

Tidy Towns Competition 2006

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Tullamore** Ref: **727**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **262**
Category: **E** Date(s): **05/07/2006**
08/08/2006

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2006
Overall Development Approach	50	46
The Built Environment	50	37
Landscaping	50	37
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	22
Litter Control	50	27
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	14
Residential Areas	40	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	35
General Impression	10	9
TOTAL MARK	400	262

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for the completed application form, excellent town map and supplementary information to support your entry.

It has been some time since this adjudicator took time out to traverse Tullamore as up to now one only negotiated the myriad of roundabouts to get to other destinations.

The changes that have occurred in the centre and particularly in the outskirts have been quite staggering. The amount of mixed development that has occurred has been major and one hopes that town can sustain it and more is on the way. Planning permission noted on one green field site on the Clara Road junction indicated that over 320 units between apartments, houses and other service centres -unreal for a town the size of Tullamore ! Anyway they are issues that are best left to the planners.

Overall it was a pleasant experience, if at times a tiring one, to adjudicate Tullamore and observe that the positive improvements far out weigh the negative aspects. Tullamore is a town with a rich historical built environment that has tried to retain its main features while also embracing modern change.

The support of both town and county councils, other town associations and especially the wider community is paying dividends as a good image of the town was presented on adjudication day.

Well done to all who made the compilation and presentation of this entry possible.

The Built Environment:

The two major changes that have occurred since this adjudicator last traversed Tullamore at some length has been a)the easing of traffic congestion around High Street Patrick Street and Columcille Street areas and b)the increase in the level of commercial activity.

The installation of a new parking system has not met with the approval of every one but it certainly has had a positive effect on traffic management.

Commercial activity has meant more people to the centre, new retail units and an improvement in the appearance of many existing ones. The number of buildings in a bad state of repair is still rather high but not exceptional for a town of its size, but the disturbing factor is that a number of these seem to be listed buildings and are of Georgian architecture vintage. Planning notices with effect from this year were noted on some. Two fine buildings with basement areas in Cormac Street, while still occupied, are fast falling into a poor state of presentation. The Town Hall with its impressive entrance is in magnificent structural condition and a fitting home for the town fathers. Credit is due to the developer responsible for the sensitive treatment employed when renovating St Paricks Classical School dating back to 1912 at the Convent Road end of the town. It is hoped that other such buildings due to be re-furnished will be treated in a similar manner and contribute to the preservation of the architectural history of the town. In present society one has to embrace and praise contemporary architecture as well and there are many fine examples to be seen in Tullamore. The Court Hotel, Garda Station, County Council Buildings, New Wing of Regional Hospital and the impressive development that has taken place at the county GAA Grounds O Connor Park were admired in this context. There are many new commercial building housing multiples such as Tesco and Atlantic Homecare on the outskirts and the majority were well presented with ample parking areas. The following premises in the core of the town appealed to this adjudicator for their presentation in both colour and signage Loughreys Bars, Tormeys Butchers, Cloonans Hardware, Tommy Clarke Barber, Digans Pub, Derville F Dolan on Cromac Street and the Mallet Bar on the Kilbide Street end of Town. There were also a number of other premises in both Harbour Street, the Barge Inn for instance, and in O Carroll Street that had simple but effective shop fronts. There are some derelict premises in the centre notably the defunct garage and petrol pumps on Bridge Street. I would concur with last year's adjudicator that there is excessive signage on the Tullamore Dew Heritage Building, it takes away from its appeal somewhat but that said the centre still attracts large numbers of visitors. The layout of Market Square was much admired and a good example of an area that is easily accessible for drivers and pedestrians. The main Churches in the town were all kept in a manner befitting their status and Scoil Bhride and Scoil Mhuire on the relief road were in very good condition with nice planting arrangements in place. The use of Irish in all the new street name signs is very welcome and there is a big effort being made to provide shop front signs that are less obtrusive or garish. Overall a very good standard with a great number of impressive private residences to be viewed in the immediate outskirts.

Landscaping:

There were many examples of both practical and colourful planting arrangements to be viewed both in public places such as roundabouts, green areas and adjoining public buildings. The use of trees as an urban necessity for both practical and aesthetic reasons is very much evident in Tullamore aka the well-maintained green area near St Kyrans Street on the Canal. This type of tree planting was replicated in other parts of the town in a similar effective manner. The mix of shrub, colourful annuals and perennials was observed at different vantage points especially in a number of housing developments. Two that spring to mind are the excellent stone beds in the green area in Marian Place and on the outskirts at Ardan Vale both very colourful indeed. The roundabout on the Clara Road was very much admired, and indeed the planting at the main Industrial Estate in Tullamore on the Srah Road was very well done and maintained which is quite a feat given how busy this area is. The Town Park, which is extensive and accommodates a large children's play area, was also well maintained. There are some planting areas that need to be tended to, as they have become a little cluttered and some of the shrubs are rather woody and losing their appeal. Finally one cannot leave this category without commenting on the many splendid individual gardens small and large that were viewed on the day. The Sea Dew Guesthouse with its very well maintained grounds and one terrace corner house in Marian Place with lush roses come to mind.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The town has a myriad of habitats for wild life, the splendid Town Park, the Canal right in from Srah Castle on by Pearse Park, up to Convent Road area and to the Canal Harbour itself. These areas alone could provide a location that would be ideal for a dedicated and substantial wildlife project depicting the wildlife species associated with the area. As well as being an amenity for the locals it would also be an added attraction for tourists interested in nature. One is aware of your ongoing efforts to help the conservation of nature in the town but it might be worth considering consulting with the County Wildlife Ranger and other local wildlife enthusiasts to discuss the

viability of the dedicated project idea.

Litter Control:

Given that Tullamore is such a large and very busy town and has some many outlying areas, the standard of litter control was quite acceptable.

There are a few black spot, particularly at canal locations that are very well known to the Committee, so no need to highlight by name in this document.

There is a very effective ongoing programme to control litter and promote the message of anti litter to the community – plenty anti litter notices to be seen, new bins sponsored by local businesses and regular clean ups.

You are wished well in the future and signs are positive that your work is being heeded.

Waste Minimisation:

The Committee has identified a number of projects that fall under this new category and that fall within the concept of better waste management.

Involving the schools is a forward looking move as it will instil the concept of Race Against Waste at an early and impressionable age.

The encouragement of business is paramount to the success of this programme and there are many ways the businesses can contribute.

The booklet provided with the original application gives one a better insight to what can be done to promote the Race Against Waste campaign and it also outlines examples of projects that are achieving success in other towns and villages.

Tidiness:

The proposal to have the cables put underground is very welcome but one realises that this will cause major disruption to the town. If the Council buy into this it will be job well done and will result in a major improvement in the streetscape.

There are a couple of prime areas that are quite untidy and visible to any newcomer to Tullamore.

The Western Relief Road possesses a large area that is quite untidy, unfortunately this is a sensitive issue and one that has to be dealt with and managed by the local authority.

The tidy towns role as a voluntary body is limited to lobbying the council.

There are a number of other parts of the town proper that could be problematic if not kept on top of. A little green area near the Clara Street does not complement the efforts of the residents of the aforementioned street and it could be such a well cared for mini amenity.

It is incumbent upon the committee, council and residents to work together to address what are now minor problems before they get out of hand.

It is a slow process but the initiatives under projects planned in your submission suggest that you are very much aware of what has to be done and by whom.

The mark will remain the same as last year with a hope that your endeavours will start to show results by next year.

Residential Areas:

The new housing developments that have taken place in the town and suburbs are many and varied. In a previous section concerns were voiced at the number of housing units are that are being planned for the future and the one planning notice observed was quite staggering.

For the most part the new houses and apartments have blended in with what is already in place.

One cannot but be impressed with presentation standards set by some of the more established housing areas, and there are many, in the town.

Marian Place, with its well tended green area and its new stone beds, was a model for that type of older town estate and a credit to the residents.

The artisan type houses on Davitt Street were much admired and were neatly kept with distinctive front door steps. In actual fact all the houses around O Connor Park GAA grounds were looking very well on a fine summers evening. Emmet Street cottages are unique in design and hard to believe that these are 103 years old.

Convent View has a very imposing terrace of houses with large front gardens and most kept in the original style. One or two have added what look like unsuitable front porches but people's tastes differ and that's what makes life interesting.

On the outskirts Ardan Vale with its nice planting arrangements and Glendaniel off the Srah Road with an excellent green area took this adjudicators fancy.

Clonmimch Avenue and on to Clomminch Road has many impressive homesteads on this tree lined avenue.

There are a few areas that are in poor condition simply because of the density of houses and the fact that no one seems have taken responsibility to look after green areas.
One realises that not every one buys into tidy towns but the committee should, if it has not done so already, try to get residents associations formed in these areas.
The Tidy Estates Competition might be an ideal vehicle to tackle these problematic areas.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The major entrances to the town were very accessible except for a slight disruption at the Dublin end where a new roundabout is being constructed.

The Birr Entrance was very pleasing as one passed Charleville Castle and on in the impressive Charleville Road.

The Clara Roundabout was much admired and it is noted that the TT Committee is responsible for maintaining planting at such roundabouts.

The road out to Endenderry is very busy and populated by large commercial and service industry estates with too much obtrusive signs -but commerciality have its price.

The Dublin Mullingar Road is acceptable but a section of footpath from the new roundabout inwards is in a poor state of repair.

The back areas in and around the town were in a varied condition, some good some fair and some quite poor but for a town of its size the overall standard was above average.

This report does not allow for detailed comment.

Main signs were visible and clean

In some parts of town there were too many signs congregated together in place, this only leads to confusion rather than being of assistance..

General Impression:

The Committee is to be commended for its efforts to date.

It has succeeded in getting the support of both council and the business community to make what are in effect very positive improvements to the town.

The local residential associations have also helped by trying to project good images of their respective areas and the Tidy Estates competition will prove to be very successful and let me say very competitive.

All this good work has made Tullamore a very appealing town with very accommodating and friendly business people.

We wish you well in the future.

Second Round Adjudication:

Tullamore has progressed well over the past few years and good efforts to incorporate the new aspects of the town have been made. Some attractive streetscapes have been achieved particularly at the O'Carroll Street/Market Square and surrounds where tree planting, sculptures, plant containers, attractive lamp standards and well organised parking spaces have been created. The vast range of buildings types have been well commented upon above and these comments can be concurred with on this occasion. The waterside areas form an attractive feature of the town and are well cared for – these make very pleasant strolling grounds as well as being both functional and visually attractive. The Town Park has an excellent structure and hopefully with the refurbishing works the entrances can be made more impressive. The refurbishing of the Court House promises to be an impressive landmark. Hopefully the uneven road surfaces in places will be rectified soon. The Bridge Shopping Centre and surrounding apartment buildings offers a contrasting style within the traditional town centre. This is well accommodated within the core centre of the town.