

FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Data Centre Images for a Room That **Starts Hostile**

What these visuals have to prove to neighbours and a planning audience, a shot list for a consultation pack, and the things a render must never leave out.

START HERE

You are not presenting to a receptive audience

Almost every other building type arrives with some goodwill. A data centre usually does not. It is large, mostly blank, fenced, lit at night, served by heavy vehicles, and it employs comparatively few people once it is running. Local residents and elected members often start opposed, and they have usually seen a render before they see a drawing.

That changes what the images are for. A visual made to impress a hyperscale client is a poor instrument in a village hall, and a visual made for a consultation will look flat next to the ones the marketing team wanted. Trying to make one set do both is the most expensive mistake in this building type, because the set that fails is the one you find out about in public.

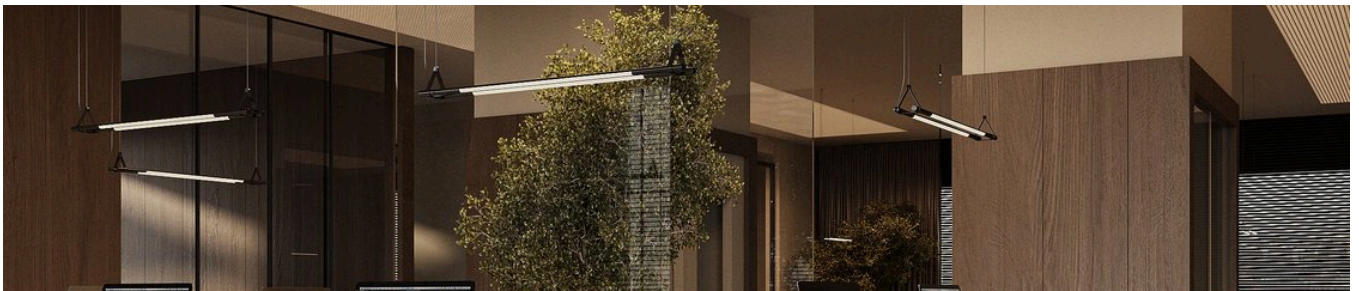
What the room is actually worried about

- How big it reads from their street, not from the air
- Noise — plant, chillers, generators, testing
- Light spill at night, and security lighting
- Lorries: route, frequency, and the junction they use
- Whether the promised screening is real or a drawing of a hedge
- What the fence, gatehouse and substation look like up close

What a hostile viewer reads as a trick

- A camera high enough that the building looks low
- Mature trees on a site that has just been cleared
- A clean roof with no plant equipment on it
- Sunset light on a building that will be seen in February drizzle
- No cars, no lorries, no fence, no people
- A view from the one direction nobody lives in

Every item in the right-hand column is a normal, defensible choice in a marketing image. In a consultation pack each one is an argument handed to the other side, and they are usually raised in the first ten minutes.



Maverick Frame production render.

STEP 01

Two different products from one model

The model, the site survey and the context are shared. Almost every decision made on top of them is not. Budget them as two sets from the beginning and the marginal cost of the second is small; retrofit the second in a hurry and you pay twice.

	CLIENT AND INVESTOR SET	CONSULTATION AND PLANNING SET
Who is looking	A hyperscale tenant, an investment committee, a board.	Neighbours, a parish or community meeting, officers, elected members.
What it must do	Communicate capability, scale, security and seriousness.	Answer the specific objection that has already been raised.
Camera	Chosen for the building. Aerials and long lenses are legitimate.	Eye level, from places people actually stand, and ideally from viewpoints somebody else nominated.
Context	Can be simplified. The subject is the asset.	Must be real: the houses, the lane, the existing hedgerow, the pylon, the neighbouring shed.
Landscape	Established and generous.	Year one, at planted size, with a matured version beside it and the year written on it.
Plant and equipment	Often tidied out of the frame.	Drawn. Roof plant, flues, chillers, generators, acoustic enclosures, the substation.
Weather and hour	Best light available.	Ordinary daylight, ordinary sky, plus at least one night view.
What is fatal	Looking amateur or provincial.	Being caught leaving something out. One omission discredits the whole pack.

The rule that comes out of this table

The client set persuades. The consultation set survives cross-examination. A studio that has only ever made the first kind will produce the first kind from a brief that does not say otherwise, because that is what an unqualified brief describes. Say which set you are commissioning, in the first email.

STEP 02

The shot list for a consultation pack

Eight views, in this order. It is a starting list rather than a submission standard — what any authority requires is a question for your own planning consultant, not something a studio can tell you.

01 The nearest residential viewpoint, eye level

From the closest place a person lives, stands or walks. If this view is missing, the audience assumes it was missing for a reason. Take it whether or not it flatters the scheme.

02 Massing against a known local reference

The building beside something everyone in the room can already picture — the existing units, the church, the barn, the treeline. Scale arguments are won against a familiar object and lost against a scale bar.

03 The approach along the access road

What a driver and a pedestrian see on the way in, including the gatehouse, the fence line and the first stretch of boundary planting.

04 Screening at year one, and the same camera matured

Planted size in one image, an assumed mature size in the other, from the identical camera, with the assumed year written on it. This single pair answers the most common objection in the room.

05 The roof and plant deck, shown honestly

An aerial or oblique that shows what is on the roof and around the building: plant, flues, louvres, chillers, acoustic enclosures, generator yard, tanks. See page 05.

06 A night view with real lighting

Security lighting, column heights, any lit signage, and light through glazing. Say which direction the view is from and roughly what hour it represents.

07 The service and HGV route

Where lorries enter, where they turn, where they wait. Traffic is the objection most often raised second and the one least often illustrated.

08 A section or cut through the boundary

Ground level, bund, fence, planting, building. Not a render at all, and frequently the most persuasive sheet in the pack, because it cannot be accused of flattering anything.

Two practical notes. Viewpoints chosen by the objectors are worth including even when they are unkind, because including them removes the charge of selection. And every view in this list comes from the same model, so the incremental cost after the first two is modelling context, not building the scheme again.

STEP 03

What not to hide, and what to ask

A render that omits the plant deck is the one that loses the room. Not because the equipment is shocking, but because its absence proves the images were curated, and after that nothing else in the pack is believed.

IF THE SCHEME HAS IT, DRAW IT	WHY LEAVING IT OUT COSTS MORE THAN SHOWING IT
Roof plant, chillers, condensers	It is the largest visible difference between the render and the building. Someone will photograph a comparable site and put it on a screen next to your image.
Generators, flues and fuel storage	These drive the noise and emissions questions. Showing them lets you also show the enclosure and the mitigation; hiding them concedes both arguments at once.
Acoustic enclosures and barriers	Mitigation you have paid for and not illustrated is mitigation the room does not know about.
Security fence, gates and gatehouse	Fencing is what neighbours see every day. A hedge drawn where a palisade fence is going will be remembered longer than anything else in the pack.
Substation, switchgear, transformers	Usually off to one side and usually the thing nearest somebody's boundary.
Car park, lorry yard, hardstanding	The extent of tarmac is a planning argument in its own right. Empty tarmac in a render reads as an evasion.
Lighting columns and their height	The night view is judged on whether the columns match the ones in the lighting layout.
The bund or level change	If the building sits lower than the road, that helps you. It only helps if it is visible in a view and legible in a section.

Questions for your own planning consultant, before you commission

We cannot tell you what your authority expects, and neither can any studio. Put these in writing to the people who can, and take the answers to the studio with the brief.

- ☐ Does this application need verified or accurate visual representations, and to what method?
- ☐ Who nominates the viewpoints, and by when must they be agreed?
- ☐ Is a photomontage required, or is a model view acceptable?
- ☐ Must cumulative or consented neighbouring development be shown?
- ☐ Is a methodology statement expected alongside the images, with camera data?
- ☐ Are night-time, lighting or shadow studies expected, and to which standard?
- ☐ What will be published, at what size, and can the pack be reused at appeal?

WORKING WITH A STUDIO

Cost, and how to brief it

Two things people ask us before anything else. Both answers are short.

COMMISSIONED WORK	FREELANCER	STUDIO
Single exterior still	\$100 – 300	\$250 – 600
Single interior still	\$120 – 350	\$300 – 700
Package, 5–8 views	\$600 – 1,500	\$1,500 – 4,000
Animation, per minute	\$1,000 – 3,000	\$3,000 – 8,000

Market ranges we are willing to publish. Turnaround and revision-round figures are deliberately not in this table: ours vary too much by project type to state as a benchmark, and an invented number here would be worse than none.

How to brief it — shorter is better

This is the opposite of what most people assume. Four things:

- What you need — **how many images, and of what**
- The plans and elevations, as they are
- A few reference images for mood and light
- One clear line on what the images are *for*

Inflating a small job into a fifty-page specification backfires: taken literally it comes out ugly, and it misleads the people doing the work. Tell them the intent and let the team that does this daily handle the detail.

The mistake that costs the most

The biggest failure we see is not choosing the wrong vendor. It is **timing**. People start looking only after the first supplier has already failed and the deadline is on fire, then choose in a panic.

Line up and vet rendering partners **before** you need one. One, ideally a few, briefed and ready to take work. It costs an afternoon now and saves a project later.

10+

YEARS RENDERING
VISUAL STORYTELLING

350+

BRANDS & AGENCIES
EMPOWERED GLOBALLY

95%

CLIENT
SATISFACTION RATE

40%+

OF OUR COMMISSIONS NOW
INCLUDE MOTION OR 360

When the image has to hold up, **talk to us**

We are a CGI studio: architectural and product rendering, 3D modelling, animation, 360 tours and VR. Ten years, 350+ brands and agencies, and the kind of work that still looks right when somebody counts the windows.

Send us the plans and a line on what the images are for. You get a scope and a price, and no obligation to use either.

START HERE

maverickframe.com/contacts

SEE THE WORK

maverickframe.com/gallery

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Maverick Frame production render. · Cost ranges are market ranges as of 2026 and are not a quotation.