

The MOA logo consists of the lowercase letters 'moa' in a white, sans-serif font, positioned inside a dark blue, teardrop-shaped graphic that points towards the top right.

mobile
operators
association

responsible
network
development

Mobile Phone Base Stations and Planning

A fine balance

There are now more than 62.5 million mobile phones in use in the UK compared to nine million eight years ago. This number grows each day – and with it grows the need to offer a service to all mobile phone users and build more of the base stations that enable mobiles to work.

However, the boom in mobile phone use has been accompanied by an increasing community concern about the numbers of masts and exposure to radio waves. The network operators recognise this and are now taking active steps to balance community concern with the need for additional sites – and to provide support to local planning authorities.

Ten Commitments

In August 2001, the operators introduced their 'Ten Commitments to best siting practice' to ensure transparency in building mobile phone networks, to provide more information to the public and local planners and to boost the community's role in the siting of radio base stations. These can be found at: www.mobilemastinfo.com

The Traffic Light model

The operators believe the answer to addressing community concern lies in listening and talking to people. No two telecommunication sites are the same, so the operators have had to come up with a way to judge how much and what type of public consultation is needed before they apply to build a new site. They do this by using a method called the Traffic Light Model.

Working with local planners, a proposed site is scored using community, planning and environmental considerations, including how close it is to sites which could cause local concern and its impact on the skyline and local council policy.

Mobile phones cannot work without a network of base stations in places where people want to use them.

No less than 30 scientific reviews worldwide in the past five years have not found adverse health effects caused by mobile phone base stations operating within the international health and safety guidelines used in the UK.



The colours green, amber and red are used to assess whether additional community consultation will be needed and if so, to what degree. If a proposed site falls into the green section, the consultation carried out by a local council via a normal planning submission is usually sufficient. An amber or red site will suggest additional consultation by an operator before a planning application is made.

Consultation can be anything from letters to parish councils and ward councillors, letter drops to neighbours, public notices or detailed community briefings. Getting people's views is important to the operators.

Providing Information

Sharing network rollout plans

In September and October of each year, operators send all local planning authorities a yearly forecast of existing and proposed base stations in their area. They also offer to meet the local planners each year to discuss the network development plans for each authority's area.

Pre-application discussions

Time is often needed to provide information and discuss concerns before the formal planning process begins. The operators understand this and offer to discuss proposed base station sites with local planners before they apply for planning permission.

Other interested parties, including local highway authorities, residential groups, parish councils and amenity bodies, may also be consulted. This is decided by an operator in consultation with local planners. If the proposed site is near a school or college, the operators will consult with the governing body before submitting a planning application.

Accountability

Documenting plans

User-friendly paperwork helps everybody. To make life easier for local planners, network operators will provide extra drawings, coverage plots and any technical information needed. This is on top of what they must provide by law. They will also provide a certificate declaring the proposed site will comply with international guidelines limiting the public's exposure to radio waves. All extra documentation is aimed to help local planners understand the siting choices each operator makes, including an evaluation of alternative sites.

Enquiries and Complaints

The operators have pledged to respond to enquiries and complaints about mobile phone base stations within 10 working days. Each company has dedicated staff to act as the first point of contact with the public. The network operators have also introduced documented policies and procedures for prompt action.

The Mobile Operators Association represents the interests of the UK's five mobile phone network operators - 3, O2, Orange, T-Mobile and Vodafone - on radiofrequency health and associated planning issues.

For individual operator contact details see www.mobilemastinfo.com

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