

WITHERNSEA 1:10000 DETAILED ASSESSMENT

Introduction

This report describes the landscape character of the setting of Withernsea and assesses the quality of the landscape and the sensitivity of landscape character to detrimental change as a result of development on the urban edge.

The purpose of this study is to identify the areas that have the capacity to accept change as a result of development without detriment to landscape character.

This assessment does not assess the character or quality of urban green space. However, the importance of links between the town and countryside is a consideration.

Landscape Setting

The landscape setting of Withernsea is influenced by a variety of landscape characteristics and two landscape character types have been identified in the East Riding Landscape Character Assessment that contribute to the setting of this seaside town. They are:

Landscape Character Type 19 – Open Farmland

Landscape Character Type 20 – Coastal Farmland

The landscape surrounding Withernsea is generally flat with some areas of gently undulating land that rises to the west and away from the settlement. There are relatively few trees in the area resulting in an open landscape. Land use in the area is predominantly arable farmland with small areas of improved grassland to the south of the settlement. The large fields provide regular patterns and are defined by low, fragmented, gappy hedges that are severely clipped.

Withernsea is a linear coastal town that expanded as a resort during the Victorian period. Development has progressed in a linear fashion along the coast and the northern and southern extents of the town are defined by large caravan parks. The caravan parks impact upon the setting of the town and reflect the town's function as a popular tourist destination.

Withernsea Lighthouse towers some 127 feet above the town and provides a recognisable landmark which contributes significantly to the character of the landscape and the town.

Description of Visual Envelope

Public views of the town are limited to the relatively few roads and public rights of way as the majority of the land surrounding Withernsea is privately owned with few areas that are publicly accessible.

A combination of the undulating land and areas of linear vegetation provide intermediate horizons which restrict views of built features that define the settlement edge thus limiting the zone of visual influence for the town.

An exception to this is the lighthouse which is clearly visible from areas far beyond the zone of visual influence, and particularly in views from the north and west.

St Nicholas' church is also visible as a recognisable landmark within the town, however, it can only be seen from the south west approach to Withernsea (refer to photo plate A).

Hedges and trees that form shelterbelts around parts of the settlement edge, although sparse, provide transition between the settlement edge and the surrounding countryside. They serve to restrict views of significant visual intrusions such as the industrial estate and caravan parks.

These natural features also restrict views of the rest of the town and impact upon views of the surrounding landscape from within Withernsea.

It is also important to note that although Withernsea is a coastal town, views of the North Sea from the surrounding landscape are very few and far between due to the local topography, intermediate vegetation and the height above sea level of this landscape.

Area 1 – South of Withernsea; East Coast to Withernsea Road

The area assessed is bordered to the east by undeveloped coastline, to the west by Withernsea Road, to the north by holiday chalets and bungalows, and to the south by open, predominantly agricultural fields and scattered farmsteads.

1.1 Landscape Character

The area is located within Landscape Character Area 20A – Withernsea to Spurn Coast.

The eastern boundary has the characteristic of undeveloped coastline that comprise of boulder clay cliffs that drop into the North Sea. A path runs along the top of the cliff providing for access for visitors and locals.

The rectilinear pattern of the large agricultural fields is defined by fragmented hedgerows that have been severely clipped.

Boundary hedges form a transition between the agricultural farmland and the temporary buildings that form the characteristic holiday chalets. This hedgerow, although gappy, benefits from not being well maintained and its increased height provides a screen to the chalets reducing the negative impact of the chalet development upon the landscape.

The generally flat landform rises gently south towards Valley Farm and the village of Hollym the roof line of which is visible on the skyline.

1.2 Assessment of Quality

Based on the above description, the quality of the landscape of this area is assessed to be ordinary. There are no significant attractive or distinctive features within this area. The coastline of boulder clay cliffs provides the main interest. The abundance of caravans and holiday chalets are a detractor within this area although the hedges act as a partial screen.

1.3 Assessment of Sensitivity and Capacity

The openness of the landscape and the lack of tree cover would mean that new development in the area is likely to be highly visible. A further extension of built development along the coast would impact upon the open rural character of the area. This area is assessed to have high sensitivity to residential and commercial development that would encroach further on the remote coastal landscape adjacent to the town. Leisure development would impact upon this area in the same manner; however, the temporary nature of such development would slightly reduce this impact. As an important gateway to the holiday town the quality of the design of such a leisure development would be influential in determining the significance of the effect on landscape character.

Change of use of areas of caravan and holiday parks to residential development would increase the influence of urban characteristics on the surrounding countryside. It may also result in pressure for new caravan sites further along the coast. Caravan sites by their nature are detractors in the landscape as their layout; design and appearance do not fit with the vernacular. In addition the coast is exposed and it is difficult to establish vegetation in this area that would act as a screen to development.

A linear development of residential properties has occurred between Withernsea and Hollym and any further development would potentially encourage urban sprawl. The cumulative impact of this may result in the joining of Withernsea and Hollym.

The area to the west of Holmpton Road is designated as undeveloped coastline within the Holderness District Wide Local Plan (policy ENV 8 and ENV9).

Area 2 – South of Withernsea; Withernsea Road to Havel Avenue

The area assessed is bordered to the east by Withernsea Road and Hollym Road, to the south and west by open agricultural land, to the northwest by Withernsea Golf Course and to the north by residential properties along Chestnut Avenue.

2.1 Landscape Character

This area is within the transition between Landscape Character Area 19E, Brunswick to Withernsea Farmland and Landscape Character Area 20A, Withernsea to Spurn Coast.

The large fields in this area differ from the rectilinear field patterns to the east in that parts of the fields have been defined by small, gently meandering watercourses that serve to drain the land. The hedgerows that follow these watercourses are fragmented, but to a lesser extent than in area 1. The watercourses within the area have been improved along their natural course and are therefore of limited ecological value. Small pools and ponds are characteristic of the boulder clay geology.

This area includes a caravan park which consists of static caravans and circulation infrastructure. The park projects out from the southern extent of the ribbon development along Hollym Road. Within the southern boundary of this park lies a small pond which has the potential to provide wildlife habitats. This southern area also includes shelterbelt planting, which although gappy, provides a visual screen to the caravan park.

The landform is predominantly flat with the land rising gently towards Hollym, which is visible from this area.

St Nicholas' church is also clearly visible from this south westerly approach to Withernsea and provides a recognisable landmark associated with the cultural heritage of the area. (Refer to photo plate A).

2.2 Assessment of Quality

Based on the above description and the condition of the landscape, the quality of the landscape in this area is assessed to be ordinary. There are no significant attractive or distinctive features, other than the visually prominent church tower, that contribute significantly to the landscape character other than the generic features associated with the landscape character type, however, the meandering watercourses and several pools provide variety and interest in the otherwise rectilinear landscape.

The location of the caravan park interrupts views of the characteristic linear development to the south of Withernsea and serves as a visual detractor even though shelterbelt planting screens significant sections of this tourism development.

2.3 Assessment of Sensitivity and Capacity

The landscape in this area plays an important role in providing the setting for the southern approach to the town. The fields immediately to the south are already influenced by holiday chalet and caravan site development. Change of use of these areas to residential or commercial would further impact on character introducing permanent built structures of

different style and scale. This would increase the influence of urban characteristics in this relatively open landscape.

Further development south along Withernsea Road would impact on the rural character of the space between Withernsea and Hollym. A small linear development of residential properties has occurred between Withernsea and Hollym and any further development would potentially encourage urban sprawl.

The church is one of the few landmark features in the area and views of the church tower are important to the southern approach. New development may impact on these views.

The landscape character of this area is assessed to have high sensitivity to change as a result of residential and commercial development.

Area 3 – South west of Withernsea; Hazel Avenue to Park Avenue

The area is bordered to the south and southeast by open agricultural land, to the west and north by a dismantled railway and to the east by residential housing.

3.1 Landscape Character

This area is located in the transitional area between Landscape Character Area 19E, Brunswick to Withernsea Farmland and Landscape Character Area 20A, Withernsea to Spurn Coast.

The southern section of this area includes Withernsea Golf Club which constitutes designed open space for recreational purposes. The course makes use of several of the generic features such as drainage ditches and pools of water and has also retained several hedgerow trees that are becoming established as small groups of trees. The security fencing surrounding the golf course is uncharacteristic of the area, however, its colour does partially integrate it with the surrounding landscape and the former hedgerow has been retained along the majority of this boundary.

To the north of the golf course, between the relatively new residential properties and the disused railway line, the land suffers from a lack of management and has a neglected appearance that is unusual for the character type. The topography within this area is influenced by human activity; namely the tipping of inert material formed from the continuing construction and expansion of the neighbouring housing estate (refer to photo plate B).

The northern end of this area is again characterised by designed space, this time in the form of allotment gardens.

The area has the characteristics of a developed urban fringe and this is reinforced through the recreational activities associated with the golf course, the allotment gardens and the trampled pathways within the central section of this area.

There are clear views of Withernsea lighthouse from this area. (Refer to photo plate B.)

3.2 Assessment of Quality

Based upon the above description of this area and the fact that there are areas where neglect has resulted in the poor condition of the landscape the area is assessed to be of ordinary to poor landscape quality. The golf course is a pleasant area for recreation and provides a transition between urban and rural activities. Although it lacks distinctive characteristics it retains the generic characteristics and the designed aspects are not significant visual detractors.

The neglect of the area between the dismantled railway line and residential properties has resulted in an area of scrub land of little aesthetic or ecological value. This area is however of value to the surrounding community as an area for informal recreation. This is evident from the numerous trampled pathways, several of which tie in with the dismantled railway line. The allotments, although in average to poor condition, contribute to the amenity of the area and connect with the recreational use of the dismantled railway.

3.3 Assessment of Sensitivity and Capacity

The area is relatively open although there are few views into it. The golf course is an important local facility and change of use in this area for either tourism or residential and commercial development would impact upon the character of the setting of Withernsea. This area is assessed to have high landscape sensitivity to change as a result of development that would impact on the contribution it makes to the setting of Withernsea as an area of transition between the urban and rural areas of the town.

The area of scrubland between the disused railway line and residential development is enclosed and views of the area are limited. In addition development would not result in the loss of characteristic features and may offer the opportunity to enhance the character of the setting of the town. This area is assessed to have low sensitivity to change as a result of built development providing that appropriate mitigation measures are incorporated i.e. reinforce planting along the disused railway line, maintenance of footpath links to the countryside, structure planting within the site, appropriate building design and layout and enhancement of views of the lighthouse.

The allotments are a valuable resource and should be retained. The improvement in the condition of the allotments should be encouraged as they define the link between the open landscape and the dismantled railway.

Area 4 – Southwest of Withernsea; Beaconsfield to Hull Road

The area known as Owthorne Grange is bound to the north by Hull Road, by residential properties to the northeast, by the dismantled railway and allotment gardens to the southeast and stretches out into open agricultural land to the southwest.

4.1 Landscape Character

The area lies within Character Type Area 19E, Brunswick to Withernsea Farmland. Characteristics of the area include gently undulating to flat open farmland landscape with few trees. Field boundaries consist of hedgerows in varying condition.

Large arable fields dominate the landscape on the west side of Withernsea. The agricultural land use with sparse boundary vegetation affords unrestricted views over the area from residential properties along Carrs Meadow. Shelterbelt and hedgerows located around residential properties to the west of Withernsea, along the B1362 Hull Road, effectively screen these properties.

The urban edge in this area is characterised by residential development, allotments and playing fields with hedgerow field boundaries along the boundary between urban and rural areas. The housing estate to the northeast of the area is partially screened by shelterbelt and hedgerow, however, this boundary vegetation is sparse affording views of the properties. Mature trees set within and behind this estate helps to reduce the scale of the development which appears as a small, linear settlement.

From Hull Road the lighthouse is clearly visible and is a distinctive landmark on this important approach to Withernsea. Views of this landscape feature are framed by the avenue of trees leading into the town (refer to photo plate C).

4.2 Assessment of Quality

Based upon the above description, the quality of the landscape is assessed to be good. The nature of the local topography both screens and reveals sections of the urban edge giving it the appearance of a small, linear settlement. Intermittent views of the urban edge as a result of landform, vegetation and land use help to reduce the apparent scale of urban development. As a result the urban edge is reasonably well integrated with the surrounding landscape.

Views of the lighthouse along Hull Road contribute to the quality of the landscape in this area as do open views that reveal the linear edge of the town and extensive views towards Hollym.

The southeast of the area abuts the dismantled railway and also an area of allotment gardens which provide for recreational activities and a transition between the rural and urban

character, serving to break up the hard edge of the settlement. The playing field is designated for recreation within the Holderness District Wide Local Plan.

4.3 Assessment of Sensitivity and Capacity

Infill development along Hull Road between the edge of Withernsea and the Vicarage would potentially lead to increased pressure to develop significant chunks of this large field. Any development in this area would also result in the loss of views characteristic of the landscape setting and a change in the appearance of the existing estate. The area adjacent to Hull road is assessed to have high sensitivity to built development that would change the character of this approach and potentially impact upon views of the lighthouse as well as extend urban influences into the open countryside.

The area to the south east, north of the disused railway line is screened from views by local topography and as a result has capacity for residential development to link with existing development providing that appropriate mitigation measures are employed i.e. appropriate layout and design (height and form) of buildings to respect existing character of the urban edge, screen planting, access arrangements that respect pedestrian use of the dismantled railway and the role it plays in linking the town with the countryside. The allotments to the east of this potential development area are an important local resource that contributes to landscape setting as well as providing a facility for the local community.

There is also landscape capacity for infill development within the large gardens on the cul-de-sac off Carrs Meadow.

Area 5 – West/ Northwest of Withernsea; Hull Road to Waxholme Road

The area is bound to the south by Hull Road, including several residential properties, to the east by industrial units and Withernsea High School, to the north by Northfield House and Waxholme Road and to the west by open agricultural land.

5.1 – Landscape Character

This area lies within both Landscape Character Area 19E, Brunswick to Withernsea Farmland and Landscape Character Area 20A, Withernsea to Spurn Coast.

The area is characterised by rectilinear field patterns that are defined by fragmented, gappy and severely clipped hedgerows. The large agricultural fields gently rise to the north where the area is bound by Waxholme Road. A large caravan park and Seathorne Holiday Village are located to the north east of this area and are characteristic features of Withernsea. (Refer to photo plate D.) The boundary to Seathorne Holiday Village is defined by mature hedgerows that have been allowed to develop into small trees and shelterbelt, serving to screen the temporary buildings from views from Hull Road. The field boundaries within this park are also still visible and have noticeably informed the layout of the complex.

The caravan site has little boundary vegetation and the caravans define the entrance to Withernsea. Some mature trees are situated in and around properties to the south of Waxholme Road which filter views of uncharacteristic buildings along this important gateway to Withernsea.

To the east of the holiday village, residential properties follow the linear form that is characteristic of coastal settlements. This characteristic is reciprocated by the surrounding village of Rimswell which is visible to the west.

Withernsea High School and its associated playing fields look out past the industrial estate adjacent to Hull Road which is only partially screened by shelterbelt planting. The large industrial buildings are clearly visible on the approach to Withernsea.

There are also important views of the lighthouse from this area which contribute to local distinctiveness (refer to photo plate C).

5.2 Assessment of Quality

Based upon the above description this area has been assessed as being of ordinary landscape quality.

The open fields and boundary vegetation are pleasant characteristics without being of significant merit. Withernsea High School currently affords views over this area to the surrounding landscape. The large scale industrial units clash with the scale and form of the residential properties in the area and also detract from the qualities of the tree avenue approach to Withernsea and the quality of the views of the lighthouse.

5.3 Assessment of Sensitivity and Capacity

Industrial and commercial use on the edge of settlements in rural areas can detrimentally impact on the setting of towns and villages. In the case of Withernsea this type of development is not a common feature on the urban edge. Infill development between the industrial estate and the residential properties would result in the loss of views northwards from Hull Road and would also potentially increase pressures to develop the land to the north of this location. The landscape does have some capacity to accept industrial development northwards of the existing industrial estate in this area without further impacting upon the setting of Withernsea. Any extension into the agricultural land should not be to the detriment of existing views from the school. Screen planting would also be required.

Change of use to residential or commercial development of the existing caravan site and holiday village would result in the encroachment of urban characteristics into the surrounding countryside. The holiday village may have some capacity to accept residential development in the area adjacent to properties along North Road as this area would be predominantly

screened from views in all directions. Expansion from the holiday village into the surrounding landscape would have a detrimental impact upon the setting of Withernsea due to the increased visual influence that would result for such development.

The local topography that runs from Stock Bridge to Foothead Garth restricts views of the area. This area has medium sensitivity to residential development providing that proposals incorporate appropriate mitigation measures.

Area 6 – North of Withernsea; Waxholme Road to East Coast

The area is bound to the south by Waxholme Road including residential properties, to the east by undeveloped coastline (policy ENV8 and ENV9 in the Holderness District Wide Local Plan), to the north by open agricultural land and to the west by a drainage ditch lined with fragmented hedgerow.

6.1 – Landscape Character

The area is located within Landscape Character Area 20B, Hornsea to Withernsea Coast.

The eastern boundary has the characteristic of undeveloped coastline that comprise of boulder clay cliffs that drop into the North Sea. A pathway runs along the top of the area known as North Cliff which links with the north promenade with the caravan park located in this area.

The rectilinear field patterns of the large agricultural fields are defined by fragmented hedgerows that have been allowed to develop in height and, as a result, have several groups of small trees within them. This is an open landscape with views of the North Sea.

Although gappy and fragmented this natural vegetation screens the caravan park that overlooks the North Sea and leads the eye to views of the lighthouse, although, as Withernsea is approached, these views become restricted by large, generally poor quality buildings that mark the gateway to the town. (Refer to photo plate D.)

6.2 Assessment of Quality

Based upon the above description the landscape quality for this area is assessed to be ordinary.

There are no distinctive landscape features that contribute to the character of the area other than the boulder clay cliffs that overlook the North Sea.

The approach to Withernsea along Waxholme Road enjoys views of the lighthouse; however, these views are limited upon entering this area where caravans and uncharacteristic buildings detract from the previously mentioned qualities.

6.3 Assessment of Sensitivity and Capacity

Change of use from caravan park to residential development would alter the character of the urban edge and reinforce the urban influences on the immediate rural landscape of the coast extending the linear nature of development in Withernsea. Any development may require coastal defence schemes to prevent erosion. This would impact on the intrinsic qualities of the coast as a natural feature.

Extension further south by the caravan/ holiday chalets would increase pressure upon the development of this attractive, natural feature.

This area therefore has a low capacity and high sensitivity for development.

Summary

The quality of the landscape setting for Withernsea has been assessed to be ordinary with few features that are of significant landscape value.

The generic characteristics of the Open Farmland and Coastal Farmland landscape character types result in a simple, regular landscape that has few detractors. The open gently undulating landscape provides for a pleasant setting which proves popular with visitors to Withernsea.

In terms of the natural elements, the cliffs that overlook the North Sea are perhaps the most interesting features with areas of undeveloped coastline stretching both north and south. It is important to restrict or prevent significant development of the areas adjacent to the cliffs in order to reduce requirements for coastal defence schemes that would compromise the aesthetic, ecological and geological integrity of these natural features.

Of the relatively few distinctive landscape features within and around Withernsea the lighthouse is perhaps the most important as it provides a recognisable landmark that contributes to the identity of the town. It is therefore vital to maintain and enhance its visual presence from key locations within the landscape setting. St Nicholas' church tower is also of considerable importance in views from the south western approach to Withernsea and again these key views require protection and enhancement.

Due to local topography and intermediate horizons created by natural and shelterbelt vegetation the rest of Withernsea blends into the surrounding landscape particularly when viewed from afar when the urban form appears as a small linear settlement, in keeping with the rural landscape character types that contribute to its setting.

The landscape setting of Withernsea has been assessed to have some capacity to accept new development with out detriment to landscape character particularly in locations to the west of the town. However, extension of development along the coastline would increase the impact

of the settlement on landscape character and areas to the north and south are assessed to have high sensitivity to detrimental landscape change as a result of new built development. Industrial and commercial development is limited at present and impacts on the on the setting of the town from the west. There is limited capacity to accept further small scale development of this type without cumulative impact on the landscape setting.

The large areas of caravans, holiday chalets and holiday villages are a dominant characteristic of Withernsea, particularly on the north and south approaches to the town. These areas require landscape enhancement to reinforce the generic characteristics of the area and emphasise the sense of arrival associated with the gateway to a town.

General Guidelines:

Where development is required to meet strategic objectives or local demand it is important to consider the height, scale and form of the buildings and integration of these buildings into the surrounding landscape context.

This is particularly true for housing developments where the requirement to meet housing density targets can often overshadow the respect of a development to its surroundings, resulting in significant impact upon the existing character.

New buildings should reflect those in the locality and follow local building styles. Abrupt edges to development with little or no vegetation should be discouraged. Where existing vegetation occurs it should be retained and enhanced to create natural, 'softer' boundaries that integrate the development into the surrounding landscape.

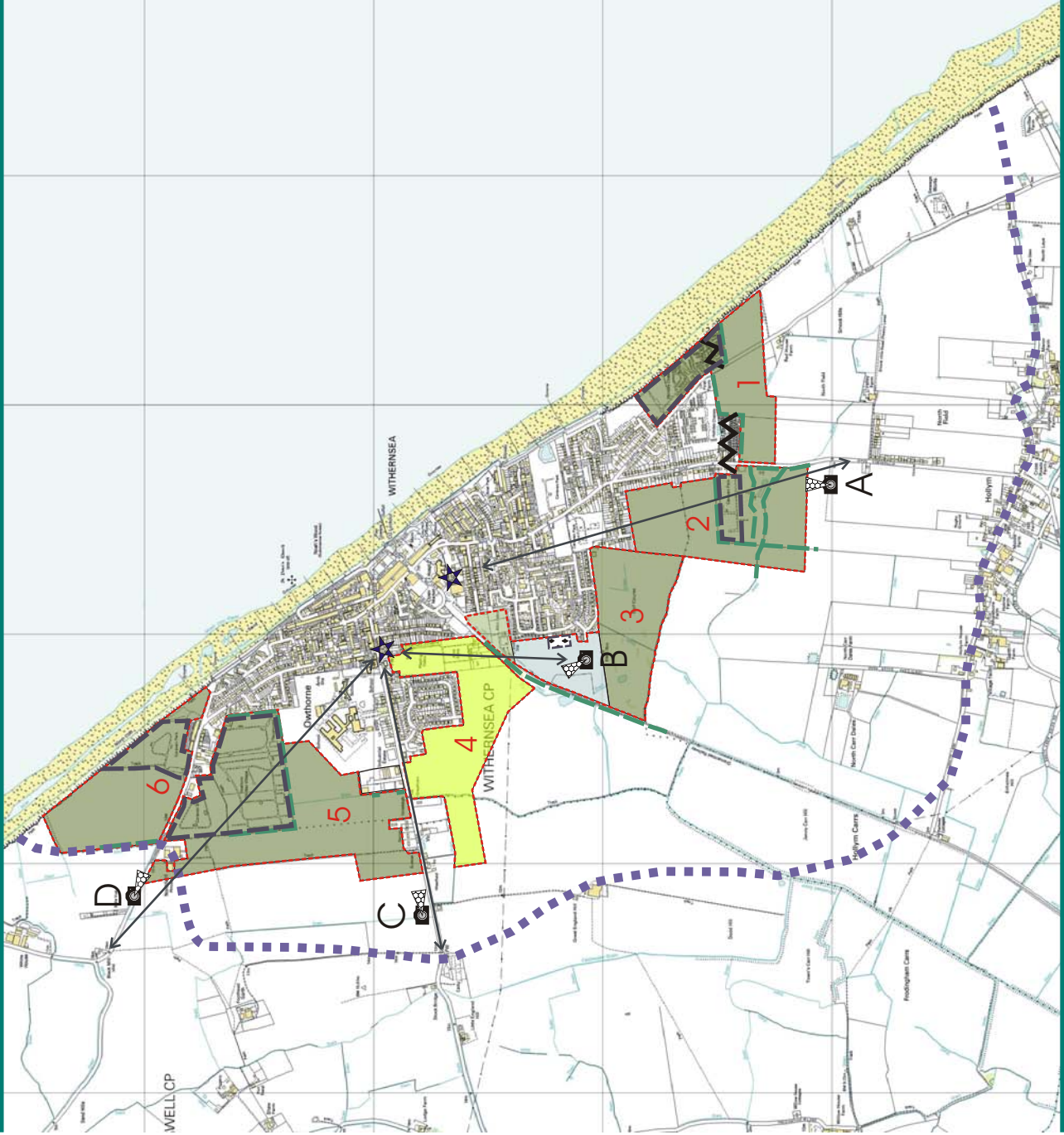
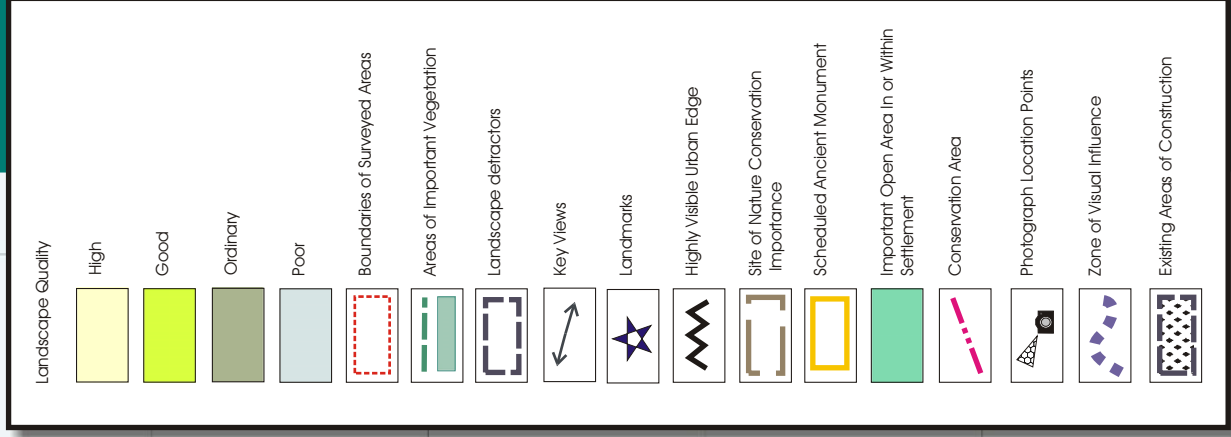
Development should take account of, retain and enhance existing landscape features and characteristics that contribute to character and quality such as hedgerows, trees, landmarks and views.

Views of landmark features such as the lighthouse should be respected. There are few recognised landmark features in Withernsea and those that are present are important to the distinctiveness.

Views of the sea are restricted due to landform, vegetation and built development. However, where there are views of the sea they are important to retain as they contribute to the character of the resort.

The landscape character of the setting of the town would be enhanced by infilling the fragmented hedgerows to reinforce the characteristic field pattern. The boundary to the golf course should be enhanced through the infilling and re-establishment of the hedgerows around its perimeter. In addition screen planting would help to improve the integration of the urban edge with the surrounding countryside.

WITHERNSEA LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS



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Plate A: North view from land to the west of Withernsea Road



Plate B: Northwest view from land to the west of Norman Avenue



Plate C: East view from Hull Road



Plate D: South view from Wawholme Road past Northfield House