A service that enables people to discover the location and power of mobile phone masts within 500 yards of their home could soon be shut down.

The Sitefinder website, operated by Ofcom, the telecoms watchdog, was set up as a result of recommendations contained in the Stewart report on mobile phones and health, published in 2000.

Last year, the Information Commissioner, Richard Thomas, demanded Ofcom make public the raw data on mobile phone base stations held within its Sitefinder database.

When making the decision, the Commissioner considered Ofcom’s reasons for withholding the requested information, such as national security, public safety and intellectual property rights.

The information on the website is provided by the mobile phone companies on a voluntary basis, and if the raw data are made public they have threatened to stop providing information about mast locations, as the data can be used by competitors to identify weak coverage areas. All five networks stopped supplying new data while Ofcom’s appeal against the Information Commissioner was going on.

The appeal by Ofcom has since been rejected by the Information Tribunal, which has backed the Commissioner’s original decision.

The Information Commissioner said, “I am aware that at least some mobile phone companies have stopped fulfilling their commitment to provide the necessary information to Ofcom voluntarily. If this continues, Ofcom must consider using its [Continued on page 15]