

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT



UfdG5 Audley End Sarsen Stone

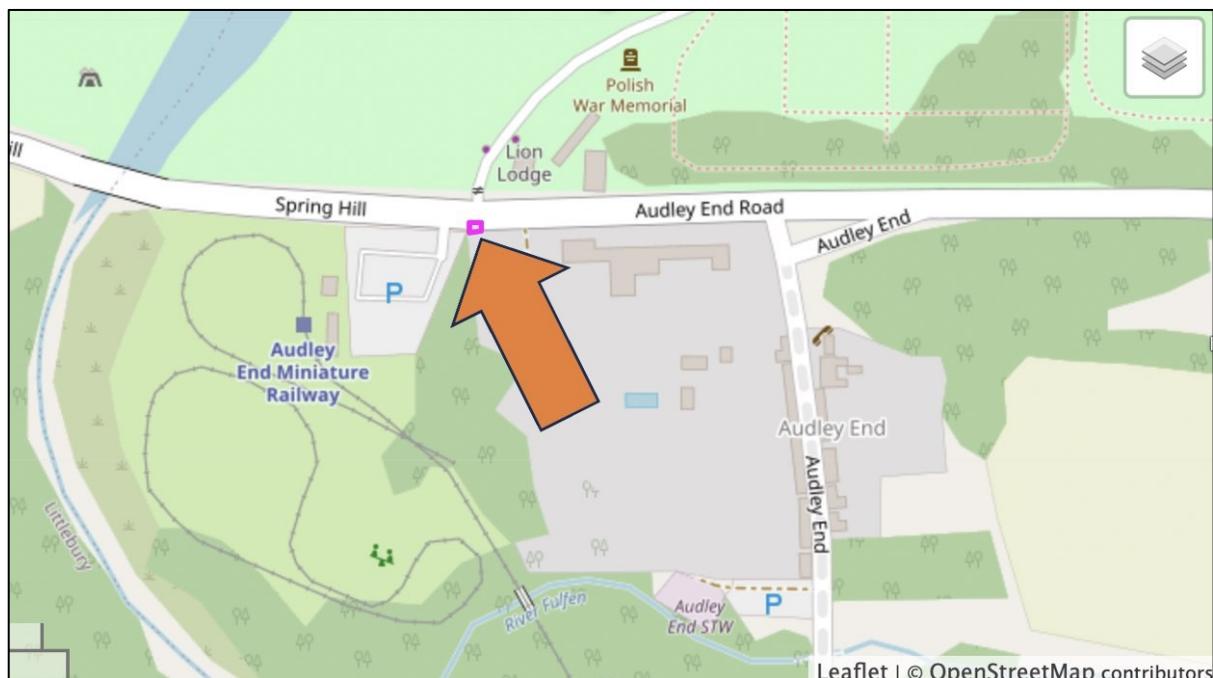
Site location: Opposite the main entrance to Audley End House

Grid Reference: TL 5234 3800

Status: Publicly accessible

Summary of the geological interest:

Large sarsen stone, 1.1 metres long, by the road opposite the entrance to Audley End House. It is a very good example of a sarsen stone in a conspicuous position by the road.



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

Sarsens are extremely hard boulders of sandstone 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. They are thus very resistant to erosion and have survived the rigours of the Ice Age. They originated on the chalk downland north and west of Essex and were carried here by rivers and glaciers. After retreat of the ice they became concentrated in river valleys.

The formation of silcretes (which includes sarsens and puddingstones) has been the subject of recent scientific debate. 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.

Sarsen stones link geology, archaeology and social history. The history of this boulder is not known. It was probably found on nearby Audley Estate farmland in the nineteenth century and placed here by the fourth Lord Braybrooke who had a large natural history collection, much of which can still be seen in the house. It was perhaps used as a mounting block.

Sarsen stones are quite common in Essex, although this one is of large size. It is in a conspicuous position on the roadside near to the main entrance of Audley End House and thus has great potential for geological education.

The stone is about 110 centimetres long, 90 centimetres wide and 50 centimetres thick.



Reference:

LUCY, G. 2003. Essex erratic boulders: a gazetteer. *Essex Naturalist* (New Series) No. 20. Pages 115-134.