

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballylinan** Ref: **98**
County: **Laois** Mark: **224**
Category: **B** Date(s): **21/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	39
The Built Environment	50	27
Landscaping	50	30
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	18
Litter Control	50	31
Waste Minimisation	20	7
Tidiness	30	10
Residential Areas	40	24
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	31
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	224

Overall Development Approach:

It is some years since this adjudicator visited Ballylinan and immediately several improvements were seen, especially in landscaping, residential areas, roads and litter control. You provide very little information on your entry form and it could be that you have omitted elements that would gain additional marks. Your map was hard to follow: it would save you much trouble and give the judges a clearer picture of what should be seen if you were to make use of the A4-size Rural Place Map of Ballylinan, available from the Ordnance Survey Office, onto which you can pencil in any extra features that you wish to draw attention to. Committees are encouraged to visit other centres, not so much to imitate as to seek ideas which could be adapted for your own particular use, and to see how other committees overcome difficulties; Clonaslee would be a village of similar size for example. Ballylinan certainly has the potential to increase its marking very significantly.

The Built Environment:

New shops under construction were seen next to Dunne's Centra – when finished this development should add considerable commercial status as well as smart appearance to that section of the village; it, as well as attractive new shops on the road to the cemetery, will be assessed when completed next year. Nolan's traditional frontage was admired; a pity some otherwise attractive business premises are marred by mass-produced signs. The church and school are both looked after to admirable effect. The fine old church, how the hall, was seen to be in need of repainting. This, like the old RIC barracks, is a handsome vestige of the architectural past which can add quality to the streetscape if sensitively maintained.

Landscaping:

The park, bounded by beech hedges opposite the wonderful run of limes, was admired, and also the neat commemorative garden on the site of the old school where the planting is not particularly interesting but the

lawns are kept remarkably trim. Really excellent floral tubs were seen in all quarters; the pump area impressed particularly, as indeed did the planting at, and adjacent to, the Church. Pockets of colour such as these add considerably to the attractiveness of the village, as do pockets of planting in the housing areas, such as at Gracefield. Incidental neatly kept spaces such as the grassy lane next the hall demonstrate care.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Tree planting and tree maintenance comes under this heading. Ballylynan has a wonderful inheritance of lime trees, an almost unique inheritance in fact for a village of its size. Tree planting was seen in the estates, but there is space for far more – in 'The Village' for example. You say on the entry form that you 'have plenty of wild life areas all around the village' – this is obvious, and it is the same with all villages, but you do not specify what you are doing to enhance wild life habitats or to involve residents, particularly children, in nature projects (such as making inventories of animals and birds seen, or the setting of nesting boxes, etc) and the creation of walking routes. Perhaps you are doing these things and if you are please say so on the entry form as you will certainly be due additional marks.

Litter Control:

It is good to read that you 'pick litter on a daily basis'. Have your voluntary litter wardens any idea of the source of litter dropping so that it could be stopped before it happens, as has been done in some other centres? Litter of course is a variable, but on the date of the visit there was very little disposable litter – congratulations.

Waste Minimisation:

The recycling area was visited and appeared clean and efficient. Well done in distributing leaflets to every house. Last year's question as to whether the school has a green flag remained unanswered and unfortunately this year's adjudicator neglected to see if a flag was flying.

Tidiness:

It is a real pity that bad examples of dereliction are in very prominent locations, and situated next to well kept properties, detracting from the latter. Committees in some other centres have found ways of minimising the appearance of dereliction quite successfully, and this might be studied. The Local Authority has powers to deal with the matter and should do so in cases that are long overdue. At least one abandoned house was seen to be under repair and this was very encouraging. Weeds and weedy ditches were seen in some places, in complete contrast to the usually very tidy roadsides; for example, the roadside on the east side of the Castlecomer road (opposite the Campus garage and row of six houses) gave a poor impression. The untidy exterior of the well kept cemetery was also a surprise, as was a very scruffy ditch opposite a neat row of cottages off the Castlecomer road, and kerbside weed running from the main road past the beautifully presented Whitethorn Grove. Perhaps a Task Force could be instituted to deal effectively with this problem.

Residential Areas:

Although you have left this category blank on your entry form it is one where substantial advances have been made and where there is potential for a great deal more of the same. Street houses looked well, retaining the traditional appearance of the core of the village. The estate of seven two-storey cottages with dormers, making use of the boundary of ancient lime trees, is a first class development that blends better than any other with the original village. 'The Village' is now a mature estate with plenty of foliage at the boundaries of properties. Whitethorn Grove is very well kept indeed with nicely painted houses, trim lawns, excellent wooden fencing and young native trees. Gracefield, and the houses on the Kilkenny road as well as a mature estate off the same road, are well presented. Rathin Towers, unfinished, is promising; a pity its approach between extensive concrete-block walls is so dreary. A beautiful thatched cottage was admired – it will probably need rethatching before long.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The main road through the village is very well surfaced. Sidewalks are of good standard. There is excellent street furniture, including railings, bollards and lamps, and it is good to find an automated pedestrian crossing. The car park behind Dunne's was spic and span – it is hoped that the surrounding land which was a blaze of poppies on the date of the visit, will be retained as a wildflower meadow. The car park at the church was also well kept.

General Impression:

Ballylynan has come on very well in recent years due to the vision and hard work of residents and business

people. There is good potential for greatly increased marking under Wild Life and Natural Amenities and Tidiness. It is hoped that the community council will rise to the challenge, as it has done so successfully under other headings. Every good wish for the continuing work.