

Shiplake Fibre Broadband

The new fibre cabinets are in position outside the Corner Shop and at the end of Mill Road, the fibre installed and the links made to our existing telephone cabinets based on the Wargrave exchange. It is my understanding that the existing copper wires from Shiplake to the Wargrave telephone exchange will be retained for voice communications and for **existing** broadband usage. According to a BT Openreach source the fibre connection is via Woodley in Berkshire.* So there are now two phone connections for broadband: 1) the existing copper cables and 2) the new fibre cable.

Without getting any more technical, the question is: Now the new fibre cable is connected will my broadband speed immediately improve? The answer is NO!! To get improved broadband speed you will need to sign up for a new fibre broadband contract with your Internet Service Provider (ISP). When you do sign up, then your broadband signal will be routed via the new fibre cable and your broadband speed will significantly increase** If you do nothing, then you will remain on your existing broadband contract with your ISP; your broadband signal will continue to be routed via the old copper cables all the way back to the Wargrave telephone exchange. Your broadband speed will be unchanged! You could regard the two route approach as a cunning ploy by BT to get you to pay more for an improved service. On the other hand the installation of high speed broadband has cost a great deal.

With the new fibre broadband service, the broadband speed you get will, as always, depend on two things: 1) the distance of your house from the BT cabinets outside the Corner Shop/end of Mill Road, and 2) the age/quality of your phone line e.g. older properties near the river may achieve lower fibre speeds than newer properties elsewhere in the villages.

What will it cost? It depends on your supplier and your current contract (if you have one). An upgrade to fibre may cost only a few pounds per month extra or, as experienced by one of my customers for a new multi option contract, a quotation from BT for £42/month. This is a full package consisting of line rental, fibre broadband (20 Gigabyte download limit) and unlimited anytime UK calls. The BT broadband package is called INFINITY. My own ISP is Plusnet. Their equivalent full package costs £36 for up to 38 Megabits/sec, no download limit, line rental, unlimited anytime UK calls. Most ISPs offer significant price reductions for the first months. **You have to shop around!** If you are happy with your ISP then stay with them to upgrade. If you are not happy, then this might be a good time to try a different ISP!

Is it worth upgrading? There is no simple answer. If you run a business from home then the improved speed will definitely be of benefit and the additional cost gets charged to the business. If you are a home user, then it depends on how much you use the internet. If you download a lot of software/data, frequently watch 'Catch-up' TV e.g. BBC iPlayer, wait impatiently for web pages to download, then fibre broadband is for you!! Alternatively, if you just use a tablet computer for email and internet, then fibre broadband could be overkill. At the end of the day you have to ask yourself, "Am I prepared to pay the extra monthly cost for greatly improved broadband speed?"

It's your choice! Personally, I will sign up for fibre broadband and stick with my current ISP.

Bob Nicholson 30/4/2015 ***

*The source of the fibre connection will have been determined by BT engineers based on their infrastructure plans and whether it is Wargrave or Woodley is not material now the fibre network has been installed in Shiplake.

** What speed increase can you expect in Shiplake? The current copper based broadband speeds vary across a range of approximately 1.5mbs to 5.5mbs, whereas the new fibre based speeds appear to be of the order of 10 to 15 times faster dependent on location, supplier and existing telephone lines to individual properties. You can gain feedback on user experiences via the village website in the Forum 'Issues and Concerns' category.

***Bob kindly produced this article when we were advised that high speed broadband would be available earlier this year and has been updated to reflect the current status now it is available. (04/10/2015).