

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT



UfdG8 Buckingham's Farm Sarsen Stone, Thaxted

Site location: By the roadside outside the entrance to Buckingham's Farm.

Grid Reference: TL 606 295

Status: Publicly accessible

Summary of the geological interest

A sarsen stone about 90 x 60 centimetres in size sits south of the town of Thaxted on the roadside outside the entrance to Buckingham's Farm.



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. Sarsen stones are quite common in Essex, but this one is a good example of stone in a conspicuous position on the roadside.

Reference:

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



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