

COUNTY: OXFORDSHIRE

SITE NAME: WICKLESHAM AND COXWELL PITS

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

Local Planning Authorities: Vale of the White Horse District Council, Oxfordshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SU285942, SU289941, SU292942

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 163, 164 **1:10,000:** SU29 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1950 **Date of Last Revision:** 1977

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 **Date of Last Revision:** 26 March 1996

Area: 12.79 ha 31.59 ac

Other information: This is a Geological Conservation Review site.

Description and Reasons for Notification

The active quarry and disused pits within this site provide good exposures through the Faringdon Sponge gravels of Lower Cretaceous (Aptian) age. The gravels, laid down under marine conditions some 110 million years ago, are unique to the Faringdon area, and were deposited in an unusual and very localised near-shore sedimentary environment. They contain a very rich and unusual assemblage of fossil sponges, bryozoa, brachiopods and echinoids, with over 150 different species having been found here; many of these are known to occur only at Faringdon. In addition, the Faringdon Sponge Gravels have yielded bones from several different kinds of fossil reptiles (including turtles, ichthyosaurs, plesiosaurs and crocodiles) and Wicklesham Pit is of particular significance as a source of such material. This site is of great historical importance, and is one of Britain's richest palaeontological localities.



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