

*"Caring for our environment"*

Centre : **LONGFORD TOWN**  
County : **LONGFORD**  
Category : **E**

**Results**

Date of Adjudication : 04-06-2002

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2002	Mark Awarded 2001
Overall Developmental Approach	50	29	25
The Built Environment	40	25	25
Landscaping	40	22	22
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	15	13
Litter Control	40	16	17
Tidiness	20	10	11
Residential Areas	30	20	18
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	19	19
General Impression	10	5	5
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>155</b>

# **Longford, County Longford**

## **OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH**

Your Work Programme document 2002-2007 is impressive and helpful and will undoubtedly go a very long way over its five-year period in providing the right kind of leadership and in inspiring the sympathetic change which is so necessary. Up to now, Longford has emerged rather poorly each year in comparison with towns of similar size and population, and it has been disappointing to have to give a lowish mark when in fact there are well-tended suburbs, excellently maintained public buildings and certain other features of real quality – against which one has had to take note of unsightly commercial and industrial premises, untidy streetscapes, congested traffic, and a litter problem of unusual magnitude. Next year, please ensure to include a map with all the places which should be seen marked on it; a map obtained from the Tourist Office on the day of judging was incomplete. Your photographs of ‘blackspots’ are candid, and emphasise the honesty of the approach. It has indeed been a pleasure to study this Programme, and all good wishes go for its success.

## **THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

The Cathedral, the Church of Ireland Church, the County Council HQ, the Government Offices, the Library, the Fire Station and other prominent buildings are well presented. Some factory buildings on the Ballinalee road are unusually fine. Many business premises in the Main Streets are well presented, but the overall impression is of a rash of uncoordinated signage. Among the frontages particularly admired on adjudication day were the plain Dunne’s Stores, the similarly discreet Longford Arms Hotel with its excellent lettering – something which catches the attention far more persuasively than many more elaborate examples which simply confuse the eye. A special commendation to O’Connor’s florists’ where the whole building is treated in a unified modern style. Of those mentioned on your list, perhaps Quinn’s in Earl Street was the most admired for a very fine maintenance job on an attractive old building. Many were photographed and entered for the competition. (Incidentally, we did not see any Irish Language shopfronts, though you mentioned a few.) No praise for the false frontages in the lane behind the Longford Arms. It is very good to read that the Council is taking steps to redevelop derelict sites. The most distinguished street in Longford is Church Street – but unfortunately the range of buildings on its north side have a determinedly mean look.

## **LANDSCAPING**

Some public planting, such as at roundabouts, is good but not extraordinarily so; more often, attempts at planting in places such as car parks are of a rather half-hearted nature. Planters enhance a number of public places. A real challenge has been met with the grassed riverside at the back of Church Street leading to a housing development. It was surprising to see the unkempt grass verge all along the front boundary of the Government Offices.

## **WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES**

It is good to see greater use being made of the river as an amenity. The Mall and the Canal Walk are oases of tranquillity and not overburdened with formal gardening. It is most encouraging to read of the work of the Royal Canal Amenity Group, and certainly the canal now seems to be an accepted part of the landscape and not something to be ignored as it was several years ago.

## **LITTER CONTROL**

The places mentioned by last year's adjudicator as badly littered were quite free of litter on this visit. Unfortunately there was not a street in the town centre where litter was not conspicuous, and at certain places – such as the handsome steps leading from the bridge to the riverside path – extensive litter had obviously been there for some time. There was a lot of old litter on the right at the beginning of Farnagh Hill, and at the pedestrian bridge under the railway near the swimming pool. There are plenty of bins in the main streets, but they were crammed to overflowing (this was a Tuesday afternoon and evening and Wednesday morning). Of course education is the answer, but in the absence of that the Local Authority simply has to be more active.

## **TIDINESS**

The boundary of the Greyhound Stadium was mentioned last year and has not improved. There is a conspicuously unkempt site in Park Road and at the foot of Farnagh Road. In the centre, the lanes beside the AIB and The Way Out were particularly unsightly. Ballymahon Street has the worst conglomeration of signs, poles and wires. The whole back-street area from the railway to Richmond Street is an uneasy mix of poorly presented business premises, scrappy open sites and houses where the people are attempting to create a decent place to live among the poor commercial development. Probably the untidy area is at the confluence of Richmond Street and Strokestown Road.

## **RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

There are many well-kept town houses, and it was particularly good to see the attractive use of colour in the very street which has been criticised above for its unprepossessing commercial side. In the same neighbourhood Congress Terrace is well looked after, and it is a pity to see some of these pleasant old houses boarded up. A development off this terrace will be eagerly looked forward to next year. The residential streets between Park Road and Dublin Road are generally good; the open space at Teffia Park is pleasant. A new estate near the Greyhound Stadium is promising, and young trees were already in place. Some new estates in the railway/canal area have access problems and many estates and residential roads have no nameplates. The new urban housing between the Tesco shopping centre and the river is an exciting development and will be interesting to see when fully occupied. Blocks of apartments in this neighbourhood are promising, but

one wonders about the dominance on the skyline by the six-storey Harbour Point building. Un-named estates in the vicinity of the Government Offices are kept with pride, and in general the residential areas to the north and west are as well tended if not better than those seen in other large towns.

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

Traffic congestion makes it difficult to enjoy the town centre. Most surfaces are good, though streets in the vicinity of Park Road require attention. A very good attempt to create a pleasant industrial estate to the south-west of the railway will be watched with interest. The Sports and Leisure Centre car park is well looked after. Unfortunately there are several 'back areas' which need attention.

### **GENERAL IMPRESSION**

A town of many unsung delights which is at last beginning to take itself seriously in the matter of improvements and development. The year 2003 will show how this is being managed, and the result is eagerly anticipated.