

Tidy Towns Competition 2006

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ashbourne** Ref: **570**
County: **Meath** Mark: **212**
Category: **E** Date(s): **11/07/2006**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2006
Overall Development Approach	50	38
The Built Environment	50	29
Landscaping	50	32
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	13
Litter Control	50	23
Waste Minimisation	20	5
Tidiness	30	14
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	25
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	212

Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator would like to welcome Ashbourne to the 2006 Tidy Towns Competition. Thank you for the interesting photographs and supporting documentation all of which were used on adjudication day. You have a large Tidy Towns Committee by national standards and that support is most encouraging. The schools are involved in your work for Ashbourne and there seems to be good support from the various agencies and the business interests of Ashbourne. The adjudicator was very pleased to read that your Tidy Towns Committee has a real input to the development of planning policy for Ashbourne and this Tidy Towns role is often forgotten by committees. The time has now come to update your Tidy Towns Plan for Ashbourne that should run from 2007 to 2009 or 2011.

The Built Environment:

Ashbourne seems to be handling the new development that has taken recently and that is presently underway in a competent manner. The town still has the feeling of a large country town. Hopefully the Castle Street development and the placing of cables underground is the start of similar work that will take place along the main street. Hopefully the redevelopment of the site of the two derelict cottages will enhance that part of Ashbourne. The Town Centre development has in effect created an attractive square-like area off the main street. The trees planted here have softened the impact of the buildings and have helped to link Ashbourne into the countryside that surrounds it. Ashbourne House Hotel looked attractive with the heavy landscaping of shrubs and large colourful hanging baskets. However the landscaping here is just a little over-done. The Catholic Church of rather unusual design was well presented and commands a key site in Ashbourne. When the time comes for the repainting of the Aldi premises consideration might be given to painting the building a darker colour that would echo the colour of the hotel directly across the road. In this way a more formal high impact town entrance from the southern side could be created. Throughout the centre of Ashbourne trees

soften the impact of the built environment in a successful way.

Landscaping:

The Millennium Garden appears to be recovering well from the recent major works carried out underground here. Excellent landscaping was noted in front of the Ashbourne Community Centre of the Dublin approach; on the northern side the superbly landscaped Prime Logistics premises was impressive. The area with the village pump at the road junction in the centre of Ashbourne lacks impact and consideration should be given to the redesign of this small but important area. Along the main street the hanging baskets and window boxes add colour to many buildings.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The Broadmeadow River may hold some further wildlife potential following the clean up carried there. It is important that your Tidy Towns Committee would examine further the wildlife potential of Ashbourne, and see what you can achieve in terms of making your area even more wildlife friendly.

If you have not already done so, the starting point is to have a habitat survey carried out of the wildlife in the Ashbourne area. Suggested habitats to be considered include the following –

- Urban habitats – gardens, waste ground, walls, graveyards, hedges
- Wetland habitats – rivers, ponds, lakes, canals, reed marsh, bogs
- Woodland habitats – forests, hedgerows, plantations, parks
- Grassland habitats – roadside verges, parks, wet meadows, dry grasslands

The survey should produce a species list for each of the habitats relevant to the Ashbourne area. This need not be an expensive survey. Perhaps there is a knowledgeable person locally who might undertake this task for you. Basically the survey would identify the animals, plants, birds, fish that inhabit your area and their associated habitats. It should be remembered that to carry out the survey properly that it will probably take a year so that all habitats can be assessed at different time of the year.

Using the results of the wildlife survey your next step should be do draft a straight forward Plan for Ashbourne to preserve the identified habitats in your area, and investigate the possibility of new ones. For example perhaps there is an old Pond in your area that is disused, but with a little work could be an important area for wildfowl.

It is most important to try and involve your local school children in this project, and in many Schools there is probably a teacher who may have an interest in this area who would be willing to get involved. As part of the actions to be undertaken in your Wildlife Plan you might like to consider the provision of some weather proof display panels in Ashbourne, illustrating and explaining the wildlife in your area. This has been done very successfully in many towns and villages in Ireland.

Litter Control:

It is good to get the schools involved in your litter campaigns and clean-ups. It is very important that your Committee would develop a litter control plan for Ashbourne. The issue of litter control is not an issue just for the Local Authority. All citizens and especially your Tidy Towns Committee have a key role to play. Your plan should include such issues as surveying the litter bins that you have in Ashbourne and their adequacy, clean up days and the role of your local schools. Has your Tidy Towns Committee considered organising a litter survey to establish the generators of litter in Ashbourne? It is most important that litter bins are placed in close proximity to the largest generates of litter. The regular emptying of a litter bins if of course essential. Some litter bins may need replacement and this should be discussed with your Local Authority Engineer. Do remember that there are many different designs for litter bins. Some designs are more suitable for some locations than others. On adjudication day litter control was quite good for a town of its size. Some litter was noted on the northern approach road on the right side of the road as well as occasional areas in the centre of Ashbourne. The litter signage is excellent.

Waste Minimisation:

Well done on the activity already underway under this new category. The segregation of litter after clean-ups by the Community School is terrific and the involvement of businesses in Ashbourne in waste minimisation is strongly commended. This provides a very solid platform to build on and attract additional marks over the coming years. The Race Against Waste booklet which accompanied this year's Tidy Towns entry form provides a lot of good ideas for developing this work further. Best of luck with your ongoing and future endeavours.

Tidiness:

At the Monument on the northern approach the weed and growth on the platform area needs to be removed. Generally the untidiness in Ashbourne is related to the new development under way at the time of adjudication and hopefully these problems will be resolved as developments conclude. It is a key role of the Tidy Towns Committee to keep a watchful eye on these developments especially as they near completion to make sure that the site is left in a presentable tidy condition.

Residential Areas:

Quite a number of estates in Ashbourne were visited and the standard was encouragingly high. Some estates had problems of weed growth at roadside kerbing. Additional trees at The Briars would make a big difference to the overall presentation. At Rath Lodge the raised central landscaped area looked really well and so much better than the normal open space area flat design. In a town the size of Ashbourne that has so many housing estates it is not possible in one paragraph to sum up all estates in the town in terms of overall presentation. However the following recommendations are offered by the adjudicator who suggests that the Tidy Towns Committee bring these points to the attention of all estates in Ashbourne.

- Road boundary walls will probably need to be painted twice each year especially on busy roads.
- Gable end walls though sometimes difficult to paint should be painted when the rest of the house is being painted.
- Timber fencing will require treatment at least twice per year.
- All estates should be encouraged to provide entrance name signs and directional signage within the estate.
- Green open space grass areas will need to be cut frequently if a quality presentation is to be achieved. Remember that grass will probably have to be cut back from the top of kerbing by hand. The provision of a few well chosen trees can often transform an open space.
- Areas to the back of estates can sometimes become dumping areas for cut grass and other materials.
- Simple landscaping at individual houses can often be very effective if the proper trees and shrubs are planted.
- By their nature estates can sometimes have litter control problems and this must be addressed by each individual estate in the town.

If you do not already run a Tidy estates Competition involving the estates in your town then now might be the time to consider doing so. It is likely that you will be able to find a local sponsor or sponsors who would be prepared to fund the prize fund. The prizes should ideally be in the form of vouchers for estate maintenance equipment or for landscaping. Private houses were also well presented especially on the Batchelors Walk.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The two main approach roads were quite well presented. However on the northern approach the verge in towards the centre of Ashbourne from the Monument was a little rough and needs further attention. The planting at the Welcome Sign on this approach was very colourful and provided a good first impression of Ashbourne. The footpath area especially in the area of the Garda Station was rather rough and need resurfacing ideally with cobble-lock or similar hard surfacing.

General Impression

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Ashbourne has managed to retain a character despite all the development taking place in the area and the Tidy Towns Committee has played an important role in that achievement. Good luck with your 2007 projects.

