

# LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

## BRAINTREE DISTRICT



### BraG17 Nether Hall Farm Sarsen Stones, Gestingthorpe

**Site location:** A large number of sarsen stones outside Nether Hall Farm

**Grid Reference:** TL 809393

**Status:** Public – at the side of a public road

**Summary of the geological interest:**

A large number of sarsen stones, the largest some 2.4 metres (8 feet) long. This may be the largest sarsen stone in North Essex today.



**Site Assessment.** *Local Geological Sites (LoGS) in Essex are assessed using criteria based on DEFRA guidance. An assessment form is used which asks key questions under four value categories: scientific, educational, historical and aesthetic. This site has been assessed and qualifies under these criteria.*

**Scientific interest and site importance:**

There are at least nine (possibly sixteen) sarsen stones outside Nether Hall Farm. The largest (one of the largest in Essex) is a triangular stone some 2.4 metres (8 feet) long. The farm is private property and the stones can only be viewed from the road.

Sarsens are remarkably abundant in the area around Gestingthorpe village. Boswell (1929) mapped their distribution in the Sudbury district and stated that over sixty blocks of sarsen-stone were present in Gestingthorpe parish. There are unfortunately far fewer visible today.

Sarsens are extremely hard boulders of sandstone that are often used as boundary or entrance markers having been dragged from nearby fields. They formed around 55 million years ago when the climate of Britain was hot and a layer of sand beneath the surface of the ground became cemented with quartz. Research has compared the conditions under which sarsens and puddingstones may have been formed with the present day climate in the Kalahari Desert and parts of Australia. They are thus very resistant to erosion and have survived the rigours of the Ice



Age. They were weathered out of the geological strata where they were formed – the Lower Tertiary Upnor Formation, which outcrops locally.

**Reference:** Boswell 1929, Lucy 2003a



*Nether Hall Sarsen Stones - view towards 16 roadside stones from northern end, looking south-east (photo D Potts 2023)*



*Nether Hall Sarsen Stones - stone no.7, looking south (photo D Potts 2023)*



*Nether Hall Sarsen Stones - large stone (no. 11), looking south-east at farm entrance (photo D Potts 2023)*