GREAT CRESTED NEWT STATEMENT

PROPOSED EXTENSION
VOYAGE CARE,
LONGMORE ROAD,
READING

DECEMBER 2025

Aluco Ecology Ltd Registered in England No. 5598341
info@alucoecology.co.uk www.alucoecology.co.uk
Hampshire 01962 886633 / Berkshire 01488 648321 / South-West 01326 291064
Registered Office: Pencairn, Penmenner Road, The Lizard, Cornwall TR12 7NR

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This report provides a summary and assessment of current information on potential for Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN) presence at the proposed development site: Voyage Care, Longmore Road, Reading. The development proposals are for a proposed single storey extension in the rear garden of a private dwelling that is currently used as a care home. The site at Longmore Road is used to support individuals with learning disabilities, autism, brain injuries and other complex needs both in the community and their home in Berkshire.

As part of the Planning Application for the development, the Local Authority have requested the following information:

> "*The site is located with a red or amber risk zone modelled for the protected species 'Great Crested Newt' as identified on the Wokingham Planning Constraints map. It is important that the local planning authority considers the potential risk to the species as a result of the proposal. Please supply a site specific 'Great Crested Newt Statement' to consider this risk and whether mitigation measures or a protected species licence would be required. It may help to seek specialist advice through an Ecological Consultant*."

This document has been prepared to provide relevant information to satisfy the above request.

1.2 Legislation & Planning Policy

Great Crested Newt and their habitats are afforded protection under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). In the Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan contains policies relating to ecology, including Policy CP7 whereby any development that may harm species of principle importance will only be permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, no better alternative is available, and mitigation or compensation measures can be put in place.

2.0 BASELINE INFORMATION

2.1 Introduction

This section sets out the baseline habitats on site for GCN, and potential waterbodies within 500m, plus any further information on presence of the species in the local area. It is based on a desktop review of available data online, and a site visit in October 2025. Existing habitats are provided at **Figure 1** below and proposed habitats at **Figure 2**. The development Masterplan is shown at **Figure 3**.

2.2 Methodology

Habitats were assessed with regard to the UK Habitat Classification UKHab Ltd (2023) The UK Habitat Classification User Manual Version 2 at http://www.ukhab.org/. Vegetation types were identified visually and using guidelines for survey, having reference to the published UKHab definitions and methods. Mapping was carried out onto printed copies of Google Earth aerial photography and by making use of numbered target notes. Digital photographs were taken to assist with recording and mapping, and show representative habitats.

Survey can be undertaken year-round, however, during the winter months likely value of vegetation and habitats can be harder to determine, and some habitats are harder to survey accurately. On this basis experience and knowledge of the surveyor is used to determine habitats present and their value, and a degree of precaution is used in evaluation and recommendations.

2.3 Onsite Habitats

The site comprises a detached dwellinghouse with private formal gardens and driveway. The vegetated habitats described below are based on site visit for the BNG assessment (13 October 2025). Representative photos of habitats are provided below (**Photos 1-5**).

Vegetated Garden

The site comprises an area of regularly managed mown lawn and flower bed garden. The lawn is a typical suburban lawn managed as an amenity grassland for use of the residents. It comprises Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris*. Herbs include White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, and a small amount of Sorrel *Rumex acetosa* and Cat's ear *Hypochaeris radicata* to the western end of the rear garden. Species diversity is generally low and herb density also relatively low. There are a number of formal shrubs and woody shrubs scattered within the lawns, including a Tamarisk *Tamarix* sp. bush that is to the edge of the proposed extension and will be removed to facilitate the development. These include a small Apple tree and 3 small conifers. The lawns are a managed amenity grassland and are relatively species poor with low species diversity averaging about 6.5 species per m^2.

Introduced shrub

The rear garden and a small section of the boundary of the front garden contains mature introduced woody shrubs comprising locally dominant Garden Privet *Ligustrum ovalifolium*, frequent Lawson's Cypress *Cupressus ×leylandii*, Cherry *Prunus* sp., Lilac *Syringa vulgaris*, and a couple of native bushes of Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*. Some Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. is also present. This habitat is being retained in situ.

Pond (non-priority)

A very small artificial concrete lined pond with no marginal aquatic vegetation and only macrophyte noted was Duckweed *Lemna* sp. It is less than 1m deep and heavily shaded by boundary shrubs and Bramble. This habitat is being retained in situ. The pond is fenced from the remainder of the garden with a 1.2m high wooden fence.

Urban tree

A line of four small Pine *Pinus* sp. trees and two small Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* trees are present at the edge of the drive. They are relatively young and not yet mature, and are subject to occasional pruning at the edge of the drive. A further ornamental small Copper Beech *Fagus sylvatica* forma *purpurea* is present on the lawn of the front garden. This is also not mature. All trees are proposed to be retained in situ.

Non-native hedge

A recently planted non-native hedge dominated by Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* is present along the front garden boundary, forming the line of a former non-native hedge removed around 2019-2020. The hedge will be retained in situ

Photo 1: Vegetated Garden (rear garden) with Introduced shrubs to the left – pond is fenced with coloured wooden fencing

Photo 2: Pond with Bramble shading, and water surface dominated by Duckweed

Photo 3: Small Trees

Pond 4: Non-native Hedge – recently planted

Photo 5: Tamarisk shrub to be removed in garden

2.4 Habitat Suitability Index Assessment

A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment of the onsite pond has been undertaken according to the methodology set out in **Appendix 1**. The results of the survey are summarised in **Table 1** below. The pond is considered likely to be of poor quality as a potential breeding location for GCN.

Table 1: HSI Assessment

HSI Criteria	Waterbody: Voyage Care, Longmore Rd. Pond
1 – Geographic Location	1
2 – Pond Area	<40m^2 = 0.1
3 – Permanence	Never Dries = 0.9
4 – Water Quality	poor = 0.33
5 – Shade	100% = 0.2
6 – Waterfowl	None = 1
7 – Fish	None = 1
8 – Pond Count in 1km	4 (significant road barriers to others within 1km) = 0.65
9 – Terrestrial Habitat	Moderate = 0.67
10 – Macrophyte Cover	0% = 0.3
Score: (Sum of 1-10)$^{0.1}$	**0.49 (poor)**

2.5 Offsite Habitats for Great Crested Newt

Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping and aerial photography was consulted for ponds within 500m of the scheme. A total of six waterbodies have been located within 500m of the site. Two of these are ponds on the far side of the B3270, which is a busy road and therefore considered likely to be a significant barrier to dispersal. These two ponds are over 380m from the site. The other four ponds are located in Shinfield Park, with one of the woodland ponds here not noted on ground assessment (Aspect Ecology, 2025). Of these ponds, two are located c170m to the north west of the site, and the third is located c250m north west of the site.

These ponds have been recently assessed as part of a redevelopment proposal at Shinfield Park (see Aspect Ecology, 2025). This assessment looked at all five extant ponds, three within the grounds of Shinfield Park and two the far side of the B3270, and carried out GCN eDNA assessment to Natural England survey standards on 24 June 2024. All five ponds were negative for Great Crested Newt eDNA (Aspect Ecology, 2025).

2.6 Desktop Review of GCN Records

A desktop review has not returned any records of GCN within 1km of the site. The closest record is of a class licence return from 2010-12 just under 2km to the north of the site in central Reading. This record however states the location as Cheshire, so may possibly refer to an inaccurate grid reference. GCN are also known from Spencers Wood and Shinfield area south of the M4, however, as the M4 creates a significant barrier records have not been further reviewed.

A District Licence for GCN is in place in Wokingham Borough, and impact risk zone mapping for the district is available through Naturespace (www.naturespaceuk.com). This mapping shows the site as being within a 'red zone' for GCN, which suggests that highly suitable habitat is likely to be present for GCN.

3.0 EVALUATION AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

3.1 Potential for Impacts to GCN

The proposed scheme is a small single storey extension to the dwelling, with the majority of the extension over the footprint of the current conservatory. There is an extension onto the lawn area of the site, and the new patio will come close to the pond area (see **Figure 3**). Although the works area will be close to the existing pond on site, it is outside the proposed construction zone, and is to be retained. The works area will be restricted to the existing heavily managed lawn. A single larger Tamarisk shrub (see **Photo 5** above) will also be removed as part of the development.

The local area the site lies within is part of a red zone on District Licensing mapping. However, a review of the waterbodies within 500m of the site has not recorded any evidence of GCN presence within 500m of the site. The five waterbodies within 500m that are to the north east have been recently surveyed using eDNA analysis, and were all found to be negative for GCN presence (Aspect Ecology, 2025).

Therefore, the only pond with no survey information is the onsite pond. This pond is a small, relatively shallow, overshaded and artificial pond in a suburban environment. It is considered unlikely to support a population of GCN on its own, when the larger and more suitable ponds within the 500m catchment are not recorded as containing populations of GCN. A HSI assessment of the onsite pond has determined that it is of poor quality as a potential breeding location for GCN.

The terrestrial habitats on site contain borders with introduced and some native shrub species, including mature garden planting. These habitats are likely to have some potential value to GCN. The lawn areas are heavily managed as a formal garden and are of low value. However, without a suitable breeding location, it is unlikely that GCN would be present in these habitats.

It is therefore considered unlikely that GCN would be impacted by the proposed development. However, a construction mitigation method statement is recommended, given the proximity of the pond to the construction zone, and that the site is within a red zone in District Licensing.

3.2 Construction Method Statement

Following the NatureSpace -Best Practice Principles – NatureSpace 2021 reasonable avoidance measures will be employed to reduce the risks to Great Crested Newts during works. This should include the following measures adapted from their best practice principles:

1. In advance of works, exclusion fencing will be placed on the lawn side of the pond wooden fencing to provide a barrier from construction activities (see **Figure 3** below). This will comprise Heras fencing with debris netting attached on inside to capture any debris from construction. The pond area will be treated as a complete exclusion zone from construction activities with no access by construction work;
2. Sandbags will be placed at the base of the fencing to direct surface water runoff away from the pond until detailed drainage measures are constructed;
3. In advance of works on site, vegetation within the construction zone should be managed to reduce suitability for newts, in order to discourage newts from impacted areas. This should be by continuing the current mowing regime of the formal lawn on site, and by cutting the Tamarisk to stump level outside the nesting bird season. Given the small amount of suitable nesting bird habitat, where timing doesn't allow for removal of the Tamarisk outside the nesting bird season, it can only be removed following checks for potential nesting birds by the suitable qualified ecologist. Where an active nest is present, the shrub and a buffer zone should be left in situ until nesting has finished, as determined by the ecologist;
4. Cut areas should be left undisturbed for 48 hours;
5. Undertake a directional vegetation clearance and soil stripping under supervision by a suitably qualified ecologist, particularly including removal of roots of the Tamarisk;
6. Initial vegetation clearance should only take place during the active herpetofauna season between April – early Oct, and in appropriate weather conditions (avoiding very wet or cold weather), to avoid killing/injuring herpetofauna. Regard should be had to other protected species potential;
7. The direction of work will be from the building to the northern boundary (where suitable terrestrial habitat exists onsite);
8. Hand searches, destructive searches (see below) will be undertaken ahead of site works where habitat exists, to reduce the risk of herpetofauna being on the site during construction;
9. Hand searches, destructive searches and initial site stripping should be supervised by a suitably qualified ecologist;
10. Destructive searches and initial soil stripping should be undertaken using a machine with a 'toothed' bucket. The machine should avoid tracking on potential habitat;
11. Working areas should avoid any retained habitat on site, which will be protected by fencing demarcating retained habitat areas (**Figure 3**);
12. Pollution protection measures should be implemented to avoid indirect impacts on retained or off-site habitats, for run-off or accidental encroachment from working vehicles, material or operatives. This includes sandbags to direct water away from the pond;
13. Machinery, materials, equipment and any waste should be stored on areas of hardstanding or raised off the ground on pallets where possible and not on potentially suitable reptile or amphibian habitats;

14. Waste materials should be removed off site immediately or stored in skips. Spoil from the excavation of the car port is proposed to be taken off site;
15. Excavations should be backfilled, covered overnight, or ramps placed in to allow any animals to escape
16. Excavations and working areas should be managed so as not to create temporary waterbodies which may attract newts onto site;
17. Access points should use the formal lawn area via a dedicated route, and keep habitat disturbance to a minimum, avoiding any areas of sensitive or potentially valuable habitat around the pond and woody shrub boundary;
18. Machinery and equipment should be cleaned of soil and debris before leaving the site to prevent spread of invasive species.
19. **If any evidence of Great Crested Newt are recorded during the construction process, work should stop immediately and advice sought from the suitably qualified ecologist, with need to apply for a European Protected Species Licence**.

Hand Searching

This is the careful searching and dismantling, by hand, of potential refuges and suitable habitat features. Hand searching may be done throughout the active season where weather conditions are suitable (e.g. not during very hot dry or cold weather). Hand searches are ineffective on large expanses of habitat and are suited to searching distinct habitat features, such as log piles and small areas of debris. Hand searches should be undertaken by the suitably qualified ecologist.

Destructive searches

This is the careful searching and dismantling of features including stumps of hedgerows, any rubbles piles on site, with ongoing supervision to check for animals as works progress. Destructive searching maybe undertaken throughout the active season, where weather conditions are suitable (e.g. not during very hot dry weather or cold weather) and is combined with hand searches. Destructive searches should be supervised by the suitably qualified ecologist.

Monitoring

Regular monitoring will be undertaken during construction to assess the method statement measures and identify unforeseen impacts, including:

- Exclusion zone fencing checks to ensure integrity and effectiveness;
- Monitoring of water quality in the pond through visual inspection;
- Documenting any amphibian sightings;
- Reporting incidents of non-compliance to the relevant authorities and implementing corrective actions with advice from the suitably qualified ecologist.

4.0 SUMMARY

An assessment of the potential for GCN presence at Voyage Care, Longmore Road, Reading has been undertaken. This has included onsite pond assessment using HSI criteria, and an offsite desktop review of waterbodies and records of GCN within proximity to the site. There are a number of offsite ponds within 500m, but those with potential to hold GCN that may also reach the proposed development site have all been recently surveyed for a development at Shinfield Park and determined to be negative for GCN. On this basis, it is considered unlikely that GCN will be present on site, as the onsite pond is otherwise isolated, small, shallow and in suburban habitats. It scored poorly in HSI assessment. The area is within a red zone for GCN on the District Licensing scheme. Given the proximity of the development to the onsite pond, and the red zone listing, a construction mitigation method statement has been recommended to ensure there are no impacts to GCN from the scheme, with measures that would ensure protection during construction.

5.0 REFERENCES

Aspect Ecology (2025) Land at Shinfield Park, Reading. Ecological Appraisal. February 2025

Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy: The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (2025) Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Berkshire. Available at: https://rbwmtogether.rbwm.gov.uk/berkshire-local-nature-recovery-strategy

Naturespace (2025) www.naturespaceuk.com

UKHab Ltd (2023) The UK Habitat Classification User Manual Version 2 at http://www.ukhab.org/

Report Author
GarethKnass

Aluco Ecology, Ltd

Figure 1: Existing Habitats on Site (base plan Make Consulting, 2025)

Key

- Vegetated garden
- Introduced shrub
- Developed land -buildings
- Developed land – hardstanding
- Urban tree
- Pond (non-priority)
- Non-native hedge

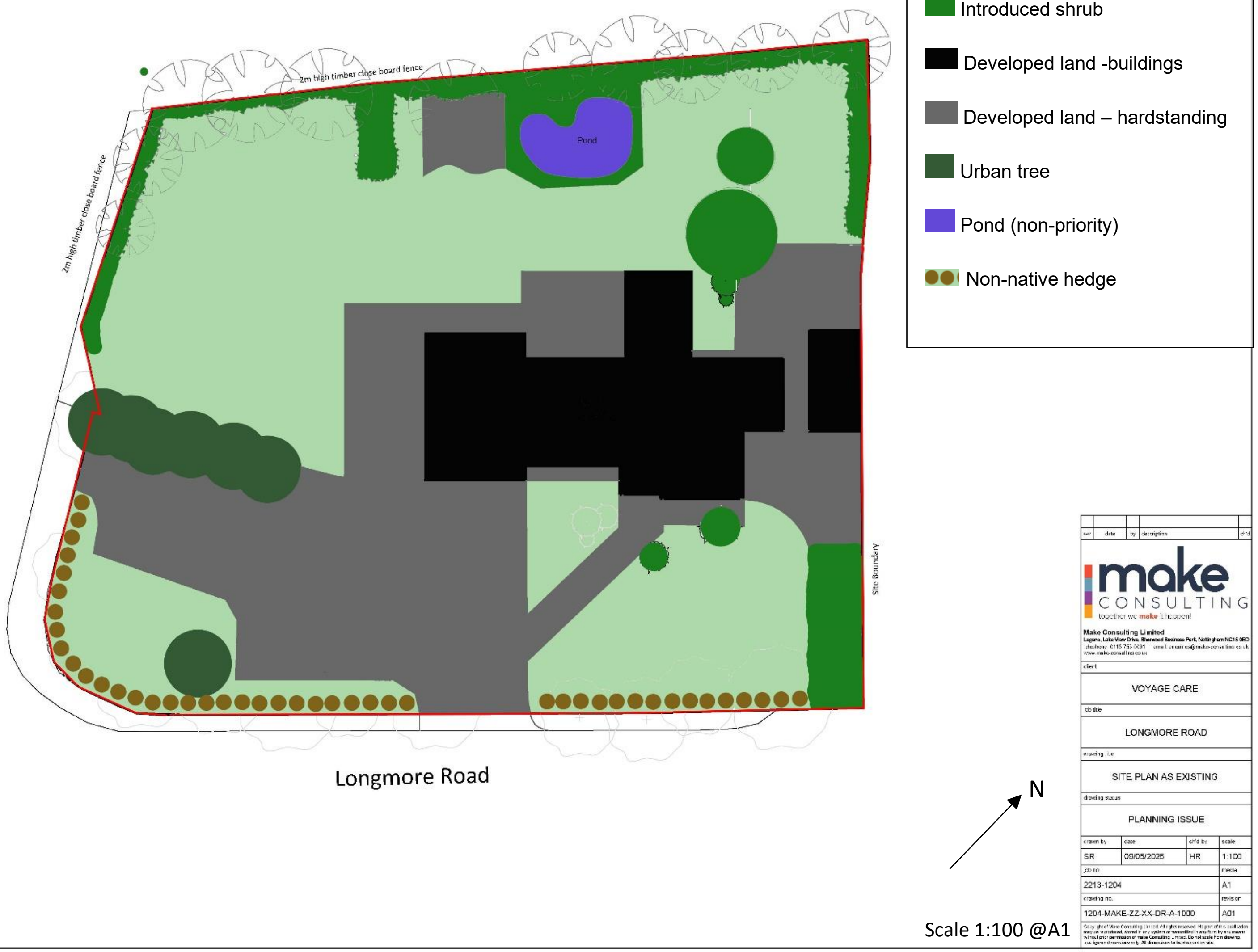
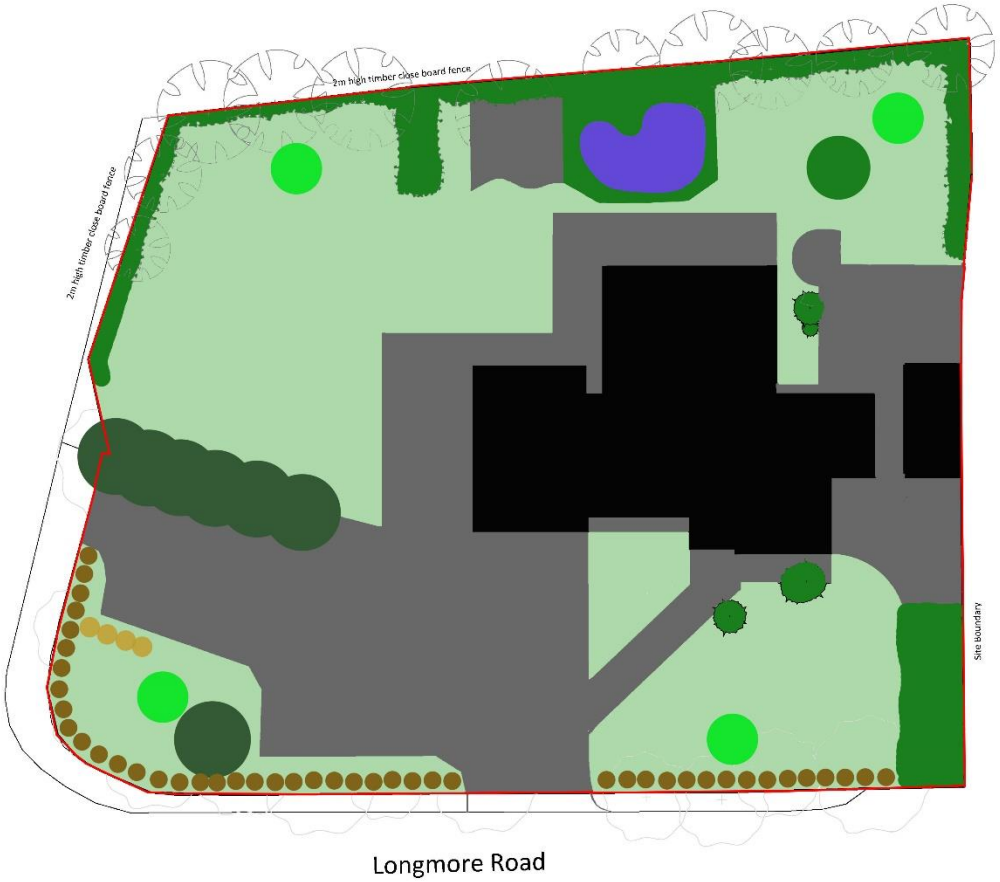


Figure 2: Proposed Habitats on Site (base plan Make Consulting, 2025)



Key

- Vegetated garden
- Introduced shrub
- Developed land -buildings
- Developed land – hardstanding
- Urban tree
- Pond (non-priority)
- Non-native hedge
- Urban tree (proposed)
- Non-native hedge (proposed)

N

Scale 1:100 @A1

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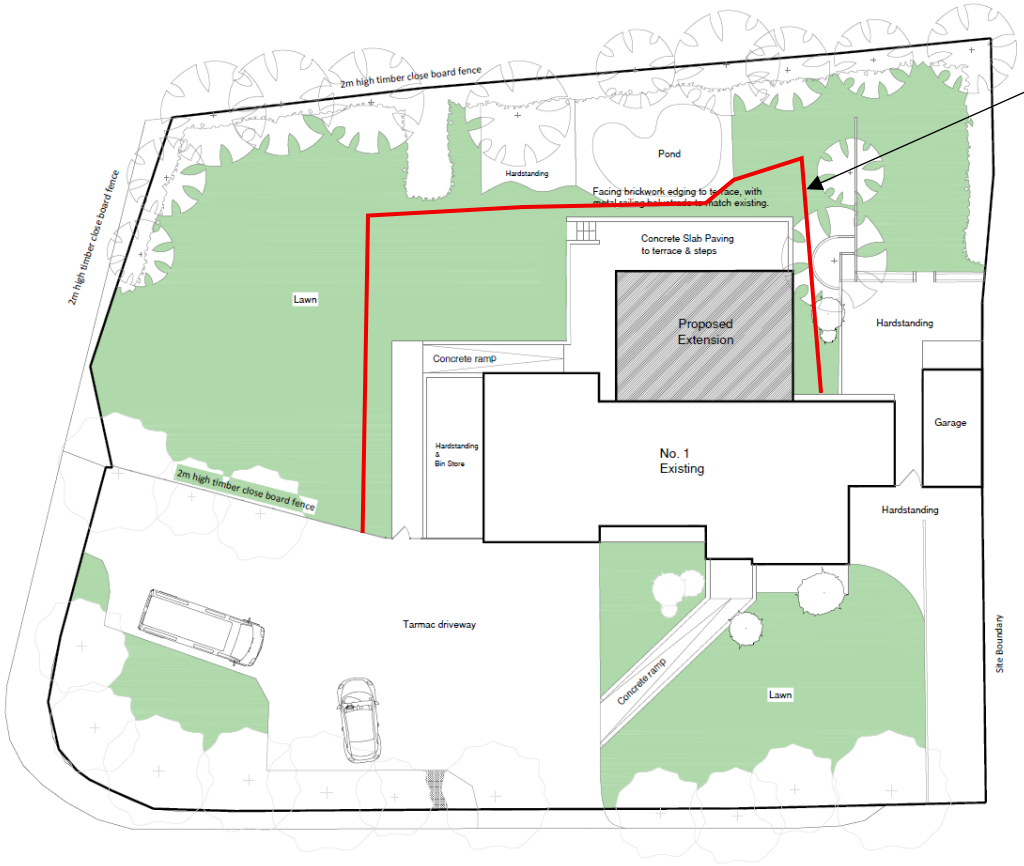
client	VOYAGE CARE
job title	LONGMORE ROAD
drawing title	SITE PLAN AS PROPOSED
drawing status	PLANNING ISSUE

drawn by	date	chkd by	scale
SR	09/05/2025	HR	1:100
job no.			sheet
2213-1204			A1
drawing no.			revision
1204-MAKE-ZZ-XX-DR-A-1001			A01

Figure 2: Proposed Development (Make Consulting, 2025)



Proposed location of construction exclusion fencing

rev	date	by	description	chkd

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Make Consulting Limited
Lugano, Lake View Drive, Sherwood Business Park, Nottingham NG15 0ED
telephone: 0115 753 0081 | email: enquiries@make-consulting.co.uk
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client
VOYAGE CARE

job title
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drawing title
SITE PLAN AS PROPOSED

drawing status
PLANNING ISSUE

drawn by	date	chkd by	scale
SR	09/05/2025	HR	1:100
job no.			media
2213-1204			A1
drawing no.			revision
1204-MAKE-ZZ-XX-DR-A-1001			A01

APPENDIX 1:

HABITAT SUITABILITY INDEX ASSESSMENT FOR GREAT CRESTED NEWT

Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) scoring system has been developed to provide an indication of the likely value of a waterbody to Great Crested Newt. It was initially developed by Oldham et al (2000). The methodology has been adapted by the Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK (see ARG UK, 2010). The index is a measure of habitat suitability. Ponds with a high HSI score are more likely to support Great Crested Newt than those with a low score. HSI is therefore useful to (see ARG UK, 2010):

- Evaluate general suitability of a pond, or ponds for Great Crested Newt,
- Compare general suitability of ponds across different areas,
- Evaluating suitability of receptor ponds in a proposed mitigation scheme,
- Identifying habitat management priorities.

The HSI scoring system is graded in five steps from poor – below average – average – good – excellent.

References

Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S. & Jeffcote M. (2000). Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (Triturus cristatus). Herpetological Journal 10(4), 143-155