



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

# Modular's Real Problem Is Perception

The images that answer a sceptical planning committee and a nervous neighbour, the ones that make things worse, and the order to show them in.

[START HERE](#)

# You are not selling. You are defending.

---

Modular schemes lose rooms, storeys and sometimes whole applications on a suspicion: that it will look temporary, that it will look cheap, that it will not age like the street it joins. That suspicion is not argued with words. It is argued with images, and the images most developers bring to the meeting are the wrong ones.

The distinction is simple and almost nobody observes it. A marketing image is made for somebody who already wants the thing and needs to want it more. A defensive image is made for somebody who does not want it at all and is looking for the flaw. They are different photographs of different subjects, and the second is harder.

## The buyer's set — what it does

- Wide, warm, golden hour, low camera
- Furniture and life, doors open
- The scheme alone in frame
- Landscape at full maturity

Shown to a sceptic, every one of those choices reads as a distraction from something.

## The sceptic's set — what it needs

- Close enough to see how two panels meet
- Neutral daylight, straight-on, eye level
- The neighbours in frame, at their real height
- The planting at the size it will actually arrive

Less attractive. Considerably more persuasive to the person holding the objection.

If you only ever commission one set, commission this one. The marketing set can be cut from the same model later, and rarely the other way round: a hero render cannot be zoomed into a junction detail that was never modelled.

STEP 01

# The fear, and the image that answers it

Objections to modular are remarkably consistent. Take each one literally and commission the image that addresses it directly, rather than a general view that hopes to address all of them at once.

| WHAT IS ACTUALLY BEING SAID            | THE IMAGE THAT ANSWERS IT                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| "It will look like a portable cabin"   | A close material view at roughly arm's length — one to two metres from the facade — where the brick, cladding or render is shown at real texture scale with real depth of reveal.                          |
| "You will see the joins"               | A deliberate junction study. Where module meets module, where the facade turns a corner, where a window sits in its reveal. Hiding the junction confirms the suspicion; drawing it well removes it.        |
| "It will not sit properly on the site" | How the building meets the ground: plinth, threshold, level change, the first 500mm above and below the pavement. This is where a temporary building gives itself away, and a permanent one proves itself. |
| "It will not match the street"         | A street-scene view from a normal pavement standing position, with the existing neighbours modelled at their real heights and their real materials, not as grey blocks.                                    |
| "The roofline will stick out"          | An elevation-style view or a long-lens street view that compresses the terrace, so eaves, ridge and parapet lines can be read against the existing ones.                                                   |
| "It will look worse in ten years"      | A paired view: as delivered, and the same camera with weathered surfaces and grown planting. See page 04.                                                                                                  |
| "It will be dark and overbearing"      | Shadow studies, plus one view from the nearest affected window looking out. Geometric, unglamorous, and the thing the objector genuinely wants to see.                                                     |

Ask your planning consultant which of these your authority expects and in what form — requirements vary by authority and change. This table is about persuasion, not compliance, and the two lists are not the same list.

## STEP 02

# What makes it worse

Four things a well-meaning image does that a sceptical room punishes. Each one has cost somebody a recommendation.

**01 The glossy hero that will not be delivered**

Mirror-perfect surfaces, an impossible sky, a camera four metres in the air. If the finished building cannot be photographed to look like that image, the image is a liability. Somebody will stand on the pavement afterwards, compare, and say so publicly.

**02 Mature landscaping presented as day one**

Six-metre trees against a new building fool nobody who has ever planted one, and the moment a viewer decides the planting is a trick they start looking for other tricks. Show what the budget buys.

**03 Neighbours as grey blocks**

Context modelled abstractly reads as context being avoided. If the scheme joins a street, the street has to be in the image properly — correct heights, correct materials, correct scruffiness.

**04 Empty streets and no weather**

A deserted, sunlit, litter-free scene is the visual signature of a proposal that has not thought about how the place is used. A few people at correct scale and a normal daylight sky do more for credibility than another hour of rendering.

**The honest pair — year one and maturity**

The strongest single device in a modular pack is two images from an identical camera. The first shows the scheme as handed over: planting at delivered size, surfaces new, nothing softened. The second shows the same view years later, with the trees at a stated size and the materials weathered as the specification says they will weather.

It costs very little — one camera, one model, two states — and it does something no single image can. It tells a sceptical viewer that you know exactly what you are handing over and are not hiding the gap. Caption both with the assumption:

**“planting shown at delivered size” and “indicative growth, year ten”**. The caption is part of the argument.



Maverick Frame production render.

STEP 03

# The pack, and the order to show it in

Sequence matters as much as content. A sceptical room that is shown the wide hero first spends the rest of the meeting deciding it has been sold to. Open with the detail instead, and the wide view lands as a conclusion rather than a pitch.

| SHOW                                          | WHY IT GOES HERE                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 01 <b>Material at arm's length</b>            | Establishes quality before anybody has formed an opinion about the mass. Hardest image to argue with.       |
| 02 <b>One junction, drawn honestly</b>        | Answers the unspoken question early and on your terms, rather than in the Q&A on theirs.                    |
| 03 <b>Where it meets the ground</b>           | Converts “placed on the site” into “built into the site”. The single biggest shift in perception per image. |
| 04 <b>Street scene, pavement eye level</b>    | The integration argument, made from where objectors actually stand.                                         |
| 05 <b>Roofline against the neighbours</b>     | Pre-empts the massing objection with geometry instead of reassurance.                                       |
| 06 <b>The honest pair, year one and later</b> | Demonstrates that you are not managing their perception. Which is, of course, how you manage it.            |
| 07 <b>One wide view, last</b>                 | Now permissible. By this point it reads as the result of everything above rather than a substitute for it.  |

## Before it goes in the pack

- ☐ Every image captioned with what it assumes
- ☐ Camera height stated, and it is a standing height
- ☐ Existing neighbours modelled, not blocked out
- ☐ Planting matches the landscape schedule
- ☐ Materials match the specification, by name
- ☐ Nothing shown that the contract cannot deliver
- ☐ A junction is visible somewhere in the set
- ☐ Your planning consultant has seen it before the authority does

One practical note on commissioning. The close material views and the junction study need geometry that a marketing-led model usually does not contain — real reveal depths, real panel edges, a real plinth. Say so in the brief. Asked for at the start it is a modelling decision; asked for afterwards it is a new model.

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](https://maverickframe.com/contacts)

SEE THE WORK

[maverickframe.com/gallery](https://maverickframe.com/gallery)

WRITTEN BY

**Dim Kuzmenko**

Co-Founder



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