

7. Kirriemuir Landscape Capacity Study

7.1 Landscape Assessment

Natural Heritage Zone (SNH 2002):
Eastern Lowlands

Regional Landscape Character Type (LUC 1997):
Broad Valley Lowland

Landscape Character Unit (LUC 1997):
Strathmore

7.1.1 Landscape Character Assessment

The landscape and visual analysis is shown on figure 7.1.

Kirriemuir is located within the Strathmore Landscape Character Unit of the Broad Valley Lowland Landscape Character Type of the Tayside Landscape Character Assessment. The fertile and favourable climate in Strathmore has led to a predominance of arable farming.

From a distance, Strathmore appears as a very broad, flat-bottomed valley enclosed by the Highland Foothills to the north; the rising sweep of the Sidlaws' north-facing dipslope to the south and the Low Moorland Hills to the east. Where estate planting survived, for example around Glamis, the strath landscape is rich and textured and particularly colourful during spring and autumn. Rectilinear fields are typically bounded by hedges and less typically drystone dykes. These were commonly associated with field boundary trees. Unfortunately many of these features have fallen into disrepair and/or been lost due to agricultural improvements since the 1950's. Where trees have been lost, the landscape appears open and expansive with rectangular fields punctuated by a scatter of large farmsteads.

The prosperity in farming in Strathmore tends to limit the occurrence of woodland in the landscape.

7.1.2 Landscape Setting

Kirriemuir lies in the centre of the Strathmore valley occupying the higher ground which functions as the watershed between southern Strathmore which drains south westwards to the River Tay via the River Isla and the majority of northern Strathmore which drains north eastwards via the River South Esk to the North Sea at Montrose. This topographical location has resulted in a noticeably more varied landform than typically found elsewhere in Strathmore. The landscape around Kirriemuir is dominated by Kirriemuir Hill (193 metres).

The varied topography around Kirriemuir has however led to more variation in field size and shape than would typically be found in Strathmore. Similarly pasture is also more common for the same reason.

To the west of Kirriemuir lies Kinnordy Loch and its associated wetlands, woodland, shrub and grasslands. This mosaic of semi-natural habitats provide a strong contrast to the more intensive landscapes of Strathmore. Kinnordy Loch is a site of special scientific interest and an RSPB nature reserve. The paths through this semi-natural area afford visitors the opportunity to experience landscapes with little evidence of man's influence. From the Loch of Kinnordy flows the Gairie Burn. The burn passes through Kirriemuir within a steep sided den. This together with public open space

being located within 'Kirriemuir Den' and the extensive woodland areas along the den give the Gairie Burn a landscape contribution substantially larger than its diminutive size.

To the south of Kirriemuir is the small Logie Estate, which includes more limited non-designated designed landscape features of woodlands and shelterbelts in the otherwise more open character of Strathmore.

Kirriemuir Hill with its formal and informal recreational areas, together with a network of paths, provides an important recreational resource. Despite having urban development on three sides and being readily accessible from the centre of Kirriemuir the hill has a strong impression of being in the countryside. This is because from the summit, development to the west, north-west and north is a significant distance away and largely masked by trees; to the north-east, east and south-east lies undeveloped countryside, to the south, development north of Brechin Road is largely masked by trees.

To the north west of Kirriemuir lies non-designated designed landscape of Kinnordy Estate. The policies of the estate include parkland; extensive policy woodlands; field bound trees and hedges. Dykes are a particular feature of this estate. As a consequence, the area to the north-west of Kirriemuir has in some areas a strongly enclosed and intimate character. A number of the woodlands on the estate are used for informal recreation. In particular, Caddam Wood, with its attractive mix of broadleaved and coniferous trees and paths is well used locally.

7.1.3 Settlement Form and Pattern

The remains of a crannog at the Loch of Kinnordy is an indication that the general area was likely to have been colonised possibly as early as the late Bronze Age.

In terms of the settlement of Kirriemuir, there is reference to the town's existence as early as the year 1201. Kirriemuir is believed to have initially grown from two centres, the Kirkton of Kirriemuir, at the centre of the modern day town and at Milltown of Kirriemuir a few hundred metres upstream on the Gairie Burn. The importance of the Gairie Burn to the development of the town is further emphasised with the later development of the jute factories towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The population of Kirriemuir and consequently the size of the town remained very small with only a population of 670 in 1748. Thereafter, the population has steadily increased towards its current population of over 6,000 at 2011 Census.

The villages of Northmuir and Southmuir were established in 1813 and 1826 respectively.

The settlement of Kirkton of Kirriemuir started on a shelf of relatively flat land above the den created by the Gairie Burn to the south and steeper southern slopes of Kirriemuir Hill to the north, in an area which remains the town centre. From the late eighteenth century the town initially expanded in all directions, extending up the southern slopes of Kirriemuir Hill and to amalgamate with the Milltown of Kirriemuir.

Southmuir to the south of the Kirriemuir Den was originally separate settlement from Kirriemuir but during the first half of the twentieth century, extensive Council housing south of Kirriemuir Den effectively amalgamated

Southmuir into Kirriemuir. Northmuir, to the north-west of Kirriemuir Hill has during the second half of the twentieth century expanded southwards around the western slopes of the hill to effectively amalgamate with Kirriemuir. Northmuir has also expanded eastwards north of Kirriemuir Hill across the relatively gentle northern slopes of the hill.

The result of all this settlement evolution is a somewhat unusual settlement pattern with the town centre south of the hill and the settlement wrapping around the western and northern flanks of the hill. Southmuir, now the southern part of Kirriemuir, is also separated by the steep sided Kirriemuir Den (see photo 7.3). Kirriemuir is characteristically built on a series of hills, plateaux and den sides only recently extending onto flat ground at Logie Business Park. As is typical of Angus settlements, buildings within the older parts of the settlement tend to have ridgelines aligned across the slope, with a corresponding grid iron street layout. Streets running up hills are typically arterial routes, with adjacent ridgelines stepping up the slopes. These patterns are particularly noteworthy around Roods and to the south-west of Lindsay Street.

7.2 Visual Assessment

Refer to figure 7.2 for key to photographs.

7.2.1 Views Out or Across Settlement

The rolling topography upon which Kirriemuir is located dictates that a large number of houses enjoy views over open countryside often for a considerable distance. However, by far the most important views out and across Kirriemuir are from Kirriemuir Hill recreation areas and cemetery. From the summit, panoramic views towards the Angus Glens and Forfar can be enjoyed. From the cemetery, views across the town centre are also possible (see figure 7.2 and photos 7.6 and 7.7).

7.2.3 Views of Settlement

Approach from North West via C27 (towards Pearsie)

Glimpses of Kirriemuir become possible after Causewayend is passed. The mature tree lines and woodlands of Kinnordy estate prevent more extensive views becoming possible. The urban area is entered abruptly at the junction with Cortachy Road. Kirriemuir presents a strong visual edge from this direction (see photo 7.10).

Approach from North via B955 (Golf Road)

Trees and woodlands at Caddam Wood and the golf course prevent views of Kirriemuir until the junction with Cortachy Road. The trees and woodlands along the eastern side of the road together with mature garden planting gives a strong visual edge to the settlement from this direction (see photo 7.11).

Approach from East via C31 (Shielhill Road)

Trees and woodlands at the golf course and Migvie Wood prevent views of Kirriemuir until it is entered progressively from the golf clubhouse onwards. The mature woodland gives Kirriemuir a strong visual edge from this direction (see photo 7.12).

Approach from East via U376 (East Hill Road)

Trees on the recreation areas of Kirriemuir Hill prevent views of Kirriemuir before the urban area is entered. This gives Kirriemuir a strong visual edge from this direction (see photo 7.13).

Approach from East via B957 (Brechin Road)

Broken views from Quarry Park are only possible after the junction at Little Garlowbank is passed. The housing at Quarry Park is partially hidden by favourable topography and trees. Housing to the south is almost entirely hidden by trees. Kirriemuir has a strong visual edge from this direction (see photo 7.14).

Approach from South-East via A926 (Forfar Road)

From Checkiefield, the centre of Kirriemuir is hidden behind a shoulder of high ground with only the top of the church steeple showing. To the east housing on the north side of Brechin Road is visible below Kirriemuir Hill but is substantially masked by mature trees. Views of Kirriemuir become more prominent as one passes Maryton. The organic appearance of the urban area gives moderate visual strength to the urban edge from this direction (see photos 7.15, 7.16 and 7.17).

Approach from South via A920 (Glamis Road)

Views of Kirriemuir become possible around 1km from the settlement. Whilst from a distance it appears to sit down into the landscape between areas of higher ground, as one approaches the urban edge appears sprawling and unconsolidated leading to a weak visual edge from this approach (see photo 7.18A and 7.18B).

Approach from South-West via A926 (towards Westmuir)

Views of the western edge of Kirriemuir are possible from close to Westmuir and intermittently as one approaches from Westmuir. The straight edges are consistent with the rectilinear field pattern in Strathmore, but there is limited trees along the boundary to integrate the urban area into the landscape. However, the intermittent nature of views, together with its distance from the viewer, gives this boundary moderate visual strength (see photo 7.19).

Approach from West via B951 (towards Glen Isla)

Views of Kirriemuir become possible west of Viewfield. Mature trees help to give this urban edge moderate visual strength (see photo 7.20).

7.3 Detailed Analysis of Directions of Growth

Refer to figure 7.3 for key to directions of growth analysed below.

7.3.1 South-West (between Core Path 253 and A926, towards Westmuir)

Much of the older part of Southmuir has been built on the south facing hill side south of Kirriemuir Den. South of Southmuir, the land becomes flat. This landform continues south-westwards, but with the gradient increasing near to the south of Herdhill. This escarpment is crossed by the A926 between Westmuir and Kirriemuir. Below the escarpment, gradients are relatively gentle. As is typical, visibility in the wider landscape increases with slope and elevation, therefore the visual sensitivity is medium closer to Herdhill, decreasing southwards. Part of this area is allocated within the Angus Local Plan Review (see photos 7.9 and 7.19).

There is a shelterbelt along the east side of core path 254 which extends northwards to the bottom of the escarpment. This shelterbelt is a line of each Sitka Spruce and Sycamore. Whilst the Spruce may not be a desirable edge to development, the Sycamore component could be managed to form a characteristic rectilinear tree line consistent with the farmed landscape of Strathmore. Similarly, there is a range of trees, small copses and shelterbelts around the houses and small paddocks to the north of North Mains of Logie. Both these together help provide a strong landscape structure on the gentler slopes below the escarpment; to the north of core path 253 and to the east of core path 254 (see photo 7.9).

Ribbon development along the A926 would, if development extends onto the escarpment, provide an existing bounding feature. However as indicated development on the escarpment would have higher visual sensitivity.

Both landscape character sensitivity and landscape values are considered to be medium, with landscape capacity considered to be high on the lower gently slopes reducing to medium on the escarpment slopes south of Herdhill.

If further land allocation is proposed in this direction, it would be considered desirable that the landscape structure be further strengthened by further woodland, tree and hedge planting particularly along the edges which abut open countryside, but also to break up the built mass on the escarpment. Within the area west of Sunnyside, there are lines of pine tree planted during the preparation of the Angus Local Plan Review. Whilst these tree lines create visual screening, lines of conifers are unlikely to be a suitable long-term edge to the urban area.

7.3.2 South-West (between A926, towards Westmuir and B951, towards Glen Isla)

The highest part of Southmuir is at its northern end next to Kirriemuir Den. To the west, the land steadily rises in elevation to a rounded summit near Balbrydie Cottages (referred to hereafter as Balbrydie hill). As with 7.3.1, existing development along the A926 provides an existing bounding feature to the south. Trees around The Poplars, Little Herdhill, and Viewfield together with the maturing millennium forest woodland around Martin Park provide a good level of landscape structure for development. Closer to Balbrydie Cottages the only tree cover are the lines of poplar trees which are unlikely to provide a landscape structure in the long-term. Consequently, visual sensitivity is considered to be low east of both The Poplars and Viewfield increasing to medium towards Balbrydie Cottages. With landscape character sensitivity and landscape value being medium, landscape capacity is considered to be medium reducing as tree cover reduces and elevation increases (see photo 7.20).

7.3.3 North-West (between B951, towards Glen Isla and B955, Golf Road)

The Kinnordy Estate non-designated designed landscape bounds the north-west edge of Kirriemuir. The strong landscape structure of woodlands, parkland trees, groups of trees, stone walls and beech hedges has led to a landscape of high landscape value and landscape character sensitivity. Whilst this structure may in some areas reduce visual sensitivity, it is nevertheless considered that landscape capacity for urban extension is low.

To the north of the B951 around Balbrydie Cottages there are scenic views towards Kinnordy Estate non-designated designed landscape and the Angus Glens beyond. Trees along the north side of the B951 and Slade Road, together with the limited built development in the upper part of Kirriemuir Den, give this area a character quite separate from the urban area. The area would only have limited connectivity with the built area of Kirriemuir.

Development extending onto the gentle north facing slopes of Balbrydie hill would be a notable change in the relationship of Kirriemuir with landform and would be perceptually detached from the remainder of the settlement. Core path 258 follows the Gairie Burn towards the Loch of Kinnordy. This area is valued for its scenic and natural appeal. Landscape value is considered to be high and landscape character sensitivity is medium. Landscape capacity for urban extension is considered to be low.

South-east of Caddam Wood is an area known as Woodside. This area is bounded on two sides by woodland; the trees of the golf course to the north-east; and the built area of Kirriemuir to the south-east. This area has a distinctive character locally with an appearance of smallholdings and scattered mixed development, with horse paddocks. Most of the older houses are aligned parallel to the edge of Caddam Wood (see photos 7.8 and 7.11). Whilst eclectic in appearance, it is well defined and forms a coherent landscape character. The edge of the urban area is well defined adjacent to the area. The distinctive and unusual character of this area leads to high landscape character sensitivity. It forms part of the setting of the recreationally important Caddam Wood and the paths leading to it. Visual containment leads to low visual sensitivity overall, but effects upon views from within Caddam Wood would increase this closer to the wood. Landscape capacity is considered to be medium to low.

7.3.4 East (east of B955, U376 and Hill of Kirriemuir and to the north of Gairie Burn)

To north-east of Kirriemuir, the urban area are Kirriemuir Golf Course and Migvie Wood (known locally as Kate's Wood). Both are strong bounding features and there is considered no landscape capacity for urban expansion in this direction (see photos 7.1 and 7.2). East of the Hill of Kirriemuir the farmland slopes away progressively steeply with panoramic views towards the Angus Glens. These views are highly scenic and important to the experience of the Hill. Again, there is considered no landscape capacity for urban expansion in this direction (see photo 7.13).

Similarly, the arable field close to the summit, north-west of the reservoir is highly visible from higher ground to the north-west (see photo 7.21). From this direction it appears as part of the summit of Kirriemuir Hill. It is important to the setting of Kirriemuir Hill; has high visual and landscape character sensitivity; and is therefore considered to have no capacity for urban expansion.

There is an undeveloped field to west of Strathmore Avenue and to the west of the cemetery. The lowest part of the field is around the same elevation as the existing houses on Strathmore Avenue. However, housing on Strathmore Avenue is often screened by mature trees on Brechin Road and on the rising ground between Brechin Road and Strathmore Avenue. Brechin Road gently slopes towards the town centre meaning that an extension of Strathmore Avenue westwards would be notably higher above Brechin Road than is currently the case with Strathmore Avenue. In addition, there are few trees south of the field on Brechin Road to screen or soften views of the field. Accordingly, most of the field is prominent in views particularly from the south, including Balmashanner Hill, Forfar and also more locally (see photos 7.4, 7.9 and 7.15). The field has high visual sensitivity.

Scenic views are available from the cemetery across Strathmore. Development on all but the lowest part of the field would be likely to obstruct such views therefore landscape value would be high for most of this field. Similarly, Kirriemuir being prominent above the Denmill plateau, when viewed from the south would alter the relationship of Kirriemuir with the wider landscape, thereby leading high landscape character sensitivity. There is considered to low landscape capacity for development on the lowest part of the field decreasing to none as elevation increases.

To the east of the town, south of Kirriemuir Hill, the hillside falls steeply towards the Gairie Burn. When approaching via the B957 (Brechin Road), Kirriemuir has a strong urban edge. The fields to both the north and to the south of Brechin Road are highly visible in the wider landscape (see photo 7.15). Similarly, views from core path 266 overlooking this area are highly scenic. The open agricultural land with strong landforms are part of the setting and special qualities of Kirriemuir Hill. A line of poplar trees provides partial screening to the land south of the B957 from some directions, but is unlikely to provide an adequate landscape structure in the longer-term. Visual sensitivity is medium on lower slopes increasing to high with increased elevation. Landscape character sensitivity and landscape value are both considered to be high. Accordingly, there is considered to be no landscape capacity for development in this direction.

7.3.5 South (south of Gairie Burn)

A rounded shoulder of higher ground extends through the northern part of Southmuir (including Webster Academy) and Pathhead Farm before terminating at Denmill. Around Pathhead and Denmill, there is a rounded plateau (hereafter referred to as the Denmill plateau) typically at an elevation of 30m above the village of Maryton to the south. As described in 7.2.4, the Denmill plateau substantially masks views of Kirriemuir when approaching from the south-west See photo 7.15 and 7.16). To the north-west of the Gairie Burn, the town centre is at a similar elevation to the Denmill plateau, but the Gairie Burn has cut a steep sided den between the town centre and the plateau. The former railway followed the den but terminated within the den close to the town centre.

The steep gradients within the den together with the burn and disused railway have led to a linear green network of trees, scrub and permanent pasture in an otherwise arable landscape. The den forms a strong bounding feature to the southern edge of the town, emphasised from Kirriemuir by the rising ground of the Denmill plateau (see photos 7.4 and 7.6).

From the Hill of Kirriemuir the plateau, rather than the den, bounds the town to the south. The higher ground on the plateau has high visual sensitivity progressively decreasing southwards towards Maryton. Development on the plateau would be highly prominent from most directions and would disproportionately give an impression of substantial urban expansion. The change in the relationship of the town with the surrounding landscape would lead to high landscape character sensitivity on the higher ground and on the eastern part of the lower ground. Core paths 270 and 271 cross the plateau and offer scenic views across Kirriemuir and Strathmore. On the lower ground towards the east (south of the veterinary clinic) would be adjacent to Southmuir and consequently would have lower visual and landscape character sensitivity (see photo 7.17). However, development extending eastward would risk further coalescence of Maryton with Kirriemuir.

Overall, landscape capacity is highest immediately south of the veterinary clinic (medium) but decreasing rapidly eastwards (low) and as elevation increases to the north (no capacity).

7.3.6 South (south of Core Path 253, Beechwood Place and A926 Forfar Road)

To the south of Kirriemuir, the land becomes flat with fields becoming larger and more regular in shape and at a lower elevation than most of Kirriemuir. The relatively flat and low elevation tends to lead to the likelihood that development would be less visible in views from the wider landscape. Kirriemuir is characteristically built on a series of hills, plateaux and den sides. Development extending onto flat ground in this direction would be a change in the relationship of the settlement to the landscape. In addition,

maintaining Maryton as a separate village close to Kirriemuir is desirable as well as preventing an impression of Kiriemuir wrapping around the west and south of the Denmill plateau (described in 7.3.5). The allocated business land at Logie Business Park partially erodes this separation, but the small arable field and other undeveloped land to the west of Maryton and the prominent and largely undeveloped Denmill plateau substantially help maintain perceptual separation between the settlements. Given all the above, landscape character sensitivity is considered to be high.

The woodland, shelterbelts and tree lines of the Logie Estate non-designated designed landscape provide a good level of visual containment when viewed from the north and screening from the south (see photos 7.6 and 7.7). However, west of the A928 and between the A928 and the designed landscape, the landscape is more open and highly visible (see photos 7.18A and 7.18B). Visual sensitivity is considered low where woodland provides screening and containment, but increases to medium or locally high elsewhere. Landscape value is considered medium. Overall, landscape capacity is considered medium decreasing to low closer to Maryton and west of the designed landscape. The low elevation, flat topography and existing landscape structure of the area to the south of Beechwood Place gives it greatest capacity for further business land.

If further land allocation is proposed in this direction, it would be considered desirable that the landscape structure be further strengthened by further woodland, tree and hedge planting. This would be particularly important west of the A928 and between the A928 and the designed landscape where visual sensitivity is considered highest (see photos 7.9, 7.18A and 7.18B).

7.4 Conclusion

Kirriemuir has an unusual settlement pattern with the town centre south of the hill and the settlement wrapping around the western and northern flanks of the hill. Southmuir, now the southern part of Kirriemuir, is also separated by the steep sided Kirriemuir Den. Kirriemuir is characteristically built on a series of hills, plateaux and den sides only recently extending onto flat ground at Logie Business Park.

The Hill of Kirriemuir; Kirriemuir Den and the Kinnordy Estate non-designated designed landscape to the north-west further substantially contribute to the sense of place and constrain opportunities for urban expansion.

The greatest capacity for urban expansion exists to the south-west of Kirriemuir, to the west of Strathmore Avenue, where gradients are relatively gentle. However there are a number directions where there are considered to be medium capacity for expansion and these include further north to the south-west of Kirriemuir and to the south of Beechwood Place. The low elevation, flat topography and existing landscape structure of the area to the south of Beechwood Place gives it greatest capacity for further business land.



7.1 Kirriemuir Golf Course



7.2 Caddam Wood



7.3 Kirriemuir Den



7.4 Kirriemuir from Core Path 270



7.5 Maryton & Southmuir from Core Path 270



7.6 Kirriemuir from Cemetery



7.7 View from JM Barrie's Grave



7.8 Woodside from B955 (Cortachy Road)



7.9 Kirriemuir from Core Path 253



7.10 Approach from North West via C27 (towards Pearsie)



7.11 Approach from North via B955 (Golf Road)



7.12 Approach from East via C31 (Shielhill Road)



7.13 Approach from East via U376 (East Hill Road)



7.14 Approach from East via B957 (Brehin Road)



7.15 Approach from South-East via A926 (at Checkiefield)



7.16 Approach from South-East via A926 (at Maryton)



7.17 Approach from South-East via A926 (Forfar Road)



7.18a Approach from South via A920 (Glamis Road)



7.18b Approach from South via A920 (Glamis Road)



7.19 Approach from South-West via A926 (towards Westmuir)



7.20 Approach from West via B951 (towards Glen Isla)



7.21 Kirriemuir from North at Meams

Figure 7.1 Kirriemuir Landscape and Visual Analysis

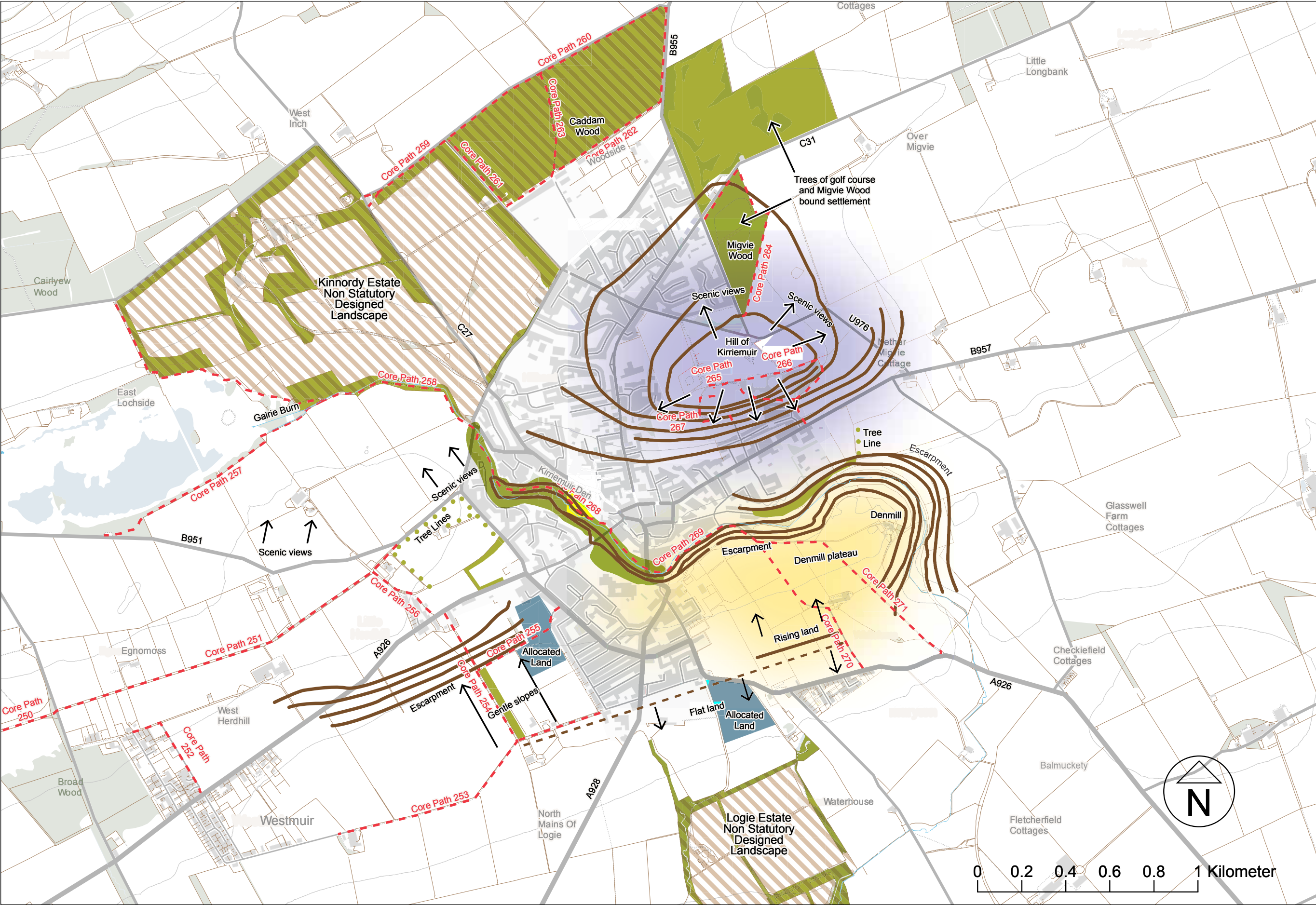


Figure 7.2 Kirriemuir Key to Photographs

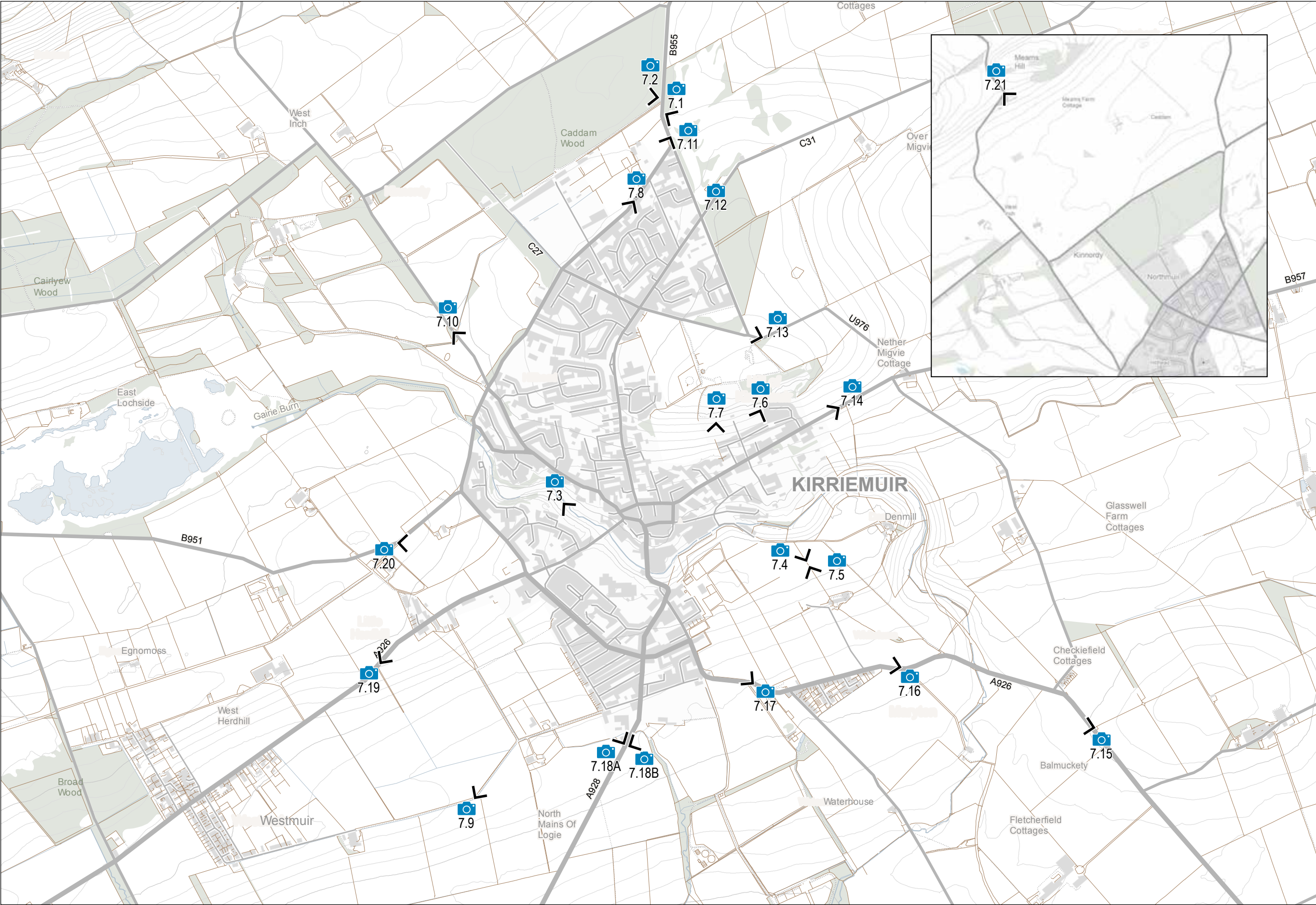


Figure 7.3 Kirriemuir Key to Analysis of Directions of Growth

