

COUNTY: WEST SUSSEX

SITE NAME: EARTHAM PIT, BOXGROVE

DISTRICT: CHICHESTER

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Local Planning Authority: CHICHESTER DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: SU 923087

Area: 9.83 (ha.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:

1:10,000:

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 3 March 1997

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

This is a Geological Conservation Review Site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Eartham Pit is situated 5 km north-east of Chichester, close to the village of Boxgrove. The site is located at the northern edge of the West Sussex Upper Coastal Plain, an area that has undergone considerable geological and archaeological investigations. Immediately to the north of the pit there is a fossil shoreline, seen as a buried cliff, and deposited against this is a complex succession of intertidal and terrestrial sediments which represent a number of different climatic events.

Interest at the site stems from the evidence for several climatic events shown by the nature of the deposits and the interglacial mammal fauna present within the intertidal sediments. In addition to this an important archaeological horizon has been identified on the surface of the intertidal deposits which would at one time have been a beach.

The recent excavations at the site have suggested a pre-Hoxnian age for the site as opposed to the Hoxnian age normally associated with the raised shoreline in the area. The combination of archaeology and Middle-Pleistocene fauna at this site has important implications for Pleistocene and Palaeolithic chronology in Britain and Northern Europe.

The excavations at Eartham Pit have yielded important climatic information for the Middle-Pleistocene and are considered as internationally important due to the juxtaposition of the fossiliferous sediments with the archaeological evidence, particularly the human remains.