

SECOND PLACES

Helping you to build your Second Life

Scoping Document for Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council Second Life Presence

Date: 14th April 2008
Author: Olli Aro
Client / Organisation: Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
Version No: V 1.0

For further information on the contents of this document, please contact:

Olli Aro
Head of Technology & Products
Second Places/Clicks and Links Ltd
One Central Park
PO Box 7
Central Park
Northampton Road
Manchester
M40 5WW

Tel: 0161 918 6794
Mob: 07795 810 907
Email: olli.aro@secondplaces.net

Contents

1.	About This Document	3
1.1.	Overview	3
2.	Second Life Overview.....	4
3.	Possibilities for TMBC Second Life Presence	5
3.1.	TMBC Second Life Applications.....	5
3.1.1.	Virtual Council Office	5
3.1.2.	Service Delivery Applications	5
3.1.3.	Consultation Applications.....	6
3.1.4.	SME Support Service Applications	6
3.1.5.	Community Engagement Applications	7
3.2.	Location.....	9
3.3.	Access.....	10
3.4.	Overall Island Layout.....	10
4.	Proposed Phase 1 TMBC Second Life Build.....	12
4.1.	Land Size and Location	12
4.2.	Island Layout	12
4.3.	Phase 1 Features	14
4.3.1.	Council office / landing area.....	14
4.3.2.	“Street of Services”	14
4.3.3.	Virtual Market Hall for SMEs.....	14
4.3.4.	Generic Purpose Events Arena	14
4.3.5.	Community Consultation on the Marina Development.....	14
4.3.6.	Community Build around St Petersfield Development.....	14
5.	Project Evaluation.....	15
6.	Indicative Budget	16
6.1.	Phase 1 Budget.....	16
6.2.	Long Term Budgetary Considerations	17

1. About This Document

1.1. Overview

This document highlights the possibilities for Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council, TMBC, presence in Second Life based on the ideas gathered through the workshop on the 20th March in Tameside.

This document is not aimed to be the final strategy for TMBC Second Life activity, but give some ideas and initiate further thinking within TMBC organisation on the business benefits that could be derived from Second Life.

2. Second Life Overview

3D virtual worlds are no longer the plaything of gamers. They are also a platform for real life businesses to market, develop and sell in a much more interactive and realist environment, still holding on to the characteristics of the world wide web.

Second Life is now the principal 3D environment. Although it has only been around for a couple of years, the population of Second Life grows nearly exponentially every month. Tools for developers are second to none, and the scripting gives no limits to what is possible. There is 1,500,000 US dollars changing hands every day, Second Life is THE environment for the 3D Internet.

Social networking is producing a huge shift in the digital marketing landscape. Two of the world's most visited websites 'YouTube' and 'MySpace' have emerged from nowhere and brands such as Blogger.com, Wikipedia are also seeing phenomenal growth.

Evolving from social networking is a new development of virtual communities. Participants are no longer shackled by their own real life persona and instead can create a three dimensional online character that reflects their personalised ideal.

Second Life Analysis

The usage patterns and statistics gathered by Linden Lab identified there were over **13 million** residents by the end of March **2008** (5,500 users join each day). Should the growth continue at this level then forecasts predict by **Q4 2008** there will be **25 million residents**.

There are currently almost 15,000 islands (16 acres) that have been rented or bought and over 19 million monthly financial transactions between users.

Any Second Life presence needs to consider the relevance of current Second Life user base, but equally important is the ability to bring in new users through web or other channels.

The most active residents are from:

- US = 30%
- Germany = 8%
- Japan = 7%
- UK = 7%
- Brazil = 7%

Age Band	% of Active
13-17 (Teen Grid)	1%
18-24	25%
25-34	37%
35-44	23%
45 +	14%

Average Age Adult Grid
30

Average Age on Teen Grid
15

3. Possibilities for TMBC Second Life Presence

3.1. TMBC Second Life Applications

As highlighted at the workshop the applications for Second Life can be as wide in scope as Real Life, but we have decided to concentrate on the following areas on the basis of that these might be the areas that TMBC would find easiest to demonstrate tangible benefits to the business and community:-

- Virtual Council Office
- Service Delivery Applications
- Consultation Applications
- SME Support Service Applications
- Community Engagement Applications

3.1.1. Virtual Council Office

As in the same way as Real Life, there should be a physical location to get in contact with the Council. While this could be a replication of a Real Life council building, maybe a more sensible approach would be for a smaller office for general information about the Council and rooms for possible virtual face-to-face meetings. This could be located near other Second Life specific council services such as the "street of services" discussed more in detail in the next chapter.

3.1.2. Service Delivery Applications

Whilst there are no current examples of Councils delivering services through Second Life, we would see Second Life benefits to the service delivery to be two fold:-

- Replacement of Real Life service
- Provision of an alternative interface to online services

Replacement of Real Life Service

Whilst many of services requiring structured information such as filling in forms have nowadays been replaced with online services, we would see Second Life as being able to replace or at least complement some of non structured Real Life transactions with the Council.

As an example we could consider face-to-face visits that are required for some areas of social services. Maybe some of these face-to-face interactions could be replaced with virtual face-to-face sessions between avatars in Second Life. As well as savings in citizen carbon footprint due to the citizen not having to travel to the council offices, there could be cost savings for the Council by providing a localised service for citizen at the sub urban areas. Traditionally this kind of service point would have to be manned at all times during the office hours, while the virtual service point would have to be only manned when required by customers.

Provision of Alternative Interface

Current online services are available via a text based interface which might not be ideal for some parts of the resident population (for example residents with reading difficulties or where English is not a first language). In Second Life it would be possible to visualise services instead of using a text based format. For example street maintenance services could be described with a physical street, which would contain abandoned cars and broken street lights for reporting the fault.

Clicking on a car could open up a deep web link to TMBC CRM allowing the user to report an abandoned vehicle. Further council performance could be illustrated by the number of abandoned vehicles on this virtual street based on the data from the council CRM system.

3.1.3. Consultation Applications

Second Life is an ideal platform for a consultation application on future build proposals. Compared to traditional 3D modelling, Second Life models are a lot more cost effective, but importantly more engaging from the community point of view, since Second Life users can walk and interact around the model either themselves or as a group, just like in Real Life.

As part of the workshop it was mentioned that TMBC is planning to build a new marina and it might be possible to trial Second Life as a consultation platform for the planning stages of this project.

Other ideas for consultation on future developments could be the new Ashton Market or the St Petersfield development.



Image 1. Oldham Consultation Space

3.1.4. SME Support Service Applications

As highlighted before, Second Life has a prominent internal economy trading over 1.5M US dollars daily. Therefore the opportunities for local SMEs are there by default for both in-world trading and converting sales from Second Life to Real Life.

In the same way the early days of the Internet website was considered as a novelty for large scale businesses, the situation is the same for virtual worlds today. However, due to most SMEs nowadays having a website, which is an integral part of their business, they can probably appreciate the value of a Second Life presence as well if the adoption of the platform could be made easier for them.

SL Manchester has established Manchester Market, which offers low cost Second Life stalls for local business in order to start experiencing with their business in virtual worlds before large scale financial commitments. Maybe Tameside could experiment with something similar; for example around the redevelopment of Ashton Market.



Image 2. SL Manchester Market

3.1.5. Community Engagement Applications

In the same way as other social network platforms, Second Life provides a perfect community engagement tool. While community engagement could be realised in many ways within Second Life, the following are the key areas we have found important.

Community Created Content

Community created content is the most important requirement for any successful community engagement project. In the case of Second Life, this means trying to get as many local organisations involved in the project as possible and providing them with some land where they can build and create their Second Life application.



Image 3. Copacabana Salsa Club in SL Manchester

Feeling of Ownership

Since Tameside is a physical place, residents will have a feeling of ownership and identity for the locality, further. It is important that the feel of ownership the residents have to the Real Life Tameside will be transferred over to Second Life. It can also work the other way over time, so that the feel of ownership from Second Life will translate back to Real Life.

In real terms a feeling of ownership and identity will generate ideas such as:-

- Involving residents in the management of Second Life Tameside in the areas of maintenance, decision making and policing
- Having services for local residents such as places to socialise, parks and pubs, and places to live, flats and apartments.

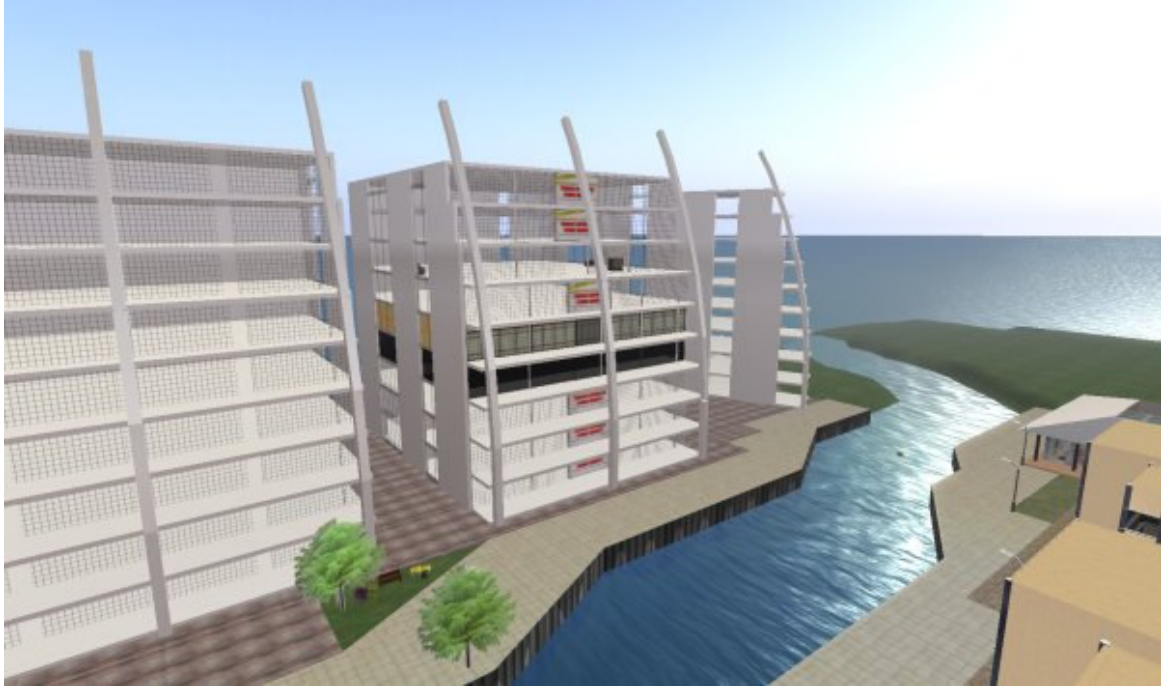


Image 4. Residential Flats in Manchester

Interactive Content such as Live Events

Whilst fresh and modern looking buildings can capture a user's interest the first time around in Second Life, the best way to bring people back and keep them in Second Life are interactive content such as live events. This would include both pure Second Life events and extending a Real Life event to Second Life.

Regularly re-occurring events are particularly useful, since they will take less advertising and easily create mini audience communities. If you turn up once to an event and meet some interesting people, you are more likely to turn up at the same event again to see and socialise with your friends.

Engaging with local radio channels and community TV networks is one of the best ways to create re-occurring events in Second Life.



Image 5. Big Chip 2007

3.2. Location

While location is not important in Second Life similarly to traditional Internet, Manchester Second Life has been in existence for almost a year now and other North West based Councils such as Oldham are starting to link with SL Manchester.

We would therefore recommend TMBC also establishes their Second Life presence somewhere near Manchester, maybe south from the Oldham island.

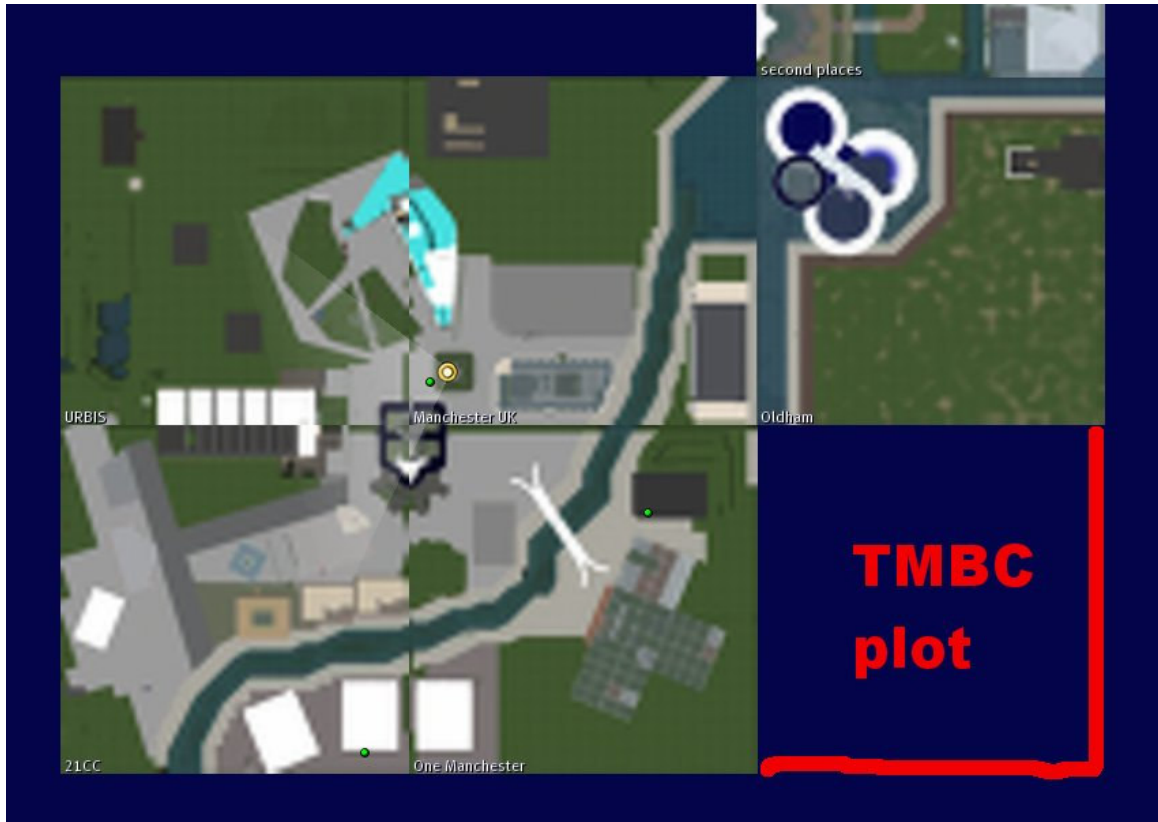


Image 6. Proposed Second Life Location

3.3. Access

Whilst there may be some aspects to TMBC's Second Life presence that should be restricted access, and this can be easily achieved with the standard build functionality in Second Life, the main part of TMBC SL should be publically accessible to anyone.

TMBC Second Life presence will be searchable within the Second Life search engine, and existing Second Life users can either walk and/or fly from SL Manchester or Oldham to Tameside or teleport from anywhere else in Second Life.

In addition TMBC Second Life can be deep linked from any traditional website such as TMBC website using SLURL.

We would also recommend TMBC utilises our custom Second Life registration portal. This can be integrated as a seamless part of the main TMBC website and allows new users to gain access directly to TMBC Second Life presence. This will also allow you to track the number of registrations as well offer your users a TMBC specific surname in order to create a further feeling of community and identity, as well as attract further local people to join TMBC Second Life.

Finally, there should be an option for "guest avatars" for one-off Second Life access for those people who are not currently registered with Second Life and would just like to gain a quick access to services. This can again be accommodated through a web application in a similar manner to the custom registration process.

3.4. Overall Island Layout

While the traditional approach to builds in 3D environments is to replicate Real Life places as they are, it is important to realise that Second Life is most importantly a social networking platform with millions of residents and therefore more importantly to build places that are functional for Second Life residents.

Our approach is to create links between Real Life and Second Life by replicating iconic buildings and other famous Real Life places, but otherwise keep the Second Life build fictional in order to ensure the maximum usability for the end users. The identification of the key Real Life landmarks should be undertaken in consultation with the Real Life community. The community's take on what are the key identifiers of the community, might be very different to the corporate TMBC vision.

The second most important factor when creating successful Second Life places, is to make sure that there are enough 'hooks' to make the visitor return to the location after their first visit. Whilst most of this will be taken care of by good quality local content, as detailed later in this document, it is also essential that all attractions link together and complement each other, and even un-built areas include some interesting content (for example historical facts of the area or other "Easter Eggs").

4. Proposed Phase 1 TMBC Second Life Build

The main objective for TMBC phase 1 Second Life presence is to experiment with virtual worlds in order to determine the benefits for TMBC businesses and the wider local community. Whilst the long term vision must evolve from community consultation and engagement, phase 1 should include as many test applications for various uses of virtual worlds as possible, but at the same time be scalable for extension in the future.

4.1. Land Size and Location

Our proposal for phase 1 is to purchase a single private Second Life island, approx. 16 acres of land. As indicated in the previous chapter, we feel the island should be co-located alongside Manchester and Oldham Second Life areas.

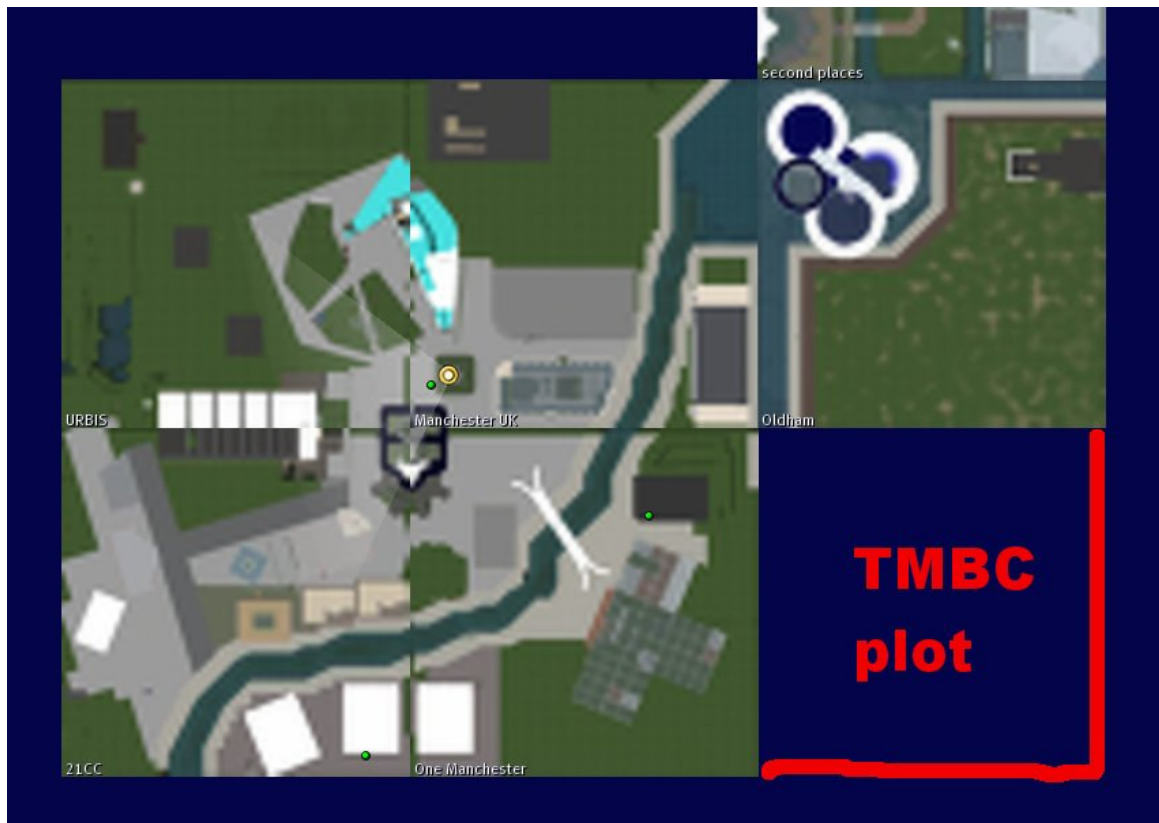


Image 7. Proposed Second Life Location

4.2. Island Layout

As indicated previously we feel that the island should demonstrate all areas of possible council applications for virtual worlds. Therefore we would recommend having the following set of features:-

- Council office / landing area
- "Street of Services"
- Virtual Market Hall for SMEs
- Generic Purpose Events Arena
- Community Consultation on the Marina Development
- Community Build around St Petersfield Development

These features will be outlined further in the following chapters.

The following picture illustrates a possible layout for the phase 1 island build.

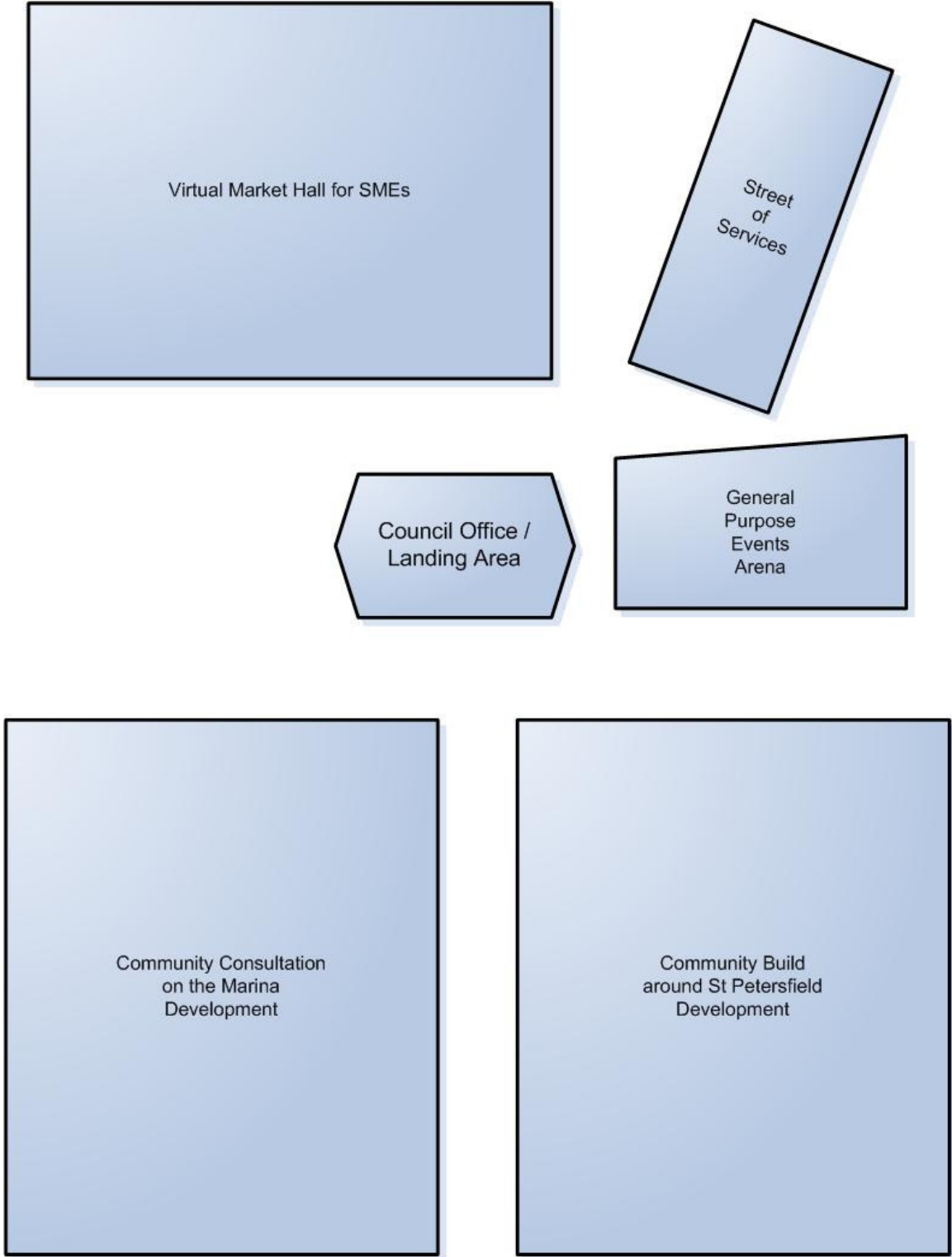


Image 8. Possible Island Layout

4.3. Phase 1 Features

4.3.1. Council office / landing area

A Second Life landing arena will be located at the centre of the island. All users teleporting to Tameside SL will enter the island through this area. The area includes information and rules for Tameside SL as well as sign posts to other parts of the island.

Next to the landing area, there is a small Council office with information desk and couple of private areas for face-to-face consultation. The office will include both image based and web content on council information and services as well as doors sensors for monitoring visits and buzzers for inviting the relevant councils worker to carry out face-to-face interactions.

4.3.2. “Street of Services”

The “Street of Services” can be accessed immediately North-East of the Council offices. This feature will look like a real street and have visual illustration for up to 20 Council services such as reporting a broken street light or reporting an abandoned vehicle. If the user selects a visualisation build in Second Life, a web browser opens with a deep link to TMBC CRM web interface.

4.3.3. Virtual Market Hall for SMEs

The Virtual market hall is located North-West of the Council offices. This space will be built based on the Real Life building proposals for Ashton Market redevelopment. Inside the market hall there are low cost Second Life business premises units that TMBC can rent out for local SMEs in order to let them experiment in virtual worlds.

In addition, the building will include some community consultation tools, in order to capture feedback on the proposed building as well as phase 1 build of Tameside SL.

4.3.4. Generic Purpose Events Arena

Outdoor amphitheatre/arena for general purpose events will be located East of the Council offices. The event arena enables TMBC to organize either pure Second Life events or to link a Real Life event with a Second Life audience utilizing real-time video stream. The events arena will be easily customizable for events, so that TMBC can also allow the use of arena to other Tameside based organizations with their own branding and possible sponsor logos.

4.3.5. Community Consultation on the Marina Development

The development plans for the new marina will be replicated on the sea front South-West from the Council offices. This arena includes a replica illustration for the development allowing users to walk around the development and post their comments for consultation.

4.3.6. Community Build around St Petersfield Development

As well as the marina development we also propose to replicate some parts of the St Petersfield development. This development would be located to South-East direction of the council offices and work on the same basis as the marina development.

In addition the residential flats of this development would be used as Second Life flats for Tameside SL residents in order to start building a long term community for the virtual place.

5. Project Evaluation

As indicated earlier in this document, the phase 1 of the development is for trialling various possibilities of virtual worlds in the delivery of Council services. Therefore it is important that there is a formal project evaluation after an agreed period of time e.g. 9 months including statistics on issues such as the level of:-

- Access to Tameside SL
- Access to Council services
- Returning users
- Users via the "Guest avatar" functionality

It is also important to survey the users on non-statistical factors such as usability of the "street of services" as an alternative way of accessing council services.

6. Indicative Budget

6.1. Phase 1 Budget

The following table lists our estimations for the phase 1 budget. The table is divided in mandatory costs that are required to realise any of the build options as well as the build options. Please note that the selection of all options would require larger land area than a single island.

Item	Cost	Comment
Scoping	N/A	Included in Workshop
Purchase of 1 dedicated Island	£1,000	Whilst Second Places are brokering the islands, TMBC has sole ownership over the land purchased.
Technical Maintenance/Rent	£2,400	12 months at £200 / month / island
Operational Management: Moderation Information Updates Security/Permission	£2,400	12 months at £200 / month
Island Landscaping & Texturing	£1,500	
TOTAL	£7,300	
<i>Build and Fit Out Options</i>		
Council Office / Landing Area	£2,500	
"Street of services"	£3,000	
Virtual Market Hall	£5,000	
Generic Purpose Events Arena	£1,500	
Community Consultation with Marina Development	£8,500	

Community Build around St Petersfield Development	£8,500	
Custom Second Life Registration Process		
Setup & website integration	£500	
Hosting, maintenance and upgrades (12 months)	£1,200	£100 / month
Custom Surname Registration Fee	£350	Eg Tameside
Name Rent (12 months)	£350	
Second Life Guest Access		
Setup & website integration	£500	
Hosting, maintenance and upgrades (12 months)	£1,200	£100 / month
Avatar Template Production	£250	Per template
Project Management	10% of the project value	
Testing & Bug Fixing	5% of the project value	

6.2. Long Term Budgetary Considerations

Whilst the budget of the project is dependent on the number of detailed buildings created in Second Life and amount of supporting activity such as community engagement, we would recommend Tameside considers the following budgetary areas for the long term establishment of a successful Second Life community:-

- Community consultation around what should be built in Second Life
- Second Life land fees
- Project management & coordination
- Second Life build
- Web development & integration
- Community engagement in the form of engaging local organisations and individuals in the running of Second Life Tameside