

Tidy Towns Competition 2005

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Mountbellew**

Ref: **333**

County: **Galway**

Mark: **250**

Category: **B**

Date: **11/08/2005**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2005	Mark Awarded 2004
Overall Developmental Approach	50	44	43
The Built Environment	40	37	37
Landscaping	40	32	32
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	26	25
Litter Control	40	28	22
Tidiness	20	15	15
Residential Areas	30	27	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	33	33
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	300	250	242

Overall Developmental Approach:

Your comprehensive 3-Year-Plan was studied with interest. Having these annual objectives to work towards can hardly fail to concentrate the mind. Do not be disappointed if some projects do not mature in the time allotted - there should always be room for flexibility - and you will probably find that other projects are completed more quickly than expected. You are doing excellently under Development, Buildings, Landscaping, Wild Life, Residential and Roads - in fact under most headings. In general, it is the centre of the town that disappoints: it is a planned town with a fine central space that today does not live up to its unique design. Far too many business premises are destroyed by advertising and mass produced signs, the horse statue is lost amid parking of vans and cars (it should be on a much higher plinth, and there should be no parking), trees should be planted, poles and wires are remarkably inappropriate and untidy (and have long been replaced in other towns), and traffic management is nothing short of antedeluvian!

The Built Environment:

The church was well presented as always - an excellent cut stone frontage behind well kept railings. The educational buildings continue to impress, not all of them for their architectural merit but all of them for first class maintenance - Holy Rosary College, the Franciscan Agricultural College and St Mary's School. The Forge Museum is a lovely plain little building (unfortunately it was closed at the time of the visit). Most of the commercial premises - almost all of them fine buildings - are marred by excessive signage.

Mulroony's Pharmacy is the one great exception where a distinctively modern shopfront respects the scale and materials of the old streetscape; it is eye-catching to the customer, but there has been no need to vulgarise it with advertising. Other premises could learn a lot from it.

Landscaping:

Immediately on arrival from either east or west one is struck by the first class verges and the roadside trees. (This seems to herald something rather special, but the centre turns out to be a disappointment.) Nice touches, such as the hanging baskets on the bridge and small plantings throughout the town - such as at Forest View - create a sense of care as well as of colour. The amenity park - almost like a secret garden - with its clear waterways, neat bridges and the quaint Bellew memorial, is remarkable for being so close to the town centre. Pleasant private gardens on either side of the river, downstream, were noted.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Trees are marked under this heading, though of course there is an overlap with Landscaping. Your tree planting programme is admired, and the rich heritage of old timber is a wonderful natural resource as well as forming a picturesque background to much of the town. (It should be mentioned that tree specialists do not recommend the planting of annuals around the boles.) Upstream, the banks of the river had recently been cleared.

Wheelchair access to forest paths was very favourably noted and the wooden signs are well designed as well as useful. (Some unsigned paths were seen off a side road to the east of the town, but they may be private.) It was good to read in your documentation that the forest is preserved from shoots.

Litter Control:

This seemed to be much improved upon last year, especially in the areas mentioned by last year's adjudicator as being littered, and additional marks have been awarded accordingly. Congratulations.

Tidiness:

The cleaning of the river has been noted above. A large commercial premises near the river was well kept - indeed, industrial sites are generally well presented in Mount Bellew.

Three very fine old houses on the Ballygar road were seen to be in a derelict condition this may be the site referred to in your submission as being under litigation. The entrance to Pairc Creagan needed upgrading at the time of adjudication. Unsightly poles and wires have been alluded to in the opening paragraph.

Residential Areas:

Houses along the approach roads were invariably presented with care. The estates, especially on the west side, were looking very well on adjudication day; it was encouraging to see so much tree planting - there is plenty of space in the furthest in section of Ashbric for more of this. If further housing is planned, consider siting development nearer to the town centre - such as new streets to the north east of the square - to maintain a sense of community, to avoid ribbon development, and to avoid the sensation of remoteness from town facilities such as schools, that has been unfavourably seen elsewhere.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Surfaces of the main roads are good - the eastern approach was being resurfaced at the time of adjudication - and verges beautifully kept. Directional signs are also good. More attractive lamp standards in the central streets would make a huge difference.

General Impression:

A pleasant small town, or large village, with a surprisingly urban feel. There is a real sense of prosperity and the progress that goes with it. Do take note of the negative points made above - they are raised with the best of intentions.

Second Round Adjudication:

The Tuam approach is a long lead in to the town. Hanging baskets at the bridge were noted and admired. Litter Control on the day was not good with papers apparent along approach roads and at the Market Square. The colour co-ordinated litter bins, however, were very fresh and well maintained. The forecourt area to the old mill building on the Tuam Road appeared a little rough. The buildings of the Market Square were generally well maintained, of note being the marvellous modern façade of Mulrooney's Pharmacy. The old petrol pumps in this location should either be restored to their former glory or perhaps moved to your fine museum? The public buildings of the town such as the church set back from the road and the numerous colleges contribute well to the competition - that modern one with the large sliding timber gate was particularly admired. The long stretch of grass verge and landscaped space on the Ballinasloe side of the town was well presented. Your problems in relation to litigation in relation to a number of issues were noted and it is to be hoped that these will progress in the not too distant future! The large committee obviously shows a great care and concern for their town. Well done to all concerned!