

Cholesbury Exchange area Broadband Q and A - Updated 30 January 2016

Here are a few Q & A's based on questions raised and useful advice gleaned from one or two other community websites. It will be updated as and when other issues or developments arise.

Q.1 What is the difference between the 'standard broadband' we have had for some time and the new broadband service?

A.1 'Standard broadband' (or ADSL broadband) is delivered via the Cholesbury exchange along the copper cable that runs via roadside boxes called PCPs and then by copper wires below and above ground to individual properties. The maximum speed of ADSLMax is around 7Mbps (Megabits per second) though in many cases is no more than 1-2Mbps. The new and much faster broadband service Fibre To The Cabinet (FTTC) is provided largely via underground fibre cables to one of four roadside cabinets or 'DSLAMs'. These are located close by the green PCP boxes which connect by copper wires to each property. The speeds available are much greater with the new broadband see Q.2 and Q.2a.

Q.2 What speed ranges are available via FTTC and what is Superfast Broadband?

A.2 The maximum speed available via FTTC is in the range 70-78Mbps though typical speeds will be in the range 25-50Mbps. The speed of FTTC provided broadband depends on the distance and the condition of the copper cable from the DSLAM cabinet to the house. For those properties further from the cabinet the speed can be below 25Mbps perhaps in the range 14-24Mbps but still much faster than the ADSL service.

'Superfast Broadband' or SFBB is the name given by providers to describe broadband services available at speeds upwards of 25Mbps.

Providers call broadband that runs at speeds below 25Mbps by different names such as; 'Better Broadband' and 'Faster Broadband'.

It will still be possible to sign up for FTTC broadband at further distances from the cabinet though the speeds attained will be below 14Mbps and there is a minimum speed below which FTTC services will not be provided. See Q2a below.

Q.2a Is there a minimum broadband speed below which SFBB services will not be available?

A.2a Yes. At distances from the new DSLAM cabinets of greater than approx 2 – 2.5 km the broadband speed drops below 4 to 5Mbps and broadband providers will not be able to provide a service via FTTC. This will only be the case for a small number of properties in the Cholesbury Exchange area, e.g. Widmore Close Asheridge, and the Working Group will press for the inclusion these postcodes in the next programme. See Superfast Extension Programme section below. In the interim, the upgrade to the ADSL service from the Cholesbury Exchange when it eventually occurs might provide some relief. See the ADSL2+ Broadband section on the SFBB webpage.

Q.3 I 'signed up' at the start of the campaign for improved broadband services two years ago, do I need to do anything now to get the new broadband service?

A.3 Yes. The purpose of signing up was to help demonstrate the community's strong support for improved broadband. Now the improved broadband service has been rolled out, you need to contact your current supplier and other providers if want to check what's on offer, to agree a contract for new broadband service.

Q.4 What do I need to do to if I am thinking of taking advantage of the faster FTTC broadband services?

A.4 To check what the typical broadband speed that is available visit <http://www.dslchecker.bt.com/>

Type in your full number without spaces. The following table will be displayed if FTTC broadband is available.

BT BROADBAND AVAILABILITY CHECKER

Telephone Number 01494758XXX on Exchange CHOLESBURY is served by Cabinet 3

Featured Products	Downstream Line Rate(Mbps)		Upstream Line Rate(Mbps)		Downstream Range(Mbps)	Availability Date
	High	Low	High	Low		
FTTC Range A (Clean)	36.4	27.9	7.5	5.5	--	Available
FTTC Range B (Impacted)	30	16.4	7.4	3.7	--	Available
WBC ADSL 2+	Up to 3		--		1.5 to 5.5	02-Nov-15
WBC ADSL 2+ Annex M	Up to 3		Up to 0.5		1.5 to 5.5	02-Nov-15
ADSL Max	Up to 2		--		1.5 to 4.5	Available
Fixed Rate	2		--		--	Available
Other Offerings						
Fibre Multicast	--		--		--	Available

The key information to check is the anticipated highest speed shown under **Downstream Line Rate(Mbps) for FTTP Range B (Impacted)** - in this case it shows a high of **30Mbps** and this compares with 'up to 2Mbps' for the current ADSL2Max broadband.

Armed with this information you can check what is on offer from your current and other providers who will either access this same information or their company's data drawn from similar sources. Prices and periodic offers sometimes vary between a company's website and call-centre and sales staff sometimes have discretion to offer discounts so it can be worthwhile to haggle.

Note: Broadband providers sometimes apply additional criteria when deciding whether or which particular broadband product in their range will be available. For example, BT requires an available maximum speed of over 15Mbps before they will supply their Infinity 1 - up to 38Mbps product. Some suppliers may for instance consider that very long runs of copper cable are more likely to impact on the likely maximum speed. So consider shopping around for the best service on offer if your own provider, following line checks, does not offer a suitable FTTC-based product.

Q.5 What does it mean if I see a 'Waiting List' message on the Broadband Availability Checker?

A.5 If, on the Broadband Availability Checker FTTC Range A and B shows a 'Waiting List' message displayed under the Availability Date column, this indicates that there is a temporary capacity issue, probably because there has been a rapid take up of the new service e.g. as

occurred with Cab 3 in late October 2015. New cabinets come with a set initial capacity. The Working Group was reassured there is an automatic process which quickly reports a 'capacity almost used up' message to BT Openreach who then refresh the cabinet to provide more capacity within 1-2 weeks. Despite this it was taking longer than this for BT Openreach to add extra capacity in Cabinet 3. So the WG pressed the SFBB Project Manager to sort this and the extra capacity suddenly appeared! The WG will continue to monitor take up and will chase up where we pick up from Grapevine postings or calls to 758890 if a problem again arises.

Q.6 Will I need a new broadband router or other equipment?

A.6 Sometimes a new router will be provided when switching to a new service from the current provider, or when you change supplier. If not, and you have had your router for a number of years it may be worth or necessary to invest in a new router compatible with FTTC broadband. You might want to check the master socket (the box where the telephone cable enters the property) and any internal cabling.

Q.7 What is the situation if I am on the Exchange Only Line and would like to know when SfBb will be available?

A.7 There are around 35 properties connected by an Exchange Only Line (see post code checker), and it is planned for them to receive a superfast broadband service via a Fibre to the Premise (FTTP) solution. This is scheduled to be installed between the first and second quarters of 2016. The first two email updates were sent in November and end of December 2015 to those from most of the 35 properties who registered interest in SfBb services. If part of this group but have not received an update, contact Chris Brown on rayshill@gmail.com for further information.

Q.8 How do I find out who is offering the better products and customer service?

A.8 There are a couple of recent surveys of broadband providers worth consulting.

ISP Preview <http://www.ispreview.co.uk/index.php/2015/01/roundup-uk-best-broadband-isps-2015-ispreview-co-uk-picks.html>

Think Broadband <http://www.thinkbroadband.com/isps.html>

FOOTNOTE: We found some very useful insights and advice on the Ewhurst community broadband website which has helped with the above questions and the following comment and it is important to acknowledge this. As the Working Group has been talking directly with BT Openreach one or two local people mistakenly concluded that the local campaign was involved in promoting BT. Obviously this is not the case. Though BT Openreach have been undertaking the SFBB rollout programme there is no connection or involvement of the Working Group with BT Retail who are, in any case, only one of several companies offering SFBB.