

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Oldcastle** Ref: **1098**
County: **Meath** Mark: **193**
Category: **C** Date(s): **19/07/2008**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	29
The Built Environment	50	29
Landscaping	50	22
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	10
Litter Control	50	26
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	14
Residential Areas	40	28
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	21
General Impression	10	6
TOTAL MARK	400	193

Overall Development Approach:

Old Castle is warmly welcomed to the TidyTowns programme having been entered as part of the Supervalu initiative last year. Thank you for the completed entry form, the 5 year programme and the map which was very useful on the day of adjudication.

The town is twined with Tecumseh, Ontario, Canada. This sign could with advantage be washed. A large new factory in course of construction speaks well for the future. Attention is directed to the extent of noxious weeds growing in many places throughout the centre. St. Oliver's Post-Primary School featured good strong colours, prominently blue and was very well presented. The SuperValu Supermarket looked very well while the Library and Fire Station complex caught the eye. Oldcastle House Hotel was colourful with window boxes in each upstairs window. Many of the roads were well swept mostly featured pavement and suitable curb stones. The charming 1882 Garda Station is prominent but the doors and timber work generally would benefit from painting before next years competition. In the central square the Church of Ireland looked very well while Caffrey's is a very fine stone building whose dignity was slightly diminished by the timber signs bolted to its front elevation. The square represents a considerable opportunity for a strong visual statement and it is suggested that initially you might concentrate your efforts in this area. A coordinated colour scheme, more use of ground planting, window boxes and hanging baskets could make a strong, vibrant and attractive visual statement.

The Built Environment:

Oldcastle has more than its share of significant, imposing structures which with some attention would enhance considerable the presentation of the centre. The splendid Ros Na Rí private residents with its fine iron work is a protected structure. The iron work would benefit from repainting for best effect.

The imposing Catholic Church would be enhanced still further by a complete removal of weeds from the base of its outside walls and by washing the 'No Parking' bollards which are badly traffic stained. One damaged bollard should be replaced. Gilson National School has a most impressive and formidable frontage, again the road railings would be improved by repainting. There were 3 flag poles in position but no flags were flying on the day of adjudication. The Health Centre was very well presented, neat, clean and freshly painted. We enjoyed the delightful, traditional timber shop front at Next Door Express. The Oldcastle Credit Union, both the building and the parking area to the front were very well presented. The Interior Creations is a very splendid store in red brick while the hanging baskets on Gibney's of Oldcastle enhanced an already splendid presentation. Lynch's Pharmacy caught the eye while the large building and grounds of the Co-Operative would benefit from clean-up of its very visible yard. The Old Railway area has a number of fine 19th Century structures, well built but seeking a present day useful purpose to insure their survival.

Landscaping:

The GAA Sports Grounds were very well presented. Is the container still required as it detracts somewhat from the overall scene? One of the very fine wrought iron gates needs repair where presumably a truck or other vehicle damaged it. For best effect they should be repainted.

The very fine children's play area was delightful presented as was the substantial parking area in this location. The presentation of the monumental cross in the town square is an important centre piece. With a view to enhancing its immediate surrounds, the introduction of grass or low level ground covering planting is suggested. The flowers planted in Oliver Plunkett Street, around the square, in front of the Catholic church and along Chapel Street generally added an agreeable splash of colour in these locations. The landscaping presentation towards the end of Castle Street caught the eye as well. The planting of mature trees as you have done is very welcome around the town. Their progress and survival should be monitored over time and additional trees planted as opportunities allow.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

In recent years consideration of the wildlife in the area and exploring methods to highlight them and encourage bird life particularly has been given additional emphasis. Typical a wildlife programme would commence with a survey of what birds and wildlife are currently in the area, together with programme of planting native, berry bearing shrubs to create the all important food chain on which birds necessarily depend. You should discuss the options with a local enthusiastic wildlife or BirdWatch Ireland member.

Litter Control:

Litter bins were noted and we were taken by the one on display in the Lough Crew Housing Estates "Please keep our area litter free". In general litter was not a difficulty throughout the centre but there was a surprising and extensive falling from grace around the Bring Recycling Centre.

Waste Minimisation:

The Bring Centre at the Fire Station was clearly being used but it was disappointing to note the extent of litter and plastic bags dumped there. This category is as much about getting the community at large to implement methods of reducing the generation of waste in all its form as it is about reusing items where feasible and recycling them wherever possible. In effect it requires a change in mindset at both community and individual household level. Consider staging a Waste Reduction Seminar in association with the environment department of Meath County Council. Read the literature available free of charge from Race against Waste for ideas and recommendations.

Tidiness:

Work is in progress on various buildings in a number of locations throughout the town. Weeds are quite a problem outside the walls of premises. The delightful Coral Property was diminished somewhat by the amount of weeds outside their railing while the splendid premises of Kellett's of Oldcastle looked very well but here again substantial numbers of weeds outside the railing jarred. The Oldcastle Laboratory's were bright and well painted. It is suggested that as part of the spring clean event next year a special emphasis be placed on the removal of weeds.

Residential Areas:

The substantial Cluaín Laoinn was very well presented, the communal grassed area suitable cut and the substantial number of trees maturing pleasantly. We enjoyed the planting at the corner which was both expansive and colourful. The entire estate was fresh, modern and well painted. White Hills featured excellently presented central grassed area with the name plate engraved on a huge stone. Lough Crew View Estate again featured pleasant planting with a display of some old farm machinery in their amenity areas. A pleasant touch was the artificial well. Individual houses and their gardens varied in their presentations. The TidyTowns

committee might explore the creation of a residents associated in each of these estates and perhaps, in time, introducing a number of competitions relating to the presentation of the various estates.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The easy to read street name plate are a distinct advantage. On the Kells Road approach the speed limit signs were easy to read while one of them was obscured slightly by a nearby tree. It maybe necessary to look long-term at parking practices. Parking of cars partly on pavements is to be discouraged as inevitably the pavements will break up - not being designed for the weight involved. Equally on some approach streets parking impedes the flow of traffic considerable. The central square is well presented but need an overall programme to fully exploit its visual opportunities. In Oliver Plunkett Street and beyond, the speed limit signs looked very well whereas the road verges and hedges were well cut back. We welcomed the good pavement which extended for some distance and the dished curbs for the entrances to individual houses. A number of signs throughout the centre would benefit from being washed.

General Impression:

Oldcastle has made an excellent structured start to the competition. It should refine its objectives and working closely with other agencies particularly Meath County Council determine how best to present their town to optimum advantage. You have made an excellent start.

All who assisted are thanked for their work, applauded for their progress and wished well in 2009.