

The East Horsley Gigabit Fibre Broadband Project Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Introduction

The following FAQs attempt to answer the most commonly asked questions that arise when East Horsley residents and businesses are considering moving to a new, gigabit capable fibre broadband service.

The FAQs are provided by the FTTP project team based on discussions with Openreach and on Openreach and Department for Culture Media & Sport (DCMS) sources (which are specified). The responses are provided in good faith and East Horsley Parish Council cannot accept any liability for the answers provided.

We have divided these questions into three subject areas:

Section 1. About Gigabit Broadband

Section 2. About the Gigabit Broadband Voucher scheme.

Section 3. Upgrading or changing your broadband package to FTTP

If you have a question which is not answered in any of these sections, then please email it to gigabit@easthorsleypc.org, together with your contact details and we will respond as soon as possible.

Section 1. About Gigabit Capable Broadband.

1.1 What is Gigabit capable fibre broadband?

Gigabit capable fibre broadband is a much faster and more reliable way of delivering broadband services into your home or business. It requires a new fibre optic cable connection all the way from the local exchange to the nearest Distribution Point (DP) to your property - usually on nearby telegraph poles or in an Openreach manhole. Your broadband provider (e.g. BT, Sky, TalkTalk) will then connect this fibre cable from the DP into your property and connect it to a hub/router inside. This is known as Fibre To The Premises or FTTP – see below for more details on FTTP.

1.2 Why do I need faster broadband?

Working and learning from home makes significant demands on broadband, particularly in families with several concurrent users. More and more services require good Wi-Fi and Internet connections (e.g. Zoom/Facetime, Sky Q, Netflix, Ring door bell, Xbox and security cameras) so the demand for faster and more reliable broadband will only increase – *source Openreach*.

There is published research that shows faster broadband can increase your house price by up to 2%. The second most asked question when viewing a house to buy or rent is “what is the broadband speed?” so even if you personally don’t need faster broadband, should you ever wish to sell or rent your house, faster broadband will make it much more attractive (and valuable) to potential buyers - *source Openreach*.

1.3 What speed will this new broadband service deliver to me?

Most of us will currently be paying for broadband packages that deliver between 10 Mbps (megabits per second) and 80 Mbps, depending on the package; some parts of the village have very low speeds towards the bottom of this range. However, the speed you actually get is nearly always lower than the advertised speed, especially the further you are from your local cabinet. The Openreach technology is capable of 1Gbps (= 1,000Mbps), but at the moment most broadband providers (often known as ISPs – Internet Service Providers) are only offering an FTTP service up to 330 Mbps. However, with FTTP you will get much closer to the speeds you are paying for. Over the coming years it is expected that ISPs will be offering ever-higher speeds as demand increases. For example, BT already offers a 900 Mbps service and other ISPs also have higher speeds available in certain areas.

If you want to check your current broadband speed then you can use an online speed checker such as <https://speedtest.btwholesale.com/> or via the one on the “Which?” website.

1.4 Who delivers this new FTTP service?

Openreach (who are a wholly owned subsidiary of BT Group but are now managed independently from BT) will install the FTTP fibre infrastructure from the exchange to a Distribution Point (DP) in your road. They will manage and run this installation. Openreach do not provide any “added value” services such as standard voice telephony, mobile telephony, broadband or TV. Instead they partner with a number of telecommunications and media companies, such as BT, Sky, and TalkTalk, who provide us with those services over the Openreach fibre network. These companies are known as ISPs - Internet Service Providers.

Once Openreach have completed the delivery of FTTP to your nearest DP it is unlikely that you will have to deal with them again. Your ISP will be your primary point of contact from then on and you will contract with them for a new FTTP broadband package. Your ISP will also manage the connection of your property to a nearby DP via a new fibre cable (normally using the same route as the overhead or ducted telephone cables) and a new indoor connection to your hub/router.

If you pledge a DCMS Gigabit Voucher then this cost from DP to your hub/router (i.e. putting fibre alongside your existing copper wire) will be fully covered. If you don't pledge and get connected later, then the cost will normally be included by your ISP as part of the monthly cost of your new or upgraded service contract – *source Openreach*.

More information on this process can be found below.

1.5 I thought I already had fibre broadband so why is FTTP different?

When communication providers speak of fibre they mean either Fibre To The Premises (FTTP) or Fibre To The Cabinet (FTTC). FTTC is delivered via those green cabinets that you see along our roads and most of us in East Horsley have FTTC. So you do have fibre, but only between the exchange and the green cabinets. From the cabinets to your property (either along the telegraph poles or under the ground in conduits) your connection is over copper wires. FTTP does not come via the green cabinets – it is a new connection.

FTTP delivers gigabit capable fibre all the way into your home or business. It delivers faster speeds that can be guaranteed, no loss of speed at peak times and no loss of speeds due to distance from

the cabinet or exchange. This short video from Openreach helps to explain the differences - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxrtKck570A&feature=youtu.be>

1.6 Will everyone in East Horsley be able to get FTTP?

The current plan is to make FTTP available in every road (public and private) in the East Horsley parish (on phone lines provided by the Horsley exchange). This means that all households and businesses in these roads will have the opportunity to access FTTP broadband if they wish to, even if they decide not to take part in the initial Gigabit Voucher scheme - *source Openreach*.

1.7 Will my private road, driveway or garden need to be dug up for me to get FTTP?

Wherever possible the service will be delivered via existing telegraph poles and underground conduits. In rare cases where this is not possible, no driveways, gardens or private roads will be dug up without the prior permission of their owners – *source Openreach*.

1.8 Where the road/pavement/lawns/walls have to be dug up for the fibre cables to reach my premises, will Openreach make good the surfaces after the work?

Yes, the only exception is if a drive is a specialist surface such as resin, when the individual customer will need to arrange and pay for the re-instatement - *source Openreach*.
If the disruption would be too great then you can always choose not to take part in the project.

1.9 Will Openreach need to enter my home or business premises?

The project will deliver FTTP from the exchange to your property. Openreach do not enter your home when they are building the network. The final connection into your property will be done by your ISP when you place an order with them. The ISP will need to enter your property to connect your hub/router to the new FTTP service – *source Openreach*.

If you require the FTTP connection to your home to be located anywhere different from where the current telephone cable enters, then you need to make this known to both Openreach and your ISP when the new service is being connected.

1.10 How much will the new service installation cost me?

The good news is that the installation of our parish wide FTTP fibre network infrastructure will be carried out at zero cost to East Horsley residents and businesses, **provided** we take full advantage of available Government subsidies – see Section 2 “About the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme”.

1.11 Can I keep my telephone service on the existing copper wire and have the FTTP connection only for broadband?

Yes you can choose to do this. You will, of course, be able to get voice telephony service over FTTP as well. However, depending upon your ISP, you may be charged separate line rentals on each connection. You should check this with your ISP – *source Openreach*.

If you have any kind of alarm system at your property that uses the copper wire telephone connection only, then you should contact your alarm provider to seek advice on what options are available to you if you upgrade to FTTP.

1.12 Will 5G provide faster broadband?

The latest mobile internet technology, 5G (fifth generation), is still an emerging technology. Although 5G promises much faster speeds over mobile phones and other mobile devices, there is no guarantee that the signal will maintain its strength through walls and floors of homes and business premises. With our current 4G networks, you will often notice a downgrade to 3G (or even 2G) in transmission blackspots, of which there are many in East Horsley. Relying on 5G alone may limit the number of people in your household or business that can use the internet at the same time. FTTP will provide much better quality and a more reliable service.

Section 2. About the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme.

2.1 What is the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme?

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) is the government department responsible for the roll out of full fibre broadband throughout the UK. For rural communities, such as East Horsley, DCMS is making money available in the form of vouchers, to help cover the installation cost of an FTTP network.

Full details on how the scheme works can be found in the DCMS Terms & Conditions at <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/home/who-is-eligible/>.

Some of the most common questions asked about the scheme are answered in these FAQs.

2.2 How much are these vouchers worth?

Subject to DCMS approval of our project, every residential home in the East Horsley project will be offered a voucher with a nominal value of £1,500.

Also, subject to DCMS approval, every home based business, or eligible small business (SME) in non-residential premises, will be offered a voucher with a nominal value of £3,500.

Note that each premise can only pledge one voucher, either residential or business as appropriate.

These vouchers only have a nominal value as each home or business will not actually receive any money directly. Instead they will be asked to pledge their voucher to Openreach to help cover the full cost of our FTTP installation in East Horsley – see 2.7 below.

2.3 How do I know if my business is eligible?

To qualify for the voucher as a small or medium business you must be turning over less than 50 million euros per annum. You can be a limited company, sole trader or charity. The business must operate from the premises listed in the project. However if you are a limited company then the company can be registered elsewhere – *source Openreach*.

The application process requires all business voucher applicants to self-certify and, if asked by DCMS, to provide evidence of their status (e.g. business bank statement issued within the last three months, VAT registration if applicable, registration or incorporation documents etc.). You have to satisfy yourself that you meet the DCMS Terms & Conditions in the PDF document referred to above, before applying for a business voucher.

Some further FAQs provided by Openreach that might assist with your decision in this context:

If someone applies for a voucher as a business (SME) – will they be required to connect to an ISP via a business contract?

No. Small businesses can use residential ISP contracts.

I work from home, but my company operates from a business premise elsewhere, can I claim a business voucher?

No, as the business is operating elsewhere.

My wife does freelance transcription from home as a Medical Secretary. She is not formally registered as a sole trader because she does not make much money - less than the tax-free allowance. Should she pledge a business or residential voucher?

We suggest that they request a voucher as a business and it will be up to them to prove that they qualify with the DCMS. She will need to have invoices, or some other documentary evidence, to prove that she is working as a business.

2.4 How do I pledge my voucher?

After DCMS agrees that our FTTP project qualifies for their voucher scheme, Openreach will open a web page dedicated to the East Horsley project for your voucher to be pledged. The East Horsley project team will try to get in touch with all residents and businesses to tell you that the project has been approved and how to go to the Openreach website to pledge your vouchers. This notification will be done through a number of channels including:

- Emails or messages to you via lead contacts in those roads that have them
- Notices in the village
- Social media (e.g. Facebook, NextDoor etc.)

Once you know that pledging is open, you might want to check your neighbours do too.

MORE DETAILS ON THE VOUCHER PLEDGING PROCESS WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE AS SOON AS WE KNOW THAT THE OPENREACH PLEDGE SITE IS OPENING.

2.5 Do I have to join the East Horsley broadband project?

You do not have to sign up for gigabit-capable broadband. If you decide not to join, your existing broadband service will be unaffected. Assuming the project is still viable (i.e. it gets enough vouchers pledged) you will still have the option to get gigabit capable broadband at a future date. If you choose not to use your voucher then it will be lost to the project – it will have no monetary value to you at all.

East Horsley Parish Council and the FTTP project team hope as many of you as possible will join in and pledge, for the benefit of all homes and businesses in the village.

2.6 Do I have to make any commitments if I accept and pledge my voucher to Openreach?

The only commitment you have to make is that you agree to install (or upgrade to) an FTTP broadband package from an Internet Service Provider (e.g. BT, Sky, Vodafone, TalkTalk) that at least doubles your current package's *designated* speed (subject to a minimum speed of 30 Mbps) – that is NOT THE SPEED YOU ARE ACTUALLY GETTING*. You have to take this new package for a minimum of 12 months following the installation of the new FTTP service - *source DCMS*

**N.B. we are awaiting clarification on the base line for this speed doubling commitment, from both DCMS and Openreach; and will advise further.*

2.6 How much will this upgraded package cost me?

That will depend on a number of elements which are set out in more detail in Section 3 - "Upgrading my broadband package". The typical cost for these upgrades will normally be from around £10 a month more than you are currently paying for a package that meets the minimum DCMS broadband speed requirements; you will be able to pay more for even faster service packages. However, it is the responsibility of each resident and business to secure the best deal it can with an ISP that meets the DCMS requirements. You do NOT have to continue with an upgraded service after the expiry of 12 months' continuous service; or a longer period if your new FTTP contract is more than 12 months.

2.7 How long is my voucher valid for?

Each voucher will be valid for 12 months from the date it is issued, following project approval by the DCMS.

The Openreach pledging web page will open very shortly after DCMS approval and it is hoped that all pledges will be made within 2 to 3 weeks. We estimate that it will require around 600 residential vouchers (out of around 1,700 properties registered in the project) to be pledged, in order to cover the FTTP installation cost. This number will be reduced depending upon the number of business vouchers that are pledged.

IN PRACTICE, IF SUFFICIENT PLEDGES TO COVER THE COST OF FTTP INSTALLATION ARE NOT RECEIVED WITHIN 3 to 4 WEEKS AFTER APPROVAL BY THE DCMS, THEN THE EAST HORSLEY PROJECT, AS CURRENTLY CONSTITUTED, WILL NOT GO AHEAD. THIS MEANS WE HAVE TO MOVE AHEAD QUICKLY WITH PLEDGING THESE VOUCHERS.

Section 3. Upgrading or Changing your Broadband Package to FTTP.

As Section 2 states, when you pledge your voucher you are committing to either upgrading your existing broadband service with your current ISP or entering into a new agreement with a different ISP; in either case you have to double the speed of your current service for a minimum period of 12 months. The FAQs below set out the options available to you in order to meet these commitments.

For all of these options the first step is to make sure you are aware of what is in your current contract, in terms of the speed you are supposed to be getting and the date your contract is due to end. There are a number of other things that you should be aware of.

If you have to call your ISP to find out this contract information, then please be aware that they may well try to get you to extend your existing contract for a further period. They may also try to get you to take a faster package as part of this contract extension. **HOWEVER**, at the moment, this would *not* be the FTTP package that you have committed to take under the DCMS voucher scheme – see 3.3 and 3.4 below for "How do I find out the cost for my FTTP package".

We would suggest that you do not make any changes to your current contract in the near future until it is clear that the East Horsley project is going ahead. If your contract is due to end shortly then nearly all ISPs will let it continue on a rolling 30 day notice period. We suggest that you begin planning now for the upgrade or change to your broadband package to become effective from January 2022.

It is up to the individual resident or business to determine what is the best way for them to meet the service commitment they are making when they pledge their voucher. The following FAQs may help you with your decision.

3.1 Do I have to stay with my current broadband provider (ISP)?

No. Households are free to use any ISP on the Openreach partner list, (see 3.2 below) provided that they are making their FTTP packages available in East Horsley, and that the speed requirements in the DCMS terms and conditions are met – see Section 2.

If you wish to use a different ISP then you should ensure that you are not liable for any penalty payments from your existing ISP if you change before the end of your current contract. See 3.4 below for more details.

3.2 How do I find out if my current ISP will be offering FTTP packages in East Horsley?

You can find the full list of FTTP broadband suppliers that Openreach partner with on <https://www.openreach.com/fibre-broadband/fttp-providers>. You have to use one of the ISPs named on this list. Even if your ISP is on this list, they might not be offering their FTTP packages in East Horsley yet.

Apart from asking your current ISP if they will have a suitable FTTP package available, you could also go onto your ISPs website and look for their FTTP package offerings, often advertised as “full fibre”, but which probably state “subject to availability”. The website will normally ask you to enter your postcode (and, optionally, you telephone number) so that the ISP’s system can automatically check if FTTP is currently available. *DO NOT ENTER* your current postcode or telephone number because your property does not yet have access to FTTP and the website will only offer the ISPs currently available (non- FTTP) packages.

Instead, enter the postcode KT24 5RG (which is Green Dene in East Horsley, where FTTP is already available), don’t enter a telephone number and follow the website instructions. If that ISP’s FTTP packages are available in Green Dene then they will be displayed to you, along with the standard published prices and other terms and conditions such as minimum contract periods. The ISP packages that are available for Green Dene should also be available to you. If the packages displayed are advertising speeds lower than 100 Mbps, then it is likely that the ISP is not offering FTTP packages in East Horsley at the moment. That may change as more East Horsley properties gain access to the FTTP service under this project, but it is not guaranteed to be the case - *source Openreach*.

3.3 What do I do if I want to stay with my existing broadband supplier (ISP)?

Once you know where you stand with your current contract then tell your ISP that you are expecting to have FTTP available in East Horsley by the end of 2021, and ask them to give you the contract details and costs of the FTTP packages that they will be able to offer you. Some ISPs may be unable to do this immediately over the telephone as they are only allowed to sell you those packages that you can currently use. If this is the case then follow the process in the previous FAQ.

Provided that your current ISP will be offering suitable fibre packages, when FTTP is available in East Horsley, the ISP will usually upgrade your existing contract without any financial penalty. They will almost certainly want to extend your contract for at least a further 12 months (which you are committed to do already), or more likely for another 18 or 24 months.

3.4 How do I change to a new FTTP broadband supplier if I want to?

If you think that you might like to change your ISP for delivery of the new FTTP broadband service, then you should:

- Make sure that your chosen ISP is able to deliver a suitable FTTP package in East Horsley when the new FTTP service is available.
- Determine if you will incur any financial penalties if you decide to change to a new ISP; and ensure that you give the required notice of contract termination to your current ISP.
- Your new ISP will then normally manage all of the necessary change-over of your broadband (and telephone) supply, including dealing directly with your current ISP on your behalf.

Changing ISP is a well-regulated and well managed process – for more details please see:

<https://www.which.co.uk/l/broadband-mobile-and-tv-services>

or <https://www.uswitch.com/broadband/guides/switch/>

3.5 How do I find out the cost for my FTTP package?

See 3.2 and 3.3 above.

The cost for this upgraded package is likely to be about £10 per month more than you currently pay. However, the price you pay for your new faster service will depend on the speed of the package you take out. Speeds are likely to vary between 100 and 330 Mbps, even higher with some ISPs.

There may also be a small installation charge from some ISPs. Using the website method described in 3.2 above is also a good way for you to compare prices from different ISPs, before you have to make your final decision whether to stay with your current provider or move to another.

3.6 How soon do I have to take out the new FTTP broadband service?

The new service needs to be taken up within 12 months of approval of your Gigabit Voucher by DCMS. However, Openreach may well use up most of this period installing the new FTTP infrastructure. This means that residents and businesses may only have a couple of months to get their new service installed.

We therefore suggest that you begin the process of researching and deciding upon which ISP you will use for FTTP as soon as you have pledged your voucher. You will not need to begin this contract until FTTP becomes available at your property. In the event that Openreach take longer than the 12 months to install FTTP, then they will seek the necessary extension of the voucher until the service is delivered.

3.7 What happens if I refuse to take out a new broadband contract within the 12 months, or when the FTTP service becomes available?

Every person pledging should be prepared to take out a new FTTP broadband contract for a minimum of 12 months. We are advised that there should not be any individual liabilities incurred if some of those pledging refuse to take out a new contract. However, the value of the pledged voucher will be lost to the project. – *source Openreach*