

CODENAME: SNOOPY

Game Systems Design Document

Pratik Jadhav — Senior Game Designer

Prototype Build: 15 June 2026 – 5 July 2026

Document Purpose

This document covers the design decisions behind each major system in Codename: Snoopy. It is written from the perspective of a game designer — not a technical architect. For each system, it describes what the system is designed to make the player feel, how the tuning values were arrived at, what tradeoffs were made, and what was cut from the prototype and why.

1. Jac's Schedule System

What it is designed to do

The schedule system exists to make Harbourside Town feel inhabited. Jac is not a static target waiting to be eliminated — he has a life, a routine, a set of habits the player must learn. The emotional payoff of the system is the moment a player realises they have correctly predicted where Jac will be before he gets there. That prediction feels like earned intelligence.

How it works

- The designer sets arrival times only. Departure times are calculated automatically from distance and car speed — this prevents manual errors and keeps the schedule internally consistent if speed or map values change.
- Jac's car drives via NavMesh. Jac himself teleports to the building centre on arrival. This was a deliberate scope decision — full NavMesh for a character who is never seen walking adds complexity without player-visible payoff.
- A destination queue prevents schedule entries being skipped at high time scale. Without the queue, if two departures fell within the same time window, only one would fire. The queue ensures all movements happen in order regardless of clock speed.
- Jac goes transparent inside buildings. His collider stays active — this preserves the possibility of elimination inside buildings without requiring a visible character model.

Design tension built into the schedule

La Sala is visited three times daily but is always heavily staffed. The cemetery is visited once mid-morning and is reliably empty. The park bench is the most predictable solo moment of Jac's day. This creates a risk-reward geography: the player naturally gravitates toward the cemetery and park as elimination windows, while La Sala functions as an intel hub where conversations are high value but high risk.

2. Tracker Planting System

Design intent

The tracker is the central skill gate of the game. Nothing else unlocks until it is planted. This forces the player into physical proximity with Jac — which is genuinely dangerous — before any other system becomes available. It teaches the core mechanic of the game (get close, observe, act when safe) in miniature before the player attempts elimination.

Mechanic flow

- Detection range: Bon must be within a set radius for the tracker ring (LineRenderer circle) to appear.
- Plant range: a smaller inner radius triggers the Put Tracker button when Jac enters it.
- Player taps the button → timer fills → tracker plants. Player must hold position during the fill. Movement is disabled during this window.
- Once planted: Jac's car turns red, the NPC pie menu activates for visited buildings, and the Eliminate Jac button replaces Put Tracker.

What was cut

The original design had the tracker timer start automatically when Jac entered the ring — no player input required. This was cut because it removed player agency at the most critical moment in the game. The player should choose to commit to planting, not have it happen to them. The button-triggered approach also makes the mechanic legible: tap to begin, hold to complete.

3. NPC Conversation System

Design intent

The conversation system exists to make investigation feel like detective work, not checklist completion. The player is not told which conversations matter. They must choose who to talk to, how deeply to press them, and when to walk away — with real consequences attached to each decision. Suspicion is the cost of knowledge.

Architecture

- 23 NPCs across 7 locations. Each has 3 risk tiers: low, medium, high.
- 69 total conversations, each 6-7 exchanges. All written in full. Content covers three intel categories: schedule, connections, and guilt evidence.
- All dialogue loaded from a single CSV in StreamingAssets. No hardcoded dialogue strings. The ConversationID system allows any conversation to be triggered from any game context.
- Each used risk option disappears — preventing repetition within or across sessions. Per-NPC state is saved to JSON on conversation end.
- Notebook entries are read from the 4th CSV column of each conversation's last row — making copy changes possible without touching code.

The intel structure

NPCs tell the truth. Their observations about Jac are accurate. But the evidence trail they describe — Roven, Aldren Holdings, the night deliveries — was constructed by Collie to frame Jac. The player's notebook fills with genuine testimony that points to a false conclusion. The design intent is that a thorough player feels more certain of Jac's guilt, not less — making the epilogue more devastating.

NPC access gate

The pie menu only activates after the tracker is planted. This was a prototype scope decision — it ensures the player has engaged with the core mechanic before accessing the investigation layer. It also means the player cannot accidentally stumble into NPC conversations before they understand who Jac is and where he goes. For the full game, this gate would be removed — investigation should be available from Day 1.

4. Suspicion System

Design intent

Suspicion is the resource that makes NPC conversations feel like decisions rather than actions. Without a cost attached to information-gathering, the player would talk to every NPC at every risk level with no hesitation. Suspicion creates the question: is this piece of intel worth the risk?

Tuning rationale

Values were designed around a 7-day play session with the assumption that a typical player talks to 2-3 NPCs per day across all locations. Low risk at +4 is nearly free — it rewards casual conversation without punishing it. Medium at +10 creates deliberate choice. High at +22 is a genuine gamble — two high-risk conversations in a session push the bar into caution territory. Passive decay at 0.02/second means a patient player who spaces conversations recovers between sessions. A player who rushes will fill the bar and fail regardless of how good their intel is.

Colour thresholds as feedback

Green (0-40): safe. The player has room to investigate. Yellow (41-65): caution. The player should consider pausing. Red (66-85): danger — any additional high-risk conversation risks failure. Game over at 86. The colour shift is the warning system — it gives the player time to change behaviour before the consequence arrives. This was important because there is no explicit tutorial.

5. NPC Nearby Count System

Design intent

The NPC nearby count creates the elimination puzzle. The player cannot simply eliminate Jac whenever they find him — they must find him alone. The count is procedurally generated from weighted crowd profiles per location and time of day, making no two playthroughs identical while ensuring the design intent (certain locations are always safe, others are almost never) remains consistent.

Location design

- **La Sala (8AM–10:30AM) — 0% chance of 0 nearby:** Union office during working hours. Protected.
- **La Sala (1PM–4PM) — 0% chance of 0 nearby:** Peak working hours. Impossible elimination window.
- **La Sala (8:30PM–10:30PM) — 5% chance of 0 nearby:** Evening shift. Near-impossible but not zero.
- **Cemetery — 60% chance of 0 nearby:** Isolated. Primary player-discovered elimination window.
- **Park (before 6AM) — High chance of 0 nearby:** Jac's morning walk. Most reliable solo moment.
- **Harbour — Variable by time:** Morning: moderate presence. Afternoon: lower.

Why it is not always zero

A guaranteed 0-nearby window at any location removes the tension of the elimination decision. The player needs to feel that even their safest window carries some possibility of a witness. The cemetery at 60% provides reliable but not guaranteed opportunity — the player who acts immediately might fail. The player who waits for the right moment will succeed more often.

6. Save System

Design intent

The save system is designed to respect the player's time without reducing the consequences of their decisions. The player can stop and return at any point. But NPC conversations already used, suspicion already accumulated, and intel already recorded cannot be reset by reloading. The investigation has a memory.

What is saved

- Game clock state (day, hour, minute) — restores with correct day/night lighting
- Bon's world position
- Jac's last known location
- Tracker planted state — with full visual restoration (red car, active ring)
- Notebook entries — restored silently, no glow or notification on load
- Suspicion value — cannot be reset by reloading
- Per-NPC conversation state — used risk options remain used across sessions
- Collie state (faded, location bools)
- Edge scroll preference

Autosave triggers

- Jac arrives at any location
- 6AM game time
- 6PM game time

- Notebook closed
- Tracker planted
- NPC conversation ended
- Tracker notification Yes pressed

7. Energy System — Cut from Prototype

What was designed

The energy bar was designed to deplete over 18 game hours and restore with 6 hours of sleep at Bon's home. Starting at 60%, Bon would last approximately 10.8 hours before needing rest — roughly matching Jac's evening schedule window. The design intent was to create a resource management layer that rewarded players who learned Jac's schedule early: sleep during Jac's downtime (11PM-5AM), maximise surveillance hours during the day.

Why it was cut

The mechanic only creates interesting decisions once the player has enough schedule intel to plan sleep around Jac's movements. In a 7-day first-time demo, players are still learning Jac's schedule during the very window the energy system would be forcing them to sleep. The result is punishment without agency — the player runs out of energy at 4:48PM on Day 1, before they have learned when it is safe to rest. The mechanic is right for the full game. It is wrong for the prototype.

What was kept

The energy bar UI element remains in the scene but is deactivated. It signals to portfolio reviewers that a stamina system is intended, without subjecting first-time players to a mechanic they cannot yet engage with strategically.

8. Game Clock

Time scale

1 game hour = 120 real seconds. 24 game hours = 48 real minutes. This scale was chosen to make Jac's daily schedule feel substantive — the player has real time to intercept Jac at multiple locations — without requiring hour-long play sessions to see a full day cycle. All systems that reference time (energy depletion, suspicion decay, schedule triggers, lighting transitions) derive their values from this single public variable.

Day/night lighting

Directional light colour and intensity transition gradually across the day. The lighting serves two purposes: atmospheric grounding (the player feels time passing) and information (the player can read roughly what time of day it is from the visual without checking the clock). This matters because player attention is often on Jac's position, not the HUD.

Systems Interaction Map

All systems feed into a single outcome: the elimination decision. The schedule tells the player where Jac will be. The tracker unlocks the investigation and elimination layers. NPC conversations fill the notebook with intel about patterns and witnesses. The suspicion bar constrains how aggressively the player can investigate. The nearby count determines when elimination is possible. The save system ensures all of these states persist across sessions, so the player is always building on what they have learned rather than starting over.

The systems do not exist independently. They are designed as a single machine for generating the moment when a player looks at their notebook, looks at the clock, looks at Jac's current location, and decides: now.