



Hedgerow in bloom © Emma Aldous

## Guide to SBIS hedgerow maps

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## Introduction

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Suffolk's hedges are deeply significant monuments of land use and farming practice.

Rich in conservation value, ancient hedgerows support a vast diversity of plants and animals. As hedgerows age, the number of species they contain increases. Experts estimate that hedgerows with over five woody species per 30m length likely existed before 1720. *The Suffolk Hedgerow Survey 1998–2012* found that 53% of landscape hedges surveyed contained eight or more woody species, and another 31% contained five to seven woody species, suggesting that 84% of Suffolk's hedges are over three centuries old.

Hedgerows have multi-functional benefits and are one of the most significant sources of natural capital, providing oxygen, acting as carbon sinks, combating climate change, reducing flood risk, slowing rainwater run-off, and providing food. They also form a crucial refuge for native species.

However, due to development and agricultural intensification, nearly half of Britain's hedgerows have been lost since the 1940s. And recent years have seen a new threat – a lack of maintenance, resulting in gappy hedges or overgrown lines of trees.

Understanding the extent and quality of existing hedgerows plays a vital part in helping to protect them. Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS) has harnessed cutting-edge technology to produce comprehensive maps with details and analysis of hedgerow composition. They will form a valuable addition to the toolkit of those working to protect isolated hedgerows or involved in planting and restoring these vulnerable habitats.

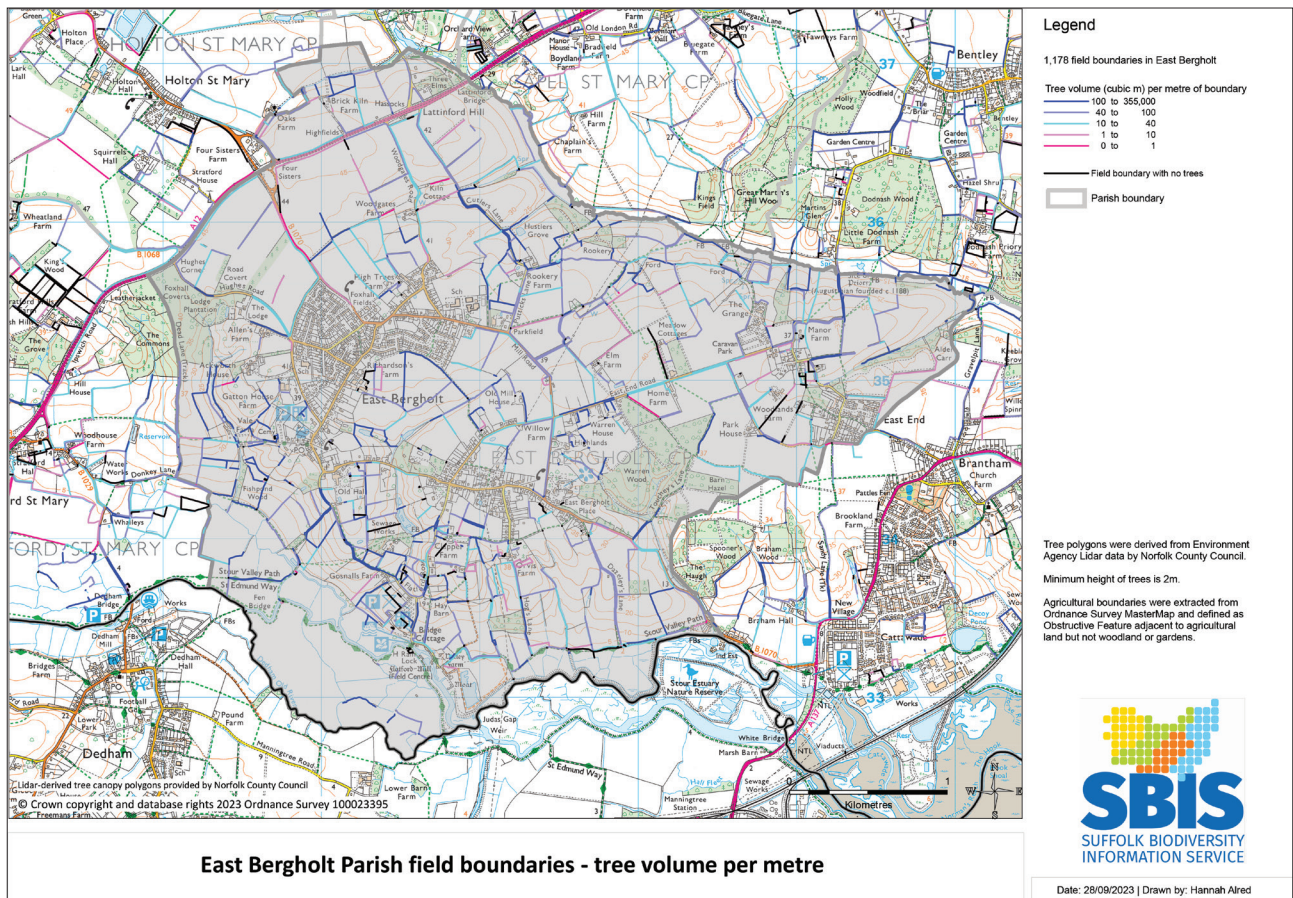


The maps and GIS data can be found on the SBIS website hedgerow portal, where you can also find the *Suffolk Hedgerows Survey*, and selected links to articles and resources ([www.suffolkbis.org.uk/hedgerow](http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/hedgerow)). A selection of parish maps are already available to download, if your parish isn't online yet please email [Hannah.Alred@Suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Hannah.Alred@Suffolk.gov.uk) to request it. Samples of the parish maps and a guide to their content are shown on the following pages.



Whitethroat in the hedge© Ben Heather

# Tree volume per metre

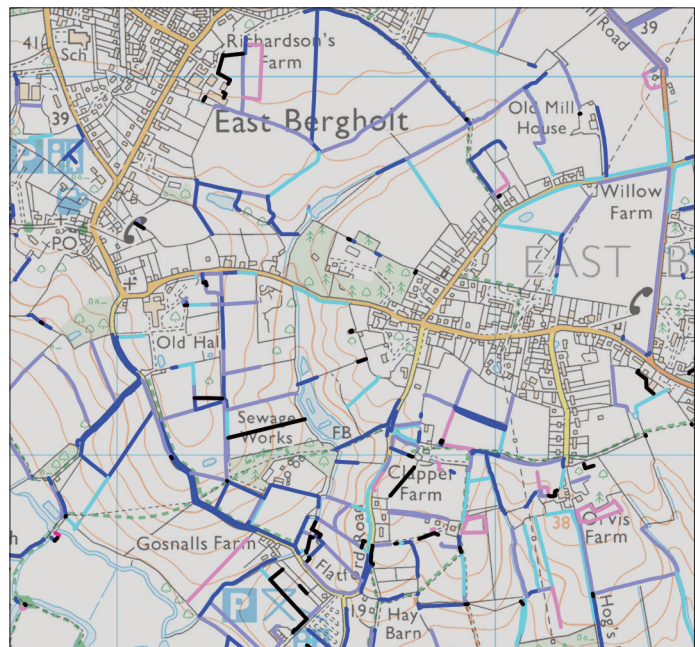


This map shows the density of individual hedges; this is calculated by tree volume ( $m^3$ ) divided by hedge length (m). Higher values indicate a dense area of hedge.

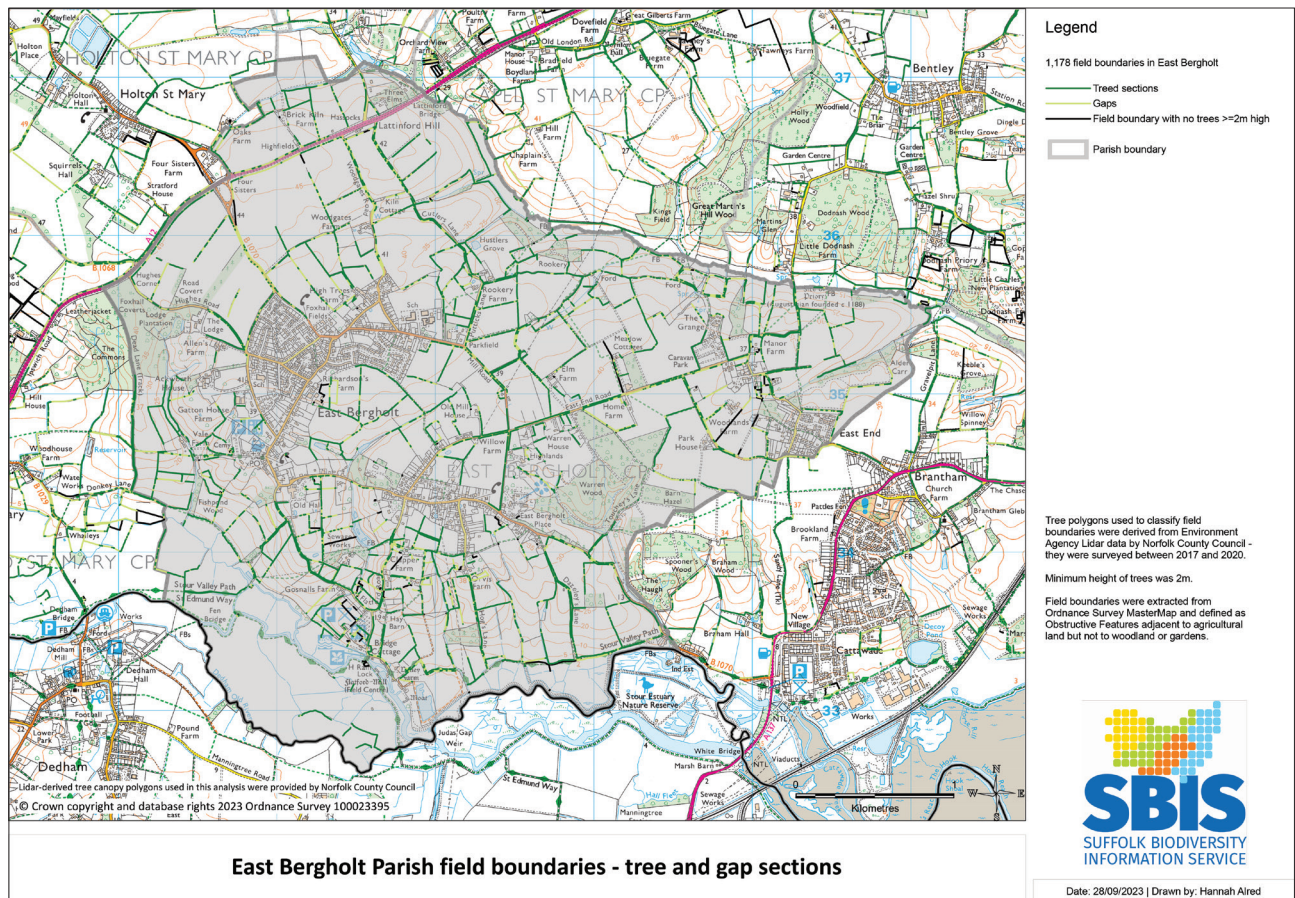
## Management tips

A dense hedge provides more physical habitat and niches for wildlife. An A-shaped hedge – thick at the bottom and narrower at the top – is ideal.

If you are concerned that your hedge lacks structural integrity, you might want to consider rejuvenating it by planting up any gaps, coppicing or hedge laying. This will encourage new growth at the base and increase foliage. Both old and young hedges (7-10 years) can be laid. However, further management might be needed if the hedge has developed into a line of trees.



# Tree and gap sections

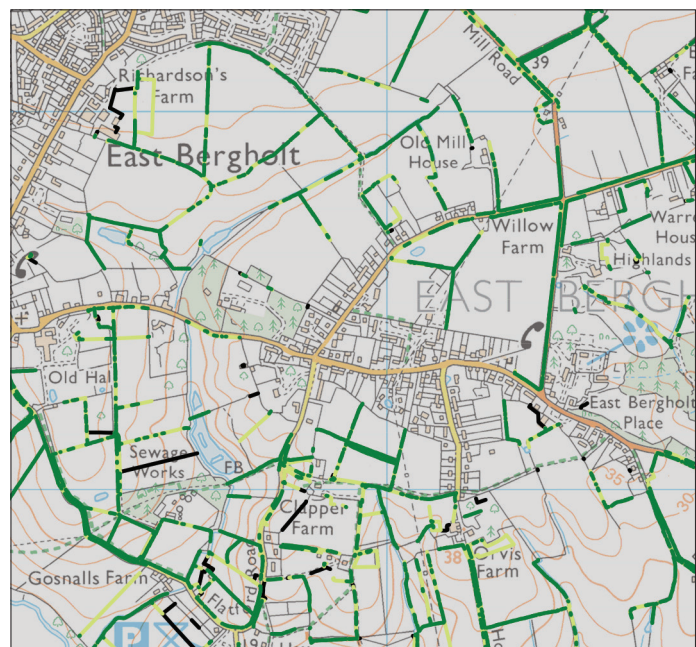


This map shows gaps in the hedge lengths between treed/hedge sections. Gaps can be any size with some sections only showing one tree in a length of gap.

## Management tips

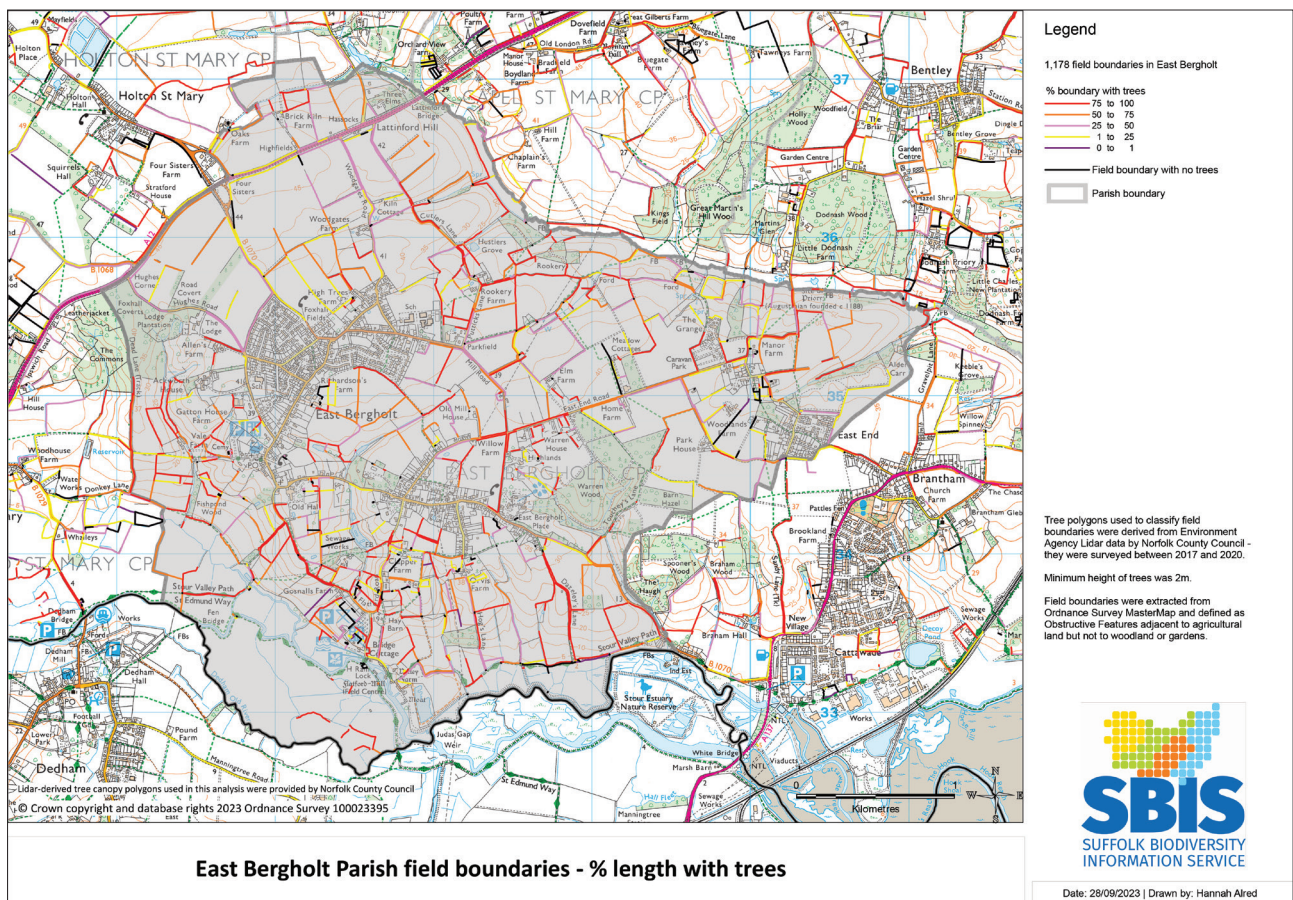
Hedgerows are crucial habitats in and of themselves and also act as green corridors. They allow wildlife to move across often fragmented and inhospitable landscapes and connect isolated habitat patches.

Ideally, there should be as few gaps as possible in a hedge. Depending on the size, you could consider reducing gaps by planting up with saplings, coppicing or hedge laying. Make sure to use native species that are well-suited to the local area. Newly planted hedges will need an initial trim in the first couple of years to encourage dense bushy growth.



- Treed sections
- Gaps
- Field boundary with no trees  $\geq 2m$  high

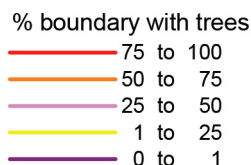
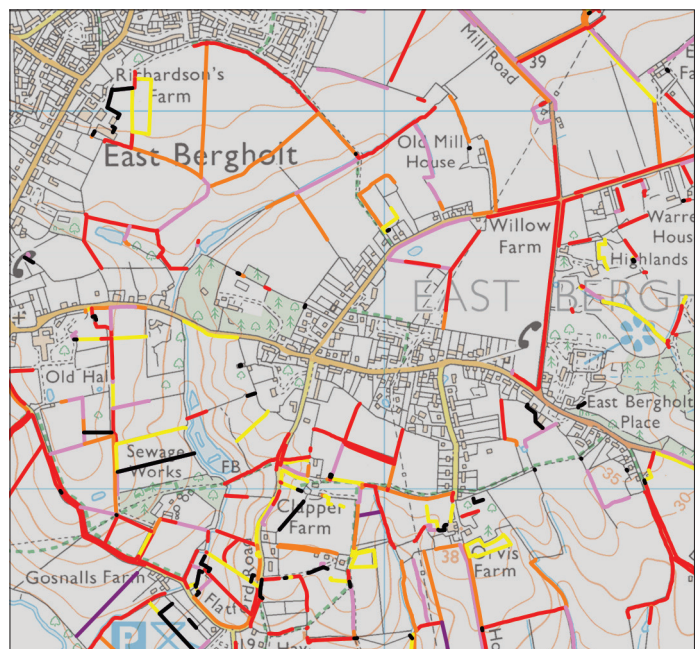
# Percentage length with trees



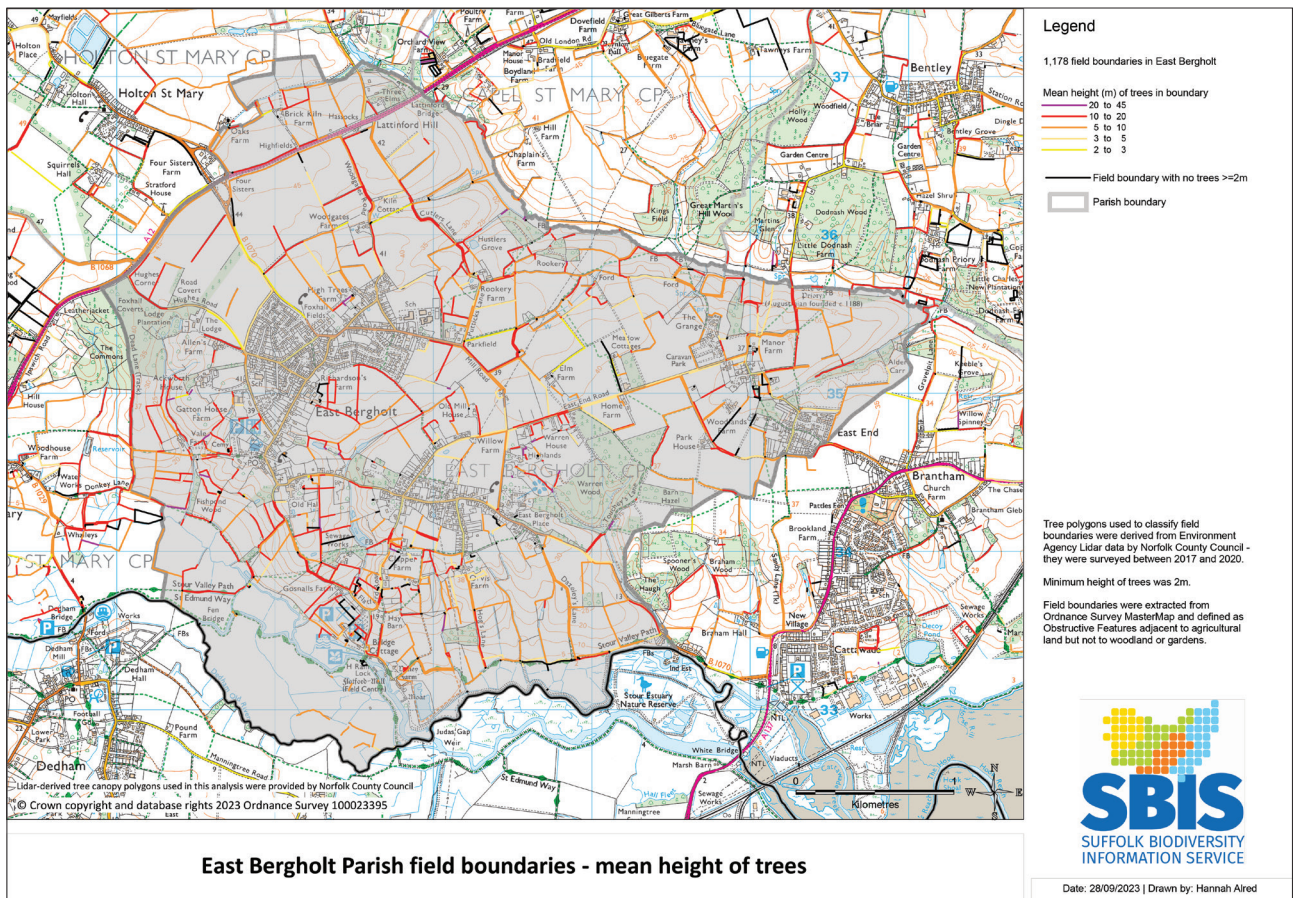
This map shows the percentage of a hedge length that has trees taller than 2m. Higher values indicate that most of the hedge section has trees above 2m high and lower values are hedge sections where the majority of trees are under 2m.

## Management tips

Hedges with a lower trees might be younger, have potentially more gaps or be subjected to more intensive management.



# Mean height of trees

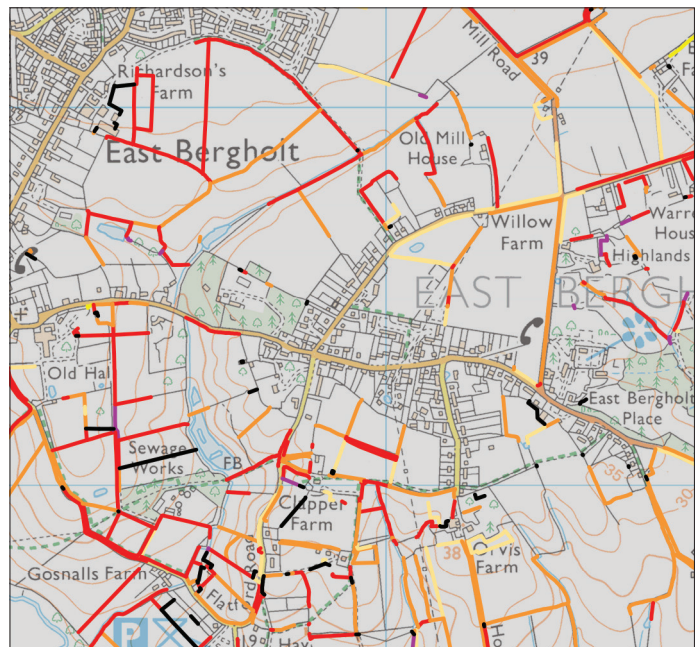


This map shows the average height of trees in a length of hedgerow. High values show a taller hedgerow and lower values are shorter hedgerows.

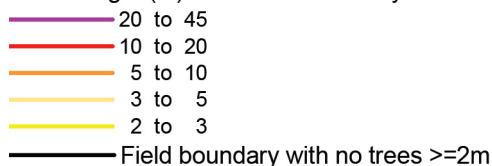
## Management tips

Species have diverse habitat needs and prefer a variety of hedge heights. For instance, Turtle Doves prefer hedges over 4m, while Yellow Hammers prefer shorter ones. Generally, taller, wider hedges are better.

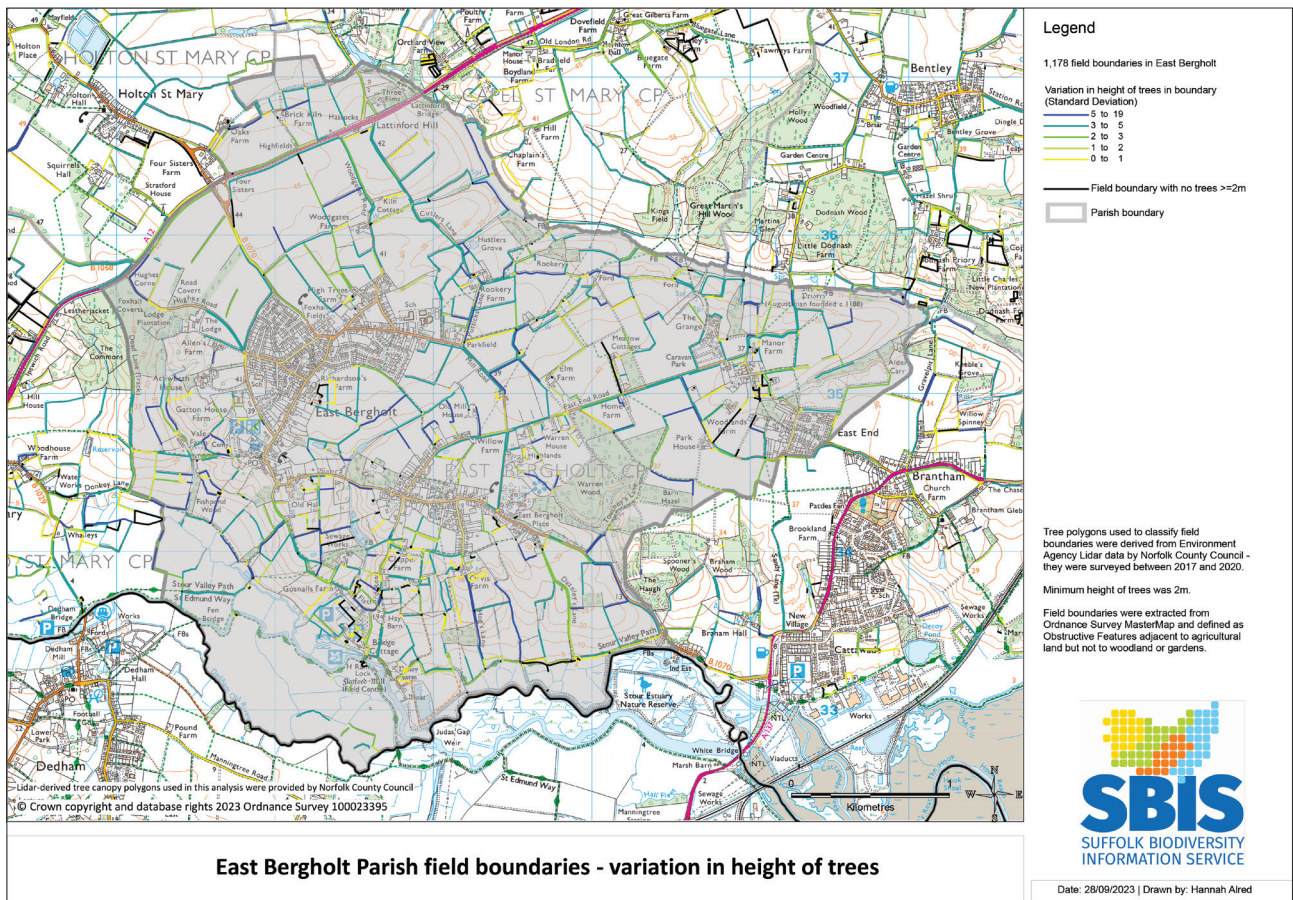
A low hedge may be over-trimmed, possibly due to cutting to the same size every year, which can cause a 'knuckle line' and a decline in hedge structure. Trimming slightly wider and taller every 2-3 years will improve the quality of the hedge, and maximise blossom and berry production. If you must cut annually, cut alternate sides of the hedge so there are still berries available. Do not cut during the bird nesting season and avoid cutting standard trees.



## Mean height (m) of trees in boundary



# Variation in height of trees

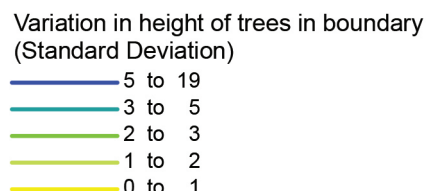
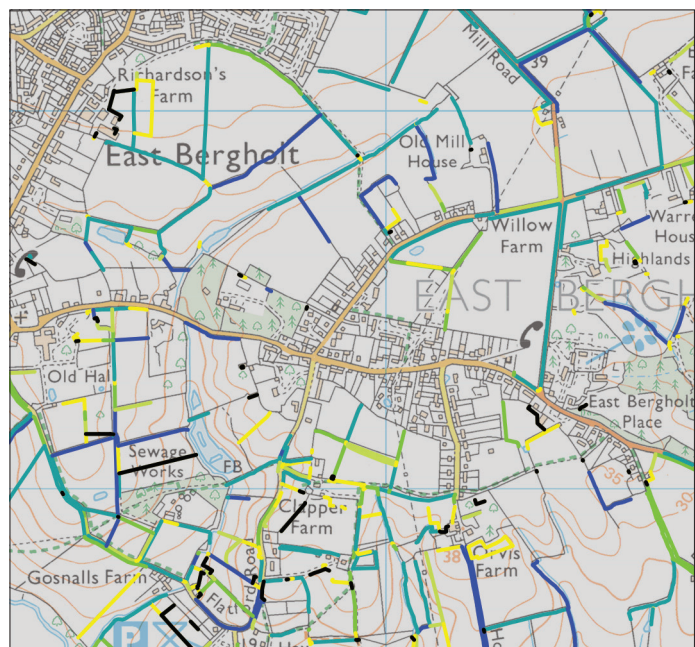


This map shows how uniform the heights of trees are in a length of hedge. Higher values show there is a greater variety in tree height in that length of hedgerow and lower values are where tree heights are all fairly uniform.

## Management tips

Standard trees are an important part of hedgerows. These are trees that have been allowed to mature and grow above the hedge line. If left, they could become the next generation of ancient trees, providing invaluable habitat for insects, small mammals and birds.

If a hedge is fairly uniform, it could indicate that it lacks standard trees. To introduce more variation in height you could identify any potential standard trees already present in the hedge, i.e. oak, field maple, hornbeam, and avoid cutting them in future rotations. Alternatively, you could plant new standard trees where there are gaps, ideally approximately 6m apart.



# Resources and links

Our hedgerows should be living boundaries. They are man-made habitats and require maintenance to ensure their longevity and health. The following resources can provide further information and help you to develop a management cycle:

## Hedgerow information



**Hedgelink - Working together for the UK's hedgerows**

<https://hedgelink.org.uk/>



**Hedgerows - People's Trust for Endangered Species (ptes.org)**

<https://ptes.org/hedgerow/>



**Hedgerow | The Wildlife Trusts**

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/habitats/farmland/hedgerow>

## Hedgerow grants and offers:



**Plant Hedges on Your Land with MOREhedgerows - Woodland Trust**

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/trees-for-landowners-and-farmers/morehedgerows/>



**Countryside Stewardship grant finder - GOV.UK**

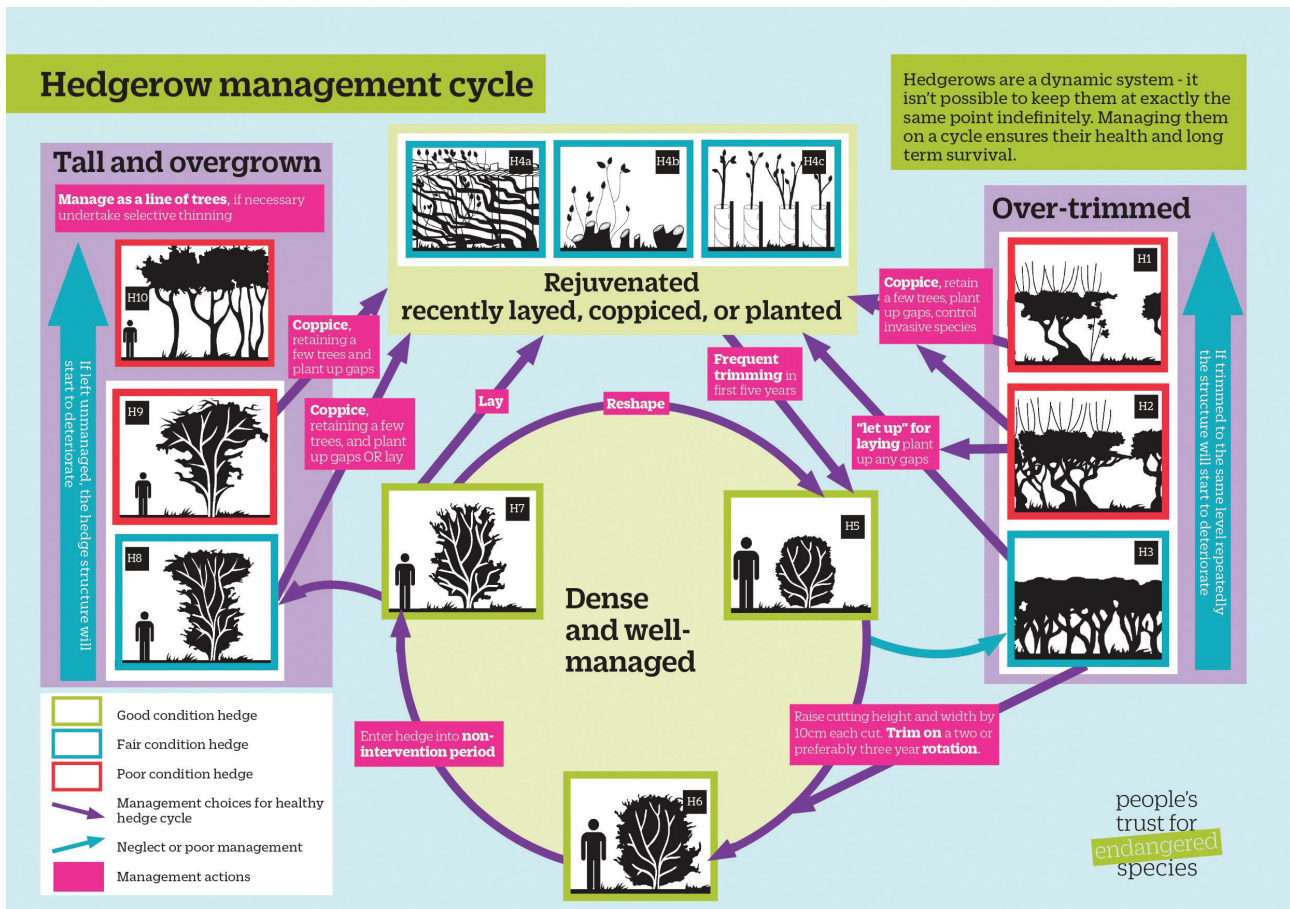
<https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants>



**Our trees, hedgerows and wildflowers scheme - Mid Suffolk / Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils**

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/trees-and-wildflowers-scheme>

Please check individual closing deadlines as these might differ for each scheme and planting season.



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