

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT



UfdG35 Westley Lane Chalk Pit, Saffron Walden

Site location: Small chalk pit on the side of Westley Lane, a track leading to Westley Farm.

Grid Reference: TL 5363 4016

Status: On public footpath (Westley Lane), the pit is on private land.

Summary of the geological interest:

Chalk pit on the side of Westley Lane with fine exposures of clean, white chalk.



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 chalk pit excavated into the hillside on the side of Westley Lane has a fine, 4 metre high vertical cliff of very clean white chalk. It is one of the best exposures of Upper Chalk in the district. The pit can be seen from the track which is a public footpath but the pit is on private land and permission from the landowner is required for access.

Chalk is a special type of limestone formed on the floor of a tropical sea about 80 million years ago during the Cretaceous period. The Chalk Sea is thought to have covered most of northern Europe, the purity of the chalk being evidence that coastlines were then far away and sea level was very high. At this time the European continent had not yet separated from North America. Fossils of creatures that lived in the Chalk Sea have been found in the Chalk here but they are rare and difficult to spot.

The chalk is soft, white and blocky. There are widely-spaced courses of nodular flint and layers and oblique veins of tabular flint. Flint is an extremely hard, black form of quartz that originates from the skeletons of sponges that were dissolved by sea water and precipitated as mostly horizontal layers.

