

"Caring for our environment"

Centre : **BALLYBRICKEN**
County : **WATERFORD**
Category : **C**

Results

Date of Adjudication : 14-06-2000

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2000	Mark Awarded 1999
Overall Developmental Approach	50	28	--
The Built Environment	40	28	--
Landscaping	40	17	--
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	15	--
Litter Control	40	20	--
Tidiness	20	13	--
Residential Areas	30	19	--
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	27	--
General Impression	10	5	--
TOTAL MARK	300	172	--

Ballybricken, County Waterford

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

This is a fascinating entry. The visit proved most interesting and rewarding to the adjudicator, who had ignorantly 'passed though' Ballybricken many times over the years. The proposed agenda, leading to environmental improvements, will serve to draw the attention of the outsider to the unique attributes of the neighbourhood. (Historically, a comparison with Dublin's liberties is not inappropriate.) The Committee is right to engage the advice of experts in the various disciplines in the coming months. It is very encouraging to note that a 3- or 5-year Development Plan will be instituted: this should set annual targets under the headings listed below. Markings will be comparatively low this first year, but that should not be OF concern. Thank you for your excellent maps, which were extremely helpful.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The intrinsically Mediaeval street-plan, with its mix of housing largely from the last two centuries, is what gives the area its special appeal. The church tower, an important landmark on the Waterford skyline, 'disappears' on closer approach: its rediscovery by way of its three narrow entries is remarkably exciting, and any improvement scheme must respect its hidden quality; the church appears to be well maintained within and without. The Garda Headquarters is well presented, except for the railings on the St Patrick's Terrace side. The ominous gaol wall to the rear is another fine feature which should be preserved. The large warehouse nearby appears to be vacant, and might be an eventual location for multi-storey parking. There are few distinguished shopfronts, new or old, but several which would benefit greatly from a sympathetic makeover – upper storeys to be attended to as much as the ground level. A group of small shopfronts in Mayor's Walk – among them Nowlan's, Qualitile and Johnny Walker's – are commendably neat. Of recent major commercial developments, the Mercedes agency respects the scale of the local streetscape, (where Besco does not and is therefore intrusive).

LANDSCAPING

The triangular Green, as the principal open space, was trim on adjudication day. There are significant opportunities for additional small grassed areas with tree and shrub-planting at the north end of Mayor Street and at the confluence of Barker Street and St Patrick's Terrace. Car parking has destroyed the integrity of such places, and also of the north end of Trinity Square. Shopkeepers and householders should be encouraged to create floral displays in

window-boxes. When presented with panache, as in lanes in Lismore or Letterkenny, these can transform a streetscape.

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

This has been seen as an irrelevancy in totally urban situations, but such should not be the case. There is useful information in the Tidy Towns Handbook, and the Irish Wildlife Conservancy will be glad to offer advice.

LITTER CONTROL

Unfortunately there was considerable disposable litter present on adjudication day, especially at the east end of the Green, in Newport's Square and Trinity Square. More litter bins are needed in prominent positions – but awareness needs to start at primary school level. Many committees co-operate with schools in anti-litter projects.

TIDINESS

There was a surprising amount of kerbside weed in many places. It is always something to watch out for - in the tidiest towns and villages, householders see to it that their frontages are weed free: it takes very little work. The close off Newport's Square had a generally scruffy appearance. Some projecting signage (generally of the mass-produced kind) detracts from the business centre. Overhead cables do not help. The apparently abandoned hall in Mayor's Walk detracts from the appearance of this fine street.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Almost all of Ballybricken is residential. There are dozens of exceedingly charming 19th and early 20th century terraces of cottages and street houses, for the most part looked after with great pride, in Francis Street, Grattan Terrace, Trinity Square and elsewhere. Mid 20th century public housing developments have perhaps not stood the test of time so well, and some boundary fences/hedges are less well kept than they might be, but generally the standard is good. More recent developments, such as the east side of O'Brien's Street, fit very well into the existing housing stock, are of trim design and are well looked after by their residents. A competition for the best kept street might prove fruitful.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

Surfaces and paving are generally of acceptable standard. The lane and steps leading from Barker Street to Thomas Hill has been well thought out. There are unpleasant rusting traffic barriers at the south end of Trinity Square which

should be dealt with. Future development of currently unprepossessing alleys, open spaces and parking bays should be remodelled in materials which are traditional to the area, and must respect ambient features. The bandstand, for example, is a structure which must surely be held in great affection. It would be essential to consult local residents about any alterations which would affect their visual outlook and their pattern of life. Prettification should be avoided at all costs. Some solid street furniture, especially recently installed lamp standards reproduced from older patterns, have given much more of an uplift to their surroundings than might have been expected. Through-traffic, and traffic congestion, detract enormously from the enjoyment of street life, and off-street car-parking is urgently needed.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

A bustling vibrant area which clearly sustains strong local traditions. The results of the action proposed by the Tidy Towns Committee to preserve, improve and enhance the quality of the neighbourhood in co-operation with the proper authorities is greatly looked forward to. Congratulations on this impressive initiative.