

"Caring for our environment"

Centre : **HORSELEAP**
County : **OFFALY**
Category : **A**

Results

Date of Adjudication : 05-07-1999

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 1999	Mark Awarded 1998
Overall Developmental Approach	50	25	25
The Built Environment	40	21	20
Landscaping	40	19	18
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	9	9
Litter Control	40	16	14
Tidiness	20	10	8
Residential Areas	30	14	13
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	18	18
General Impression	10	4	5
TOTAL MARK	300	136	130

Horseleap, County Offaly

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

A three to five year development plan is still required; this is important as it brings focus to an overall programme and allows for an accurate assessment process. The entry form is helpful in understanding the background to the development of the village. Of note are the excessive speeds of traffic passing through the village and the non enforcement of the 30 mile an hour zone. This highlights the need for greater liaison between the village and the county council to ensure a safer environment and will be more easily put forward to the local authorities through a development plan.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Essentially the built environment of the village is collected around the junction but as there is not a significant amount of built environment the scale of the road is inclined to dominate the character of the village. The new triangle with the raised planters is a definite improvement that must be commended as it serves to reinforce an additional element to the built environment. The church needs to be separated from the road environment by a row of tree planting and a successful approach to this is illustrated through the presentation of the garden centre to the road where vegetation has very successfully reinforced separation from the road environment. Overhead power lines on the Dublin road are very disruptive and may in future years require a more orderly pattern. The many derelict houses detract from the visual appeal of the village; however, this is easily offset through creative approaches such as these taken by other villages in treating such buildings. The school looks very well and has been recently painted. There is an opportunity for the school to seek planting between the road and its property and also separate itself from the Statoil filling station. Given the recent improvements made to the road markings, it is noted that parking must generally occur off the road; this creates a problem where cars parking on the wide pavement at the junction to the Clara road hide the stop sign. This problem should be assessed so as to maintain safety.

LANDSCAPING

The garden centre adds a very attractive feature to the village and is very well presented. The sign in front of the garden centre is perhaps slightly overlarge in proportion to the scale of the village. There is a great opportunity to get indigenous trees and shrubs into the new triangle area and though it is noted that weeds currently have taken over the soil, it is presumed that it is proposed to eradicate weeds for proper planting in future years. It must be noted that the hedges on the side of the main road need diligent maintenance as the sycamore hedge leading from the west is in front of a sign which asks motorists to lower speed and warn them about children crossing the road. At present half this sign is hidden

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

There were lots of swallows on the day of the adjudication and many birds in the area. Serious consideration should be given to a selected scheme for screen planting at the school to promote opportunities for wildlife. The stream at the rear of the village, (Ganesborough river) in an opportunity for wildlife endeavours and can be seen from the Mullingar road.

LITTER CONTROL

Given that there are few sources of litter in the village, maintenance of a litter free environment could be better. There are quite a number of areas with litter and styrofoam on the Clara road; however, in general given the impact of the passing traffic efforts are very good for such a location on a national primary route.

TIDINESS

In general the village is very tidy, but the loose gravel from the road reduces the visual and safety considerations.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

The built environment is quite small in scale in comparison to the national road; the use of potted plants is very successfully handled in front of one of the houses and could be used as a theme extended through the town or through the village. It is recommended that more indigenous plants be used so as to develop a much more gentle landscape setting to the residential areas as there is a significant amount of natural hedging around the streets and back areas. The speed of traffic has a

great impact on the village and further calming measures are needed so as to provide a better character to the village.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

The village has taken good care of most edges to the roads; however, it must be noted that the County Council have not helped the committee by presenting a storage area on the approach from Galway. In general the roads are the dominant feature in the village and as such perhaps required greater attention to their presentation. The extensive areas of loose gravel that hide the road markings must be addressed and again the committee should approach the local authority for assistance in this matter. It is noted that the road sign to Clara should be re-orientated as this is a very annoying failure of road signs which tourists require at road junctions. The Committee must be commended on the introduction of the triangular area which greatly defines the junction of the road to the national road and will become a very pleasing visual feature in the village.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

Given that the scale of the village is quite small with respect to the extent of the built environment the most dominant characteristics are roads and large community structures. These buildings need greater integration with each other and this should be achieved through a tree planting programme which would unify these spaces and separate them from the national road. A very good example of the development of a theme in this village is the use of potted plants in one case and these should be considered for greater use.