

UfdG40 Highwood Gravel Quarry

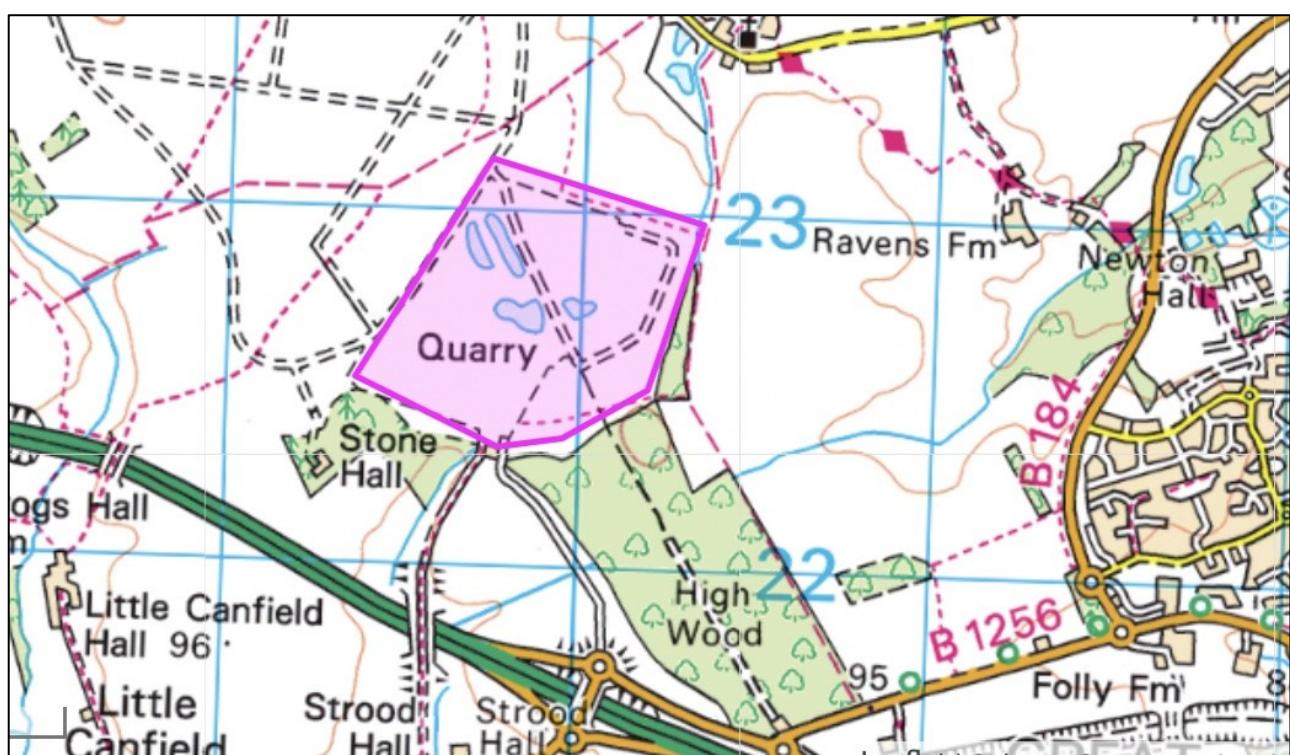
Site location: Highwood Gravel Quarry, Great Easton, near Great Dunmow.

Grid reference: TL 597 226

Status: Private land (working gravel quarry)

Summary of the geological interest:

Highwood Gravel Quarry is a working gravel quarry with exposures of Kesgrave (Thames) Sands and Gravels overlain by a thickness of boulder clay (till). The exposures are constantly changing as the gravel is worked.



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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

Highwood Gravel Quarry is working the lower part of the Kesgrave Sands and Gravels (Sudbury Formation of Kesgrave Catchment Group) which were laid down during the early Ice Age by the River Thames when it flowed through north Essex and Suffolk and out across what is now the southern North Sea to become a tributary of the Rhine.

A number of unusual erratic cobbles and boulders have been found in the gravels by members of the Essex Rock and Mineral Society and the Essex Field Club, including 'exotic' rocks from Cornwall and North Wales. Such discoveries are the basis for establishing the route of the former Thames and the drainage pattern of Southern England over 500,000 years ago.

Above the Kesgrave Formation is a thickness of boulder clay, or till, which was laid down on top of these gravels about 450,000 years ago by an ice sheet during the Anglian glaciation, the most severe cold period of the whole of the Ice Age.



Highwood Quarry in 2016. Photo: Ros Mercer