

Tidy Towns Competition 2006

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ardee** Ref: **488**
County: **Louth** Mark: **245**
Category: **D** Date(s): **06/06/2006**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2006
Overall Development Approach	50	45
The Built Environment	50	32
Landscaping	50	32
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	24
Litter Control	50	27
Waste Minimisation	20	9
Tidiness	30	14
Residential Areas	40	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	29
General Impression	10	6
TOTAL MARK	400	245

Overall Development Approach:

Your Three Year Plan is comprehensive and, it is confidently expected, achievable. Much research has gone into its preparation and it is very good to see specific years marked as targets for stages or completion of projects. As well as the guidance which it provides, such plans have had the effect elsewhere of encouraging additional activity. With your growing population, are you involving new residents in your work and inviting newcomers to join your committee? – elsewhere this has resulted in a surge of valuable interest and in some cases expertise. Your notes on the entry form have been very helpful – not many committees provide so much information. (But watch that you put the information in the right box – for example, 'Bottle Banks' should come under 'Waste Minimisation' rather than under 'Built Environment'.) Could you please write the names of locations to be visited on your map – eg 'Old Graveyard' rather than reference numbers – it is difficult to deal with several documents when walking through the town. It has never been expected that any Tidy Towns committee will undertake many of the improvements suggested by the adjudicators; rather, the committee is seen as an informed conduit through which ideas may be passed, if they seem appropriate, to the relevant public bodies, business houses and residents' associations.

The Built Environment:

The principal existing public buildings were once again seen as well maintained. A very interesting almost completed new building was seen opposite the Bank of Ireland car park – please draw attention to it next year and it will be entered for the national architectural award. The Chantry – not signposted, and few local residents could give directions – is a building of rare historic importance; it was not quite clear what rehabilitation has been done and it did not seem to be presented in its somewhat dishevelled location with the confidence it deserves. Of the business and commercial buildings of the main street (with its various names as it proceeds) the southern section was seen as better kept than the northern where cheap-looking mass-produced signs were more prevalent. Certainly this long and handsome thoroughfare does not make

much of the dignity and charm which it once possessed. It would be useful to see the leaflet which you distribute to shopkeepers etc.

Landscaping:

The public park and busy playground to the north end of the town were well presented on the day of the visit. Several raised beds were seen having been expertly prepared to receive annuals. Plenty of shrubs and evergreens were noted – they have the distinct advantage of requiring less upkeep and providing interest throughout the year. The splendid landscaping of the major roundabout and town entrances has always been a positive feature of Ardee and this year was no exception. Much of the landscaping effort was seen to advantage in the housing estate (see Residential below). Tubs, window-boxes and hanging baskets were also favourably noted, creating spots of care and colour.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The River Walk, though littered in places, is obviously a haven for a number of species. The same may be said of the wonderful hedges of the Old Railway Walk – such an imaginative initiative – where the may blossom was in full splendour at the time of the visit. Credit has been given for the creation and maintenance of the Sensory Garden, though it could not be found (it is off the map and persons questioned were not aware of it). The graveyard near the back of the Church of Ireland church – if this is the correct location – appears to have been redeveloped as a grassed space: like the Chantry nearby, not a great deal seems to have been made of it. This neighbourhood of 'backs' could be most attractive.

Litter Control:

The list of littered locations given by last year's adjudicator had certainly been shortened, but litter was still seen to be a major problem in some places, including the footbridge over the Dee, the Riverside Walk, the Markey memorial and the Railway Walk where two piles of rubbish disfigured the eastern entrance. Clearly education is the key – to create an understanding at an early age, and this was exemplified in how well school grounds were kept clean, and residents' associations obviously are highly motivated in this regard. It is in the more public places of Ardee that the scourge is so prevalent. Well-publicised prosecutions can have a salutary effect, whether of visitors, traders or residents. Have fines been imposed, and if so with what frequency?

Waste Minimisation:

Your bring banks should be increased in number. It is essential to obtain guidance from the local authority in this increasingly important matter. It is good to read that two schools already have green flag status. A way might be found of contributing waste material of diverse kinds to the excellent recycling centre at Dundalk. The mark here is nominal in the first year of its introduction to the Tidy Towns competition, and we can see how things go by next year.

Tidiness:

Various manifestations of neglect were seen chiefly in the neighbourhood of the principal bridge. Perhaps the local authority would take the imaginative step and draw up a comprehensive scheme – which would include traffic calming – that would create better conditions in this crucial area. Under several headings your own Development Plan emphasises essential improvements which must be implemented. It was good to see that the car park near the bridge was tidy at the time of adjudication. A derelict house was seen beside St Leger's Castle, and the castle had sprouts of vegetation growing in the masonry at the higher levels.

Residential Areas:

Most of the older street houses and cottages both in the town centre and in localities such as off Bale street and O'Carroll street contribute well to the sense of home pride. At the time of adjudication Ferdia Park, with its trim lawns, good seating and attractive sculpture was very spruce indeed; this adjudicator recalls that when it opened cynics remarked that it would not remain as tidy as in its first year of occupation, but the fact is it has improved, due to the thoroughly good work of its residents; it was one of the best estates seen in three counties this year. Second to this, Slieve Breagh and Cherrybrook both had excellent greens, landscaping and plantings. An exceptionally neat new development on the south side of the Duleek road was admired; its internal course was already well landscaped but the roadside could do with tree planting.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Traffic lights and pedestrian crossings are very badly needed at the cross roads south of the principal bridge where traffic control is at present chaotic. The local authority and the National Roads Authority should urgently consider a north-south relief road with a new river crossing and at least four roundabouts to make the main shopping street a more people-friendly place for residents and visitors; perhaps this is already being done, it seems so obvious? Surfaces on some roads, such as Tierney street, are first class; others, such as Bale street, are less so. Not all streets and estates have name plaques; internal signposting is sparse and

signposting to other towns not always adequate. Overhead wires and ungainly lamp standards serve to increase the untidy effect of the main street. Much of this is addressed in your Three Year Plan.

General Impression:

An attractive town with a generously wide main street, Ardee suffers dreadfully from an excess of through traffic: in fact traffic alleviation seems to this adjudicator to be the most urgent priority. Unsightly wirescapes and poles need attention – these are local authority matters which have been well attended to in comparable towns elsewhere. You do very well in your landscaping and in the presentation of residential estates. It is confidently expected that with the successful implementation of your ambitious Development Plan you will receive a substantial increase in marks over the next three years. Very best wishes for this.