

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ongar** Ref: **2156**
County: **Dublin** Mark: **236**
Category: **E** Date(s): **27/07/2018**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	37
Streetscape & Public Places	50	33
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	30
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	24
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	11
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	45
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	26
TOTAL MARK	450	236

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Ongar chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais. Thank you very much for the completed entry form, supporting map and summary three-year plan. I suggest defining your Tidy Towns area on the map to assist adjudication. You have a small but devoted committee of five endeavouring to drive and motivate your large community. We commend your efforts to communicate via both innovative and traditional methods to encourage volunteering and to promote the Spring Clean Event. Congratulations on the support you are getting from agencies and bodies that obviously appreciate the great work you are doing. We recognise your success networking with local schools and suggest you might promote the green flag initiative with some of them. Keep up the splendid work Ongar!

Streetscape & Public Places / Sráid-Dreach & Áiteanna Poiblí:

Ongar Square has great potential to become a lovely focal point of your town centre, however, cars parking alongside its boundary visually detract from this feature. Parking control measures are required here. A few small improvements to enhance the appearance of the Square are strongly recommended, such as providing interpretation of the Obelisk and adding a floral display. It is a shame Ongar House is not being used, but it looks reasonably well-maintained at the front. Some attention to weeds is required along the boundaries of its grounds. Your principal street is handsomely tree-lined, and many shops were well presented on adjudication day including Rendezvous café, Umami Shop, Power's Butchers and Pavlov's Bakery. Unfortunately, the timber on overhead apartments is not weathering well and needs refreshing. Cu Chulainn's Bar and Era shop are very attractive. Some cluttered shopfronts with large stickers in windows were noted including Dunnes Stores and Ongar Computers. The Brentech building at Ongar Square is quite a dull corner and could do with a facelift at this prime location within the village. It is a pity to see a modern new village centre being dominated by cars parked and others passing through, when efforts are being made to introduce pedestrian areas into older towns and parts of cities elsewhere in the country. There is an absence of signage for carparking facilities within the village; if this was improved, perhaps cars would park in designated facilities, reducing clutter on the street. The car park at First Direct Mortgage is nicely screened with trees and shrubs, but it seems customers need an incentive to use it.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Ongar Park is an important amenity for the people of Ongar. We look forward to several initiatives you suggest for this area in your three-year plan, including planting of native trees around the basketball courts and playground which were being enjoyed at the time of our visit. A wildflower meadow might work very well where Ongar Park meets the Woods to increase local biodiversity. We suggest that the kissing gate at the park entrance be removed as it no longer serves a purpose. Despite clearance of undergrowth and removal of litter earlier this year, Ongar

Woods which bounds Ongar Park remains quite littered and uninviting. Your Entry Form mentions you intend further clearance of undergrowth to be undertaken. Please include this key point in your three-year plan. While the vegetation at ground level has potential biodiversity value in its present state, its 'closed-in' nature makes it conducive to anti-social behaviour in an urban environment. The community centre and school is a major complex with an impressive entrance but unfortunately it lacks enough softening with trees, shrubs and perennials. Existing planting requires maintenance and attention. Planting of native trees along the approach to the community centre should be considered; kerbside weeds need tidying along this stretch. You have inherited many beautiful mature tree specimens within your village and it will be challenging to safeguard them into the future. Some show signs of compaction around the roots, such as the horse chestnut near to the front of the park entrance. Please seek advice from a professional arborist on how to best protect your trees. Supporting stakes and ties need to be checked on young trees and removed where no longer necessary. It is advised to remove existing shrubs/perennials from the base of your trees (including at Ongar square and along the main street) as these compete for resources and do not add any enhancement. One dead Hornbeam tree along the main street needs to be replaced. We noticed that Ongar Tidy Towns committee have supplied many plant containers along the main street which really enhance the streetscape - well done!

Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhithéagsúlacht i do cheantar:

Well done for your efforts on rat-control and the extensive clean-up undertaken within the Woods in April this year. Ongar Woods and adjacent Park provide many great opportunities for both enhancement of and enjoyment of biodiversity in your area. We look forward to your plans for Ongar Woods including mapping the biodiversity of the Woods and developing a management plan in the coming years. However, several objectives detailed in this Section in your Entry Form were not included within your three-year plan. Please ensure consistency across your application.

We encourage you to carry out some actions to encourage pollinators into your open spaces in the Park. Wildflower meadows can be used to soften the edge between woodland/trees and mowed lawns in the park. The Biodiversity Officer in Fingal County Council will be able to advise you. We suggest you encourage the Owner Management Companies of your residential areas to consider planting pollinator-friendly shrubs and perennials to both enhance the appearance of their green areas and encourage pollinating insects - the National Biodiversity Data Centre website has a useful information booklet for community groups.

This section is about developing an awareness of wildlife and is especially important in urban areas where some people are becoming detached from our environment in terms of knowledge and understanding of the rich natural area surrounding your community. Biodiversity is under threat globally and sadly Ireland is a part of this trend. Habitats of value include specimen trees, hedgerows, treelines, streams, woodlands and wetlands. Having children list the plants and animals to be found in your natural environment and recognising their significance (native, protected, or alien invasive?) is very useful project for schools. Sowing and encouraging wildflowers is a promising idea and one that brings excitement in watching the various species develop over the years. However, it is not enough to simply sow wildflowers, they must be managed for a few years until they are established. Check the website www.biodiversityireland.ie for information on how they should be managed.

Sustainability – Doing more with less / Inmharthanacht - Mórán ar an mbeagán:

This category is becoming more and more important highlighting the need for communities to address the issues involved in tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land use, and the use of dwindling resources. Congratulations on the extensive work carried out in your community garden which includes many new initiatives including a new polytunnel with planting of fruit and vegetables, harvesting rainwater and composting. Having a community space such as this will create many opportunities for young and old alike to work together and learn how to produce their own food sustainably. Well done on your recent workshop on reducing food waste and hosting an electrical recycling day. To strengthen your involvement within this interesting category, you could offer some assistance to the local schools towards obtaining a green flag.

There are several other measures that you can take regarding sustainability. Contact your waste contractors and try to find out what is being thrown away and armed with this information you can start to think about how waste can be reduced. Examine the waste pyramid and note the recycling is only the fourth most preferred option after avoidance, reducing and re-using. One third of our waste is organic in nature, such as grass clippings. Regarding water usage, self-watering hanging baskets are a help in reducing the amount of water used and also the task of watering. Other waste minimisation projects might include encouraging the re-use of water bottles and coffee mugs at school and at work. In response to an over use of chemicals for weed control, many useful products of the past are no longer available and therefore communities are encouraged to use other means such as hoeing to maintain weeds. These activities will highlight the fact that you are focussing on this category and when you develop more projects in the future your marks will increase.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We heartily commend your incredible efforts on litter clearance within your community. The main street and Ongar Square were quite litter free on the day of adjudication. However, despite your endeavours, litter continues to be a challenge within Ongar Woods and Park, and on the approach roads, and very much remains a work in progress. The main street needs some attention with regard to road sweeping, removal of fly posters on poles and service boxes, cleaning poles and repair of litter bins. The seats at Ongar Square need to be refreshed, and some of the bollards at this location need to be repaired. The many satellite dishes outside Paddy Power's betting office gives quite a cluttered appearance in such a central area of town and we suggest liaising with the owners to see if this situation can be improved. The boundary fence between Ongar Park and Ongar House requires immediate attention; perhaps a wooden picket fence, at least in the short term, would mask the untidy grounds of Ongar

House.

Residential Streets & Housing Areas / Sráideanna Cónaithe & Ceantair Tithíochta:

The townhouses south of the Main Street were attractively decorated, with those on the right having floral displays. Your residential areas have many mature and semi-mature trees and well-maintained grass. Manor Square has a lovely secluded garden where an old oak takes pride of place. Unfortunately, some branches are dying, and the tree requires remedial treatment by a professional arborist in order to preserve it for future generations. A lovely array of shrubs such as Viburnum davidii and Portuguese laurel (Prunus lusitanica) are found, with a specimen of Magnolia grandiflora in the centre. It is recommended that pruning and maintenance of shrubs and lavender be undertaken, and that trees with supporting stakes be checked, as they may no longer be needed. We suggest that by reducing the height of the boundary hedge and by judicious pruning of some tall shrubs such as Portuguese Laurel, the garden may be opened up a little and might encourage more users who in turn would help in supervision of its usage.

Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes / Bóithre Isteach, Sráideanna & Lánaí:

The approach road between Ongar roundabout and the village centre has a nice line of lime trees. However, parts of the footpath here are cracked and need repair. There was a lot of litter on the old Clonsilla to Clonee Road. A yield sign was obscured by a hornbeam tree on the main street – this needs to be remedied.

To reiterate the 2016 Adjudicator's advice, it would be great to see prominent signage to welcome one's approach to Ongar. Ongar is accessed from two roundabouts and these are opportunities to welcome visitors and highlight your existence. We suggest you devise features on these roundabouts that would interest people in coming to see the village.

Concluding Remarks:

Congratulations on your many achievements in the past year and we look forward to returning to your town in 2019.