Tidy Towns 1999

"Caring for our environment"

Centre : **BIRR**
County : **OFFALY**
Category : **D**

Results

Date of Adjudication : 06-07-99

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 1999	Mark Awarded 1998
Overall Developmental Approach	50	29	32
The Built Environment	40	34	33
Landscaping	40	32	31
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	19	19
Litter Control	40	28	26
Tidiness	20	15	13
Residential Areas	30	23	22
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	28	28
General Impression	10	8	7
TOTAL MARK	**300**	**216**	**211**

Birr, County Offaly

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Thank you very much for the entry form which is informative and presents a complex set of issues in a very simple format. Unfortunately the three to five year Development Plan, which is a mandatory requirement at this stage in the Competition, was not submitted and therefore is reflected in a drop in points in this category. Obviously with the submission of such document this should not be a long term reflection on marks in this category. It must be noted that it was difficult to find streets and items that were referred to in the entry form and referred-to areas in the script. There is no town plan presented for easy reference within the town and when asked at one local hotels, they only had a regional plan and not a town plan for this entry. It is important that when such a document is drawn up that there is a very clear indication of the spatial layout and that aspects that relate to a specific year are clearly identified on a plan. This is mentioned because the scale of this town is such that it would be impossible to expect all objectives to be carried out in any single one year.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

There are so many interesting spaces and buildings in this town that there is no need to go into detail. However, it is clear that there is great pride in the town and that this runs through in the great attention to detail and presentation of structures within the town. Of particular note is St. Brendan's Community School which has really matured into a first class environment both internally and externally. All people involved in the nurturing of this particular facility must be complimented. Again the school, Iosep Naofa was another example of an educational building

LANDSCAPING

There is a very consistent flavour taken in the treatment of presenting landscape spaces in Birr, in general they are simply planted and very well maintained. Camcor park provides a very good example of such an approach. The hanging baskets on the terraces on the Roscrea road entering the town demonstrate a very strong theme of connecting various buildings along a busy road. Perhaps the GAA grounds need to address the street more successfully and improve the quality of the Roscrea road to match to the same standard as the County Arms Hotel opposite them. New Road (Pound Street) could take street trees and further extend the character of tree lined streets that is found within the town. The Maltings is now finished and is a very interesting space to visit, however, the landscape component perhaps needed to have stronger impact. There is only one area of concern from the point of new landscaping and that has to do with the

square and the newly planted trees near the base of the column. One must question the asymmetry that may result as the trees mature and the trees closest to the monument may in fact be more a hindrance rather than a reinforcement to the order of this space.

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

The river was very clean and well maintained as the weir and Camcor Park. It is interesting to note the gunnerage growing at the sides of the wier. It should be noted that this category should be better developed in the three to five year plan and which should highlight specific methods in which wildlife is either being managed or being employed into the thinking of current projects.

LITTER CONTROL

Given the extended amount of litter sources in this town, there is a very good programme for controlling the spread. It was noted that the main street was very full of litter early in the morning, however, with the commencement of the litter cleaning people the main street and square were clean within an hour. There is a very effective programme and the people who carry it out should be complimented.

TIDINESS

Dublin Road was very tidy as were most of the streets in the town. Perhaps some consideration should be given to the area around the GAA grounds.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

The Crescent is a typical example of the care and attention given to both houses and adjacent spaces that are found around the town. There are very fine examples of landscaping and buildings that benefit from a proper setting. Cappanealle Park is very fine though it could do with a tree at the road, however, avoid matching such selection with the cypresses on the opposite side of the R.439. The old and new areas are very good in their landscape setting and in demonstrating the way in which they relate to the external spaces that they open onto. One looks forward to seeing how the new residential areas being developed in the town will mature.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

The limes planted on the Dublin road seem to be maturing very well; the Tullamore road needs an element of upgrading and there were weeds noted on the entry road from Banagher.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

This town provides a very good contribution to the Tidy Towns Competition and has always provided a very good experience when visiting the town. It should be mentioned that recent developments within the castle grounds do not seem to have extended into the town and perhaps visitors should be made more aware of these developments as not every visitor goes to Birr to see solely the castle.

SECOND ADJUDICATION (07/08/99)

Birr offers a most interesting array of buildings and history. As mentioned above - more information and direction would be very welcome on a visit to Birr to avail fully of its treasures. There is a very good sense of pride in the town and the Birr Castle walls and castle add a unique character to the town. The interesting variety of housing - especially the terraced housing, adds to the attractiveness. Having so many residences within the town is a very pleasant feature. The Maltings area development requires careful attention to finish and landscaping. The railings around the green with the two fine specimen trees need cleaning or painting. Saturday late afternoon may be the most difficult time to keep the streets litter free but an adequate plan should make provision for such.