EstateAgentTODAY

Why Valouran's Matt Robertson believes credibility is the developer's greatest asset

Ask most people what prime property development looks like and they'll probably imagine an exclusive club where money flows freely, prestigious addresses guarantee profits and success comes as much from who you know as what you do.

Matthew Robertson has spent enough years in the industry to know the reality is rather different.

"It's highly competitive," he says. "You only get one chance to prove yourself. If you don't deliver, people simply won't back you again."

For Robertson, co-founder and CFO of Valouran, that simple truth has shaped almost every decision since he and long-time colleague Alex Michelin launched the business in 2022.

Three years on, Valouran has become one of London's rising prime residential developers, working alongside major institutional investors on landmark schemes in some of the capital's most sought-after locations.

The firm is now developing and managing over £4 billion of assets across 2.7 million sq. ft.

But Robertson is quick to dismiss any suggestion that success arrived easily.

"We kissed a lot of frogs," he laughs, remembering the company's first attempts to raise investment.

Those early months were spent making presentation after presentation to prospective investors, explaining their vision, demonstrating their track record and asking institutions to place their confidence in a brand-new business.

"I wouldn't call it luck," he says. "It was about convincing people we could deliver."

Looking back, those conversations were less about raising capital than earning trust.

That trust has since become Valouran's most valuable asset.

"What's changed," Robertson explains, "is that people who have worked with us before now come back to us. In some cases they've got projects that have run into difficulties, and they've asked us to come in and help get them back on track."

That is perhaps the clearest indicator of how far the company has come.

Winning a development opportunity is one thing. Being invited to rescue one is something altogether different. It requires confidence not simply in a company's finances, but in its judgement, discipline and ability to deliver when circumstances become difficult.

That reputation has been hard won.

Before co-founding Valouran, Robertson spent more than a decade as CFO at luxury developer Finchatton, working alongside Michelin on some of London's most prestigious residential schemes. Yet despite his financial background, he speaks surprisingly little about numbers. Instead, the conversation repeatedly returns to architecture.

"I've always loved London's buildings," he says. "We're incredibly fortunate to work in one of the world's great cities."

For Robertson, development is not about replacing the past with the new.

"We've got enormous respect for London's heritage," he says. "We're not interested in shiny glass towers for the sake of it."

That philosophy is evident in The Whiteley, one of Valouran's flagship developments, where contemporary architecture has been carefully integrated with a restored listed façade.

"It has to feel like one composition," Robertson says. "The old and the new have to belong together."

Matthew Robertson

It is a revealing comment.

Although responsible for finance, Robertson talks about buildings with the enthusiasm of someone fascinated by how cities evolve over generations. The spreadsheets, investment structures and financial models are essential, but they exist to make something lasting, something fitting.

"You have to understand the numbers," he says, "because they're what enable you to create."

In prime development, raising capital is only the beginning. Years can pass between acquiring a site and handing keys to a buyer. During that time markets change, interest rates move, construction costs fluctuate and planning challenges emerge. Every decision has consequences.

"You've got to deliver," Robertson says simply.

It is a phrase he returns to more than once.

For institutional investors, delivery is everything. Capital follows credibility, and credibility is earned one completed project at a time.

That reality also challenges another common misconception about the upper end of the market.

These are not homes that quietly sell themselves simply because of their postcode.

The buyers are among the most discerning in the world. They expect exceptional design, flawless execution and absolute confidence that what they are buying will stand the test of time. Success depends as much on reputation as location and Valouran wants to be one of the most trusted developers in London.

Trust is what persuaded investors to back two founders starting a new business.

Trust is what encourages existing partners to return.

And increasingly, trust is what leads others to ask Valouran to step into projects where experience and calm judgement matter more than bold ambition.

Away from boardrooms, Robertson remains someone who simply enjoys the built environment. He speaks with genuine affection about London's architectural inheritance, and the responsibility developers have to leave the city richer than they found it.

For him, finance is not the story. It is the fuel propels the vision into real estate.

The numbers provide the discipline that allows great buildings to be realised, difficult projects to be rescued and investors' confidence to be rewarded.

In a business often perceived as being about money, Matthew Robertson offers a different perspective.

"We've got the greatest respect for, London's heritage, the greatness of London, the architectural lineage," he says.

"And we're not, as an outfit, ones for kind of big, shiny new glass towers necessarily.

"We really try to play into the heritage: A, because we've all got a passion for it, but equally importantly, that's what our buyer group wants."