

Hedgeborough



How can digital games about increasing
biodiversity help players better understand
their own physical environment

Mary Tallontire s2748238

MSc Digital Media and Design

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The University of Edinburgh

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Edinburgh College of Art

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Abstract

This work seeks to understand the potential of digital games about biodiversity on the player's relationship to their own environment and local spaces, particularly for the digital native generation. This involved the creation of a digital game called Hedgeborough about increasing biodiversity in an urban environment through community conservation work and interviews to determine the impact this game had on players' understanding of their local surroundings. The game operates with the presumption that players will have a base knowledge surrounding environmental issues. It utilises the format of an open-world game to allow players to explore ideas around community conservation in a risk-free virtual space. Data gathered suggests that Hedgeborough highlighted to players their own potential for engaging with community conservation work leading to a preliminary conclusion that there are some positive impacts on participants' perception of their own physical environment.

Video Walkthroughs

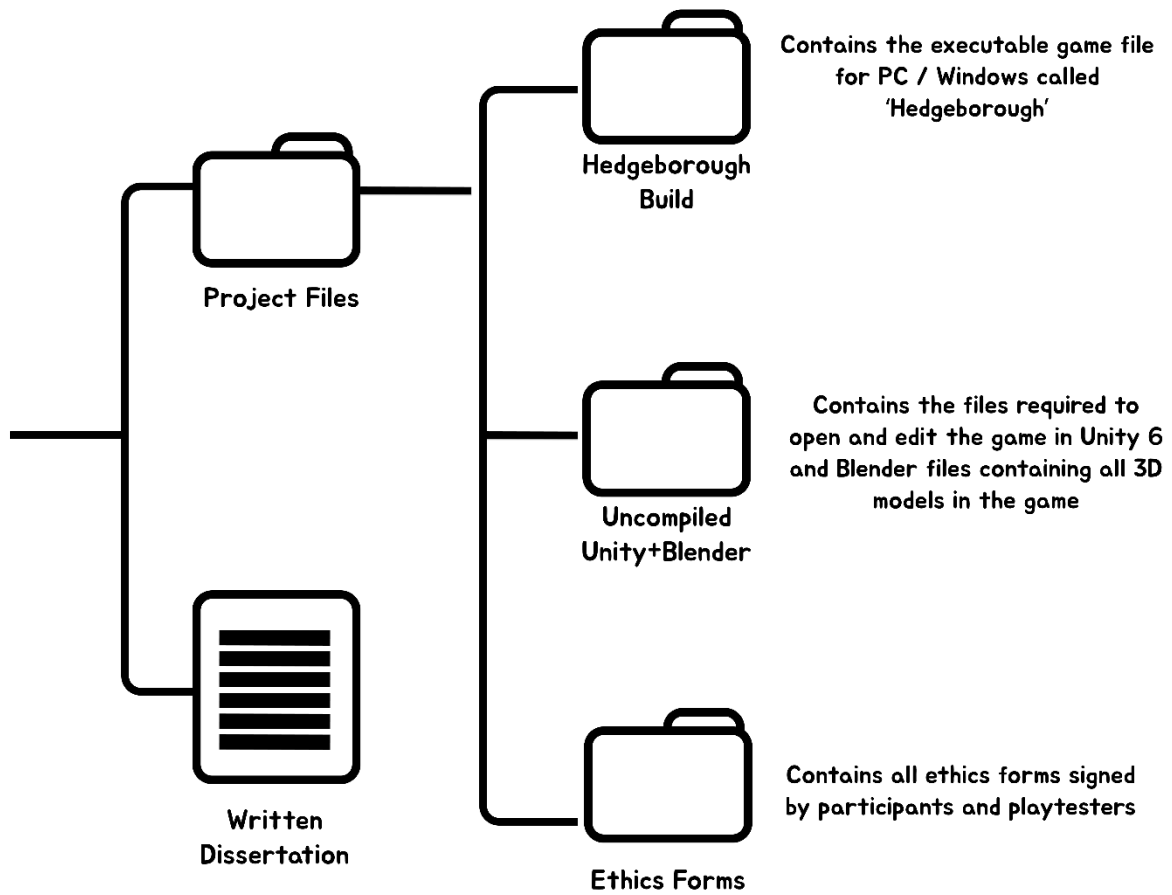
A video walkthrough of the game accompanying this research can be found here:

https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/Hedgeborough+Walkthrough+Video/1_7ljz35vc

A video compilation of play testers playing the game can be found here:

https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/t/1_yhdcspcj

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine the usefulness of digital games in improving players' awareness of their own physical environment and potential to help increase biodiversity around them. This concept stemmed from the idea that digital technologies are causing people to rely on global networks for communication meaning community is increasingly being found online, leading to people being less connected to their local physical environment (Dijk, 2012). This is occurring at the same time as biodiversity is in mass decline (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2020), and the impacts of climate change are being felt worldwide (IPCC, 2023). Whilst these issues are not intrinsically related, community conservation offers a way to connect people back to local community and their local environment and also help increase biodiversity in their local communities. Digital games are potential way to introduce people, who are already on digital technologies, to community conservation, giving players autonomy to explore ideas and concepts within a virtual environment, allowing them to become competent with new skills within a risk-free space that they feel connected to.

To understand the potential of digital games in helping players' understand their local environment, this research project included the development of Hedgeborough. This is an open-world digital game about a city that faces a decline in hedgehogs, where the local community decides to come together to attempt to restore biodiversity in their area and hopefully increase the hedgehog population. Semi-structured interviews, which included passive observational playtests, were conducted to determine the impact of the game on participants' perception on their own local environment.

This research project will be relevant to those interested in the potential of digital games in the context of environmental education, as it aims to gain a deeper understanding of how to impact the perceptions of players and help them act on knowledge they most likely already have.

The first chapter discusses the conceptual background for this project, including case studies of several digital games. The second chapter details the design and development process of the game Hedgeborough as well as a discussion of research methods used. The third chapter details the results of interviews taken about Hedgeborough, and the fourth chapter contains reflections on these results and ideas for potential future development. The fifth and final chapter is the conclusion of this research project.



Background

Conceptual Background

The aim of this research is to reconnect people with biodiversity and their physical environment. This stemmed from the book *The Network Society* (Dijk, 2012) and the idea of “network individualism.” This concept means that as a result of networks being built online in digital spaces, people are becoming less connected to their physical environments and local community but instead rely upon connections facilitated through digital technology. Dijk argues that the “social fabric of contemporary societies is being woven by social networks instead of by groups meeting in physical spaces” (ibid, p116). With communication and transportation speed increasing means networks are increasingly global, which serves to “spatially enlarge society” (p116). Communities are increasingly found online, and connection with local communities has become rarer. The presence of technology in physical spaces has an impact on connection between people too, with Turkle (2015) discussing how having a phone in vision during a conversation can result in people only discussing topics that they are not concerned about being interrupted, leading people to be less invested in the conversation. Whilst global networks can be positive, as they facilitate rapid information dissemination and connect global communities, they can also result in people being less connected to their local “physical spaces” (Dijk, 2012, p116) and communities.

With the advance of network individualism and people becoming disconnected from their surroundings and community, “biodiversity [is] declining at an unprecedented rate” (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2020). In addition, “human-caused climate change” (IPCC, 2023, p42) is having a large impact on every region across the globe, with the UK in particular being one of the most nature-depleted places on earth (State of Nature, 2023). Whilst these issues are not inherently related, if people are less invested in their own physical environments, the question arises of how we address biodiversity decline. There is then potential for these two problems to be addressed simultaneously with community conservation work. This has benefits for “both people and nature” (Esmail et al., 2023) and revolves around grassroots, community action around restoring biodiversity in local areas.

Furthermore, Ofcom in 2024 found that young adults (those aged 18-24) spend a daily average of 6 hours and 1 minute online, the highest average of those measured. Because of this, one increasingly important way of communicating the importance of environmentalism with this generation is through digital tools. One digital tool in particular is digital games, which have become a appropriate way to engage with the younger “digital native” generation (a term coined by Prensky in 2001 to mean those who grew up with and intuitively understand digital technology). In 2023, 52% of people in the UK aged between 16 and 24 stated they played video games (Ofcom, 2023). At their core, digital games are systems of play, which well renowned scholar Huizinga (1939) described as a “cultural factor in life” (ibid, p5). Therefore, games have the potential to engage all people. One definition of games comes from designer Greg Costikyan, who defined games as “an interactive structure of endogenous meaning that requires players to struggle toward a goal,” (p24) however ultimately, the definition used is not of the utmost importance for this research despite the discourse around definitions with game theorists. What is important is that games require players to take an active role in participation, that “interaction is purposeful” (Costikyan, 1994, p11) and the engagement of players in a subject, world, and “struggle” towards an end goal. Active participation makes digital games a useful digital tool for engaging players in environmental education, and games “provide unique opportunities to simulate nature, educate players, and foster empathy towards environmental issues” (Blake et al, 2025, p100). They can therefore become a tool to use technology as a way

to re-introduce digital natives to rediscovering the value of the natural environment and reengage with nature. In addition, digital games exist both in and outside of traditional educational environments, providing a greater audience reach and the potential introduction of educational content to players in different contexts.

Developments in digital games over the past few decades have seen many expand into “increasingly rich and complex virtual worlds” (Rigby et al, 2009, p215) which can allow players to explore and experiment without real world consequences. Przybylski, A.K et al’s research (2012) illustrates these how virtual environments can become “rich environments for the development of the self,” and that video games can help put “players in touch with individual aspects of themselves” that is linked with the “motivational appeal” of a game. They discuss the importance creating immersive, open world spaces where players can explore ideas and ambitions in a risk-free environment, which can help players overcome learned helplessness. They also emphasize a link between the potential of games to put players in touch with ideal versions of themselves and the emotional impact of said game.

Digital games have additionally been found to be beneficial at providing the conditions for the “self-determination theory” (SDT) which dictates that human motivation is driven by autonomy, competence and relatedness and that these psychological needs being met means humans are naturally inclined to grow and develop (Ryan, Deci, 2000). Digital games can provide fulfilment of these needs, with research from Ryan et al (2006) demonstrating that having “fun” across a wide range of digital games was related to autonomy, competence and relatedness. The SDT then is also useful for developing learning-centred experiences or games within virtual worlds, as “the same intrinsic need satisfactions that have been found to facilitate and deepen learning are also those that deepen fun and sustained engagement with games” (Rigby et al, 2009, p221). The concept of a “learner hero” arises, where players become students that feel agency, mastery and connection as they become a hero of a virtual environment through narrative. Ultimately, the potential of virtual environments within digital games to facilitate learning and an understanding and connection to the educational content is clear. Using the SDT framework within games allows them to motivate players and provide conditions for learning, which are useful when thinking about impacting the perception of player’s own real physical space and encouraging conservation work with local community.

This is especially important as younger generations are likely to be well educated on environmental matters, but this has not necessarily translated into pro-environmental attitudes, whilst in older generations this is not the case: “environmental commitment and concern appear to translate into these specific pro-environmental behaviours for older but not younger individuals” (Wiernik, 2013). Boncu et al (2022) furthermore discuss the greater potential of games in producing deeper and lasting change than other methods of environmental education, and that “the reception of information by young people is optimal when it suits their interests and their style of information processing.” Digital games provide a unique opportunity of reaching younger generations and providing them to explore environmental knowledge and motivate players to apply it both within and outside of the game. Blake et al (2025) highlight that whilst education is beneficial, education alone fails to cause a behavioural change in people, particularly surrounding environmental issues. Boncu et al (2022) also highlight the need to foster corresponding values, intentions and pro-environmental attitudes through interactions within games to encourage behavioural change. To leave a lasting impact, fostering empathy and compassion is important, as well as allowing people to reflect on things they already know.

In contrast, it has also been noted that digital green spaces depicted in video games hold the potential of players using these to connect with nature, a phenomenon discussed by Truong et al (2018). In an analysis of their favourite areas to explore in the massively multiplayer online (MMO) game World of Warcraft, players seemed to subconsciously prefer green, natural spaces raising questions around digital nature experiences and how they might be displacing a player's desire to explore and conserve real, physical environments. There is also however a risk of falling into techno-solutionism. This concept originates from Morozov's 2014 book "To save everything, click here: technology, solutionism and the urge to fix problems that don't exist." It is the mindset that problems should be solved with technology. This is especially relevant when the problem aiming to be solved developed as a result of technology, and avoiding this mindset requires critical thinking around the technology used and an exploration of solutions that don't involve technology to assess if the technology is really required. For this research project, the purpose of technology usage is to meet players where they are, which is largely on digital technology and online, and active steps have been taken to avoid falling into techno-solutionism.

Case Studies

Following this, specific games and books have been important for the development of this research project.

Alba: A Wildlife Adventure (Ustwo Games, 2020)

This game has been largely influential on this project, in terms of subject matter, art style and mechanics. This commercial game contains educational aspects about the relationship between humans and nature, where the player plays as Alba Singh – a child visiting her grandparents on a fictional Spanish island where she learns a local nature reserve is going to be redeveloped. It is an open world game. Mechanics include exploration, dialogue with characters, taking photos of animals to 'discover' them, and plot ultimately resolves in the nature reserve not being redeveloped. The actions players take as Alba directly affect the environment and the space develops over the course of the game and narrative. The game is structured into days, and each day elements of the plot encourage players to explore and impact different parts of the island through different quests meaning the environment is explored slowly over the course of the game.



On my playthrough of the game I found gameplay to be engaging and loved slowly discovering the virtual environment and the different animals inhabiting the island. The use of the camera mechanic to 'collect' different species was effective and provided discernible response to discovery, and the mini-interactions around the island allowed you to impact the space, even if these interactions were largely similar just in different locations. The visual style of this game has been largely influential on me; the cel shaders that have a painterly look beautiful and match well to the themes and demographic of the game, and the simple UI matches the virtual world depicted in the game.



Alba: A Wildlife Adventure (Ustwo Games, 2020)

I found the use of a child character limiting, as whilst being a child allows the player certain freedoms, such as allowing all other characters to intrinsically want to help Alba, it also provides other questions. These include: why is this small child building an entire bridge out of wood? Why is this child being gifted a toolbox by a virtual stranger? Why is this child running around an island by herself? These questions could remove some of the immersivity from the experience. The age rating for this game is 5+, however it has drawn in many adult players, including me. Adults playing may feel disconnected from the visions of the child character and therefore feel that they cannot apply messages from the game to their own life. Moreover, the plot dictates that Alba is staying at the island for one week before she returns home. One of the key reasons for not feeling connected to a space, identified by Qi, Mazumdar and Vasconcelos (2024) is related to people not spending enough time within a space. Whilst this is a story about a child and it can be positive to communicate the positives of short periods of conservation

work, this short time frame may make it harder for players to draw parallels to their own life and push false ideas that environmental change can occur in a small amount of time like, leading players to potentially be discouraged when looking to engage in local biodiversity conservation. Furthermore, narratives involving an individual attempting to alter an environment foreign to them within a short time frame can fall into colonialist narratives of conservation (Esmail et al, 2023) which should be avoided. Whilst Alba doesn't inherently fall into this, as Alba is a child with family on the island and a community that largely backs her ideas, when designing games, it is important colonialist narratives are not communicated to the player.

Terra Nil (Free Lives, 2022)

Terra Nil is a strategy game that flips the traditional city builder game concept into an ecosystem restoration game that “emphasizes nature over expansion” (Bell, 2023). The goal of the game is to transform its isometric wastelands into thriving, self-sustaining ecosystems using a variety of tools and buildings, which come at a cost. This requires the player to think strategically about how best to manage their resources whilst simultaneously restoring as much of the land as they can. Different levels represent different ecosystems, including temperate, polar, tropical and continental biomes, and levels are procedurally generated to allow a slightly different gameplay experience upon each level attempt. Once a level has been completed, the game offers players the opportunity to “appreciate” the ecosystem they created, providing an opportunity to behold and reflect the environment they’ve just restored. Then, the digital ecosystem is left to thrive without human interference.



Terra Nil (Free Lives, 2023)

However, it is hard to apply this game to a player's reality. The core concepts of ecosystem restoration are meaningful; however, gameplay revolves around restoring a virtual environment with tools and equipment that cost thousands of dollars and therefore beyond the reach of most people. In terms of environmental awareness, it may be useful to give players knowledge on how ecosystems can come to thrive from “barren wasteland” (Free Lives, 2023) and provide a sandbox to explore how they can positively impact a virtual environment. However, the

practices demonstrated within gameplay are not achievable to the average, singular player. The game relies on using machinery such as “toxin scrubbers,” “cloud seeders,” and “hydroponiums,” (ibid) which are speculative technologies that don’t exist in reality yet as they do in the game, and whilst there are some real technologies featured, such as windmills, these are not tools players will have access to in reality and demand large amounts of capital. Ultimately, the game becomes more of a mindfulness experience: in my playthrough I became very immersed in the game and found it almost meditative, largely due to the calming background music alongside the beautiful visuals of nature. This leads me to question if this game falls into the trap of replacing a player’s need for time within green spaces with virtual nature (Truong et al, 2018) and that in creating this meditative experience through digital technology players will be less likely to engage with local nature around them - the “appreciate” mode I feel is a perpetrator of this especially. Overall, educational content within this game will not largely alter how the average player lives day to day but might highlight to them the potential of “barren wasteland” which is still key in helping players to better understand their own environments in terms of biodiversity levels. This example furthermore demonstrates things to avoid when looking to help players understand their own environments through a digital game.

Wild Fell (Schofield, 2022)

A non-fiction, biographical book written by ecologist Lee Schofield, where he details his time working at the rural RSPB conservation site Haweswater in the Lake District. He discusses how golden eagles have become extinct in the region and the importance of the RSPB’s rewilding efforts to create an environment where they could thrive again. The book explores the ways biodiversity has increased at the Haweswater site, and the actions they took to do this which largely focused on the role of plants in reviving ecosystems, which are a necessity for encouraging animals to live in an area. There is also discussion of the RSPB’s relationship with the rural farming community of the Lake District, who haven’t always been as keen to rewild land that has been used for farming for decades. This emphasizes the importance of working with the local community when thinking about altering and rewilding spaces. I found the focus on increasing the numbers of one species (the golden eagle) an interesting way to structure the book. The discussion of creating an environment where these birds could thrive was consistent and created an end goal for the book, which can be applied well to a game. Rewilding and increasing biodiversity often do not have a traditional end goal like this, but for creating structure or narrative in a book or game, this is a useful framework that I found effective.

Other Games

My inspirations for game making also come from games outside of the realms of sustainability. For this project particularly, there are echoes of games such as A Short Hike (Adam Robinson-Yu, 2019), Undertale (Toby Fox, 2015) and Lego Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy (Traveller’s Tales, 2006) I feel can be felt within the final product. To me, A Short Hike is a masterclass in open world game design, with progression through the world and story being directly linked to the power ups you find through exploration. The dialogue is silly, short, and humorous, and challenged my perceptions of what character dialogue in a game can be – it does not have to be long, serious or solely exist to drive the plot forward, it can be its own entertaining part of the game. Undertale (Toby Fox, 2015) does a similar thing, interposing simple game play with witty dialogue, where each character also had their own unique voice and dialogue style. The simplicity of play and fun dialogues alongside this in these games has been largely influential on my game making style. This silliness is continued in Lego Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy, which

cleverly uses comedic cut scenes to tell the story, alongside low difficulty game play including small world interactions and simple level design. I played Lego Star Wars as a child, and the game has had a long lasting impact on me; many aspects of my game design I feel can be tracked down to this game.



A Short Hike (Adam Robinson-Yu, 2019)



Undertale (Toby Fox, 2015)



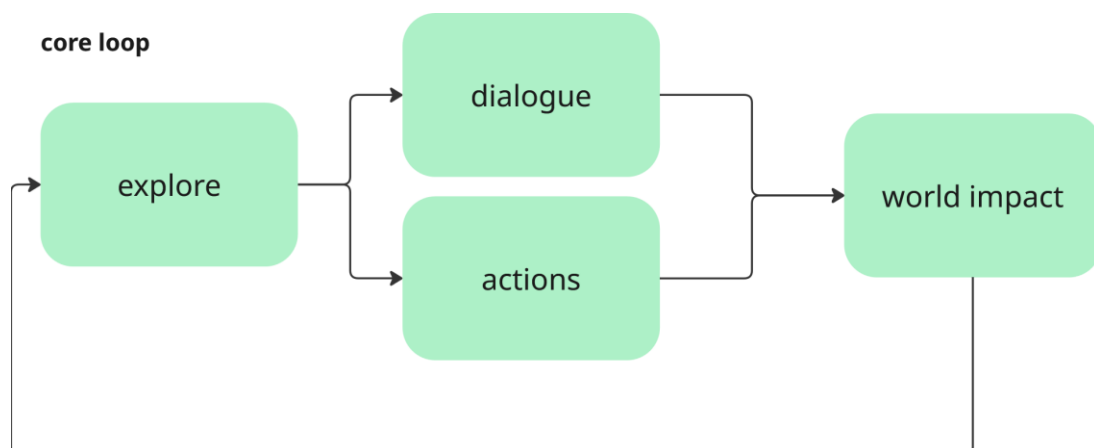
Lego Star Wars II; The Original Trilogy (Traveller's Tales, 2006)



Methodology

This work seeks to understand the potential of digital games about biodiversity on the player's own relationship to their own environment and local spaces. This involved the creation of a digital game about increasing biodiversity in an urban environment through community conservation work. The format of digital games appeals to younger audiences and digital natives (Boncu et al, 2022). This game is designed to give those on digital technology space to think about their physical environment and to give players autonomy to explore ideas around community conservation in a risk-free virtual space. Whilst I want the game to have educational elements, I purposefully tried not lean into being a solely serious game to allow it to reach new audiences and because the amount of educational content is small and most likely information players know; the game operates with the presumption that players will have a base knowledge surrounding environmental issues. This means the game instead looks to encourage players to act upon the knowledge they already have within their own local environment and community, instead of teaching specific environmental knowledge, allowing them to become competent with these skills in a virtual environment.

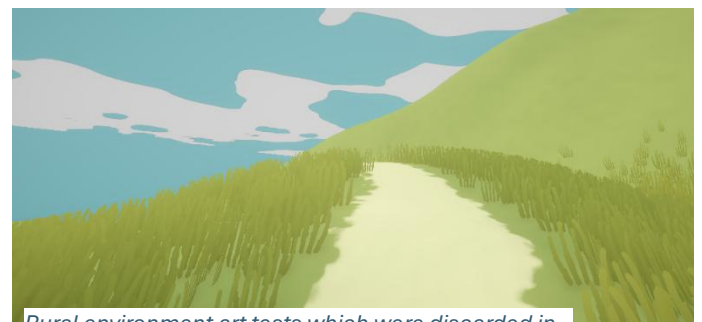
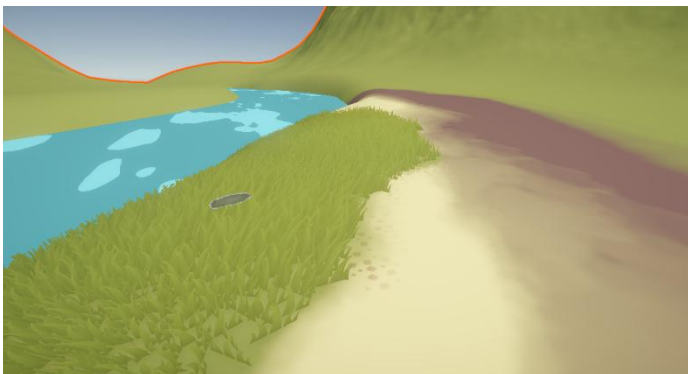
The game I have developed for this research is Hedgeborough: an open world game about the city of Hedgeborough where a newspaper about declining hedgehog numbers kickstarts community action to improve the biodiversity of the area, which helps to bring the community together to improve public spaces. The player character becomes the 'hero' of the game (Rigby et al, 2009, p221), and game mechanics include environment exploration, dialogue and actions within the world, which results in world impact as shown in the core loop graph below. Key elements include the development of one area that the player actively alters over the course of the game, that the game demonstrates methods of engaging with nature in both small and larger ways and an obvious the link between the game and real-world spaces, without simulating a real place. The target audience for the game is digital natives, to encourage them to think about the physical environment and put into practice the environmental knowledge they most likely already have but do not act upon (Wiernik, 2013).



When designing the environment and game plot, I debated whether to base the game within a rural or urban environment, and the advantages of an urban setting became apparent. I wanted the game and environment to appeal and mirror the environment of most players so they would be able to understand how educational content within the game related to their own environment. Mirroring the environment of all players is an impossible task, however in 2014 the United Nations revealed that 54% of the global population lives in urban areas, and this is expected to increase by 66% in 2050. Furthermore, as noted by the IPCC, urban areas account for an increasing amount of emissions, from 62% of the global share to 67-72% between 2015

and 2020 (IPCC, 2023), highlighting the importance of discussing mitigating climate change with those residing in urban areas and the potential for environmental action here. Whilst the game map still contains aspects of nature and greenery, in using an urban environment I am limiting the potential of players using the environment as a replacement for physical greenspace (Truong et al, 2018) as the majority the environment is urban. This limitation hopefully means players will look to real world green spaces instead using Hedgeborough to connect with nature, and the city within the game most likely will mirror places in their life allowing them to better connect to the environment and understand how ideas around community conservation could be applied to their own physical space.

My early experiments with a rural environment also helped me to come to the decision to focus on urban environments, which are demonstrated in the four screenshots below. These landscapes almost felt too idyllic and didn't mirror real places most people frequent day to day, which would make practices in the game harder for people to be able to picture in their own lives.



Rural environment art tests which were discarded in favour of an urban environment.

The game was developed in Unity Engine 6 using the Universal Render Pipeline (URP), due to my experience with this program, to create a game for PC. I did contemplate using Godot as it is open source, however with the time constraints of this research I felt it would be unwise to use software I had not used before as this would add an unnecessary learning curve. All 3D models I created in Blender; however, some skyscraper models I made earlier this year for my game Consumption Model (2025). With the models I opted for a low poly style to allow for all models to be made in time, for them to suit the cel shader best and to mirror the aesthetic of games such as A Short Hike (2019) and Alba: A Wildlife Adventure (2020). Cel shading gave the game a cartoon style and allowed models to easily look cohesive and fit together well, giving the game a smooth aesthetic. The shader used is a slightly altered version of a URP shader graph from

lecture slides from Koknar (2025) for the course Game Design Studio I took earlier this year. I was initially concerned that a lack of realism in the graphics would limit the potential for players to be able to apply concepts explored in the game to their own environments, but research from Garver et al (2018) says “it appears that manipulating the aspects of visual style did not have a significant effect on the engagement or enjoyment of the player” (p6). This study looked at the impact of colour and form on player experience. Other tools for development included Miro for game planning such as for designing the environment, Figma for UI elements and other graphic design elements and Yarn Spinner (Secret Lab, 2024) which is a dialogue scripting tool for Unity.



First plan of the world space, with the orange line showing the final version of the critical path

Whilst the game is about largely hedgehogs, it could have been about any animal native to the UK, as the mes

sage of the game is not explicitly tied to hedgehogs. Hedgehogs are a stand-in for all animals that live in urban environments, with them being particularly useful as they are generally liked. The game would receive a different reception if a different animal, such as rats, were used instead. Furthermore, Western European Hedgehogs (which are native to the UK) are declining (Gazzard et al, 2025), with key reasons for the decline being roads, pollution, litter and human intrusion – issues associated



Hedgehog model in Hedgeborough

with urbanisation - and their presence is seen as an indicator of broader ecosystem health (ibid). Gazzard et al also highlight the need for campaigns around “householder-level conservation” (ibid, p6), involving supplementary feeding, habitat change, and urban hazard mitigation. Therefore, hedgehogs felt like a perfect choice for a game about encouraging “householder-level conservation.” Furthermore, engagement in campaigns around hedgehogs is “widespread,” (ibid, p9) so players might be familiar with these already, allowing the game world to become a place to explore and understand this knowledge so it can then be put into practice in their own life with the benefit of the familiar.

I spent some time debating whether a first- or third-person viewpoint would be better for this purpose. Third person would mean a specific character would need to be created for the player to experience the world through, instead of the player experiencing the world with less barriers. I decided on first-person as it allows a cipher character to be easily created, meaning the player character is a blank slate and players can project themselves onto the character. The lack of a visual representation of the cipher character allows it to be

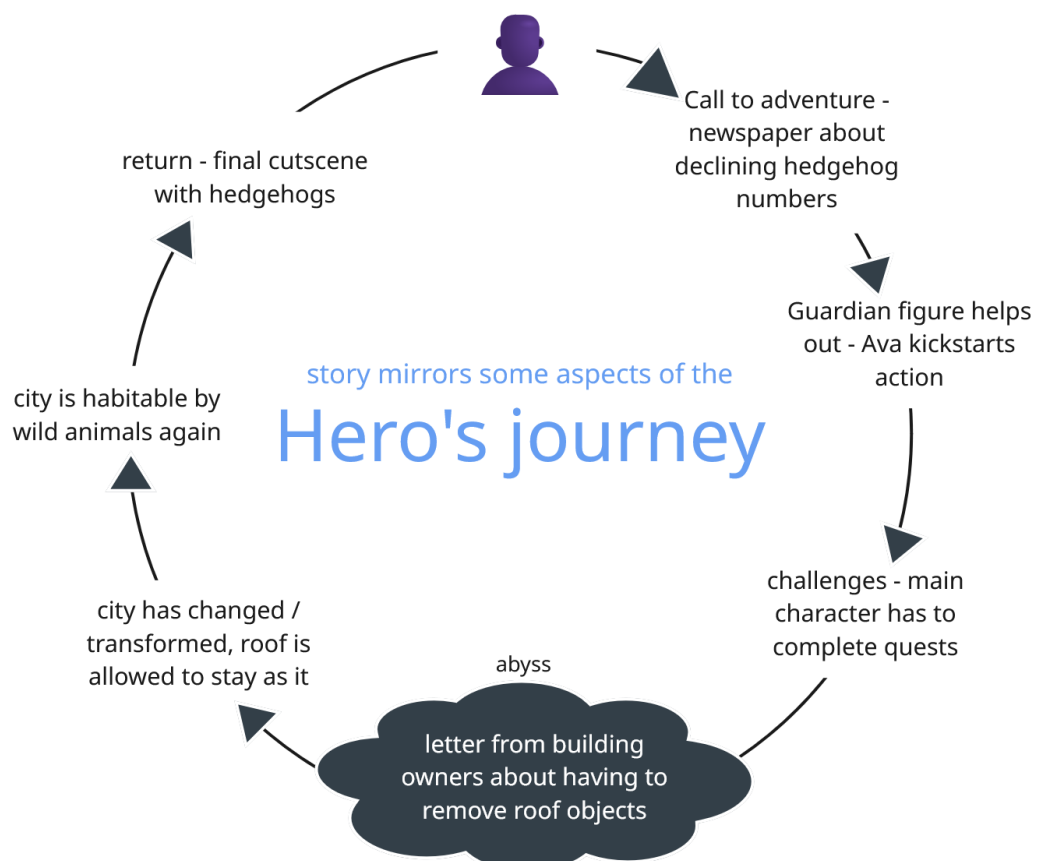
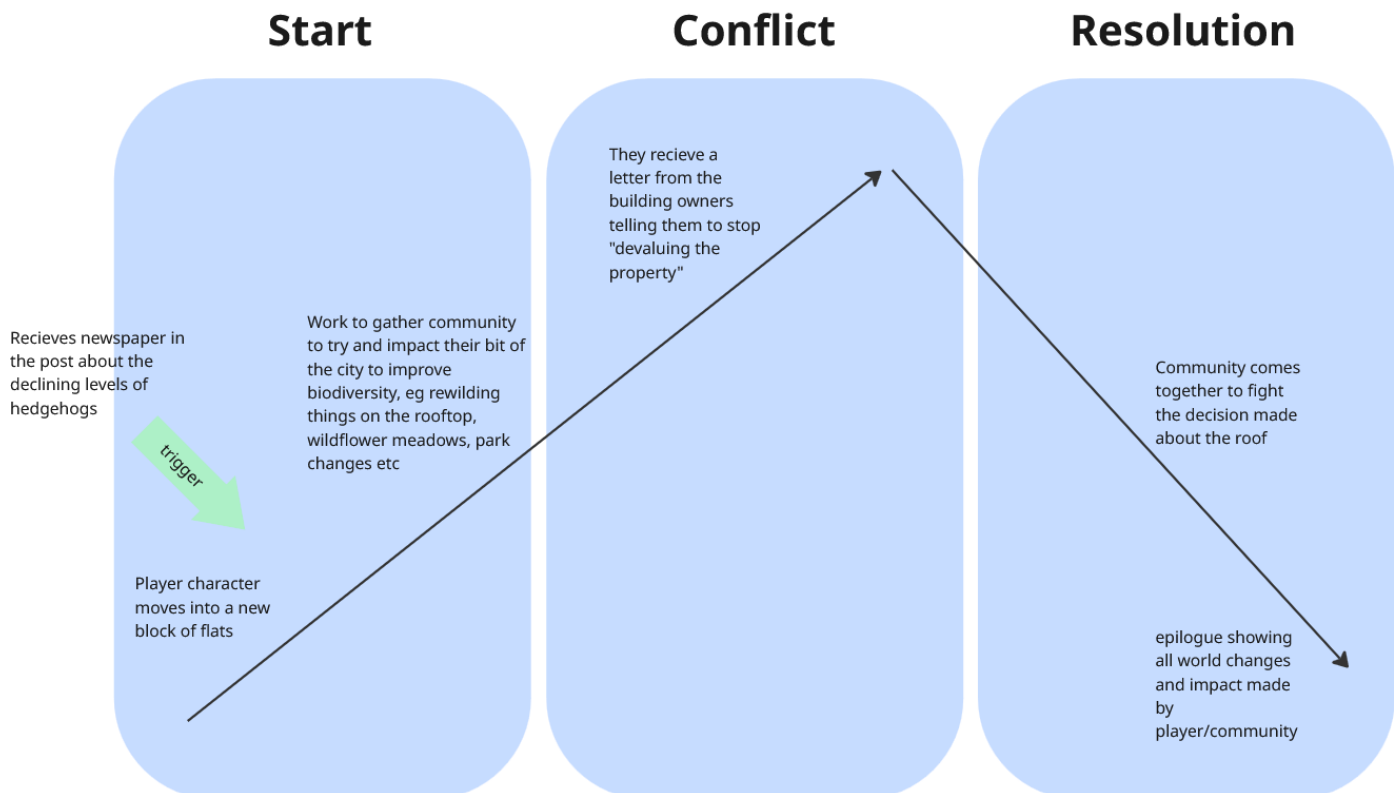


Screenshot of my experiments with a third-person viewpoint in the world.

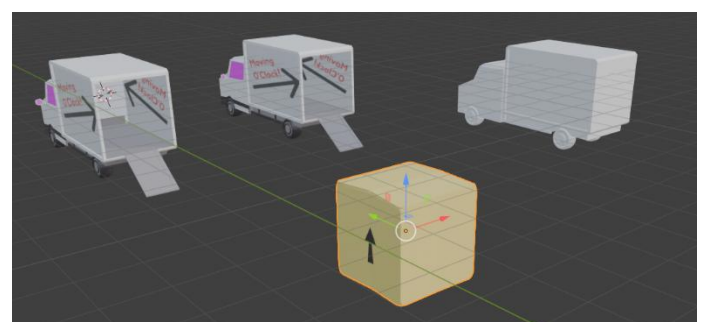
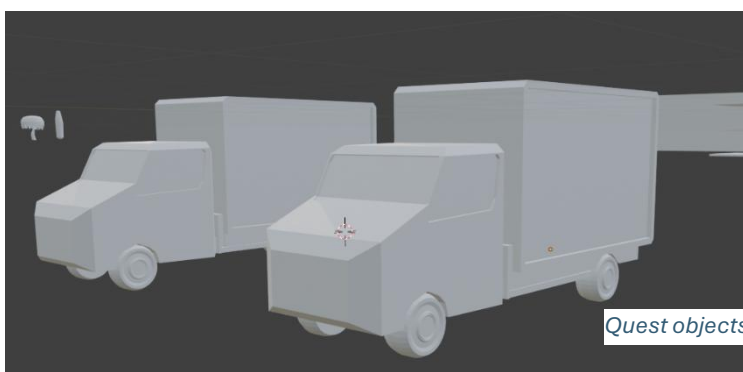
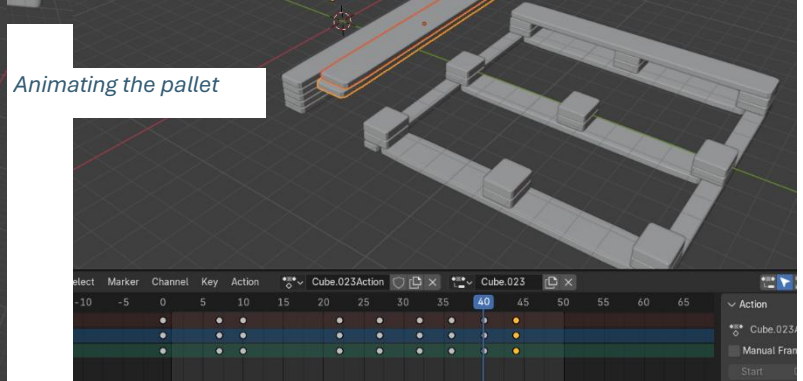
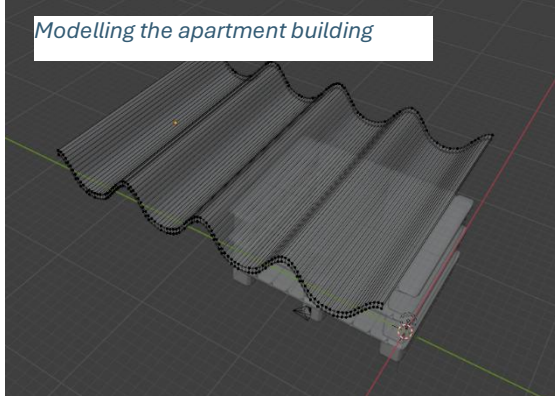
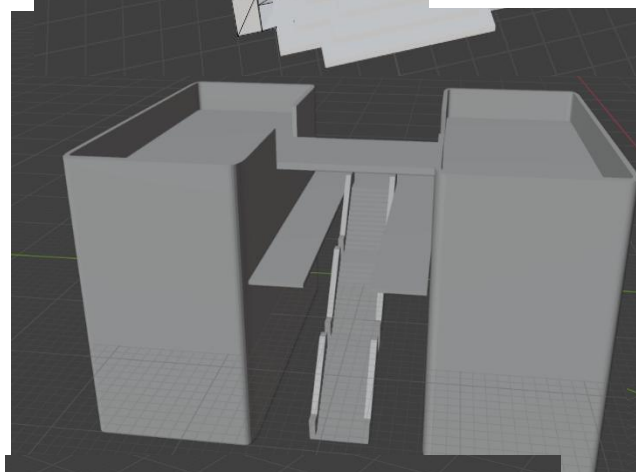
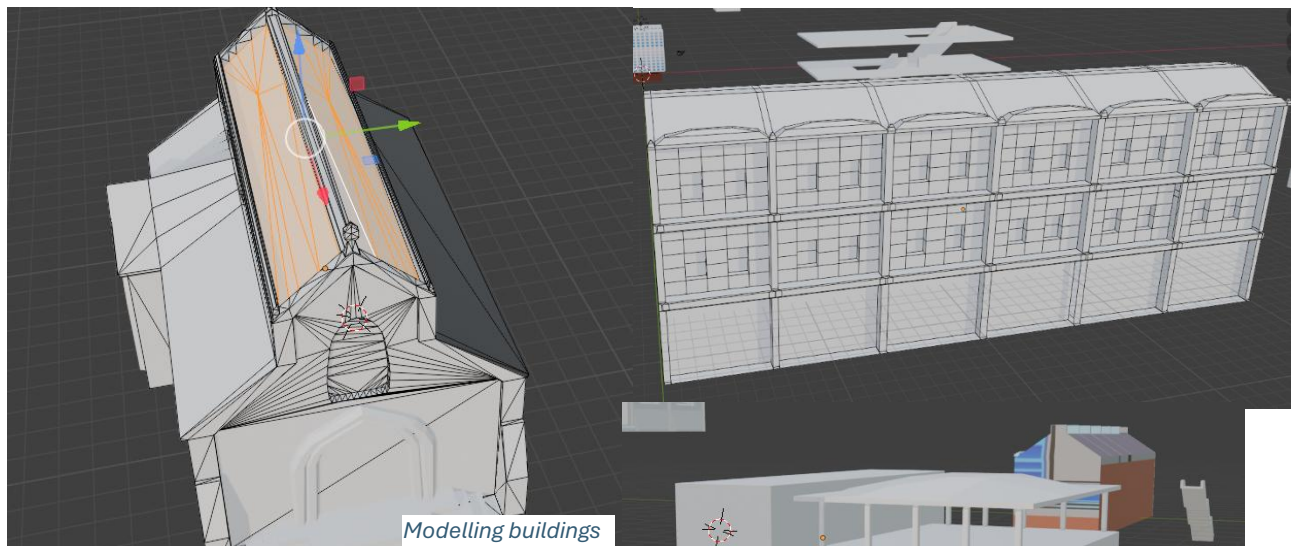
relatable to all and means players can interpret the character as they like, whilst also avoiding the potential for gender or racial stereotyping. I did debate the potential of adding a character creator into the game for a third-person perspective to bypass this, where players could build a 3D character to look like them to navigate through the story with, however with time constraints this was not possible. This also may have resulted in the player bonding with the character they created instead of developing a bond with the environment and educational themes of the game. Additionally, first-person viewpoint has been found to be more ‘immersive’ (Cairns, Denisova, 2025, p147) than a third-person viewpoint when playing an RPG, however no differences were found in emotional involvement or sense of control.

To ensure the game did not fall into the trap of communicating that biodiversity increase can occur quickly, which could put players off engaging in conservation work, it became obvious that time skips in the plot were needed to ensure the player did not leave with an idealistic view of wildlife conservation, whilst also keeping playtime short. The short time frame depicted in Alba: A Wildlife Adventure was one of my critiques of the game, but I did enjoy the way the game was structured into days to provide separation between the unique tasks of each day. Time skips between different days, with each day containing a different quest for the player to complete within the open world, allowed for biodiversity and the community to develop within a natural timescale. With the narrative of the game, I opted to use a three-act structure to give the plot a logical flow and provide something for the player to work for and mirror elements of the Hero’s journey. I tried to tie aspects of the story to the environment as much as possible to allow a connection between the player and the environment to form outside of world interactions. A positive ending was important to provide the player with hope around environmental issues and allow them to experience positive emotions associated with community conservation. When designing the final chapter, I additionally purposefully limited the areas the player could access to the roof so that they were not able to directly access the park and were still visibly in an urban area. This was to ensure that players did not actively engage with the park as a way of engaging with nature or green spaces so that when the experience finished, they would instead want to interact with real green spaces around them due to the lack of access to a digital one. Finally, having the player character being new to the area allowed the player and character to discover

the environment and NPCs at the same time, reducing the amount of disconnect the player would feel within the environment.



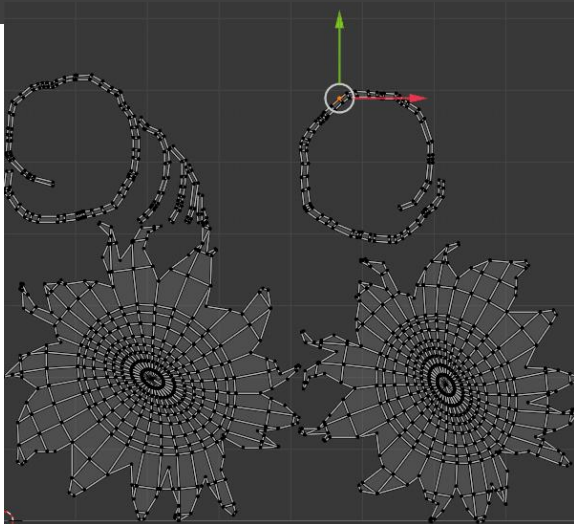
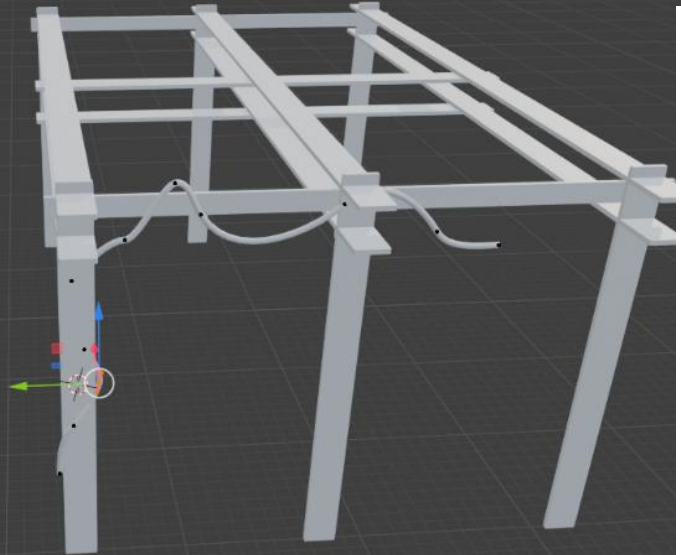
Modelling screenshots:



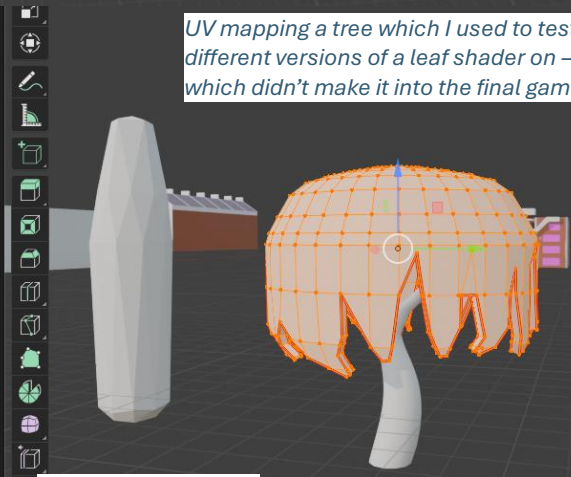
Creating a base character model which I altered slightly for the different



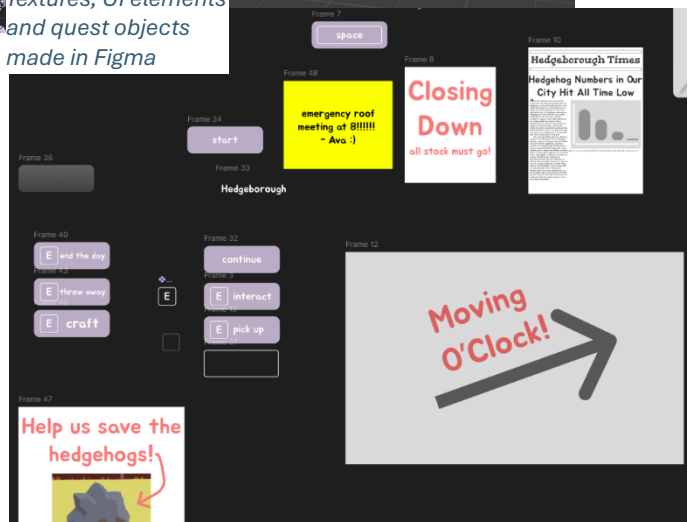
Characters then animated using Mixamo (Adobe, 2024)



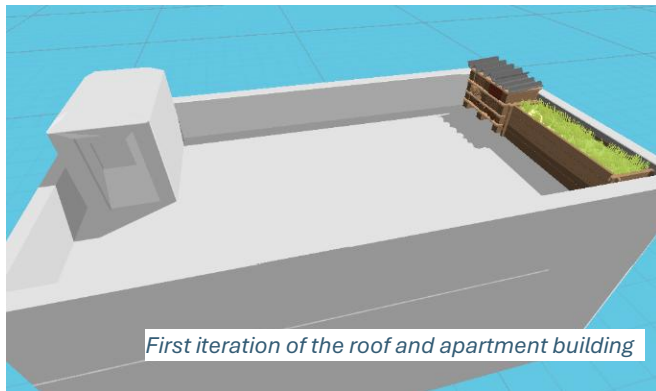
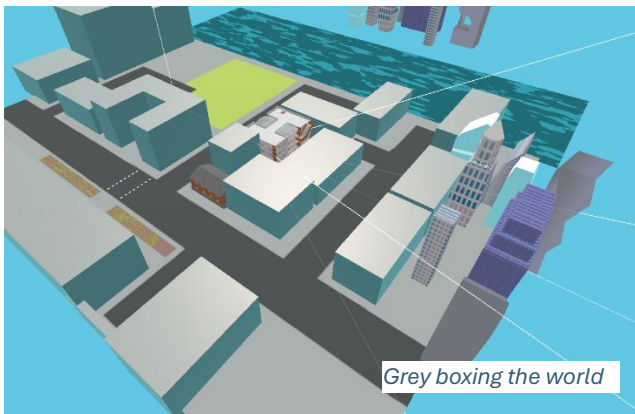
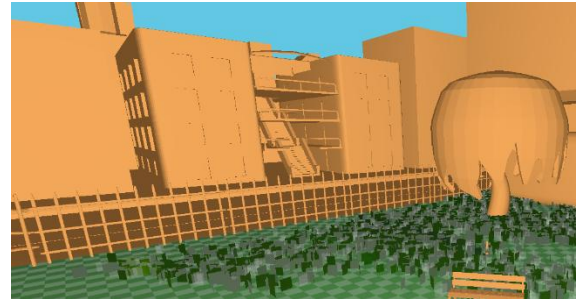
UV mapping a tree which I used to test different versions of a leaf shader on – which didn't make it into the final game.



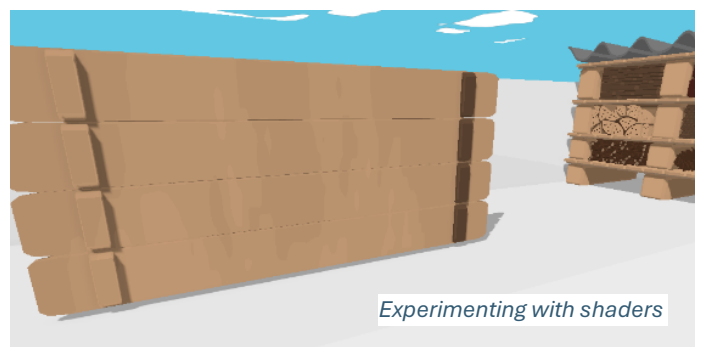
Textures, UI elements and quest objects made in Figma

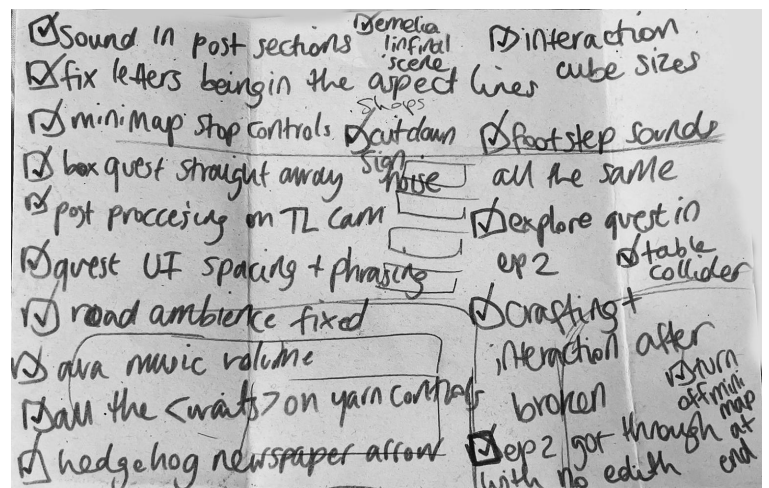
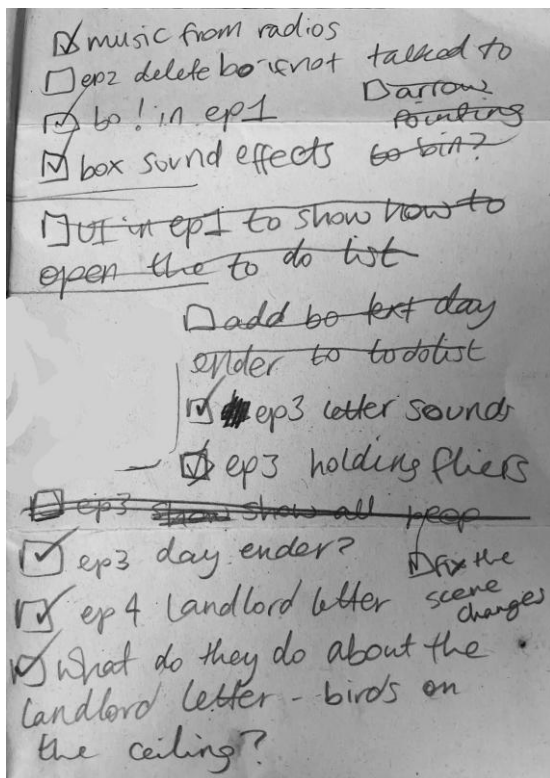


Screenshots of worldbuilding in Unity:



Experimenting with different ways to block the street to keep players within the boundaries





Some of my to-do lists during development in Unity

More design documents can be found in the appendix

The plot of the game is largely told through dialogue with NPCs, alongside cut scenes and environmental storytelling as the player watches the environment change over the course of the game. Including humour in the dialogue was important to provide the game with comic relief and allow the dialogue to exist as an engaging part of the game aside from just being there to progress the narrative, largely inspired by dialogue in *Undertale* (2015) and *A Short Hike* (2019). Quests are also used to progress the story, and whilst these are basic and linear, they allow the player to actively participate within the world and narrative. Keeping the gameplay of the game and quests low difficulty was important to allow all players to be able to easily progress through the story and understand the themes and educational content.

When it came to designing the UI, my intention was to keep this as simple as possible as UI design is not my strong suit nor something that I felt would provide much meaning within the game the aside from the necessary 'E to interact' buttons. I used the font 'Jua' (Woowahan Brothers, 2018) to give text within the game a light, playful feel to match the aesthetic of the environment and humour of the dialogues. Sound design is also not something I am particularly strong at; therefore, all sounds I outsourced, and these are referenced in the bibliography.



On the 10th of July 2025, I did a preliminary playtest with visitors to the Design and Digital Media Graduate show, where I passively observed how players reacted to a prototype of the game. At this point the game was not finished yet, elements of each episode were in place and from this it was useful to see how players responded to the world and mechanics and allowed me to iterate upon my design, which Salen and Zimmerman point out is a key part of game design

(2004). I was able to observe how players responded to the mechanics and systems, without yet asking how players responded to the game in terms of applying the themes of the game to their own lives. All my notes relating to my observations from this can be found in the appendix.



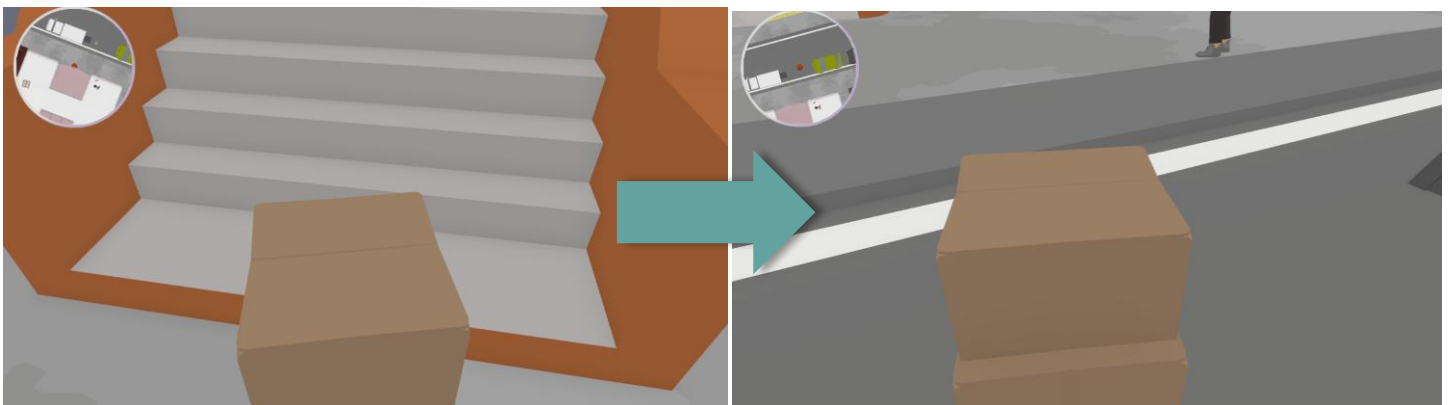
These playtests provided me with vital insights as to how players navigated around the world and responded to quests given to them, enabling me to make modifications based on what I learned from these observations. I had planned to make the other side of the road accessible in later episodes, however it soon became clear that players were having a hard time navigating around the small parts of the world they had access to in the early game and frequently got lost. Therefore, I decided that I should not focus on making the world bigger and expanding the explorable parts of the world in each episode and instead focus on helping players better understand and comprehend the space they already had. I also added some breadcrumbing to make the critical path easier to see and understand.

Furthermore, players were not noticing objects that had interactions attached to them, so it became obvious that these would need something to demonstrate the interaction attached to them. I added floating, glowing particles above interactable objects which use the same material as the exclamation marks above NPC's heads, so the player would associate them with interactivity. The UI displaying quests was also confusing players, and as the game only has one active quest at a time, having the quests have its own separate UI screen ultimately wasn't required. Instead, quests are now always displayed in the bottom corner of the screen, which also makes it less likely to feel lost within the quests, as they always have a visible reminder of their tasks.

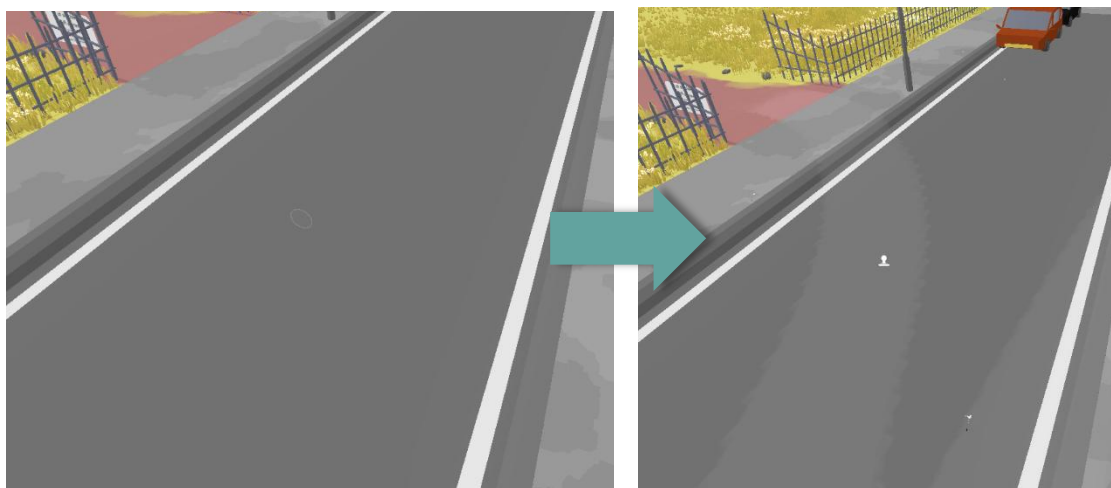
Finally, I made a major change to the box carrying quest, which initially had the player carry three boxes up the stairs. It became obvious that this repetitive task was boring and served no real purpose other than to demonstrate that the player character has moved house, which could be said in a faster way. I therefore changed this to have the player carry a stack of boxes at once and added the first Emelia NPC interaction in the middle to give the quest a purpose outside of being a small narrative marker. This added interaction also serves as the introduction to community and doing small tasks for people.



Addition of glowing particles above interactive objects



Carrying two boxes at once for the box carrying quest



Addition of a decal gently guiding the player to the places they can go and dandelion seed particle system blowing in the direction players are supposed to go



Removal of To Do List screen to instead display quests on the screen at all times. I prefer the look of the To Do List screen however it makes gameplay smoother if quests are on screen instead.

Interviews

There are two main ways for generating user feedback: surveys, or in-person interviews. Surveys have an advantage in the potential for quantitative results and statistical analysis if they generate enough responses, however they can also require careful testing of questions to ensure they are interpreted correctly and can be impacted by response bias. I initially planned to utilise surveys for this research, with participants answering questions before and after playing the game, however this method would have meant there would be no insight into how users played the game and navigated through the world and story. This could have meant certain answers may have been unknowingly impacted by how much a player did or did not engage with certain game elements. Therefore, interviews became the more viable option, as with these I could also include a passive, observational playtest in the middle of the interview. Semi-structured interviews including a playtest also allows one to watch the body language and reactions of players, and there is an understanding of how the participant played the game when discussing answers, which could alter questions or provide clarity around answers. Interview answers largely provide qualitative data, giving an insight into the player's thoughts and feelings towards the topic and game. There are also limitations with using interviews, as they too rely on self-reported behaviour, allowing for potential response bias, but the addition of a passive, observational playtest should largely be able to counteract this as it will provide extra insight into participants' thoughts regarding the game. Interpretations of interview data can also be subjective. This can impact results, and whilst I have tried to be as objective as possible, this should be considered.

I conducted 8 semi-structured interviews with participants representing the target audience for the game. This involved a passive observational playtest, with questions asked before and after playing the game. This was to determine the potential impact of the game on the player's understanding of their own physical environment and potential to help increase biodiversity around them. All participants were asked the same questions, some were asked additional ones based on their answers, and all played the same version of the game. Interviews occurred in different locations each time, with one conducted virtually (with participant 004), however the impact of this on the experience was seemingly minimal as the passive observational playtest was able to function as normal. My interview plan can be seen in the graphic below. I tried to limit the amount of overwhelm participants would have felt in the interview despite questions being fairly direct by trying to create a welcoming atmosphere, giving participants time to collect their thoughts and occasionally switching up the wording of questions.

Before Game

Age and gender

Would you describe yourself as a digital native?

Do you play many video games, and if so which ones?

Have there been any games you've played that have had a long lasting impact on you, and why?

Do you live in an urban or rural environment?

What is your local environment like?

→ Do you like it?

How biodiverse is your local environment?

→ Do you like the current amount of biodiversity?

How would you describe your relationship to sustainability and the environment?

What is your local community like? Do you interact with your local community much?



After Game

Any initial thoughts before I ask questions?

Do you feel like any aspects of the game could be applied to your own life?

If you think of your local environment again now, how do you feel about it now?

How do you feel in regards to biodiversity around you now?

→ Why do you think this is?

How do you feel in regards to local community now?

→ Why do you think this is?

Was any of the information presented to you new information to you?

→ Despite the information not being new, do you view any of the themes in a new light?

Tell me about how you felt about the city within the game

How did you feel navigating and impacting the world?

Were you consistently engaged with the game?

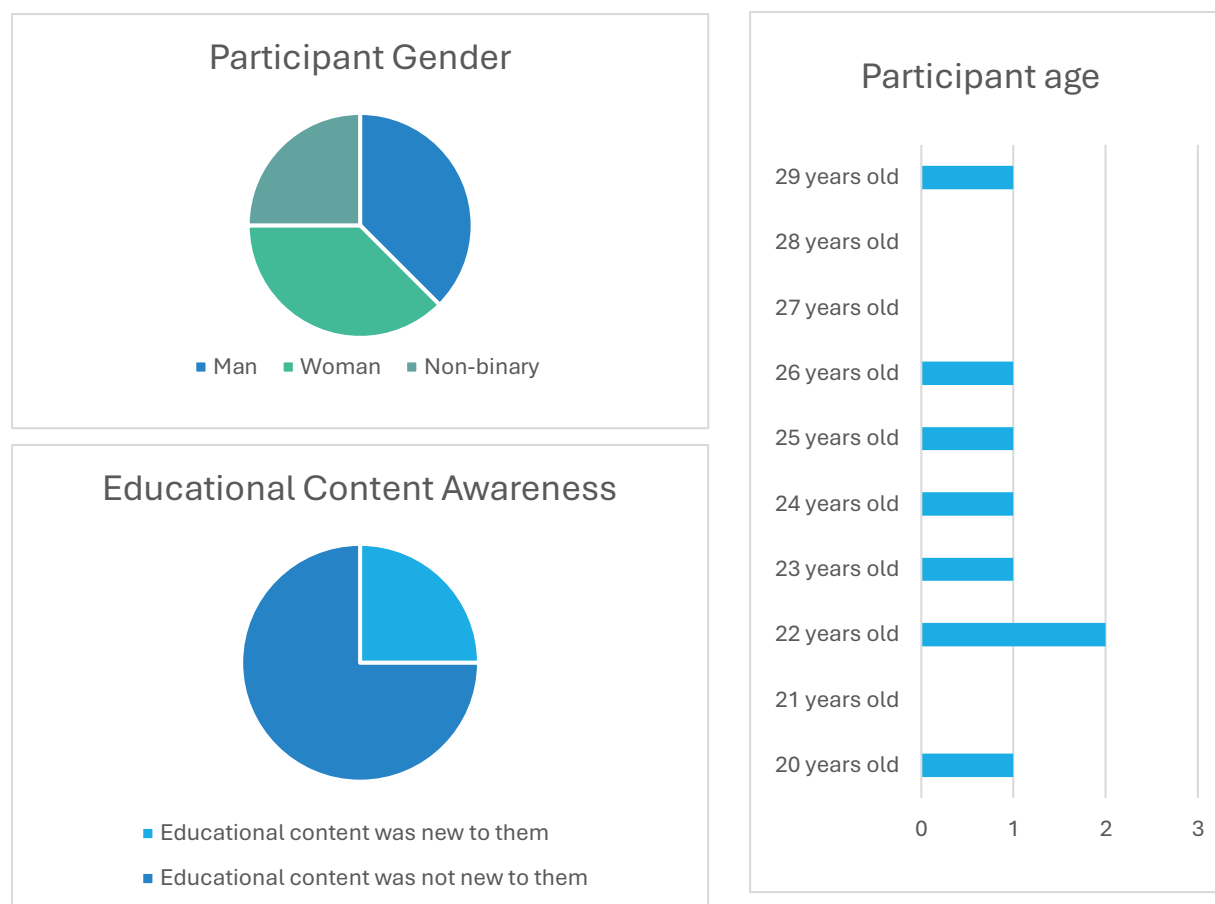
If you were to make any changes to the game, what would you change or what would you have liked to have happened in it?



Results

I interviewed eight people for this research, all aged between 20-30 who defined themselves as digital natives. All participants that reported that they currently lived in an urban environment and that they played video games, meaning all participants were in the target demographic for Hedgeborough. Most primarily listed multiplayer games as examples of games they enjoyed, demonstrating that largely this demographic may primarily enjoy the social aspects of games, but the majority did name single player games too. Only participant 005 did not mention any multiplayer games, instead referencing short story games like A Short Hike (2020).

The themes that emerged when participants were questioned about games that caused a long-lasting impact were that this was largely related to nostalgic value or the narrative of a game. Most games mentioned were single player games despite the earlier popularity of multiplayer games. More demographic information about participants is visible in the graphs below.



The consensus after playing the game was that the majority of players did have a change in how they viewed their local environment. Recurring themes in the impact of the game were that it made players recognise the importance of small actions, generated new ideas for them, helped them to understand what could be possible, made them notice their environment differently and reminded them of information they already knew. This reminder of information was largely in the context of reframing information participants knew in the context of their own lives, or lives of people around them. Participant 005 summed this up well by saying “I think a lot of my knowledge has been theoretical” and that to “see it in action and play though it actively [was] just a different way of looking at information that I already had,” demonstrating that responses largely support my contention about the potential of video games to impact people’s perceptions of their own local environment. More quotes representing these recurring themes can be seen in the graphic below.

Quotes on the impact of the game on player's perception of their own local environment and community

Participant 1

"I would look at it with different eyes, in the sense of thinking about these small things"

"looking for signs or lack of stuff that I wasn't playing attention too as much before"

"[demonstrated the] positive emotion of doing these little things that actually can help"

Participant 2

"doing small things can lead to a like a bigger outcome"

"I think just maybe if a lot of people play this and sort of realise what they can do, you know, things like this can happen, I think it's quite good."

Participant 3

"it's a little bit utopian [...] but indeed it is a good message"

"it's reminding you of what you could be doing. You could always do more"

"it's showing you concretely that this could happen" "So it's just like even if it's not revolutionary in what it's saying, it's still saying it in a way that's approachable"

Participant 4

"I'm not really an animal person, not really a plant person"

"not really a change in my perspective, more like understanding the perspective of someone else"

Participant 5

"I think a lot of my knowledge has been theoretical, right? And so to see it in action and play though it actively that's just a different way of looking at information that I already had and sort of helps me feel like it's a doable thing rather than just an abstract theory in a paper"

Participant 6

"it makes me feel grateful for what I have"

"think reframing it in like an urban aspect is helpful"

"I already talk with my neighbours. That's the thing. I feel like if I didn't then, then that would be a big one as well."

Participant 7

"so it's made you reassess the importance of small animals around you?" "yes!"

"I do want to participate more within the community"

"taught me [...] little facts throughout the game that will probably stick with me when I'm out and about"

Participant 8

"it's a lot easier than probably people realise, to just like, reach out and talk and like even just do little things" "when [educational content within the game] is actually presented to you, like, makes it seem a lot more simple."

"being able to see potential everywhere, but knowing that someone has to be the first person to stand up and do it"

Key:

recognition of impactful small actions

empathy

Understanding what is possible

Idea generation / Inspiration

Positive emotions

Noticing things differently

Reminded of information

Found the outcome idealistic

Maintained previous thinking

Some user feedback focused on gameplay. Frustration from some, such as participant 001 and 004, stemmed from the speed of the character, which is an easily adjustable change. Participant 004 in general had a more negative response to the game, who coincidentally also said they were “not really a plant person,” had not thought about biodiversity in their area before and said all information presented to them in the game was new – one of two participants to say this. Furthermore, during their playthrough I observed them skipping through dialogue sections and not engaging with small interactions around the world, opting to press E to interact but walking away before the animation finished meaning the impact of these interactions were not seen. They called the way you navigate through dialogue (pressing the space bar) “tedious” and small interactions around the world “irritating,” as they did not progress the main quest, despite them existing to progress change in the environment outside of the quest system. Despite participant 004’s more negative response to the game, they did say that after playing they would “maybe like be empathetic for animals” and had gained more of an understanding of why others may engage with community rewilding projects, even if it was not something they could see themselves doing. They were the only participant to mention the word ‘empathy’ explicitly.

Participant 003 called the game “utopian,” participant 005 said it was “hard to draw a connection because this feels like such an idealised like small community kind of thing.” Participant 008 discussed how the game made them realise that “someone has to be the first person to stand up and do it,” and viewed the community within the game as motivational, instead of an unreachable standard. Interestingly, participant 003 and 007 both reported that they did have a large amount of environmental knowledge, whilst participant 008 had less. These responses generate questions for more research and will ultimately require more participants to determine a potential connection here. A potential question to pose in future research might be to test if it is better to depict a “utopian” society to help inspire players and demonstrate the potential of what could be, or to depict conflict within the community, which ultimately might put players off communicating with local people, but more accurately represents what they might find if engaging with community conservation work. Participant 007 communicated their desire to engage with community but that they found this hard to do in practice, citing “social anxiety” as one reason for this. This highlighted the need for work in this realm to continue outside of digital technology, with Hedgeborough acting as a first stepping stone in helping players understand that they can alter their local environment. In future development of this project there is potential for working with community groups to use games as a way to communicate with local people on how to engage with them or introduce them to key conservation concepts.

During the interviews, I noticed that in asking people about the current biodiversity levels in their area, some participants responded that they had not thought about this before. This line of questioning then prompted them to evaluate the levels around them and potentially impact their thoughts on increasing biodiversity in their area, before they even played the game, or meant that when playing the game, they had more awareness of their current thoughts, or lack thereof, around biodiversity than players not being interviewed might. I also noticed that when asking participants about their knowledge of sustainability and environmentalism, all participants seemed to feel obliged to say that they were engaged in this, and body language often communicated that this was perhaps exaggerated, with some wanting to appear to say the socially acceptable thing. This method of interviewing also meant answers to questions after playing the game relied on player’s first impressions and thoughts, without giving them any time to dwell upon themes or have time to apply it to their own life. Therefore, whilst the findings

of these interviews were largely positive, more data is required before a final outcome of this study can be determined.

Outcome

Whilst I am proud of the result, and the game has been largely successful in its mission, following all interviews and playtests I feel there is still development and iteration upon Hedgeborough and the themes and concepts that could be done to improve the impact of the game and gameplay. Interviews provided both answers around the impact of the game, which showed the game largely resulted in players viewing the world around them differently, but also ideas on how to best iterate upon the game concept to make gameplay more fun and engaging overall and therefore improve the impact on players' perceptions of their own environments.

Frustration around small interactions in the world stemmed from these having no real reason or effect, other than altering the world and therefore helping to develop the narrative and environment, with this response largely coming from Participant 004. Interestingly, this feedback mirrors some of the critiques *Alba: A Wildlife Adventure* (2020) received, with feedback from players on the 'Patient Gamers' forum on Reddit including that small object interactions "get old very soon," (deleted user, 2024) and that overall, it has "objectively bad gameplay" (Foywillbefoys, 2024). I disagree with these critiques about *Alba*, as I was consistently engaged during my playthrough, but feel it was important to get this response on Hedgeborough. Players are not going to feel positively about all games they play but taking this feedback into consideration when thinking about future development is important. Future changes to appeal to this response more would include making the less obvious objective of slow, environmental change easier to understand with more discernible feedback, perhaps through gaining points when the player interacts with objects, such as a "community support progress bar" as Participant 002 suggested.

Related to this, the current quests in game tasks feel quite linear, and the player only has one real task to do per time jump, mostly due to the time scale I had to develop this project. In future developments of the game, I hope each time jump will have multiple tasks with more characters, with quests that feel less rigid and allow the player more freedom within the world than one pre-determined path. One quest in particular that I plan to workshop is the signing of the letter task; I know this gets repetitive fast and bored some players. The linear nature of the experience as it stands, I feel does limit the potential of inspiring change in attitude to the environment, as the player currently is restricted in exploring the world as to how they may truly want to, meaning the potential of them to experiment within the world is lessened.

Another way to allow more experimentation within the world would be to expand the world into more of a sandbox, with crafting and object placing being more procedural, allowing players to build and develop the world as they please instead of having objects and interactions in pre-planned positions. This would provide a greater sense of freedom within the world for the player, giving them a greater sense of freedom within the game world and therefore understand which parts of the game and environmental concepts engage them the most, as well as overall helping gameplay to feel less rigid. The narrative and time skips would still be important with these changes, potentially even more so important to still provide the experience with structure.

I created every model in Blender, which was important to me as it meant the visual style remained consistent. However, I do feel this slowed development, and whilst I'm happy with the environment I've created, this comes at the cost of the game content and design. World design

and game design do go hand in hand; however, I feel the time spent on environment design could have been used to flesh out the game content better in order to focus on the research question better. I had to reduce the size of the explorable sections of the map after my initial playtests, including two streets I had fully modelled and implemented in Unity which had to be cut demonstrating the importance of early playtests. Evidence of these cuts are still found in the game, such as with the broken crossing, which was supposed to become fixed in later episodes to grant the player character access to the other side of the road. I ended up not removing this, partly as I had written some dialogue around this, but mostly because of the potential for expansion with this game and concept.

An extension of this study would be to track the behavioural change of players after playing to see the potential of video games on changes in environmental behaviour. It would also be interesting to repeat interviews with participants a week or month after playing the game too, to determine if the impacts on how they viewed their space were temporary, whilst the game was fresh in players' minds, or if they had engaged with any new community conservation work. Future collaboration with a community conservation group or environmental researchers furthermore would help to add to the impact of this project and is something I am hoping to do.

Conclusion

To conclude, results from interviews largely indicated that Hedgeborough did impact how players viewed their local environment, causing most to reflect upon biodiversity levels around them and actions they could take that would have a meaningful impact. The game introduces players to community conservation and allows them to explore this concept in a risk-free virtual environment, allowing them to become comfortable with this before potentially engaging in and contextualising this information in their own local environment. This research highlights the importance of designing environmental education that builds upon what interests and excites people, that also understands the context of where people could be engaging with the educational content, such as on digital technologies or in urban areas. Overall, it demonstrates the great potential of digital games in impacting players' perceptions of their own local space.

Word count: 8627

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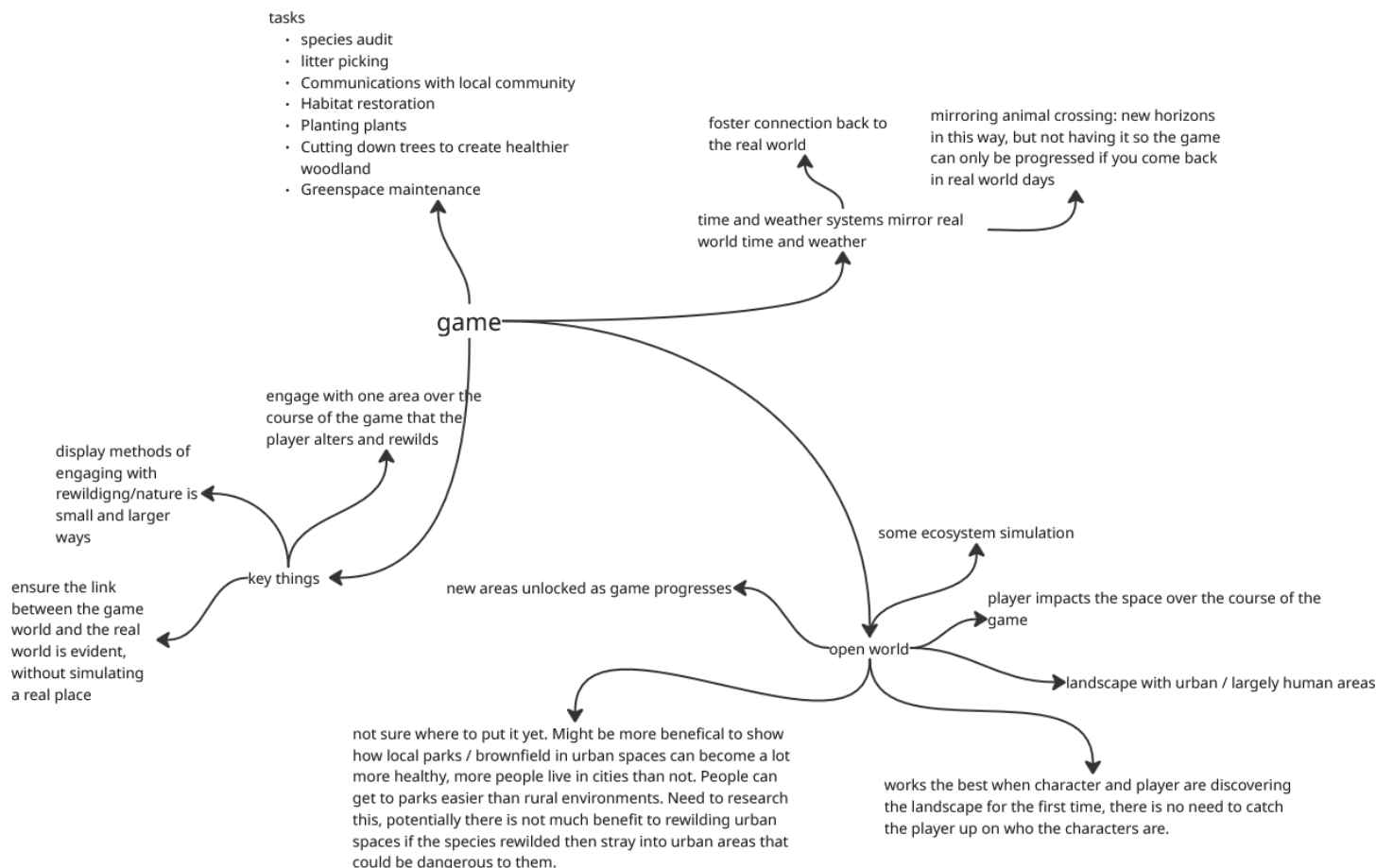
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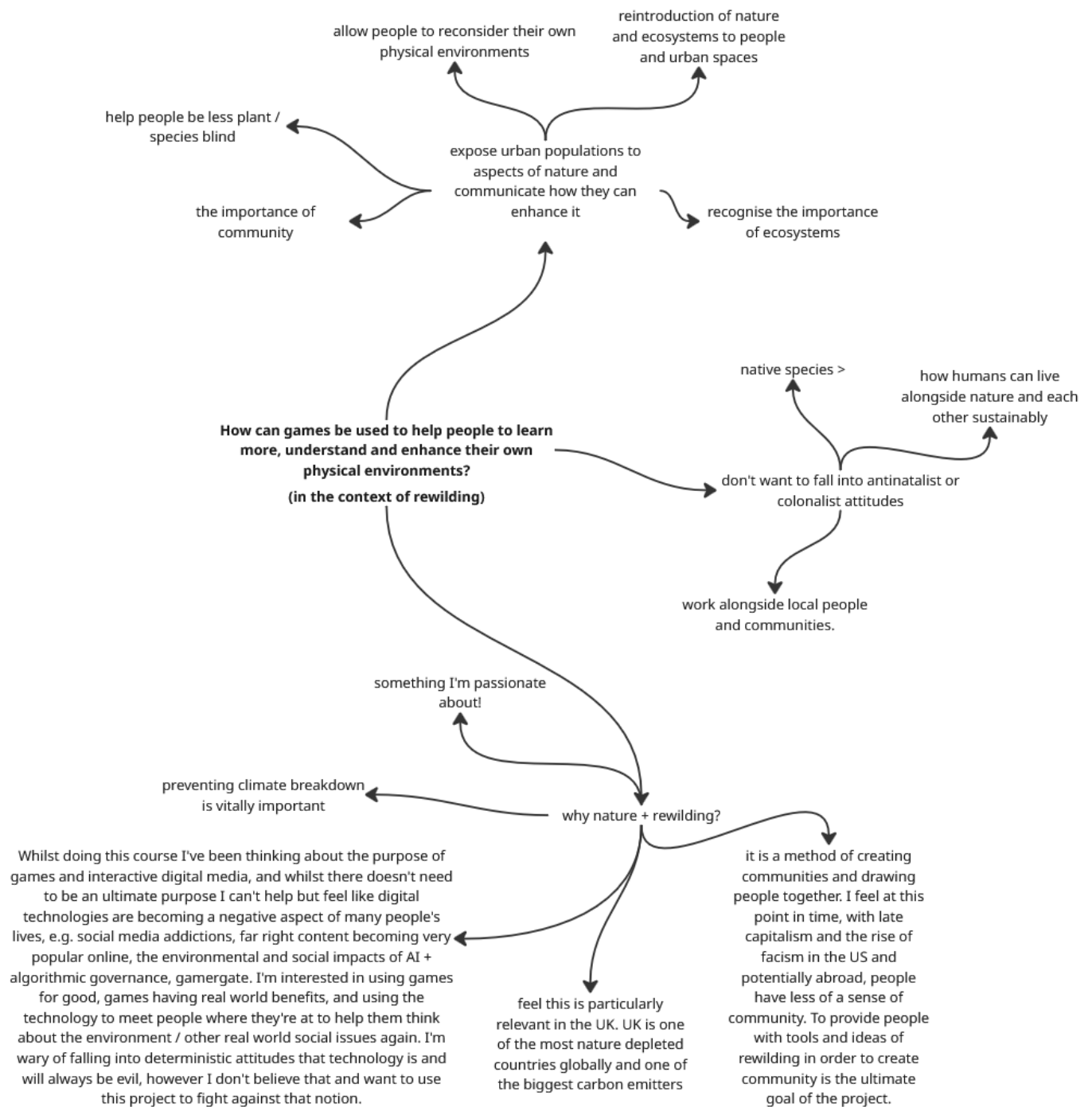
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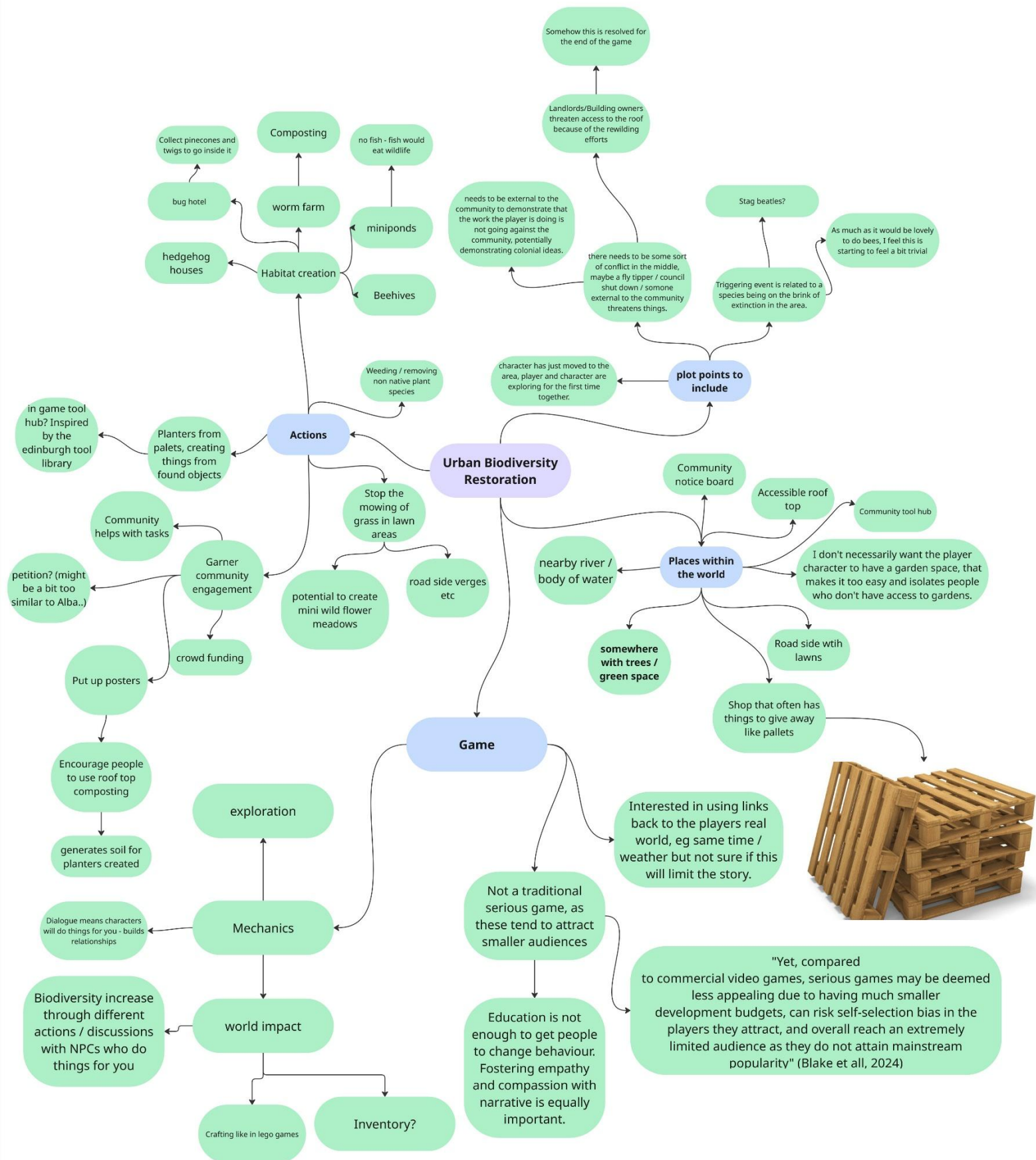
Figma Link

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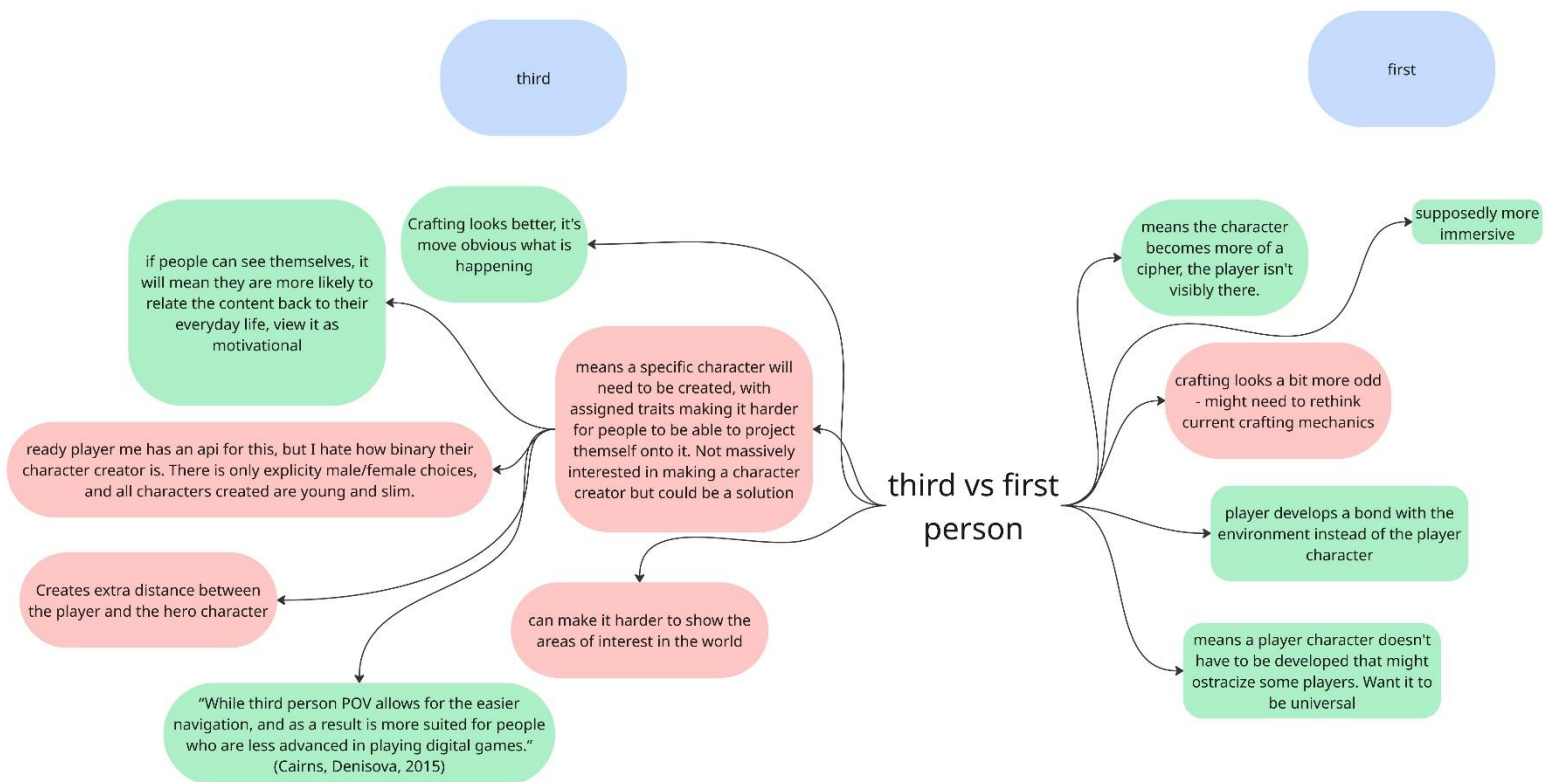
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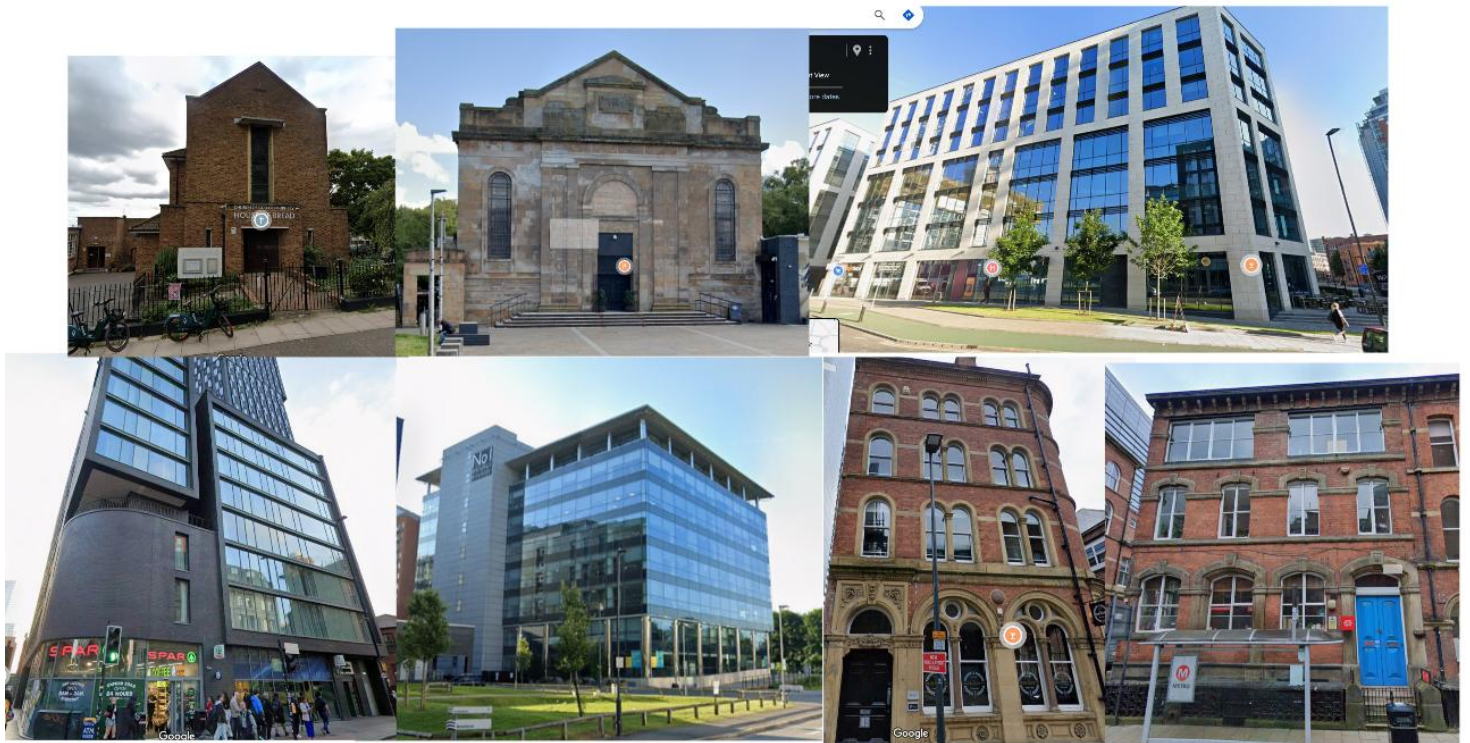




Third Vs First Person



Building Mood board / Inspiration



All images from Google Street View (2025), largely of Manchester and Leeds

Using northern UK cities as inspiration for buildings.

Quest and day planning



Interview Transcripts

Participant 001:

Participant 001: Hello!

Mary Tallontire: Hello! Ok, questions. Age and gender first of all?

Participant 001: I'm female and my age is 24.

Mary Tallontire: Would you describe yourself as a digital native?

Participant 001: Yes

Mary Tallontire: Yes! Anything else to say about that?

Participant 001: I think I'm part of the like first group, so to say, of digital natives, at least in my cultural sphere because my first phone was still like a nokia phone but then when I was like 12, or 13 I did have a touch screen phone, so I feel like I did grow up with that.

Mary Tallontire: yeah yeah

Participant 001: Not as much as maybe gen alpha right now, luckily.

Mary Tallontire: hmm. Do you play many video games, and if you do type and which ones?

Participant 001: I do play a lot of switch, Nintendo Switch, erm, a lot of social games in that sense like we play a lot of Mario Kart in my flat and super smash. I do really like solo games as well. But those are a little bit on the backburner right now, just cause I'm busy.

Mary Tallontire: Fully

Participant 001: For the past few weeks actually I've been constantly thinking about Mario Odyssey, like I want to play it again! So in autumn, when everything's a little calmer, I'm gonna go back to looking at like longer, solo games, but mostly switch almost nothing on the computer.

Mary Tallontire: Yea, like cute little cozy games?

Participant 001: Yeah, very, very cute little cosy games. Things organised neatly

Mary Tallontire: Nice. Have there been any games you've played that have like had a longer impact on you long lasting?

Participant 001: Yes. Well, something that's kind of stuck with me was Before your eyes. That's the one game where you need to blink and they're just stuck with me because the story was so good and the interactions were so, like the fact that you need to keep your eyes open and look at something that's also emotionally painful is was really....

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. So involved emotions as well.

Participant 001: Yeah. Definitely. That just stuck with me on like an emotional level. Apart from that....

Mary Tallontire: I mean out stand out is.. fine

Participant 001: Yeah, I think that's what comes to mind first.

Mary Tallontire: And do you live in a rural or urban environment?

Participant 001: Urban.

Mary Tallontire: Yep. What's your like, local environment like, would you say?

Participant 001: It's very, I mean there's quite a bit of traffic, but it's not like super, it's not a metropolis. I'd still call it like a small city. It's very walkable. I'd say there is quite a few green spaces, especially where I live. I live close to some parks, Holyrood, so if luckily if I ever want into nature I don't have to walk far, but there's also a lot of buildings, obviously in a lot of traffic and. Yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Do you like your, like, local area? Like, very local?

Participant 001: Yeah, yeah, I do. I do, yes. Yeah, especially because of Holyrood.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. How? How biodiverse you'd say your local environment is?

Participant 001: Hmmm...

Mary Tallontire: Or have you ever thought about that?

Participant 001: I've never really thought about that, to be honest, it doesn't seem extremely biodiverse. because. I do keep seeing for example same few plants all over Holyrood. There's a lot of like foot traffic there as well. A lot of. Bikers, dog workers and stuff. But there is, like on London Road, there's this little garden which seems like it's a little more like urban wilderness kind of thing with different plants not as busy but. Yeah. I think like there's not, I wouldn't say there's like a tonne of like, but you say, like very habitats.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah

Participant 001: Yeah, you know.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, it's not somewhere where you can see animals and things living.

Participant 001: Not a lot, no, Bunnies! Maybe we've got our bunnies.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Do you like that current amount of biodiversity? If you like, reflect on that. Do you have any feelings about it?

Participant 001: Now that I think about it Holyrood does seem a little. Like, yeah. Empty sometimes in a way. Just because there's so many people there and. Yeah, you could use a little more wilderness maybe, but then I guess that's also. Scottish environment that I'm not really used to. That's very like sort of flat. Plant height in general compared to what I'm used to from home. Yeah, there's like low bushes and low and I kind of associate them with a more arid regions like higher mountains. It's just my own association.

Mary Tallontire: Hmm yeah. And how would you describe your own personal relationship to sustainability and environmental issues?

Participant 001: Struggling. It is something that is like on a very deep level inside me, something I've very constantly about, but I try not to think about it too much. It's worries me.

Mary Tallontire: Yes.

Participant 001: And then I often think that I'm not doing enough or I'm not being like. Thoughtful enough or strict enough of my own habits and behaviours. And then on the other hand, sometimes I'm like. Ohh, you know, big, big oil is fucking up everything anyway, and it doesn't matter if I use one more plastic cups so it's a it's a kind of a pendulum.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah it's complex

Participant 001: Yeah that. But. It's hard. Yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, of course. I'm not here to judge anything. What's your local community like, would you say? And do you do you interact with the local community?

Participant 001: I don't think I've interacted a tonne with my local community, more with the students at the university and those are a lot of international people. So even though it is a community, it does feel like which would typically called the community. But I am trying to get more into that. Yeah, working on it, I'd say.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, yeah. OK. So we play the game now, finally!

Participant 001: Do you want me to talk out loud?

Mary Tallontire: Yes. I'm not gonna say anything. I'm just gonna watch you do it. OK, but. If you wanna say anything, that's useful.

[Transcript whilst playing removed as it doesn't make sense out of context. However, some interesting quotes included "This reminds me of the Lego games like Lego Star Wars"]

Participant 001: It's beautiful. I want a 3D print of the little hedgehog!

Mary Tallontire: Thank you! Yes. OK. Any initial thoughts before I ask questions?

Participant 001: It's insanely cute and I love the, like I can see the inspiration from the Lego Games and I think that works really well, like the humour and the like, little building stuff that doesn't add too much per say, like it doesn't add anything to the story itself, but I feel like that's kind of the point, that like the little things matter and like you don't have to do it. Of course not. But it's nice, you get a little bit of joy out of it.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Do you feel like any aspects of the game could sort of be applied to your own life?

Participant 001: Oh for sure, funnily enough, what I was thinking is that we're getting the keys for our flat in the afternoon. Yeah, and on the advert it said that it has a private garden, like the whole building, but I'm not sure it does because on the viewing we did see it. And you know, we did a lot of viewings, so I'm not sure if the guy said erm we don't just don't have the key for the garden or if there isn't one. If that's just wrong on the advert, I have no idea. So we'll find out. But I'm just thinking, oh my god, my little garden, maybe I could do something there! OK, we'll see.

Mary Tallontire: If you think about your like local environment now, how do you feel about it now?

Participant 001: I feel like I would look at it with different eyes in the sense of thinking about like these small things. Like, oh, what about the like, the wildflowers, the bees the grass? Like how what does the grass look like, like? Like I've never really thought about like mowing the grass or not or. In, like public parks and things. So yeah, yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Small things, but yeah. How do you feel about biodiversity around you?

Participant 001: I think, yeah, I think that that's kind of the same thing like I would look at it differently like I would, next time I walk past it, I'd actually be, looking for signs or lack of stuff that I wasn't paying attention too as much before?

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Why do you think that is in particular? Is there anything that's....

Participant 001: Just cause the game was very enjoyable experience and I was like oh. It's so like it's cute and it's fun and that positive feeling like obviously, I know, hedgehogs don't look like that in real life and it might not be their habitat anyway, but just that positive emotion of. Doing these little things that actually can help, because I think that kind of goes back to what we were talking about before with, like climate anxiety.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 001: And you get this global whelming feeling of dread of like, these problems are so huge and nothing you do matters. And like, you can't do anything, but that's not true. And I think the game kind of helps remind you of that, that little things do matter, even if its just for your local community.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, yeah. Do you feel any different? How do you feel in regards to your local community now.

Participant 001: Well, I would say kind of same. Like my intention is there to interact and to like get the local community. Yeah, get to know the local community better. That just kind of confirmed that.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, yeah. Did you find any of the information was new to you in that game? Any of the like educational sort of things?

Participant 001: Funnily enough, I don't. Not specifically new, because my grandparents have hedgehogs in their garden, so I know that they had cat food because my grandpa always goes out with his little tin of cat food to. Feed. The hedgehogs.

Mary Tallontire: Cute

Participant 001: Yeah. Not specifically new educational, it's more like of a reminder of the whole wildflowers and bees and things like that. But I wasn't like, oh, I didn't know that.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, despite information not being new. Do you view it in a different light or?

Participant 001: Yeah, yeah, I would say so. Like in a sense, it's a reminder, you like, look at it with different eyes.

Mary Tallontire: Right. Yeah. Tell me how you felt within the city in the game. How did you feel?

Participant 001: Well at the beginning. It felt a little like grey and drab. But then at the end, in the last little video at night, I thought it was really cute and you saw the flowers and people like contribute and people will see that you can add something in. Just. Like just for the community.

Mary Tallontire: Did you feel you were impacting the world yourself? In the game.

Participant 001: Yeah. Yeah.

Mary Tallontire: OK. How did you feel navigating the city and impacting the world?

Participant 001: Good, good. Curious. Curious, I thought it was easy to navigate around for like a short game. I thought the like the size of the map was quite good cause. The Walking speed isn't super fast because since it's very compact, it's fine. Yeah, so you can get around easily and you can. Basically always you know what to do next, but you also know, OK, I need to go up to the roof next. But first let me take a walk around the block. Let's see if there's anything else to do.

Mary Tallontire: were you consistently engaged for playing?

Participant 001: Yeah

Mary Tallontire: OK. And if you were to make any changes, what would you change? And what would you maybe like to happen in the game?

Participant 001: Hmmmm. I mean. I feel like it works very well as it is and I feel like it doesn't need any major changes. If you were to continue working on it, I think you could like add multiple storylines like for example one about bees or whatnot. But that's not strictly necessary. It's just if you wanted to expand it. I mean the environment is. Quite. Simple in terms of 3D, but I think that works well and it kind of makes you feel this like greyness of the concrete and stuff. Because it's so plain in a way, yeah.

Mary Tallontire: It's so in your face

Participant 001: Yeah. The Sparkle helped me to see what was interactable. The only thing that confused me was the trash can?

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Yeah.

Participant 001: Everything else had either sparkles or when when you got close to it 'e to interact'. The trash can didn't have 'e to interact' so didn't think that I could throw the trash away

Mary Tallontire: It's supposed to! But yeah. That's all my questions. So thank you!

Participant 001: Yeah of course!

Participant 002:

Mary Tallontire: OK, first of all, just age and gender, however you want to self-describe.

Participant 002: Male, 29

Mary Tallontire: Would you describe yourself as a digital native?

Participant 002: Yes. just yes

Mary Tallontire: Do you play many video games? And if you do, which which ones?

Participant 002: Yes. more role-playing games, I so I do more role-playing games and maybe like first person shooters. And Mario cart, so like social ones, maybe.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, like multiplayer?

Participant 002: Yeah. Multiplayer. Yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Have there been any games you've played that have had a more longer lasting impact on you?

Participant 002: I really like the Civilization games. Those are really fun. Yeah, just world building, that kind of stuff.

Mary Tallontire: Why do you think that is?

Participant 002: I think it's just sort of fun to sort of imagine you building yourself your own your own world and kind of. Yeah, being able to do whatever you want to do, I suppose. Also open world games as well.

Mary Tallontire: Cool. Do you live in an urban environment? Or what sort of environment?

Participant 002: Urban.

Mary Tallontire: what's your local environment like? Around you, where you're living?

Participant 002: Do you mean here or like, back home?

Mary Tallontire: Where you live now.

Participant 002: I don't really. Know I don't know how to answer that, maybe more like.

Mary Tallontire: What's it like where you live?

Participant 002: It's nice. It's a nice area.

Mary Tallontire: You like it?

Participant 002: Yep.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. How biodiverse would you say this area is?

Participant 002: Not very.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Have you ever thought about that?

Participant 002: No. no, I think I think just looking at like having more parks and like kind of green areas would be a good thing, but other than that, no not really.

Mary Tallontire: Do you like the current amount of biodiversity?

Participant 002: Yeah, I think there could be more.

Mary Tallontire: How would you describe your relationship to sustainability and environmental things?

Participant 002: Try to do what I can, but sometimes I get lazy.

Mary Tallontire: Hmm, yeah. What's your local community like where you live? Do you interact with it much?

Participant 002: Not much. A bit here and there there, I attend a few community meetings, but I wouldn't say there's any sustainable, sustainability meetings or anything like that. I mean, we have the different. Compost bins and all that, but you know otherwise.

Mary Tallontire: Nothing that you've like majorly engaged with. OK cool.

Mary Tallontire: Now I'm just gonna watch you play the game, OK? If you wanna make any comments, that's useful. But yeah, I'm not judging the how you play with it.

[Transcript whilst playing removed as it doesn't make sense out of context. However, some interesting quotes included "I like all the animations. Super cute," "It'd be kind of cool if there was, like, uh, how many things you restored maybe impacted like a community helper, progress bar"]

Mary Tallontire: So any initial thoughts before I ask more questions?

Participant 002: I think having the particles really works, I think having the objectives in the bottom left kind of when you have a task to do, really good.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Do you feel like you could apply any of the aspects of the game to your own life?

Participant 002: Yeah, I think so. I think maybe, you know, looking at getting more involved in community, I think that was a big thing there and. Even just doing like. You know what is it, like the small doing small things has a big outcome.

Mary Tallontire: If you think of your own local environment again now, how do you how do you feel about it now?

Participant 002: I think there could definitely be more Community support, especially back home. I don't think there's a lot of. I mean maybe there is, but I was just never involved, but maybe. You know, supporting those a bit more, yeah.

Mary Tallontire: How do you feel in regards to the biodiversity around you now?

Participant 002: Think that it needs to be improved. I think, I mean, edinburgh isn't bad because we do have quite a bit of green space, but like there are some some kind of dirtier areas that can definitely get cleaned up, but that costs a lot of money and but having you know a community or like a volunteer programme, something like that, that might go and clean those up could be helpful.

Mary Tallontire: Yes. Why do you think maybe you've changed your perspective or like impacted your perspective? Thinking back to the game.

Participant 002: I think just seeing again sort of from the game. You know, doing small things can lead to like a bigger outcome. So I mean, even just getting a group of people together, sort of like what happened there and just sort of getting to know each other and then being able to, I guess talk about this, first of all and then doing something about it, yeah, I think would be a big thing.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. How do you feel in regards to local community now?

Participant 002: Um, again, I mean it's it's kind of the same as the one before, but I mean, yeah, definitely things can get be improved. Again, it's not as bad as maybe where I am from Canada but.

Mary Tallontire: Yes.

Participant 002: Yeah, there's always improvement, I think.

Mary Tallontire: Did you did you find any of the information was new to you, that was presented by the game.

Participant 002: Hmmmmmm

Mary Tallontire: You can say no! It's ok!

Participant 002: No

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, yeah despite not being new, do you feel like it's maybe made you view it in a new light or anything?

Participant 002: Yeah, I mean I again, I think just seeing that it can be done.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah

Participant 002: I mean. Obviously it's not real life. it's kind of, but I mean, I think just maybe if a lot of people play this and sort of realise that they, you know, things like this can happen, I think it's quite good.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. How did you feel about the city within the game?

Participant 002: I thought it was nice, I really like the transition from when you finish doing all the tasks to when it sort of becomes more biodiverse and all that. I think that was a really cool transition. I think I don't think there's anything really needed, again, maybe just some more hints or something like that of what you do next. No, I mean otherwise it was good.

Mary Tallontire: Did you feel it was similar to cities that you've maybe lived in or? Been in before?

Participant 002: Yeah

Mary Tallontire: OK. How did you feel navigating and impacting the world?

Participant 002: Feels good.

Mary Tallontire: Were you consistently engaged playing?

Participant 002: Yeah, yeah, I think the text again the text really helps and just sort of the conversations that you have with people, I think it was done in a good way.

Mary Tallontire: Cool. So if you were to make any changes, other than the ones you already mentioned about things, would you? What would you change or what would you like to maybe happen in it if you could?

Participant 002: Um, I think maybe like maybe 2 game outcomes of like maybe what happens in I can't remember, was that a year later, maybe a year later if no one does anything. And it gets. Worse, like let's say, I didn't put up any of those pots, or maybe a few people didn't want to sign. That could be kind of like cool kind of decision tree. And then, yeah, I think that could make the game kind of more interesting of like. How doing small things makes a big impact rather than if you just leave it, it just gets worse and worse.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, cool. Thank you. That's all. Thank you.

Participant 002: Yeah. Of course.

Participant 003:

Mary Tallontire: Question Time. Age and gender?

Participant 003: 20, Male

Mary Tallontire: Would you describe yourself as a digital native?

Participant 003: What does that mean?

Mary Tallontire: It means that you've grown up with technology and phones and you know how to use them quite well and you're not confused by them.

Participant 003: Yes.

Mary Tallontire: Yes, you'd say that.

Participant 003: Yes.

Mary Tallontire: Anything else to say?

Participant 003: Eer no.

Mary Tallontire: Do you play many video games, and if so, what, what? Which ones and what type are they?

Participant 003: Yes. Let me get my Steam library open. I play Valorant. I play Overwatch.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 003: Uh. I did play Fortnite.

Mary Tallontire: Do these gamers have anything in common?

Participant 003: Those are all multiplayer games, multiplayer. It's like competitive games. I've played MMORPG's. Played JRPGs. I've played RPGs, I've played single player shooters, I've played Dave the diver.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 003: Uh, Destiny 2.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, so a good amount.

Participant 003: Stardew Valley, Terraria and Minecraft. Valheim.

Mary Tallontire: Quite a few games.

Participant 003: Yeah, Sid Meier's civilization 6.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Have there been any games you've played that have had a long-lasting impact on you and why do you think that has been?

Participant 003: Uh... Valorant because I've met lots of my friends through Valorant.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 003: And Stardew Valley, it's like a social game I play with my friends who don't usually play games.

Mary Tallontire: So those for the kind of the social impacts outside of games.

Participant 003: Yeah, but also like, I guess, like the story of stuff like Baldur's Gate 3. That's, like left it impact, you know. I get really tilted when I play Valorant too.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah ok. Do you live in an urban or global environment?

Participant 003: Uh, probably urban?

Participant 003: Yeah.

Mary Tallontire: What's your local environment like?

Participant 003: It's a house.

Mary Tallontire: Ok... Do you like it?

Participant 003: Yeah it's alright. Well, my new flat's a lot better than last year's flat. It's not mouldy.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. How biodiverse is your local environment?

Participant 003: Well, my new flats quite biodiverse cause we've got tonnes of trees around us. We're on like a mini hill.

Mary Tallontire: Hmm.

Participant 003: And.....

Mary Tallontire: So that is something you've thought about?

Participant 003: Yeah, I've. I've thought about it. Yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Do you like the current amount of biodiversity there is?

Participant 003: I mean, yeah, it's better than not having it. But it's also like I don't know. I'm also living in a flat, so it's like it's a bit... it's not like you can have a jungle.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, OK. What's how would you describe your relationship to sustainability in the environment?

Participant 003: Uh, quite heavily linked.

Mary Tallontire: No, your relationship to them not to each other.

Participant 003: Yes. No, I mean, like I study the environment at university.

Mary Tallontire: Right. So you know quite a bit about it.

Participant 003: Yes, indeed.

Mary Tallontire: Uh, what's your local community like? Do you interact with it?

Participant 003: What does that mean?

Mary Tallontire: Your like local community, people around you in the area.

Participant 003: I mean, yeah, because I work at [local café] and that means you know people around.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 003: Yeah, but, it was kind of weird. I was at the at at, you know, at [local bar].

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 003: And like tonnes of regulars just came up to me and talked to me. I was like, what? You know me?

Mary Tallontire: Wow yeah. Did you like that?

Participant 003: It was all right.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, bit awkward.

Participant 003: I was just ohh man, I'm talking to my friend right now, I'm busy.

Mary Tallontire: Right, you were busy.

[Played game]

Mary Tallontire: Do you feel like any aspects of the game could be applied to your own life?

Participant 003: Uh. I mean like, yeah. They're all like things you could do to help spruce it up, but it's a little bit. Little bit, what's the word? Utopian.

Mary Tallontire: Hmm.

Participant 003: But indeed it is a good message.

Mary Tallontire: Yes, but you don't feel like it's realistic to apply to yours?

Participant 003: Well, it could be. They're like. Uh. The public, like organising thing, yes. But like the results being so clear and so obvious in your public sphere is a bit.

Mary Tallontire: Bit utopian. Yeah, fair enough.

Participant 003: Yeah. Oh well.

Mary Tallontire: If you think of your local environment again now, how do you feel about it?

Participant 003: In [location where participant's parents live], fine there could be more grass, you know more. More stuff. Could be better, but my flat. Yeah, it's in [location where participant lives], so it's a bit grim innit. It's like I don't know. Well, yeah, I think my flat area does pretty well because it's all quite nice. But like in in other areas where I was last year. It's very much the opposite of what that was. It's all grey concrete wastelands. And rats.

Mary Tallontire: How do you feel in regards to biodiversity around you now?

Participant 003: The same

Mary Tallontire: The same?

Participant 003: Yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Why do you think that is? Is there anything that could have maybe done worse, or do you think you had a fine view on it first?

Participant 003: I think I had a decent view of it before. You know it's like I guess with everything like that, it's always just reminding you of what you could be doing. You could always do more.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Uh. Yeah. How do you feel in regards to local community now?

Participant 003: I mean like. Is it the same thing where it's like, oh, you could just be, you could be doing this and it could be making things better, you know?

Mary Tallontire: Hmm.

Participant 003: Could be using the local community to cause improvement in the world.

Mary Tallontire: Was any of the information presented to you new to you?

Participant 003: Pardon.

Mary Tallontire: Was any of the like information like educational content new to you? Did you know that already?

Participant 003: Well, what do you mean like just having more stuff will save the the animals?

Mary Tallontire: That or just like some of the things that they had said and things, yeah in general.

Participant 003: I thought most of it was like pretty intuitive stuff, you know?

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Despite it not being that new. Does it help you reframe anything in your own life in a new light?

Participant 003: Yeah. It's it's kind of like the same thing as before, it's just it's giving you, it's showing. It's showing concretely that this could happen. You could do this to then get this to then get this outcome, you know.

Mary Tallontire: Mm-hmm.

Participant 003: So it's just like even if it's not revolutionary in what it's saying, it's still saying it in a way that's approachable.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. How do you feel about the city within the game?

Participant 003: You could add like a cool like mini game.

Mary Tallontire: Did you not think it was that engaging?

Participant 003: It was engaging, but it wasn't. You know, it wasn't it... it was less of a game than it was an interactive world, you know.

Mary Tallontire: Hmm. Fair.

Participant 003: Yeah. OK. Like you could have added for example, what I think would be awesome. Do a mini game with the rubbish. Throw the rubbish into the trash can.

Mary Tallontire: Hmm.

Participant 003: Or something I don't know. It's up to you what it's gonna be but it doesn't like it doesn't have to be a game, does it? It can just be like an interactive world. So you don't need to do that.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. How did you feel navigating and impacting the world?

Participant 003: Uh, yeah, it was good. It was. It all worked really well. You know it was all good.

Mary Tallontire: Were you consistently engaged with it?

Participant 003: Yeah, I think that having all the little stuff to do instead of it just being a fetch quest, there's always stuff to go interact with in the world, which I think made it engaging.

Mary Tallontire: If you could make any changes to it, what would you change? Or is there anything you would have liked to have happened?

Participant 003: Well, there's there's always more stuff you could add to, like the detailing and stuff, but that's just like you don't have as much time. And also it's like it's not really the point.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 003: So. It's like saying ohh this game could be rendered in Unreal Engine, but like Oh well, who cares?

Mary Tallontire: It could have been an Unreal Engine 5 though, couldn't it?

Participant 003: Yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Cool. Well that is all. Thanks for answering my questions.

Participant 003: Nice.

Participant 004:

Mary Tallontire: OK, age and gender first of all.

Participant 004: 26, male

Mary Tallontire: OK. Would you describe yourself as a digital native?

Participant 004: What does that mean?

Mary Tallontire: It means like you grew up with technology and phones and you understand how to use them intuitively.

Participant 004: Oh yeah. I am a digital native. Like, I'm not a boomer.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Do you play many video games?

Participant 004: Yes. There's like so many examples out there. OK, so like I mean...

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, yeah.

Participant 004: Multiplayer games probably like counter strike, DOTA. I mean you have like.

Mary Tallontire: Mm-hmm.

Participant 004: Its counterparts, like Valorant and Apex Legends, Steam Games in general.

Mary Tallontire: Do you play them with friends? Multiplayer sorts of things

Participant 004: Yeah, yeah, single player ages as well. Like Devil may cry. Fire Emblem. Pokémon.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, and have there been any games that have had like, a long lasting impact on you?

Participant 004: Many of the games had just mentioned, probably have a lot of impact on me in general. That's why, like I'm like pursuing like game audio as like a career, right. I just like playing games, basically.

Mary Tallontire: And do you live in an urban or rural environment?

Participant 004: I live in an urban environment, yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. And what's your local environment like?

Participant 004: Actually speaking like here in [location participant lives]?

Mary Tallontire: Yeah

Participant 004: In [location participant lives]? I mean. I don't even know how to describe this place so. I don't know. I don't know how. To describe it.

Mary Tallontire: Well fair. Do you like it?

Participant 004: It's cool, yeah.

Mary Tallontire: It's cool! How biodiverse is like your local area, would you say?

Participant 004: Biodiversity, as in like animals and stuff like that? OK. We have seen a few squirrels like.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Is it not something you've really thought about?

Participant 004: Not specifically. I mean, you just come across things. I mean, there's a lot of dogs here for sure. So that's like as much and different types of birds as compared to like where I'm from, right, so it's like. I don't see like seagulls often back home, we see more pigeons there. It's like everywhere here. Like you have seagulls. You have, like crows? Yeah. So a lot of Birds song

Mary Tallontire: Do you like the current amount of biodiversity here?

Participant 004: Do I like the current amount of biodiversity....I'm impartial, yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Impartial. OK. How would you describe your relationship to sustainability in the environment?

Participant 004: I mean. I don't think I actively go out of my way to like. I guess promote like sustainability and environmental stuff, but I do just generally I do my part, I don't litter, I don't like you know, basically I just keep to myself and everything that I do personally is just like, yeah, I don't leave the lights on when I'm out, you know, like

Mary Tallontire: So you're conscious of it.

Participant 004: I'm conscious of it.

Mary Tallontire: What's your local community like?

Participant 004: In terms of what?

Mary Tallontire: As in like, do you interact with local people around you?

Participant 004: Uh, yeah. I mean, people? Yeah. Definitely. Like I hang around and, meet some friends. That's yeah.

[Played the game]

Mary Tallontire: Any initial thoughts before I ask any questions?

Participant 004: Uh, in terms of like the narrative or the gameplay aswell.

Mary Tallontire: No, just anything. I mean, if you don't have any that's fine. if you don't like it, that's fine! Just be honest. It's better to know than to not know.

Participant 004: I think more in most of my comments are with probably the game play and like just like the dialogue in general like I feel like there's a lot of like, pressing going on. I think it'll be a lot better.

Mary Tallontire: MHM.

Participant 004: If it's like a little bit more concise or like 1 like, chunk of text. It's probably easier to understand, when you read something instead of like tapping because like if I miss something I have to go back, interact in person again and go through it all again, it's tapping again. So that's one of the things I think there's a lot of tapping going on for like a lot of like a lot of words,

Mary Tallontire: Right.

Participant 004: it's like 2 words per tap. And just like that's kind of like, uh, yeah, it's a little bit....

Mary Tallontire: Tedious?

Participant 004: Tedious, yeah. I mean. It's a little bit difficult to follow the story, I'd say or like objectives in general

Mary Tallontire: OK.

Participant 004: Because I mean you see me like struggling just roaming around a city like not knowing what to really do, because like the objectives or not, I mean, maybe it's just me, but I like. I didn't think it was clear enough for me to just like. Ohh yeah, that's what I'm supposed to do now, right? So it's like, OK, look for something that that could help, right? It's it's very it's very open-ended for how big the city is

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. OK.

Participant 004: And with how fast your walking speed is? So even with like running it's not too much different from walking I think. I think the. Speed of your pace could be. A little faster. But like, that's game playing like wise, narratively, I mean.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 004: I get that this is also very concise. It's supposed to be like a really like short game because like, yeah, I'm doing a really short game that's honest it narratively like it just doesn't. You don't have enough time to actually like flesh out the story. It's gonna be just like really cookie cutter. So that's really understandable. I guess in a way.

Mary Tallontire: Do you feel like any aspects of the game could be applied to your own life?

Participant 004: I mean. It is informative I guess, in a way like you know, like I didn't. As I said before, I didn't really like have. I don't have too much knowledge in this domain like I'm not really like an animal person, not really a plant person.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 004: Not really a biodiverse person in general like I don't like, they are just. They're just there, OK and like.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 004: I guess it's informative, right? You learn like how? Like. I don't want to correct word for it is, but it's like maybe like be empathetic for animals, a little bit more so when you're just like, oh, yeah, like, ee have to care about these problems because you know. There are like animals living amongst us as well. Kind of like. So as much as applying what I know, I don't think I would actively be going out there like, but like.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 004: It's more like understanding when people have ideas about biodiversity, or so it's like. Like if I see somebody that's like really pushing this agenda, at least I know why they have that angle like that. That thought process and just like.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, yeah. Helping you view things differently? Yeah. OK. If you think about your local sort of environment now, how do you feel about it?

Participant 004: My local environment, how do I feel about it? Sorry, that's a little bit of a big question. I don't really know which angle I should be taking like, how should I feel about my environment?

Mary Tallontire: I mean, your local space, sort of where you live. Do you feel any differently about it or view it in any different ways since playing?

Participant 004: Ah, since playing the game.

Mary Tallontire: It's OK if the answer is no. Yeah.

Participant 004: I don't think so. I don't think so.

Mary Tallontire: Do you feel any different about biodiversity in general?

Participant 004: Yeah, the perspective change thing, I mean, not really a change in my perspective, more like understanding the perspective of someone else's.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. How do you feel in regards to local community?

Participant 004: After playing a game. Not much different.

Mary Tallontire: Not much different. No, that's fine. That's fine. Was any of the information presented new to you?

Participant 004: Yeah, I think most of the most of the information in the game was like, I mean. I still don't really get too much of like how like the plants and the hedgehogs like, link?

Mary Tallontire: Hmm.

Participant 004: Like how they work with each other

Mary Tallontire: Right. OK.

Participant 004: Uh, at least I know that there's something that I don't know.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, yeah. That's interesting! How did you feel about the city within the game?

Participant 004: I mean, I think aesthetically it's, it's nice. I mean like. And I mean, I like that there are, like, interactive elements in the game. But I guess it's a little bit confusing when you have a lot of like random interactive elements that don't tell you why you're interacting with them. It's kind of like, yeah, I fixed something, but it's just like. Yeah. Why did I do that? Like, what is the result of, like, doing all these things besides just being a like, feel good click kind of thing, right?

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, right. How did you feel navigating and impacting the world? a bit pointless? Is that like just like what you said?

Participant 004: I guess, yeah. I mean in terms of like the random interactions like kind of like? I mean, I don't want to say it's completely pointless, but it's just like there. I mean in, in a lot of games you just if you do random things right, you interact with people but things like. I don't know. I mean it's definitely a nice touch to have these interactions because you feel like you're actually inside inside a game. It's not like it's not like you only have one view, pure objective. I just think it's like because the main objective is not clear enough.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 004: That. Makes it such that, like there's like all this like optional interactions, but I'm going through them one by one even then because I don't know what is the main interaction that I should be going for and it turned like it becomes a little bit like. It was like, maybe even, like, irritating. If you're, like, going around, like, like looking for the main objective and there are just like random interactions

Mary Tallontire: Right.

Participant 004: I like to explore but like I like to know what is the main objective is, for someone just like OK, I see I need to talk to this guy, but I like. I know that that guy is optional. You know, should just talk to him instead, just to just and get his opinion. But the thing is, if I look at every single person, like, do every I interact with every little thing in the entire environment just to find what am I supposed to do right? That gets a little irritating for me, yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Hmm yeah. Did you feel you were consistently engaged with it?

Participant 004: I mean, as far as narrative goes, I don't think so. I actually think I might have drifted off a little bit because of the problems I was speaking of, just knowing where like I had to keep on clicking on the dialogue and stuff and then like at some point you, I mean you can just play [the playtest video] back and you can realise that I just started like clicking really, really quickly.

Mary Tallontire: Spamming. Yeah, yeah.

Participant 004: Because. Like I start to not want to care about what you're talking about. I sort of, like, know what you're going to be talking about, especially for like that one part where I have to interact with every single person to sign a form or something. It's like, yeah, I know what you're going to say. You know, it's like, yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Yes. Right.

Participant 004: So, I mean, engage with the game. Yeah, sure. Because I'm playing it and I will be engaged with. Playing the game, but like I guess narratively, I just kind of drift off like after. A while.

Mary Tallontire: OK. Yeah. I feel like you've answered the last one as well. If you were to make any changes, what would you change?

Participant 004: Yeah, I feel like I've answered that!

Participant 005:

Mary Tallontire: OK, I'm. Going to ask you some questions first. Age and gender?

Participant 005: I'm 25 years old and I am a woman.

Mary Tallontire: Would you describe yourself as a digital native?

Participant 005: I think I do technically fit in that category. Yeah, I wouldn't... I don't like that term because I don't want to be a digital native, but I think yes.

Mary Tallontire: Do you play many video games and if so, which which one?

Participant 005: I would say a moderate low to moderate amount. my favourites recently have been Donut County and A Short Hike.

Mary Tallontire: I can't think of any other treatment so like.

Participant 005: Silly, silly fun, cute games.

Mary Tallontire: Silly and single player as well that are quite short.

Participant 005: And single player. Yeah, I don't. I don't do a lot of multiplayer games.

Mary Tallontire: Have there been any games you've played that have had a longer lasting impact on you?

Participant 005: Games for my childhood, probably more board games than video games. I'm trying to think of things for my youth.

Mary Tallontire: But that's for nostalgia value?

Participant 005: Maybe. Yeah. Yeah. I don't think anything thematically has stuck with me, but I also don't think that I have the breadth of experience to have found one that really. Stuck with me.

Mary Tallontire: Do you live in an urban or rural environment?

Participant 005: Currently urban, but I have lived in rural environments.

Mary Tallontire: The environment you live in now, what's the like local environment like around you? Like directly where you?

Participant 005: Live. What do you mean?

Mary Tallontire: Do you like it there? What's the sort of architecture like? The buildings?

Participant 005: Yes. I like it. It's very much like mixed-use residential and commercial and this is the first time I've lived in the city at all, but in a city like this as well, and I think it's really nice because anything that I could really need is within a pretty close proximity to me, it's not like if I need medical attention, it's fairly easy for me to get there robust public transit.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. How biodiverse is the local environment?

Participant 005: I think that there's just. There's a large international community.

Mary Tallontire: Biodiverse, sorry.

Participant 005: Oh. I don't know about biodiversity, really about that.

Mary Tallontire: Have you thought about that before.

Participant 005: Not in this current location or time in my life. Yes, but not not necessarily here.

Mary Tallontire: Do you, now you've maybe thought about it, do you like the amount of biodiversity you?

Participant 005: I don't even know like realistically what that would look like for me in my current environment like. Looking at different bird species, plant species kind of thing like I'm not sure, I guess because I've not lived here for very long. I'm not sure what's local to the environment versus what would be invasive. I don't know. Does that make sense? Like what's a native plant versus an invasive plant in this area, I'm not sure.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. How would you describe your relationship to sustainability and the environment and things like that? Mm-hmm.

Participant 005: I'm very interested in sustainability generally, I think. I know a lot about it. Since I was a kid, that's been sort of central to my life and what I've wanted to do. Yeah, I care a lot about it but now that I've answered the last questions that I haven't known anything about the biodiversity of my area, I feel kind of. Silly saying that, but I'm just thinking about my impact, it has as always been important to me, but maybe less local impact. Yeah. Well, in terms of local biodiversity, I'm not even sure where I would start to to make an impact there. It's more my own individual impact.

Mary Tallontire: And what's your local community like? Do you interact with it?

Participant 005: Yeah, I've been trying to get to know my neighbours a little bit better. My community has a lot of older people in my neighbourhood. And so I I'm friendly with my neighbours in my building, but haven't had a lot of interaction with people really outside of my building. I would like to. I feel like there aren't a lot of opportunities for me to meet people who aren't like directly living above or below me.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, yeah, so, OK, now we play the game.

[Game Played]

Participant 005: That's very nice. How could biodiversity be helped in my area? What a good question.

Mary Tallontire: Any other thoughts before I ask questions?

Participant 005: That was very nice. The hedgehog at the end was good because I really. I didn't realise. Like I was looking for one subliminally the whole time. Since I got that flyer. I'm looking for it. I also did feel like. I know that I said it as I was playing, but like. I was more just like doing stuff for Ava and like. I as a as a person, as a player, am interested in the stuff that was going on, not just because Ava is telling me to.

Mary Tallontire: Hmm.

Participant 005: But if and, I'm not sure how you would design it otherwise to make it feel like it was more my idea to do things, but it did feel like I was just like helping somebody else complete projects a little bit. Yeah, and I liked the time. Skips a lot. I thought that was a really effective way of showing, like you obviously can't show plants growing within the day, so like showing them months later and then a year later I think was helpful, yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Do you feel like any aspects of the game can be applied to your own life?

Participant 005: Well, I wish I had a roof. I wish I had a roof that I could add things to. I've always lived in a place that has, like, really quick access to green space and I don't right now because it's the first time that I've lived in an urban space. It makes me want to seek that out more. I think like there are parks that always have tonnes of people in them. But I am used to having like 24 hour access to Like green space all around, but I just don't really have that much right now.

Mary Tallontire: yeah.

Participant 005: What else? I don't know. I haven't seen a hedgehog since I was a teenager, but now I'm like. Do hedgehogs live here?

Mary Tallontire: If you think about your own like local environment now, like specific to like your area where you live, do you feel any different towards it now? After playing the game.

Participant 005: Yeah, I do think, I mean, like I already do try to pick up litter when I see it around. But just like being on the lookout for little things that I can fix, especially living in a Windy City, I will say things move around a lot. So like if the recycling bins are out like they'll get scooted down or like. Things will fall out of recycling then. This is just like the first example that's coming to mind. I think it's harder to... like in the game, it's really easy to mend things that are broken, and I think that that's maybe harder to apply in a real life scenario. Yeah, just being on the lookout for things like that.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, maybe a change I thinking that it's partly your responsibility or...?

Participant 005: Something like that. I think that that... That seems to be sort of the point of the game, is that like you're an active member of this community. And you're like connecting with your neighbours and trying to do it together.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. How do you feel about biodiversity around you after playing?

Participant 005: I just think maybe more curious, yeah. Yeah, it's not something that I think we're taught to...maybe I wasn't taught to actively think about constantly. Wherever I am, and I don't see, I guess maybe the news is full of a lot of other different stuff right now, right? That's not like a priority right now for a lot of people and maybe. It should be. Yeah. Just curious maybe seeking out bits of information about it in my area more than I would have before.

Mary Tallontire: How do you feel in regards to the local community now? Do you feel?

Participant 005: It's hard to....Hard to draw a connection because this feels like such an idealised like small community kind of thing. Yeah, and I think it can. It can be harder to feel that in a larger urban setting. Yeah. It's like you've got your, your friends, your community, your direct neighbours. And maybe that's the point. Like maybe those are the people that you need to really be building relationships with. But yeah, it's hard to hard to directly translate something like this into like, not everybody you meet on the streets going to actually really care about.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Participant 005: But yeah, definitely thinking about strengthening the connections I already have.

Mary Tallontire: Hmm. Yes. Is there anything in particular in the game that made you feel that way?

Participant 005: I love I, and maybe I do this more than others that I know, but just like talking to people, as you're walking down the street, I.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 005: Think that that's. Maybe since COVID we've lost some of that that ability to be informal with people and just like, say hi to people. Like yesterday, this lady was laughing because a guy was honking as somebody was crossing the street and it wasn't their turn. And we had this little moment of, like, I was laughing at her laughing and we were like this guy so mad for nothing. And that was like the best part of my day yesterday. Yeah. So just thinking about ways to bring that in more and I think the game, one of the things that Hedgeborough does really well is sort of set up that feeling of, like you can talk to every person that you come across, you know, like that's and that's kind of your responsibility, like trying to connect, engage with your community. Connect and engage with your community. Yeah. Which sometimes I think, especially since COVID, it can feel like maybe dangerous to do that or like, like that's not necessarily wanted. Yeah. But I do think that that's really important and something that I think we need to start rebuilding.

Mary Tallontire: Would you say there's a link between digital natives and that at all?

Participant 005: Oh yeah. Oh, yeah, I think. Well, I think since COVID digital natives have gone even more digital and people who maybe aren't digital natives have also have, like my parents have gotten a lot more technology focused just for example. But yeah, I think I sit at a weird at a weird point on the digital native scale. It's like between like my childhood was not focused around technology, but like around probably ages 7 or 8 it became like the family computer was the hub of our home, you know, and so I feel very comfortable around digital technology, obviously. Yeah. But yeah, I do think. It's easier. It's easier to detach because of. Yeah. Also in the game, I'm going to bring it back to the game now, like when I was talking to people and they were texting like, holding the phone while I was talking to them. I think that that is such a norm, but also it makes me feel, like it hit me, particularly as I was playing a game because we're we're in this idealised form of community and still it's like I feel like there's a barrier between me and the other person, because they're on their phone. That's just me. I think that's just what I'm thinking about lately, but yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Yes. Was any of the information in the game presented to you new to you as well? Like educational wise.

Participant 005: Hmm.

Mary Tallontire: You can say no, that's OK.

Participant 005: Well, a lot of it I did know just because I'm interested in rewilding like I already have an interest in a lot of these sort of topics. I didn't know any of this stuff about hedgehogs because I don't know that much about hedgehogs. So that was an interesting sort of take on it. Like I didn't know the cat food. Yeah. And I didn't know that it was important to sort of make sure that their wild habitats are preserved. That was interesting.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, despite some of the information not being new, do you think you view it any differently?

Participant 005: I think a lot of a lot of my knowledge has been theoretical, right? And so to see it in action and to like play through it actively. It's like that's just a different way of looking at information that I already had and sort of helps me feel like it's a doable thing rather than just like an abstract theory in a paper.

Mary Tallontire: Tell me how you felt about the city within the game. Hedgeborough. If you have any thoughts.

Participant 005: God, I love Hedgeborough. It's a cute city, I think you did a good job of towing the line between like a large city, small city like I think even a lot of suburban areas could like. It's like a suburban downtown area for me, like my the town where I grew up, had like a fairly robust little downtown, and it reminded me a bit of this. I think that's a hard that's a really hard balance to tow like having a city that feels like your city, you know if you're trying to reach as many players as possible. So I think that you did a good job with that. It feels like, you know, I know where the grocery store is. I know where the pharmacy is. If I went back in immediately right now, it would take me maybe 20 seconds to get to whatever. Because it's like it's very accessible as like an outline of a city. And I I appreciated getting to see it change over the course of the year, thought that was very cool. And yeah, and again, like I said earlier, having just a few people that you're interacting with, but seeing again and again in an episodic layout, I think you feel like you've built a connection. It's like funny seeing the triplets and like. Realising that they are triplets was like that was funny and like seeing Joe and like it's clear that he got the job because he's sitting outside of the office building. It was like, oh, yeah, go Joe. Yeah, not being able to, like, talk back to those people, I think does take....

Mary Tallontire: Hmm.

Participant 005: The agency away from player a little. Bit like I do wish like, we could say Well done Joe! But yeah, just getting to see how the city changes overtime is fun.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Do you feel like the city is reminiscent of places you've been and lived in?

Participant 005: Yeah, definitely. Yeah. I think going back to the first thing I said it's like I've lived in really small towns, mid size city. This is the biggest city I've lived in, which is still not very big and I visited tonnes of cities and I feel like it's a good like even if it's just like your block in a massive city, it feels like very accessible as a range of different sizes.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. How did you feel navigating? And impacting the world?

Participant 005: Navigating felt pretty simple, like I don't think that it was too complex of a of a layout.

Mary Tallontire: Hmm.

Participant 005: Like I said earlier, I feel like I could get to the grocery store very quickly if you popped me in and asked me to. I was confused a bit when I heard the music on the other side of the wall. That was like the only time that I felt like I didn't know what was happening or where I was. Yeah. And I think I said this as I was playing the game, but having the little lights above things that I could interact with was super helpful because I you can see them from very far away even and that sort of I think naturally draws me in to interact with whatever it is.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, yeah. Did you feel like those interactions were useful or added to the experience? Or did they feel a bit like pointless to you?

Participant 005: I did think at one point like as I was growing flowers in the park or whatever, like pressing the button to grow the flowers. I did wish that there was some sort of like measurement or gauge of like. Just how much impact you're having by doing this action, right? Because it does feel a little bit like I'm just doing this because there are lights above it and I'm just going to do this with whatever. I think cleaning the things off of the sidewalk did feel a little bit more like, oh, I'm doing something to help other people. I don't know, maybe seeing like a grand total of like things that you've done not that that's maybe the goal of like you need to do X amount for your community, but some sort of some sort of measurement or acknowledgement that you're doing something to help rather than just sitting up you know?

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, yeah. Did you feel that you were consistently engaged with the game?

Participant 005: Uhm. Yeah, I think that there was a time, the time when I was supposed to be like one wearing around discovering the city in the park. I think that was maybe the only time I didn't have like an active task. Passing out the Flyers I did feel like I've gotta get these Flyers out. That felt like I was exploring, but I also had something to do. Whereas the the just exploratory times feel a little bit like. I'm trying. I'm like trying to find the next thing that I'll be able to interact with, which also is. It's a form of engagement. It's maybe a different form of engagement being consistent.

Mary Tallontire: Hmm

Participant 005: Yeah, answer is yes.

Mary Tallontire: Is there anything you would have liked to have also happened in it?

Participant 005: Hmm. I would have liked to like, tell the landlord what's up.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, a little bit of landlord combat.

Participant 005: Yes. Not combat? No, I think.

Participant 005: Yeah, seeing the like, I don't know... I would say maybe the major conflict in the game is the landlord wanting to shut down the roof, right, in addition to, like, trying to rebuild stuff for the hedgehogs.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 005: And so the time skip for a year ahead and because of the pigeon nest, you've been allowed to keep the rooftop. That does feel a little bit like, oh, it worked out. You know, it's like there's not really an action we do. Other than I guess getting the signatures for the petition.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. There could have been something else.

Participant 005: Maybe or just like having the landlord be a person? I don't know if that's that would help or hurt the narrative to have like, a face to the person who's trying to shut it down and like getting that person to understand the importance of it rather than just like, legally, you have to leave this year. You know.

Mary Tallontire: It's using a loophole instead of action.

Participant 005: Yeah, maybe a bit like, I think I think it would be nice. It would help reinforce for me the importance of spaces like that. If I was trying to convince someone else, you know, I don't know what that would look like, but maybe just a bit interesting. Yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Right. Yeah. OK. Thanks for answering, that's it!

Participant 006:

Mary Tallontire: Thank you for coming to my interview! OK. Age and gender, please.

Participant 006: 23, Non binary.

Mary Tallontire: Cool. Would you describe yourself as a digital native?

Participant 006: Probably, yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Do you play many video games and if so, which ones?

Participant 006: Yes. Red Dead Redemption Two, I'm playing loads of Plate Up, which is fun. Fortnite.

Mary Tallontire: So one big solo game, but otherwise multiplayer games, like more social ones. Cool. Have there been any games you've played that have had a longer lasting impact on you and?

Participant 006: Yes. Red Dead!!

Mary Tallontire: Why do you think that might have been?

Participant 006: Red Dead Redemption. Who is surprised... Why does it have a long lasting impact? The storyline was very good, really enjoyed that. I really enjoyed open world games and like an ability to do loads and loads of side quests and it has that. And they have an effect on the story, but they're also not pivotal to the gameplay. So I've played it twice through. One time I just did the main quest. Umm, the other time I'm trying to do 100% and they've been completely different in terms of the story.

Mary Tallontire: Ohh cool. And then do you live in an urban or rural environment.

Participant 006: Urban.

Mary Tallontire: And what's your like, very local environment like? Around your where you live.

Participant 006: Quite green, very busy, very touristy.

Mary Tallontire: Do you like it?

Participant 006: Yes

Mary Tallontire: How biodiverse is your local environment?

Participant 006: I feel like for an urban environment, it's very good, but for everywhere else it is not as great.

Mary Tallontire: So that is something you like actively think about?

Participant 006: Yes, especially with my new bird box on the window.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Do you like the current amount of biodiversity around you?

Participant 006: Yeah.

Mary Tallontire: How would you describe your relationship to sustainability and in the environment.

Participant 006: I'd say at the moment it's quite strong, but it tends to fluctuate depending on how overwhelmed I get by everything and doing a course at the moment is...

Mary Tallontire: Hmm.

Participant 006: Like deepening it a little bit, but then there's times where I go and I will, like actively try and distance myself from it because it makes me upset to think about climate change.

Mary Tallontire: Fair enough. What's your local community like? Do you interact with them much?

Participant 006: No. There's a there's a community for the court, but I found it quite judgmental because most of the people are quite old and it wasn't really for us. So we ended up ignoring the group.

Mary Tallontire: Interesting. Yeah. OK. Game time.

[Played the game]

Mary Tallontire: OK. Any initial thoughts before I influence you with my questions?

Participant 006: I enjoyed planting things.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Do you feel like any of the aspects of the game could be applied to your life?

Participant 006: Own life? More DIY? I love DIY. I love to build things. I already talk with my neighbours. That's the thing. I feel like if I didn't then, then that would be a big one as well.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 006: My neighbour is my landlord.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Wow. If you think of your local environment now, do you feel any different about it?

Participant 006: I think like both the front and the back [garden], this front is like communally mowed and things like that, and the back is like the landlords look after it, but we're all free to use it. And I do. I do feel like I should use the back more.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. How do you feel in regards to biodiversity around you now?

Participant 006: I think it makes me feel grateful for what I have cause, like a lot of people live with a lot worse and like when we put the birds thing up recently, we didn't think we would get anything. But we've had like, gold finches and things that we weren't expecting, so.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Is there anything in particular in the game that you think made you think about that?

Participant 006: All of the light little things that they did. Because we lived here for, like, nearly for five years before, we thought of doing that, and it was such a tiny action tiny. And now we see pigeons.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah.

Participant 006: The pigeon's there. And goldfinches and a chaffinch. Yeah. And I think it is just little things like that help. Yeah, a lot, especially in urban areas.

Mary Tallontire: How do you feel in regards to the local community now?

Participant 006: The same. I wish they would be more friendly towards us. Yeah, but no, I do also think like it's nice that they have that because it is like you do see all of the older people getting together, which is very cute. So I'm glad they have that. And we do have the backspace and I have used it with neighbours being there at the same time.

Mary Tallontire: Was any of the educational content new to you?

Participant 006: Probably not, no.

Mary Tallontire: Despite it not being new, do you view it any differently?

Participant 006: What do you mean?

Mary Tallontire: Despite that you knew that information already, but does it reframe or help you view any of it in a different light in context of your own sort of life?

Participant 006: Yes. I think reframing it in like an urban aspect is helpful.

Mary Tallontire: How did you feel about the city within the game?

Participant 006: I liked it. I wish I could get on the road. I want to drive. The red sky was slightly alarming at first, but it made more sense the more I played on. Too, too red. I feel like you could potentially populate the floor bit a little more like on the pavements.

Speaker Hmm. Hmm.

Participant 006: But otherwise, I yeah, like it. The river was pretty.

Mary Tallontire: How do you feel navigating and impacting it?

Participant 006: Fine. I think it was well laid out and it made sense and it didn't feel like there was areas where I was going in and getting lost, like it felt very circular in a good way.

Mary Tallontire: Do you feel consistently engaged with it?

Participant 006: Yeah. Yeah. And where you place the little bits that you could interact with felt like they were placed in areas where you would go into and there might not be anything else.

Mary Tallontire: Did you find the dialogue to be too long or annoying?

Participant 006: No, I wouldn't say so. I feel like any shorter it would have been, like, too snappy, but I wouldn't say too long, yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Is there anything else you would have liked to have happened in it?

Participant 006: Maybe if you have the jumping mechanic, it being useful for something.

Mary Tallontire: A reason for jumping? Yeah.

Participant 007:

Mary Tallontire: Age and gender?

Participant 007: 22. Nonbinary. Yeah

Mary Tallontire: Would you describe yourself as a digital Native?

Participant 007: Yeah....What does that mean?

Mary Tallontire: It means you've grown up with technology and you understand kind of how to use it intuitively.

Participant 007: Yes.

Mary Tallontire: Do you play many video games and if so, which ones?

Participant 007: Yes, I do. Yeah. Little Big Planet, Kingdom Hearts. Yeah. Minecraft. Animal Crossing.

Mary Tallontire: MHM.

Participant 007: A lot of very creative games. Free roaming.

Mary Tallontire: Have there been any games you've played that have had a longer lasting impact on you?

Participant 007: Yes, yes, yes.

Mary Tallontire: Which ones?

Participant 007: List all of them? or just like the most impactful?

Mary Tallontire: Mention whichever you feel the strongest about, I guess.

Participant 007: Little Big Planet. Yeah. There's a lot of creativity and freedom with it. They have like the story mode, which is incredibly made as well as well as there is a part where you can create your own levels and growing up I played a lot of the fan made ones where they... literally, people have made movies on it, people like remade, like Resident Evil on it. There's so much texture within the game, like various different kinds of textures. There's like fabric, there's like slop. You know, like very very texture based game which is something that I am very fond of.

Mary Tallontire: So this is something you played growing up?

Participant 007: Yeah. Growing up, you know, I played a lot of it growing up like I played it from the ages of like maybe 7 until like. Till now. So for the last that's quite a many years.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Do you think nostalgia plays a part in the impact at all?

Participant 007: Ohh absolutely yes, I was very fond of it, and I used to play a lot of it with my family, especially my dad and my older two siblings and it's a game like a game where we all used to. Just. Play together. On many different consoles, so we went from like PlayStation 3 to PS4 and then I played on my PSP on the PS via and like each installment I've played through and through and it's always fun.

Mary Tallontire: Nice. Do you live in an urban or rural environment?

Participant 007: Urban. Yeah. Yeah.

Mary Tallontire: What's your directly local environment like?

Participant 007: Right. Gentrified, umm, very gentrified compared to what it used to be with [location where participant lives]. It's a lot more... It's very much like London to me, where there it is very still, very creative, especially down for example in [location near where participant lives]. However, the creativity within [location where participant lives] is very dire compared to other places in Scotland.

Mary Tallontire: Do you like your like directly local environment?

Participant 007: Well, absolutely yes, it's very familiar to me. It's, it's my second home technically or like classes as my first home now because I feel more calm here.

Mary Tallontire: How biodiverse is your local environment?

Participant 007: On like a scale of one to ten?

Mary Tallontire: However you feel. Feel free to give the scale if you want

Participant 007: I feel like it's like maybe a good six or seven directly local, like in my neighbourhood.

Mary Tallontire: Hmm.

Participant 007: It's very biodiverse, I'd say. Umm, thinking more central though it's a lot less biodiverse considering before, like in [location where participant lives], in central, there was a lot more greenery and everything and it was well kept and but now it's a lot more just like shop, shops shops, buildings, buildings, buildings and whatnot than, you know, greenery and finery.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. So you think it's gotten worse?

Participant 007: Yes.

Mary Tallontire: Have you thought about the biodiversity levels before then? Is that something you pay attention to?

Participant 007: I'd say yes, just because [country where participant lives] is very much known for its nature and how gorgeous it is.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. How would you describe your own relationship to sustainability and environmental? Be honest, I'm not judging you!

Participant 007: I'd say I try to keep myself at a good standard with sustainability, especially with recycling and whatnot. But I do fall into the habit of like buying plastic bottles and that and other litter. I try to keep up with sustainability, especially like growing up like in our house we had separate recycling bins and everything my parents have always kept us to be like, remember to

wash all the plastic things and cans before recycling. So I think I keep myself to a good standard of it, yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. So that's something you strive to do?

Participant 007: I think it was just like ingrained in me. Hmm. Which is good.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. What's your local community like? Do you interact with the community that much?

Participant 007: Around this area not for much, but I do talk to like my neighbours, especially having spoken to those on like the first floor. He's, you know, wanting to do a lot more with the community here as a whole with the local park in general, like he wants to change the park a lot more like making it more of a community and bring everyone together, which is really nice. And we have been discussing about that in general.

Mary Tallontire: MHM. OK, now we play the game.

[Game played]

Participant 007: It's so cute!!

Mary Tallontire: Right. Any initial thoughts before I ask you questions?

Participant 007: I really enjoyed it. It was a good play through, the colour palette is really, really nice to the eyes, it's not too intense, as well as it's, it's easy to look at. The concept as a whole, it's very interesting as well with the current, the current world and the climate and everything it is something like that does need to be shared and shown, and it's it's a very well made game all around, like the mechanics. It was easy to navigate on what to do and. Yeah. And I like the hedgehog.

Mary Tallontire: Thank you. Do you feel like any aspects of the game could be applied to your own life?

Participant 007: I'd say with community wise like. Creating a community is kind of scary, however, it is quite important, especially in this day and age, with technology and social media. Having like a actual physical community does well, for your mental health in general as a whole, and it makes you feel like you've accomplished something if you're part of the community. Like with social, with the current generation, social media and everything, there's not a lot of community within, for example, in [location where participant lives] , like, even like locally, there's there is communities, but with nature and everything, it's quite difficult to get people together to like change the park or make improvements or anything. So it is very important.

Mary Tallontire: If you think about your own local environment now, has the game impacted any of your thoughts on that?

Participant 007: It's taught me like facts about hedgehogs being able to eat cat food and just like little facts throughout the game like that will probably stick with me when I'm out and about.

Mary Tallontire: Hmm.

Participant 007: And just sharing with people like, oh, hedgehogs are important. Well, hedgehogs are always important. They're little fellas. However, like for example like with save the bees, save the bees. Like. Has been like.... What's the word...

Mary Tallontire: a buzzword?

Participant 007: Huh. Buzzword yes, but also like 'save the bees' is a lot more bigger of a... not concept, but just in general like it's more largely known, more widely known compared to like other like nature things like plantation, yes and greenery and hedgehogs because. Hedgehogs, people hate them. They're just little guys. They're just chilling out. People have the fear of them or they do terrible, terrible things to them when they're just little fellas. Hedgehogs are important, save the hedgehogs.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. So, you've sort of, it's made you reassess may be the importance of the small animals around you?

Participant 007: Yeah! Especially insects, cause I've always had a fear of bugs until like quite recently, where I'm like, oh wait, they're just harmless. And people I know, a lot of people who also have a fear of insects and bugs just because, like on in media or just in general like upbringing people would be like, Oh my God, they're little creatures. Like they're gonna kill me, like no, the majority of them are fine. And they're just living their life and people shouldn't be, you know, squishing them or killing them. Right. Like just because they're living their whole life.

Mary Tallontire: How do you feel about how do you feel in regards to biodiversity around you now?

Participant 007: Sort of the same...like I do, I do want to participate more within the community here, especially with the park nearby, but. That's also.....I don't know... Hmmmm

Mary Tallontire: What do you think in the game maybe made you feel like that?

Participant 007: Just how the dialogue went within, like the dialogue within the game was very nice and like people will also have the fear of starting community because of social anxiety and in the game, it doesn't really showcase that. Like Oh my God, like scared to talk. In the game, people are there to talk and having a community is good because you know you have some, you have people surrounding you who are willing to... who have the same common interest to you and you know to make the change.

Mary Tallontire: Yep. So, how are you feeling in regards to local community now? Quite similar to what you were just explaining?

Participant 007: Yeah basically.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Was any of the information presented new to you?

Participant 007: Yes, yes, the the part where... was it Eva was speaking about like the different facts from the book? I actually didn't know those. Again, Hedgehogs eat cat food! Hmm. And just in general, with nature, like there are little facts sprinkled through the game, which is really nice.

Mary Tallontire: Hmm.

Participant 007: Because like it is part of the dialogue coverage but it will like engrain in your brain if you fully take it in. And I think I have, to a degree.

Mary Tallontire: Did you ever feel like the game was too educational, that maybe it brought you out of playing it?

Participant 007: No. I think I was quite locked in throughout the whole thing just because of the dialogue as well as the background music was quite calming, so like it wasn't like Oh my God, like I have to like lock in to fully do like a task, like the task felt nice. It was more of the dialogue that got me more hooked into it, as well as the sound effects and the textures and the weird grassy fingers [participant repeatedly mentioned in their playthrough that the grass looked like a hand]

Mary Tallontire: How do you feel about this city within the game?

Participant 007: It does showcase like what I meant with how [city participant lives in] looks like, or how most cities nowadays are like, with like the environment, because like there's always more buildings being built, like just surrounding us like that are going to be like flats or like student accommodation instead of creating like a good like little park because there's not a lot of greenery around here. I mean there is, but not to a degree where on how it used to be, it's not what I would want, like it's something like I would want to see a lot more of because there's been a big increase with like flat buildings and like businesses and being open, which is nice. However, we also need to touch grass sometimes.

Mary Tallontire: How did you feel navigating and impacting the world?

Participant 007: How do I feel navigating and impacting?

Mary Tallontire: As in, did you find it easy to navigate? Did you find it easy to impact? Did any of it feel unnatural?

Participant 007: Oh, it felt quite natural just roaming around just because, like for example, like I already mentioned before, like the games I've played before are very free roaming. So like I like to go through like the little details of each game or like each part of the, like the environment just because I like to inspect what fully goes into the thing. The navigation was quite easy, especially having the map in the corner because there was a point where I was like, oh God, how do I get out here? The map was there so it was easy to find and it was just in the corner so. It was, it was very easy.

Mary Tallontire: Did you feel consistently engaged with the game?

Participant 007: Yes.

Mary Tallontire: Cool. Is there anything else you would like to happen in it?

Participant 007: Pigeons. Yeah. I would want to see some pigeons being hatched, considering that was, like, sort of the whole realisation, that being illegal to move pigeon eggs, I would want to see the pigeons actually being at the end with the hedgehog hanging out.

Participant 008:

Mary Tallontire: So I'm gonna ask you questions and then you play the game in the middle and ask you questions again afterwards. What is your age and gender first of all?

Participant 008: I am 22 years old, gender female.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Would you describe yourself as a digital native?

Participant 008: I know the Internet, so yeah.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Do you play many video games and if so which ones?

Participant 008: Mainly I play visual novels like sure little, just like adventure stories.

Mary Tallontire: Have there been any games that you've played that have had like a longer lasting impact on you, in particular?

Participant 008: Yeah, definitely. Breath of the Wild, Zelda.

Mary Tallontire: Why do you think that one especially?

Participant 008: It was just my friend introduced me to it, and then just from that I kind of realised. Like. Well, this is what video games can be like. You know, I just got really attached to the characters. It got me back in the fandom space again when I hadn't been in the for a while.

Mary Tallontire: Nice. Do you live in an urban or rural environment?

Participant 008: I live in a city, so urban?

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. What's your like, directly local environment like where you live?

Participant 008: It's a really busy live in a very touristy area. And so it's hectic but I like it.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah, so you do like it. How biodiverse is your local environment?

Participant 008: There's a lot of traffic, so....there's trees. There's trees. Yeah. There's also a lot of walking as well, though you know there is this castle blocking most of the sun into my flat most of the time so. I don't know how biodiverse that is.

Mary Tallontire: So you would you say you've thought about the amount of biodiversity around you before?

Participant 008: A little bit yeah. We don't have recycling on our street, we would kind of appreciate recycling on our street.

Mary Tallontire: Yes. Do you like the current amount of biodiversity around you?

Participant 008: Yeah, I would appreciate that.

Mary Tallontire: How would you describe your relationship to sustainability in the environment?

Participant 008: I like to think I'm quite a sustainable person. I like. I think about how much electricity is being used, how much water is being used, and I do try and recycle when we can.

Mary Tallontire: What's your like...local community like? Do you interact with them very much?

Participant 008: Not really. They all seem friendly enough when the brief interactions that we've had with them. Someone once wrote a poem and then asked other people to review on it. We did review it. We liked the poem.

Mary Tallontire: Cool. OK, game time!

[Game played]

Participant 008: So stinking cute. Amazing. I love.

Participant 008: Was just so cute. That was the cutest thing ever you did such a good job.

Mary Tallontire: Thank you. Do you feel like any aspects of the game could be applied to your own life?

Participant 008: Own life, yes. Yeah, definitely. Even just having, like, plants more around the place, definitely.

Mary Tallontire: Cool. If you think about your like directly local environment again, do you feel any different after playing the game?

Participant 008: Yeah, yeah, definitely. Because it's a more human traffic area so there's not a lot of space for animals, there's like foxes and stuff like that stuck with me. There's not hedgehogs, unfortunately, but definitely things could be done

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. How do you feel in regards to biodiversity around you now after playing the game?

Participant 008: That there's more that to be done. It's very sweet. It is a very good thing. Yeah, definitely something that brings our community together.

Mary Tallontire: Is there anything in the game in particular that made you feel like that?

Participant 008: Even just like picking up the rubbish it was just kind of just like, oh, yeah, you forget that like you're helping somebody out and stuff. Yeah. Just also just interacting with the characters. Like, oh, yeah, you can just talk to your neighbours and stuff.

Mary Tallontire: How do you feel in regards to local community now?

Participant 008: Basically, yeah, just like it's a lot easier than probably people realise, just like, reach out and talk and like even just do little things, like putting a plant out can like like ohh, you can get something going with other people in the community.

Mary Tallontire: Yeah. Was any of the information presented in you to you? like you can say no, yeah.

Participant008: No. None of it really was.

Mary Tallontire: Despite it not being new, does it help you maybe view it in a new light?

Participant 008: Yeah, definitely. It's like, when it's actually presented to you, like, makes it seem a lot more simple.

Mary Tallontire: Right. How do you feel about this city within the game?

Participant 008: It was good to see it develop. It was also very realistic I guess, just things not working and like rubbish everywhere and it's like.

Mary Tallontire: Yes.

Participant 008: It's also just like being able to see potential everywhere, but knowing that someone has to be the first person to stand up and do it, definitely it reminds me a lot of my like town back home, there's a lot of areas with potential there.

Mary Tallontire: Yes, yes. Yeah. Did you feel consistently engaged with the game?

Participant 008: Absolutely. It was super cute. And there's a lot of things to appeal. Like free stuff!

Mary Tallontire: Would you have liked anything else to have happened in it?

Participant 008: Seeing a tiny baby hedgehog would have been cute... with a tiny little one following the big ones.

Mary Tallontire: That would be very cute, yeah.

Notes from playtests before interviews:

People get bored doing 3 boxes, need something more interesting or slight difference, maybe more stair effects so it's different each time

Players wanted to interact with the boxes from the start without having to talk to Bo first

Get rid of the streetlamp on the kerb next to Darren!

Make it so you don't need to jump up the kerb every time

Clear ! on the NPCs when they've been talked to even if dialogue remains the same

People enjoyed the different NPC talking styles

maybe move Ava closer to the steps, the extra steps are unneeded

UI buttons to interact might be a bit small

Move the boxes from the stairs to the roof so it's obvious how to get to the roof

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Some were confused as to why the grass cutting man disappeared

Lots of players failed to notice Hanna was there in the corner of the map, her location needs to be made more obvious! Maybe with some sound

Players who did use the To Do list scene wanted to be able to tick tasks off once they were done instead of them vanishing

Players are getting lost a lot more than expected! Players are getting lost easily/

The crafting collider is too close to Hanna, people try to talk to hanna and set the collider off by accident instead.

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Players would use the crossing to get over the road, but then get stuck on the other side of the road without realising the crossing was also the only way back over again

Objects on the other side of the road confused people as they were not interactive and there didn't seem to be any reason to cross the road.

Lots of people not noticing planter interactions

People wanted some kind of indication of how many fliers to go / how many had been handed out, just holding the game objects it wasn't always obvious how many were left.

It's not obvious that the bird nest is there until it is mentioned by a character, by that point people can't go back and see it

Some people didn't realise the map was a loop, and walked back round to the flat the really long way

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