

# ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT – VOLUME 3 – APPENDIX 8.9

## **Otter and Water Vole Survey Report - Repower**

## **Drax Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage**

The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations, 2009 -Regulation 5(2)(a) Document Reference Number: 6.3.8.9

Applicant: Drax Power Limited

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# The Drax Power (Generating Stations) Order Land at, and in the vicinity of, Drax Power Station, near Selby, North Yorkshire

## Otter and Water Vole Survey



The Planning Act 2008 The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 - Regulation 5(2)(a)

### **Drax Power Limited**

**Drax Repower Project** 

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Drax Power Limited are submitting a Development Consent Order (DCO) application to the Planning Inspectorate for a Proposed Scheme. This will include the repowering up to two existing coal-fired units with gas at the Existing Drax Power Station Complex, along with the construction of a battery storage facility and Gas Pipeline.

Records of otter (*Lutra lutra*) and water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) from within 2 km of the Site were identified during the desk study which forms part of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) undertaken by WSP in 2017. Evidence of otter and water vole and suitable habitat for supporting these species were identified on Site during a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) undertaken by WSP in 2017. Consequently, WSP were commissioned to undertake an otter and water vole survey of the Site.

Three otter and water vole survey visits were carried out within the survey area in September 2017, March 2018 and April 2018. Watercourses and ditches with habitat features suitable for otter and water vole were inspected for the presence of these species in line with best practice guidance.

The otter surveys comprised a daytime search for field signs including spraints, tracks, slides, prints and potential holts/couches and above-ground laying-up/resting sites along suitable watercourses and ditches. The water vole surveys comprised a daytime search for field signs including faeces, latrines, feeding stations, burrows, 'lawns', nests, prints and runways along suitable watercourses and ditches.

Evidence of otter was recorded at least two locations along Pipeline Area and in habitats adjacent to the Power Station Site (slides, couch, prints and spraint), although no evidence of otter was recorded within the Power Station Site. No otter holts were recorded during the surveys. One potential couch site was identified north of the Power Station Site where the North Perimeter Ditch joins with Carr Dyke.

Evidence of water vole was recorded in one location within the Pipeline Area.

It is considered likely that both the otter and the water vole populations also make at least occasional use of other suitable habitat within the survey area.

Refer to the Environmental Statement for information on avoidance, mitigation and enhancement recommendations.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1. Drax Power Limited intends to repower part of the existing Drax Power Station to run on natural gas. It is intended that consent for the Proposed Scheme will be secured via an application to the Planning Inspectorate for a Development Consent Order (DCO).
- 1.1.2. The scheme comprises a series of proposed upgrades for repowering the existing plant (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Scheme'). Additionally a gas pipeline is required in order to connect the power station to the National Grid national transmission system. The Pipeline Area extends to approximately 3 km east of the plant ending adjacent to Rusholme Lane (approximate National Ordnance grid reference SE 698 266). These areas are hereafter collectively referred to as 'the Site' and are included on Figure 1.
- 1.1.3. WSP conducted a Drax Repower Project Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017) (Ref 1) of land within and adjacent to Drax Power Station (Yorkshire, approximate central National Ordnance grid reference SE 661 272) including the land required to install a gas pipeline.
- 1.1.4. Existing records of otter (*Lutra lutra*) and water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) from within 2 km of the Site were identified during the desk study. Furthermore, habitats assessed as suitable to support both otter and water vole were recorded during the extended Phase 1 habitat survey, including a series of ditches and watercourses. Targeted otter and water vole surveys were subsequently commissioned by Drax Power Limited.
- 1.1.5. The purpose of these surveys was to establish whether these species were present or likely to be absent from the Site. The survey area comprised the Site and up to 50 metres outside. All watercourses within the Site and located within 50 metres of the Site were surveyed and are shown on Figure 2.
- 1.1.6. This report was prepared to accompany the Environmental Statement (Ref 2) and should be read in conjunction with it.

#### 1.2 Legislation and Planning Policy

- 1.2.1. Otter are fully protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (Ref 3) and also receive protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (Ref 4). It is an offence to kill, injure or take this species, damage or destroy places of rest or shelter, or disturb this species (whether in a resting place or not). Additionally, it is illegal to possess, transport, sell, barter or exchange any part of an otter.
- 1.2.2. Development activities that could result in impacts to otter should avoid/minimise the likelihood of an impact occurring. If impacts are unavoidable then the works may need to be carried out under a European Protected Species (EPS) development licence.



- 1.2.3. Water vole are fully protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (Ref 4), meaning it is an offence to kill, injure or take this species, damage or destroy places of rest or shelter, or disturb this species whilst occupying a place of rest of shelter.
- 1.2.4. Both otter and water vole are also identified as Species of Principal Importance (SPI) via the provisions of Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (Ref 5). Under Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 public bodies (including local planning authorities) have a duty to have regard to the conservation of SPI when carrying out their functions, including determining planning applications.
- 1.2.5. The United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) (Ref 6) is a government initiative designed to implement the requirements of the Convention of Biological Diversity to conserve and enhance species and habitats. The priority species generally correlate with those listed in accordance with Section 41 of the NERC Act. The national BAP is supplemented by Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP) which identify habitats and species of particular value or concern at the local level. The UKBAP has now been replaced by the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework (Ref 7), however, it contains useful information on how to characterise important species assemblages and habitats which is still relevant.
- 1.2.6. At the national level the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) (Ref 8) forms the basis for planning development decisions with respect to conserving and enhancing the natural environment, including otter and water vole; the ODPM circular 06/05 (Ref 9) also provides supplementary guidance, including confirmation that "the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal."
- 1.2.7. The NPPF (Ref 8) sets out, amongst other points how at an overview level the *"planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:* 
  - Minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where
    possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall
    decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks
    that are more resilient to current and future pressures..."
- 1.2.8. The NPPF (Ref 8) also sets out how planning policies should "*minimise impacts on biodiversity by the:* 
  - -[promotion of] the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations..."
- 1.2.9. The Selby District Local Plan (2005) (Ref 10) states that:
  - "Development and other land use changes which may harm badgers and other species protected by Schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, or the EC Habitats and Species Directive will not be permitted."
- 1.2.10. The Selby District Core Strategy Local Plan (2013) (Ref 11) adds to this by:



- "Ensuring developments retain, protect and enhance features of biological and geological interest and provide appropriate management of these features and that unavoidable impacts are appropriately mitigated and compensated for, on or off-site. And "ensuring development seeks to produce a net gain in biodiversity by designing-in wildlife and retaining the natural interest of a site where appropriate."
- 1.2.11. Otter are listed on the Selby Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) (2004) (Ref 12), with the objective to:
  - "Maintain and expand existing populations [creating] a stable, resident, breeding otter population...at carrying capacity throughout all rivers and tributaries in Selby District".
- 1.2.12. Water vole are also listed on the Selby LBAP (Ref 12), with the objective to:
- 1.2.13. "Maintain the current distribution and abundance [and] restore water voles to their former widespread distribution



## 2 METHODS

#### 2.1 Field Survey

- 2.1.1. Three otter and water vole survey visits were carried out within the survey area, led by ecologists with experience of completing otter and water vole surveys across a range of sites supporting similar habitats. The first visit was conducted over three days between 26 and 28 September 2017 and the second on 21 March 2018, with an additional visit on 18 April 2018. The surveys were carried out in line with best practice guidance from Chanin and Smith (2003). Monitoring the otter Lutra lutra. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No 10. Peterborough, English Nature (Ref 13) and Strachan, R., Moorhouse, T. & Gelling, M. (2011). Water Vole Conservation Handbook, third edition. The Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, University of Oxford (Ref 14).
- 2.1.2. Watercourses and ditches with habitat features suitable for otter and water vole were inspected for the presence of these species. Water voles require wet ditches with a good coverage and variety of bankside vegetation and steep sided embankments formed from earth that can be burrowed into (Ref 14). Otters require a food supply of fish and good water quality to support a healthy population of fish (Ref 13). The condition of each water feature (e.g. general habitat type, shore/bank substrate, bordering land use, vegetation, disturbance level, bank profile, and water depth) were also recorded in order to assess the suitability of the watercourses for otter and water vole, the results are shown in Appendix 1.
- 2.1.3. The otter surveys comprised a daytime search for field signs including spraints, tracks, slides, prints and potential holts/couches and above-ground laying-up/resting sites along suitable watercourses and ditches, in line with good practice guidelines (Ref 13).
- 2.1.4. The water vole surveys comprised a daytime search for field signs including faeces, latrines, feeding stations, burrows, 'lawns', nests, prints and runways along suitable watercourses and ditches, in line with good practice guidelines (Ref 14).
- 2.1.5. Field signs that were recorded are described below and shown on Figure 2, with photographs given in Appendix 2. Field signs of other relevant wildlife such as the American mink (Neovison vison) and brown rat (Rattus norvegicus) were also noted. The culvert locations were also mapped as these provide important structural features in the landscape and otters are known to use culverts as resting sites and are often good locations to identity signs of otters (Ref 13).

#### 2.2 Limitations

2.2.1. During the first otter and water vole survey five ditches within the Pipeline Area were not surveyed due to access limitations. When access became available an otter and water vole survey was undertaken at these locations as part of the second and third otter and water vole survey visits. The survey area and notes on specific access restrictions during the first survey are shown on Figure 2. The surveys were conducted during the optimal survey period for water vole and evidence of water vole was identified within one of the newly accessible ditches



surveyed during the second survey. Therefore, access limitations experienced during the first visit are not considered to be a limitation to the overall survey results.

2.2.2. Figures accompanying this report have been reproduced from field notes. Whilst this provides sufficient information for the purpose of this report, the maps are not intended to provide exact locations of field signs.



#### 3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1. The survey area is shown on Figure 1. The named watercourses that were surveyed are shown on Figure 2 (Sheets 1 10). Four ditches/drains at the Power Station Site (Sheets 1, 4, and 5) and six ditches/ drains within the Pipeline Area (Sheets 6-10) were identified and surveyed. The following field signs were identified during the surveys:
  - Otter footprint.
  - Otter spraint.
  - Otter couch.
  - Otter slide.
  - Water vole sighting.
  - Water vole burrow.
  - Water vole latrine.
  - Mink footprint.
  - Mink scat.
  - Small mammal sighting.
  - Small mammal footprint.
  - Small mammal burrow.
- 3.1.2. The field signs are described below with locations shown on Figure 2 and photographs given in Appendix 2.

#### 3.2 Otter survey

Visit One

- 3.2.1. The survey identified signs of otter activity in the form of prints (see Appendix 2, Photograph 1) at the River Ouse along the Pipeline Area and an old spraint (see Appendix 2, Photograph 2) on a wooden bridge over a dry drain along the Pipeline Area. The locations of these field signs are shown on Figure 2 (Sheets 8 & 9).
- 3.2.2. No confirmed otter holts were recorded within the survey area. No confirmed field signs of otter were recorded within the Power Station Site.

#### Visit Two

- 3.2.3. The second survey identified signs of otter activity in the form of prints (see Appendix 2, Photograph 3) at the River Ouse along the Pipeline Area. These prints were fresh and therefore confirmed additional presence of otter since the first visit. A potential otter footprint was identified next to Carr Dyke (see Appendix 2, Photograph 4) along with two otter spraints (one old and one recent) located beneath a concrete footbridge (see Appendix 2, Photographs 5 and 6). A potential otter couch/laying-up spot (see Appendix 2, Photograph 7 and a slide (see Appendix 2, Photograph 8) were also identified. The locations of these field signs are shown on Figure 2 (Sheets 1, 5 & 8).
- 3.2.4. No confirmed otter holts were recorded within the survey area. No confirmed field signs of otter were recorded within the Power Station Site.



3.2.5. Otter range over large territories, and their use of any particular watercourse/part of a watercourse can therefore be intermittent and vary seasonally in response to prey availability and other factors (Ref 13). It is therefore likely that at least a proportion of watercourses with no evidence of otter will be used for commuting/foraging by the species.

#### 3.3 Water vole Survey

Visit One

- 3.3.1. The survey did not identify any field signs of water vole within the survey area during the first visit. Small mammal burrows (see Appendix 2, Photograph 9) and prints (see Appendix 2, Photograph 10) were found across the survey area but these alone are not sufficient evidence to prove the presence of water vole. These field signs are shown on Figure 2 (Sheets 1, 2, 8 & 9). The prints identified were considered likely to be brown rat.
- 3.3.2. No definitive field signs of water vole, such as latrines or feeding stations, were found.
- 3.3.3. Presence of American mink was confirmed via the identification of a scat within the Pipeline Area (see Appendix 2, Photograph 11). The location is shown on Figure 2 (Sheet 9). American mink is listed as an invasive non-native species on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (Ref 4) and is known to predate water vole. Additionally, a small mammal, likely bank vole (*Clethrionomys glareolus*), and a brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) were observed during the survey. These are noted on Figure 2 (Sheet 4).

Visit Two

- 3.3.4. The survey identified the presence of water vole in one of the ditches along the Pipeline Area named "Unnamed Selby Area IDB drain with reference 18/1" in the form of a water vole sighting within the water course in the ditch. Several burrows and latrines (see Appendix 2, Photograph 12) within the same ditch were also recorded. The droppings found were about 8-12 mm long and 4-5 mm wide, they were cylindrical and had blunted ends (unlike rats) and were coloured green, with a texture like putty with no unpleasant odour. They were deposited in clusters (latrines) unlike rats which are more likely to deposit single droppings (Ref 14). It is therefore considered likely that the adjacent burrows are water vole burrows. Furthermore, several water vole feeding remains were recorded (see Appendix 2, Photograph 13). The field signs are shown on Figure 2 (Sheets 6 & 10). No other field signs of water vole were recorded throughout the rest of the survey area.
- 3.3.5. Presence of American mink was confirmed through the presence of prints (see Appendix 2, Photograph 14) in two locations along Carr Dyke which adjoins to the North Perimeter Ditch. These are shown on Figure 2 (Sheet 1).
- 3.3.6. No confirmed field signs of water vole were recorded within the Power Station Site.



## 4 INTERPRETATIONS OF RESULTS

#### 4.1 Otter

- 4.1.1. The presence of otter at and adjacent to the Site has been confirmed. Evidence of otter has been recorded at least two locations along Pipeline Area and in habitats adjacent to the Power Station Site, although no evidence of otter was recorded within the Power Station Site. It is likely that the local otter population also makes at least occasional use of other suitable habitat within the survey area. This is extrapolated from the evidence seen in the form of spraints and footprints.
- 4.1.2. No otter holts were recorded during the surveys. One potential couch site was identified north of the Power Station Site where the North Perimeter Ditch joins with Carr Dyke.

#### 4.2 Water Vole

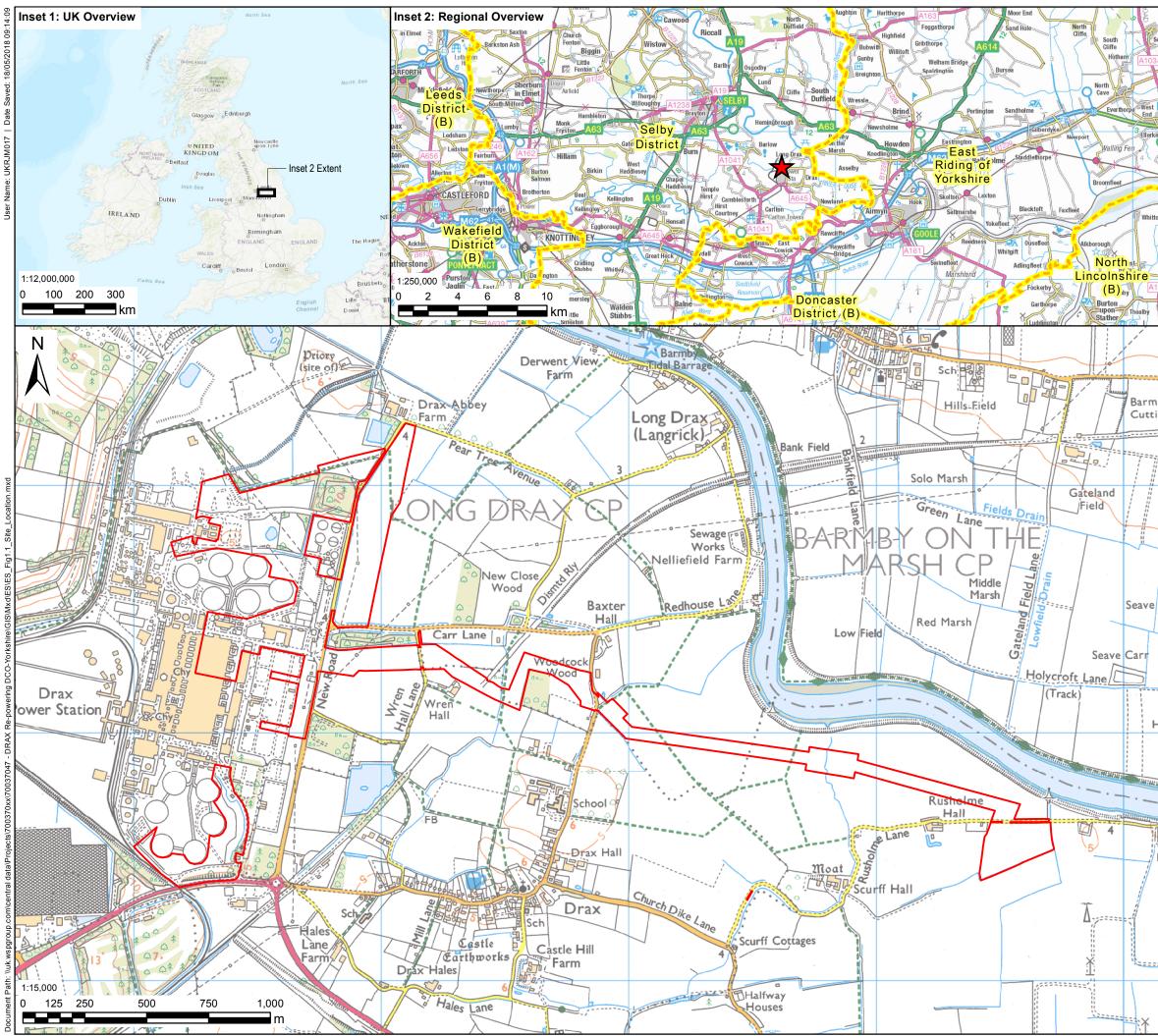
- 4.2.1. The presence of water vole within the Pipeline Area is confirmed. Evidence of water vole has been recorded in one location along the Pipeline Area. It is likely that water vole population also makes at least occasional use of other suitable habitat within the survey area.
- 4.2.2. Refer to the WSP (2018). Drax Repower Environmental Statement (Ref 2) for information on avoidance, mitigation and enhancement for both otter and water vole.



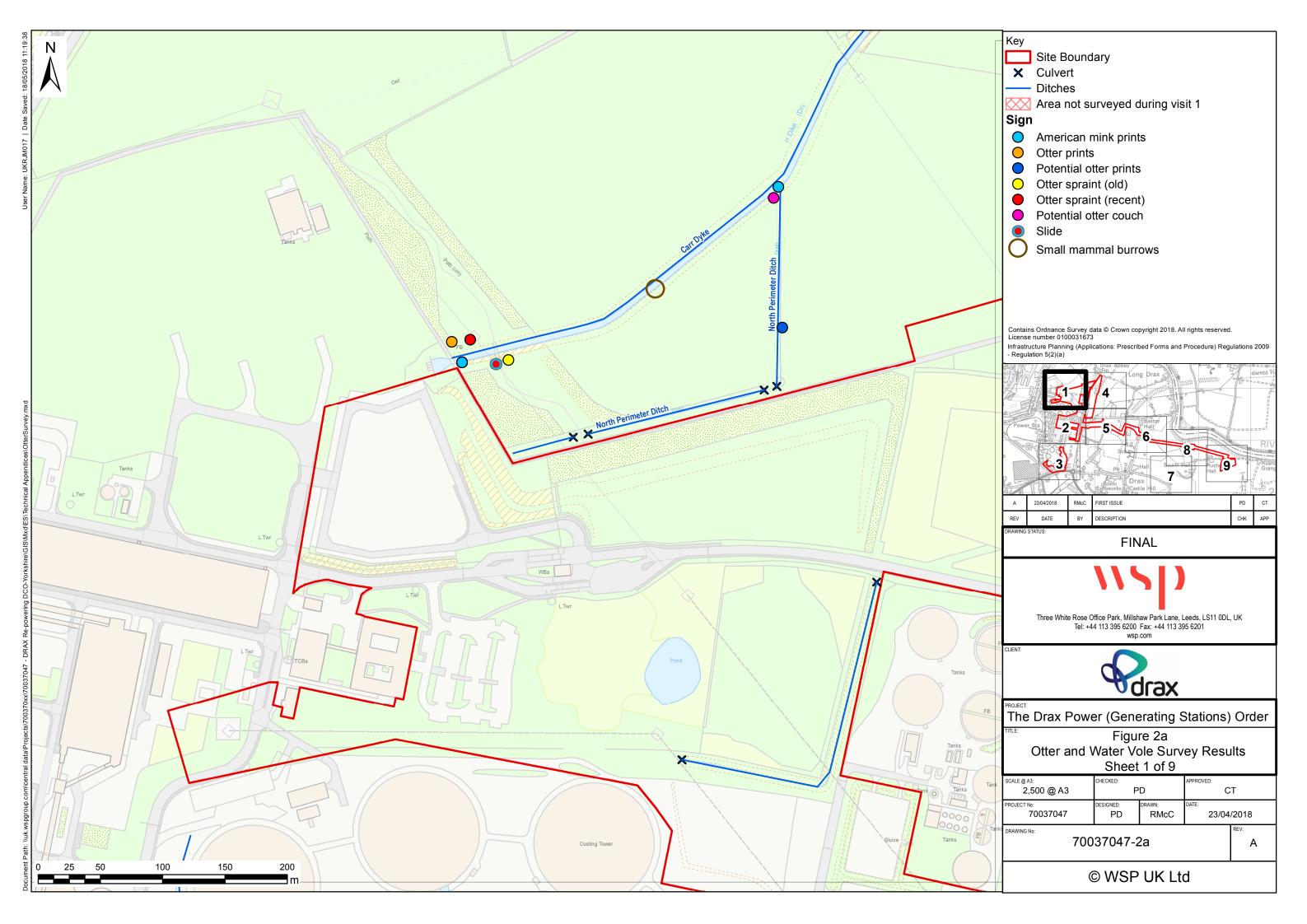
## REFERENCES

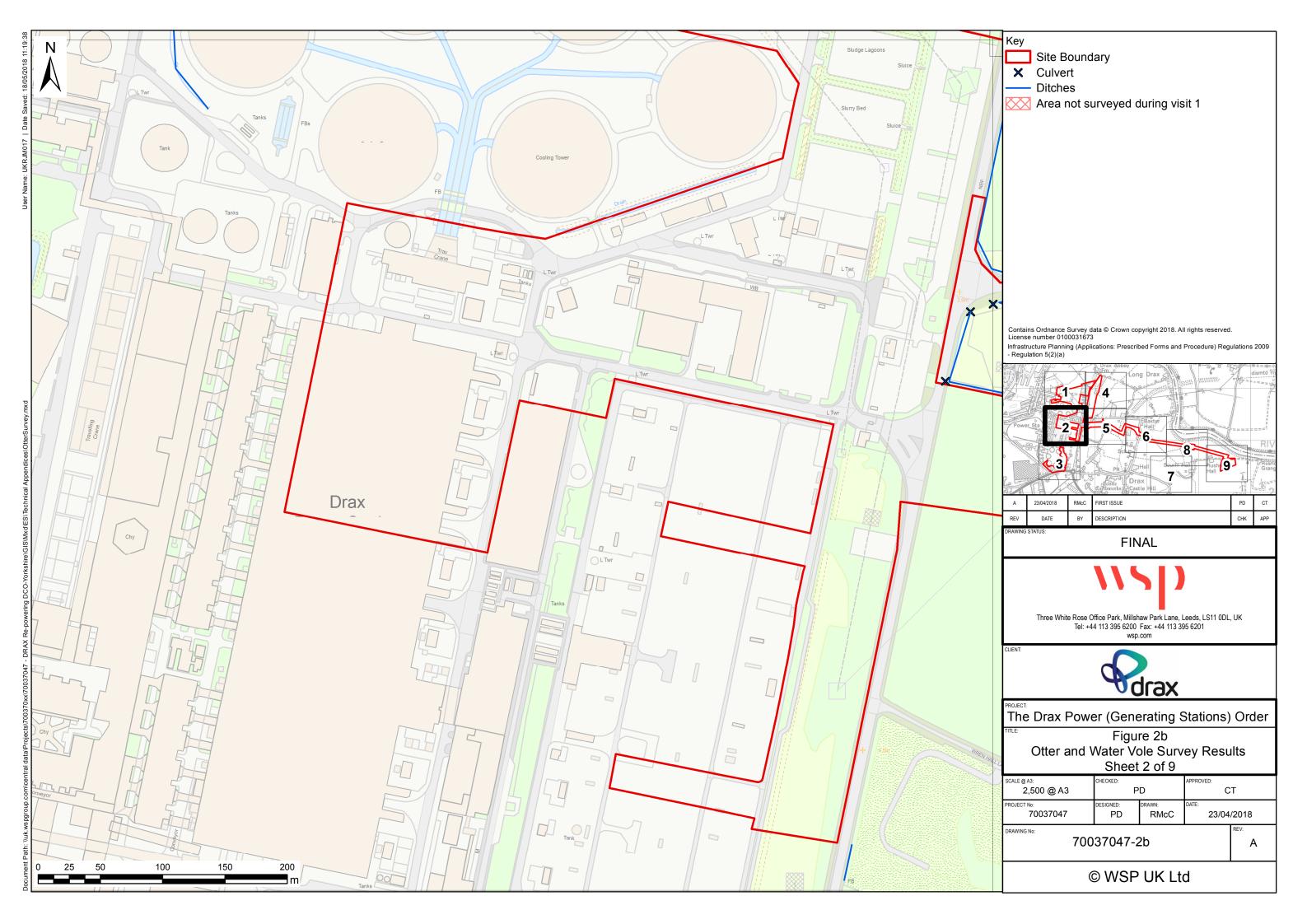
- Ref 1: WSP (2017). Drax Repower Project Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.
- Ref 2: WSP (2018). Drax Repower Project Environmental Statement.
- Ref 3: Her Majesty's Stationary Office (HMSO) (2017). Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations.
- Ref 4: HMSO (1981). Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000).
- Ref 5: HMSO (2006). Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act.
- Ref 6: The UK Biodiversity Action Plan; available online at: http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5155. [Accessed: 25/04/2018].
- Ref: 7: The UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework; available online at: http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6189. [Accessed: 25/04/2018].
- Ref 8: Department for Communities and local Government (2012). National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- Ref 9: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (2005) Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impacts within the Planning System.
- Ref 10: Selby District Local Plan (SDLP) (2005).
- Ref 11: The Selby District Core Strategy Local Plan (2013).
- Ref 12: Selby Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) (2004).
- Ref 13: Chanin and Smith (2003). Monitoring the otter Lutra lutra. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No 10. Peterborough, English Nature.
- Ref 14: Strachan, R., Moorhouse, T. & Gelling, M. (2011). Water Vole Conservation Handbook, third edition. The Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, University of Oxford.

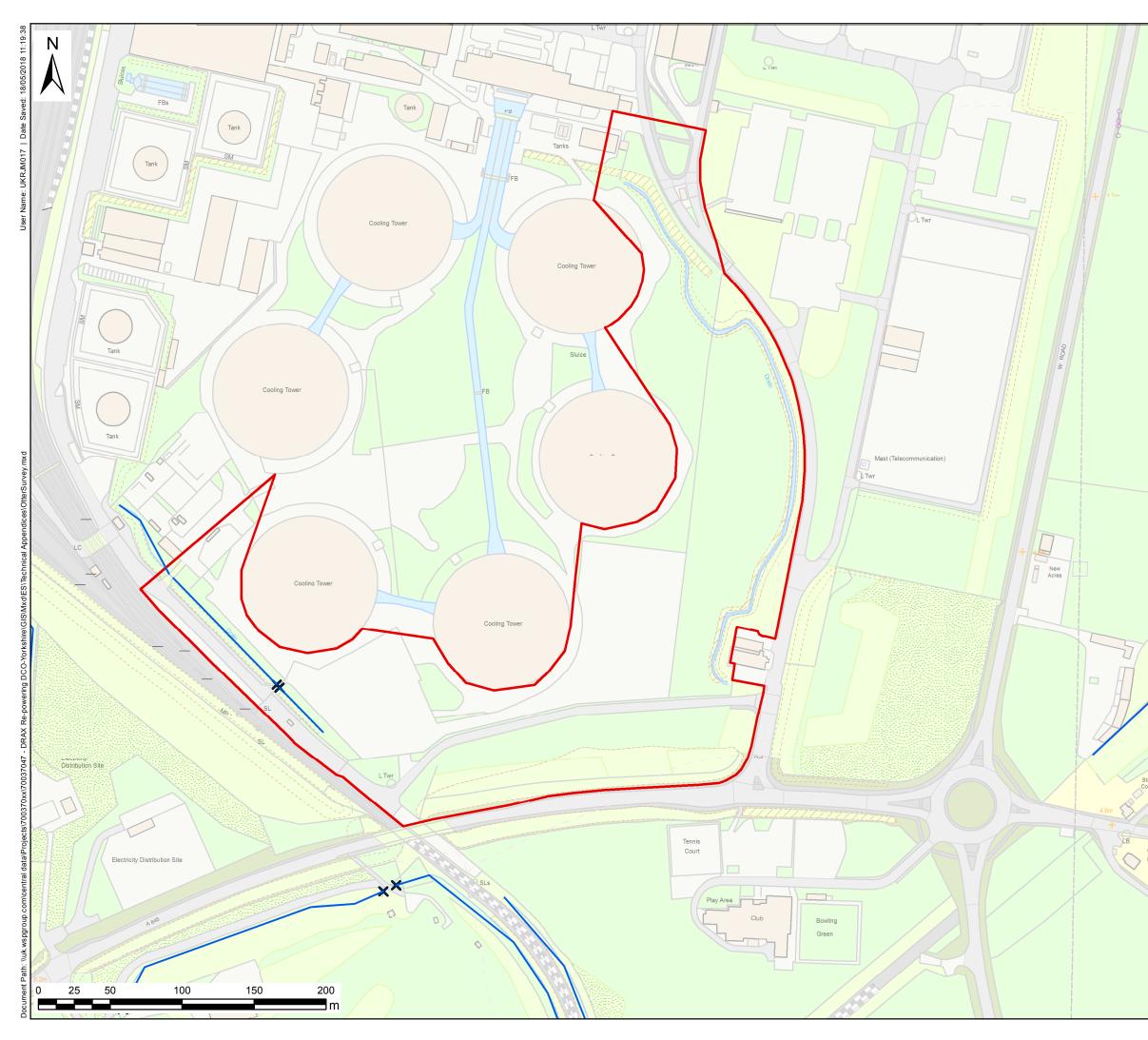


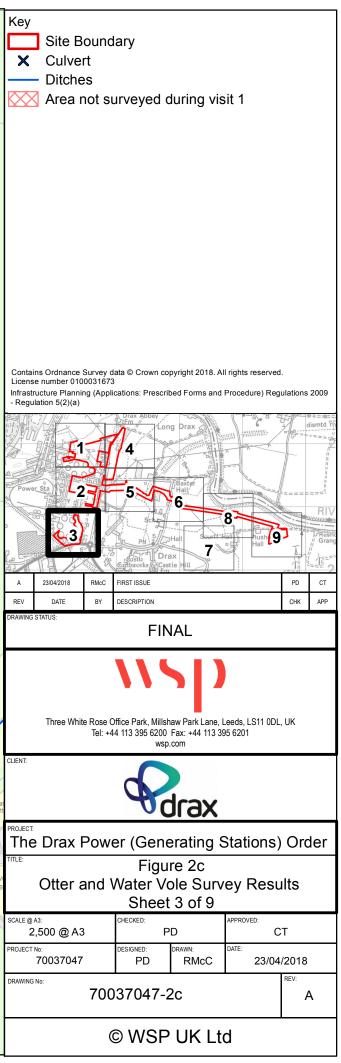


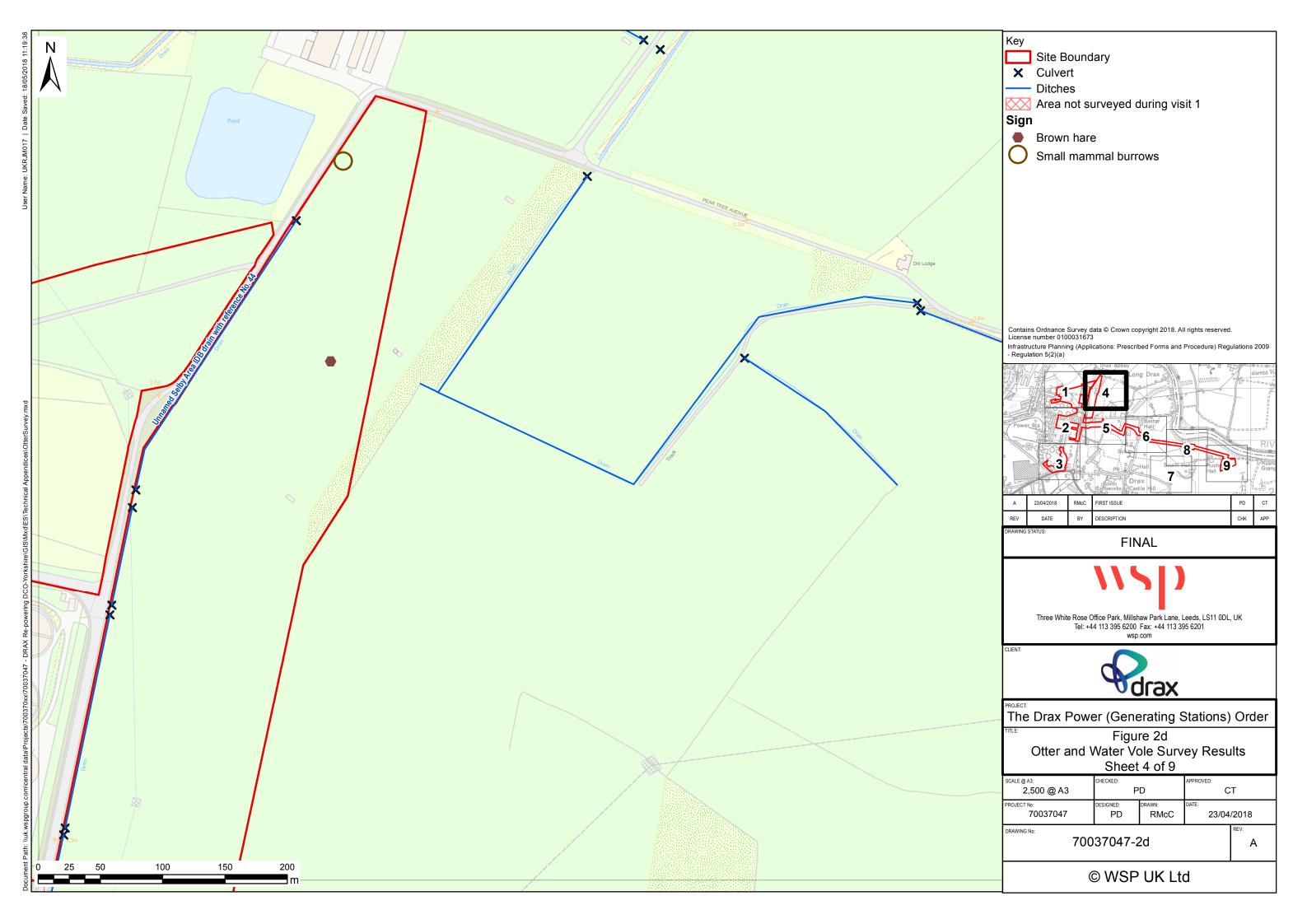
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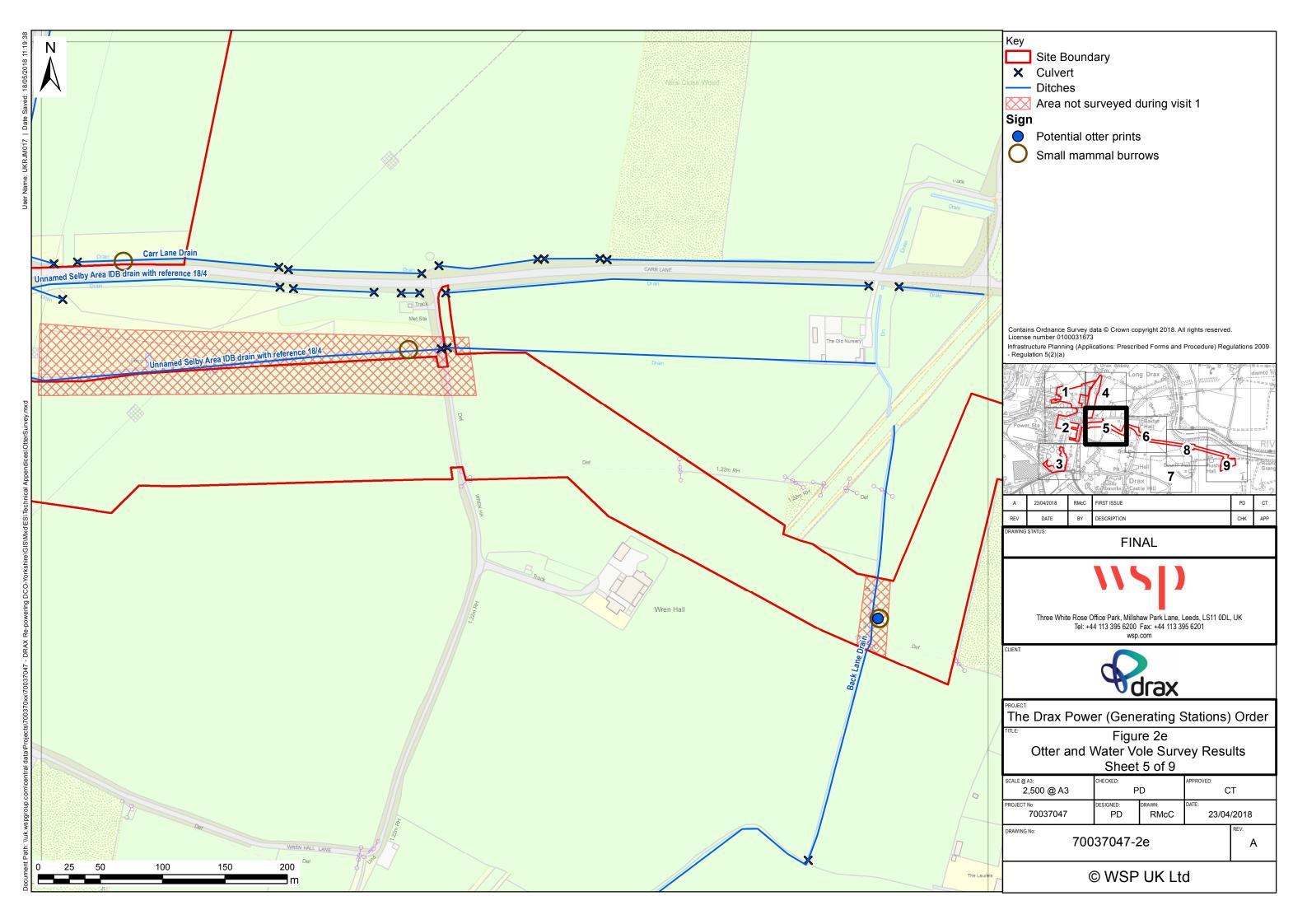


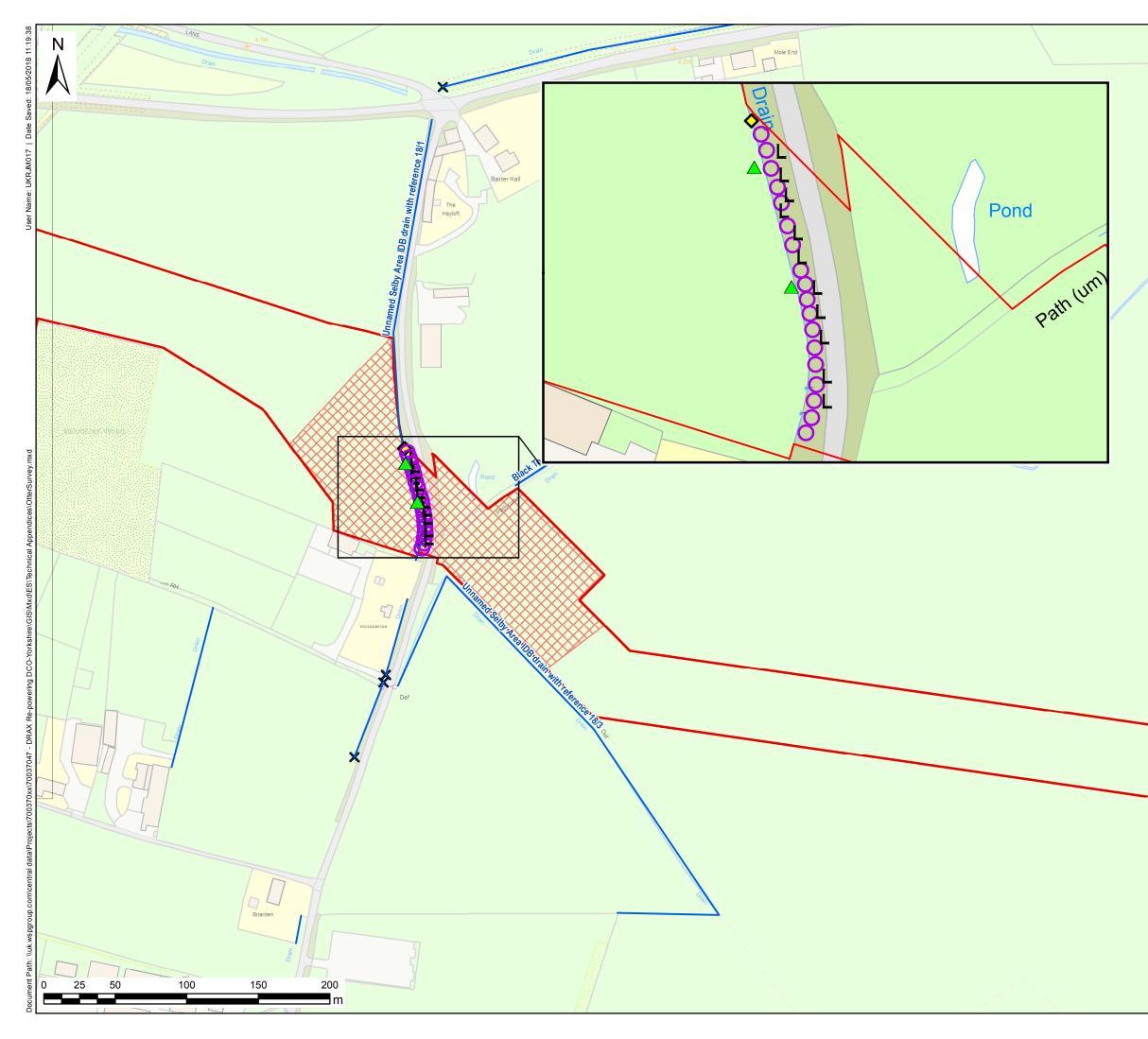


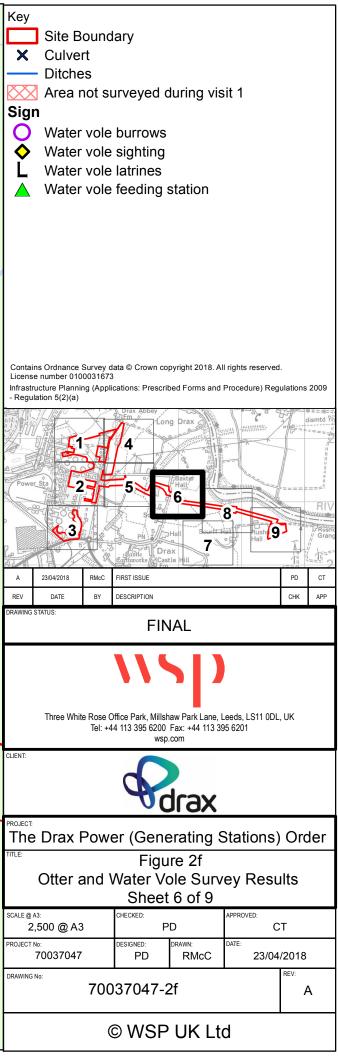


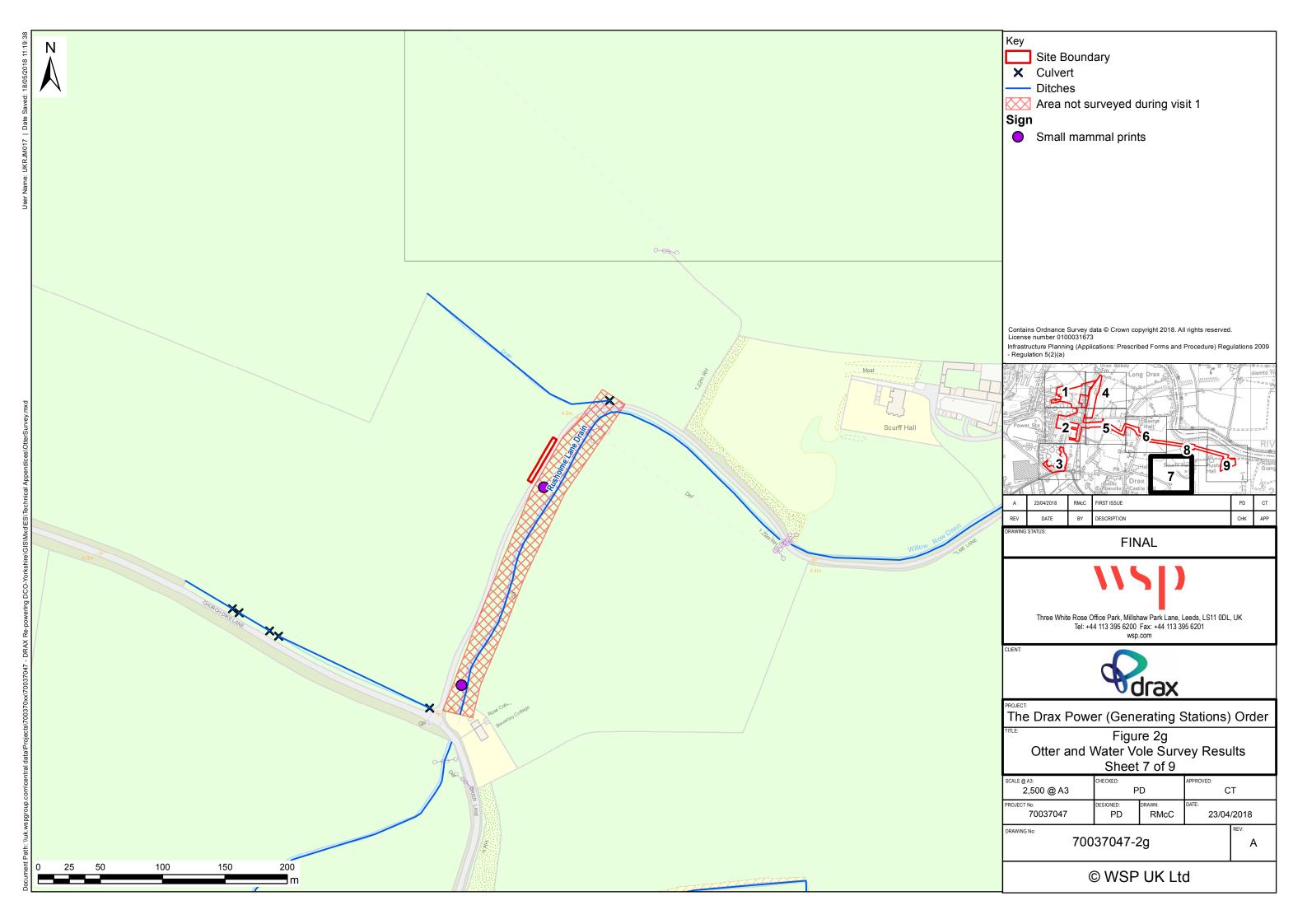


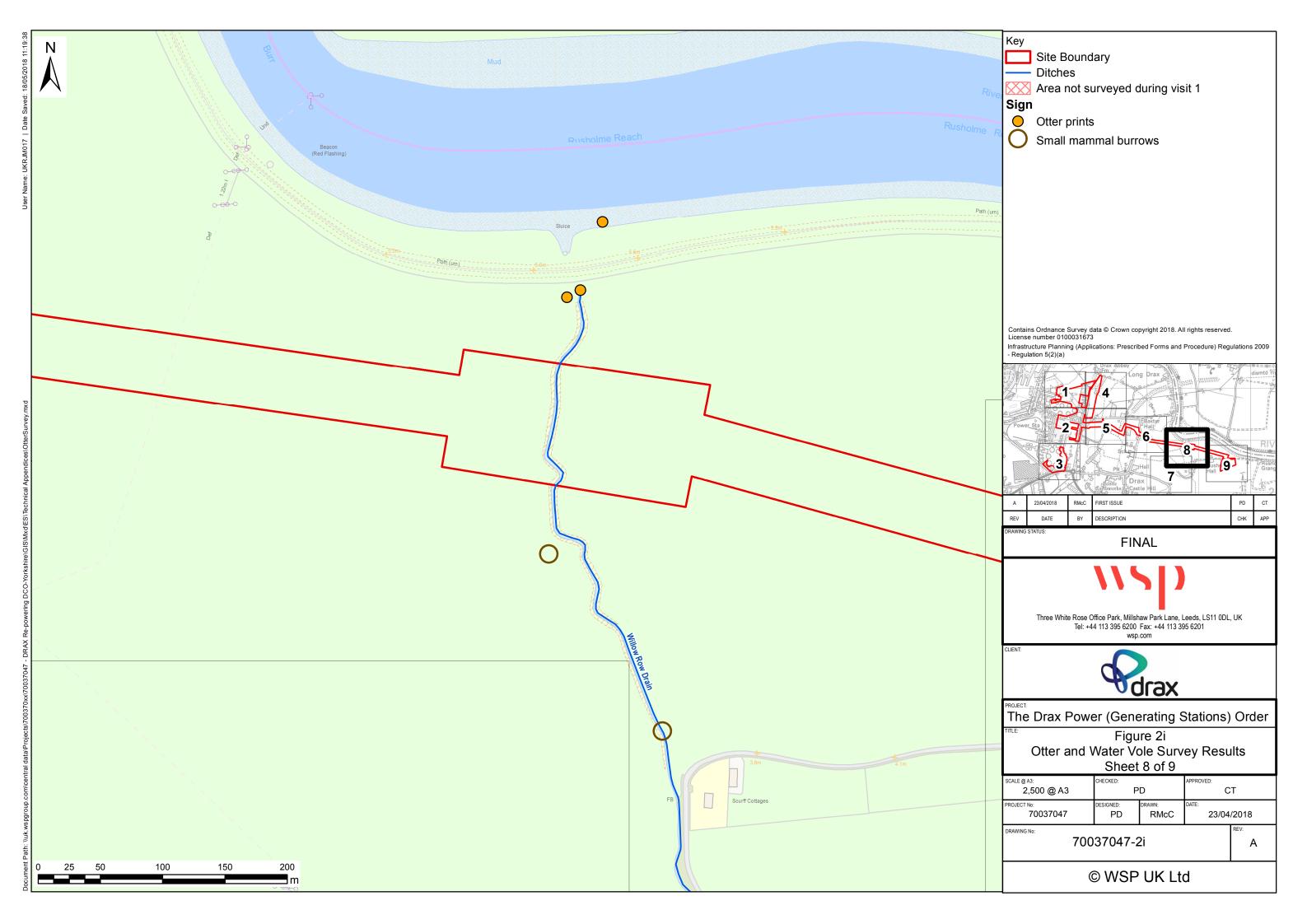


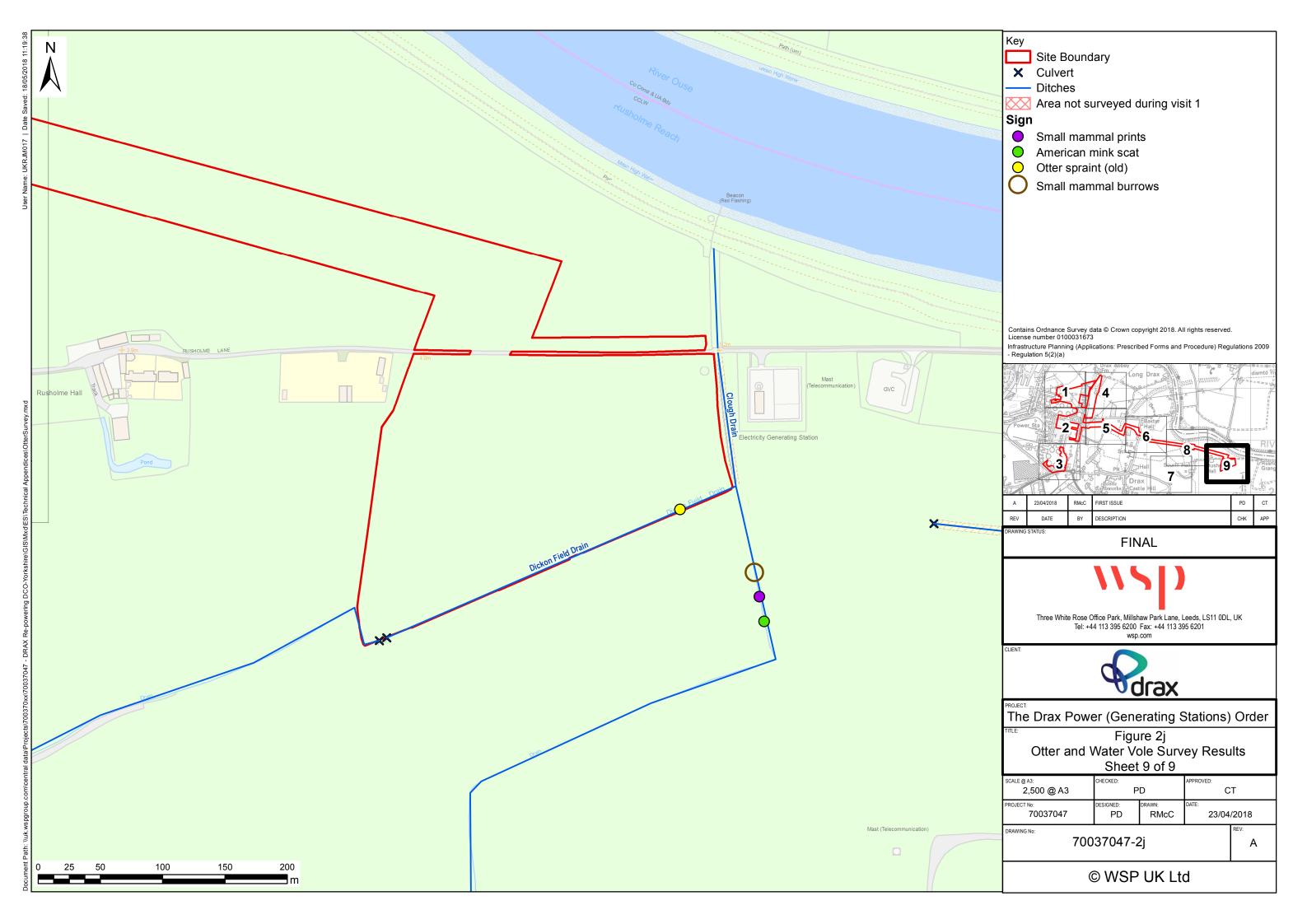












## 1.0 APPENDIX 1: OTTER AND WATER VOLE SURVEY HABITAT INFORMATION

Visit 1: Otter	and W	ater vole S	urvey Habita	at Information					
Watercourse Reference	Habitat Type	Shore/bank	Bordering Land Use	Disturbance	Water Current	Water Depth (m)	Channel Width (m)	Bank Profile	
North Perimeter Ditch	Ditch	Earth	Mixed broadleaved woodland/ arable crop, horses grazing	Public footpath, Power station, agricultural machinery	No water	No water	1	Steep (>45°)	
Unnamed Selby Area IDB drain with reference No. 44	Ditch	Earth	Arable crop, road	Road traffic including lorries to the power station, agricultural machinery	Static	<0.5	1	Steep (>45°)	
Carr Lane Drain	Ditch	Earth	Arable crop, road	Road traffic, agricultural machinery	Static	0.5-1	1	Steep (>45°)	
Unnamed Selby Area IDB drain with reference 18/4	Ditch	Earth	Arable crop, road	Road traffic, agricultural machinery	Static	0.5-1	1	Steep (>45°)	
Back Lane Drain	Not acc	essed during	g this visit						
Unnamed Selby Area IDB drain with reference 18/1	Not acc	essed during	g this visit						
Black Tom Drain	Not acc	Not accessed during this visit							
Unnamed Selby Area IDB drain with reference 18/3	Not accessed during this visit								
Rusholme Lane Drain	Not acc	essed during	g this visit						
Willow Row Drain	Ditch	Earth	Arable Crop	Agricultural machinery	No water	No water	1	Steep (>45°)	





Visit 1: Otter and Water vole Survey Habitat Information									
Watercourse Reference	Habitat Type	Shore/bank	Bordering Land Use	Disturbance	Water Current		Channel Width (m)	Bank Profile	
Clough Drain	Ditch	Earth	Arable Crop	Agricultural machinery	Static	<0.5	1	Steep (>45°)	
Dickon Field Drain	Ditch	Earth	Arable Crop	Agricultural machinery	Static	<0.5	1	Steep (>45°)	

Visit 1: Otter and	d Water vole Survey	y Habitat Information
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Visit 2: Otter	and Water	vole Survey	y Habitat Information
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Watercourse Reference	Habitat Type	Shore/bank	Bordering Land Use	Disturbance	Water Current	Water Depth (m)	Channel Width (m)	Bank Profile
North Perimeter Ditch	Ditch	Earth	Mixed broadleaved woodland/ arable crop, horses grazing	Public footpath, Power station, agricultural machinery	No water	No water	1	Steep (>45°)
Unnamed Selby Area IDB drain with reference No. 44	Ditch	Earth	Arable crop, road	Road traffic including lorries to the power station, agricultural machinery	Static	<0.5	1	Steep (>45°)
Carr Lane Drain	Ditch	Earth	Arable crop, road	Road traffic, agricultural machinery	Static	0.5-1	1	Steep (>45°)
Unnamed Selby Area IDB drain with reference 18/4	Ditch	Earth	Mixed broadleaved woodland/ arable crop	Agricultural machinery	Static	<0.5	1	Steep (>45°)
Back Lane Drain	Ditch	Earth	Arable crop	Agricultural machinery	Static	<0.5	1	Steep (>45°)
Unnamed Selby Area IDB drain with reference 18/1	Ditch	Earth	Arable crop, Road	Road traffic, pedestrians, farm traffic	Static	<0.5	1	Steep (>45°)
Black Tom Drain	Ditch	Earth	Arable crop	Agricultural machinery	Static	<0.5	1	Steep (>45°)
Unnamed	Ditch	Earth	Arable crop	Agricultural	Static	<0.5	1	Steep



Visit 2: Otter and Water vole Survey Habitat Information								
Watercourse Reference	Habitat Type	Shore/bank	Bordering Land Use	Disturbance	Water Current	Water Depth (m)	Channel Width (m)	Bank Profile
Selby Area IDB drain with reference 18/3				machinery				(>45°)
Rusholme Lane Drain	Ditch	Earth	Arable crop, road	Road traffic, pedestrians, farm traffic, dogs	Static	<0.5	1	Steep (>45°)
Willow Row Drain	Ditch	Earth	Arable Crop	Agricultural machinery	No water	No water	1	Steep (>45°)
Clough Drain	Ditch	Earth	Arable Crop	Agricultural machinery	Static	<0.5	1	Steep (>45°)
Dickon Field Drain	Ditch	Earth	Arable Crop	Agricultural machinery	Static	<0.5	1	Steep (>45°)

## 2.0 APPENDIX 2: OTTER AND WATER VOLE SURVEY HABITAT INFORMATION

