

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
at Shoreham Airport, Shoreham  
West Sussex BN43 5FF**

**NGR: TQ 520542, 105711**

**ASE Project No: 170806**

**Site Code: SAI 17**

**ASE Report No: 2017415**

**OASIS id: archaeol6-300333**



**By Chris Russel**

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## **Abstract**

*Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Southern Water to undertake an archaeological watching brief during pipeline excavations west of Cecil Pashley Way, Shoreham Airport. The work took place between the 9<sup>th</sup> of August and the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2017 and this report details the results. The work was commissioned by Southern Water.*

*The watching brief at Shoreham Airport noted the alluvial geology at around 1.57m AOD. It successfully recorded archaeological features, which appeared to relate to post medieval agriculture and WW II military activity at the site. An in-filled ditch was noted which contained 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramic mugs. This feature may date from the earliest phase of airfield construction although the pottery recovered was still in production during WW II. A lead coated wire and a Bakelite junction box were recorded hinting that WW II structures at the site were connected by telephone, although these features may be civilian in origin.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Southern Water to undertake an archaeological watching brief during pipeline excavations west of Cecil Pashley Way, Shoreham Airport (hereafter referred to as 'the site') (NGR TQ 520542, 105711, Figure 1).

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

1.2.1 According to the British Geological Survey the site lies on bedrock of Newhaven Chalk Formation with superficial deposits of Alluvium (BGS 2017). The excavations took place on level grassland to the west of Cecil Pashley Way.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3.1 This work was carried out as permitted development and did not, therefore, require planning consent.

### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

1.4.1 The broad aims and objectives of the archaeological watching brief were to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains, and characterise (nature, date, complexity and extent) any deposits that may be affected by the scheme.

### **1.5 Scope of Report**

1.5.1 The scope of this report is to detail the findings of the watching brief which took place intermittently between the 9<sup>th</sup> of August and the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2017. The work was directed by John Cook, Tom Munnery and Chris Russel. Neil Griffin project managed the fieldwork and Jim Stevenson project managed the post-excavation process.

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Overview**

- 2.1.1 The following is taken from the Heritage Assessment produced for the airport by ACTA Landscape and Heritage Consultants (2016) and is reproduced with due acknowledgement.
- 2.1.2 Shoreham Airport is situated on the west bank of the River Adur a short distance from the historic town of Shoreham. It lies on flat land reclaimed from the sea in the early post-medieval period and was chiefly used for agriculture until the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- 2.1.3 In 1909 the area was developed as an airfield and by 1913 drainage ditches had been filled in to construct runways, with aircraft hangers constructed in the east of the site. During World War One the aerodrome was requisitioned by the Royal Flying Corps as a training facility and at the armistice it was used to store captured German aircraft.
- 2.1.4 Between the World Wars the airfield returned to civilian use. It was purchased by the Brighton and Hove Corporation in 1933 and the terminal building was constructed in 1934. From 1936 commercial flights to major UK cities and the Channel Islands operated from the airport and it was furnished with its own railway station.
- 2.1.5 By 1940 civil flights to Europe and the Middle East were operating from Shoreham and these were still in operation when the airfield was requisitioned again by the military. A complex of gun positions and pillboxes were constructed to defend the facility which was chiefly used for training and air sea rescue. A grid of pipe mines was laid, designed to be detonated in order to deny the airfield to any invading force. Later In the war squadrons from Shoreham supported the D Day invasion and destroyed several V1 flying bombs.
- 2.1.6 At the end of WW II the airfield returned to civilian use and it still operates as such today, as well as housing several light industrial units.

### **2.2 Recent Archaeological Investigation**

- 2.2.1 An archaeological evaluation and watching brief was carried out by Archaeology South-East on the airfield in 2015 (ASE 2015). The fieldwork successfully recorded artefacts and structures relating to the WW II activity at the airfield.

### 3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Fieldwork Methodology (Figure 2)

- 3.1.1 The initial phase of work at the site consisted of the archaeological monitoring of four mechanically dug test pits along the route of the new pipeline.
- 3.1.2 The second phase consisted of the archaeological monitoring of topsoil stripping and trenching relating to the installation of the new pipe. This was done using a 'V' shaped bucket in an area of grassland immediately to the west of Cecil Pashley Way. A section to the very north of the pipeline had been excavated before the commencement of the monitoring. However, some of this work involved the re-excavation of an existing pipe and sections were still open and available for inspection.
- 3.1.3 The remaining pipe trench was monitored by a qualified archaeologist and ample time was given by the on-site contractor for the recording of any archaeological finds or features observed.
- 3.1.4 All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were collected, sampled and recorded to accepted professional standards using standard Archaeology South-East recording forms. A digital photographic record was maintained throughout the work.

#### 3.2 The Site Archive

- 3.2.1 ASE informed Shoreham Museum prior to the commencement of fieldwork that a site archive would be generated. The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited at the museum in due course. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Context sheets	7
Section sheets	1
Plans sheets	0
Colour photographs	0
B&W photos	0
Digital photos	128
Context register	1
Drawing register	1
Watching brief forms	7
Trench Record forms	0

Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive

Bulk finds (quantity e.g. 1 bag, 1 box, 0.5 box 0.5 of a box )	1 box
Registered finds (number of)	0
Flots and environmental remains from bulk samples	0
Palaeoenvironmental specialists sample samples (e.g. columns, prepared slides)	0
Waterlogged wood	0
Wet sieved environmental remains from bulk samples	0

Table 2: Quantification of artefact and environmental samples

3.2.2 The finds and environmental samples ultimately deposited as part of the archive are dependent on specialist recommendations and regional archive requirements.



## 4.0 RESULTS (Figure 2-5)

### 4.1 Test Pits Monitored 09/08/2017

4.1.1 A total of four investigative test pits were monitored at the site prior to the main phase of trenching at the site. These measured approximately 1.0m wide and 2.0m long and were dug to around 1.0m below ground level (BGL). Pits 1-3 showed blue grey alluvium at 1.0m BGL overlain by 0.75m of brown alluvium, 0.20m of subsoil and 0.30m of topsoil. Test pit 4 revealed only brown alluvium.

### 4.2 Pipe Trench Monitored 21/08/2017-12/09/2017

4.2.1 The pipe trench showed generally uniform stratigraphy along its length, which consisted of a lower stiff yellow brown clay alluvium [103] at around 1.57m AOD. This was overlain by mid orange brown silty clay alluvium [102] with a maximum depth of 0.40m. This in turn was overlain by friable, mid grey brown fine silt subsoil [101] with a maximum depth of 0.40m. The sequence was capped by loose, dark grey brown fine silt topsoil [100].

4.2.2 A small number of archaeological features were observed during the works. A single ditch was recorded towards the centre of the monitored trench (Figure 3). This was a steep sided cut [106] filled by dark grey brown fine silty clay with frequent chalk block inclusions [107]. The fill also contained post medieval glass and pottery. The base of this feature was not reached within the limit of excavation.

4.2.3 A lead insulated cable surrounding 4 copper wire [108] was noted in the north of the trench (Figure 4). This cable was seen to run north-west to south-east towards Cecil Pashley Way. Approximately 250m further south the topsoil strip revealed a brick line inspection chamber capped by a purpose built concrete lid [105] (Figure 5). The chamber contained a Bakelite junction box connected to lead coated wire very similar to that recorded as [108].

Context	Type	Interpretation	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
100	Layer	Topsoil	Trench		0.25-0.35
101	Layer	Subsoil	Trench	Trench	0.15-0.40
102	Layer	Upper Alluvium	Trench	Trench	0.30-0.40
103	Layer	Lower Alluvium	Trench	Trench	1.0
105	Masonry	Inspection Pit	0.55	0.43	0.44
106	Cut	Cut of Ditch	Trench	3.90	1.10
107	Fill	Fill of [106]	Trench	3.90	1.10
108	Cable	Lead Insulated Cable	Trench	-	-

Table 3: List of recorded contexts

## 5.0 THE FINDS

### 5.1 Summary

- 5.1.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered during the watching brief at Shoreham Airport. All finds were washed and dried or air dried as appropriate. They were subsequently quantified by count and weight and were bagged by material and context (Table 4). All finds have been packed and stored following ClfA guidelines (2014).

Context	Pottery	Weight (g)	Glass	Weight (g)
107	3	697	1	29
Total	3	697	1	29

Table 4: Finds quantification

### 5.2 The Pottery by Luke Barber

- 5.2.1 The archaeological work recovered pottery from deposit [107]. This produced three large fresh sherds from three different handled cups in refined whiteware. All the cups are different. The first (194g) has a concave profile with splayed base measuring 100mm in diameter. The second (114g) is of cylindrical form with a 76mm diameter base and three purple-red thin annular lines around its middle. The final example is also of cylindrical form but with a notable foot-ring/recessed base (base 84mm diameter, height 92mm) and purple-red rim-edge, below which is a further thin (1mm) annular line. This vessel also has a black transfer-printed maker's name in a circular cartouche on the inset base, showing it to have been made by W.H. VICKRIDGE of 37 Union Street, Boro, London SE. All three cups can be placed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, probably between the 1910s and 1940s. None are definite War Office issue though manufacturers supplied similar utilitarian crockery to the armed forces during both World Wars.
- 5.2.2 The post-Roman pottery is not considered to hold any potential for further analysis and has been discarded.

### 5.3 The Glass by Elke Raemen

- 5.3.1 A small glass fragment weighing 29g was recovered from [107]. It is from the neck of an aqua Codd bottle, dating between 1873 and c. 1925.

### 5.4 Other by Justin Russell

- 5.4.1 A GPO (General Post Office) Bakelite junction box, found within a brick lined inspection chamber was recovered from the centre of the topsoil strip. Marked 'GPO BTNo13 LR43 243', it has a length of lead cable entering through a secured fixing nut. The serial number text signifies this is a General Post Office box (ie, for use with a telephone system) and LR43 might indicated a manufacturing date of 1943. The cable itself is composed of four copper wires, tightly bound with cloth and encased in a lead sheath. The box unscrews to reveal eight screw tightened connection points, two of which

have wires connecting them together. Other cables connected to the box would appear to have been removed some time in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

- 5.4.2 Lead coated cable [108] found in the north of the monitored area, is similar to that seen in the junction box but differs in the manner of construction; the four copper wires are internally bound in paper rather than cloth.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 Overview of stratigraphic sequence**

- 6.1.1 The upper alluvium was seen between 1.57m and 1.67m AOD along the pipe trench. This was overlain by subsoil and topsoil, which appeared undisturbed.

### **6.2 Discussion of archaeological remains by period**

- 6.2.1 The earliest feature on site appeared to be the ditch [106]. The chalk inclusions in the fill suggest deliberate back filling possibly during the construction of the airport in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

- 6.2.2 The cable [108] would appear to run around the north-east perimeter of the airfield, on the west of Cecil Pashley Way and is likely to form part of the communication system of the airfield. There is a strong possibility the cable runs from the Guard Hut some 60m to the north, thenceforth connects to the control tower in the south - the alignment of the cable with the air raid shelter between Cecil Pashley Way and the River Adur may only be coincidence, as shelters of this type were not generally connected to a telephone system.

- 6.2.3 The brick lined inspection chamber [105] in the central part of the monitored topsoil strip can be tentatively linked to the airfield defence scheme, in that the cable exiting from the inspection box was seen to head in the direction of a light anti-aircraft post on the western bank of the River Adur. The post, now partially demolished, features a crew rest area, for use during periods when they were on standby (prepared for an attack but not at action stations) and it is possible the cable represents part of the telephone communication, that links with the control tower and possibly the cable [108] to the north.

### **6.3 Conclusions**

- 6.3.1 The watching brief at Shoreham Airport noted the alluvial geology at approximately 1.57m AOD. It successfully recorded archaeological features, which appeared to relate to post-medieval agriculture and WW II military activity at the site. An in-filled ditch was noted, which contained 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramic mugs. This feature may date from the earliest phase of airfield construction although the pottery recovered was still in production during WW II. A lead coated wire and a Bakelite junction box were recorded hinting that WW II structures at the site were connected by telephone, although these features may be civilian in origin.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

ASE would like to thank Southern Water for commissioning the work and for their assistance throughout the project, and Mark Taylor, Principal Archaeologist, West Sussex County Council for his guidance and monitoring. The excavation was directed by John Cook, Tom Munnery and Chris Russel.

## HER Summary

HER enquiry no.						
Site code	SAI 17					
Project code	170806					
Planning reference	n/a					
Site address	Cecil Pashley Way, Shoreham Airport, Shoreham, West Sussex, BN43 5FF					
District/Borough	West Sussex					
NGR (12 figures)	TQ 520542, 105711					
Geology	Newhaven Chalk					
Fieldwork type	Eval	Excav	<b>WB</b>	HBR	Survey	Other
Date of fieldwork	09/08/2017-12/09/2017					
Sponsor/client	Southern Water					
Project manager	Neil Griffin					
Project supervisor	Tom Munnery/Chris Russel					
Period summary	Palaeolithic	Mesolithic	Neolithic	Bronze Age	Iron Age	
	Roman	Anglo-Saxon	Medieval	Post-Medieval	<b>Other</b>	
Project summary (100 word max)	<p><i>The watching brief at Shoreham Airport noted the alluvial geology at around 1.57m AOD. It successfully recorded archaeological features, which appeared to relate to post medieval agriculture and WW II military activity at the site. An in-filled ditch was noted which contained 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramic mugs. This feature may date from the earliest phase of airfield construction although the pottery recovered was still in production during WW II. A lead coated wire and a Bakelite junction box were recorded hinting that WW II structures at the site were connected by telephone, although these features may be civilian in origin.</i></p>					
Museum/Accession No.						

**OASIS Form**

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-300333**

Project details

Project name Shoreham Airport Watching Brief

Short description of the project

Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Southern Water to undertake an archaeological watching brief during pipeline excavations west of Cecil Pashley Way, Shoreham Airport. The work took place between the 9th of August and the 12th of September 2017 and this report details the results. The work was commissioned by Southern Water. The watching brief at Shoreham Airport noted the alluvial geology at around 1.57m AOD. It successfully recorded archaeological features which appeared to relate to post medieval agriculture and WW II military activity at the site. An in-filled ditch was noted which contained 20th century ceramic mugs. This feature may date from the earliest phase of airfield construction although the pottery recovered was still in production during WW II. A lead coated wire and a Bakelite junction box were recorded hinting that WW II structures at the site were connected by telephone although these features may be civilian in origin.

Project dates Start: 09-08-2017 End: 12-09-2017

Previous/future work Yes / Not known

Any associated project reference codes 170806 - Contracting Unit No.

Any associated project reference codes SAI 17 - Sitecode

Type of project Recording project

Site status None

Current Land use Transport and Utilities 2 - Other transport infrastructure

Monument type NONE None

Significant Finds NONE None

Investigation type "Watching Brief"

Project location

Country England

Site location	WEST SUSSEX ADUR SHOREHAM BY SEA shoreham airport
Postcode	BN43 5FF
Study area	2 Hectares
Site coordinates	TQ 620542 105711 50.871303007524 0.303448273609 50 52 16 N 000 18 12 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 1.57m Max: 1.6m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	Southern Water
Project design originator	ASE
Project director/manager	Neil Griffin
Project supervisor	Chris Russel
Type of sponsor/funding body	Southern Water
Project archives	
Physical Archive recipient	Local Museum
Physical Contents	"other"
Digital Archive recipient	Local Museum
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Survey"
Paper Archive recipient	Local Museum
Paper Contents	"other"
Project bibliography	
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Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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Author(s)/Editor(s)	Russel,C



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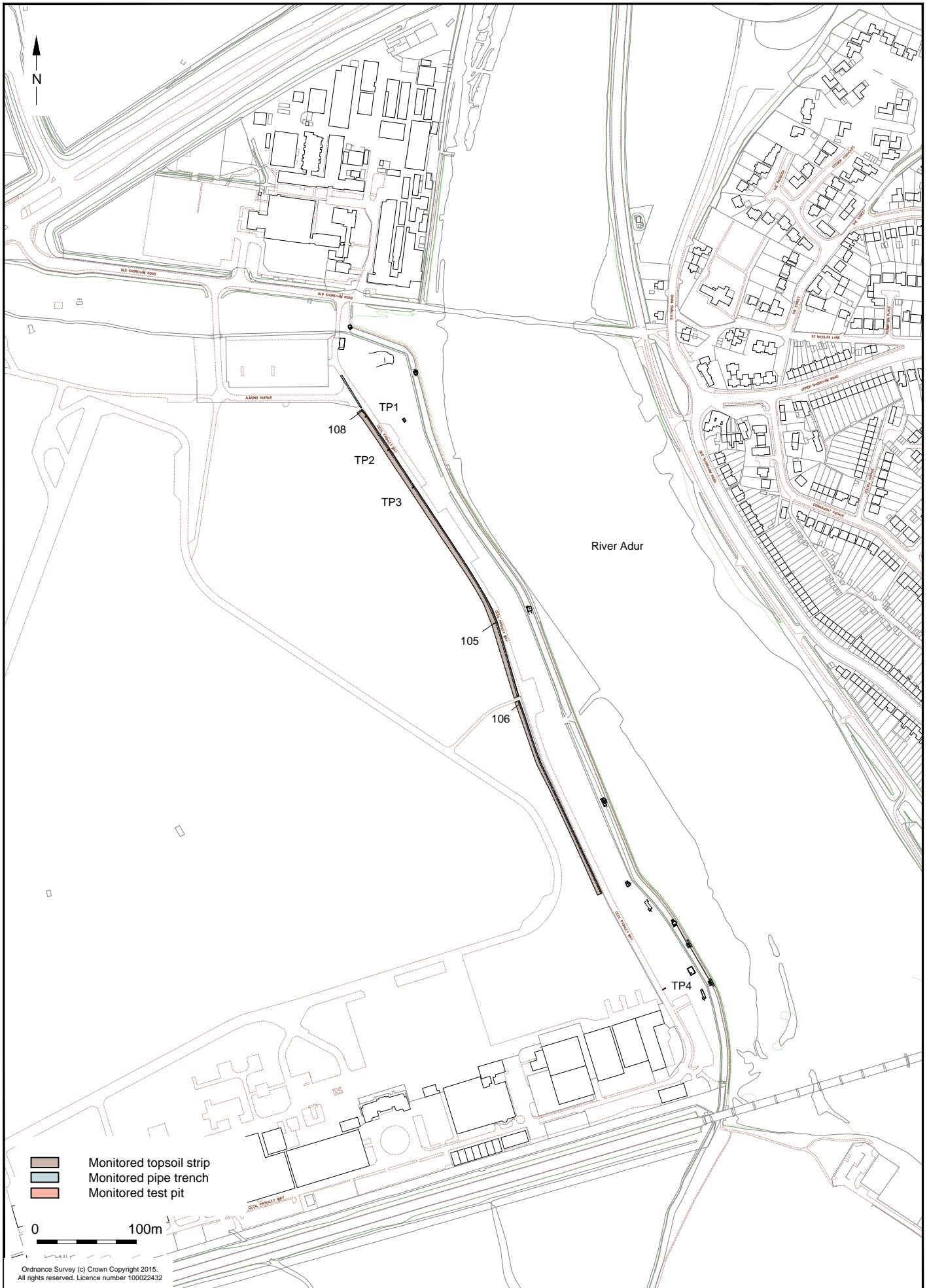
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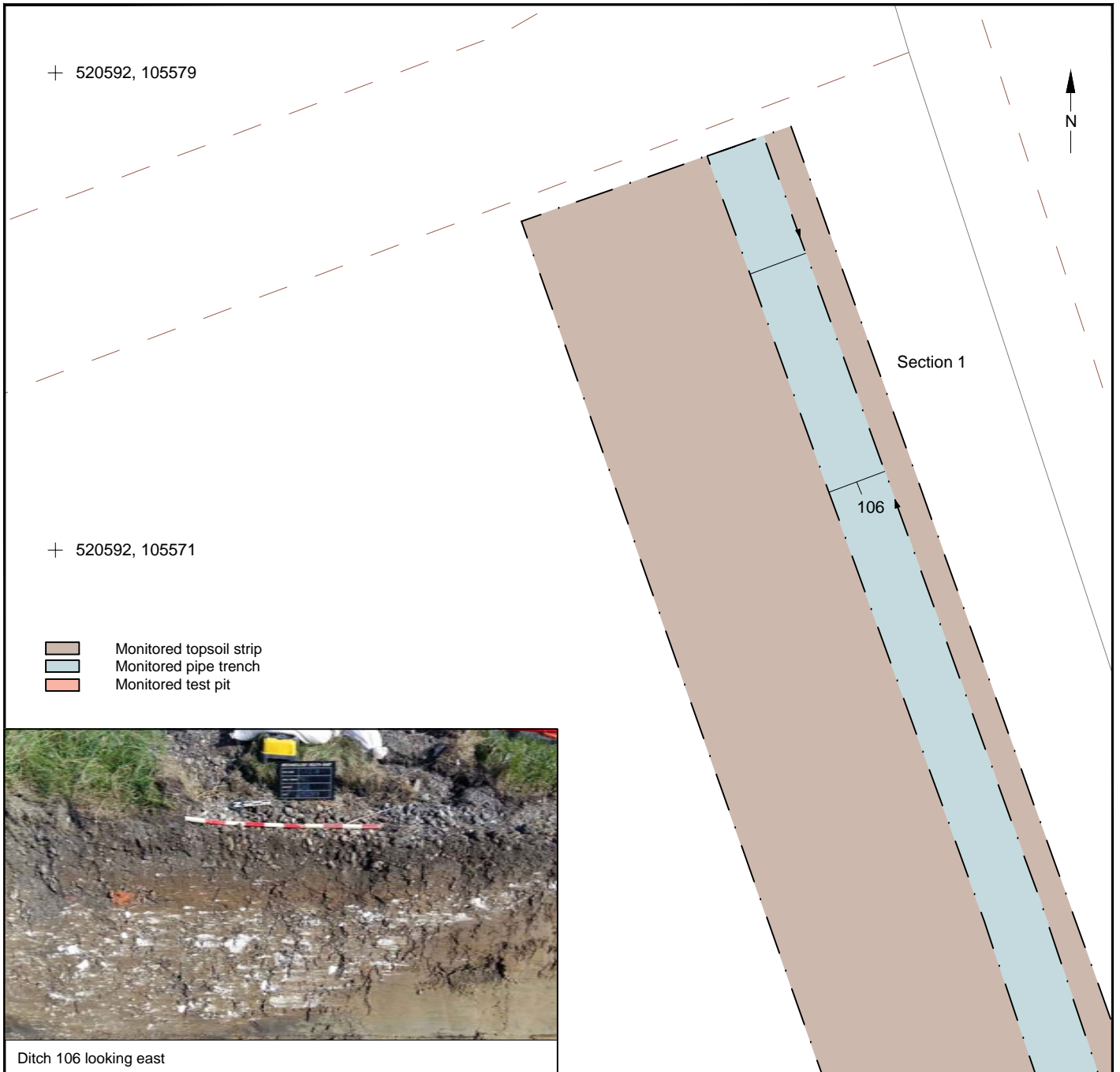
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Project Ref: 170806	Nov 2017	Site location	
Report Ref: 2017415	Drawn by: JLR		

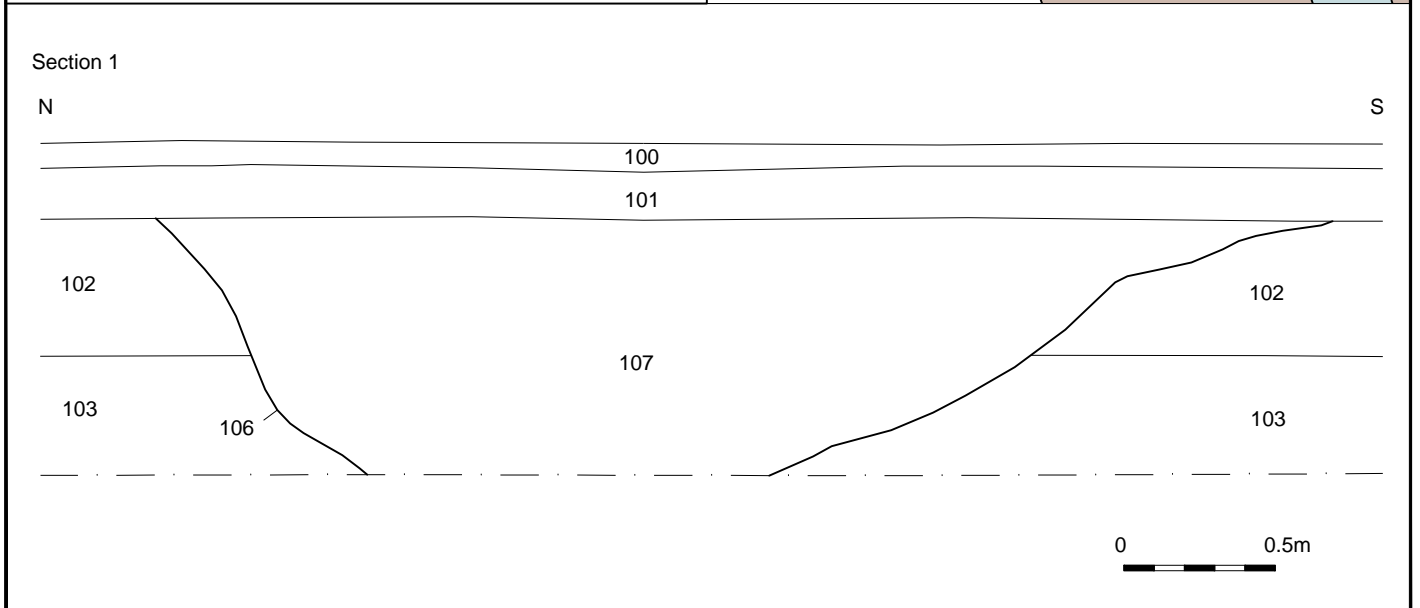


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Project Ref: 170806	Nov 2017	Location of monitored work	
Report Ref: 2017415	Drawn by: JLR		

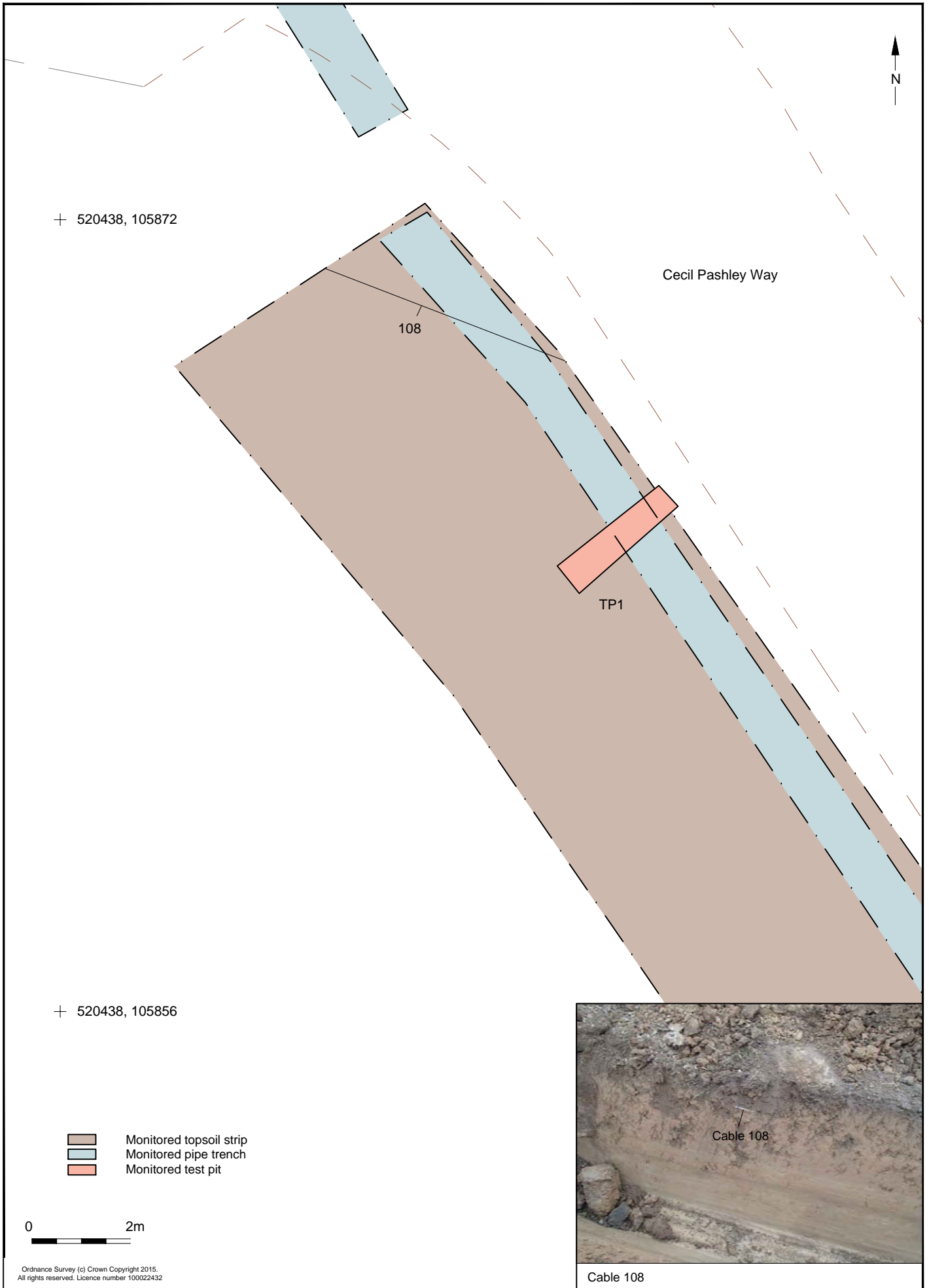




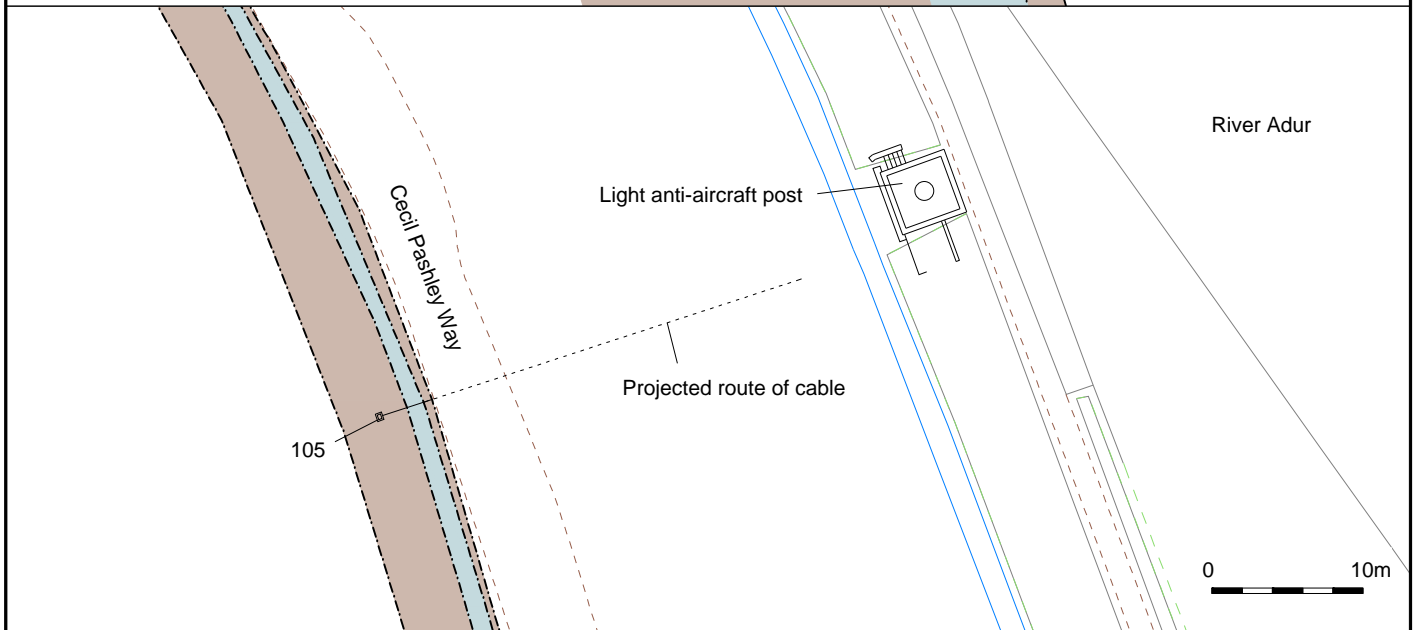
Ditch 106 looking east



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Project Ref: 170806	Nov 2017	Feature 106		
Report Ref: 2017415	Drawn by: JLR			



© Archaeology South-East		Shoreham Airport, Shoreham		Fig. 4
Project Ref: 170806	Nov 2017	Feature 108		
Report Ref: 2017415	Drawn by: JLR			



Brick inspection chamber 105

Concrete lid to brick chamber

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Project Ref: 170806	Nov 2017	Feature 105		
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