

LDD Report Frankie Snow

by Frankie Snow

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Level Design and Development

CW2 – Evaluative Report

Game Idea Overview

The game will have two teams, both teams are trying to move their payload from their own spawn to that of the enemy team. To win, your payload must reach the end before the other team.

Players are able to choose from two character classes; Melee and Ranged. Players can choose to move with the vehicle or to use side routes around the map to track down the enemy team, kill them and destroy their payload to prevent it from reaching the other side.

Intended Target Audience

The target audience we decided on for our game would be males, typically aged between 16 and 25. They would most likely have an interest in British history, closer to the medieval period, historical wars and stories from that time period.

As well as this, they may have an interest in other similar games, whether this is down to the core gameplay elements – following games such as Overwatch and Battlefield with the PvP playstyle and payload escort objective, or due to the visual style and thematic elements through games such as Chivalry or Mount and Blade.

Also, due to the nature of the game being played in matches, our target audience is better suited to people with less time on their hands. Players would not need to pause the game to save where they are as it is an online multiplayer experience.

Design Choices

We wanted to create a visually strong aesthetic for our level, that matched the overall narrative for the idea we had come up with. We decided to base our visuals on towns and cities in Britain during the medieval time period.

We had plenty of references to work from through researching old British buildings and artefacts found from this time period, allowing us to produce more accurate and consistent assets for the level. This cohesiveness was important to the design of our level as a strong aesthetic identity prevents a break in immersion for the player as every aspect of the game is consistent.

We not only used a consistent visual style, but also colour palettes; we wanted to convey the feeling of an eerie battlefield at sunrise. So, the palette of the buildings were darker and muddier colours, to contrast with the lush green of the grass and the trees, as well as the colours of the lighting and mist added afterwards in Unreal.[6]

Self-Directed Learning

In terms of self-directed learning, I spent a lot of time looking into various tools and techniques I could use to put our level together in Unreal Engine. One of the main things I spent time on was finding out how to use splines.

I wanted to find a way to more efficiently map out the roads, and it was suggested to me to have a look into splines and use this to create the roads and paths within the map rather than placing them one by one. I used a tutorial by Gorka Games [7] on YouTube to implement this into our level. I spent some time modeling and texturing a basic road that the spline would use to replicate and create the paths.

As well as this, our original map design had a large river flowing through the middle of it. I also wanted to replicate this in the final design, so I set about finding a way to do this too. I found that there is a plug-in for Unreal Engine that allows for simulated water implementation into levels. After having a look on YouTube, I found a tutorial by Buvesa Game Development [8] that showed me how to install and use the plug-in to create my river.

Role Research

Our team did not have designated roles; we split all tasks evenly to allow each member to have a go at each section of the design elements. The only difference for myself is that I had focused more on composing our level in Unreal Engine and working with the features available in-engine to effectively create our level as well as enhance it.

I spent a lot of time reading through the Unreal Engine forums to try and gain a better understanding of the software. I feel as though this was very beneficial to my unofficial role within the team as it allowed me to have those extra skills and knowledge to be able to efficiently and effectively pull together all of our assets into a playable level.

I also looked into the landscaping tools as i wanted to create a natural feel for the map, as well as lighting and fog effects to enhance the immersion of the level and provide players with an inkling into the potential narrative behind the game. As mentioned above, as a part of my role research, I looked into the use of splines for creating paths and simulating water.

Games Design Theory Principles/Ludological Concepts

To begin, once we had decided on an idea for our game, we used a method called paper prototyping to create a visual that we could base our level design on. [1] This involved us firstly drawing out our ideal map layout on paper, which then evolved into creating the buildings, props and roads using various toys such as Lego and toy train sets.

When designing our level, we tried to focus on spatial composition and level layout. I did some research into the effects of this within popular games such as Fortnite [2], Call of Duty [3] and Overwatch [4].

I found that changing the combination of both open and enclosed spaces in a level would completely change the pacing of a game and also encourage the player to try new strategies and playstyles; whether this is holding their position or planning an ambush on the main vehicle. IT also prevents there being a dominant strategy. Having a dominant strategy within the game would cause players to become frustrated as the core game loop would involve them losing too often, this has a negative effect on player immersion and enjoyment.

The use of buildings and props placed well within a level can cause bottle necks in routes the player would naturally follow, slowing them down, and providing areas that create balance between high-intensity aggressive combat and slower-paced, strategic combat.

As well as having an effect on player movement in this way, part o a good layout is the locations that pickups would be found. This is something we ran out of time to implement into our level, however pickups would've been found near the player spawn, as well as near the midpoint of the map in various buildings and behind props found around the level.

Research Reflection

In reflection, I feel that the research that I have conducted was complimentary and had a positive influence on my contribution to the project. I was able to effectively implement the new skills that I had gained and techniques that I had learnt through my self-directed research.

The way that I chose to conduct my research could've possibly been more effective, I would find a lot of articles or videos and quickly sift through them to find the exact information that I was looking for. In future, I may spend a bit more time thoroughly exploring more of the sources that I come across as I may be able to find extra information and tips through doing so. This may also prevent me from having to conduct as much research as the extra information may be the pieces that I was initially missing.

I do feel as though my research was effective to my design process, through looking into different techniques and tools, I was finding more inspiration for furthering the design of our map and level, and the different things that could be added or implemented to create a more effective outcome for our final product.

Team Reflection

Our team generally worked well, we were able to collaborate well to produce a wealth of ideas for our game/level. As mentioned above, we didn't give each other set roles, however each of us had an area tht we were best at. I spent a lot of time experimenting

in Unreal Engine, Elana spent a lot of time on concept art and Phil with his modeling and texturing.

We did unfortunately lose a member of our team; he stopped turning up to class and responding to messages and emails. After this we made the decision to spread his workload between the three of us, and I feel this may have had a knock-on effect as it meant we had to take on extra work that we were unprepared to deal with.

As well as this, there was difficulty with communication within the team. We found that it wasn't easy to keep some members of the team engaged with the work, and I also found myself chasing certain people to provide their contributions so that I was able to implement this into our final level.

I feel as though overall, we were able to make the best of a bad situation and were still able to produce a functioning level at the end of it.

Effectiveness of Practical Work

The final level we have produced I feel is quite effective and definitely shows a good application of the research conducted throughout the course of the module.

For me, the most effective part of the level is the consistency between the assets created. I feel that our idea for the visual style was well communicated within the team and has worked to create a strong, consistent outcome. We based our visual style on the medieval time period, specifically medieval Britain, meaning that it was easy to find references to create this consistent aesthetic.

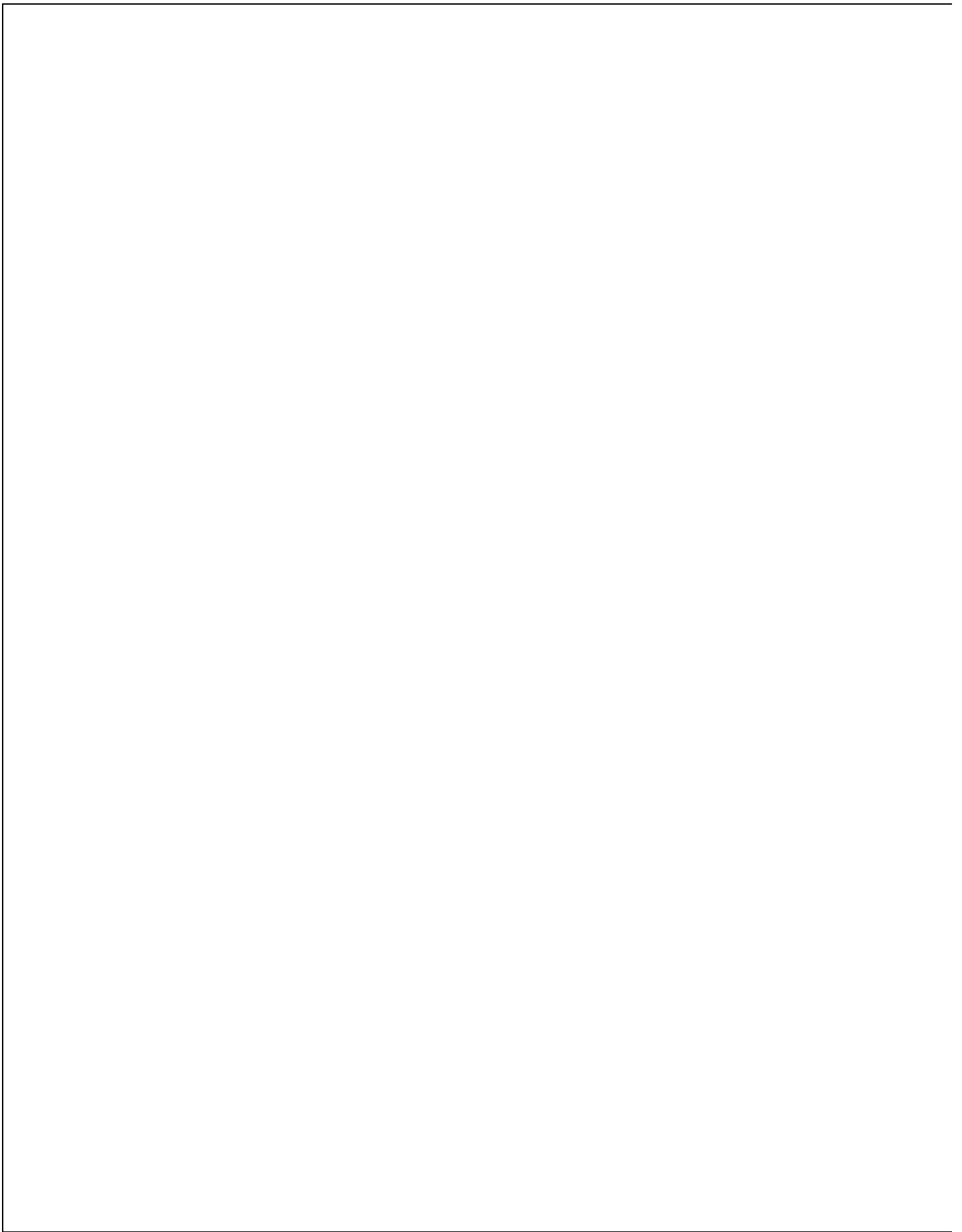
The layout that we decided on in the end is another part of the practical work that I feel is quite effective. We used the paper prototype that we had created in the first few sessions and evolved this to create our final level layout. When placing all of the assets into our Unreal file, I tried to lay them out as close to the prototype as possible, while also considering the research that had come after this.

I do think that if we were to revisit this in future, if we had another week to spend on it, we could've created a stronger outcome. I feel that we lost a lot of time due to a missing member of the team as well as issues with communication and engagement.

We would want to be adding more immersive elements to the level such as music and ambience, as well as interactive props to indicate where our pick-ups would be, more areas for the players to hide or fight within such as a courtyard area, and also better mapped landmarks. Our map is meant to have checkpoints for the vehicle to capture, and I feel as though if revisited in future, this is one of the important elements that I would like to add.

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GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

71 / 100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Thanks for this submission Frankie. Overall a very good piece of reflective documentation with good evaluation of personal workflow. There is also a good break down of design choices with extensive referencing used throughout all in the IEEE format. Well done.

 A voice comment was left for this paper.

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