**Policy ESD 11: Conservation Target Areas**

B.240 Conservation Target Areas in Oxfordshire have been mapped by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) in consultation with local authorities and nature conservation organisations in Oxfordshire. The Target Areas have been identified to focus work to restore biodiversity at a landscape scale through the maintenance, restoration and creation of UK BAP priority habitats, and this is their principle aim. They therefore have a major role to play in achieving Strategic Objective 15 (Section A: Strategy for Development in Cherwell). Addressing habitat fragmentation through the linking of sites to form strategic ecological networks can help species adapt to the impact of climate change, and therefore Conservation Target Areas can also contribute to the achievement of Strategic Objective 11. Conservation Target Areas represent the areas of greatest opportunity for strategic biodiversity improvement in the District and as such development will be expected to contribute to the achievement of the aims of the target areas through avoiding habitat fragmentation and enhancing biodiversity.

B.241 Ten Conservation Target Areas lie wholly or partly within Cherwell District. The boundaries of the Conservation Target Areas are indicated on the Policies Map (Appendix 5: Maps).

B.242 General targets for maintenance, restoration and creation of habitats have been set for each area, to be achieved through a combination of biodiversity project work undertaken by a range of organisations, agri-environment schemes and biodiversity enhancements secured in association with development. These targets are in the process of being made more specific in terms of the amount of each habitat type to be secured within each Conservation Target Area (see Wild Oxfordshire's website <http://wildoxfordshire.org.uk/biodiversityconservation-target-areas>). Habitat improvement within each area will contribute towards achieving County targets, which in turn will contribute towards regional biodiversity targets identified by the South East England Biodiversity Forum. A lead partner has been appointed for several of the Conservation Target Areas to co-ordinate action.

B.243 Biodiversity enhancements sought in association with development could include the restoration or maintenance of habitats through appropriate management, new habitat creation to link fragmented habitats, or a financial contribution towards biodiversity initiatives in the Conservation Target Area. Biodiversity enhancement within the Conservation Target Areas will be considered through the review of the current Planning Obligations Draft SPD and the funding of infrastructure through CIL or other tariff system. Biodiversity offsetting is being explored at national level through a number of pilot projects, as a way of compensating for biodiversity loss in an effective way. If this initiative proves successful the approach could be used to secure strategic biodiversity improvement.

**Policy ESD 11: Conservation Target Areas**

**Where development is proposed within or adjacent to a Conservation Target Area biodiversity surveys and a report will be required to identify constraints and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. Development which would prevent the aims of a Conservation Target Area being achieved will not be permitted. Where there is potential for development, the design and layout of the development, planning conditions or obligations will be used to secure biodiversity enhancement to help achieve the aims of the Conservation Target Area.**