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The SNP want to water-down the requirement for playing fields for new schools, it has emerged.

At the moment, playing fields have to be a minimum size.

A consultation document published yesterday by the Scottish Government proposes changing the regulations, with new rules for synthetic pitches.

These plans would allow synthetic pitches which are much smaller than grass pitches – up to half the size:

- The average secondary school of 850 pupils, for example, currently has to provide 3.2 hectares of grass pitches – but in the new rules, would have to provide just 1.7 hectares of synthetic area.
- A primary school of 450 pupils would only have to provide 0.3 hectares of synthetic area, compared to 0.6 hectares of grass.

The proposed rules would also allow new schools to ignore the minimum size for grass pitches, if they are developing mixed grass and synthetic pitches.

The consultation refers to guidance from SportScotland to support this change – but almost all of the new regulations for secondary schools would allow playing fields smaller than the SportScotland guidance. A secondary school of 1200 pupils is recommended by SportScotland to need 3.9 hectares of mixed pitches, for example – but under the new regulations, would be allowed to go below the existing minimum of 3.6 hectares. In practice, the regulations mean that most new school playing fields will be smaller than under the previous guidance, and many will be smaller than recommended.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“Safety is paramount, but before any decisions are taken, the Scottish Government must pay attention to the Sport Scotland recommendations – and there must be no attempt use this consultation to diminish the playing space available.

“The cross-party Sport committee at Holyrood and the Health and Sport Committee have both heard evidence that points to the diminished number of playing fields available across Scotland.

“That comes at the same time as there is rising obesity and worrying signs of poor health amongst too many of our young people.

“This consultation is an opportunity to review matters properly, and ensure that all our schools are safe and have campuses fit for the 21st century.”

The consultation can be found [here](#). The difference between the existing and proposed regulations is as follows: **Primary**

Size	Existing regulations	New regulations (grass only, hectares)	New regulations (synthetic only, hectares)
60 or less	$\frac{1}{4}$ acre = .1ha	0.1	0.1
61-140	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre = .2ha	0.2	0.3
141-215	$\frac{3}{4}$ acre = .3ha	0.3	0.3
316-450	1 acre = .4ha	0.4	0.3
451 or more	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres = .6ha	0.6	0.3

Secondary

Size	Existing regulations	New regulations (grass only, hectares)	New regulations (synthetic only, hectares)	SportScotland recommendation (typical mix of pitches, hectares)
320-500	4 acres = 1.6 ha	1.6	1.7	2.5 (for 500 pupils)
501-750	6 acres = 2.48 ha	2.4	1.7	2.5 (700)
751-1000	8 acres = 3.2 ha	3.2	1.7	3.2 (1000)
1001-1200	3.6	3.6	2.5	3.9 (1200)
1201-1400	4	4	2.5	3.9 (1400)
1401-1600	4.4	4.4	3.2	4.5 (1600)
1601-1800	4.8	4.8	3.2	–
1801-2000	5.2	5.2	3.2	–

SportScotland guidance calculates the area required for an average mixture of activities and timetabling for schools of different size, with typical mixes of grass and synthetic pitches.