

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

BRAINTREE DISTRICT



BraG18 Nether House Farm Sarsen Stones, Wickham St Paul

Site location: On the roadside next to the entrance to Nether House Farm

Grid Reference: TL 8392 3654

Status: Public – at the side of a public road, next to a private farm entrance

Summary of the geological interest:

Two fine sarsen stones either side of the entrance to Nether House Farm.



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:

At either side of the entrance to Nether House Farm are two fine sarsen stones. The largest (150cm x 120cm x 30cm) stands in an upright position. The smaller stone (120cm x 60cm x 40cm) has a fine mamillated surface on both sides. It is the best example known from north Essex. A smaller sarsen stone stands next to each of the large sarsens.

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.

The remarkable 'mamillated' surfaces are called growth structures which were formed as the quartz slowly crystallised between the sand grains from a central point.

The farm is private property and the stones can only be viewed from the road.

Reference:



Nether House Farm - upright sarsen on RHS of entrance (photo D Potts 2024)



Small sarsen on RHS of entrance (photo D Potts 2024)



Nether House Farm - side profile of sarsen on LHS of entrance (photo D Potts 2024)



Nether House Farm - small sarsen on LHS of entrance (photo D Potts 2024)