LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES
COLCHESTER DISTRICT

CoG1 Church Lane Gravel Cliff, Stanway

Site location: Just south of Church Lane, Stanway, Colchester, Essex.

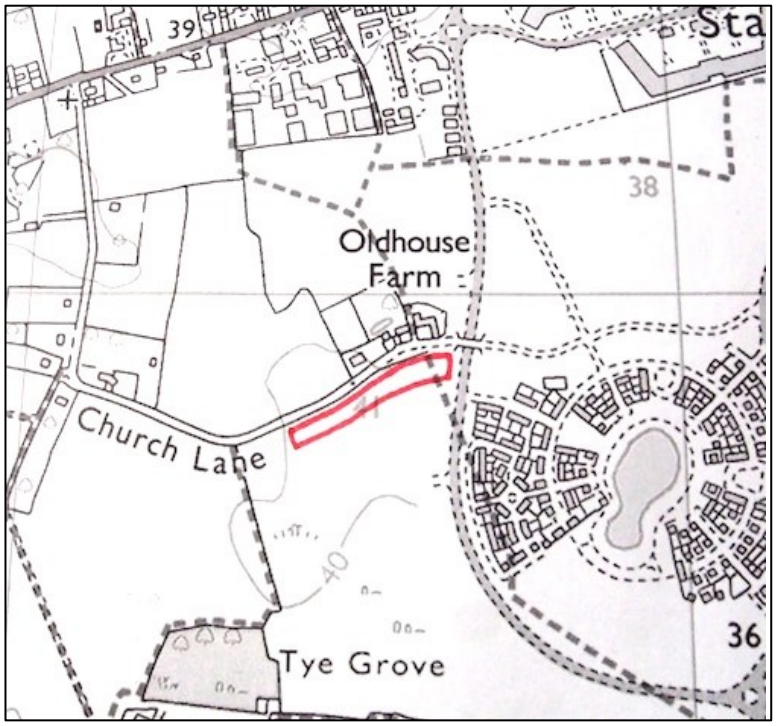
Grid Reference: From TL 9442 2379 to TL 9463 2389

Status: On private land.

Summary of the geological interest:

The disused gravel pits south of Church Lane, Stanway have mostly been infilled and much of the land is now occupied by housing. However, a vertical cliff of Kesgrave Sands and Gravels (pre-diversion Thames gravel) is preserved south of Church Lane just west of the new Stanway Western Bypass. Although it is partly obscured by vegetation, this cliff is a rare survival and is of educational and scientific interest.

The Kesgrave Sands and Gravels were laid down during the early Ice Age by the River Thames before it was diverted to its present course. It then flowed through mid-Essex and Suffolk and out across what is now the southern North Sea to become a tributary of the Rhine. The gravel is mostly flint but also contains 'exotic' pebbles of rocks from far upstream, some of which are ignimbrite (a volcanic rock) from North Wales.



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.*

Date of selection/last
revision: September 2017

Scientific interest and site importance

The sand and gravel at Church Lane cliff is typical of the Kesgrave Sands and Gravels. Exposures of gravel such as this are very rare nowadays; most pits having been restored with no geological exposures remaining.

Research into the origin of the Kesgrave Sands and Gravels is ongoing, with recent investigations in this area suggesting that some of this gravel may have been redeposited by meltwater from the Anglian Ice Sheet. Retention of a good gravel exposure here is therefore important for future scientific study.

The gravel cliff at Church Lane, Stanway (photograph taken in 2007).