

Media Design Document

Media Design Document for a BBC Merlin themed level

High Concept

Theme: Castle

Genre: Exploration/Stealth

I wanted to set my level in a castle, and decided to base the level on Chatou de Pierrefonds as it is one of my favourite castles and I already have a large number of primary sources. As Pierrefonds is the main filming location in BBC Merlin, I decided to make my level based on the show.



The level will roughly follow the end of S3 E13: The Coming of Arthur Part 2 , so will have the following features:

- Merlin and Arthur split up following separate paths
- Merlin must find the cup of life in the castle
- Arthur must save Uther from the dungeons
- Enemies are immortal so can only be defeated by Merlin

Research - Visual Board and Case Study

Visual Board

Visual board containing:

- Initial map research and references
- North Greenwich and Canary Wharf primary research
- Castle map research and primary images

https://www.canva.com/design/DAHEO052Myl/KZUpRxiYfY6bG6Li4pNj3A/edit?utm_content=DAHEO052Myl&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton

Level Design Case Study

I played through Demon Souls level 1:1 The Gates of Boletaria, taking notes throughout my playthrough. I chose this level as it is a castle based linear exploration level.

Key takeaways:

- Use looping paths
- Open up shortcuts when the player is far enough through
- Make the boss easy to get to
- Introduce new concepts one by one
- Introduce new abilities through the enemies/environment
- Include optional high risk high reward challenges/areas
- Use objects in the environment to create an advantage/disadvantage

Lego Variations and 2D Level Plans

The level consists of two primary routes, one for each of the two characters

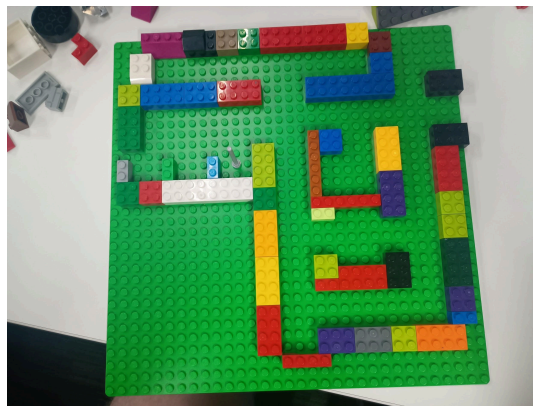
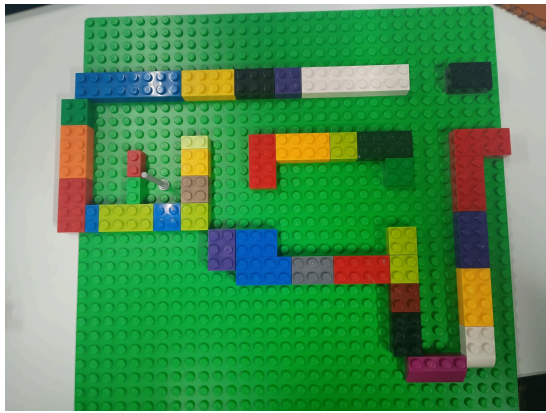
Merlin:

- Travel up through the castle to reach the cup of life.
- Possible option to disarm the warning bell

Arthur:

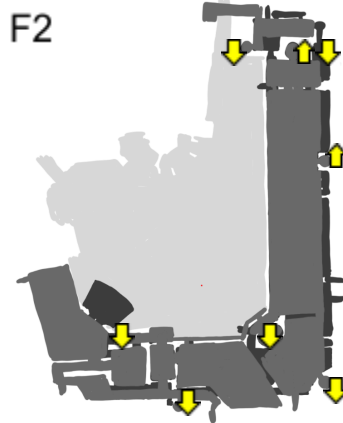
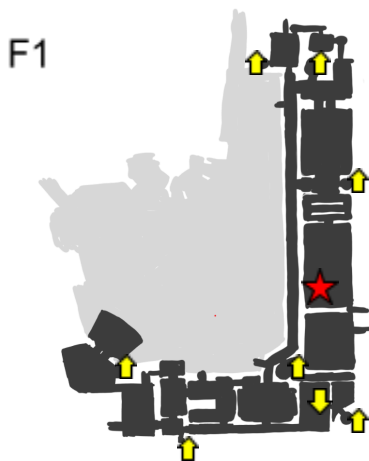
- Travel through the dungeon to reach and free King Uther

Lego Variations - Dungeons



The first variation is primarily focused on lining up with the internal consistency of the show. For the second variation I added extra routes and paths for better exploration as well as cornering and trapping enemies. This is necessary as they cannot be killed by Arthur, the character in play in the dungeons

Castle Map



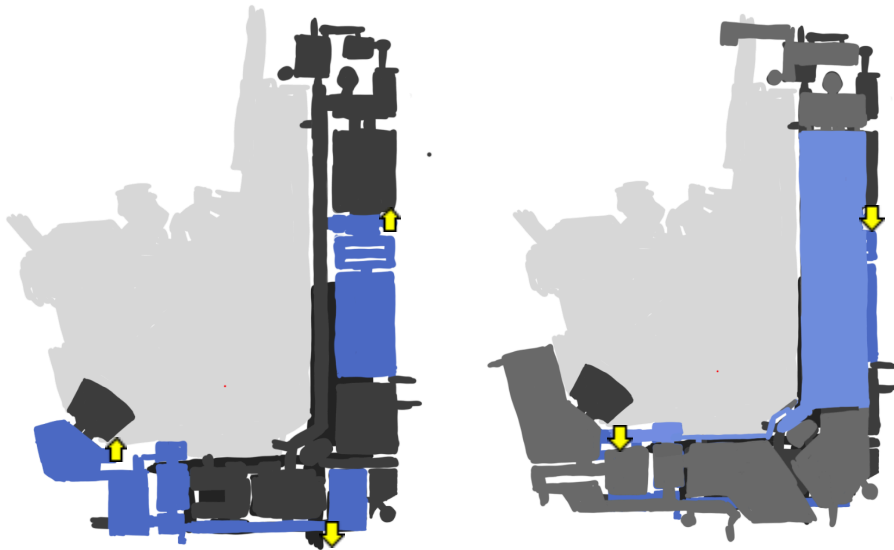
- Start
- ◆ Uther
- ★ Cup of Life
- ↑ Up Stairs
- ↓ Down stairs

I started with mapping out rooms that are filmed at the castle and filled in the gaps with rooms filmed in sets. The dungeon map is based off the lego block out, but adjusted to fit the scale

I coloured in the rooms that should be playable through the castle in order to reach the cup of life, coming up with various routes.

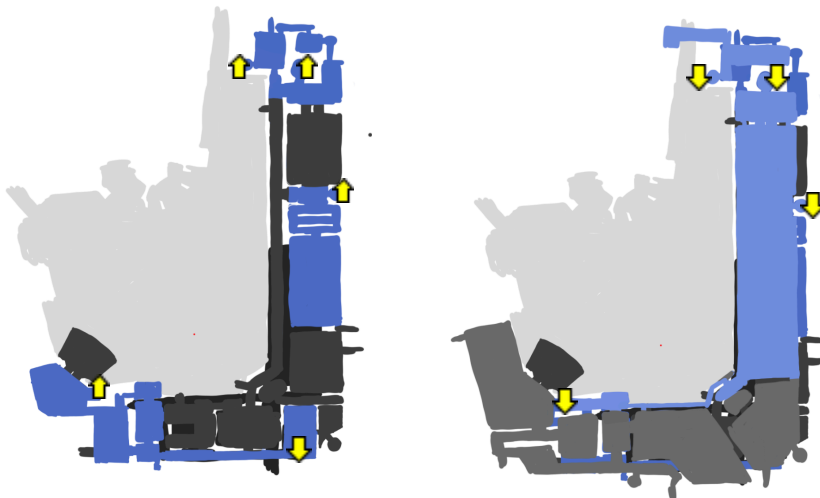
Route 1

This route is focused on a single direct route with as few rooms as possible, for keeping a small scale and linear route.

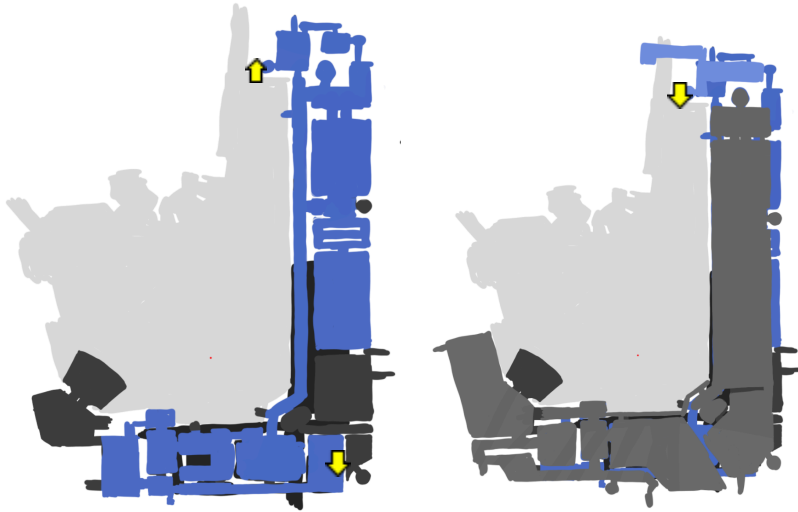


Route 2

This is the same as route 1 but now featuring the warning bell, allowing for more player choice and reducing linearity. I make use of a looping path at the warning bell to reduce need for backtracking

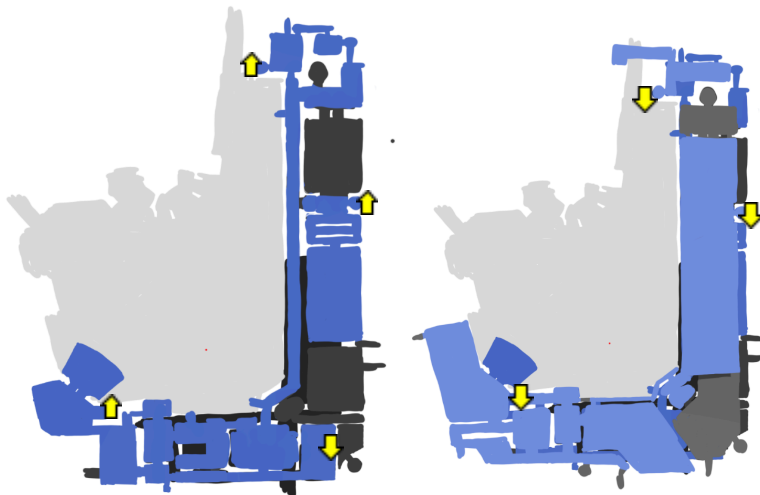


Route 3



This route aims to stay on the ground floor as much as possible, removing the great hall and courtyard. This means there would be no large empty spaces to fill

Route 4



This route includes the majority of rooms, while still maintaining a mostly linear route with optional rooms to explore. This route also includes the courtyard. Ultimately, despite some of the benefits provided by the other routes, I settled on route 4 as it would be the best for exploration.

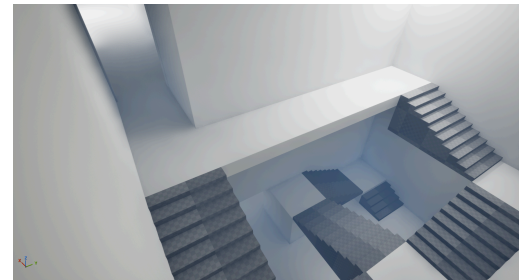
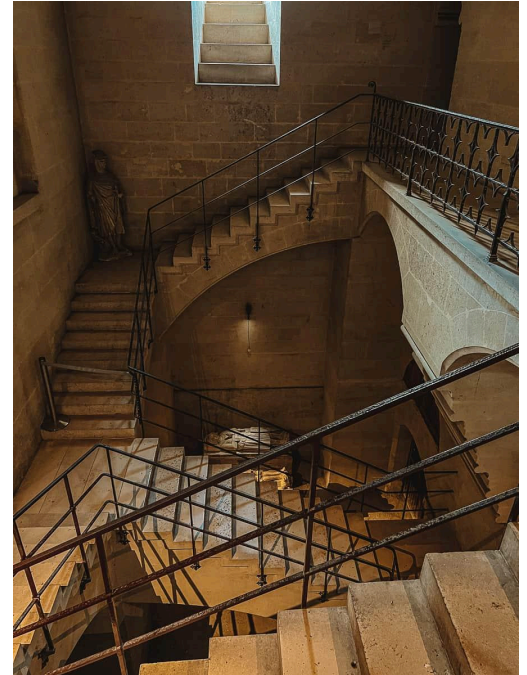
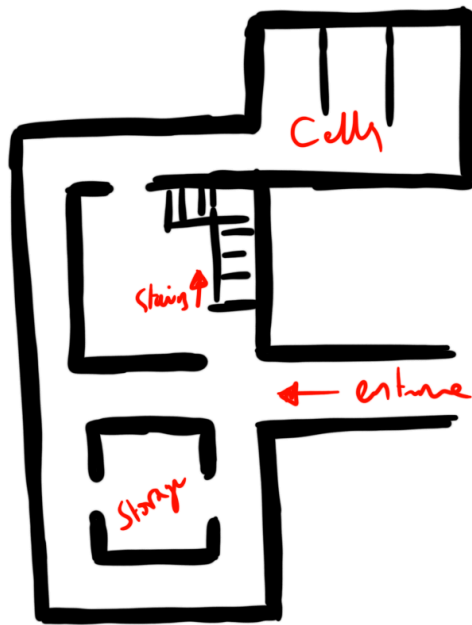
First Basic Block Out

I created the first basic block out using cube static meshes. I used reference images to get the correct scaling and arranged the rooms according to my final floor plan. Moving forward I plan to replace the cube meshes and use the modelling tool instead. This will allow me to add more detail and make each room feel more distinct.

Dungeon and Ground Floor Stairs

The level begins from the dungeons. The King is imprisoned in the cells and must be freed by Arthur to complete the level.

The floor plan for the dungeon was changed slightly due to the stairs being at a different angle to what I had initially planned.



Courtyard



The courtyard is in the centre of the level and can be accessed early on. This section is optional.

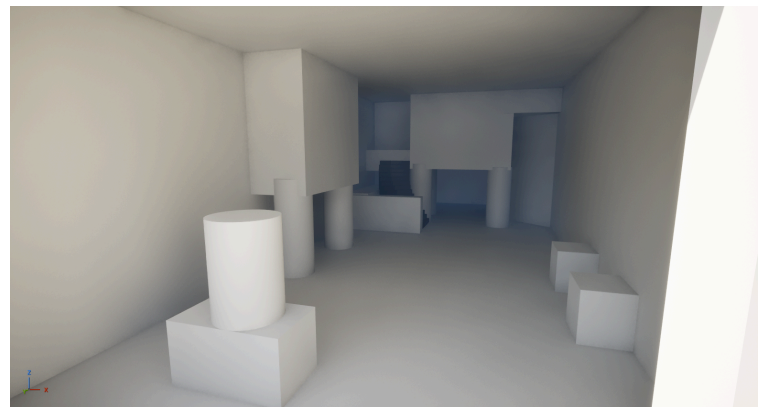
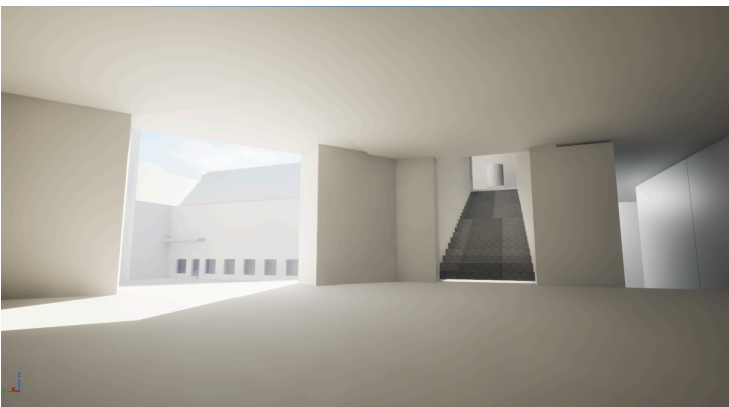
Moving forward I will need to fill in this space as the large empty space would be boring to play through.



Gryffin Stairwell

This area must be passed through to reach the first floor. It can be accessed from either inside the building or the courtyard. The griffin statue and fireplace can be used to hide from enemies.

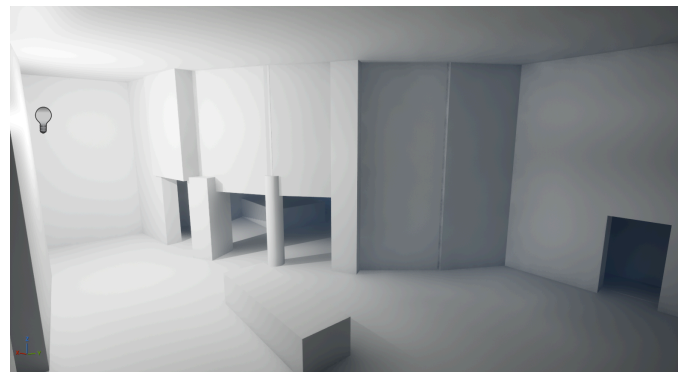
A shortcut will also be located behind the griffin statue, which can be opened from the ramparts



Morgana's Chambers

Morgana's chambers are located on the first floor and must be passed through to complete the level. This room took the longest to block out due to being filmed on set rather than in the castle, making it difficult to keep its placement logical and internally consistent. As well as this, the room includes additional walls and pillars, with it being difficult to find a clear reference from the show. Because of this, it took a long time to pin down the shape and size of the room.

Due to the difficulty in blocking out these chambers, I made the decision to cut Arthur's chambers from the level. I felt my workload was becoming difficult to manage, and knowing this part of the blockout would likely take a similar amount of time, I felt including this optional section would be too time consuming and lower the overall quality of my work in the long run.



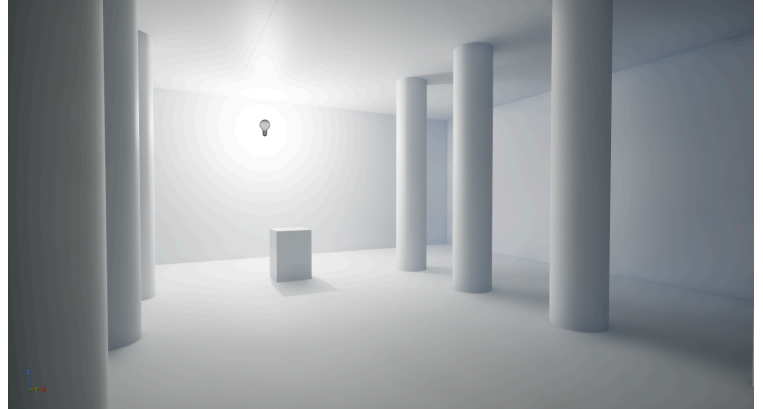
Great Hall

The great hall is the next key room after Morgana's Chambers. Currently, I feel it is too large and empty so aim to fill in the space moving forward



Council Chambers

The Council Chambers are the final room and location of the boss fight. The boss fight would likely feature predominantly ranged magical attacks, so the pillars would provide good cover to dodge attacks



Video of Block Out

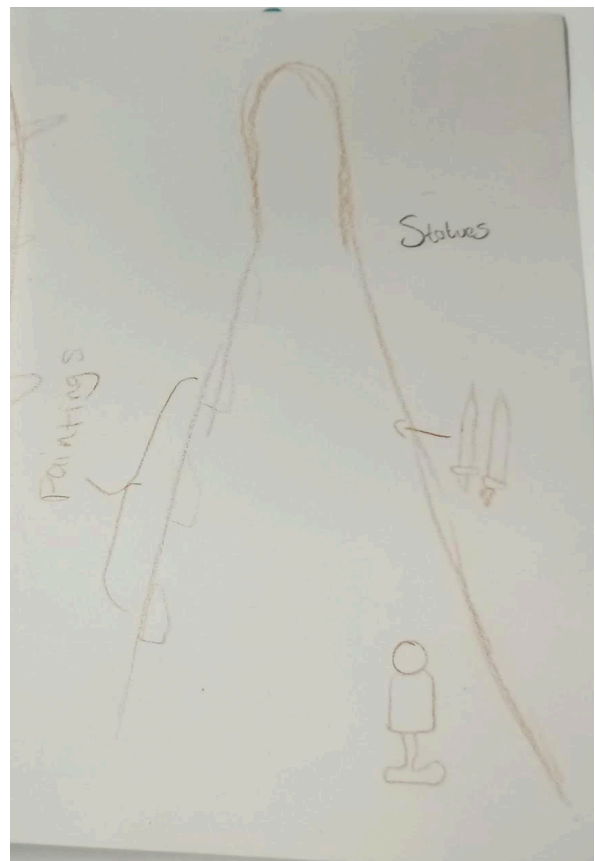
Initial Block Out - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BqhTL3IQCo>

Playtest Review

After having some of my peers playtest my first blockout, I was given positive feedback, with them saying they liked the level a lot.

I asked for some suggestions on how to fill the Great Hall, and was given the idea to make a training space for knights with the following features to fill the space:

- Weapon stands and training dummies
- Paintings and Swords/Shields mounted on the walls
- Archery targets

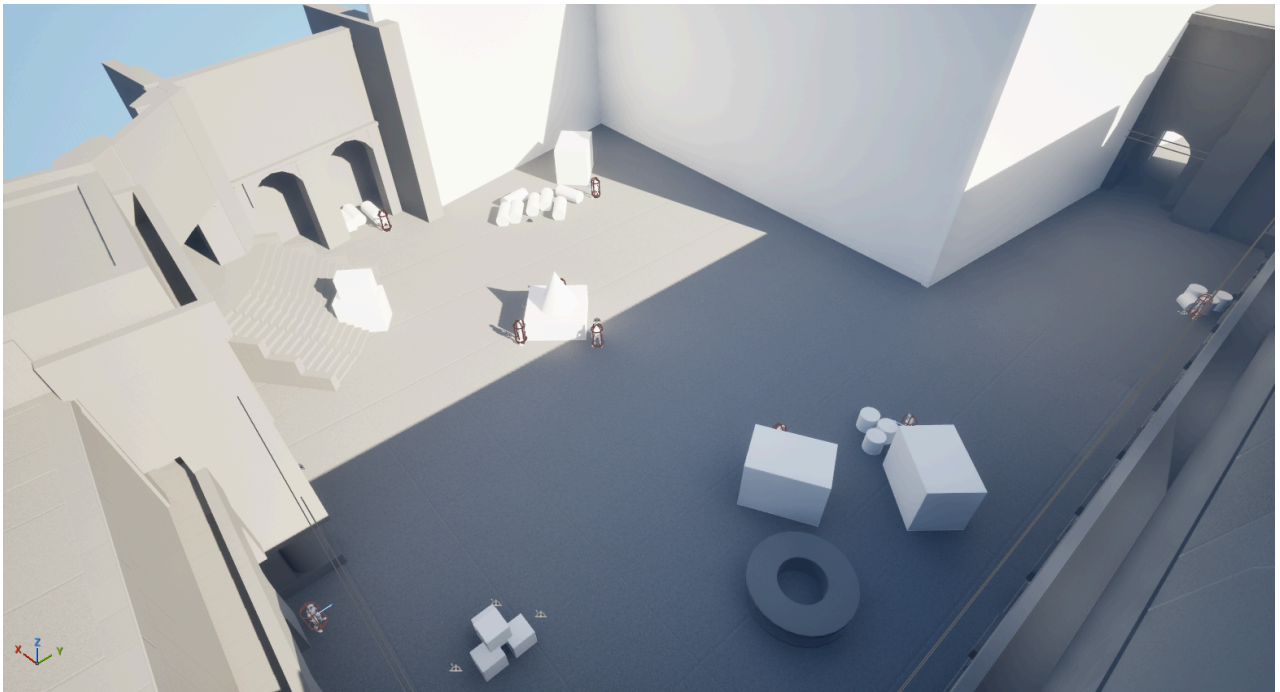


Changes and Updates

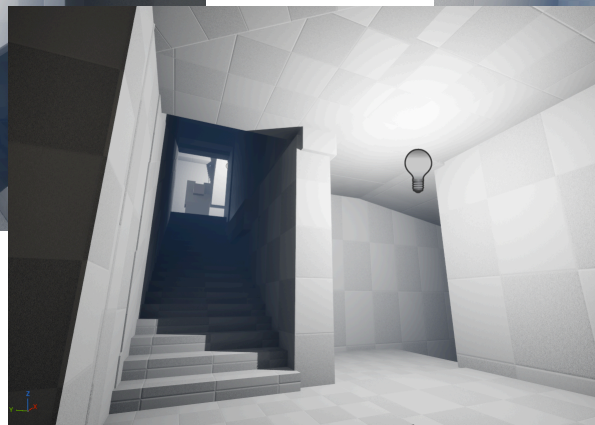
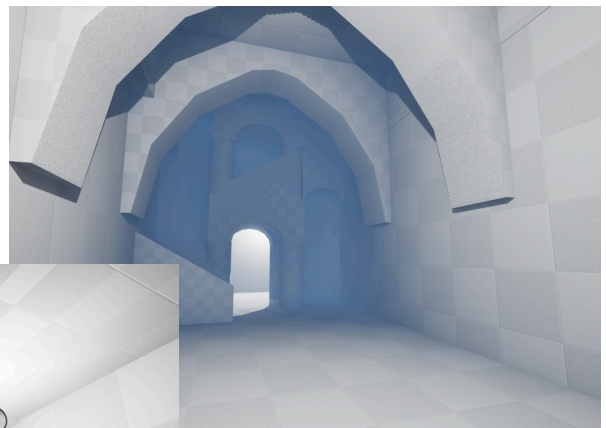
I remodelled the castle using the modelling tool, placing the castle map under the level in order to get a more precise scaling. I then added some basic static meshes to plan the use of the space. For some rooms, I drew over the screenshots to plan how to fill them.

Courtyard

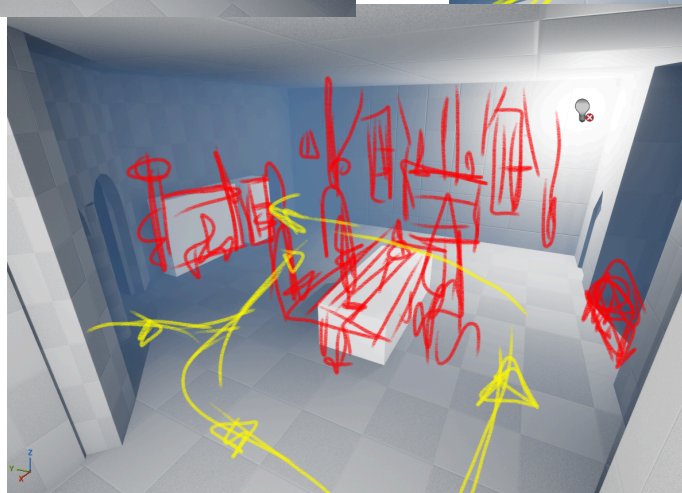
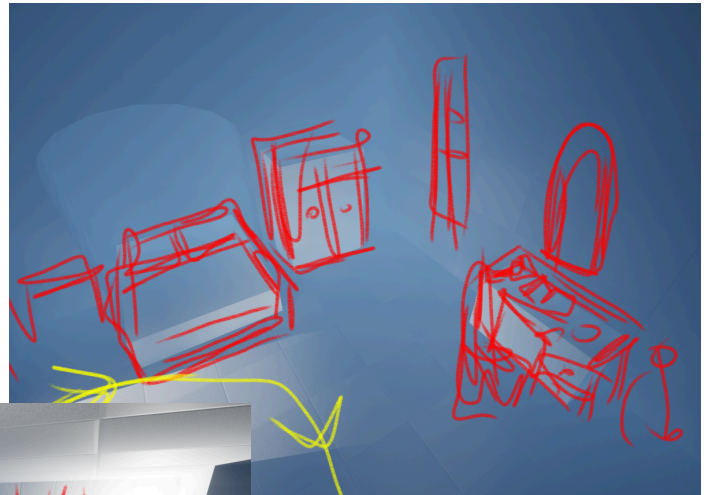
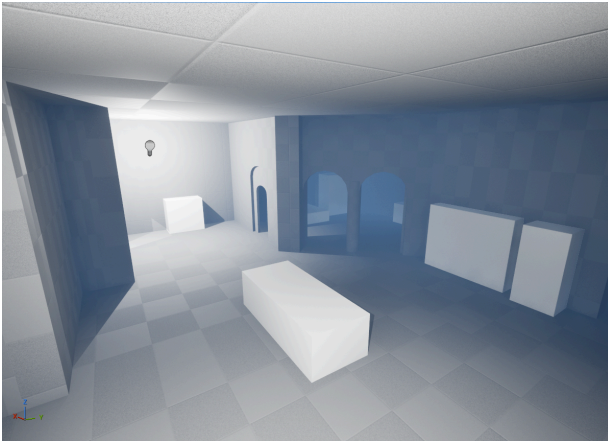
When filling the courtyard I considered where I wanted obstacles and enemies to be placed for the stealth gameplay as well as the environmental storytelling.



Gryffin Stairway



Morgana's Chambers

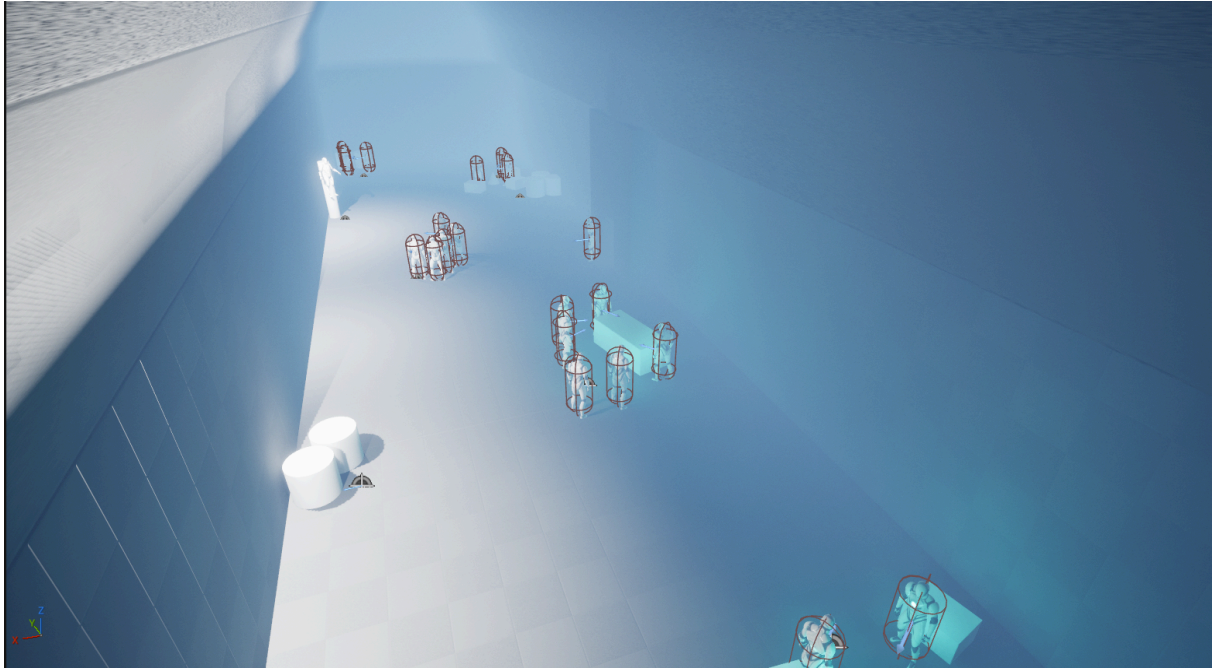


Great Hall

After considering the suggestion to turn the great hall into a training ground, I decided not to go through with it. I felt it wouldn't make sense from a storytelling perspective as the armoury is not easy to access from the great hall, and there is already a canonical training grounds elsewhere in the castle (though this is not featured in my level). Instead, this area will be a camp for the enemies who cannot be housed elsewhere due to insufficient capacity. This keeps along the same lines as a training ground while making more sense for the story.

Players may have the opportunity to unlock a disguise if they help the blacksmith, so this area must serve two key purposes:

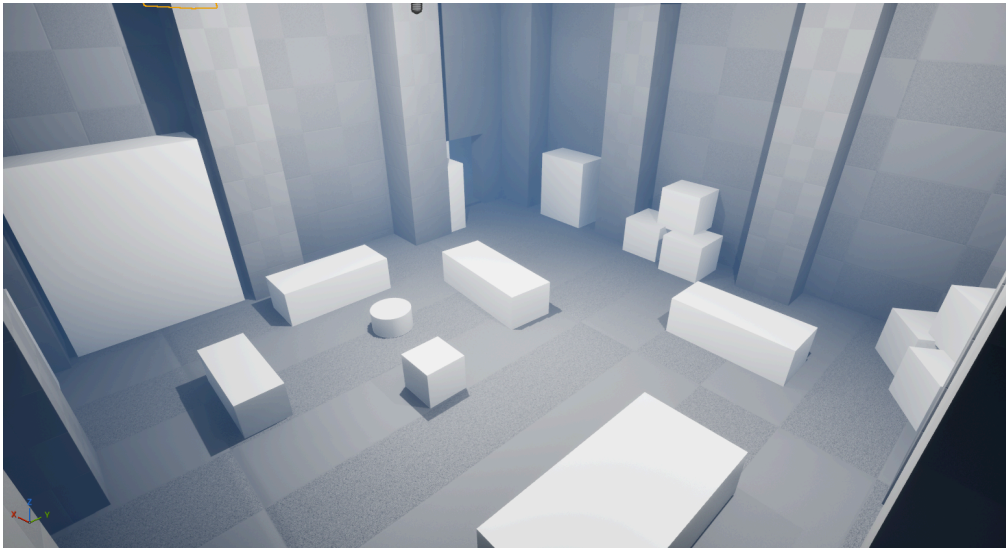
1. A combat heavy area where players are almost guaranteed to be spotted
2. A more lighthearted and comedic area for players with a disguise to interact with enemies



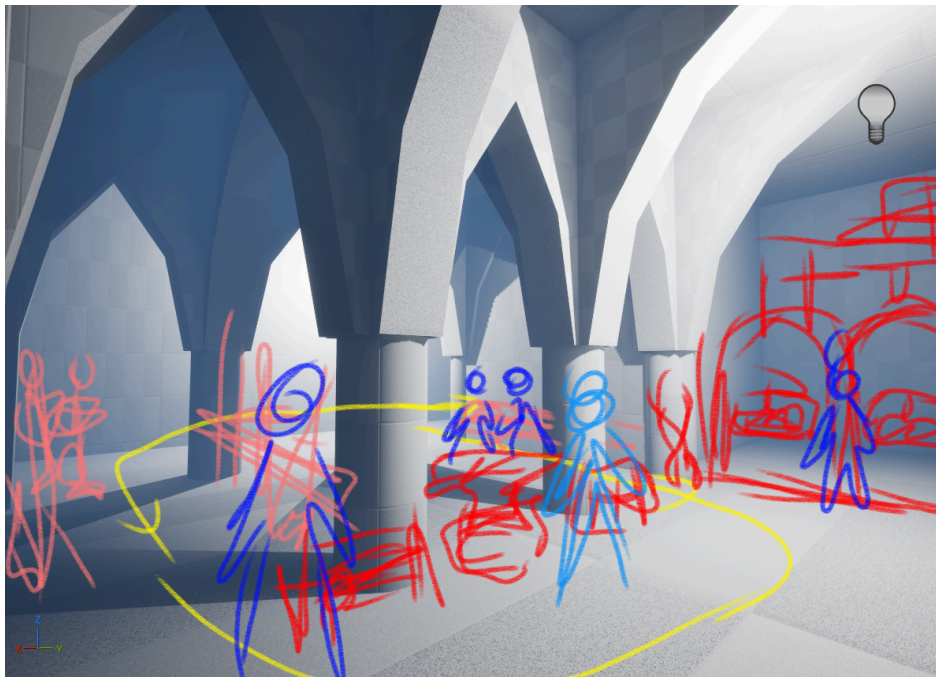
Council Chambers



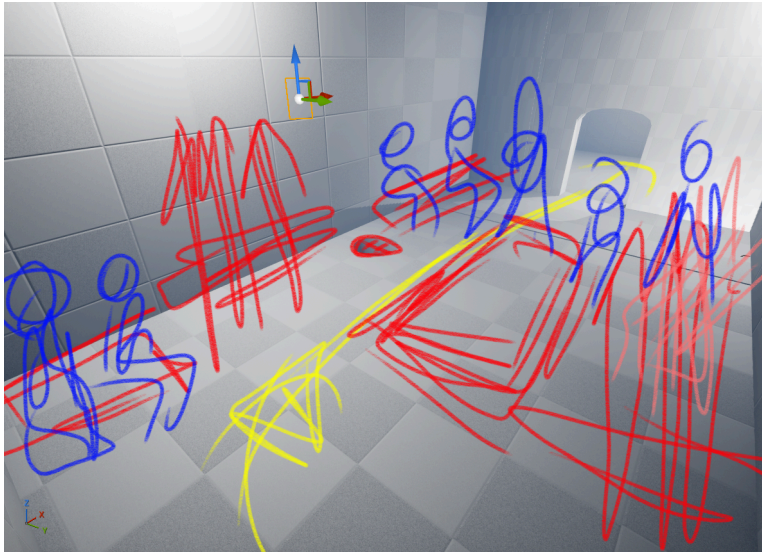
Kitchen



Blacksmith



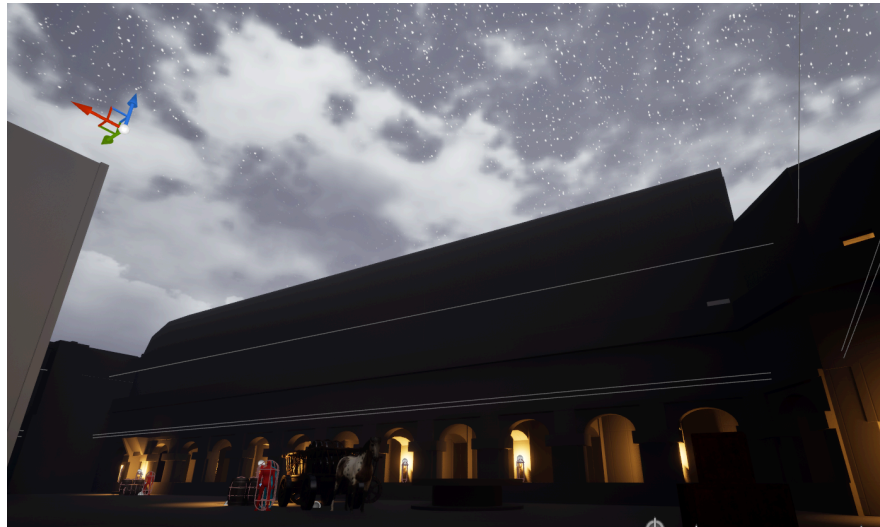
Armoury F2 / Warning Bell



Modular Assets, Lighting and Enemies

Lighting

The level is set at nighttime in order to create a tense atmosphere. As it is dark there is little natural light, so I mainly relied on candlesticks and torches to light the level.



I made blueprints of all the key lightsources so that they could be easily placed around the level and adjusted simultaneously. I could not find a long candlestick on Fab for the interior, so I placed one on a cylinder static mesh to use as a placeholder



Candlestick (interior)



Torch (exterior
and dungeons)



Window (chambers)



Window
(great hall)



Candle

I also made sure the walkway towards the warning bell and the main entrance by the Gryffin Stairwell were well lit. This is to create contrast with the dimly lit courtyard, drawing the player to these key areas. This will help with wayfinding



Modular Assets

I used a wide variety of modular assets from Fab in my level:

- Barrels
- Boxes
- Armour stands
- Tables
- Chairs
- Fireplaces
- Shelves
- Chests
- Carriages
- Beds
- Rugs
- Windows
- Torches
- Candles



Enemies

As my level is a stealth level, enemies are very important in filling the space. In order to fully visualise my level, I felt it was important to include enemies with their patrol paths. I have also added enemy sight detection so to make it easy to visualise whether the player is within any enemies line of sight.

