together for children
SUNDERLAND

Red Gables Q&A

March 2025

Welcome

Red Gables a five-bedroom detached property in East Rainton, Sunderland has been purchased by Sunderland City Council on behalf of Together for Children (TfC).

After a substantial planning application process we now have permission for Red Gables to become a new residential home for overnight short breaks and day-care for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Although planning permission with conditions approved has now been granted, there have been several bumps along the way which has resulted in delays in work starting on site and in-turn on the estimated opening date. To help explain our plans for Red Gables we have put together this Q&A. As you can imagine, for a project of this scale, there are some questions and timeframes we are not able to fully answer or provide, but we will keep you updated as the project progresses.

The property is already homely, welcoming, and well maintained, but we will need to carry out some refurbishment work to ensure it best meets the needs of the children and families in Sunderland.

We will work alongside families as well as our experienced teams at TfC to make sure the home works for families and helps children and young people have fun, socialise and gain independence in a supportive and comfortable environment.

Questions and answers

Where is the property?

Red Gables is a five-bedroom detached property in East Rainton, Sunderland.
The property already has a great layout, is spacious, welcoming and well looked after, but we will need to carry out some refurbishment work to ensure it best meets the needs of the children and families in Sunderland who will use it. The home is also easy to access and there is on-site parking provisions and plans to extend parking facilities particularly following feedback from our public consolation with neighbours.

Why was the property chosen?

Red Gables was chosen because the property already has a lot of the qualities we were looking for in a new provision such as a good layout and substantial outdoor space. It also has the character and homeliness we wanted. The existing wide corridors and space to add a lift and additional rooms means families and the team can access all parts of the building. The layout of the property has meant that less structural work would be needed compared to others we properties we considered during the search.

How much is the project expected to cost?

The purchase of the home, renovation work, legal costs and adding facilities is expected to cost around £1.7million. The property itself cost £772,000 to purchase.

Why was the planning application decision delayed?

Planning application was initially submitted in December 2023 for Red Gables. Unfortunately in February 2024 we were advised of objections from local residents which were primarily focused on concern regarding noise from the building, parking facilities and additional cars on the road. The plans were then due to be discussed at committee after the UK-wide general election in early July.

However, in June, the planning application for Red Gables had to be withdrawn again due to a legal land-related issue which was unfortunately out of our control. The application was resubmitted and presented at a planning committee in October which was specially held to minimise further delay. It was at this meeting we were given approval for our plans for Red Gables to go ahead.

During both delays we called upon the families we work with to share their positive comments and personal stories in support of our planning application and we were overwhelmed with the support received. These backings submitted through the planning portal were hugely influential in getting this application approved and showing planners why the home is so important to families in Sunderland.
Thank you to everyone who supported this activity - it's very much appreciated.

Questions and answers

What work will be carried out?

Planning permission has been granted and will include building structural work and internal alterations.

Building work will include: the removal of the balcony, widening of external doors, levelling access to all external doors, adding automatic doors, adding to parking and making entrances accessible. In addition work includes adding a new acoustic fence as per the planning conditions, renewing the patio / outdoor space and building new ramps.

Internal alterations will include adding a lift, dividing the living space, conversion of walk-in wardrobes to create more practical space, adding a stairwell wall, increasing the size of the downstairs bathroom, renovating bathrooms, adding an accessible second bathroom upstairs, upgrading the kitchen, adding automatic doors and equipment such as railings.

When will Red Gables be open and why is it going to take so long to get the service up and running?

We hope to open the home in winter 2025 and Red Gables will be fully staffed by TfC employees. The timeframe is subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances but we have included an indicative timeline on page 6 of this booklet. The timeframe we have put forward includes time required to complete work as well as the necessary legal activity including registering the home with Ofsted, consultation with families and appointing and inducing the team.

Who will staff Red Gables?

Day time arrangements

The Registered Manager is available Monday to Friday during office hours. There is some flexibility to enable the manager to have out of hours contact with service users and staff. A half hour handover period is written into the rota, to allow for staff to provide any information necessary.

Red Gables will have 4 staff on duty whilst the children are in the building i.e. in school term between 7:00am and 10:00am and 2:00pm to 9:00pm. At weekends and during school holidays the aim will be to have 4 staff on duty between 7:00am and 9:00pm. The staff will comprise of 1 designated shift leader (RCCO) and care staff. There will be no ancillary staff on the home, with shift staff carrying out the cooking and day to day upkeep of the home.

Red Gables will have 29 recruited staff in total. The Registered Manager is responsible for the running of the home. The Registered Manager is accountable to the Service Manager, Residential and Care Experienced Services.

Questions and answers

Continued...

All staff of Red Gables will be appropriately qualified with a level 3 NVQ/Diploma. This award ensures staff have knowledge of the relevant areas for their role, including child development, child protection, child health education and social issues, managing challenging behaviour, issues of race, ethnicity, religion, and culture, residential childcare skills, The Children Act, Health and Safety and other relevant legislation. Our staff will be actively encouraged to car share to and from work, and to access public transport where possible.

How are you currently supporting families while work is ongoing?

All families have an assessing social worker from TfC who have worked with them to arrange alternative care arrangements whilst planning application was being reviewed and this will continue whilst work is taking place. If you have any questions about your current arrangements please contact your assessing social worker.

How will spaces for Red Gables be allocated?

Our intention is that Red Gables will provide short breaks for children with complex disabilities, learning disabilities and who may have life-limiting conditions. This will be subject to the statement of purpose being accepted and agreed by Ofsted and allocation of places will be subject to an updated assessment of need.

How many families will be supported at Red Gables?

Red Gables will provide up to five bedrooms for overnight accommodation which will be dependant on staffing arrangements and matching considerations.

How will families be kept informed of developments?

We will be producing a regular newsletter that will be circulated to families we currently support to keep them informed of developments. We will also be taking progress photos and filming on site at regular intervals so you can see the progress through our newsletter and our social media. Families will be the first invited to visit the home when appropriate.

In addition we worked with volunteers who joined our Red Gables parent / carer forum event in January 2025 where members were invited to discuss various parts of the project with our team. This was to ensure the space is custom designed to best meet the needs of children and young people in Sunderland and their families. The topics covered included outdoor space, IT and internal design. The team also visited our SEND youth group STARS for additional feedback on what they think young people would like to see at the home which has been incorporated into tender material.

Site plans

PROPOSED REAR ELEVATION

PROPOSED RIGHT ELEVATION

PROPOSED REAR ELEVATION

Indicative timeline

Phase 2 timeframe - implementation

NB: provisional timeframe provided - further dates will be available once we have received our responses to tender.

October 2024	Planning application approved at Committee
Nov / Dec 2024	Updates to parent / carers and media
January 2025	Parent / carer focus group
March / April 2025	Tender and procurement issued
Mid May 2025	Tenders returned by contractors
May / June 2025	Contractors appointed
June / July 2025	Work starts on site
Autumn 2025	Recruitment activity starts
Autumn 2025	Construction and fitting work
Autumn 2025	TfC team confirm equipment and facilities needs
Autumn 2025	Pre-launch tours

Phase 3 timeframe - launch

Winter 2025	Finishing touches are added to the site
Winter 2025	Ofsted certification
2026	All Red Gables staff on site
2026	Welcome visits with families start

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If you have any questions please email
shortbreaks@togetherforchildren.org.uk