



# NITON and WHITWELL PARISH PLAN 2013



**Adopted as a Supplementary  
Planning Document June 2014**

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## 1. FOREWORD

The first Niton and Whitwell Parish Plan was published in March, 2004. In advance of the Government's Localism Act (2011/12) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), the IW Council planning department provided information to town and parish councils and arranged briefing events to explain to local communities the impact of these measures on local decision-making, within the constraints of the 2012 Island Plan Core Strategy.



Niton and Whitwell Parish Council invited a group of volunteers to form a Steering Group to review the 2004 Plan and to propose alterations and additions in the light of changes in government and IW Council policies, and in local needs.

*Names of those local residents who comprised the Steering Group are listed at Appendix 1.*

The first meeting was held in September, 2011, when the vision statement in the 2004 Steering Group was readopted. This read: "To identify and promote the current and future needs of the community, to enable such needs to be met through dialogue, attraction of funds and development; whilst retaining the local distinctiveness, facilities and sense of community which currently make the villages so popular."

A questionnaire was designed and produced for hand delivery to every household (c 1,100) in January, 2012. 480 completed questionnaires were collected during February/March, 2012. The cost of conducting this survey was met by a grant of £1,000 from the Parish Council. A further grant of £2,500 was obtained from the Big Lottery Awards For All scheme and this paid for the questionnaire's analysis, using the Survey Monkey software package, and other expenses incurred in the production of this document.



Following this analysis, and in the light of advice from the IW Council planning department, and from participants in similar groups in adjacent counties, a presentation was made to the Parish Council in October, 2012.





## Whitwell



The village of Whitwell is also mentioned in Domesday Book where the Manor of Whitwell with Westover was said to have been owned by three brothers. It came subsequently into the possession of the Lord of Gatcombe, the family Lisle and later to Worsley of Appuldurcombe. The population in 1632 was 309; by 1781 it had increased to 344.

The Anglican church has a Tudor porch and tower, and was originally divided into two chapels, one dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the other to St Rhadegund. At that time responsibilities for support and maintenance were divided between the inhabitants of Whitwell (St Mary) and the inhabitants of Gatcombe (St Rhadegund). During the 16<sup>th</sup> Century an archway was made through the dividing wall and the church became one place of worship.

From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century until 1952 the IW Central Railway ran through Whitwell, which had its own station. Worsley's *History of the IOW* (1781) notes that "the greater part of this parish produces fine corn", and photographs record men and machines threshing corn in Whitwell in 1940.

### 3. NITON AND WHITWELL TODAY

The villages sit on the southern tip of the island, with boundaries stretching from St Catherine's Down in the west to the settlement of Nettlecombe in the East and Ford Farm in the north, comprising 1,300 hectares of mainly agricultural land. The population of Niton at the 2011 census was 1,162, and of Whitwell 619. Of about 1,000 dwelling units, 109 were vacant and of these 85 were classified as second homes or holiday accommodation.



The National Trust owns and manages the Wydcombe estate, a parcel of land running north/south on St Catherine's Down and the stretch of land from Castlehaven to Watershoot Bay, the eastern end of which is poorly drained and prone to flooding. Over half the area of land within the parish boundaries is within the designated AONB, and the Isle of Wight Council has designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. The sea below



mean low water mark to around 1.5km offshore form part of the South Wight Maritime Special Area of Conservation designated under the European Habitats Directive for its important marine habitats.

*Maps at Appendices 2-4 illustrate the areas covered by these designations.*

## Road network

The only A road is the A3055 leading west from Niton towards Blackgang and along the Military Road to the West Wight; and leading east (Undercliff Drive) towards St Lawrence and Ventnor. For some years there has been single-file traffic only on a stretch of the eastern section due to instability. Stabilisation of this road is a priority in the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract for the long-term maintenance and upgrading of the island's road network.

The Newport road between Niton and Rookley bears a heavy load of traffic and is in need of considerable upgrading.

Although not on a regular bus route, the IW Council

has recently recognised the importance of this road by adding it to the gritting network in winter conditions. This illustrates the need for the highways department to give priority to maintaining roads leading to and through Rural Service Centres (RSCs). Further recommendations for improvements to traffic flows and street parking are included in Section 4.

**Action 3.1 We aim to keep Island Roads to their published schedule, and will lobby to improve it if needed**

## Local distinctiveness



There are a number of distinctive landmarks; St Catherine's Lighthouse, the Pepperpot on the summit of St Catherine's Hill at 237m, the second highest point on the island, and the Hoy Monument above The Hermitage. The Eastern Yar rises on the outskirts of Niton and flows through both villages on its way across the island to Brading and Bembridge.

There are good examples of stone-built houses and walls, thatched roofs and ancient farmsteads in both villages. A small

community of fishermen - mostly for crab and lobster - operate from Castlehaven and maintain the slipway there.



There are areas of historically unstable ground on the Undercliff between Blackgang and St Lawrence where there have been numerous landslides; the 1928 fall, which irrevocably cut the old Niton/Blackgang road, being the most dramatic in recent history. An ambitious and costly drainage scheme in 2003/5, along and to the north of Castlehaven Lane, has reduced the extent and frequency of such slides. An impressive network of footpaths (some only recently reopened) with their associated stiles and kissing gates, criss-cross the parish. Among these is Niton's "Tunnels" footpath, restored through local efforts led by a parish councillor.

There are eight distinctive and historic red painted water pumps in Whitwell, where there is also a well which is dressed annually with some ceremony. Each village has an ancient Anglican church, while in Niton, Methodists and Baptists also worship.

*Source of Census Information - Office of National Statistics*

## Wildlife

The two villages are rich in wildlife, the most characteristic and distinctive species being found along the Undercliff. The rocky outcrops of greensand blocks and the open, exposed landscape surviving around St Catherine's Point provide a habitat which is unique on the island, and it is here that the Glanville Fritillary, the island's special butterfly; and a scarce plant, the wild liquorice, can be found.



Cowslips occur commonly here, together with a host of colourful

chalk-loving plants. Uncommon lichens and sea spleenwort fern are special plants of the rock outcrops. Fulmars and kestrels nest on the ledges of Gore Cliff.

St Catherine's Point is a popular spot for bird-watchers with telescopes, hoping to spot the spring and summer passage of sea-birds along the Channel. Behind them, the wooded slopes provide the first and last landfall for small migratory birds crossing the Channel.

To the east of St Catherine's Point, the Undercliff is much more wooded, damp and shaded. This is ideal territory for two very local plants found in abundance - the late-flowering Italian lords and ladies, and the parasitic ivy broomrape. The talus slopes at the foot of the cliff provide ideal territory





for badgers, which are a common sight and are often attracted to gardens for food.

## Facilities

Most of these are centred in Niton, one of the island's 11 designated RSCs, though they are well patronised by Whitwell residents and others from further afield. There are three public houses (one in Niton, one on the Undercliff and one in Whitwell) and a small hotel on the Undercliff.

Each village has a garage, though petrol is available only in Whitwell, as well as a village hall. Regular village hall activities include dog-training, short mat bowls, table tennis, ballet, country and sequence dancing, yoga and keep fit classes; and the halls also host two Women's Institutes, art and camera clubs, the Undercliff Singers, Niton Male Voice Choir, the Pepperpot Players, a horticultural club, and various charity coffee mornings. With such intensive use there is need for regular maintenance, and some upgrading of both halls is needed.

Niton has a thriving primary school, pre-school and toddler group. The school is available for use by some of the local organisations, eg Scottish dancing. *See also Section 14.*

Shops in Niton include a much-valued Post Office/newsagent/tea shop, mini supermarket, country store, pottery, pharmacy, hairdresser and a community-manned library. The public toilet, taken over by the Parish Council and reopened, is cleaned by a volunteer, with supplies provided free by Norris Family Grocers.

The Post Office operates a "satellite" service in the Whitwell Anglican church two days a week. There is a football pitch, a skateboard park and a small children's playground area in Niton. Whitwell lacks such facilities. There is a youth club, plus Brownie and Rainbow packs, for young people. For tourists there are several caravan or chalet parks, guesthouses and bed-and-breakfast facilities. But survey respondents believed that more should be done to attract visitors to the villages and surrounding countryside.

There is no gas main, and overhead power lines and poles diminish the attractiveness of the villages. Nonetheless, these are relatively well-served communities where residents enjoy living and wish to retain all the services they now enjoy.

**Action 3.2** We are producing a tourist leaflet and will publish it on the Parish Council website and elsewhere

#### 4. TRAFFIC AND PARKING



The density and speed of traffic through the parish, particularly through Whitwell, has been a problem for many years, but with the addition of speed indicators in both villages, a significant change has been noticed. The national speed limit on the road between the two villages can cause a problem when cars slow down on entering the 30mph zones. The density of traffic is particularly noticeable during the holidays and at weekends. Road surfaces have been improved between:

- Ventnor and Whitwell (south);
- Godshill and Whitwell (north);
- Niton and Whitwell;
- Niton and

Rookley.

Road drainage, particularly with elevated rainfall during 2012 and into 2013, is still poor in places. Some surfaces are also bad.

**Action 4.1** We aim to keep Island Roads to their published schedule, and will lobby to improve it if needed



## Parking

There is a strong feeling that parking has become significantly worse in Niton; less so in Whitwell.

Problem areas/hotspots are:

- Niton: the whole of the village centre/Niton Youth Club/Niton School/Glen Approach/Allotment Road/Chatfeild Road/Rectory Road.
- Whitwell: Bannock Road North/ Junction with the High Street/Kemming Road, near the church.

Niton Youth Club and its car park was closed at the time of the survey and in use as a temporary classroom and playground for Niton School. However it has now reopened, slightly easing parking in the village centre. In considering the future use of this IW Council building, the value to the community of the car park should be considered.

Most villagers are resistant to the idea of paying for car parking, especially on the street in Niton, but some said they would pay in a designated car park.

The Town End car park in Niton is currently used for long-term parking for caravans and other large vehicles. A height barrier to prevent this should be considered.

A private project to increase short-term parking available in Niton is under consideration.

**Action 4.2**  
We will approach the Isle of Wight Council with a view to taking the car park over

## 5. PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

The 2004 Plan, while including content on Southern Vectis bus services, also dealt with ad hoc arrangements for giving lifts and the "Dial a bus"





service; and with the feasibility of a rail link service from Shanklin to Ventnor, possibly continuing to Niton and Whitwell.

Currently there is still no co-ordinated car lift service in the parish, even though 92% of questionnaire respondents have access to a car in their household. As in 2004, only ad hoc car lift arrangements exist. In the 2012 questionnaire, 45% of 417 respondents said they shared a car with others to make journeys; and 52% of 372 respondents said they would support a parish-led community car-sharing scheme.

**Action 5.1** A new Parish Council committee will pursue all three transport objectives

The Shanklin to Ventnor rail-link, service 16, began operating in 2004 but was withdrawn in 2010, so any aspirations of a Niton/Whitwell extension are probably unrealistic.

The following public and community transport options can be accessed by the various sections of the community.

- Age UK Isle of Wight (formerly Age Concern) operate a Good Neighbour scheme which can sometimes assist with transport to GP and hospital appointments. Call 539302.
- "Dial a bus" was formerly operated by the Wightbus (IW Council) which transferred the service to Southern Vectis in September, 2011. It includes the Wednesday morning service from this parish. Passengers need to book at least two days in advance. The service operates from Niton to Newport and return, calling at Whitwell if required, and is intended for those incapable of using the regular bus service. Call 827051.
- The community car service, Optio, targets those who are elderly, frail or less mobile who cannot access public transport. Across the island, Community Action Isle of Wight (formerly the Rural Community Council) have a network of volunteer drivers who use their own cars to provide a door-to-door service. Optio is a membership scheme with an annual fee, payable per person or per household couple. There is also a mileage charge, calculated from the driver's home address and payable directly to the driver. The service is available to meet a range of needs such as shopping, hospital visits/appointments, memory club, medical appointments, visiting friends, and day centres. Call 522226.
- In September, 2011, the launch of the Community Bus Programme led

to the restoration of an hourly service on Southern Vectis's No 6 bus service, with journeys via the Undercliff and St Lawrence added to the timetable, alternating with those via Whitwell. Journeys crewed by Southern Vectis drivers are supplemented by those crewed by fully-trained volunteers. Service No 6 was one of four routes which launched the programme across the island. The analysis of responses to questions about the service, including those from senior citizens and students, has been conveyed to both Southern Vectis and The IW Council transport manager. Aspirations from all categories, in particular Whitwell residents, included an enhanced timetable and lower fares.

**Action 5.2** A new Parish Council committee will pursue all three transport objectives

- The Niton School minibus was partly funded with public funds and is therefore available for use by Niton and Whitwell residents. Volunteer drivers, who will need to pass a council driving test, have already come forward. This facility was the subject of much interest at two of the Plan public meetings held in Niton and Whitwell, as its existence was not generally known. A link co-ordinator between the school and community users is needed to manage this facility and draw up ground rules, to be agreed by the Parish Council and the school, for finance, use and maintenance of the vehicle.

**Action 5.3** A new Parish Council committee will pursue all three transport objectives

A local assessment of public/community transport needs was not conducted following the last Plan publication. Given the current level of car ownership and household access to a car in the parish, "Dial a bus", the Optio programme, UKIW's Good Neighbour scheme, the community minibus, the current use of the No 6 bus service and enthusiasm for a parish-led community car-sharing scheme, the value of a full local transport assessment is questionable. It may, however, be useful to supply parishioners with a directory of the various options available.

## 6. HOUSING AND PLANNING

There is a typical mixture of ancient and modern buildings in both villages, several of which are listed. Examples of the former include Nutkins, Herveys and Manor Farmhouse in Niton; Wydcombe and Strathwell Manors and Dean Farmhouse in Whitwell.



Both villages have post World War II housing estates (mostly bungalow type) -The Glen, Priory Walk and Bannock Road. There has been, and continues to be, occasional in-filling within Whitwell's previous development envelope and Niton's RSC settlement boundary.



Some of this, eg Puckwell Farm, has been sensitively designed to enhance the character of the village whilst other units, eg Ivy Close, have not. Concern has been expressed about the growing number of second homes and holiday lets where maintenance standards of property and gardens do in some cases detract from the generally good appearance of the village. No local housing needs survey has been undertaken recently. There is a steady turnover of house ownership in both villages, although many are bought as second homes by people living off the island.

In the drafting of this section of the Plan we have taken note of the island's annual housing target of 520 units (Core Strategy 1.24) and of the following extracts from the Core Strategy document:

- 1.13 No housing allocations have been made. Rather the general locations for, and levels of, housing have been identified.
- Potential development sites have undergone a strategic level viability assessment as part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) process. (see maps at Appendix 5). The SHLAA is a technical exercise to inform the Island Plan. It does not allocate land for development, but examines the extent to which possible sites, including those suggested by developers, landowners and other parties are suitable, available and achievable over a given timeframe. It is not an identification of planning applications already made, or about which there has been pre-application discussion. The inclusion of sites within the SHLAA should not be taken to imply that the sites will be allocated for housing or looked upon favourably when determining planning applications.
- There is a potential housing supply within the 11 RSCs, of which Niton is one, of 107 units per annum. But the aggregated potential throughout the island exceeds the targets.
- 3.10 Core Strategy Objectives:
  - 1) To support sustainable and thriving communities that enable people to enjoy a quality of life, without compromising the quality of the environment.



- 2) To ensure that all development supports the principles of sustainable development.
  - 3) To ensure that housing is provided to meet the needs of island residents.
  - 4) To ensure that all development is designed to a high quality, creating buildings and a sense of place that reflects and enhances local character and distinctiveness.
  - 5) To promote and enhance community leisure and recreational facilities.
- SP1 Spatial Strategy. Niton is defined as an RSC, where proposals for greenfield and/or non-previously developed land within or immediately adjacent to settlement boundaries will need to demonstrate that deliverable previously developed land is not available and an identified local need will be met. In Whitwell, unless a specific need is identified, development



proposals will not be supported.

Responses to the questionnaire did not reveal a local housing need, other than for a proportion of affordable housing in any approved development. However, were such need to be established in the future, then in-fill units rather than multi-unit developments were preferred by most respondents. A strongly-held view that both villages should retain their independence was consistent with a rejection of ribbon development.

There are arable and livestock farms of varying sizes around and between the villages, which enhance the landscape. But the Government recognises that the diversification into non-agricultural activities is necessary for the continuing viability of many farm enterprises.

There have been sensitive and popular barn conversions in both villages for short-term holiday and business unit letting. Less satisfactory have been erections of horse shelters on open farmland which have not enhanced the landscape, and in future they should be planned adjacent to existing farm buildings.

There are several small-scale chalet/caravan sites in Niton: at Castlehaven, in Boxers Lane, in the grounds of Westcliff, and to the north of the village on high ground at Meadowview. Most of these were authorised in the 1960s. Whilst their presence may bring some holiday trade to the village, they do not enhance the landscape and further such development is not recommended, nor is the change of use to permanent long-term dwelling in such accommodation.

In the past the Parish Council has not welcomed pre-application

consultation by developers or household applicants. However, the Localism Bill encourages pre-application consultation with communities as follows:

- Developers must consult communities before submitting certain planning applications, having regard to any advice their local planning authority may provide.
- They must consider any responses they receive before they finalise their proposals and submit their applications.
- When submitting their application they must account for how they have consulted the local community, what comments they have received and how they have taken those comments into account.

**Action 6.1**  
The Parish Council now welcomes pre-application approaches on all schemes

Although this requirement applies only to developments - and the IW Council policy on the extent to which pre application consultation should be mandatory is yet to be determined - we believe there is potential for all schemes to benefit from pre-application discussion. The Parish Council has now changed its policy to enable its planning committee, without prejudice to members' positions when considering any subsequent planning application, to be involved in this process of consultation.

## 7. RECREATION, SPORT AND LEISURE FACILITIES

The Parish Council owns land to the south of Allotment Road in Niton, and cricket was played on the steeply sloping ground there until quite recently. After tireless fundraising efforts and matched grant funding, members of Niton Play Park Appeal (NIPPA) designed and oversaw the installation of the children's playground which is now used by local children and visitors. The skateboard ramp is well used and is kept in good repair.



Two Niton Football Club teams play at weekends on land at the western end of the village,. The changing rooms are inadequate, and initiatives over the past decade to improve them have so far proved unsuccessful.

There are no sport or leisure facilities for adults or children in Whitwell. A sum of money is held by the Parish Council, bequeathed some years ago by a local resident specifically to provide recreational facilities for the village children, pending the



availability of suitable land. This has been a long-standing quest by the Parish Council.

**Action 7.2**  
We are in talks over the future of the Football Club and the Youth Club building

There is a well-supported surfing club which operates from Castlehaven. Exciting windsurfing may also be enjoyed there. There are various activities enjoyed at both village halls, adding to the community feel in the two villages. (see also section 3 - Facilities)

While Niton Primary School has a small games field, it is far from ideal for the larger number of older children now attending the school. Overall, facilities for team games and other physical activities for the younger generation in the parish is less than adequate. The Parish Council should embrace opportunities to improve the situation.

**Action 7.1**  
We have set a six-month target to find a suitable site

## 8. CRIME, POLICING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

A police officer is responsible for the Safer Neighbourhood team for Wroxall, Godshill, Chale, Niton and Whitwell. Drop-in meetings at the local post offices are advertised at <http://www.hampshire.police.uk/internet/my-neighbourhood/eastern/isle-of-wight/east-wight/wroxall-godshill-chale-niton-whitwell/>

### How to get involved

There is a collective responsibility to help to prevent crime and keep our communities safe. In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight there are a number of ways residents can play an active part in community safety and support the local police service. For example:

- Bring local issues to attention by attending one of the regular Community Priority Setting meetings held by police and local agencies in the neighbourhood.
- Become part of the local policing family and use skills by working as a



Police Support Volunteer or a member of the Special Constabulary.

- Submit local priorities to the team.
- Submit information about crime or criminal activity within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Niton and Whitwell are low-crime areas. Villagers attribute this partly to the area's sense of community.



## 9. NITON AND WHITWELL ECONOMY

In their responses to the 2012 local survey, residents expressed very strong support for local enterprises which are highly valued and well used. It is important to maintain their viability and encourage enhancement where sustainable opportunities arise. Local businesses and services provide 169 jobs, of which 59% are filled by residents within the parish.

A few sites house small start-up business premises. The survey showed considerable support for expansion and development of these enterprises, but using existing locations rather than additional sites.

It is important to understand where people shop and how they get there, so businesses can plan for a successful future. The vast majority of residents regularly use local shops but also "out of area" supermarkets. Very little use is made of home delivery services from local shops, and increased local advertising of this service might well lead to





greater use. Internet shopping is well established, with 35% of households regularly buying online.

Whitwell residents greatly regret the closure of the local store. The introduction of a Post Office facility and local stalls in the parish church twice a week has gone some way to help. The infrequent bus service and lack of safe footpaths between the villages also militates against greater use of Niton services by Whitwell residents. The community minibus (see Section 5), at present under-used, could be used in this context.

A growing feature of present and future employment is the "working from home" trend; very much influenced by the widespread availability of the internet and the continued expansion of high-speed broadband. The survey indicated that about a quarter of working-age residents were, or would in future, be working from home.

As with the island as a whole, tourism within the parish is important for economic good health. There is scope for additional information to be made available such as "finger post" signs, maps and leaflets to include local footpaths and bridleways. St Catherine's Lighthouse, the Pepperpot and the Hoy Monument are all within easy walking distance. Hot food is available at the three public houses and Fields Nursery, a fish-and-chip van visits weekly, and snacks are on offer at the Niton Post Office, which also provides an ATM linked to many banks and building societies. There is no great support for the provision of further eating facilities.

Action to improve marketing and communications aspects of local tourism is needed, in liaison with the IW Council's appointed Tourism Director.



**Action 9.1** We aim to place our tourism leaflet with local businesses



Whitwell has spearheaded the approach to bulk energy purchasing and delivery, starting with domestic central heating fuel. The survey revealed strong interest in such schemes by about half of the respondents. Such undertakings need to be organised and managed.

**Action 9.2** We are extending the successful Whitwell scheme to Niton

## 10. HEALTH SERVICES

The nearest general hospital is St Mary's in Newport. The Health Centre in Niton village centre is part of the South Wight General Practice, which also has surgeries in Brighstone and Godshill. The Niton facilities have recently



been redeveloped and a training practice established. Medical support and facilities are provided for 2,000 registered patients; although some residents register with practices in Ventnor. There is a small dedicated car park for staff, but the general inadequacy of parking facilities in the village means that patients may have to walk some distance from their cars. Whitwell residents would welcome provision of a Health Centre in their village.

The Niton Surgery dispensary serves only those patients who live more than a mile away. This arrangement was put in place to protect the viability of Niton Pharmacy, which has recently been taken over by Day Lewis, a national chain.

## 11. EDUCATION

### Primary

Niton Primary School, on the southern side of the village, caters for pupils aged from 5 to 11.

Currently there are 155 pupils on the register, 58 in Early Years and Key Stage 1, and 97 in Key Stage 2. Of these 43% live outside the parish

boundaries, in St Lawrence, Chale and further afield. There is a waiting list for one year-group, but vacancies in others - so an increase in overall pupil numbers is expected.

To accommodate increased numbers following the recent reorganisation of education on the island, the local authority built two additional classrooms in 2012. These were linked to the main school buildings by corridors financed by the school itself. The KS2 wing now provides a







stimulating environment to support the transition of children into high school.

There is a small hard-surfaced playground as well as a small grass playing field suitable for sports day events and for football.

An active Friends of Niton Primary School organisation promotes fundraising events, and the use of the school buildings by youth groups and adult classes also helps to raise essential revenue.

The children are encouraged to participate in community events and support charitable fundraising at local, island, national and international levels.

## Pre-school

Niton Pre-school occupies a fenced-off site next to Niton Primary School, leased from the IW Council, and caters for children aged two to five. In 2011 it achieved an Ofsted grading of outstanding in all elements.

It is run by a company limited by guarantee, and has charitable status. It has strong links with Niton Primary, serving as its main feeder school. It is one of the larger employers in the village with a current workforce of nine, around half of whom live in the parish.



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In 2012 a parents' committee raised almost £10,000 to make major improvements to the building. Working closely within the community gives the children a sense of belonging and pride in the village.

The pre-school mobile building is nearing the end of its life. Government initiatives on childcare funding for two-year-olds mean its capacity could increase, so its long-term plan is to secure a site, and planning approval, for a permanent building.



## Niton Tots

There is a thriving toddler group in Niton held at the Methodist Hall on Friday mornings from 9.30 to 11.30am. Every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Friday the Health Visitor pays a visit, weighing babies and giving general advice. Between 15 and 25 families a week attend, with 35 families on the register.

Occasionally the group joins the pre-school for activities, furthering the links with families in the village and surrounding areas. The group is open to children and families from a wide area, and families who are not from Niton and Whitwell are most welcome.

## 12. COMMUNICATIONS

The Parish Council website at [www.iwight.com/parish\\_councils/nitonwhitwell](http://www.iwight.com/parish_councils/nitonwhitwell), was established in 2006 and formed part of the IW Council website, [www.iwight.com](http://www.iwight.com). The website was maintained by the clerk and any technical problems were the responsibility of the IW Council, so no funding was required. It fulfilled all the statutory requirements incumbent on the Parish Council and also had some additional pages of local interest contributed by Miss Sue Oatley, a past parish councillor. Although the website was fairly basic, it was a valuable communication tool.



Since the redesigned IW Council website went live in April, 2013, the Parish Council website has been temporarily located at [www.iwight.com/council/OtherServices/Niton-and-Whitwell-Parish-Council](http://www.iwight.com/council/OtherServices/Niton-and-Whitwell-Parish-Council), but only as a short-term measure to preserve an on-line presence. Plans to develop a stand-alone website using Wordpress were approved in May, 2013, and work is going ahead as fast as possible. Minimal funding of about £20 a year will be required, but the Parish Council aims to build a comprehensive website, which is both useful and easily accessible. Collaboration with other local organisations is also being explored.

An independent village website at [www.whitwellandniton.co.uk](http://www.whitwellandniton.co.uk) is maintained by Whitwell resident Mrs Julie Hoskyns for the benefit of the local community.

Traditional means of communication include the Isle of Wight County Press, the parish magazine Connections, the facilities of the Edward Edwards library in Niton, parish council notice boards (outside the Village Hall in Niton and in the bus shelter in

Whitwell High Street at its junction with Nettlecombe Lane), community notice boards and posters displayed by kind permission of local businesses. The Village Talk column in the County Press offers free advertising for event organisers.

Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Parish Council, held in alternate months in Niton and Whitwell, and a few take advantage of this. Before the start of each meeting, the chairman allows up to 15 minutes for public comments and questions. Names and contact details of current members of the Parish Council are displayed on the notice boards and website.

Communication links between parish councillors and the IW Council are much improved since 2004. The IW Council website and email communications allow information to be passed between Unitary and parish councils quickly and efficiently. The parish clerk enjoys good working relationships with many of the IW Council officers. The ward councillor, who represents Chale as well as Niton and Whitwell, is a vital link in communications with County Hall. He regularly attends Parish Council meetings and works closely with the Parish Council and clerk for the benefit of the community. He has assisted the Steering Group in the production of this Plan.



### **13. ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL SERVICES**

The IW Council's household waste contractor collects recyclable and non-recyclable waste on alternate weeks.

Standards of highway maintenance with regard to cutting back vegetation have deteriorated markedly over the past decade, especially along Sandrock Road and Undercliff Drive where the attractive stonewalling is in need of restoration.

The chain support posts along the course of the Eastern Yar in Blackgang Road are frequently damaged and have to be replaced. A more robust means of protection is needed along this stretch of pavement.

**Action 13.1 Island Roads have put work in hand to repair the fence**

#### **Footpaths**

Resurfacing NT24 would encourage parents to park in Town End car park and walk their children to and from school. This would ease the peak-hour parking difficulties in the Glen and Niton High Street.



Residents were asked if they would use a dedicated footpath and cycle track along the main Niton-Whitwell road, which could also be used by mobility scooters. Although most Whitwell residents either drive to Niton or to supermarkets elsewhere now that the Whitwell shop has closed, two-thirds of respondents (66%) were in favour or strongly in favour of the path, and 53% felt it would be safer for all users. This was among the most strongly supported suggestions in the 2012 questionnaire, although 23% said there would be no benefit, as they either use Ashknowle Lane or believe it should be upgraded.

**Action 13.2** This is a challenging project but we are committed to it. We will also lobby for a 40mph speed limit, and the upgrading of Ashknowle Lane



## 14. AND FINALLY... LIFE IN THE PARISH

The villages of Niton and Whitwell, although separated geographically, share a very familiar bond - community spirit.

Whitwell, although smaller than its neighbour has a feeling of warmth and comfort. Although spread out between thatched cottages, farms and more modern bungalows the people of Whitwell all come together in times of crisis or celebration to help each other. Recent celebrations for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee saw a very successful street party with young and old coming together in friendship. Further back, in 2006, the people joined together to help extinguish the flames which tore through the-then thatched White Horse Inn.

One villager says: "It feels safe to live here because everyone is so friendly."

Niton, being somewhat larger and housing most of the local amenities, is always a hive of activity. Saturday mornings see the High Street full of people of all ages, often on their way to the village hall for a coffee morning in aid of a local group or charity.

Each year various events are held in Whitwell and Niton, village fetes in the church or post office respectively. The Lantern Parade in December sees both villages come together in a celebration of light. Carol singing and the visit of the Rotary Club's Father Christmas are December highlights, whilst spring sees the village pantomime for the younger folk.

There are always posters up in the two villages and it is always worth taking time to see if you are being invited to a coffee morning, tea party, a play by the Pepperpot Players, a quiz night, a masked ball, a talk about wildlife, a school parade or a cream tea in the post office. The list is endless, and the events are what make the two villages special.

As one resident summed it up: "A united happy atmosphere where opportunities arise for people of all ages to come together."



## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

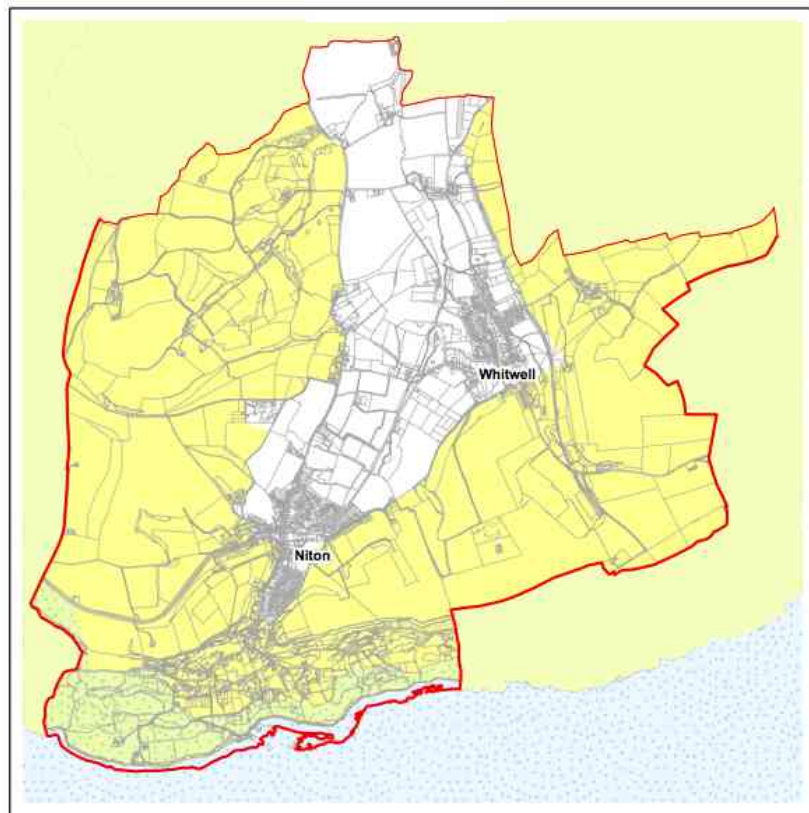
#### Steering Group membership

The following residents of Niton and Whitwell were members of the steering group throughout the period from September, 2011 to May, 2013: Peter Marsden, George Glover, Vickie Ford (Clerk to the Parish Council), Rob Harris and Sue Day.

Wendy Arnold\*, Clare Fradgley, Maurice Kane, Fay Norris\*, Jon Boileau Goad\*, Carol Court, Charlie Peach\* and Mavis Barclay contributed to the enterprise at various stages. Editor, Jayne Hill; design, Jon Young\*. \* Denotes parish councillors, past and present.

### Appendix 2

#### Landscape designations



Niton and Whitwell Parish:  
Landscape designations

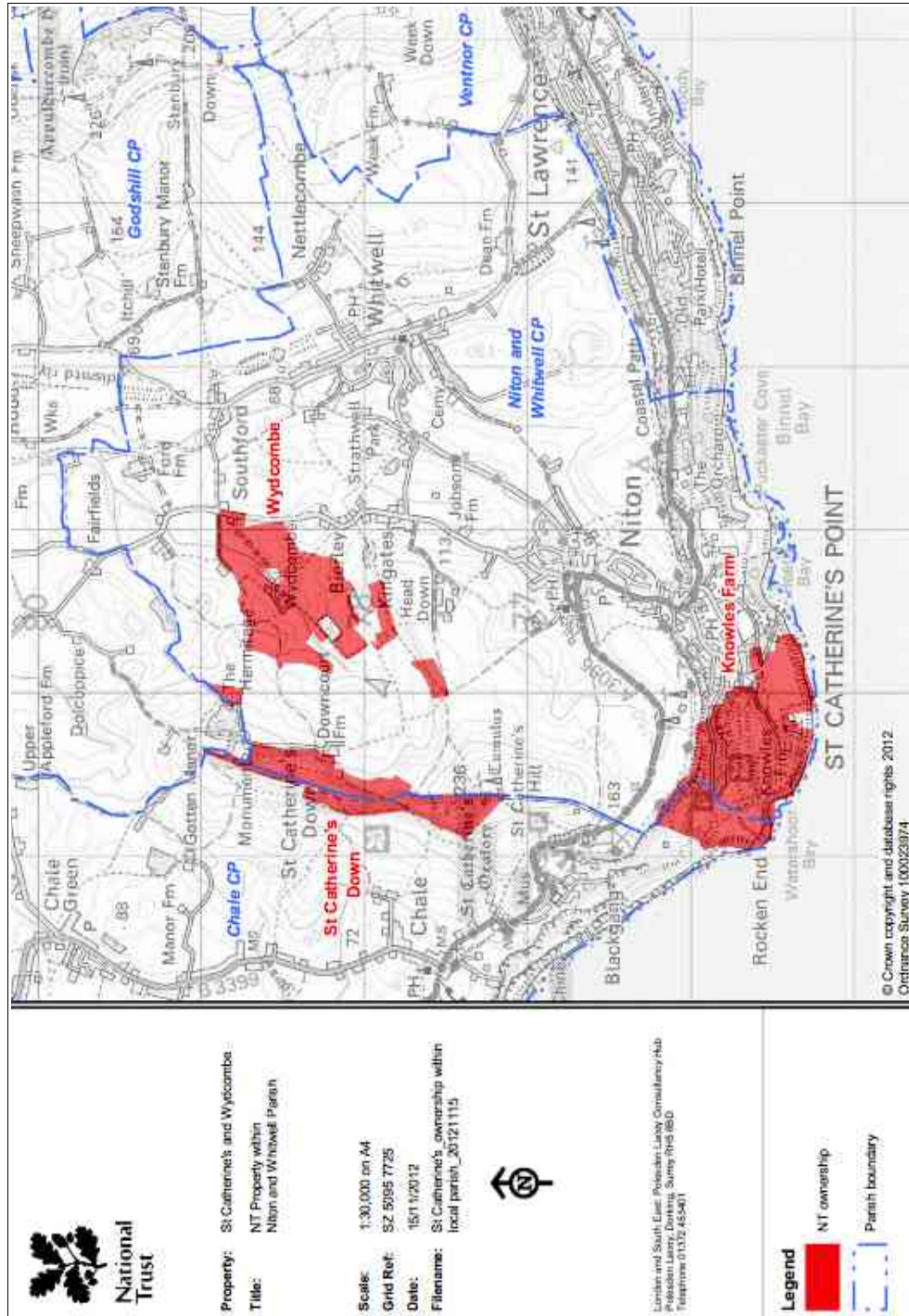
1:25,000  
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**Key**  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
Heritage Coast



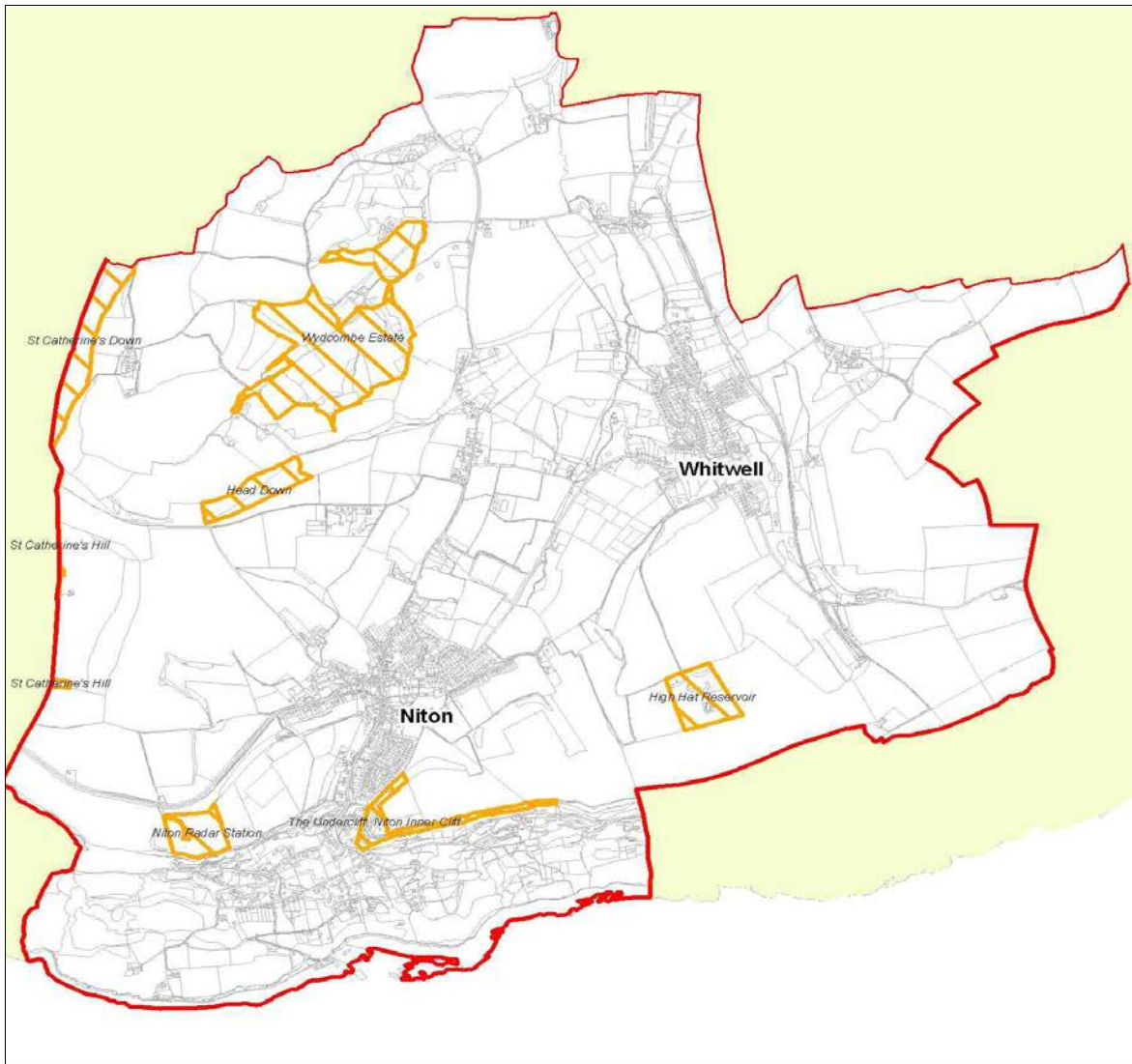
### Appendix 3

### National Trust property



## Appendix 4

### Nature conservation designations



**Niton and Whitwell Parish:  
Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation SINC  
(local designation)**

1:25,000

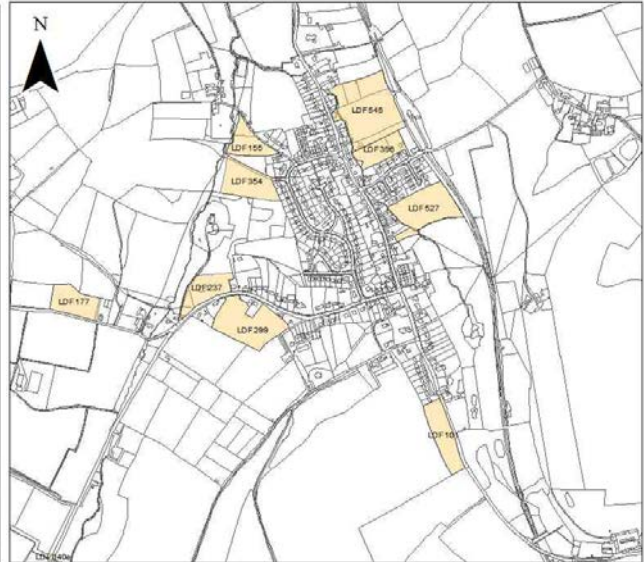
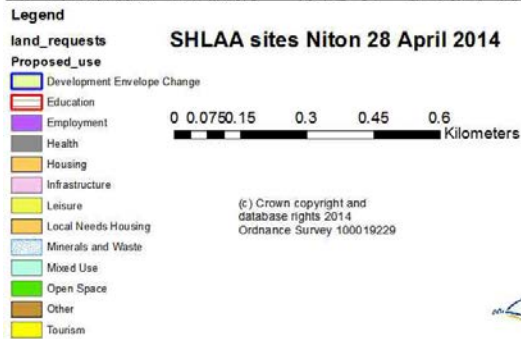
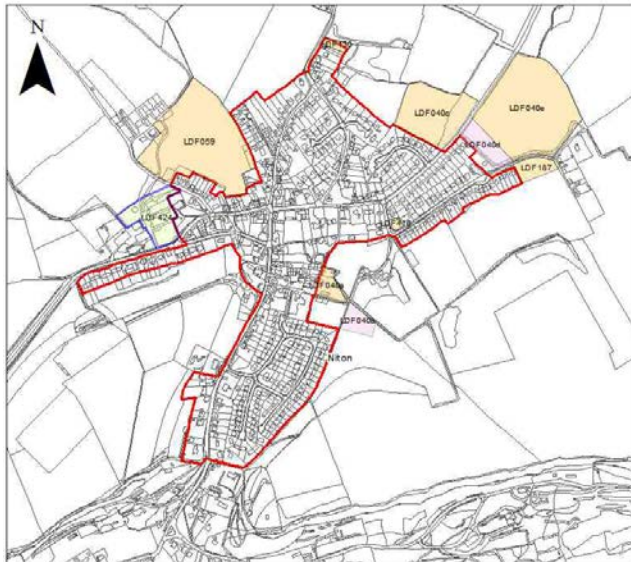


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## Appendix 5

### Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments



Niton sites	Whitwell sites
<p>LDF040a. Land at Puckwell Farm, adjacent Niton Primary School. LDF040b. Land at Puckwell Farm. LDF040c. Land off Chatfeild Road. LDF040d. Land off Chatfeild Road and Allotment Road. LDF040e. Land off Chatfeild Road. LDF059. Ladyacre Farm, Pan Lane. LDF130. 1, North Butts Cottages, Newport Road. LDF187. Land at eastern end of Allotment Road. LDF416. Allotment Road Car Park. LDF424. Niton Manor Farm, Blackgang Road.</p>	<p>LDF101. Land off Ventnor Road. LDF155. Land off Slay Lane. LDF177. Field Plot, Kingates Lane. LDF237. Land adjacent The Anchorage, Kemming Road. LDF299. Land south of Kemming Road. LDF354. Land west of Bannock Road. LDF396. The Coach House, Nettlecombe Lane. LDF527. Land south of Meadow Way and Ludbrook Way and rear of St Michael's, High Street. LDF545. Land at Water Acre, High Street.</p>



**Appendix 6**

# Parish Action Plan

<b>Action No.</b>	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
3.1	Sections of the Rookley to Niton road need considerable upgrading.	The Parish Council will analyse Island Roads' published seven-year schedule of works; will monitor and lobby for compliance; and will lobby for a revision to the schedule if needed.	Island Roads attended a PC meeting in March 2014; liaison is now improved.
3.2	Make tourists more aware of the area's facilities and attractiveness.	The Parish Council, helped by George Glover and Visit Isle of Wight funding, is preparing a local tourist leaflet.	The tourist leaflet was printed in March 2014.
4.1	Drainage on some sections of the roads in Niton and Whitwell remains poor.	As with 3.1, the Parish Council will hold Island Roads to account.	Some work was done over the winter of 2013-14. The Niton-Rookley road is under discussion.
4.2	The Town End car park needs to be controlled to limit long-term parking by caravans and large vehicles.	The Parish Council will approach the Isle of Wight Council with view to acquiring the car park under the Localism initiative.	April 2014: the process is underway.
5.1	Given the support for car sharing indicated in questionnaire responses, the parish requires a community-led scheme to pursue this.	The Parish Council has formed a Transport Committee to tackle all three transport action points.	The committee will report progress in mid-2014.
5.2	A minibus is available for community use. Considerable interest in this has been shown, but planning and organisation is needed.	The Parish Council has formed a Transport Committee to tackle all three transport action points.	Discussions are underway with Niton Primary School.
5.3	A wide range of transport options are available but many people do not know about them.	The Parish Council has formed a Transport Committee to tackle all three transport action points.	The committee will report progress in mid-2014.

<b>Action No:</b>	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
6.1	Pre-application planning consultation needs to be improved, to streamline the planning process.	The Parish Council has changed its policy and now welcomes pre-application approaches from all planning applicants.	The PC's policy changed in July 2013.
7.1	Whitwell lacks a children's recreational area and facilities.	The Parish Council has set a six-month target for a suitable site to be identified. The Whitwell ward councillors will convene as a committee to consider all options, including discussions with the owners of development land.	The PC is conducting a Housing Needs Survey (May 2014) which may lead to an opportunity to provide a play area in conjunction with a Whitwell development.
7.2	Facilities for team games and other physical activities for the younger generation are less than adequate.	The Parish Council is in close touch with the Football Club over its future, and is seeking information from the IW Council over the Youth Club building's status.	April 2014: A planning application which includes improved football club facilities is imminent; a Community Interest Company, with PC support, is negotiating to take over the Youth Club building.
9.1	Liaison with the Isle of Wight's Director of Tourism is needed on marketing local tourism.	The Parish Council aims to place its tourist leaflet with local businesses.	The tourist leaflet was distributed in March 2014.
9.2	A wider parish application of bulk purchase of domestic central heating fuel needs to be pursued.	The organiser of the Whitwell scheme has been asked to work on extending it to Niton, with Parish Council support.	The target date for introduction is September 2014.
13.1	The chain support posts alongside the Eastern Yar in Blackgang Road, Niton, are damaged and need replacing with something more robust.	Work is underway to address this problem.	This work has been started but not yet completed, and the PC is chasing Island Roads (April 2014).
13.2	Niton and Whitwell are separated by a very busy road with no footpath - a great concern expressed by survey respondents.	The Parish Council is committed to achieving a footpath on this road. We will also lobby for a 40mph speed limit, and for work to upgrade all of Ashknowle Lane.	May 2014. Main road land-owners are being identified and approached. Speed limit: The IW Council has been approached; Ashknowle Lane: The PC is in talks with the IW Council.

## Appendix 7

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

## 1. Introduction

Much of the parish lies within the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The AONB Partnership encourages the local preparation of parish landscape character assessments using the methodology developed by the Countryside Agency, and these assessments can be adopted as Supplementary Planning Statements. Further information about the historic landscape character of the parish can be obtained from the Sites and Monuments Record and the HLC database held at the County Archaeology and Historic Environment Centre. The following notes have been compiled using HLC data and ecological data supplied by the Countryside Section of the Isle of Wight Council. They could form the basis of a full landscape character assessment at a later date, with appropriate support from the AONB Unit.

## 2. Historic Landscape Character Areas

Three historic landscape character areas cover a large part of South Wight, these being South Wight Downland, South Wight Downland Edge and The Undercliff. All three historic landscape character areas are represented within Niton and Whitwell. The underlying geology comprises Chalk and Upper Greensand on the downs, with Lower Greensand deposits in the lower-lying areas. Visually, the landscape encompasses the upland ridges and slopes of St Catherine's Hill, St Catherine's Down and Head Down; pasture fields on the downland edge slopes and in the Yar Valley; flatter arable farmland to the east and south-east; and the rocky, tree-covered landscape of the Undercliff beneath the dramatic inner cliff.

The River Yar rises to the west of Niton and flows northward, passing to the west of Whitwell and dividing the two main upland areas of the parish. A tributary flows to the east of Whitwell before joining the Yar. To the north of Whitwell the Yar Valley is wider and flatter.

### South Wight Downland

In the past much of this historic landscape character area would have been communally grazed downland, supporting floristically rich chalk and acid grassland. Today there is virtually no unimproved chalk grassland within the South Wight Downland of the parish, although there are strips of unimproved acidic grassland along the east side of St Catherine's Down and on Head Down. Virtually all other grassland has been improved for agriculture and no longer supports a rich native flora.

Three Bronze Age round barrows (burial mounds) have been recorded within this area, and the barrow on St Catherine's Down is still prominent earthwork. Although the medieval stone lighthouse on St Catherine's Hill, and the Hoy Monument at the north end of St Catherine's Down, lie just outside the parish, they are dominant features in the downland landscape.

Hill slopes that now support arable agriculture may have been unenclosed downland in the past. Field patterns and boundaries suggest relatively recent, post-medieval, enclosure. On the flatter ground around Niton and Whitwell, and also around Nettlecombe, there are large arable fields. These fields occupy the same areas as the former common open fields of Niton and Whitwell which survived into the 19th century. There is no settlement or woodland within the South Wight Downland Area.

### South Wight Downland Edge

The hill slopes to the east of St Catherine's Down lie on the boundary between the Downland and the Downland Edge areas. These slopes may formerly have been used for unenclosed downland grazing, although they are now



occupied by large arable fields. The isolated Downcourt Farm is the only pre-19th century settlement within this hill slope zone. The sloping ground below Head Down, stretching down to the Newport Road north of Niton, is occupied by medium-sized arable fields.

Small hedged pasture fields with sinuous boundaries, linked by many tracks, characterise the area around Wydcombe, and small fragments of unimproved neutral grassland and species-rich marshy grassland persist. However, there is evidence that more arable agriculture took place in the past. There are several farmsteads in this area, although other farms shown on early maps have disappeared.

To the east of the Niton-Newport road on the lower, flatter ground of the Yar Valley, the farmland is mainly arable, with large fields at the north end of the parish. Around Whitwell there are small pasture fields. Farmsteads occur at regular intervals along the Yar Valley.



There is only a small amount of woodland within this historic landscape character area, and only a few tiny fragments of ancient woodland predating 1793. 19th century ornamental grounds and landscape parks at the Hermitage, Wydcombe and Strathwell are still recognisable in the landscape.

The main settlements of the parish lie within this historic landscape character area, tucked beneath the steeper downland slopes and close to the Yar Valley. Both Niton and Whitwell are historic settlements associated with medieval parish churches. The historic core of Niton, shown on the 1793 Ordnance Survey Map, was a nucleated cluster around the church. In the 19th and 20th centuries, settlement spread down into the Undercliff. The historic core of Whitwell was linear in form, but this form has been modified by 20th century housing to the west of the main road. Nettlecombe was a medieval settlement subsidiary to Whitwell and, as its name implies, is situated

within a combe to the east of Whitwell, surrounded by higher ground. There is some archaeological evidence for a slightly larger settlement here in medieval times. Bierley, at the north end of the parish, is shown as a single farmstead on the 1793 OS map, although it now comprises a small cluster of 20th century dwellings.

### **The Undercliff**

The unique area of the Undercliff is the result of a coastal landslip which has occurred within the last 10,000 years, with large falls continuing to the present day. Prehistoric rubbish deposits (middens) have been found along the coast, suggesting that fishing and the collection of shellfish took place in the area. Medieval middens have also been found. The uneven ground surface is not very suitable for agriculture, and some land would have been uncultivated in the past. But there were a number of medieval agricultural holdings, including Knowles, Beauchamp and Orchard. Stone walls define the small irregular fields that survive in places. On the Isle of Wight these walled field boundaries occur only within the Undercliff.

Traces of ridge and furrow have been recorded by archaeologists near St Catherine's Point. Ridge and furrow is usually associated with ploughing of medieval or later date, but here it may indicate "lazy beds"- a primitive type of spade cultivation employed in difficult terrain.

The historic landscape character of the Undercliff has been greatly influenced by the houses and pleasure grounds constructed by the well-to-do from the early 19th century. The earliest such properties within the parish were Puckaster, Beauchamp and the Orchard, and later examples included Mount Cleves, La Rosiere, Thorncliff, Westcliff and Windcliff. Ornamental planting around these properties, and the growth of 20th century secondary woodland, has changed the Undercliff from a relatively open landscape to a more heavily-wooded environment, except in the area of active landslip near Rocken End and the exposed fields around St Catherine's Lighthouse and Knowles Farm. The 19th century St Catherine's Lighthouse is the most dominant built feature in the landscape.

### **3. Boundaries, roads and tracks**

The modern civil parish of Niton and Whitwell occupies nearly the same area as the historic ecclesiastical parishes of Niton and Whitwell. The ecclesiastical parish boundaries of both Niton and Whitwell, as shown on the six-inch OS map of 1862, are still preserved as field boundaries for much of their length. These intricate and interlocking boundaries date from medieval times (subject to some later rationalisation) but parts of the Whitwell parish boundary could have originated in the Anglo-Saxon period when Niton and Whitwell may have formed part of a much larger "mother parish" based on Godshill.

Other surviving linear boundaries may indicate historic land holdings and require further investigation. Boundaries, roads and tracks are often the most ancient elements in the landscape. Roads and tracks often delineate field systems and land holdings of medieval date, or link farmsteads with areas of communal downland grazing. Constant use over time created hollow ways such as Bury Lane which leads from Niton village to Head Down. Niton Shute and the Cripple Path formed a link between the Undercliff and the land above the cliff.

### **4. Future work on the historic landscape**

Information within the Sites and Monuments Record and the HLC database held at County Archaeology and Historic Environment Centre could be used as the basis for a full archaeological and historical survey of the parish, examining such themes as land holdings and estates, communications, patterns of land use and settlement through time.

**Vicky Basford,  
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*Published by Niton and Whitwell Parish Council  
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