LEISURE AND RECREATION

INTRODUCTION
The Council wishes to see the development of a wide range of indoor and outdoor leisure facilities which meet the needs of the City's residents. Some of these facilities will be of a very high standard recognising Manchester's status as a major City which plays host to events of national and international importance. Wherever possible the Council wishes to see new leisure developments which provide for multi-purpose uses in order to maximise their value in terms of meeting community needs. The Council is anxious that such facilities cater for the needs of all people in the city and as such they will need to be easily accessible by public transport and cater for disabled people.

The City's population is changing, both in terms of its overall size and its social composition. These changes have important implications for active recreation and, during the Plan period, open space will be reviewed in their light. Provision will be looked at, not so much in terms of crude space standards, but in a way which considers quantity, quality and accessibility in relation to local communities.

One of the major issues the Council has to face is to find the resources to maintain and improve the quality of the City's many parks and recreation areas. The Council recognises the value of these open spaces as green lungs within the City. The approach the Council is taking involves increasing the recreational opportunities in some of the larger parks such as Heaton Park and Wythenshawe Park so as to provide the resources to finance the maintenance and improvement of the parks as a whole. This will only involve a very limited amount of new buildings and these will need to be carefully designed so as not to detract from the character of these parks. The benefits to people living in the city will be, firstly, that they will have access to more leisure facilities and, secondly, that the major parks can be maintained and enhanced to provide attractive open spaces for informal recreation.

A major new strategy set out in the Environment section of the Plan is for the development of a network of linear recreational open spaces by linking and making better use of river valleys, canals, disused railways and other appropriate areas of open space. This will open up many new areas for informal recreation and have a significant impact upon improving the City as a place to live.

The successful bid to become Britain's "City of Drama" in 1994 and the new international concert hall, a new home for the Halle, illustrate the importance of Manchester as a cultural centre. The Council, as one of the main players in all of this, strongly supports the further development of Manchester as a centre for the arts and culture. This will sustain the international role of the City, promote tourism, provide employment opportunities and encourage other types of economic investment. The City's role as a centre of youth culture has increased over the last decade and is a growing area of the economy and one of the City's major attractions. Another major feature of the City is the cultural richness provided by the presence in Manchester of people from a wide variety of backgrounds. These features will be supported and promoted by the Council.

The policies for Leisure and Recreation, which are summarised below, come under the heading of: improving and adding to the City's leisure, recreation and cultural facilities both to improve the quality of life and support the City's international reputation. This involves:-

- working with the private sector, the government and others to provide a range of high quality, multi-purpose indoor sporting facilities
- providing a major international stadium and associated facilities in East Manchester
- protecting outdoor sporting facilities from development and improving the range and quality of facilities
• creating a network of safe and attractive major linear recreational open spaces (see Environment section)
• making better use of the City's rivers and canals for water sports and angling as they become cleaner
• providing a greater range of recreational activities in the two Largest parks in the City: Heaton Park and Wythenshawe Park
• upgrading other parks and recreational areas
• providing a good distribution of safe and attractive areas for informal recreation within easy reach for all
• people in the City and especially the provision of play spaces for young children
• strengthening the City's role as an international and regional centre for the arts which will be further enhanced when the City's new concert hall opens during the mid-1990s
• providing public art such as sculpture, murals and the provision of suitable areas for outdoor performances and displays
• encouraging the provision of street cafes in appropriate locations.

POLICIES
L1.1 The Council will work with the private sector, Central Government and other institutions to facilitate the provision of a range of high quality multi-purpose indoor sporting facilities, which meet the needs of all people in the City, including some facilities of international standard. These should be located to provide a distribution which is accessible by public transport to all the communities of Manchester.

Objective: To improve and add to the City's stock of leisure, recreation and cultural facilities, both to enhance the quality of life and support the City's international reputation.

Reason: The provision of a good range of quality indoor facilities accessible to all residents will contribute towards making the City a better place in which to live by providing everyone with greater opportunities for recreation as well as for the achievement of sporting excellence for those who wish to pursue a career in sport. The Council is anxious that such facilities cater for the needs of all people in the City and will therefore wish to see provision made within them for disabled people and the provision of crèches, as well as ensuring that the facilities can be reached by public transport. The greater use of sporting facilities by City residents can contribute towards making them healthier. The provision of some of these facilities to an international standard is appropriate in a highly accessible major City such as Manchester. Located within East Manchester is Sportcity, a cluster of international standard sporting facilities made up of the new 48,000-seater City of Manchester Stadium, the National Institute of Sport, the Tennis Centre, the Velodrome and other sports related facilities used to host international events, such as the Commonwealth Games. It is an integrated multi-faceted set of sports and commercial uses that collectively generate significant levels of activity and regeneration. Located throughout Manchester are other international standard sporting facilities such as the Aquatics Centre in Manchester City Centre. Besides hosting international sporting events, these facilities will be available for use by the City's residents and will improve the range and quality of recreational facilities.

L1.2 Existing outdoor sporting facilities and recreational areas will be protected from development unless appropriate replacement facilities can be provided in advance or it can be shown that adequate facilities exist within the local area. Opportunities will be taken to improve the range and quality of facilities, especially in inner areas of the city. The provision of all-weather pitches will be encouraged as a means to both extend and improve the quality of provision so long as this is consistent with the protection of residential amenity. New facilities should be located where they can be easily served by public transport.
**Objective:** To improve and add to the City's stock of leisure, recreation and cultural facilities, both to enhance the quality of life and support the City's international reputation.

**Reason:** Playing fields are coming under considerable pressure for development. The Council does not wish to see the overall level of provision fall, indeed it wishes to see it increased especially in the inner areas of the City which currently lack adequate facilities. Outdoor recreational facilities are often attractive open spaces in their own right.

The overuse of some facilities has resulted in decline in their quality. One of the ways for of providing for the more intensive use of facilities and to improve their quality is the provision of all-weather pitches. This is especially appropriate in areas where the opportunities to make large areas of land available for playing fields is constrained.

The provision of a good range of high quality outdoor sporting facilities accessible to all residents will contribute towards making the City a better place to live by providing greater opportunities for recreation as well as for the achievement of sporting excellence for those who wish to pursue a career in sport. The greater use of sporting facilities by the City's residents can contribute towards making them healthier.

L1.3 The use of the City's rivers and canals will be encouraged for water sports and angling as they become cleaner provided that this does not conflict unacceptably with nature conservation. To this end, the Council will continue to encourage improved accessibility to and along these waterways (making provision, wherever possible, for sight and mobility impaired people) and improve the attractiveness of the areas through which they run. The Council will ensure that safety considerations are fully taken into account in any such developments.

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**Reason:** Water sports are becoming increasingly popular while angling is the country's most popular participation sport. Informal walking on towpaths is a prime leisure activity. One of the benefits of reducing pollution levels in the City's rivers and canals will be to open up opportunities for their more extensive use for sport and recreation. Improving accessibility and safety and enhancing the immediate environment along the waterways will benefit the two key recreational user groups greatly. There is considerable potential here to exploit the City's many waterways to enhance the City's attractiveness to tourists. Waterways provide a resource for many tourist generating activities (pleasure boat trips for example), while the very environment created by waterside settings of potential tourist related development or features by themselves will generate considerable tourist appeal.

L1.4 The Council will work with the private sector to provide a greater range of recreational activities in Heaton and Wythenshawe Parks in ways which do not detract from the character of these parks and their value as major open spaces for informal recreation.

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**Reason:** Heaton and Wythenshawe Parks are the two largest parks in Manchester serving both the northern and southern parts of the City respectively as well as areas beyond the City boundaries. They offer opportunities to accommodate further sporting and recreational activities and improved visitor attractions provided that such facilities are consistent with their primary role as parks and their inclusion in the National Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. The encouragement of further activities in these parks will lead to more people using them which, in turn, will make them safer to use.
L1.5 The Council will seek to upgrade other parks and recreation areas, wherever possible making use of private sector finance, to provide safe, secure and attractive areas accessible to all which provide a range of recreational activities to suit different groups of people. In considering proposals for improving facilities or extending their range, the Council will ensure that the main function of the city's parks in providing open spaces for informal recreation is fully protected.

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**Reason:** Attractive parks and recreation areas which are safe to use are an important aspect of city life. Given the highly built up nature of the City it is essential to make the best of those open spaces which can provide for informal recreation.

L1.6 The Council will encourage the provision of a good distribution of safe and attractive areas for informal recreation within easy reach for all people in the City and especially the provision of play spaces for young children where priority will be given to those housing areas which lack adequate private gardens.

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**Reason:** It is important that there is a good distribution of areas for informal recreation and especially that young children have safe and convenient places to play out of doors. In some parts of the City, homes have gardens that will provide for the needs of young children. In other areas such as those with concentrations of terraced housing there are no gardens or the gardens are too small. In these areas there needs to be a good distribution of local play areas. The current provision needs looking at carefully. Some existing play areas are poorly located or are inappropriate for other reasons while some need to be upgraded. There is a need for further provision in some areas.

L1.7 Development which will strengthen Manchester's role as an international and regional centre for the arts and culture will be permitted.

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**Reason:** Manchester is the cultural capital of the North. It is a centre of artistic excellence. The further encouragement and fostering of the arts will sustain the City's role as the Regional Capital, promote tourism, provide further employment opportunities, encourage economic investment and add to the quality of life of Manchester residents.

L1.8 The Council wishes to see further public art provided in the City as part of environmental improvements and new developments including sculpture, murals and the provision of suitable areas for outdoor performances and displays.

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**Reason:** The provision of further public art will make Manchester more attractive and lively and will encourage people to visit the City. Because of its accessibility, it opens up art to a large number of people.

L1.9 The Council will permit the further provision of street cafes in the city and district centres, provided that they are carefully designed to minimise disruption to pedestrians and to avoid problems of litter.
**Objective:** To improve and add to the City’s stock of leisure, recreation and cultural facilities, both to enhance the quality of life and support the City’s international reputation.

**Reason:** The Council wishes to see the provision of street cafes in locations such as the City Centre and District Centres where they will add to the vibrancy of these areas and enhance their attractiveness.