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University of Staffordshire

Tool Development

Technical Design Document

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Contents

Project Introduction

This project is a collection of three tools, developed within a timespan of about 2-3 weeks each. The tools were created with other developers in mind as the intended users.

Tool 1 is a level editor, offering location, rotation, mesh/material, and name editing for various objects in the game world.

Tool 2 is a map generator, offering a way to create dynamic hex-tile-based maps using a set of adjustable parameters.

Tool 3 is a character creator with simple genetic functionality, specifically being a way to take 2 created characters and mix their features together to create a new character.

Project Goals

The goal of the project overall is to create 3 tools that are understandable to use, with navigable UI layout and appropriate features offered to achieve desired effects.

Tool 1 will aim to offer simpler/streamlined methods for laying out actors in the game world, as well as categorising objects or editing simple aspects of them (mesh and material) easily, and in groups.

Tool 2 will aim to offer a quick method to acquire aesthetically-pleasing, small maps with a hex tile style, also allowing access to each tile as an actor for further development into more complex uses (eg strategy games on a hex grid). Ample variety in maps generated is also a goal.

Tool 3 will aim to offer a simple method to simulate genetic mixing of characters, and a way to acquire a range of simplistically shaped characters (eg as stand-ins or placeholders). The genetic mixing functionality may also function as a basis to develop more complex 'family' systems.

Challenges and Risks

The main challenges arise with tools 2 and 3. Complex systems will be attempted in blueprint, and both will require experimentation and research to realise.

Tool 2 (map generator) requires the development of a robust system to lay out hex grid tiles, then apply 'biome'/feature spread across the tiles in believable and aesthetically consistent ways (eg spreading areas of forest/desert, dynamically generating mountains/hills/cliffs/water bodies). A challenge arising from this specifically is the heavy impact on performance in needing to frequently loop through tile actors to apply the correct effects on them, causing stuttering/pausing on generation, saving, and loading. This issue specifically worsened when transitioning from generating on BeginPlay to during editor, as the sphere collision used to gather neighbouring tiles of a tile (essential for generation methods) no longer functioned, and thus required looping through all tiles to find close neighbours.

Tool 3 (character creator / genetic simulator) requires an effective system for creating, passing, and adjusting data using structs. This is due to the created characters holding many features, many of which are involved in the genetic mix functionality. Created characters also must maintain persistence when being saved, loaded, reselected, and edited.

Hardware Requirements

Recommended:

- CPU: Intel® Core™ i7-11700

- GPU: NVIDIA GeForce RTX 3080
- Memory: 32GB
- Storage requirements: 734MB

Note that these are the specs of the PC these tools were developed on. They are thus recommended specs, and testing to find minimum specs has not been done.

Platforms

Target Platform
Windows PC

Engine Specific Specifications and Limitations
These tools are only available for use on Unreal Engine 5.

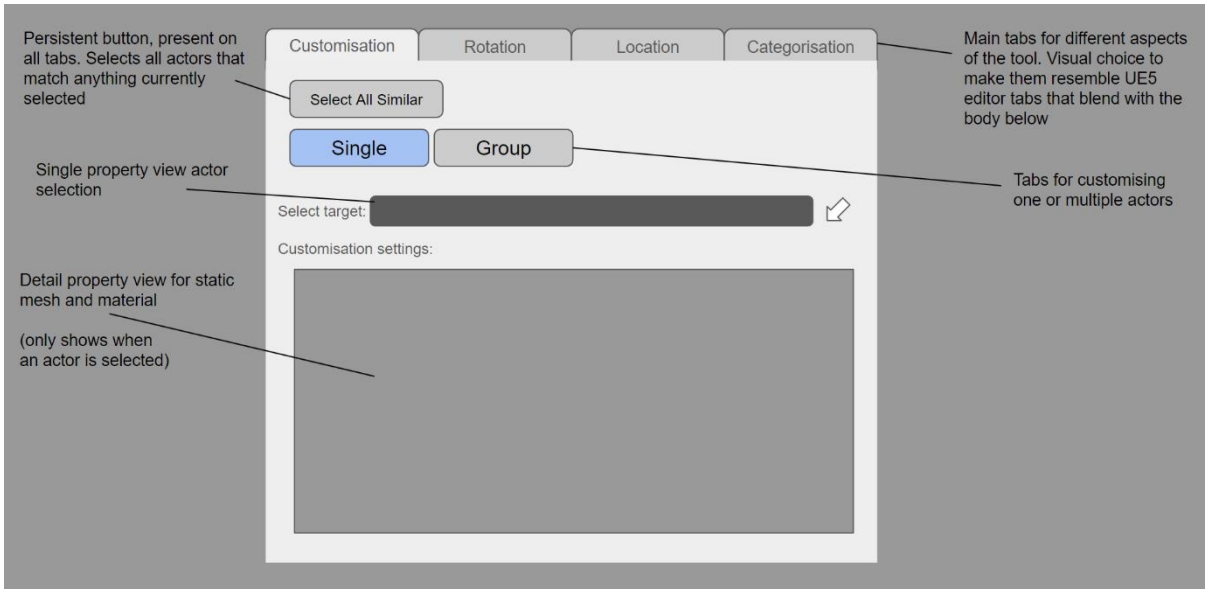
Note that the storage requirement listed above in the specs only accounts for the tools themselves, and not the overall Unreal project holding it.

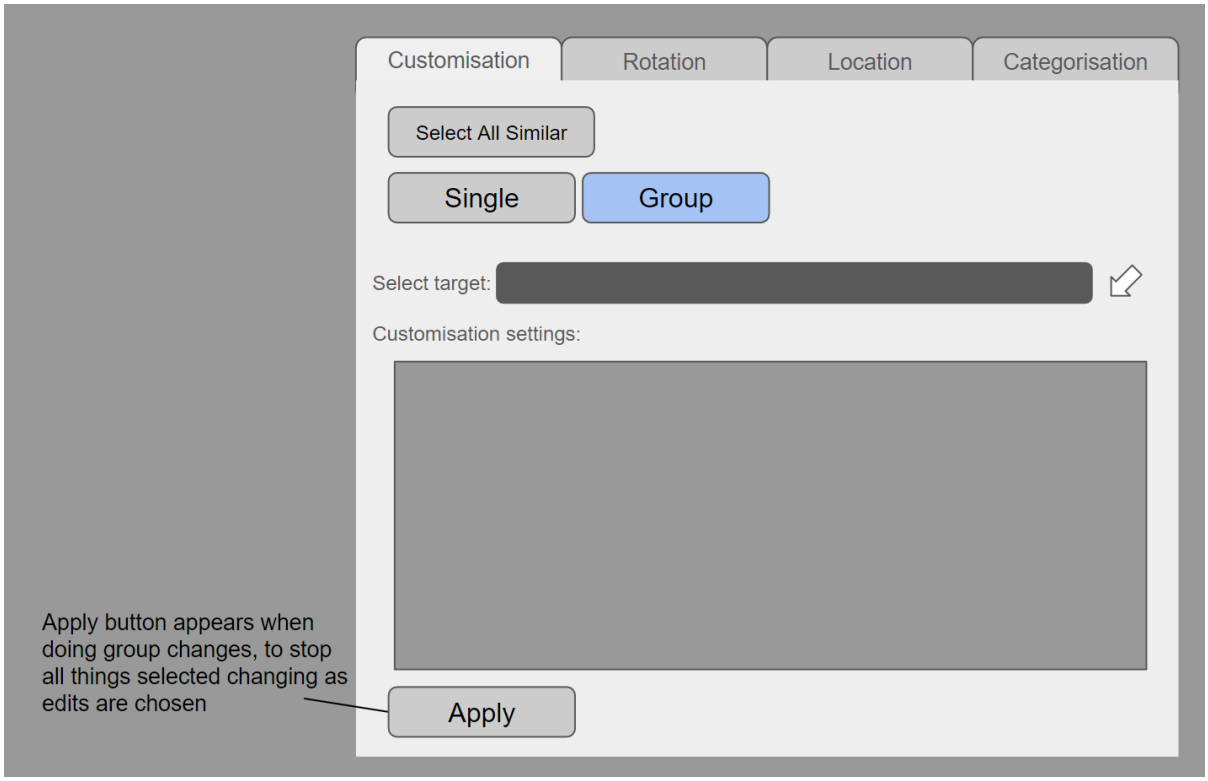
Engine Summary
Version 5.4.4. No plugins are used.

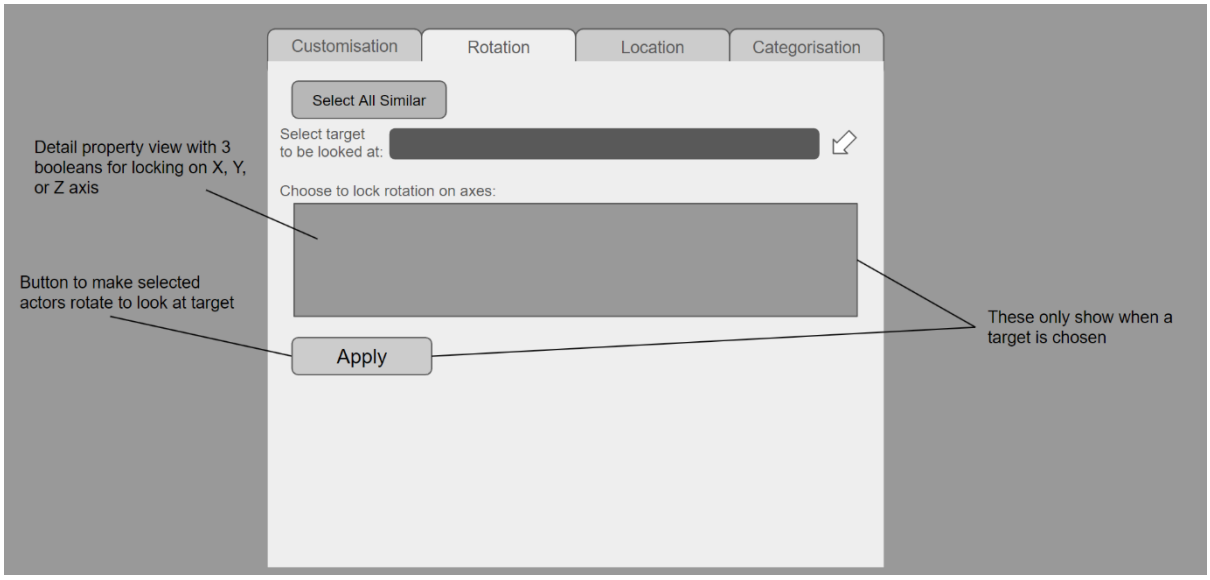
Systems and Diagrams

System 1
Tool 1 – Level Editor

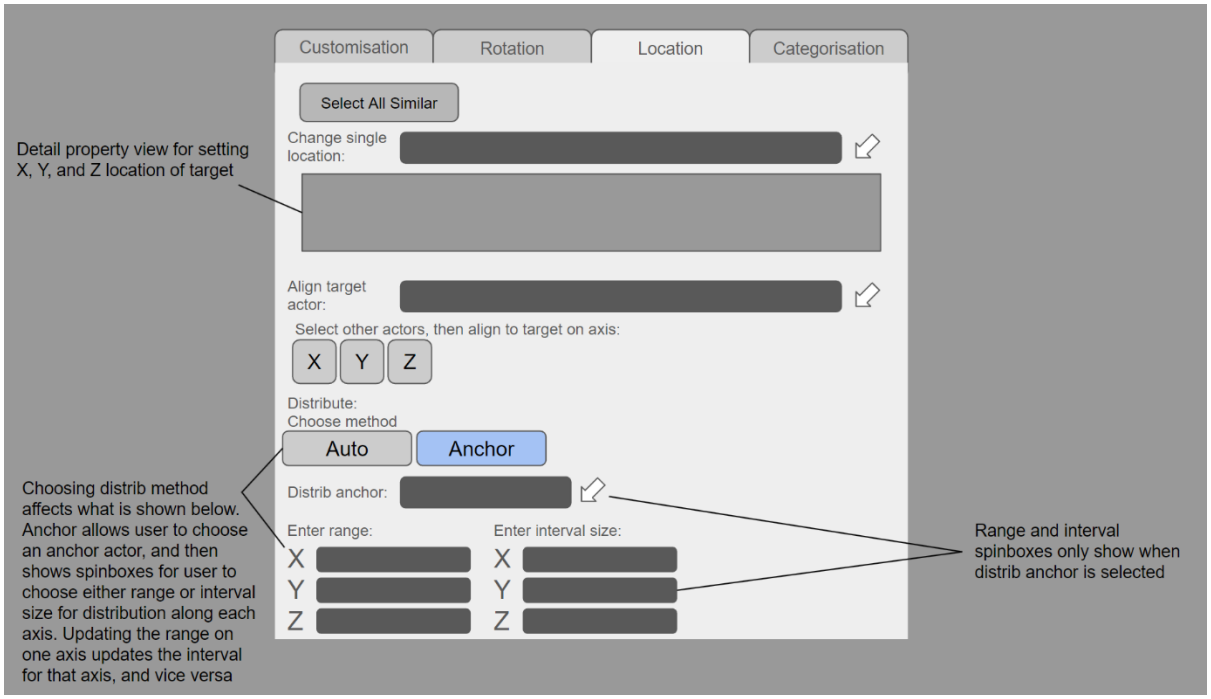
Wireframes

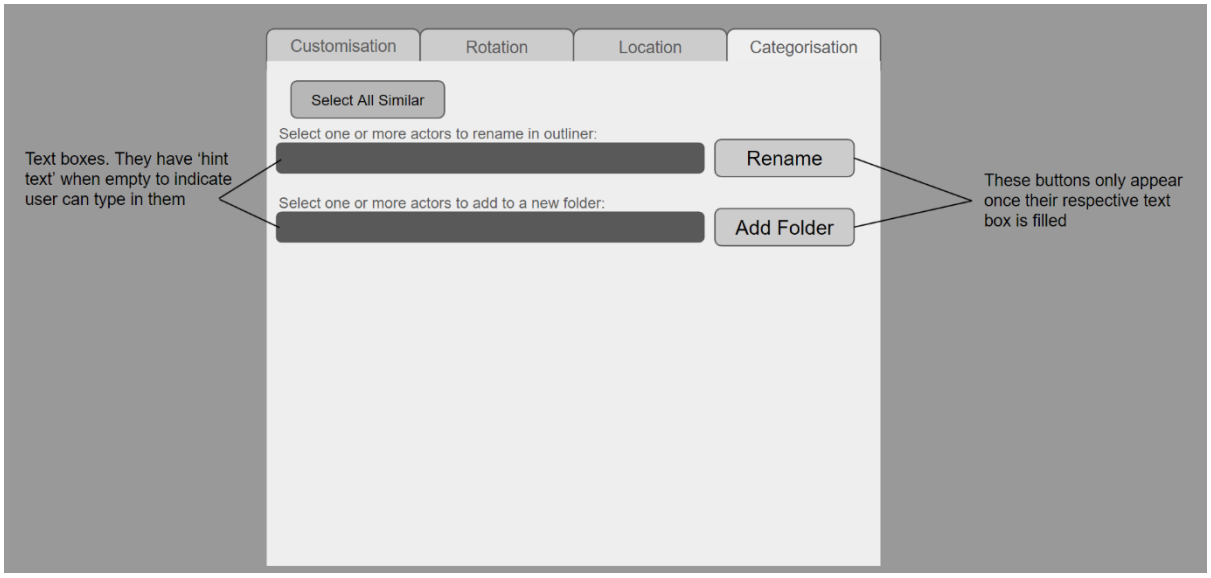






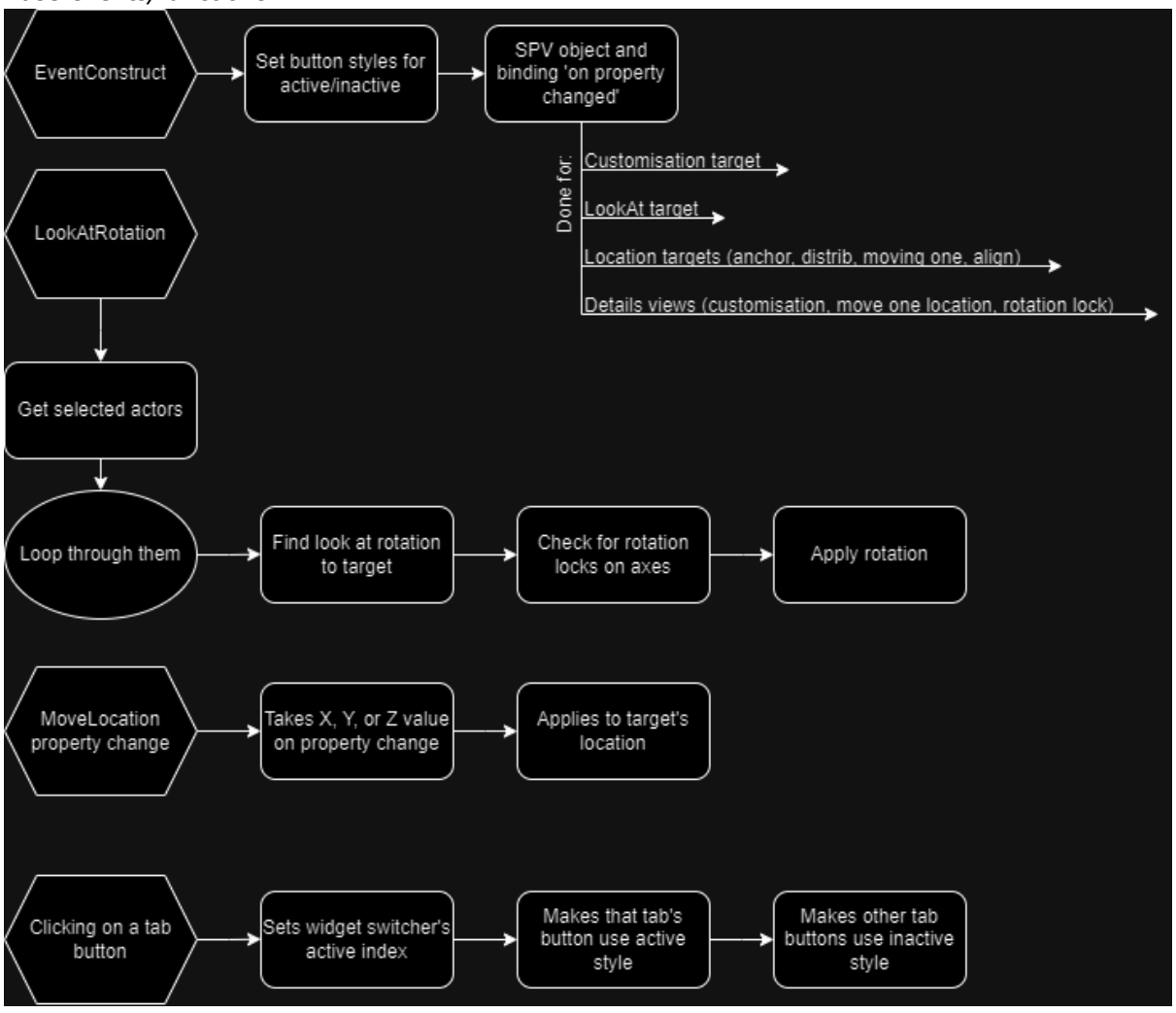

Customisation
Rotation
Location
Categorisation
Select All Similar
Change single location:
Align target actor:
Select other actors, then align to target on axis:
X
Y
Z
Distribute:
Choose method
Auto
Anchor
X
Y
Z
All
Detail property view for setting X, Y, and Z location of target
These only show when their relevant target is chosen
Choosing distrib method affects what is shown below. Auto has buttons for distributing across each axis, or all at once. Tooltip on Auto explains that auto uses range of the bounds of the selected actors


Customisation
Rotation
Location
Categorisation
Select All Similar
Change single location:
Align target actor:
Select other actors, then align to target on axis:
X
Y
Z
Distribute:
Choose method
Auto
Anchor
Distrib anchor:
Enter range:
Enter interval size:
X
Y
Z
X
Y
Z
Detail property view for setting X, Y, and Z location of target
Range and interval spinboxes only show when distrib anchor is selected
Choosing distrib method affects what is shown below. Anchor allows user to choose an anchor actor, and then shows spinboxes for user to choose either range or interval size for distribution along each axis. Updating the range on one axis updates the interval for that axis, and vice versa

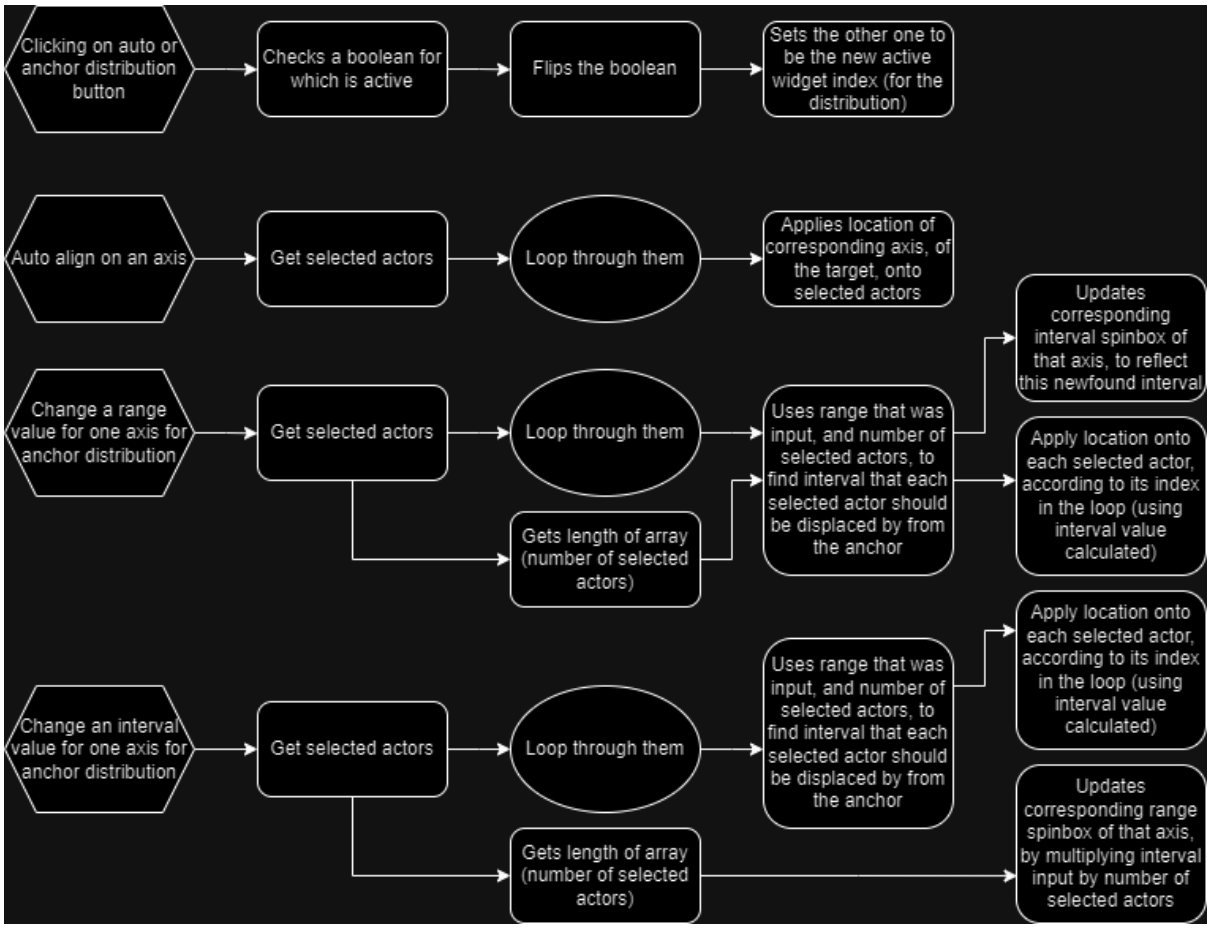


Blueprint flowcharts

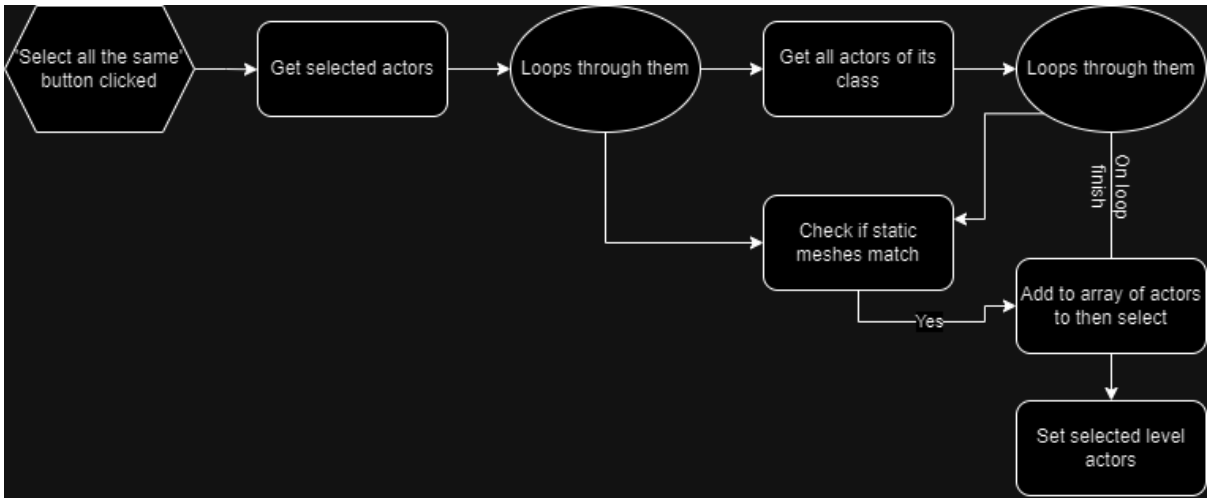
Base events/functions



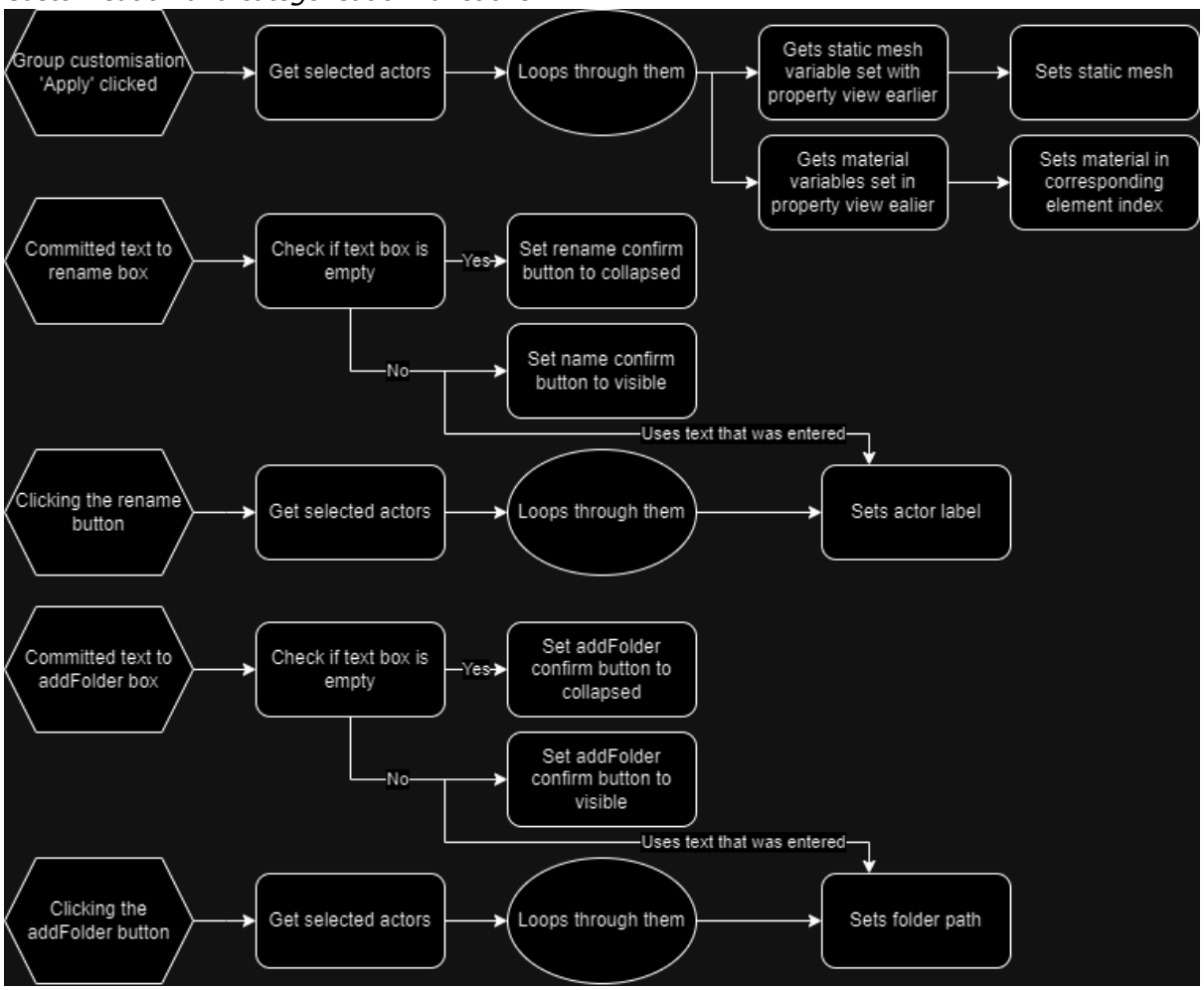
Location functions



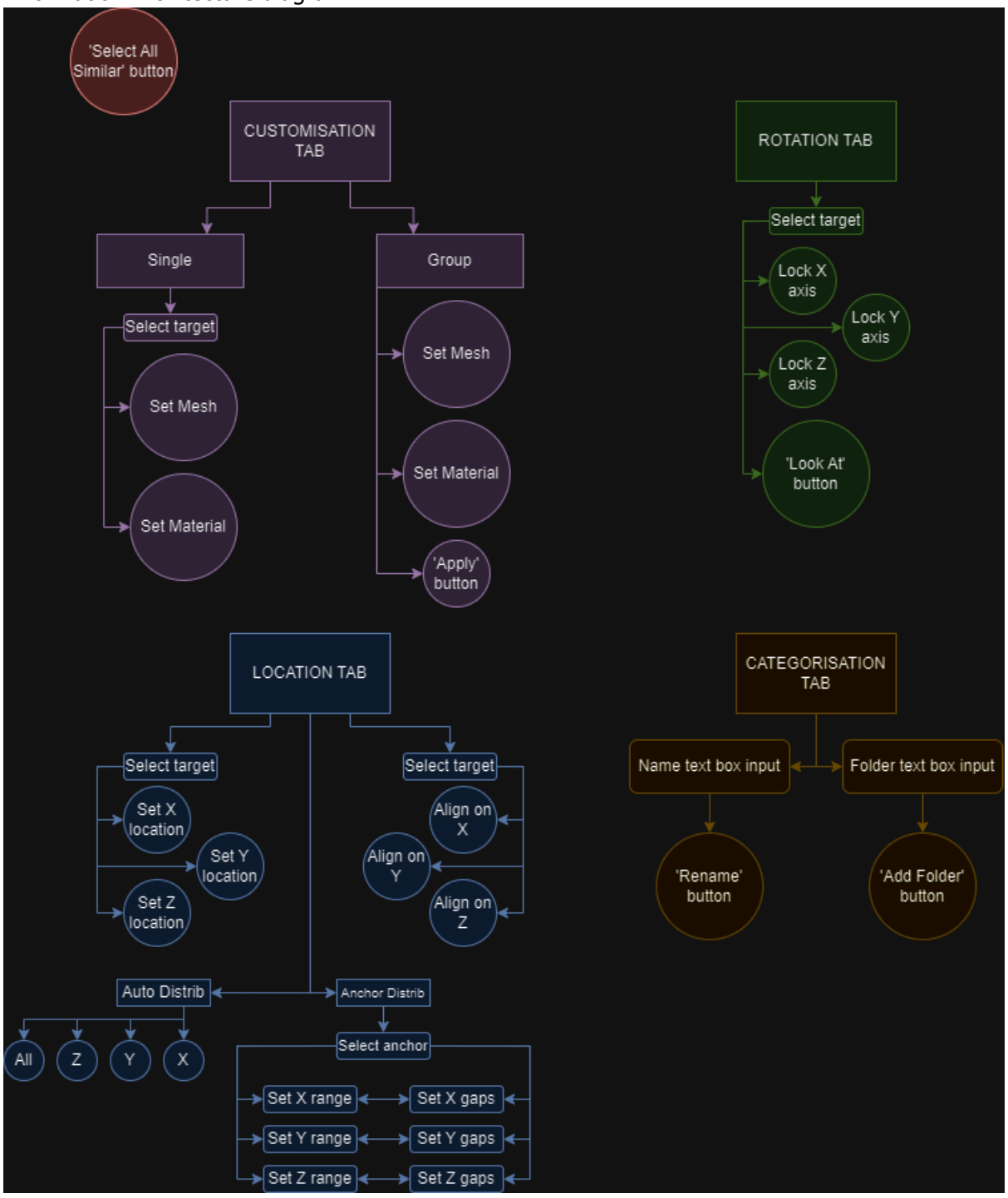
'Select all the same' function



Customisation and categorisation functions



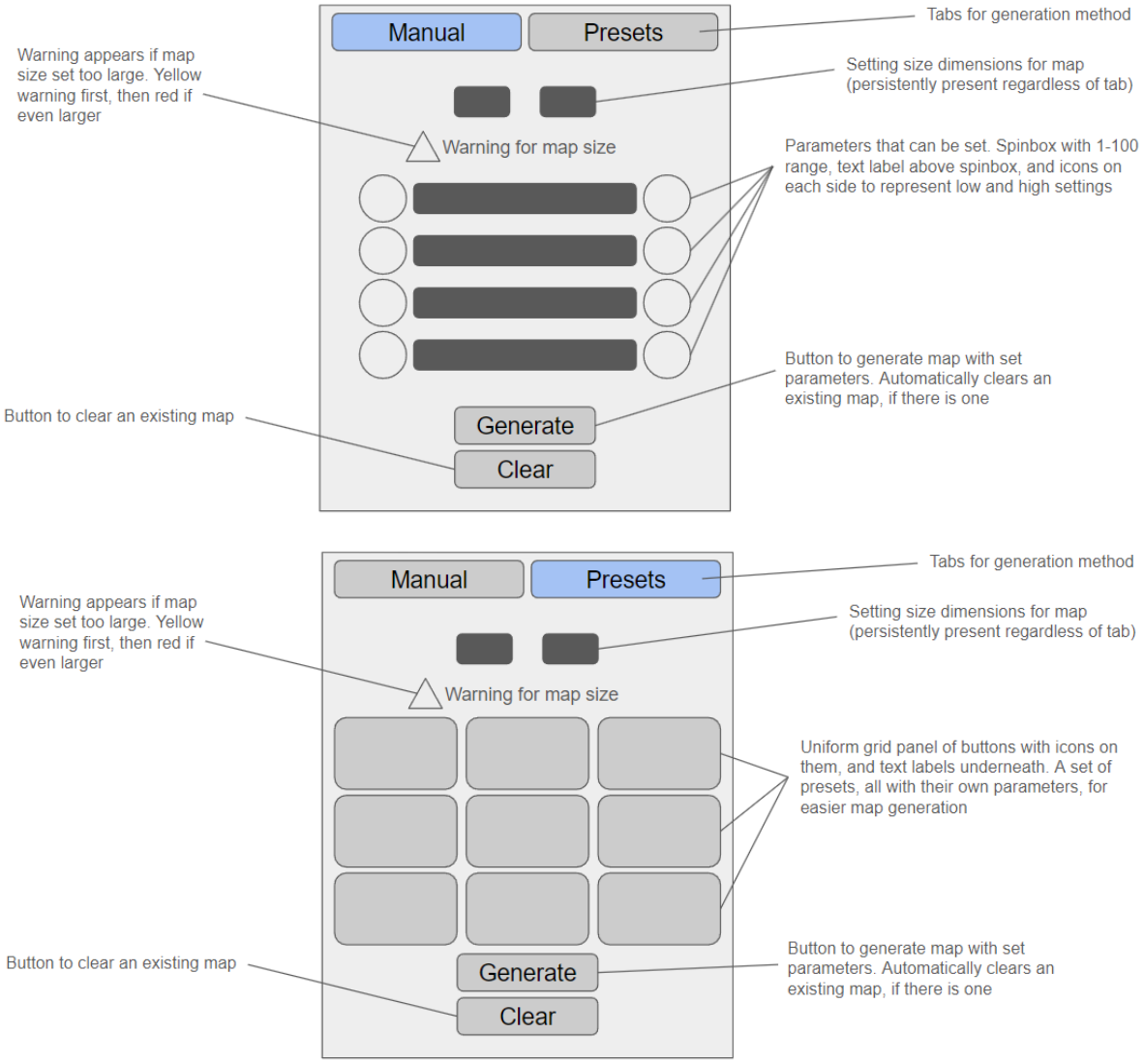
Information Architecture diagram



System 2

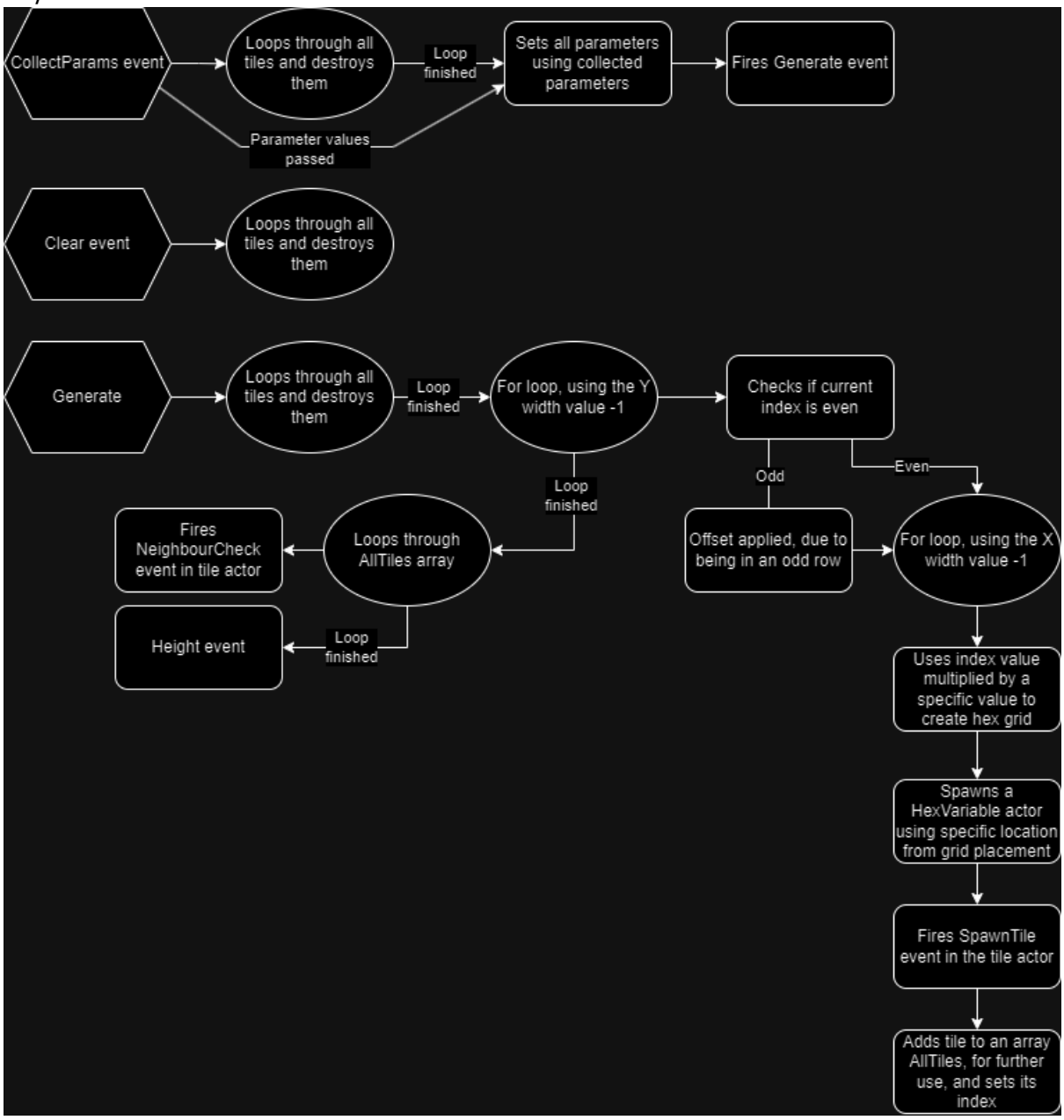
Tool 2 – Map Generator

Wireframes

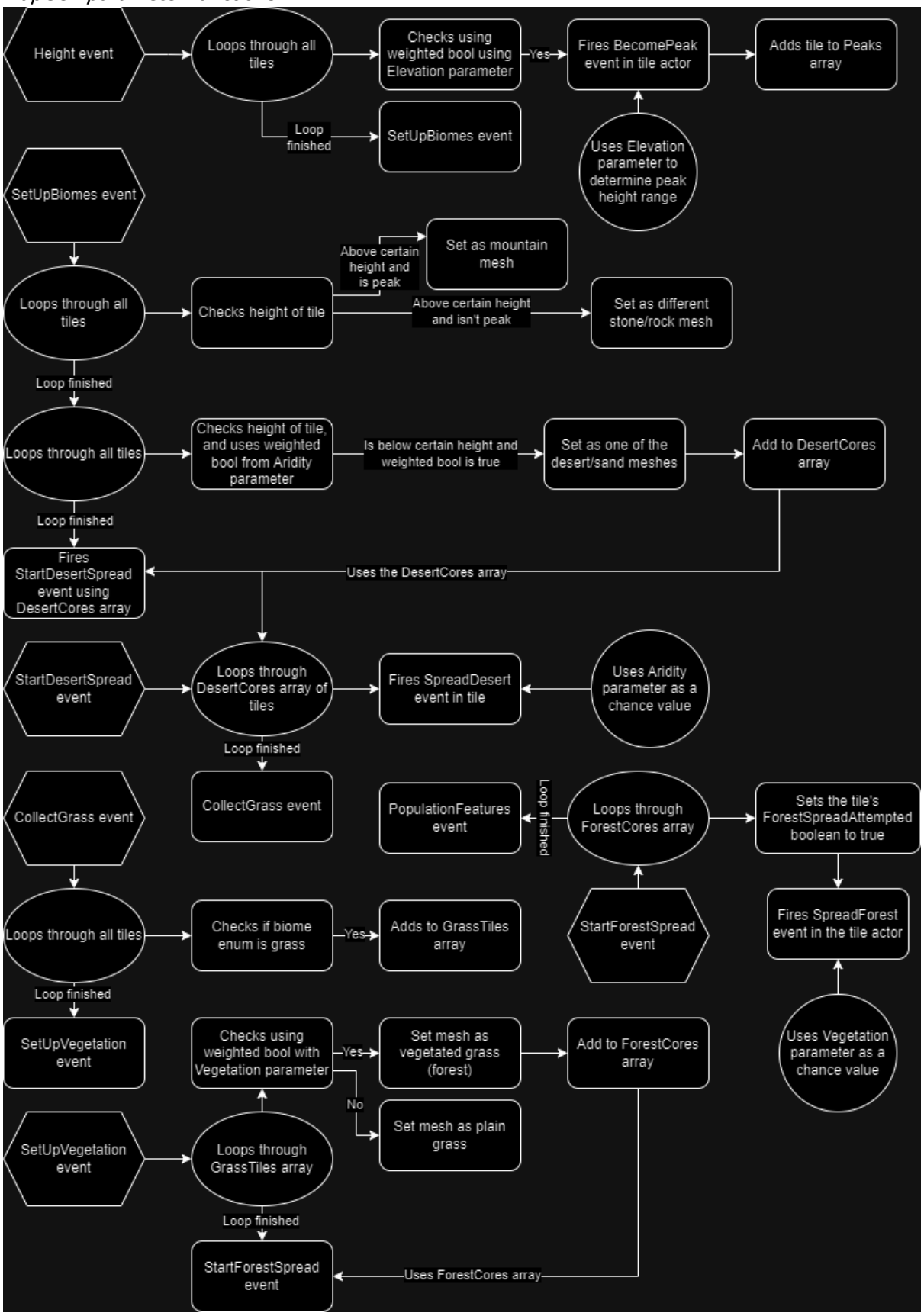


Blueprint flowcharts

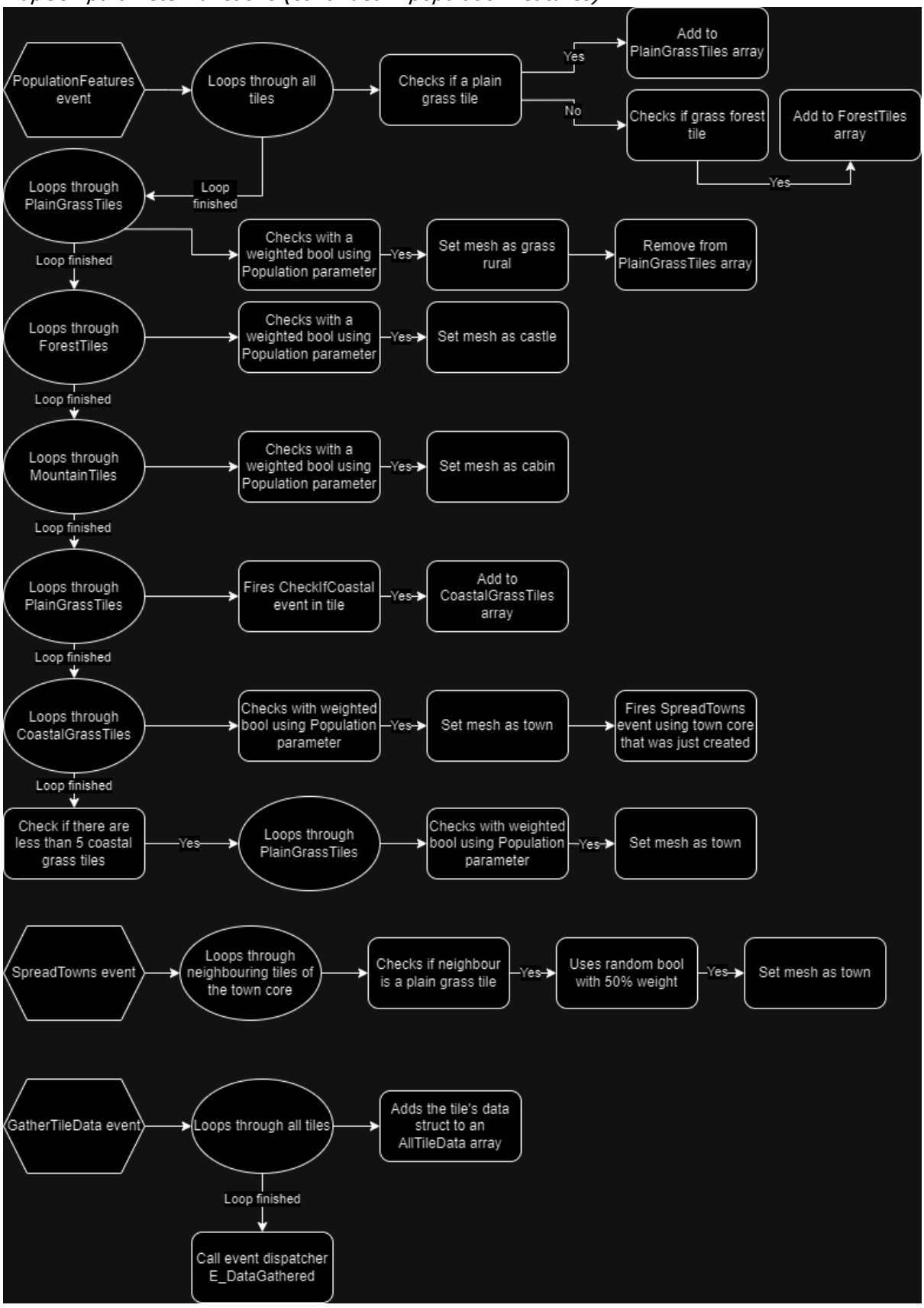
MapGen actor base functions



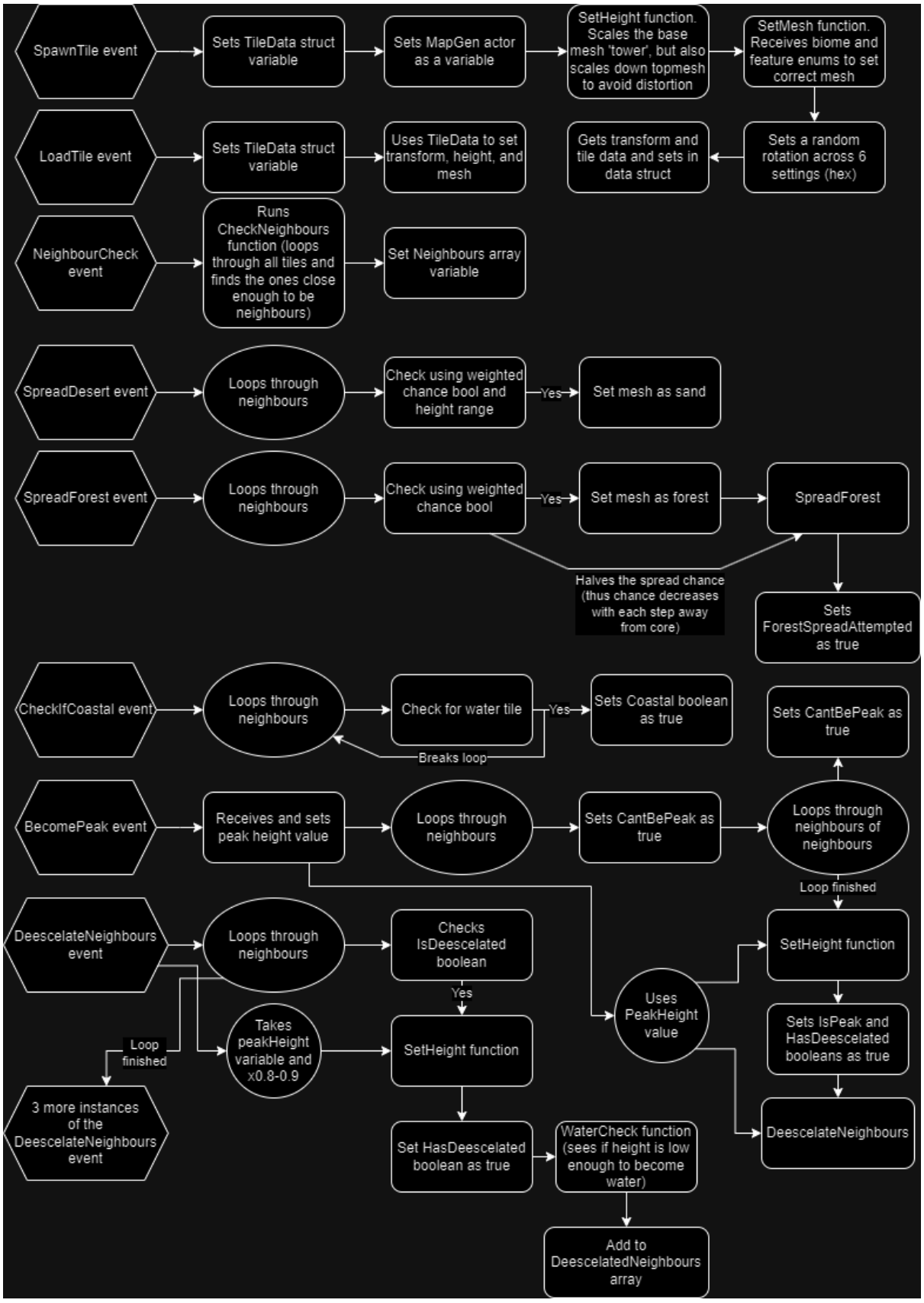
MapGen parameter functions



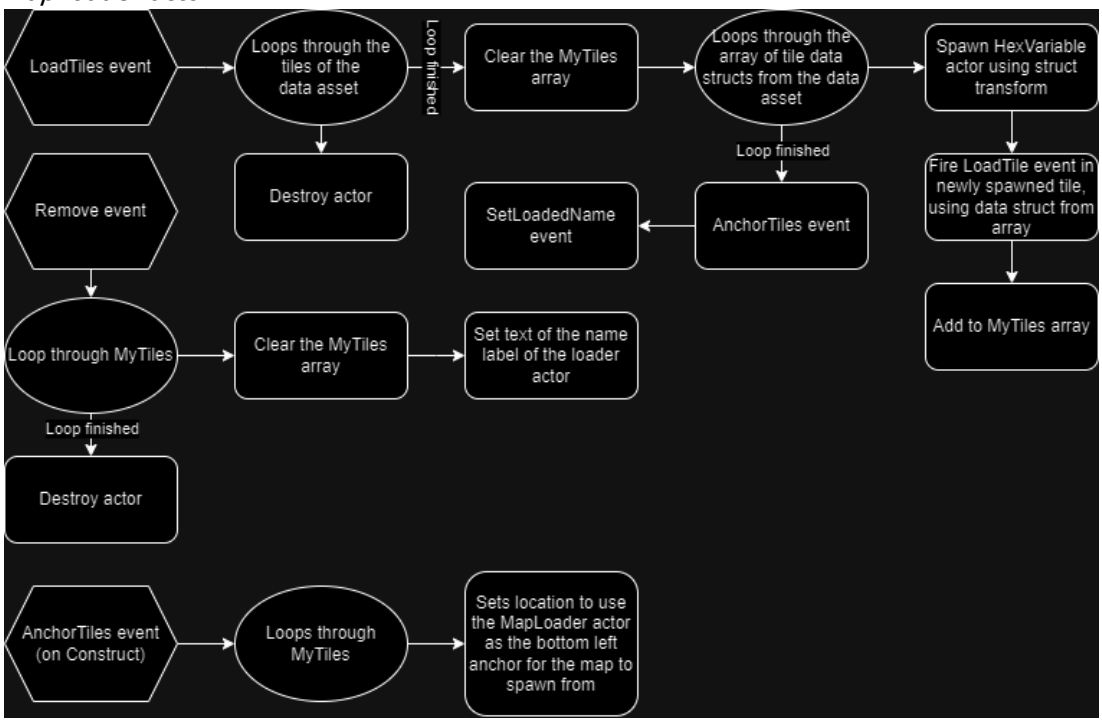
MapGen parameter functions (continued – population features)



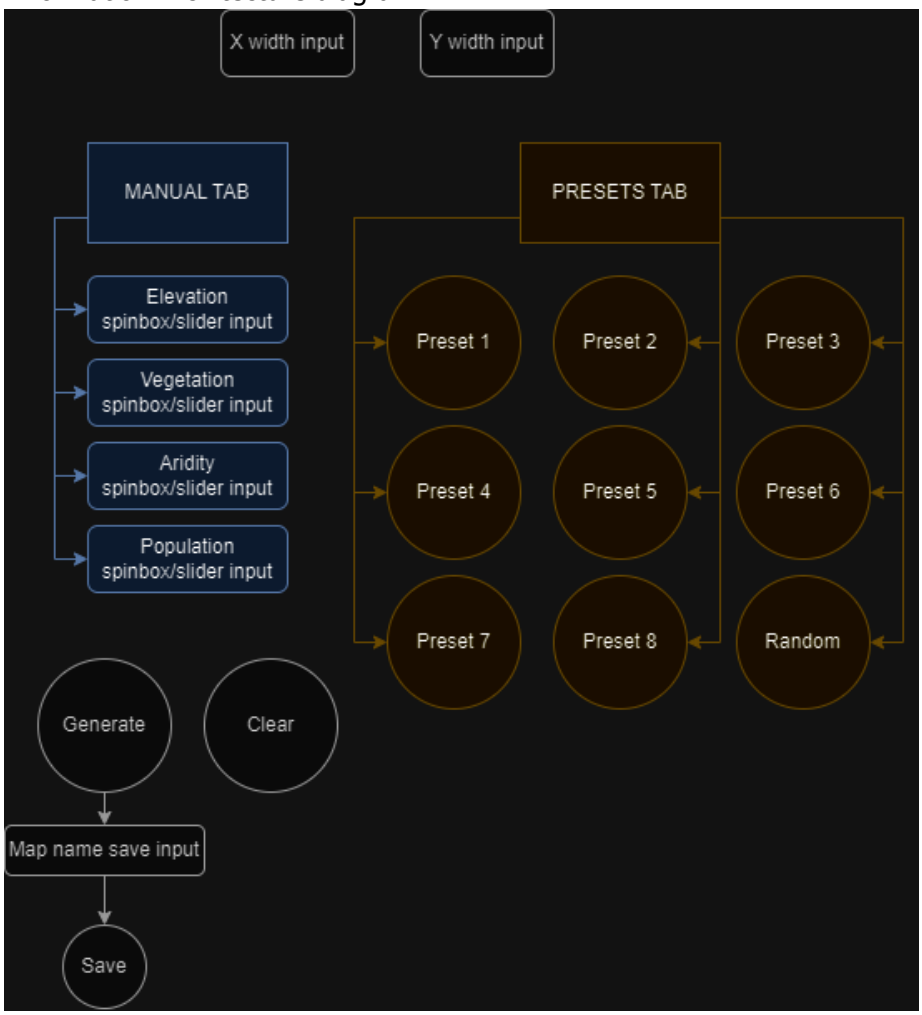
HexVariable actor



MapLoader actor



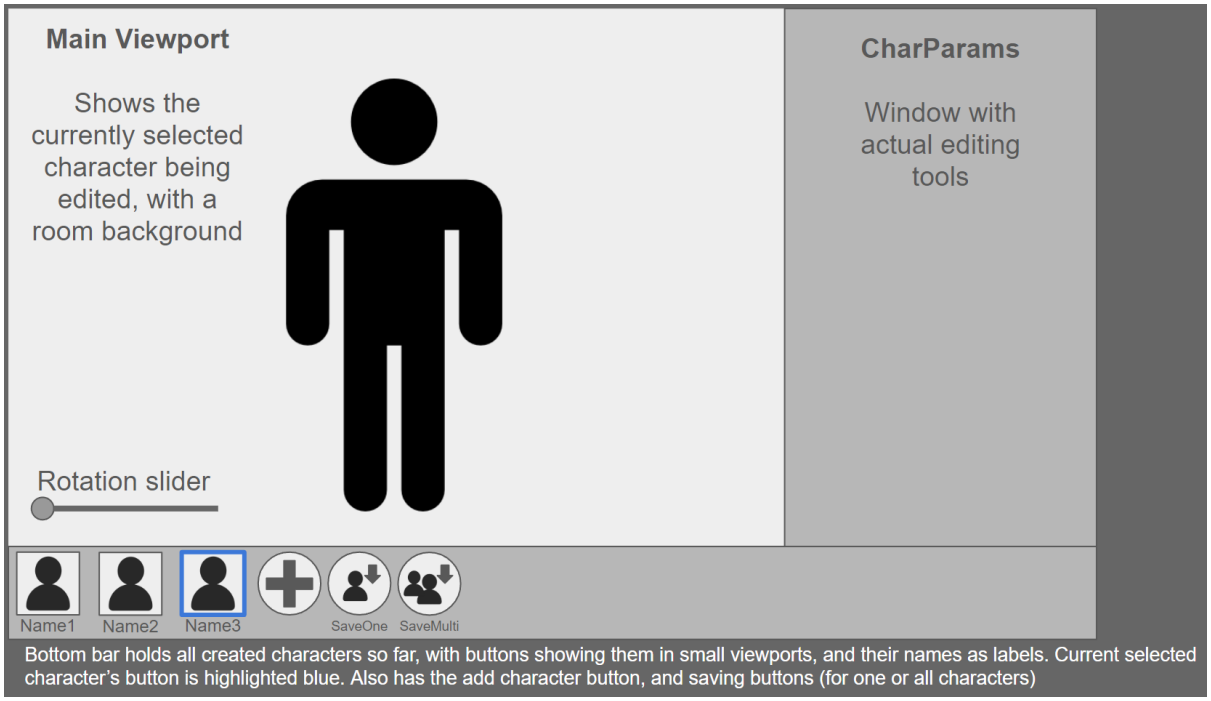
Information Architecture diagram



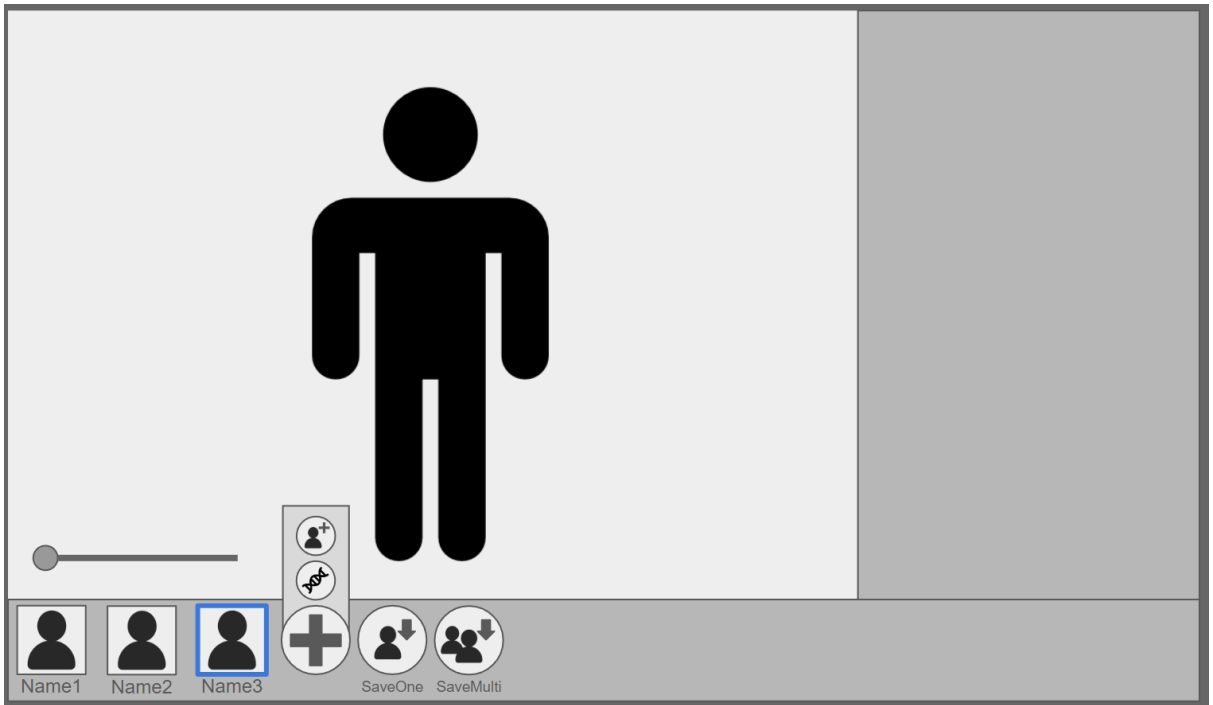
System 3

Tool 3 – Character Creator / Genetics Simulator

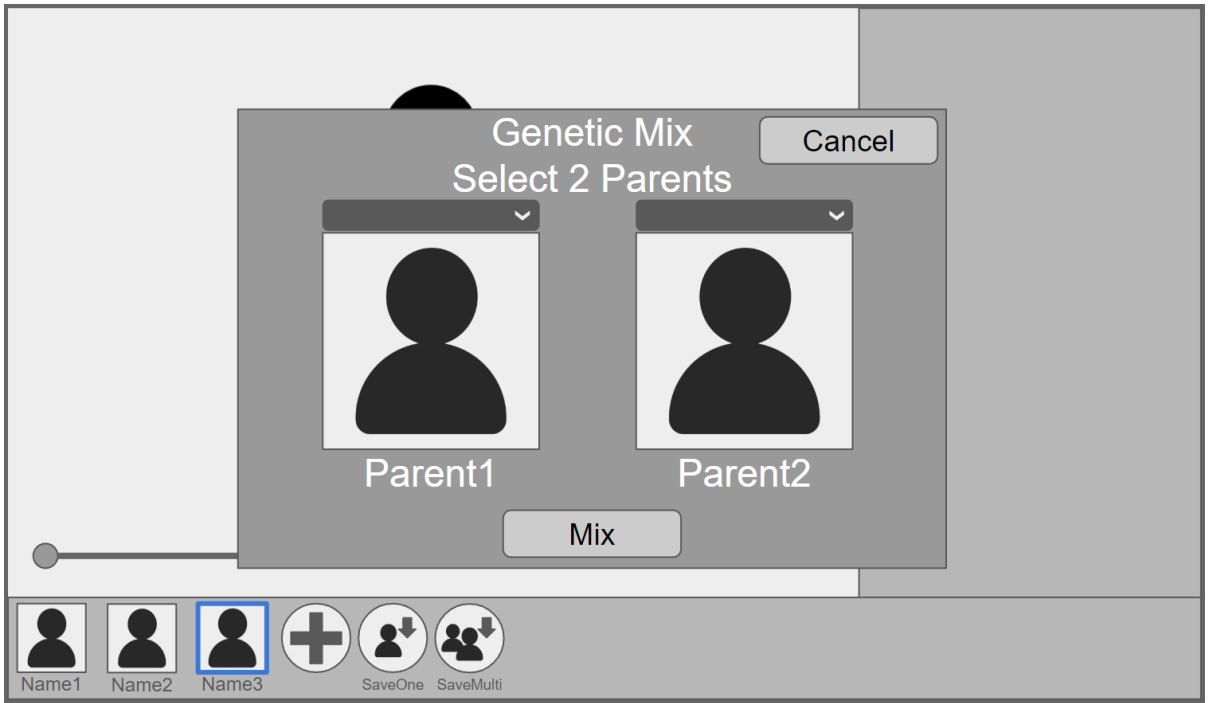
Wireframes



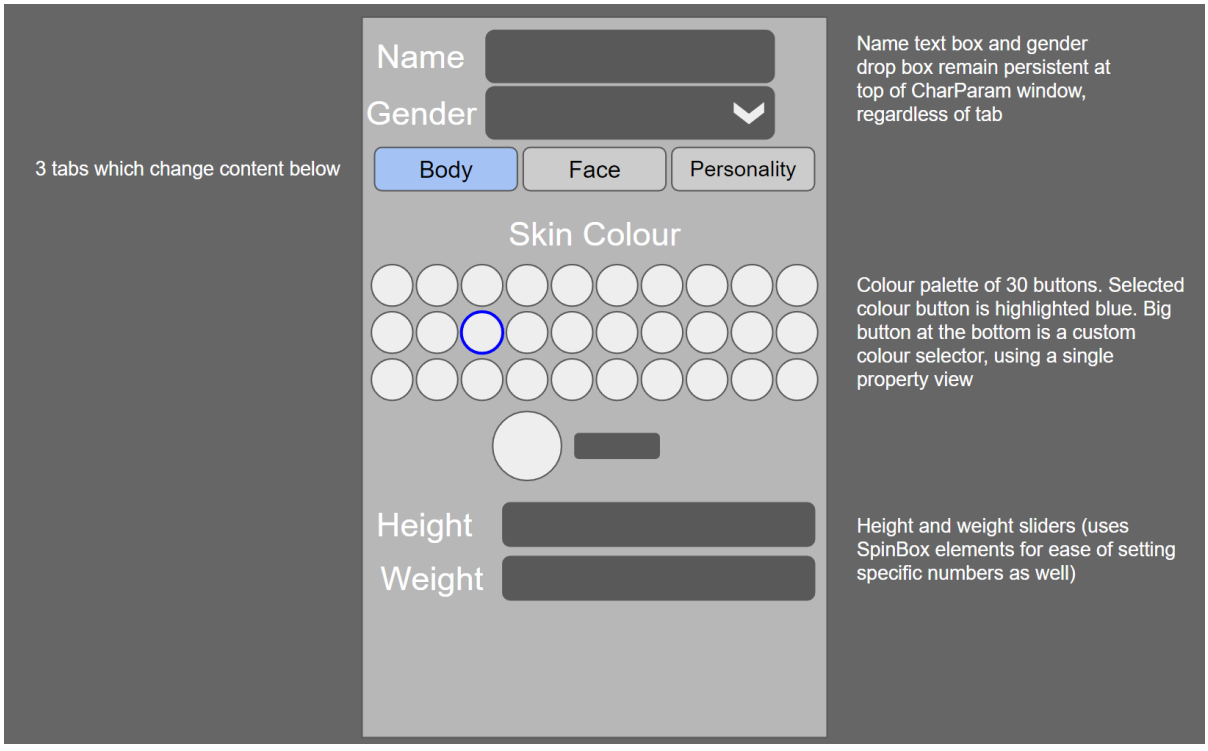
Bottom bar holds all created characters so far, with buttons showing them in small viewports, and their names as labels. Current selected character's button is highlighted blue. Also has the add character button, and saving buttons (for one or all characters)

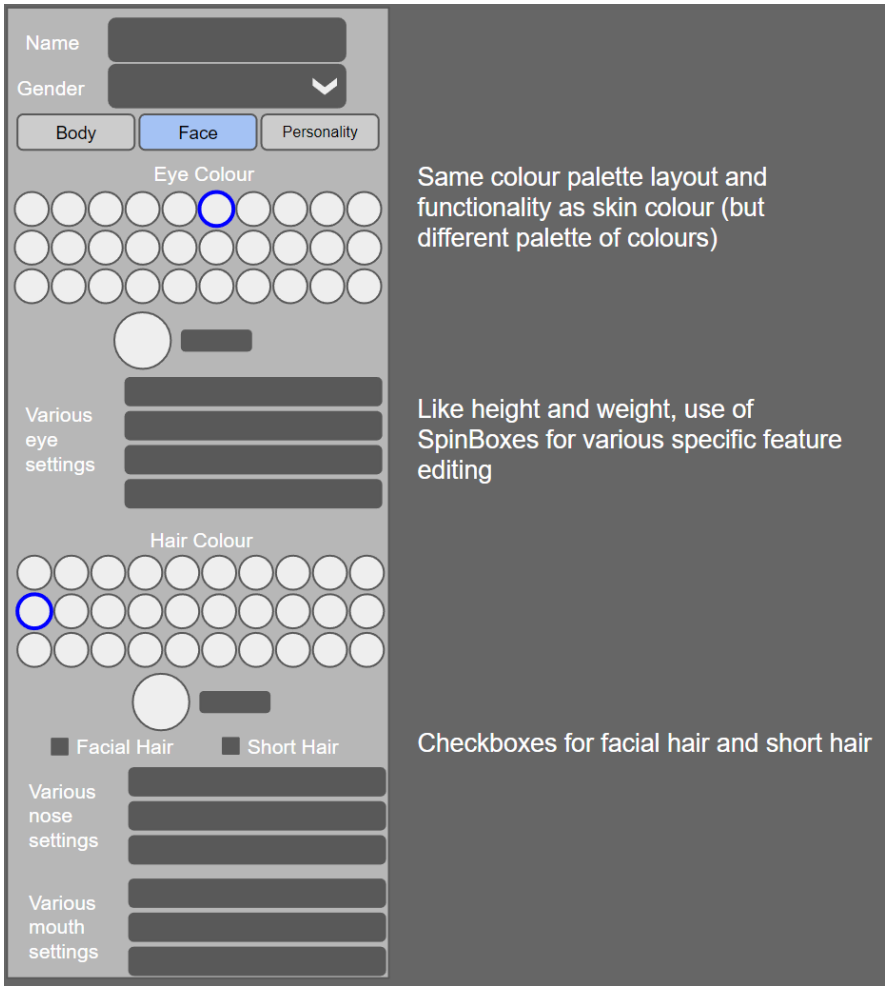


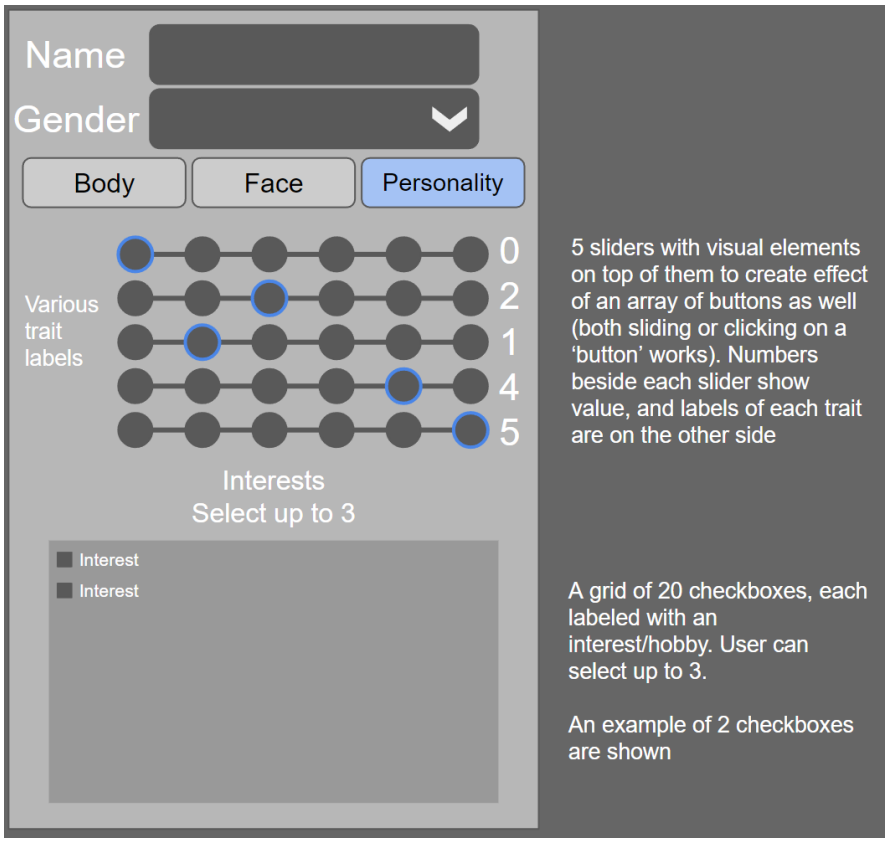
When add character button is pressed, a small panel appears with 2 options: Adding a new default character, or opening the Genetic Mixing panel. GenMix is only enabled (not greyed out) if at least 2 previous characters are made. Both options grey out if at 10 character max limit



Genetic Mix panel opens. 2 drop boxes which hold available characters. Upon choosing from the drop box, the character fills in the parent image slot (and their name label). When both characters are selected, the Mix button becomes available. Upon selecting one parent, they are removed as an option from the other drop box.

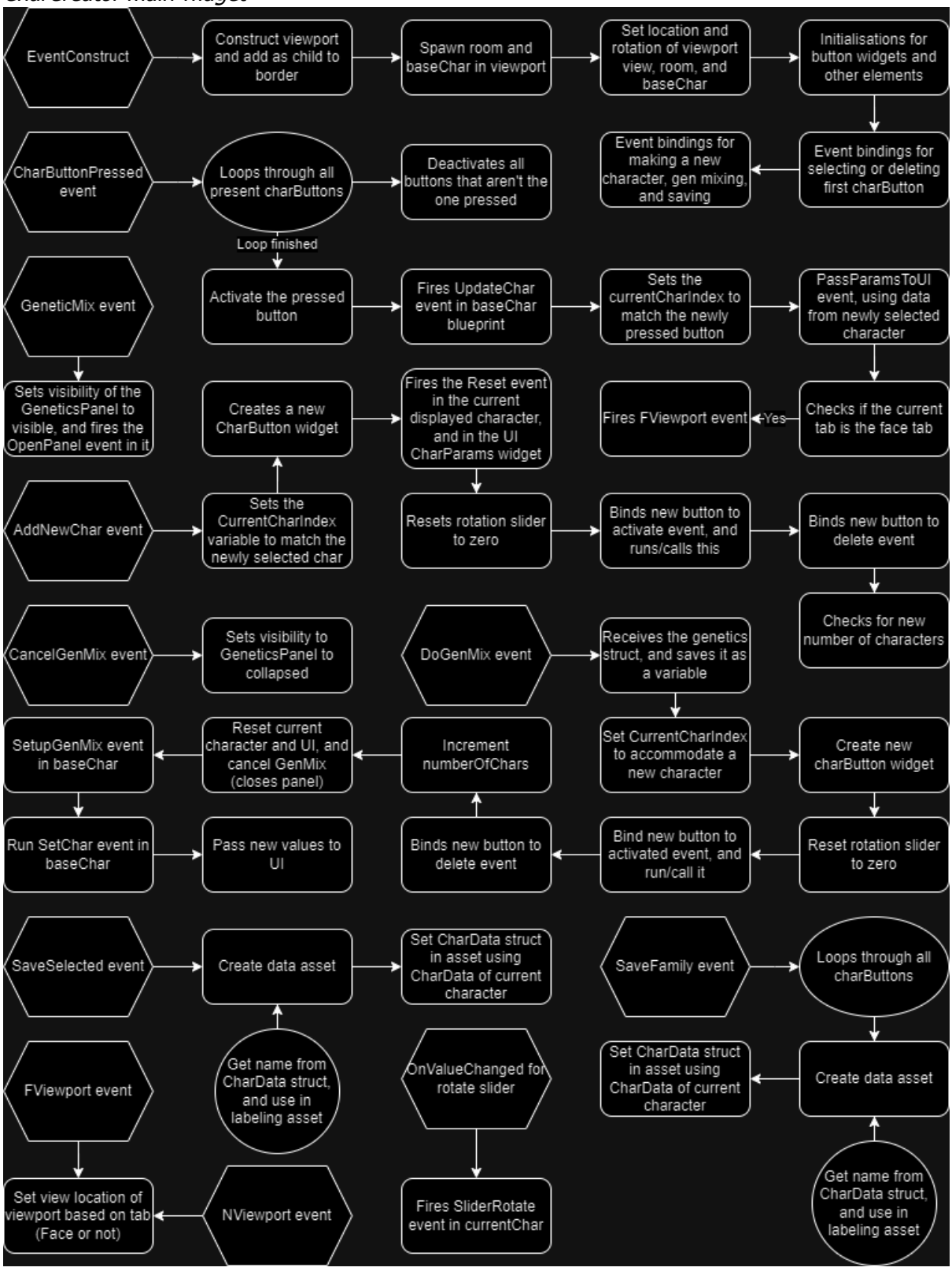




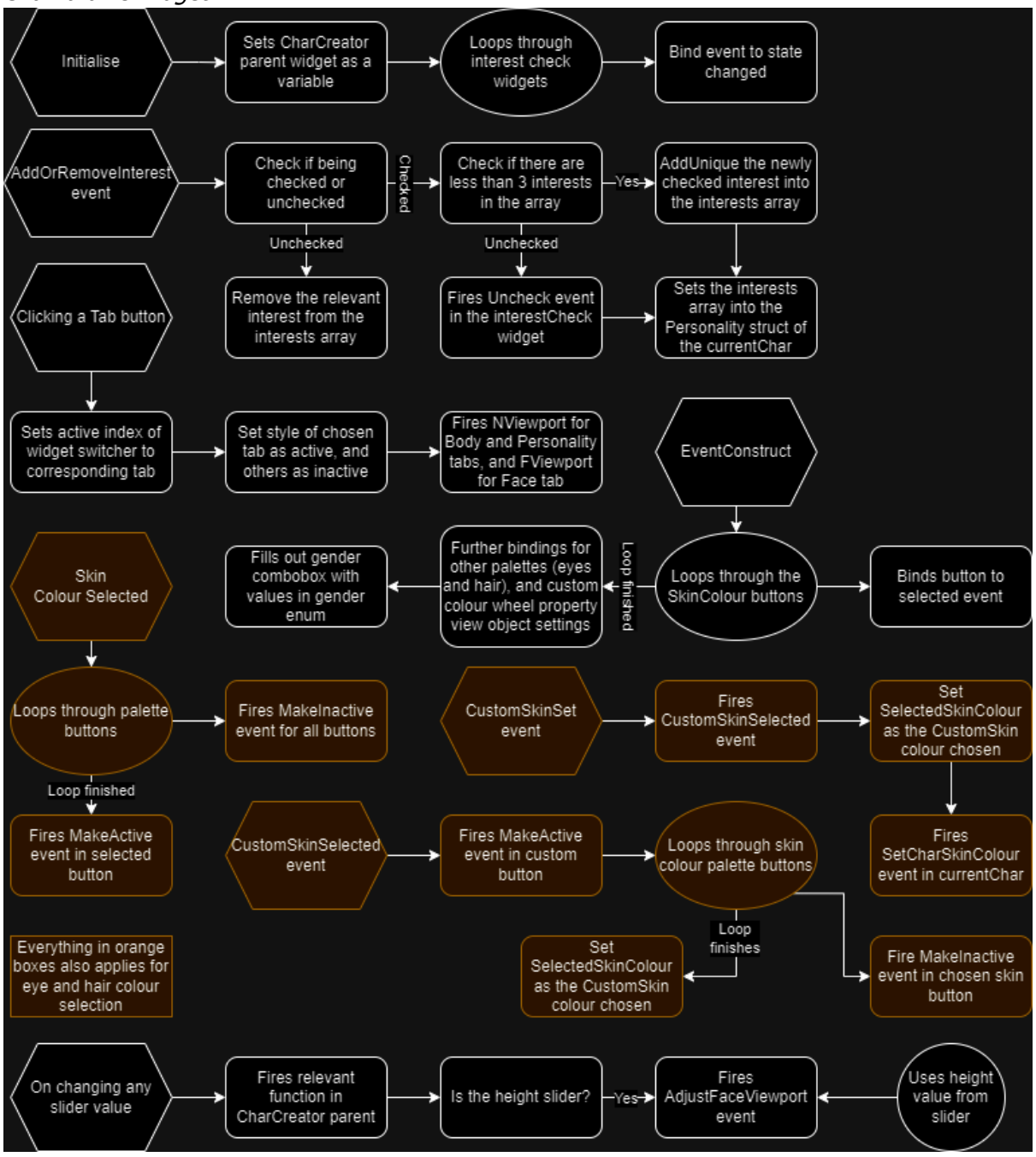


Blueprint flowcharts

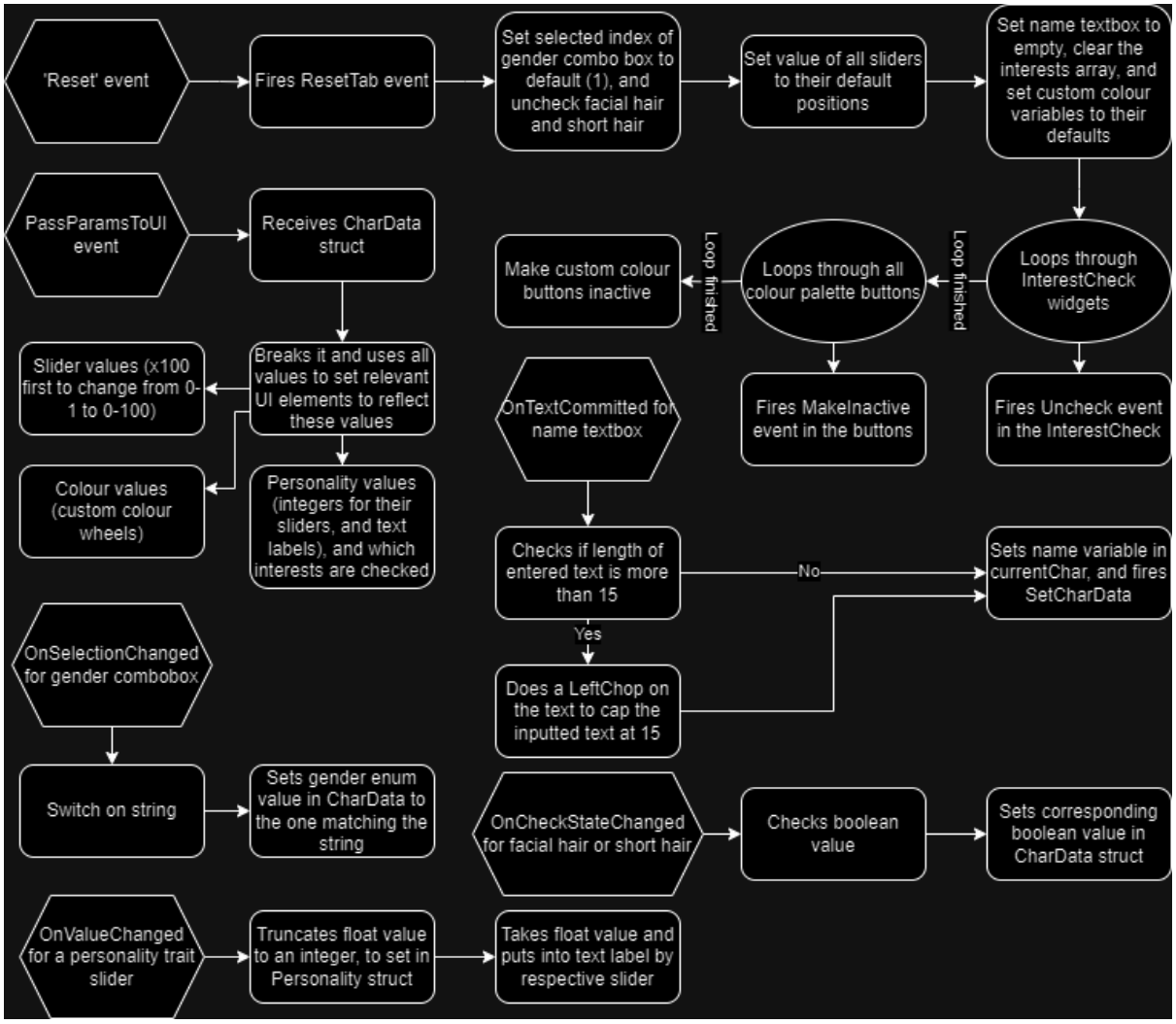
CharCreator main widget



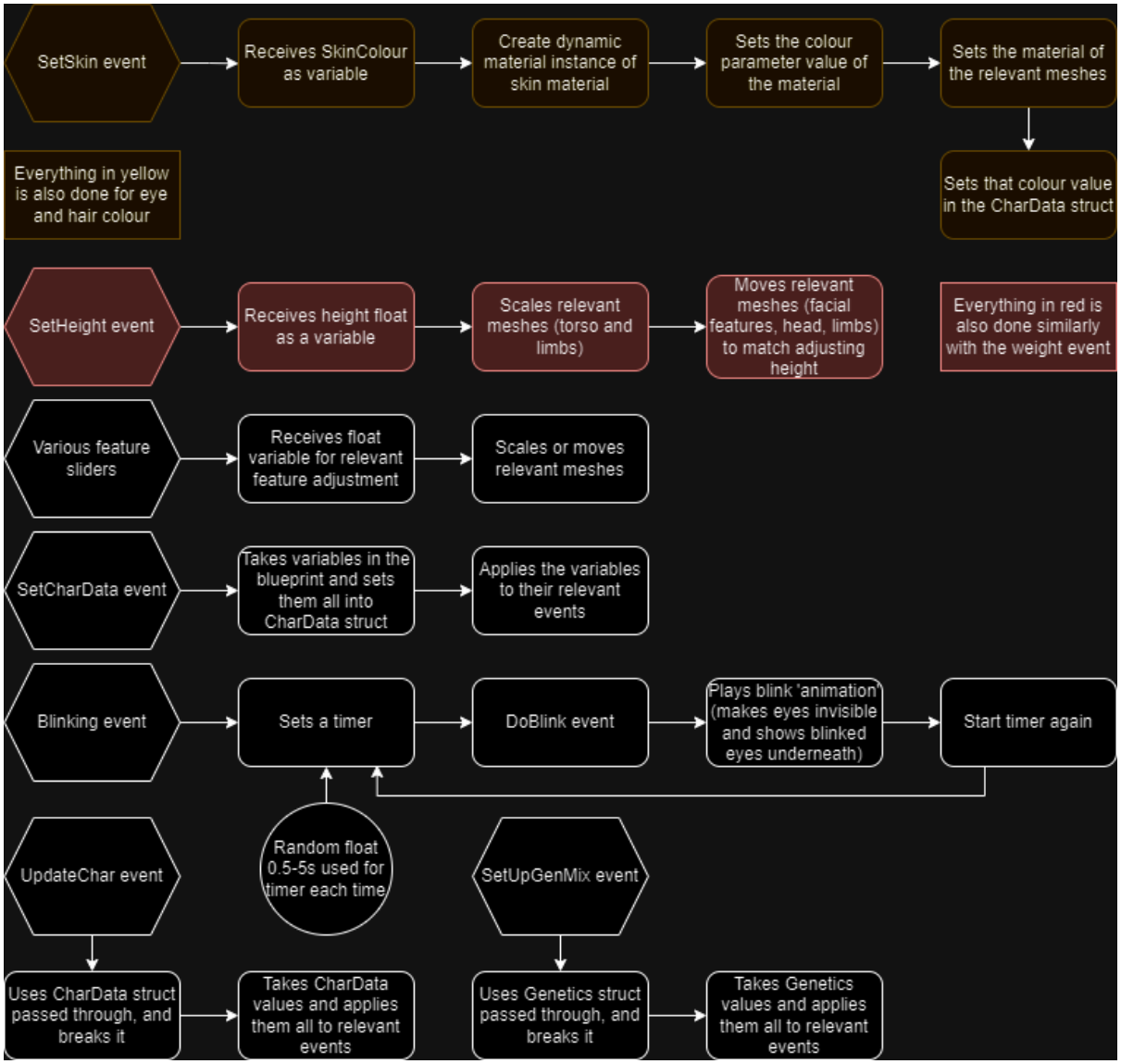
CharParams widget



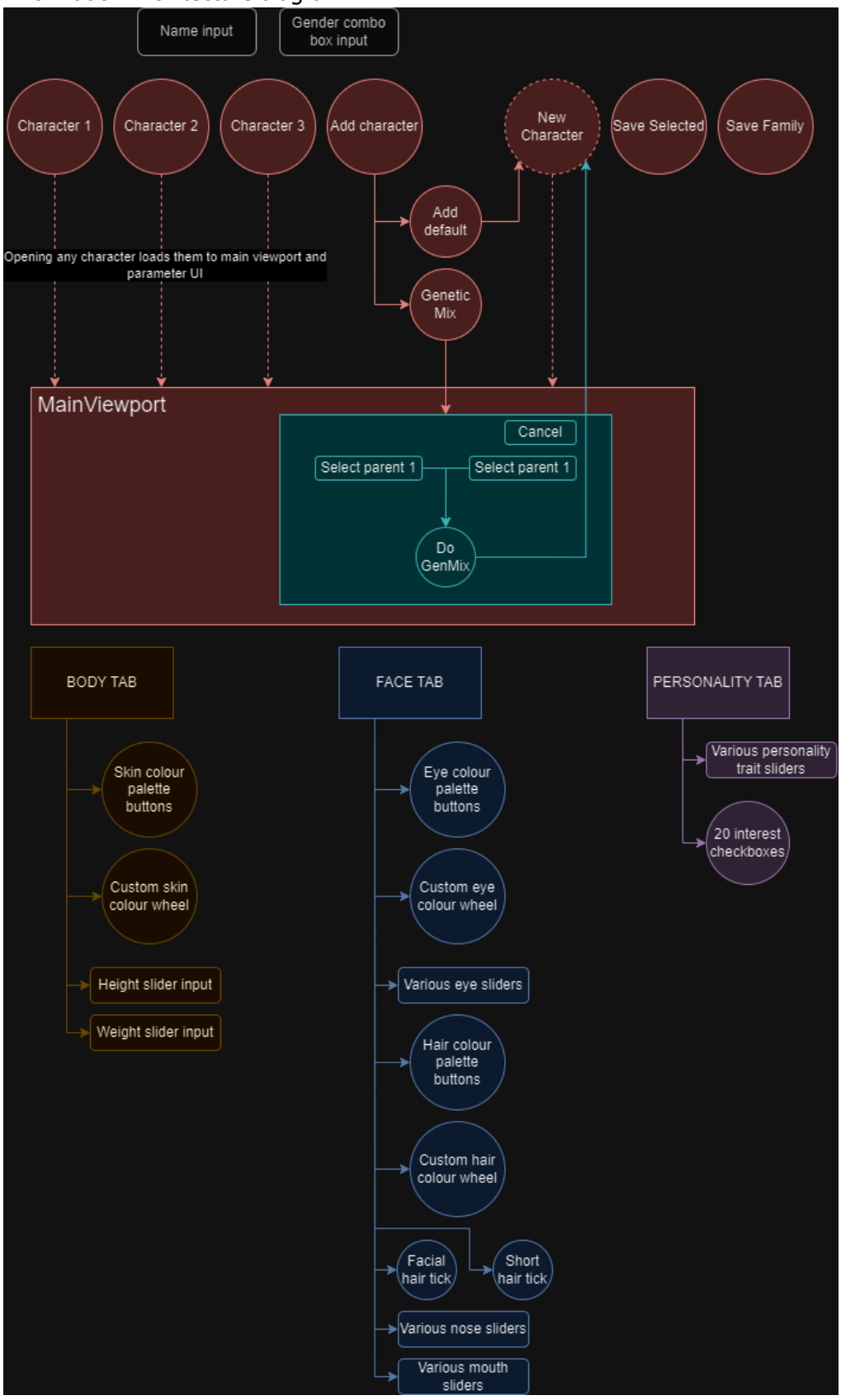
CharParams (continued on next page)



BaseChar actor (next page)



Information Architecture diagram



Optimisation and Profiling

Profiling Systems

A planned testing session will occur on the 4th week of development (allowing testing of the first two tools, and implementation of feedback). Continued testing will occur throughout development as well, particularly nearer to the end of each tool's development (to allow actual testing of implemented features, and further improvement).

Coding Standards

Programming Standards

- Minimising use of casts
- Consistent use of naming convention prefixes, some examples:
  - S = data struct
  - TXT = texture
  - TEXT = text box
  - SB = size box
  - EUW = editor utility widget
  - BP = blueprint (general actor)
  - ENUM = enumerator

Style Guide

Commenting all blueprint (particularly larger / more complex blueprints) into cohesive sections, with clear and descriptive titles.

Also maintaining neat node connections and layout (especially considering the common use of loops and interlinking variables in these blueprints).

Production Overview

Moscow

Green: done, Red: not done

- MUST
  - Tool 1 – basic location movement, rotation functions, and mesh/material editing
  - Tool 2 – generation of a small simple map with a small range of features
  - Tool 3 – creation of simple characters with a small range of editable features/data
- SHOULD
  - Tool 1 – more complex location functions such as alignment, and also actor naming
  - Tool 2 – functionality of hex grid layout, and more of a range of features/biomes (desert, mountainous), and map saving/loading
  - Tool 3 – increased range of features editable in the character, character saving/loading
- COULD
  - Tool 1 – complex distribution function, folder functionality, lighting editing

  - Tool 2 – more robust function for the elevation deescelation method, and also allowing loaded maps to be moved
  - Tool 3 – genetic mixing functionality
- WOULD
  - Tool 1 – small preview viewports for editing actors, more robust editing for different actor types
  - Tool 2 - wider range of biomes (swamps/rainforests), addressing generation issues to allow larger maps easily, reworking tiles to not be actors but meshes of one larger actor
  - Tool 3 – animated characters, playable characters with stats that reflect in gameplay, family tree display

Timeline

Task	Start Date	Completion Date
Initial research/brainstorming	30/9/24	7/10/24
Developing Tool 1	5/10/24	14/10/24
Planning & Research Tool 2	15/10/24	20/10/24
Developing Tool 2	18/10/24	31/10/24
Planning & Research Tool 3	28/10/24	2/11/24
Developing Tool 3	1/11/24	20/11/24
Bug fixing and polish	21/11/24	26/11/24
Finalising documentation	21/11/24	29/11/24

Budgeting

8-9 weeks development time (overall, including research, planning, and documentation). Approximately 6 hours of work a day, on average.

Primarily one developer, with input and assistance for some bug fixing and mechanic questions from lecturers and fellow students.

No financial resources required, as any assets are either made myself (eg simple meshes for character creator) or used free asset packs (eg Kenney's Hex Tiles).