

Tidy Towns Competition 2007

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballybarrack** Ref: **1390**
County: **Louth** Mark: **180**
Category: **A** Date(s): **17/07/2007**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2007
Overall Development Approach	50	25
The Built Environment	50	20
Landscaping	50	20
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	20
Litter Control	50	30
Waste Minimisation	20	5
Tidiness	30	20
Residential Areas	40	15
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	20
General Impression	10	5
TOTAL MARK	400	180

Overall Development Approach:

Ballybarrack entered as part of the drive by SuperValu to work with communities to approve the environmental standards of their areas through participation in the National TidyTowns Competition. Areas were entered on the basis that they fall within the catchment area of the nearest SuperValu store and this 'baseline assessment' is intended to provide a basis on which progress could be made over the coming years through partnership with residents, businesses and local agencies. As such it should not be interpreted as a critique of the area but rather an opportunity for everybody to work together to make their home a better place to work, live and visit. As part of SuperValu's strategic approach to sustainable development in the area, a nominal mark has been given to reflect this. Further marks will be awarded in future years where more tangible TidyTowns structures can be developed and local environmental plans prepared and implemented.

The Built Environment:

Ballybarrack is a settlement of houses located on either side of the main road, and as such may not as yet constitute a collective unit usually entered into the TidyTowns competition, although this is a largely a matter for the residents who may wish to use participation as a means of creating a better sense of unity in a developing area, an objective shared by TidyTowns and one it is committed to assisting. Other initiatives also exist, such as the Green Mile competition which also serve a very useful function in this regard and may have greater relevance in some cases. The houses were well presented with some beautiful gardens evident showing a high degree of pride of place - well done to all concerned. A footpath would create a safe corridor for walkers and in addition to some suggestions listed beneath, could assist in bringing about a greater sense of unity by linking the various houses.

Landscaping:

As Ballybarrack is a settlement, there is currently no obvious shared civic space for landscaping, although that

doesn't mean this category has no relevance. In Ballybarrack landscaping in roadside gardens provide a great deal of colour and interest to the visitor, while providing many habitats for local wildlife. At the eastern end of the road, it was regrettable to see stretches of hedgerow removed. While hedgerows may present a bit of challenge in maintenance terms, they are the traditional landscaping feature of rural Ireland and an important basis for sustaining wildlife - it would be great if these were restored at some point and it was noted that one side of the road has already been replanted with hawthorn and there are also some lovely stands of Fuchsia.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Even small areas provide great opportunities for wildlife. As already stated existing gardens are providing a valuable function and restoring lost hedgerows would also bring about immense benefits as well as being aesthetically pleasing. Individual residence can also establish specific features designed to sustain wildlife populations such as bird boxes, or specific planting to encourage the important insects and therefore the animals that depend upon them. The humble bumble bee has become so rare it is now a protected species and household gardens could do so much to increase their numbers.

Litter Control:

There was no litter to be seen on the day of adjudication. This was impressive as even small areas can suffer from litter being thrown by passing traffic. Without background information, it was not possible to ascertain the extent of community involvement and further marks could be gained here if litter patrols are in operation.

Waste Minimisation:

Without details of ongoing community projects, it was difficult to assess the extent of progress being made under this category, however taking into account general council facilities and SuperValu's own commitment in this area, I believe a nominal mark is appropriate for this year. There are of course plenty of ways in which local communities can assist in tackling this growing problem, and it would be very useful to consult the Race Against Waste community booklet available for free from the TidyTowns Unit in the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Tidiness:

As Ballybarrack is such a small area there was no unnecessary clutter caused by telegraph poles or abundant wirescape. The aforementioned footpath would streamline the area more as well as providing safety for walkers.

Residential Areas:

As stated above, Ballybarrack boasts some fine residences along the R171 which were well presented with impressive gardens.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The road through the area was generally in good condition, although the need for footpaths to improve safety cannot be stressed enough. As Ballybarrack is not an obviously defined area, it has no welcome signs along the road to create a sense of place nor did the adjudicator see specific measures to calm traffic as it passes the houses. Perhaps this is something that could form a joint project for residents, as it must be worrying, particularly where there are children, to have the main road so close to the properties.

General Impression:

If Ballybarrack decides to take up the TidyTowns challenge there are many ways it could make great progress in the competition. Perhaps the most important, is the fact there is nothing to identify the place and, as stated above, a 'town' feel could be generated quite simply by placing welcome signs at either end of the road leading into it. A footpath would also do much to create a civic impression. In any event, it looks like a wonderful location to live and I wish the residents every good luck for the future.