The Ministry of Engagement

PRACTICAL WORKBOOK 05

# Why here? Explaining the case for place

## “We need this infrastructure.” Fine. But why here?

Name the location. Can you explain why it is here, not just why it is needed?

A case for infrastructure is not automatically a case for this location. The need may be set at a national or state level. The location is a choice someone made, against criteria, with trade-offs.

### For the person who owns the decision

If the project can’t explain the choice, people will fill the gap themselves, usually with the least generous explanation. An honest account of how the site was chosen is easier to defend than silence.

### What an honest case for place gives you

An explanation that holds up when people who live there question it, and a clear line between what has been decided and what they can still influence.

### Start with one location

Workbook 04 asks what the work asks people to carry. This workbook asks why they are the ones carrying it.

### The location choice we need to explain

What is going where? Who made the choice, and when?

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# Need is not location

Keep three things separate. People will test each one differently.

## The case for need

Why the infrastructure is needed at all. Who has said so, on what evidence, and for whom?

## The case for this place

The criteria that led here: land, access, connection points, ground conditions, approvals, cost and timing. Which were requirements and which were preferences?

## What this place gives up

What the location asks of the people who live and work nearby, and what was traded away by not choosing somewhere else.

## Why is it needed?

State the need in one or two sentences and name its source.

## Why here rather than somewhere else?

List the real reasons, including cost or convenience if they mattered.

**“It’s needed” answers a different question from “why here?” Don’t let one stand in for the other.**

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# Write the case for place

Use this as a short options and trade-offs brief. Check each part with the person who made or owns the location decision.

## The need

One sentence, and where it comes from.

## The options considered

Locations or approaches looked at, including any ruled out early, when and by whom.

## The criteria

What decided it, who set the criteria, and which were requirements rather than preferences?

## Why this location

The honest reasons for the choice, in plain language.

## What it asks of this place

The impacts, who carries them and for how long. Include people whose rights or cultural authority need direct engagement.

## What is still open

Layout, design, timing, routes or mitigation people can still influence. If nothing is open, say so.

If cost or speed drove the choice, say so. People can tell when a reason is missing.

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# What an honest case for place looks like

## Fictional example: the battery storage site

### The inherited answer

A battery storage facility is proposed on farmland at the edge of a town. The project's first explanation is that the site is "the most suitable location".

### The check

The engagement lead asks the development lead what that means. The site is close to an existing substation with capacity to connect, the landholder is willing and the land sits outside the mapped flood area.

### The options

Two other sites were considered. One was further from homes but would have needed a new line across several properties, adding cost and time. The other landholder declined.

### The explanation

The team shares the options, the criteria and the fact that connection and cost drove the choice. It sets out what the site asks of nearby residents and what they can still influence: the layout, screening, the construction route and how emergency planning is shared.

**Not everyone agreed with the choice. But people could see how it was made, what it cost them and what they could still change.**

### Our equivalent

Which reason for our location have we not yet said out loud?

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# Test the explanation

Before you publish it, test it with people who have no reason to agree.

## Read it to someone who disagrees

Ask someone who will be affected to read the explanation. Could they describe how the choice was made, even if they still oppose it?

## Replace conclusions with reasons

“The best location”, “the most suitable site” and “strategically placed” are conclusions. Say what made it best, and best for whom.

## Check the timing

Explain the choice before it looks final. If it is already final, say so, explain who decided and be clear about what remains open.

## Our case for place in five sentences

Why it is needed, why here, what else we looked at, what it asks of people here and what they can still influence.

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## Could someone who disagrees still recognise an honest explanation of why it is here?

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