

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

CASTLE POINT DISTRICT



Cpt PG7 West Wood, Daws Heath

Site location: Valley of Prittle Brook, Hadleigh, Essex

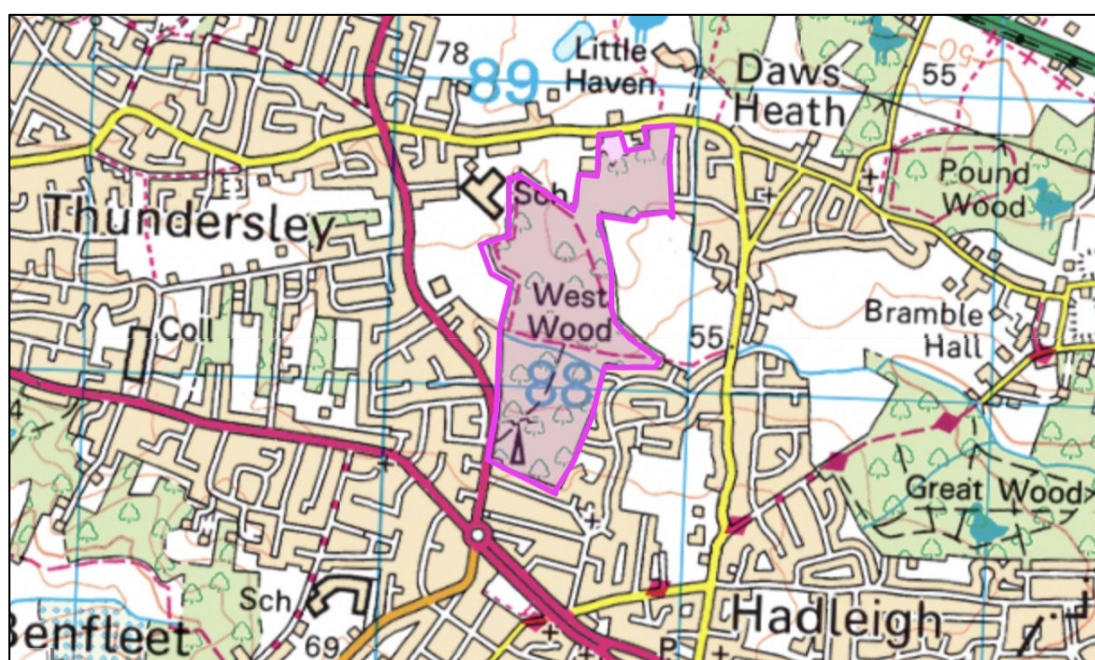
Grid Reference: TQ 805880

Status: Publicly accessible at all times

Summary of the geological interest:

West Wood has a varied geology which has influenced the species of trees that exist from valley floor to hilltop. The Prittle Brook flows in the valley in the centre of the wood, which is underlain by a bedrock of Claygate Beds. To the north and south the rising ground gives way to the overlying Bagshot Sands.

On the highest ground, to the north, there are overgrown shallow pits where 'exotic' gravel can be found. This is Daws Heath Gravel, which outcrops on each side of the valley just beyond the north and south boundaries of the wood but has migrated here during the coldest periods of the Ice Age by the process of 'solifluction' where saturated ground moves downhill under gravity. Daws Heath Gravel is an ancient remnant of a terrace of river gravel deposited by the River Medway when it flowed across eastern Essex in the early part of the Ice Age.



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

The varied geology has influenced the species of trees that exist from valley floor to hilltop. The Prittle Brook flows in the valley in the centre of the wood, which is underlain by a bedrock of Claygate Beds. To the north and south the rising ground gives way to the overlying Bagshot Sands.

On the highest ground, to the north and northeast, there are numerous overgrown former shallow gravel pits, where exotic gravel can still be found, brought to the surface by animal burrowing. This is Daws Heath Gravel, which outcrops on each side of the valley on the north and south boundaries of the wood.

Daws Heath Gravel is an ancient remnant of a terrace of river gravel deposited by the River Medway when it flowed across eastern Essex in the early part of the Ice Age, perhaps as much as a million years ago, and contains unusual rock types, including some from the Weald of Kent.



An abandoned former gravel pit exposing Daws Heath Gravel in the northeast corner of West Wood (the former Cottage Plantation, now called Valerie Wells Wood).

Photos: Jeff Saward, 2020.