered to them from the Radial Park handover site, they are entitled to a seven day money back guarantee.

Fredrik Skantze, co-founder and chief marketing officer of Autoquake, said: "Our acquisition at Radial Park will enable us to offer a far wider choice of vehicles to our customers and is an ideal opportunity for us to expand in the North of England."



Joint agents on the letting were Leeds-based industrial property agents Gent Visick and King Sturge.

Rupert Visick, of Gent Visick, said: "We are pleased to have secured Autoquake as tenants for Radial Park. We have had to adapt our strategy in line with market changes, to identify new sectors in which to target potential occupiers. This letting demonstrates the value of that approach."

Mr Visick said his company had made a bright start to the year and said that the deal highlighted the changing face of the commercial property sector during the downturn.

He said companies such as Autoquake, which offered cut-price vehicles, were taking advantage of the downturn and that Threadneedle had seen the letting of the site as necessary because of the abolition of empty property relief rates.

Garry Hobson, chief executive of Autoquake, told TheBusinessDesk.com that the company's approach to marketing its vehicles was helping it to buck the trend of a failing motor industry.

Mr Hobson, who has previously worked at Pendragon and General Motors, said: "We are absolutely delighted to take over the historic Vickers factory here in Leeds for our new distribution and handover centre in the North of England.

"The new Leeds facility will play an integral part of the business as upscale throughout this year and the years to come."

Mr Hobson said Autoquake planned to open two new sites this year and was expecting to sell around 15,000 vehicles in 2009.

The former tank factory closed with the loss of 450 jobs in 1999.