Trust

How data and technology are reshaping trust in real estate



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Introduction

Real estate has always run on trust. For most of the sector's history that trust has been both personal and institutional. But technology has complicated the picture. It is no longer enough to trust the people and firms involved in a transaction. The sector must also decide whether to trust the technology those firms use, the data it consumes and the data it produces. This is challenging without the standards, track records and lines of accountability the sector normally relies on to judge who or what deserves trust.

AI makes it even harder. It is now quick and cheap to produce written reports that are unverified by humans and the volume of data available has grown faster than the sector's ability to establish where it came from or whether it should be used.

This matters because the mechanisms that make professional trust work do not yet easily transfer to data infrastructure or machine-generated outputs. A chartered professional can be questioned, held to a standard and, if relevant, held accountable. A dataset of uncertain provenance or an AI tool giving incorrect outputs cannot.

This paper examines what trust actually means in a sector reshaped by data and technology, where it is coming under strain and what needs to change to rebuild it for the future.



Section 1

What do we mean by trust



Trust sounds like a simple concept. In reality, it is complex and multifaceted. When a real estate professional says they trust a piece of advice, a technology or a dataset, what are they actually trusting? It could be the person who provided it, the company behind it, the data itself, or simply the fact that someone will be accountable if it turns out to be wrong.

Trusting a person. This is the oldest form of trust in real estate. A client who has used the same adviser for fifteen years and received exemplary service will reasonably expect the same in the future. Part of what they are trusting is a track record, but a bigger part is judgement. A rent review, an arbitration or a valuation is often two sides reading much the same evidence and reaching different conclusions. The judgement applied is exactly what the client is paying for, usually based on years of experience.

Trusting a company. Whilst the individuals involved may not be known personally, there tends to be a belief that a proper process sits behind what is provided by a trusted business. An established data provider or software firm usually gets the benefit of the doubt because of its reputation, its size, or simply because everyone else in the market uses it. The assumption is often that someone competent has checked the product provided.

Trusting the data. This is the form of trust the sector has had the least practice with and the one technology increasingly asks for. It means relying on information because of where it came from, how it was produced and whether it is biased. Not because of who handed it over. That requires knowing its provenance and quality, which can often be hard to establish.

Trusting that someone is accountable. A good deal of what gets called trust is really about knowing who carries the cost if the information is wrong. The UK's HM Land Registry might be a good example. It is trusted for property information not because it is always right, but because they have no interest in the data being anything other than accurate and because a government-backed guarantee sits behind it with a way of getting mistakes corrected and compensated. The trust is in the remedy as much as the record.

In practice, these four overlap and most decisions rest on a mixture of them.

42% / 72%

Just 42% of UK respondents say they are willing to trust AI and 72% are unsure whether they can trust content online because it may have been AI-generated.

KPMG and the University of Melbourne, Trust, Attitudes and Use of Artificial Intelligence: A Global Study 2025 — United Kingdom insights, April 2025.

Section 2

How technology is changing trust



Technology and data are changing trust within the real estate sector in several ways.

Volume of data

Real estate organisations are now collecting and using much more data than ever before. For example, a single sensor in a building reporting once a minute produces over half a million readings a year. A mid-sized office with a few hundred sensors across heating, lighting, metering, occupancy and access is therefore generating hundreds of millions of data points annually. The volume now in circulation makes verifying any of it considerably harder.

From informing decisions to making them

As data analysis becomes more complex, insights that once supported a professional judgement are increasingly influencing the outcome. A person is normally accountable for any output, but as ever more complex analysis now feeds straight into building operations, lending decisions and compliance returns, it is becoming much harder for the person examining the underlying figures. That makes unchecked data even riskier, because an error might now go straight into the decision rather than into a recommendation someone might question.

More complex supply chains

Supply chains have become longer and more complicated. Firstly, there are more organisations in the chain. A building may have an owner, an asset manager, a property manager, a facilities manager and a string of specialist contractors, each running their own technology systems and using their own data. This makes it difficult to determine who is responsible for the technology and the data in the building. Accountability is now spread more thinly across the chain rather than sitting with anyone in particular.

Secondly, there is much more data within the supply chain. A single valuation, due diligence report or sustainability disclosure may draw on multiple data sources. Each step adds its own assumptions and its own errors and this makes the supply chain very complex and hard to trust.

AI produced content

AI has made it cheap to produce work that looks accurate, regardless of whether anyone has checked it or not. It is generally accepted that the quality of written materials is often judged by how they are presented and produced and by which trusted provider. However, AI can now produce well-structured reports or a set of statistics in minutes and the finished product looks professional even when nobody has verified any of its content. Producing something plausible is now easy but checking its accuracy can be a challenge.

Risk assessment

Digitalisation has changed how the sector assesses risk when buying technology. The old line that “nobody was ever dismissed for buying from IBM” described a world where the safe choice and the established choice were the same. This particularly

rang true when a riskier alternative, such as an unknown, untrusted software startup, could only offer a modest gain to a business. However, when the potential reward from an AI product is transformational, buyers might accept risks that they may have refused ten years ago. This can result in a sector adopting technology rapidly while the guardrails are still only being built.

7%

Only 7% of organisations say their data is completely ready for AI.

Cloudera and Harvard Business Review Analytical Services: Taming the Complexity of AI Data Readiness, 2026





Section 3

Trust in companies

Reputation

Reputation is an important element of trust in companies, particularly when it comes to the procurement of technology. It has become harder to judge the technology that is being bought so people look at the provider. If real estate professionals cannot tell how good a dataset or an AI model really is, they are likely to fall back on factors such as how long the provider has been around and how many other companies use it. The irony is that if everyone goes for the popular choice, nobody gains a competitive edge because everyone resorts to buying the same product as their competitors.

This can make life very difficult for newcomers to the market. A start-up will struggle to win clients without case studies but cannot produce case studies without clients. Large firms rarely want to be first to try something new and tend to look at what their competitors have bought before deciding. Sometimes the useful push comes from an adviser the client already trusts, who is willing to say that the familiar provider is not always the best one.

Use of technology

The financial structure of the AI market makes the debate around trust even more pressing. A significant proportion of the AI capability now being embedded into professional workflows is supplied by companies operating at a substantial loss, with pricing supported by investment rather than revenue. Senior figures within the industry have suggested that some AI companies are at risk of going out of business. The question for a real estate company is therefore not only whether it trusts a given provider, but also whether it could continue to operate if that provider suddenly withdrew, failed or significantly repriced its product.

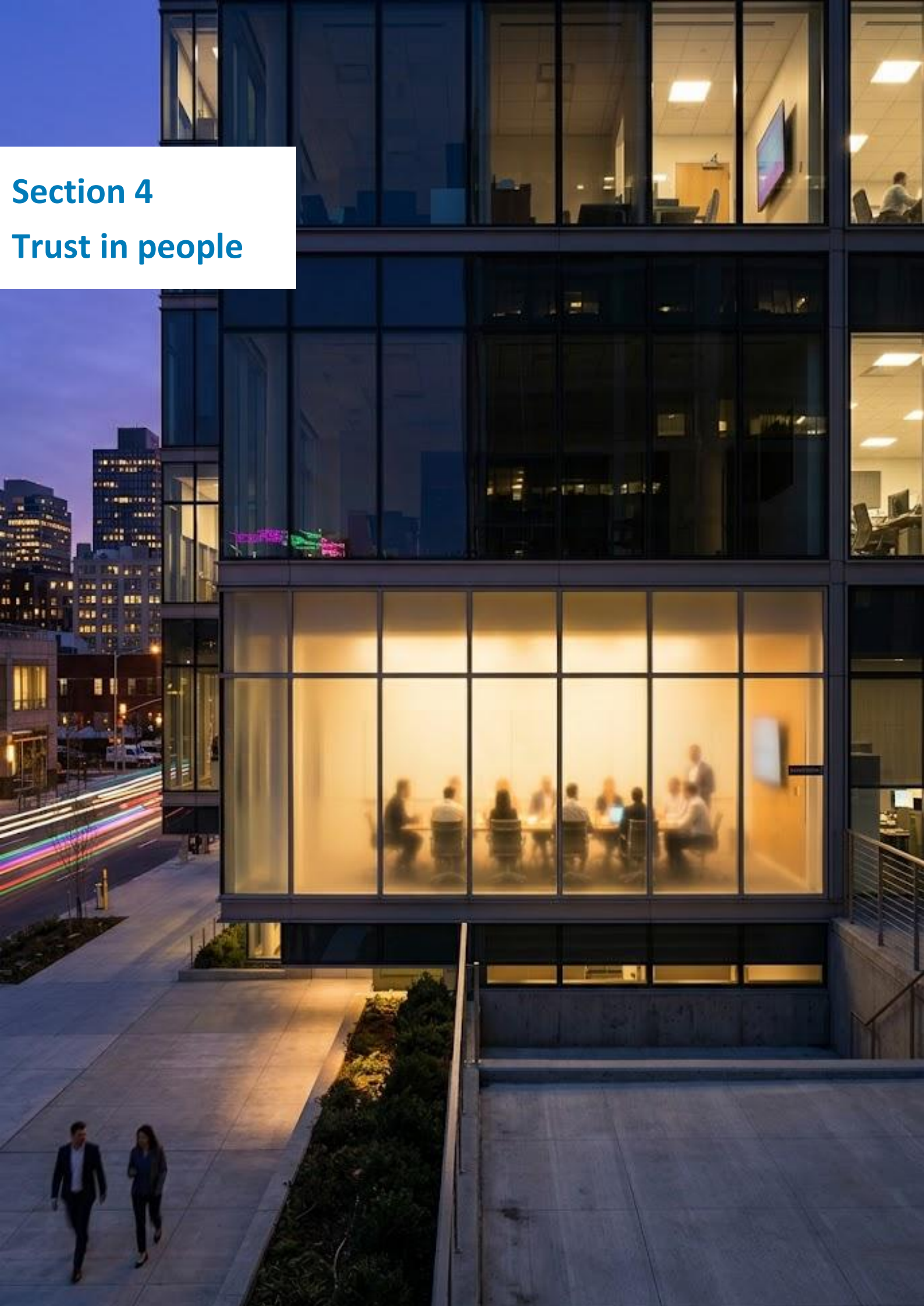
> **71% vs 50%**
>
> ***71% of organisations with data governance programmes report high trust in their data compared to 50% without them.***
>
> *Drexel University LeBow and Precisely - 2026 State of Data Integrity and AI Readiness*

> **44%**
>
> ***Fewer than half of GenAI users report that their company has a GenAI policy.***
>
> *Deloitte GenAI Workforce Survey 2026*

Transparency

In order to earn customer trust, companies must be transparent about how they use technology and explicit with clients about when and how AI has been used. Disclosure alone is not enough though, as an organisation is accountable for whatever it sends a client regardless of how it was produced. A chatbot's output, for example, is only as reliable as the material it draws on. This makes version control a trust issue rather than an administrative one, because a system drawing on a superseded policy or an outdated piece of guidance will give a confident answer that the organisation then owns. Telling a client that AI was used counts for little if the AI was working from the wrong document.

Section 4
Trust in people



Digital skills

The real estate sector offers strong professional training, however, many professionals now using AI have had little to no training in it and there is a gap between how confident people feel using these tools and how capable they actually are.

> **50% / 20%**
>
> ***Half of those using GenAI have received no formal training, while only 20% have received any mandatory training.***
>
> *Deloitte GenAI Workforce Survey 2026*

That gap matters because the sector's answer to reducing the risks of AI is almost always the same: keep a human in the loop. Verification is what turns an AI output into advice that can be relied on. But it only works if the person checking knows what to look for. Reviewing an automated valuation or a machine-drafted report means understanding both the property element and, broadly, how the system reached its answer. Without that, a review adds a signature but not scrutiny.

Clients may trust an adviser with twenty years' experience because they have done the deals and know the market. That is not the same as knowing about data, technology or which systems to use, yet both conversations increasingly happen in the same meeting. Good advisers will be clear about where their expertise ends.



Future generation

One major concern for real estate is the digital skills of the next generation. A good analogy is the pilot and the autopilot. Pilots are trained to fly the plane but do not need to do so while the autopilot is working. Because they have that training, they can recognise when it goes wrong and take over if necessary. Judgement in real estate has been built the same way, through years of experience and doing deals and the tasks that built those foundations are the ones now easiest to automate. Junior professionals are therefore getting powerful tools at exactly the point in their careers when they have the least experience to judge what those tools produce. Unless firms deliberately protect that learning, the people expected to verify AI in ten years' time may never have developed the skills to do it and the industry will be relying on an autopilot with nobody in the cockpit who can actually fly the plane.

58%

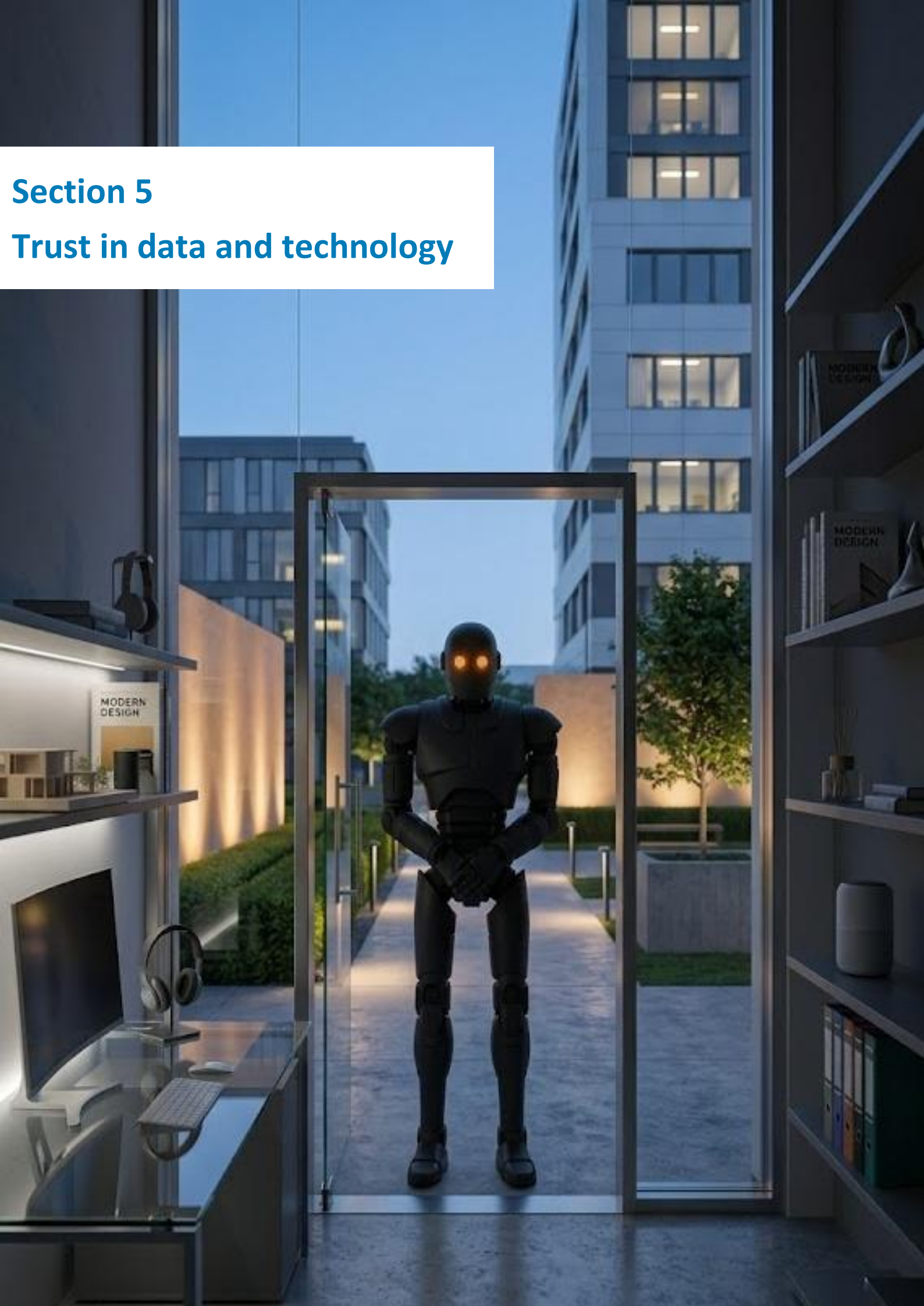
Nearly six in ten UK workers using AI have relied on its output at work without checking whether it was accurate.

KPMG and the University of Melbourne, Trust, Attitudes and Use of Artificial Intelligence: A Global Study 2025 — UK findings.

Capacity for improving digital skills also varies by firm. Large firms can afford enablement teams and structured digital skills training. Mid-sized firms are often adopting technology just as quickly but without the same support and may be the most exposed. Improving digital skills for the current and future workforces will be key to helping improve trust in the sector.



Section 5
Trust in data and technology



Trust in data and technology has been challenged by the vast increase in the availability of data and the rapid advancement of AI technology.

Data provenance and quality

For people to trust data, they need to know things about the data such as provenance. Unfortunately, this can be hard to come by. Much of the data that real estate uses and relies on was collected for another purpose, typed in by hand and often never properly cleaned. Public sources are no exception. Title and address records can contain duplicates, planning data can carry manual errors and the assumption that a government body has tidied everything up before publishing it is often wrong. In reality, no dataset is perfect. Some deserve more confidence than others, but it is helpful to have a view on how each was produced and what it can reasonably be used for.

Data governance

Data governance is about who is responsible for data, how it's collected and managed and the rules that protect its quality and integrity. In practice, governance is often fragmented, especially where data moves between organisations or systems. Responsibilities can be unclear, standards can differ and decisions about data can be made without thinking about how it will be used later. Good governance gives a framework for managing quality, access, security and use, as well as making those responsibilities clear. Whilst provenance asks, "Where did it come from?" governance asks, "Who is looking after it and how?"

The top AI barrier: data quality

Data quality and availability is the most-cited obstacle to AI adoption among commercial property professionals, ranking above integration with existing systems and above a shortage of skilled people.

RICS, AI in Commercial Property and Construction Report 2026, August 2026.

Data bias

Bias in AI models can also encourage mistrust of the technology. A model trained on past transactions and trends learns whatever patterns are in that history, including ones that may now be outdated or carry prejudice. The risk is not that a model invents prejudice but that it repeats it accurately and presents it as objective analysis.

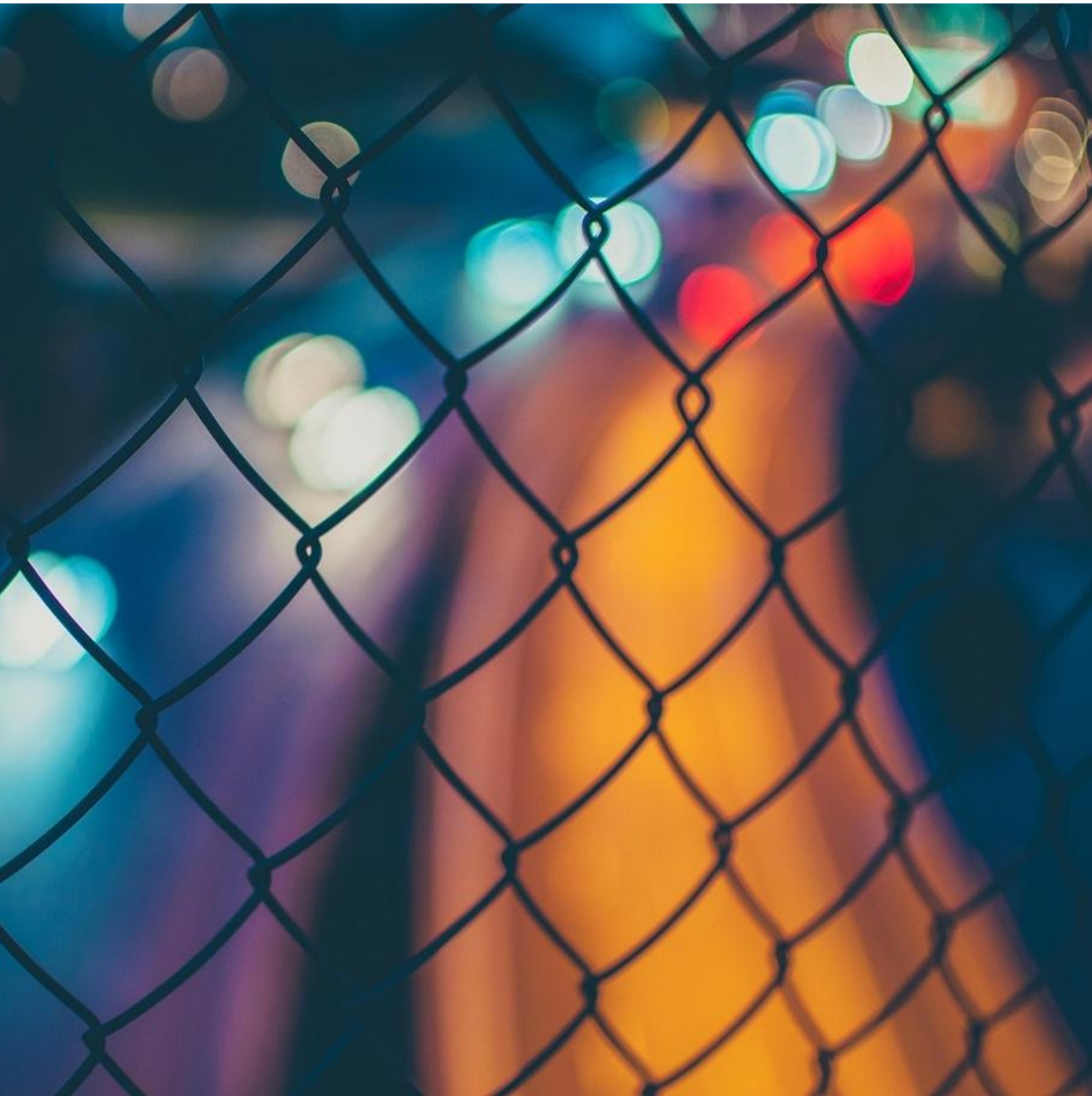
AI Transparency

An AI model that returns an answer without showing how it reached it is asking to be trusted on authority alone, something that many in the sector find hard to accept. It can be difficult to trust AI content when the ‘workings’ of the answer aren’t available. Anyone who sat an exam at school knows that the answer on its own never got the full marks. The sector would benefit from more AI tools providing the answer alongside the sources, the assumptions and the

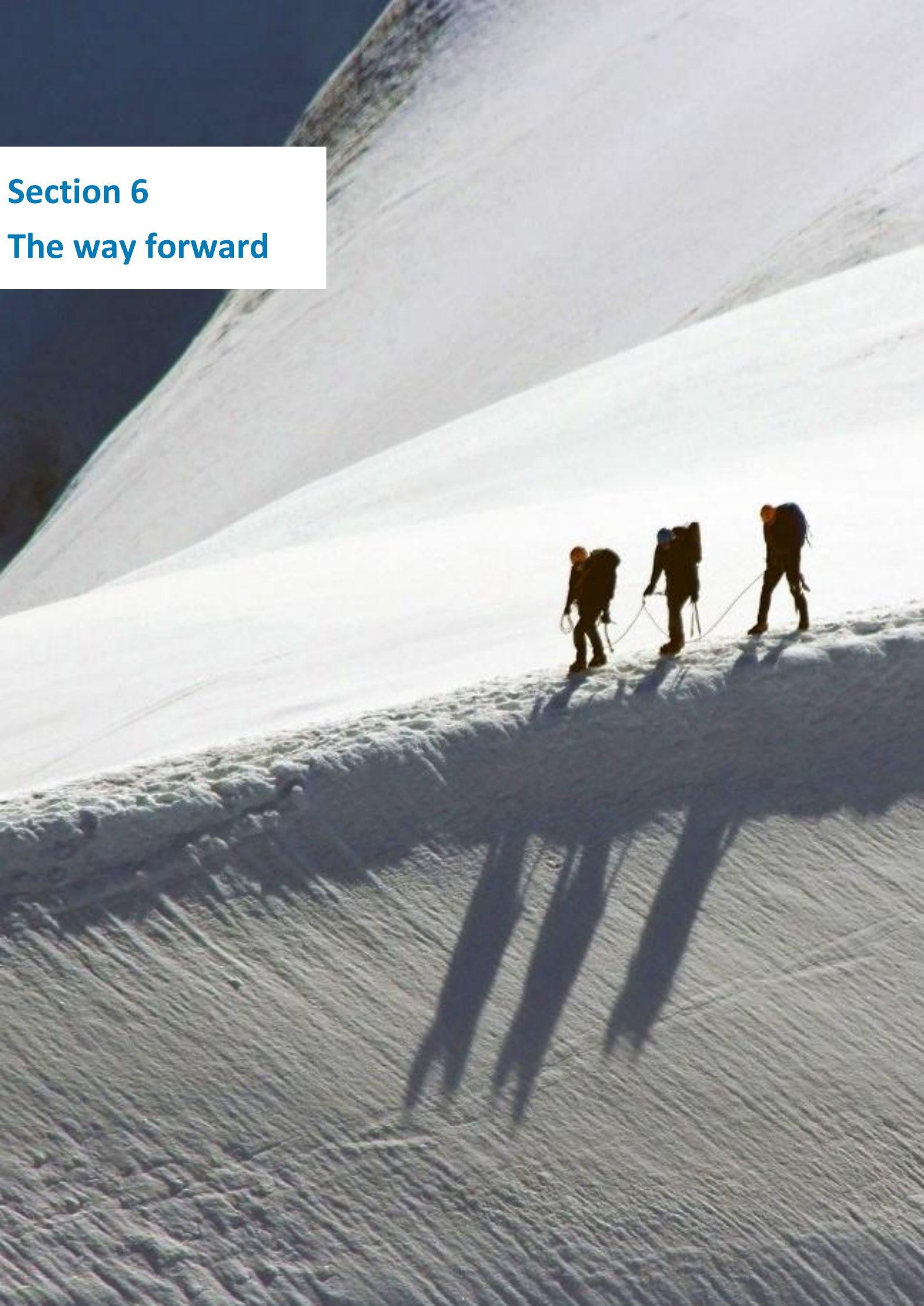
workings – a glass box rather than a black box solution. This transparency is more likely to enable trust in the technology.

Price of technology

AI tools are cheap to try, which has lowered the bar for trusting them. In many cases, a small subscription fee per user invites experimentation in a way that a price reflecting the real cost would not. It will become a more difficult conversation if prices move towards cost, especially for firms that have by then built the tools into their daily workstreams.



Section 6
The way forward



Earning trust in real estate requires bringing data and machine outputs up to the same rigorous standards long applied to human professionals. Six key elements drive this shift.

Standards and professional guidance

A global professional standard on the responsible use of AI in surveying practice[1] was launched by the RICS and took effect in March 2026. It mandates strict governance, risk documentation, and human oversight, while requiring client disclosure and ethical in-house development. This is a significant step forward, but its reach is currently limited by a lack of awareness that must be overcome to encourage more widespread use. RICS is not the only body offering guidance: the solicitors' regulator (SRA) issued a warning notice on AI misuse in August 2026 affecting property lawyers and construction and architecture bodies have also published guidance of their own.

> **42%**
>
> ***42% of commercial property professionals had either not heard of the RICS global standard on the responsible use of AI in surveying practice (22%) or had heard of it but knew nothing about it (20%).***
>
> *RICS Survey of the Profession Highlights August 2026*

Skills aimed at judgement, not tools

Training people to operate AI systems can be straightforward. What is more difficult is developing the professional judgement required to assess what those systems produce. This requires data and AI competence to be embedded into qualification routes and continuing professional development within firms.

Internal guardrails

Every company should have a clear AI policy and all staff should know what it says. This includes which AI tools are approved, what can and cannot be put into them and what must be checked before work goes out. If done properly, it will allow staff to use AI with confidence rather than guesswork and protect the confidentiality of company information.

Transparency in both directions

Clients should be told when AI has been used in work delivered to them. They should equally be told where their data goes once it leaves the organisation, who processes it and in which jurisdiction. This transparency should also apply to buildings: as more technology and sensors are connected, organisations should be able to say what information is being collected, by whom and to what end.

Collaboration

The sector already accepts that competitors can work together where the problem is shared. Data trust is exactly such a problem. No firm gains lasting

[1] https://www.rics.org/profession-standards/rics-standards-and-guidance/conduct-competence/responsible-use-of-ai

advantage from the sector's data being unreliable and the work of establishing provenance, quality benchmarks and common definitions is not a competitive activity. Structured, safe forums between competitors, clients and suppliers would move this faster than any firm can on its own.

Data infrastructure

Underpinning all of this is the technical infrastructure that allows trust to travel with data rather than being reconstructed at every handover. Consistent metadata allows provenance, licensing and quality to move with a dataset. Techniques such as tokenisation can allow information to be used without exposing the underlying asset. Data trusts and trust frameworks can provide governed arrangements for sharing data although these are still relatively new concepts. None of these is necessarily a complete answer but together they begin to give data the characteristics that professional trust has always relied on: a known origin, a known standard and a known party standing behind it.

In practice: data trusts and trust frameworks



Data trusts

According to the ODI (Open Data Institute), a data trust is an 'independent, fiduciary stewardship of data where one party authorises another to make decisions about data on their behalf, for the benefit of a wider group of stakeholders'. This encourages individuals or groups to share their data with confidence because the trust is managed by an independent trustee with legal duties to fulfil.



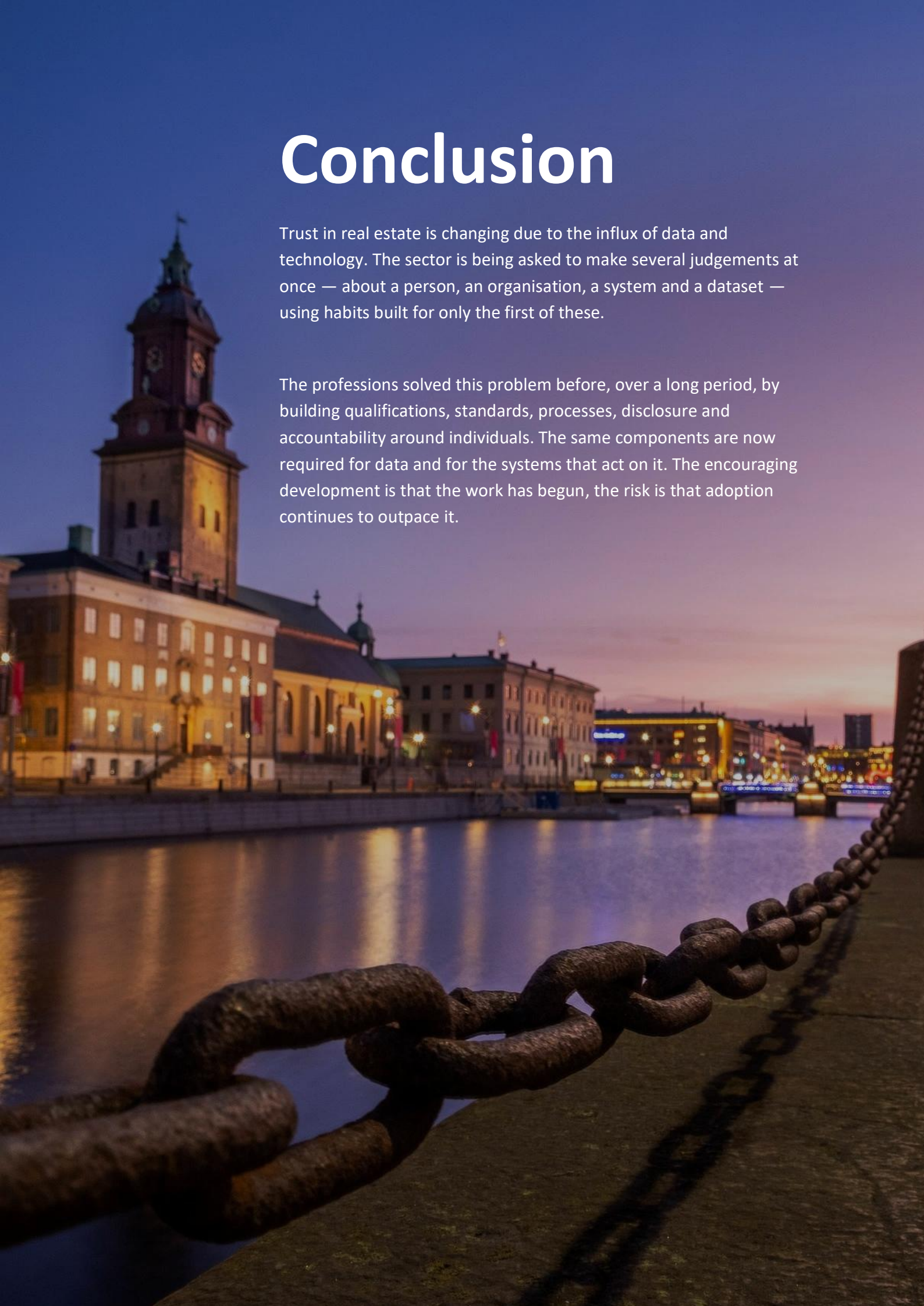
Trust framework

According to IB1, trust frameworks operate at a sector level to collaboratively establish and maintain a light layer of identity management, governance, definitions, principles and open standards for data sharing, which create the foundations of a trusted data-sharing ecosystem.

Conclusion

Trust in real estate is changing due to the influx of data and technology. The sector is being asked to make several judgements at once — about a person, an organisation, a system and a dataset — using habits built for only the first of these.

The professions solved this problem before, over a long period, by building qualifications, standards, processes, disclosure and accountability around individuals. The same components are now required for data and for the systems that act on it. The encouraging development is that the work has begun, the risk is that adoption continues to outpace it.



About REvolve

REvolve is an Alpha Property Insight initiative. Members of REvolve consist of leading names in the real estate sector which come together to provide unique perspectives on a particular topic. Membership of REvolve demonstrates the members' thought leadership and willingness to explore some of the most pressing challenges that the real estate sector faces in a collaborative way.

Membership does not imply agreement with or endorsement of all of the views expressed in the report.

Each paper is written by Alpha Property Insight and is based on both extensive desk research and a round table discussion with members. The report was produced with the assistance of AI tools, supporting research and content. All statistics have been verified against their original sources and all content has been reviewed and edited by the author who remains responsible for its accuracy and conclusions.

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Building physics for the future

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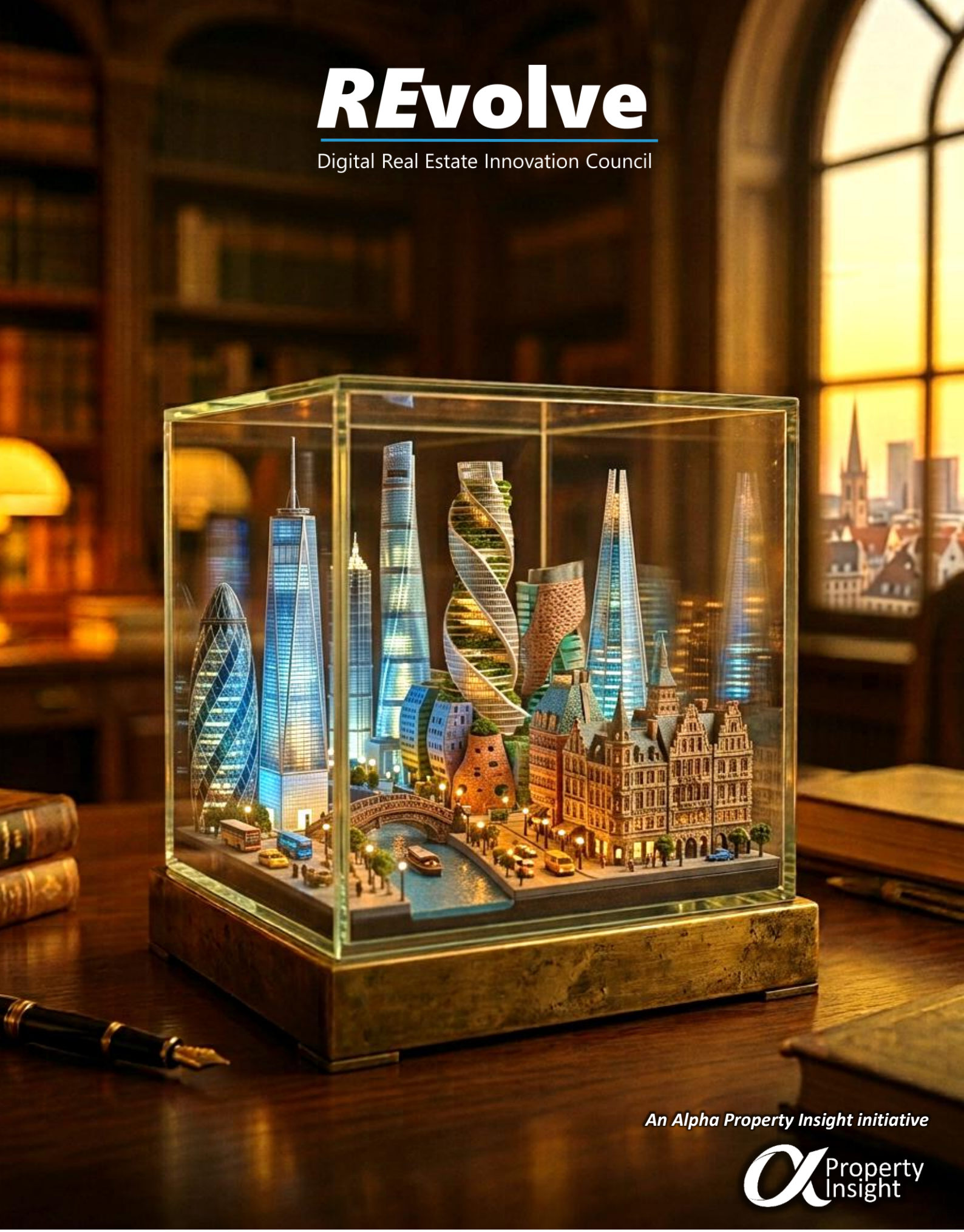
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