Formal statement concerning Policy 3 and the protection of Shillingstone's historic character

I wish to place on the public record my continuing objection to the changes made to Policy 3 within the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan Review.

The original Neighbourhood Plan was approved by local referendum in 2017. Its policies concerning traditional design, local character and the historic environment formed an important part of the planning framework approved by the community.

The revised Policy 3 introduces express flexibility allowing departures from traditional vernacular design where higher environmental standards are advanced as justification, subject to the policy's other requirements.

Although presented as part of a wider policy update, this modification changes the terms upon which future development proposals may be assessed, including proposals affecting Shillingstone's Conservation Area.

My concern is not that the statutory Conservation Area designation or its boundaries have been altered. It is that the revised planning policy may afford greater discretion to accept designs that depart from the village's traditional architectural character.

Of particular concern is that I have seen no evidence establishing that Shillingstone residents requested this specific policy change or expressly endorsed the introduction of this additional flexibility.

The Parish Council has advanced the modification, Dorset Council has supported it, and the Independent Examiner has concluded that the modified Plan meets the relevant statutory requirements without the need for a further referendum.

I recognise those conclusions. However, I consider it important to distinguish between compliance with the statutory examination process and evidence that the community itself specifically sought or supported this modification.

The original Neighbourhood Plan received direct public endorsement through a referendum. The current modification to Policy 3 has not been subjected to an equivalent vote.

While I recognise that a further referendum has been found unnecessary under the applicable procedures, that conclusion should not subsequently be represented as evidence that residents expressly approved this particular change.

Matters I wish to have formally recorded

For the avoidance of doubt, I request that the following matters be preserved within the Council's records relating to the Neighbourhood Plan Review:

1. I formally objected to the proposed modification of Policy 3 during the Regulation 16 consultation.

2. I remain concerned that the revised wording may weaken the practical protection afforded to Shillingstone's traditional architectural character and historic environment, particularly within the Conservation Area.
3. I have not been provided with evidence demonstrating that Shillingstone residents requested or specifically endorsed the introduction of flexibility permitting departures from traditional vernacular design.
4. I consider it important that the origin of this modification, the reasons for introducing it, and the evidence of public support relied upon are accurately documented.
5. I do not consider that the conclusion that a further referendum is unnecessary should be confused with a positive expression of community consent to this particular policy change.

I do not claim to speak on behalf of every resident of Shillingstone, nor do I suggest that the Parish Council was necessarily acting outside its statutory powers in proposing the modification.

My concern is one of **democratic accountability, transparency and the preservation of an accurate historical record**.

The Parish Council has chosen to advance a modification which may materially influence how future development is assessed within the village. I consider it important that the responsibility for proposing that change, and the extent of demonstrated community support for it, remain clearly identifiable.

Importance of preserving this objection

Should future planning applications rely upon the revised wording of Policy 3 to justify development that departs from Shillingstone's traditional architectural character, I wish there to be no ambiguity that concerns about the consequences of this modification were formally raised before its adoption.

My purpose is not to predetermine any future planning decision.

Rather, it is to ensure that my objection, and the distinction between a Parish Council-sponsored policy change and demonstrated community support for that change, remain part of the public historical record.

Request concerning the Cabinet decision

I therefore respectfully request that:

1. This statement be accepted, if procedurally possible, as a late public representation for Cabinet's consideration of Item 13 on 10 November 2026.
2. The statement be circulated to Cabinet members before their decision.
3. The statement be included in the published meeting record, where the Council's procedures permit.
4. If inclusion in the meeting record is not possible, the statement be retained with the Council's formal records relating to the Shillingstone Neighbourhood Plan Review, with its receipt and location confirmed in writing.

5. Dorset Council identify, or provide a reference to, any consultation evidence establishing that residents specifically requested or expressly supported the modification to Policy 3.

I appreciate that the Independent Examiner has completed his assessment and that Dorset Council considers itself under a statutory duty to make the revised Plan.

Nevertheless, I believe it is entirely proper for an affected resident to ensure that his opposition to a substantive policy modification is accurately documented before that modification takes effect.

The essential point I wish to preserve is that the modification to Policy 3 was advanced through the Parish Council's review process, but I have seen no evidence establishing that the particular change was initiated or expressly endorsed by the residents whose village it will affect.