

12. Letham Landscape Capacity Study

12.1 Landscape Assessment

Natural Heritage Zone (SNH 2002):
Eastern Lowlands

Regional Landscape Character Type (LUC 1997):
Dipslope Farmland

Landscape Character Unit (LUC 1997):
South-East Angus Lowlands

12.1.1 Landscape Character Assessment

The landscape and visual analysis is shown on figure 12.1.

The Dipslope Farmland is characterised as an extensive area of land which generally slopes north-west to south-east. It is dominated by arable farming with low woodland cover except on large estates and along river corridors. Fields are typically medium to large and many field boundaries are absent. Those which remain are marked by hedges or post and wire fences.

12.1.2 Landscape Setting

Dunnichen Moss to the north-west of Letham has been claimed to be the site of the battle of Nechtansmere where the Picts defeated the Northumbrians in 685AD.

Letham is located on a small plateau to the north of the Vinny Water gently sloping west to east, around 90m to 100m AOD. To the north-west is Dunnichen Hill. The long ridge of the hill extends eastwards creating a shoulder of higher ground extending to the north of the village. From Dunnichen Moss along the northern edge of the village, a shallow ridge runs parallel to the more pronounced ridge to the north. To the west, the ground rises to a small hill at Crosston (125m AOD).

To the south and east, the den of the Vinny Water forms a dramatic change in topography. Woodland associated with the den reinforces the contribution of this feature in the landscape. A smaller wooded den connects with Vinny Den from the north to the east of Letham.

Idvies House built 1804 is located on the south side of Vinny Den. In addition to the woodland associated with the den, there has been extensive policy woodland and roundel planting on the Idvies estate.

12.1.3 Settlement Form and Pattern

Letham was planned in 1788 as a textile village. The village developed around a square in a loose grid pattern. The road network does not radiate from the centre as is often the case with settlements. Instead, the network of small countryside roads sometimes split as they approach the edge of settlement enclosing great wedges of land which broaden in width towards the village centre which is more of a grid layout. This has led to a loose grid with strong diagonals, particularly to the west and south-west leading to a combination of grid and triangular street layout pattern. This pattern was established by the nineteenth century.

The village did not grow progressively from the centre outwards. It started as a scattered development across most of the area which Letham now occupies, with concentrations around the road junctions. The infilling of the

areas has been slow, with built development progressively occurring initially along West Hemming Street. The infilling of most of the village did not occur until the end of the twentieth century. This has resulted in an unusual blend of old and new development throughout the village, with only the area around The Square and West Hemming Street having a greater number of older developments.

12.2 Visual Assessment

Refer to figure 12.2 for key to photographs.

12.2.1 Views Out or Across Settlement

Despite sitting low in the landscape, Letham has a strong relationship with the wider landscape. The den-side location together with paths and roads along most of the external boundaries has led to the wider landscape being an integral part of the character of the village. Views from Braehead Road across Vinny Den towards Idvies Hill are of particular high value, but there are many edge of settlement paths which enjoy attractive views across the wider landscape.

12.2.2 Views of Settlement

The lower ground location of Letham means that views across it are possible, particularly from the north and north-west. This enables mature trees within and close to the village to substantially soften views.

12.2.3 Approaches

Approach from North via C54 Auldbar Road

The Dunnichen to Balgavies road passes to the north of Letham, allowing access to Letham from either the west (U461) or north-east (C54). From the Dunnichen direction (U461), views of Letham become possible around East Mains of Dunnichen and continue until the junction with the C54. Much of the village is screened by a combination of trees and topography, or is viewed against a backdrop of trees. The shallow ridge of higher ground from Dunnichen Moss across the northern edge of the village substantially screens the built area on the lower ground to the south. From the junction with the C54 the eastern part of the village is screened behind trees and only a relatively small part of the village is visible to the left of Drummiermont Farm. Again it is partially screened by the shallow ridge and viewed against a backdrop of trees (see photo 12.1).

From the north-east views of Letham are not possible until the junction with the U461 due to topography. Letham is considered to have a strong visual edge when viewed from the north.

Approach from the North-East via U464

Views of Letham become possible at East Trumperton. The village is almost hidden amongst trees. Substantial screening is provided by trees east of the village and the few houses that are visible are viewed against a backdrop of trees within the village. The road slips into Vinny Den as it approaches the edge of the village increasing the drama of arrival. Letham is considered to have a strong visual edge when viewed from the north-east (see photo 12.2).

Approach from the East via U464

From the cross-roads with the C53, Letham is barely visible above a shoulder of higher ground south of the Vinny Den and that which is visible is again back-clothed against trees. As one enters Vinny Den, Letham is visible on the higher ground on the other side of the Den, but again is softened by foreground trees and shrubs as well as being viewed against trees behind. Letham is considered to have a strong visual edge when viewed from the east (see photo 12.3).

Approach from South-West via U464

Views of Letham become possible as one leaves Vinny Den. The Blair's Road part of the village is visible across the fields to the north and the trees and hedges give this part of the boundary a strong visual edge. Whilst Anvil Bank has limited boundary treatment, views are screened by trees and shrubs along the path between Dundee Road and Bowriefauld. The employment land on Dundee Street has a wooden fence and no landscaping to soften its appearance. This part of the boundary is considered to have a weak visual edge (see photo 12.4).

Approach from West via C54 West Hemming Street

The slight hill at Crosston restricts views of Letham when approaching from Dunnichen, but views towards the employment land at Dundee Street almost a kilometre distant start just before Crosston Cottage. Whilst insufficient, some trees close to the boundary help soften the development. As one approaches the West Hemming Street/ Blair's Road junction, the mature trees and hedges within the wedge enclosed by both roads provide a strong context for the village beyond.

Entering the village via either West Hemming Street or Blair's Road, the village has a relatively strong visual edge (see photo 12.5).

12.3 Detailed Analysis of Directions of Growth

Refer to Figure 12.3 for key to directions analysed below.

12.3.1 North (East of Drummiermont Farm)

The northern edge of Letham east of Auldbar Road (C54) is substantially screened by assorted trees and shrubs, with built development only occasionally visible. The northern edge is marked with an historic green lane which is part of the Letham Path Network and is also Core Path 109. The path extends east of the village along the edge of woodland to meet the unclassified road (U464). The path links into the village in several places and northwards to Whitefield. The landscape north of the path is attractive with the ground gently rising towards Whitefield at its eastern end. North of Whitefield, the gradient increases markedly as it approaches Dunnichen Hill's extended eastern shoulder, where the view shed is terminated by woodland. Field boundary trees add to the scenic qualities of the view (see photo 12.7 and 12.8).

Between Drummiermont and Whitefield, in contrast, the ground gently slopes northwards away from the village allowing more extensive views to the north and north-west. The urban edge at this point occupies the top of the smaller Dunnichen Moss shallow ridge.

West of Auldbar Road a vehicular track forms the urban boundary which is used for both access to houses and for recreation. West of Auldbar Road, the village is less screened by trees and shrubs, but the edge along the break of slope together with an extensive tree backdrop give this edge a settled appearance, deferring to the wider landscape.

The area east of Auldbar Road has high landscape value and this decreases slightly further west. Conversely, the area west of Auldbar Road is highly visible and therefore of high visual sensitivity. This progressively decreases towards the east of the northern boundary. Paths along the urban edge is a distinct characteristic of the village and this would be lost if development extended northwards.

Given the above, it is considered that there is no capacity for urban extension east of Auldbar Road and low capacity to the west.

12.3.2 North-West (between C54 West Hemming Street and Drummietermont Farm)

To the west of Letham is a shallow valley with a small burn draining Dunnichen Moss. West Hemming Street runs along the shallow ridge which extends east of Crosston. From the north and north-west, the urban edge is substantially softened by trees and hedges. Along the northside of the small burn is a grassy path which runs westwards past the edge of Dunnichen Moss towards the village of Dunnichen. It is also Core Path 107. Parallel to the path to the north is the Dunnichen Moss shallow ridge. The route is of high landscape value and the association Dunnichen Moss adds to its sensitivity.

There is however medium capacity for urban development south of the small burn below the ribbon development on the north side of West Hemming Street. The burn would form a natural stop point for development. There is also theoretical capacity for development north of the burn but south of the Dunnichen Moss shallow ridge, but this would significantly affect the character of Core Path 107. Capacity in this regard is therefore considered low. In relation to both sides of the burn, the north-south field boundaries west of Dreamfield House would be obvious stop lines.

12.3.4 South-West (between Blair’s Road and U464 Dundee Road)

The south-west of Letham is where the network of small countryside roads split as they approach the edge of settlement enclosing great wedges of land which broaden in width towards the village centre. The north is the West Hemming Street/ Blair’s Road fork and to the south is the Dundee Street/ Braehead Road fork. There has been late twentieth century infilling between the wedges at Anvil Bank and with a small area of employment land created west of Dundee Street. The older parts of the urban edge are visually strong with trees and hedges substantially softening the built area. However, more recent development typically has hard edges and limited landscaping. The development at Anvil Bank is inward facing, with screen fences abutting the wider landscape. Similarly, the employment land has no landscaping within the site and relies upon trees and shrubs beyond the boundaries to slightly soften the development. The strength of these parts of the urban edge is relatively low.

Between the two wedges is a grassy path to Bowriefauld (Core Path 110) (see photo 12.9). The path passes the edge of the employment land after which the landscape becomes open in character, with trees around Crosston and Bowriefauld providing landmarks to the west. To the south of the path, the woodland associated with Vinny Den provides some visual screening of the area to the south of the path. To the north of the path, the ground steadily rises towards West Hemming Street and its junction with Blair’s Road correspondingly increasing visual sensitivity. Capacity for urban

extension is considered to be high adjacent to Anvil Bank, decreasing as levels rise to the north and progressively westwards. The area west of the employment land also has capacity due to screening and back-dropping which would occur due to the woodland at Vinny Den. Again, capacity reduces progressively westwards.

Notwithstanding the above, the absence of structural landscaping to the west of this area would mean that it would be important that significant structural landscaping be incorporated within any development proposal. Additionally, paths and roads which form the edge of the development would perpetuate this important characteristic of Letham.

Connectivity with the village would be restricted to Blair’s Road and Dundee Street, with no link available through Anvil Bank.

12.3.5 South & South-East (towards Vinny Den)

Vinny Den is a dramatic feature in an otherwise gently undulating landscape. The Den marks the southern and south-eastern sides of the village. The unadopted Braehead Road follows a line close to the edge of the Den. Towards the Den, the topography becomes steep and often wooded. Towards the north and west of the road the ground is relatively flat with scattered urban development. Braehead Road enjoys dramatic views into and across the Den towards Idvies Hill. Views in these directions are of high value. Braehead Road is Core Path 111. There are flat areas of ground towards the Den side of the Braehead Road. Allowing development of these areas would obstruct important views to the wider landscape. Accordingly, it is considered that there is no capacity for urban extension on the Den side of Braehead Road.

However, there exists high capacity for urban extension on the undeveloped areas to the north and west of Braehead Road. Some of these areas are however well used for informal recreation and it would be desirable that a green network be incorporated into any development.

12.3.6 East (north of U464)

To the east of East Den Brae, the boundary of Letham is formed by a small Den with a small burn which runs south-eastwards to join the Vinny Water. The trees and woodland associated with this den together with the dramatic changes in topography substantially screen Letham from the east. Further north, woodland to the east of Drummietermont Feus screens Letham. There is considered no capacity for urban extension to the east.

12.4 Conclusion

Letham has a strong relationship with the wider landscape. Most of the urban boundaries have existed for more than 100 years, with development infilling without extending the village. (The exceptions to this are to the south-west). This has led to mature trees and hedges, which have helped soften and integrate the village into the wider landscape.

The greatest capacity for urban extension is to the south-west, on the lower ground where development would extend the village in a way which would be consistent with the historic relationship of the village to the wider landscape. Connectivity to the village would however be less than would be preferred.

Additionally, there is considered capacity for development to the north-west, south of the burn in the field around Dreamfield. Again, the lack of connectivity on the village side of the development is sub-optimal.



12.1 Approach from North via C54 (Auldbar Road)



12.2 Approach from North-East via U464



12.3 Approach from the East via U646



12.4 Approach from South-West via U464



12.5 Approach from West via C54 (West Hemming Street)



12.6 Approach from West via Blair's Road



12.7 Whitefield from Letham Path Network



12.8 Drummietermont from Letham Path Network



12.9 Letham Path Network

Figure 12.1 Letham Landscape and Visual Analysis

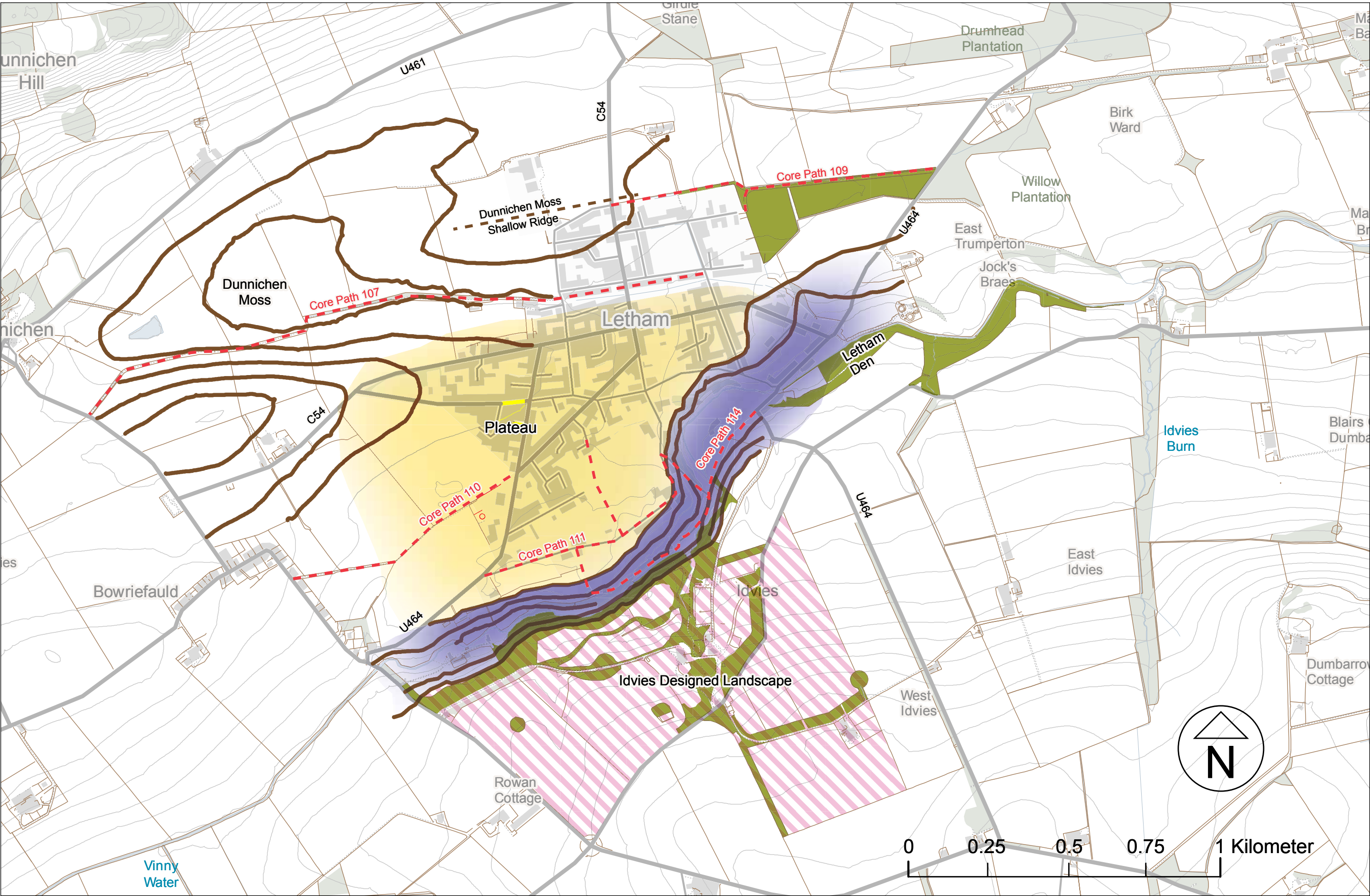


Figure 12.2 Letham Key to Photographs

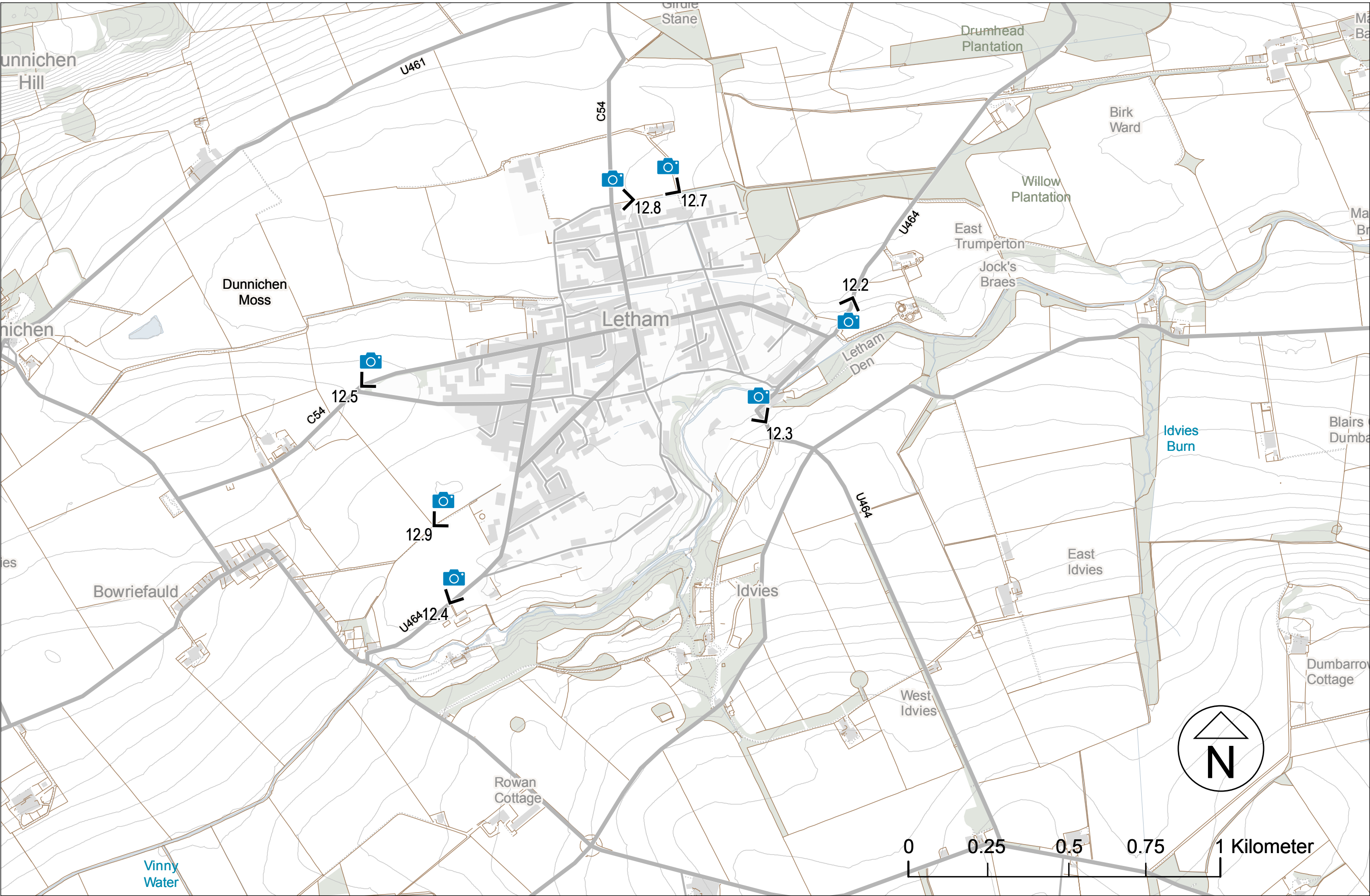


Figure 12.3 Letham Key to Analysis of Directions of Growth

