



(L - R): Alex Michelin and Matthew Robertson, Co-Founders of Valouran.



**SENIOR
CORRESPONDENT**

Matthew
Neville
29 FEB 2024

INTERVIEW: Property developer 'pushes the boundaries' of innovation and sustainability

As part of our 2024 Innovation Week, in association with [Innovation SuperNetwork](#), we sat down with Alex Michelin and Matthew Robertson, Co-Founders of Valouran, a London based property developer with a strong focus on sustainability and innovation. The pair were keen to share their insight

First things first, what does innovation mean to the team at Valouran?

Alex: Innovation is one of the seven founding principles of Valouran and as such, sits at the core of our business culture. We aim to deliver exceptional residential-led developments that push the boundaries of innovation and enhance the surrounding natural environment.

Each time we start the initial stages of planning a project, our primary focus lies in how we're going to be sustainable, rather than thinking about revenue or maximising profits. This distinct approach sets the tone for Valouran's ethos. The name Valouran is derived from the word 'Valour' which means: 'strength of mind and spirit; courage'.

This concept serves as a fundamental foundation for the company and its culture, having the strength to deal with all the challenges that are faced with courage and honour. Matthew and I are veterans of prime residential development, and we know it takes a lot of resilience and strength to see these projects through to a successful conclusion.

Matthew: We specialise in innovative ways of preserving existing buildings, retaining historic façades, and incorporating modern methods of construction.

Two examples of our conscientious approach to development include a project on The Bishops Avenue, where we've made a deliberate effort to preserve the building's original façade, and in Brook Green where we are converting an old Victorian schoolhouse.

In Brook Green, we're minimising the development's carbon footprint through initiatives such as collaborating with a specialist heritage sash window supplier to prioritise thermal efficiency and airtightness in the new structure, all whilst maintaining the building's heritage appeal.

This approach underscores our commitment to avoiding excessive use of new materials like concrete and steel. Instead, we focus on elevating existing structures to meet and surpass contemporary standards.

How does Valouran encourage and foster innovation within the property market?

Alex: There has been a huge increase in awareness and appetite for sustainable homes with a significantly reduced environmental footprint. 25 years ago, when I started, clients occasionally mentioned sustainability but it was not a large concern.

Today it is very much at the top of their agenda in terms of trying to reduce their environmental footprint and live in an eco-conscious way which does not harm the planet.

What sets Valouran apart and defines the company's vision is our unwavering commitment to sustainability right from the inception of a project.

We consistently question: How can we reclaim greywater? Is it possible to eliminate plastic entirely in a building? How can we make sure that all construction materials are sourced locally? These questions shape our approach from day one, involving not only our internal team but also our architects, engineers and the entire supply chain.

Matthew: In fostering innovation, it is also vital that the architects and designers we collaborate with, share our passion and enthusiasm for creating something magnificent that will stand the test of time.

We look to collaborate with those who bring passion, energy and a huge amount of creativity, a firm that is constantly trying to push the envelope and do something unique. We want to create buildings of the future which make people's lives better.

In which ways does Valouran's core focus on sustainability tie in with innovation?

Alex: Valouran's dedication to sustainability is itself innovative. The company was born from combining our passion for design with our extensive knowledge of the residential market and recognising a need for prioritising placemaking and sustainability.

In this way, we are pioneers. We deliver best-in-class, sustainable residential developments in the most desirable locations.

Matthew: We recognise real estate's critical role in global carbon emissions and so we're pushing the boundaries of sustainability. By actively integrating environmentally conscious practices across our developments, from urban greening to improving streetscapes, we not only reduce our environmental footprint but also elevate the quality of our developments.

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What can you tell our readers about Valouran's plans for the remainder of 2024?

Alex: We've got lots of exciting projects in the pipeline, but one that particularly stands out to me is the restoration of a listed chapel building in St. John's Wood. Arguably one of the most sought-after sites in St John's Wood, it is such a unique space that lends itself beautifully to repurposing as a series of exceptional residential apartments.

We are committed to preserving the architectural heritage of The Chapel whilst delivering homes of the very highest modern standard with excellent environmental credentials. We will ensure the property blends harmoniously into the surrounding streetscape and promises to provide a truly exciting place to live.

Matthew: One of our latest projects is the redevelopment of an old house on The Bishops Avenue into a magnificent collection of apartment buildings all set in two and a half acres of beautiful gardens.

With sustainability a key pillar of the business, Valouran will strive to ensure the development represents a sustainable footprint for the future of The Bishops Avenue. Through measures such as limited tree removals supplemented by replacement tree planting and improved boundary treatment for the road, we are committed to achieving biodiversity net gain.

I think the scheme will break all price records when it is delivered in a few years' time, as the quality of spaces we are producing is remarkable. These spaces are coupled with exceptional amenities, outdoor space, parking, a pool and a state-of-the-art gym which will make it highly popular with residents.

This is just one of the many projects we are working on, with a few more set to be announced in the coming months.

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