

*"Caring for our environment"*

Centre : **CARLOW**  
County : **CARLOW**  
Category : **F**

**Results**

Date of Adjudication : 02-07-99

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 1999	Mark Awarded 1998
Overall Developmental Approach	50	38	38
The Built Environment	40	35	35
Landscaping	40	32	31
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	21	21
Litter Control	40	29	30
Tidiness	20	15	15
Residential Areas	30	24	23
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	30	30
General Impression	10	8	7
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>230</b>

## **Carlow Town, County Carlow**

### **OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH**

The information received with maps, photographs and the Nationalist Supplement were all very helpful in finding all the features of the town and the background. The priority of preparing a three to five year plan is very important. Carlow is expanding rapidly; there is so much activity and business, and housing has put a strain on the resources. The traffic on some of the narrow streets and the parking situation is strangling the town as well as the noise, pollution and danger from such traffic. Perhaps more one-way streets, pedestrian only streets during the daytime, more parking restrictions and encouragement to use the car parks would be helpful. As a town grows people continue to expect to be able to take their cars wherever they want to. This is not a part of a growing town. The tidy towns committee should liaise with all the relevant bodies to achieve higher standards. As towns get bigger the role of tidy towns committees changes and becomes less of a hands-on committee and more one which is involved in lobbying and liaising with various bodies.

### **THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

Carlow has a rich combination of architecture. There are some outstanding buildings such as the courthouse and Carlow Cathedral. The business premises show a wide range of presentations. Some, in their enthusiasm, seem a little elaborate and a simpler style would be satisfactory. Space seems to be a difficulty as so much appears squashed into the town. As was mentioned last year, the Superquinn premises is attractively presented. The idea of employing a person during the summer to carry out a survey of derelict buildings is excellent. Often these buildings can detract so much from the efforts of others and a real inventory is needed so that a policy can be formed to deal with them. The huge expanse in housing is very noticeable and the number of housing developments within the town such as Cathedral Close will bring life into the centre of the town. These developments often clean up sites that were neither productive or attractive. At the junction of Barrack street and Tullow street there is a profusion of all sorts of signs, notices and poles. To stand back and look at this illustrates how piecemeal developments can result in such an uncoordinated vista.

### **LANDSCAPING**

Considerable work has been done in this respect over the years. While some of the new developments, parks in particular, give great impetus to the town probably two of the most important landscape features of any town or city are the tree planting schemes on the roadsides and any other vacant ground, and the gardens of householders. Trees are such a vital part of towns and cities. The countryside surrounds Carlow with trees. Many of the

new tree plantings are of small ornamental types. It is important to find locations such as greens, wide verges and parks to plant the larger tree types such as ash, beech, sycamore, chestnut and oak. On the approach from Castledermot large copper beech trees come into view. These were planted by previous generations who could never have hoped to see them at maturity. Should we be doing likewise for the next two generations? It is a lovely idea in such a busy town to be able to walk through the parks interlinking with the riverbank walk to get from housing to shops, so avoiding the roadways. Hanover Park is interesting with its wild grass area and pathways along the river. The gazebo theme is very effective and the introduction of the children's play area close to the supermarket car parks must be a winner. The landscaping around the Liberty tree is interesting. This is a most prominent place and an exceptional level of maintenance and replacement is needed here. Landscaping throughout the housing estates is variable. The newer large housing schemes are in need of landscaping. So often the expensive town and large houses are exceptionally well landscaped such as Heatherfield Court, while the more ordinary building schemes have a minimum of landscaping. Containers and planting on roundabouts needs to be excellent and imperfection is unacceptable as these items are in such prominence. The Springfield drive landscaping is again a great asset. The developments at Potato market are to be commended. A very interesting treatment of the graves to the side of the Cathedral is the mass ivy growth over each grave. The small area grounds around the courthouse do not do the building justice in their present state. The sites around Telford urgently need attention. The entrance to Pennys stores from Burrin street needs attention. The garden within the Royal Hotel is a delight to visit.

## **WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES**

The river walks and banks are the obvious asset to be tapped in this regard and more work is needed to provide information, access and enticement to avail of these facilities. The Hanover park with its natural grass border will encourage wild life too.

## **LITTER CONTROL**

Litter continues to be a problem in Carlow. This problem is not confined to Carlow and almost all big towns and cities are experiencing the same difficulty. Looking over the bridge below the post office, the river waterfall was blocked with rubbish – mostly pieces of aeroboard. This destroyed the flow of the cascade. Litter was evident on streets, in Hanover park, around the Cathedral Close and Presentation Place. A concerted effort, particularly with school children is needed.

## **TIDINESS**

In a town of this size there will always be a variety of standards. The main streets and road approaches give a tidy appearance. Cars and car parking are frequently a source of untidiness.

Breaking up carparks with narrow corridors of trees is helpful in this regard. This is not evident in Carlow. The carpark at the Carlow shopping centre is a vast mass of cars.

## **RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

There are many fine residential areas which are well treated and landscaped. The older estates obviously have had more time for plant growth. Massive housing estates are in themselves not the most attractive sight, hence the need for well treated open spaces, greens and tree planting to give character and a sense of individuality to the estates. The Highfield estate is treated well-Heatherfield Court, as mentioned previously, is exceptional with it's all year round planting effects. While developers and local authorities have responsibility for housing developments, at the end of the day it is up to every individual to do the most they can to care for their home and garden. Every encouragement should be given to competitions and information to achieve this goal. The collective contribution of all individuals is amazing. The names of many of the estates are not clearly marked.

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

Generally there is a high standard of presentation of the approach roads. Road markings are well done but sometimes, with the volume of traffic, one can find oneself in the wrong lane before the sign indicates which is correct. The narrow back streets are improving as many of these now have new developments and are possibly used more frequently. The volume of traffic is far in excess of what these roads were made for and this is taking its toll on the town. As stated before, the car should not have the privilege of accessing every part of the centre of Carlow. This would make life much less frustrating and more clam, particularly for pedestrians.

## **GENERAL IMPRESSION**

Carlow is an exciting town, with the massive explosion of activity of business and housing and all that this brings to a town. This is such a interesting town. The developments, particularly with parks and water features, are imaginative. It is easy to see that this town will improve dramatically with a bypass and good planning by the tidy towns committee

## **SECOND ADJUDICATION (11/08/99)**

In spite of a slight falling back under litter control on second adjudication day, Carlow has again come out remarkably well. One senses, from the documentation, a very strong will to improve in the less impressive categories. Most of the residential areas are first class. One would like to see fewer derelict or underdeveloped sites, and fewer poles and wires; with the extensive construction in progress, it will however be some time before a really effective tidiness reigns in these respects. The riverside amenity (No 5 on map) will certainly be fine when completed. Among the pleasing

sights noted by the second adjudicator, who had not been in Carlow for some time, were the John Behan Liberty Tree sculpture, the Croppy Memorial in Graiguecullen, improvements to Hanover Park and the Bus Park. The latter is promising, but entering it for an award before planting has had time to establish would be to put it out of the running at once, so this has not been done; it needs at least two more years.