

# Ancient and Species Rich Hedgerows (ASH)

## Habitat Action Plan

Doncaster Local Biodiversity Action Plan  
January 2007



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Doncaster Biodiversity Action Partnership  
Doncaster Council, Environmental Planning, 2nd Floor, Danum House,  
St Sepulchre Gate, Doncaster, DN1 1UB.

Telephone: 01302 862896  
Email: [bio.diversity@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:bio.diversity@doncaster.gov.uk)

[www.doncaster.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/biodiversity)



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**Doncaster**  
**Biodiversity**  
**Action Partnership**

A graphic element of the Doncaster Biodiversity Action Partnership logo, consisting of a stylized red flower or leaf shape.

## 1. Description

1.1 From roots to treetops, hedgerows are a significant wildlife habitat. The tops of the hedgerow trees provide song posts for chirping male birds and food in the form of nectar and berries, whilst the centre of the hedgerow creates an excellent nesting habitat. Explore even further into the hedge bottoms to discover prime shelter and hibernation sites amongst the tangle of roots, and an often-diverse under-storey of plants that are a haven for invertebrates.

1.2 Hedgerows are the green veins of the countryside, providing a network of wildlife corridors over large stretches of the UK and are an important habitat for at least 47 existing species of conservation concern in the UK, including 13 globally threatened or rapidly declining species. They provide a sanctuary to over 600 plant species, 1500 varieties of insects, 65 varieties of birds and 20 mammal species in the UK<sup>1</sup> In the Doncaster Borough a rare species of moth, the **Scarce vapourer moth** (*Orgyia recens*), is critically reliant upon the correct management of hedgerows for its survival and the **White-letter hairstreak butterfly** (*Strymonia w-album*) has suffered significant declines as a result of the loss of its elm foodplants. A number of Red Data Book species of bird make use of hedgerow habitats, including the **house sparrow** (*Passer domesticus*), **tree sparrow** (*Passer montanus*), **linnet** (*Carduelis cannabina*), **yellow hammer** (*Emberiza citronella*), **bullfinch** (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), **song thrush** (*Turdus philomelos*), and **turtle dove** (*Streptopelia turtur*). Bullfinch and turtle dove particularly favour tall hedges. The **barn owl** (*Tyto alba*) often relies upon the hedgerow network in the countryside for regular hunting routes.

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<sup>1</sup> Selman, Dodd & Bayes, 1999, A Biodiversity Audit of Yorkshire & The Humber

1.3 The UK Biodiversity Steering Group defines ancient hedgerows as “those, which were in existence before the 1720-1840 Enclosure Acts”. Species rich hedgerows are those, which contain five or more native woody species per 30-metre length, or four or more in northern England<sup>2</sup>. However the importance of Hedgerows with fewer than five woody species per 30-metre length, but which have a rich basal flora, or are an important connection between otherwise isolated nature conservation sites, should not be overlooked. These hedgerows should be included in the action plan, however practical criteria for identification need to be agreed. By their nature and origin ancient hedgerows are often species rich, due to their composition of ‘useful’ timber and fruiting species and longevity in the landscape.

1.4 The distribution of hedgerow species across the borough may reveal an interesting insight about former landscapes. A significant presence of hazel, for example amongst Doncaster’s northern villages, suggests that some hedgerows are the remnants of larger woodlands, or were planted using saplings from local woods. Oliver Rackham<sup>3</sup> describes ancient hedgerows as “the ghosts of woods that have been grubbed out leaving their edges as field boundaries.” These are distinctly earlier than the purposefully planted hedges of the Great Enclosures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Whilst some purposeful hedge planting had begun to replace the woodland remnants and self-sown tree lines resulting from a lack of boundary management, the Enclosure Act was a historic turning point in terms of hedgerow origins. Oliver Rackham describes the predominantly monoculture hedgerow planting resulting from the Parliamentary Enclosures, as the time when “hedging became commercialised”.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.ukbap.org.uk](http://www.ukbap.org.uk) - originally published in: Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report – Volume II: Action Plans (December 1995, Tranche 1, Vol 2, p243)

<sup>3</sup> Rackham. O, 1995, The History of the Countryside, Pheonix Press.

## 2. National status

2.1 In 1993 the estimate of remaining hedgerows in the UK was 536,000 km. Between 1984 and 1990 the mean loss of hedgerow length in the UK was estimated at 24%. Of those 42% were thought to have been species rich or ancient. The UKBAP<sup>4</sup> Habitat Action Plan estimates the total remaining UK resource of ancient and / or species rich hedges is approximately 190,000 km.

2.2 The results of [Countryside Survey 2000](#)<sup>5</sup> showed that nationally, by 1998 the decline in length of hedges reported for the 1980s in Great Britain had been halted. Comparison with the 1984-90 period showed that rates of hedge planting were similar but rates of removal had fallen markedly. These changes were thought to have coincided with the general downturn in the agricultural economy during the mid-1990s and the increased incentives, advice and regulation over that period.

2.3 Since the late 1980s, Government operated agri-environment schemes ([Environmentally Sensitive Areas](#) and [Countryside Stewardship](#)), have included payments to land managers for the planting, restoration and/or management of hedgerows. The new challenge for Natural England is to deliver the above measures to deliver biodiversity and landscape conservation. The various schemes; Entry Level Stewardship (ELS), Organic Entry Level Stewardship (Organic ELS) and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS), should offer greater flexibility and ease of uptake. The entry-level options enable engagement with a wider range of people who own, farm and manage land, whilst higher-level options have further and more targeted benefits for wildlife. In recent years greater awareness has developed amongst both farmers and the wider community of the importance of hedgerows and the need to conserve them.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.ukbap.org.uk](http://www.ukbap.org.uk) - originally published in: Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report – Volume II: Action Plans (December 1995, Tranche 1, Vol 2, p243)

<sup>5</sup> [www.cs2000.org.uk/](http://www.cs2000.org.uk/)

2.4 The second major threat both nationally and locally is loss of hedgerows as a result of development. These traditional landscape features are often lost when agricultural land is allocated for residential or industrial use. It is essential that new development schemes retain and sensitively manage existing hedgerow and green lane networks, to retain wildlife corridors through the site.

### 3. Local status

3.1 A comprehensive study has recently been undertaken into the recorded history of Doncaster Borough's hedgerow resource. This exercise has greatly enhanced our knowledge of the Borough's hedgerows and resulted in the collation and consolidation of available information into a hedgerow database. The information contained within the database was sourced from analysis of Aerial photography, Tithe maps, Enclosure maps and other sources such as historical records. The database records 7 categories of hedgerow within Doncaster Borough:

<b>Type</b>	<b>% of total in borough</b>	<b>Length in borough</b>
Light hedge (low/gappy/thin)	16.28%	372.8km
Solid hedgerows	25.03%	573.2km
Tall shrub hedgerows	16.15%	369.8km
Tree studded hedgerows	9.11%	208.6km
Mostly trees	26.98%	617.8km
Natural tree line	4.51%	103.2km
Tree screen	1.93%	44.2km

3.2 In Doncaster Borough many of the ancient lanes and Greenways are lined by important hedgerows, including Apy Hill, Hindley and Stoney Lane Hedgerows (SSI 4.17a) and Friars Lane (Hedgerows) (SSI 4.17b), in Tickhill, which are designated as Sites of Scientific Interest (SSIs). Elsewhere the green lanes of Fishlake and Sykehouse also run with old hedgerows alongside them. Long established hedgerows, such as those along ancient lanes, are a vital biodiversity resource in their own right and also serve an important wildlife corridor function, particularly those linking ancient or remnant woodland sites together, for example those which lead into Edlington Wood a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

3.3 Some hedgerow species have particular affinities with the individual landscape character areas of the borough<sup>6</sup>. Some of the Borough's most important hedgerows occur within the band of Southern Magnesian Limestone, where fragmented remnants of species rich hedgerows provide clues to historic field patterns. Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), wild cherry (*Prunus avium*) and **purging buckthorn** (*Rhamnus cathartica*), the foodplant of the Brimstone butterfly (*Gonepteryx rhamni*), are typically limestone species and it is on the limestone that sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*) is likely to be spotted if carefully looked for. The clay and carrland areas run down the middle of the borough from north to south and hedges will appear with guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*) and crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*). The largest proportion of willow (*Salix spp*) is concentrated in the Borough's northern villages. The hedgerow species of Doncaster's sandstone tend to be more ubiquitous, but heath specialists such as gorse (*Ulex spp*) and broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) will be noticed amongst the hedgerows of the eastern sandy areas.

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<sup>6</sup> DMBC, December 2006, Doncaster Landscape Character Assessment and Capacity Study.

#### 4. Legal status

4.1 The [Hedgerows Regulations](#), made under section 97 of the Environment Act 1995, were introduced in England and Wales on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1997 in order to protect this characteristic element of the countryside. The Regulations enable Local Planning Authorities in England and Wales to protect ‘Important’ hedgerows in the countryside by use of a notification system. Subject to the location and length of a hedgerow, it may be deemed ‘Important’ under the numerous provisions contained within the Regulations. These provisions fall within two broad categories of ‘Archaeology and History’ and ‘Wildlife and Landscape’ and form Schedule 1, Part 2 of the Regulations.

4.2 The Regulations prevent the removal of most countryside hedgerows without first submitting a hedgerow removal notice to the Local Planning Authority. The Regulations also set out criteria that must be used by the Local Planning Authority in determining which hedgerows are important. The Local Planning Authorities may order the retention of important hedgerows. Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council’s Environmental Planning Team has been actively involved with administrating the Hedgerow Regulations. It is thought that the very first Hedgerow Retention Notice, following the enactment of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, was served on a hedge in the Doncaster Borough.

4.3 A leaflet - The Hedgerows Regulations: Your Question Answered - provides a brief summary of the law, relating to hedgerows. More detailed guidance is in The Hedgerows Regulations 1997: A Guide to the Law and good practice, available from Defra.

4.4 Article 10 of the EC Habitats Directive requires member states to encourage the management of hedges (and other linear features) in their land use planning and development policies and, in particular, with a view to improving the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network. This is reflected in The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations 1994, which recognises that such linear features are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. Planning Policy Statement 9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation further encourages the development of policies for the management of hedgerows.

## 5. Links to associated habitats & species

5.1 Hedgerows are the most important linking feature between all other habitat types in the Borough. The Ancient and Species Rich Hedgerows Habitat Action Plan is linked to the following Habitat Action Plans:

- Lowland Heathy Oak Woodland (LHW)
- Limestone Woodland (LW)
- Wet Woodland (WW)
- Neutral and Wet Grassland (NWG)
- Lowland Heathland / Acid Grassland Mosaic (HAG)
- Limestone Grassland (LG)
- Marshes and Swamps, Lakes and Ponds, Ditches and Drains (MLD)
- Arable Field Margins (AFM)
- Greenways (GW)
- Urban Greenspace (UG)
- Parkland, Wood Pasture and Veteran Trees (PWV)

5.2 **'A Species Audit of Doncaster Borough'** has been produced as part of the Doncaster Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Species highlighted in bold within the Habitat Action Plans are identified within Doncaster's Species Audit and are conservation priorities. The Audit identifies **78** species associated with Ancient and Species Rich Hedgerows.

## **6. Current factors causing loss or decline**

6.1 Removal for agriculture or development.

6.2 Road widening and road junction improvements.

6.3 Damage, isolation and eventual degradation and removal as a result of development.

6.4 Use of old hedges as boundaries in new development, nullifying the Hedgerow Regulations, as hedgerows defining a domestic cartilage are explicitly excluded from the scope of the Hedgerow Regulations. Such hedges are often quickly replaced by fences.

6.5 Disregard for hedgerow and green lane network patterns in major developments in rural areas.

6.6 Neglect/lack of management (cutting or laying).

6.7 Frequent and/or badly timed cutting (leading to poor habitats, gap development and non-native species encroachment).

6.8 Loss through felling or senescence – with no replacement.

6.9 The use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers adjacent to the base of the hedgerow leading to nutrient enrichment and a decrease in ground flora diversity.

6.10 Increased stocking rates for animals, especially sheep.

6.11 Dutch elm disease and reactive management to its occurrence in hedges.

## 7. Current local action

### Research & Monitoring

7.1 The Local Authorities recent hedgerow research study provides a chronology of how the existing hedgerow landscape was formed; which can assist in identifying breakages in these historic linear features. This baseline information will be of benefit when considering replanting projects, the aim of which will be to provide hedgerow-hedgerow / hedgerow-woodland linkages in order to restore sections of the 'wildlife corridor' network that has become eroded over the years. The surveying and recording of hedgerows in the various geographically distinct regions of Doncaster Borough helps us to better understand the nature and history of our living landscape and, importantly, how these features can be protected and enhanced. In light of the challenges posed by large scale developments such as distribution and warehousing facilities, relating to Doncaster's strategic location as a transport hub, the research helps to identify features of conservation priority and inform creatively designed proposals with appropriate mitigation and net environmental gain.

7.2 Funding from the Big Lottery's Transforming Your Space initiative has enabled the further development of the Biological Records Centre at Doncaster Museum. The biological data collected as part of the project, particularly botanical information for local sites, species and habitats has enhanced the modern dataset. Historical biological information has also been transferred to the database.

7.3 The borough has a diverse series of Sites of Scientific Interest (SSIs), illustrating the variety of species and habitats that are represented on sites throughout Doncaster. All SSIs were surveyed in 1996/1997 and again in 2004/2005, when additional candidate sites were also identified. Some of the most important hedgerows in the Borough are designated as Sites of Scientific Interest, such as Wood Lane Hedgerows and Verges (SSI 2.4) and Shaw Lane Hedgerows (SSI 2.33b).

7.4 The Doncaster Naturalists' Society holds regular field meetings and has carried out detailed surveys of many of the Borough's hedgerows. The Society routinely submit biological records to the Local Record Centre at Doncaster Museum.

7.5 DMBC has recently commissioned a TPO review, to update and inform the protection of trees and woodland of local importance.

### **Safeguarding & Management**

7.6 Funding from the Big Lottery's Transforming Your Space initiative has enabled the development of a range of biodiversity initiatives, including the resurvey of the Borough's SSI's, research projects, production of site management plans and the provision of resources (equipment, educational, activity and promotional materials) to help raise awareness and encourage participation in the management and enhancement of local biodiversity. A number of management plans have also been produced.

### **Communications & Publicity**

7.7 The Local Authority's Countryside Interpretation Team and Countryside Rangers run practical demonstration days for the public and these sometimes include traditional hedgerow management techniques.

### **Habitat Creation & Restoration**

7.8 A hedgerow initiative was launched by the Doncaster Biodiversity Action Partnership, which involved liaison with all of the parishes in the Doncaster Borough to raise awareness of the importance of hedgerows and encourage the submission of proposals for planting schemes. Funding awarded to DMBC through the ODPM's Liveability Project enabled the planting of over 5000 metres of hedge line on prioritised sites.

**Funding & Resources**

7.9 The new Environmental Stewardship Scheme provides funding for maintenance of field boundary features such as hedges, and also for the sensitive management of field margins for wildlife. All nature conservation bodies are promoting and encouraging farmers and landowners to join the scheme.

**Advisory**

7.10 DMBC has introduced a programme of continuous professional development based on planning related issues, including 'Protected species' and 'Trees and Hedgerows'. The Environmental Planning Team has produced a suite of Supplementary Planning Documents, providing guidance on: Planning for Trees and Hedgerows, Nature, Sustainable Construction and Landscape Planning on Development Sites in Doncaster.

## 8. Objectives, targets & proposed actions

Please refer also to the Generic Actions in the LBAP Introduction & Overview document

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Costs	Category
1) To ensure the protection and maintenance of existing ancient and/or species rich hedgerows.	Continuous.	1.1	<p>Prevent depletion of ancient and/or species rich hedgerows resulting from development and/ or the delivery of statutory functions by:</p> <p>1) Having regard to the protection and enhancement of habitats when considering the allocation of sites, in line with the approach set out in PPS9 and the priorities set out in the LBAP.</p> <p>2) Having regard to the assessment, retention and enhancement of habitat types when formulating and making Development Control Policies and decisions, in line with the approach set out in PPS9 and the priorities set out in the LBAP.</p>	DMBC, Natural England (NE)	Staff costs	Advisory/ Safeguarding & Management

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Costs	Category
			<p>3) Providing advice to Development Control and Developers on appropriate types of survey i.e. ecological and/or hydrological, the interpretation of survey results and methods of incorporating habitat retention and enhancement into development proposals (for both designated sites and non-designated features of biodiversity value, as identified in the LBAP.</p> <p>4) Having regard to the priorities set out in the BAP in the interpretation of UDP/LDF policies (and any supporting SPGs/SPDs).</p> <p>5) Providing technical advice on the severity, implications and nature of suspected breaches in planning control (either conditions or unauthorised development).</p>			

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Costs	Category
			<p>6) Awarding appropriate site protection through designation, based upon routine environmental monitoring and assessment.</p> <p>7) Ensuring that all Partners and relevant landowners, service providers and operational contractors are informed of the existence and importance of ancient and/or species rich hedgerows (both designated and non-designated sites).</p>			
	Continuous.	1.2	Continue to collect and maintain up-to-date, standardised, biological data using the Museum's Local Record Centre. Promote and initiate appropriate management, monitoring and the exchange of environmental data, to ensure the maximum level of site protection is awarded and habitat condition is maintained.	DMBC, NE, Doncaster Naturalists' Society (DNS), Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT)	Staff costs and volunteer time. Other costs to be evaluated	Future Research & Monitoring

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Costs	Category
	By 2008.	1.3	Expand DMBC's Environmental Planning protected species protocol to include LBAP habitats and species.	DMBC	Staff costs	Advisory
	No further loss of any ancient hedgerows in the Borough.  Species rich hedges are a 5-point target in both the limestone and Humberhead Levels Joint Character Areas, the classification, on which HLS is based.	1.4	Endorse national hedgerow conservation targets and promote hedge planting through Environmental Stewardship.	DMBC, NE, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), YWT	Staff costs and volunteer time	Advisory/ Communications & Publicity
	Continuous.	1.5	Discourage the inappropriate use of old hedges as boundaries in new development proposals.	DMBC	Staff costs	Safeguarding & Management
	Continuous.	1.6	Devise a protocol for the management of hedgerows with Dutch elm disease, based upon their retention as low clipped hedges, to control further spread. Review in light of research and best practice.	DMBC	Staff costs	Safeguarding & Management/ Policy & Legislation

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Costs	Category
	40km of key ancient hedges identified for inclusion in survey, from hedgerow research project.	1.7	Commission a botanical survey of key ancient hedges and their associated ground flora.	DMBC, DNS, NE	£45,000	Future Research & Monitoring
2) To restore degraded ancient and/or species rich hedgerows and ensure the appropriate management of existing hedgerows.	3 new species rich hedgerow sites with improved site management, by 2009.	2.1	Achieve favourable management of ancient and species rich hedgerows by developing appropriate site management techniques to maintain and improve their biodiversity value.	DMBC, YWT	£805	Safeguarding & Management
	By 2009.	2.2	Identify locations for hedgerow planting where original hedge lines are gappy or completely lost.	DMBC	Staff costs and volunteer time	Future Research & Monitoring/ Habitat Creation & Restoration
	5 sites by 2010.	2.3	Identify all ancient and species rich hedgerow sites where Priority Species are present and implement appropriate specialist management schemes to benefit these species.	DMBC, NE, Private landowners	To be evaluated	Species Management & Protection
3) To create 6,500 metres of species rich	By 2009.	3.1	Initiate a hedgerow replacement scheme for selected sites across the	DMBC	To be evaluated	Habitat Creation & Restoration

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Costs	Category
hedgerow resource in the Borough, linked to existing hedge lines, woodland, copses or scrub.			Borough, (including those identified at 2.2).			
	700m of new hedgerow created on development sites by 2008, and a further 700m by 2010.	3.2	Request hedgerow planting with native species of local provenance on development sites where old boundaries have been previously lost or where new boundary lines are appropriate.	DMBC	Staff costs, developer costs	Advisory/ Habitat Creation & Restoration
	By 2009.	3.3	Update the DMBC local character trees and hedgerow species mix leaflet.	DMBC	£1512	Advisory
	Continuous	3.6	Research the establishment and running costs and operational requirements of a native seed project with existing nurseries to grow on seed gathered from local hedgerows. Pursue opportunities to implement feasible initiatives.	DMBC, YWT, DNS, NE, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV)	To be evaluated	Habitat Creation & Restoration / Species Management & Protection
4) Raise public awareness of the	Continuous.	4.1	Provide information on the importance of hedgerows, practical advice on	DMBC, NE, DNS, FWAG	£1500	Advisory

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Partners</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Category</b>
importance and special characteristics of ancient and/or species rich hedgerows.			hedgerow planting and funding opportunities to landowners (including ELS and HLS).			
	By 2009.	4.2	Provide an advice sheet for DMBC's Highways Dept to send out to Utility companies when approving work in the highway and for IDBs to send out to landowners benefiting from the Blackshaw Clough drainage works.	DMBC, IDBs	£3000	Advisory

## **9. Indicative Habitat distribution & Opportunities map**

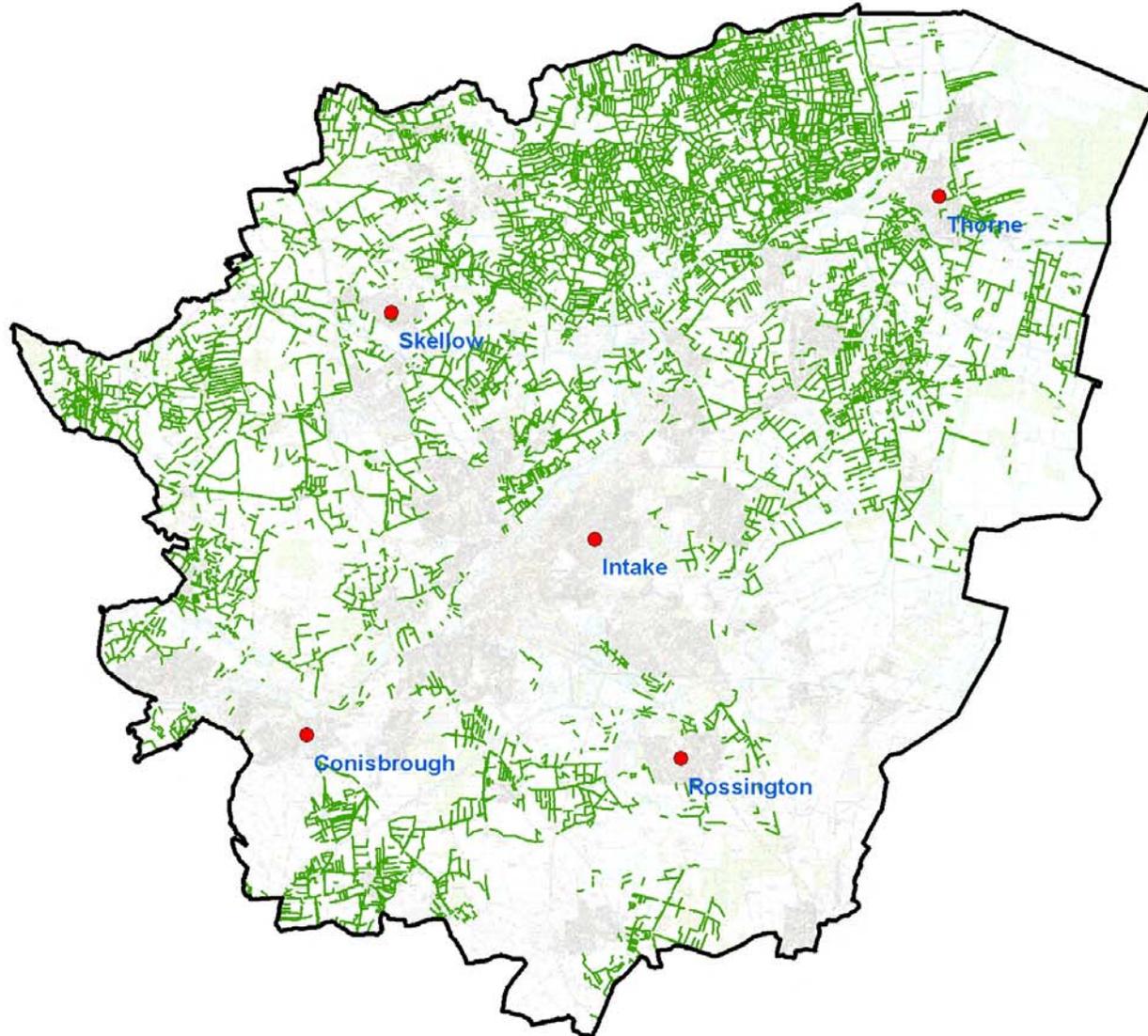
The map for Ancient and Species Rich Hedgerows has been compiled using hedgerow data gathered during the 2005 Hedgerow Research project. This is a digitised record of the hedgerows in the Borough based on Aerial Photography. The hedgerows were identified and classified by type; and information was then gathered for each of the hedgerows to give it a historic context. The map shows hedgerows currently in existence (all types are shown), which are known to have existed pre 1845.

## Ancient and Species Rich Hedgerow

DATE: January 2007  
 SCALE: 1:160,000  
 DRAWING NO: HAP/1/ASH

**LEGEND**

-  Doncaster Borough Boundary
-  Village
-  Pre 1845 Hedgerows



Environmental Planning  
 Spatial Planning and Economic Development  
 Directorate of Development  
 2nd Floor  
 Danum House  
 St Sepulchre Gate  
 Doncaster  
 DN1 1UB

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