

*"Caring for our environment"*

Centre : **ASHFORD**  
County : **WICKLOW**  
Category : **B**

**Results**

Date of Adjudication : 08-07-97

|                                | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 1997 | Mark Awarded 1996 |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Overall Developmental Approach | 50           | 32                | 30                |
| The Built Environment          | 40           | 16                | 16                |
| Landscaping                    | 40           | 26                | 25                |
| Wildlife and Natural Amenities | 30           | 19                | 18                |
| Litter Control                 | 40           | 28                | 27                |
| Tidiness                       | 20           | 14                | 13                |
| Residential Areas              | 30           | 18                | 17                |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas  | 40           | 25                | 24                |
| General Impression             | 10           | 5                 | 5                 |
| <b>TOTAL MARK</b>              | <b>300</b>   | <b>183</b>        | <b>175</b>        |

## **Ashford, County Wicklow**

### **OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH**

Thank you for your detailed map and development programme for Ashford, which was very helpful during the course of adjudication. The adjudicators wish the committee well in their efforts in implementing this plan. Try to be sympathetic to bilingualism and access for both disabled and elderly. It is good to see evidence of this, for example, near the Garda Station with seating and Irish language noted. The Tidy Towns Committee have done impressive work, in a very short period - only four years, congratulations on the work completed to date. It is interesting that you have researched the name of your village. Try to build on this by incorporating signs. The adjudicators would like to know what plans you have for the derelict buildings. Overall, you appear to have a good developmental approach. One area of concern has to be in arresting and reducing the number of signs and sandwich boards, which are on prominent display in several of the petrol stations/service stations, and are particularly bad in the case of one.

### **THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

There was a good presentation noted at the Pharmacy, Dowlings and Classic Cut - well done. Ashford House had been painted and flower baskets were noted; the church was well maintained and a new restaurant was also noted next to the Takeaway, which is a welcomed development. A new development was noted taking place at Chester Beattys and allowances were made for this as it was not looking its usual best; flower baskets were also noted at the school grounds. Are there any plans for the fencing and derelict sites? The Woodpecker Bar could be slightly improved, for example, painting or landscaping the area to the front and to the side. Otherwise, the other premises were relatively well presented with efforts made with flowers - well done in this regard. Overall, there is room for improvement - a dedicated effort is needed in this regard.

### **LANDSCAPING**

The area opposite Mount Usher, further south of where the landscaping has taken place is at present unsightly and should be tackled. There is good evidence of landscaping throughout the village of Ashford this year, for example, at the turn off to Ballinalea, the triangle was looking quite well but the area by the seat needs attention - weeds were noted here. The tree planting is coming on well adjacent to Bolands Garden Centre. There is a very attractive appearance as one approaches Ashford from Rathnew with lovely mature Beech Trees and beautiful views of Mount Usher Gardens. A new planted area near the pharmacy was also noted with Heather planting. The area by the bridge was very well maintained with neatly cut grass and a beautiful vista of the river here. A very attractive flower bed was also noted to the right of Ashford House, with a good choice of planting. The Church grounds are also beautifully maintained; congratulations to those involved. A nice use of simple planting was also noted at

the signpost to the Devils Glen on the main road. Overall, very good attention to landscaping and a good performance under this section this year. Well done.

## **WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES**

Conserving nature is a new venture for many towns and can appear daunting at first. The adjudicators recognise that environmental programmes can take time to get up and running, and even longer to assess their success. This section requires the involvement of all groups in the village, from commercial to residential, and including schools. Any habitat for wildlife requires one to encourage food producing or attracting plants. In this regard, the village of Ashford is unique in having the River Vartry with many riverside plants. Native plants are usually more important for wildlife than introduced ones, and should be encouraged where possible. Habitat management should be a low impact exercise, continued like other areas of the Tidy Towns competition year round. As a rule, groups should endeavour to minimise the use of pesticides and herbicides, preferably not at all, and completely eliminate them in any wildlife conservation area. It is important to remember that tidiness is not always attractive to wildlife. Though the village itself needs to be kept tidy, in some cases establishing areas of decay and overgrowth will be required and can be established creatively, without being unsightly. Try to keep this in mind in your overall development plans; a fine example of this is the riverbank area. There was additional tree planting noted in the lower side of the river; Well done. The hedges also offer opportunities for improvements - providing habitats. Try to approach these in a balanced manner by giving due regard to both tidiness and also the provision for habitats for a range of species of both flora and fauna.

## **LITTER CONTROL**

Litter control in Ashford is good. Even allowing for the fact that the village is a major thoroughfare for the N11, which was quite busy during the time of adjudication, plus the fact that a mart is held there on Mondays, there was no evidence of any litter on the day after this. Small sprinklings were noted, for example, on the path by Mount Usher Gardens and opposite the shop in Woodview and also on the road to Ashford Downs - fortunately these seem to be the only signs of litter. It was good to see new bins in Woodview and it is nice to see that you have a recycling programme in place, with the bottle banks noted and the area surrounding it was litter free. The car park area which also is the location for the mart was also neat and tidy, well done.

## **TIDINESS**

Weed control is generally good but some weeds were noted on paths, for example, near Inchanappa House, it did not appear to be a major problem. There is good surfacing on the roads and good attention to maintenance through the trimming of grass and hedges. However, additional attention is needed at Ballinalea Road, including resurfacing of the road and trimming of hedges, e.g. particularly near the surgery. On the approach road from Ashford Downs, near the stop sign, this area needs to be

presented better also - try to replace the Glendalough sign which has aged a bit.

## **RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

Overall, residential areas are well presented this year, with the exception of one or two sensitive spots. Ballinalea area is very good with attractive shrubbery but there was a need to cut the grass as it was slightly long at time of adjudication. Within Woodview Park, generally, the approach and the area to the left and central areas are well maintained, with new litter bins noted. However, graffiti on poles, signs and ESB boxes are still evident; some weeds were evident by kerbs - why not consider landscaping some of the open space to the rear of this park. The middle section, as stated, was very well presented this year - the tree planting that has taken place is coming on well. There is good individual effort within here as well and it was nice to see several people tending to their gardens at time of adjudication (pity the children, who appeared to be doing nothing, could not be helping out in this). Obviously, the new residents group within Woodview is making a positive impression, keep up the good work and try to get junior litter wardens working in there. Grangelea, which is a park that was not seen before, was very well maintained, well done. Ashford Downs also is a very attractive development. A new development was also noted at Carrig Park with good attention to planting of native Oak trees.

## **ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS**

On the approach road from Rathnew, the left hand side was, unfortunately, very bad, it was overgrown. The right hand side was very neat and tidy and set off very well from Mount Usher Gardens, as stated, minor sprinklings of litter were noted. Approaching from Dublin, there was an excellent presentation, which appeared very neat and tidy with neatly trimmed grass, walls had been cleared leaving hedging behind as a wildlife habitat; well done in this regard. On the approach road from Annamoe/Roundwood, hedging had been cut back; grassed areas needed more attention however. Further out towards the school, needs attention. Approaching Ashford from Bel Air, the road had been resurfaced, good individual efforts were noted at residential premises, making an effort right out onto the road, but improvements in presentation could be brought about by sympathetic cutting of verges, while at the same time maintaining habitats.

## **GENERAL IMPRESSION**

The general impression this year was one of very neat and tidy village. You are continuing to make improvements, however, the overuse of signage is a concern. You have a good mixture of trees and the unique wildlife habitat in terms of the river. Try to concentrate on the built environment and make improvements in this regard and also in the area opposite the fencing at Mount Usher Gardens. Improvements in these two areas would reap dividends for the village. Good luck for 1997 and well done so far.