



# Sofala Village Background Paper for Village Plan

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The Bathurst Community Strategic Plan and Local Strategic Planning Statement call for a review of the 2015 Village Plans to support sustainable growth and vitality within each location.

During 2015 Bathurst Regional Council prepared village plans for eight villages; Hill End, Peel, Rockley, Sofala, Sunny Corner, Trunkey Creek, Wattle Flat and Yetholme. Council has commenced a review of these village plans and will be creating an additional one for Perthville - Georges Plains.

## 1.2 About this plan

The plans will present aspirational vision statements of the village's future character along with planning strategies to achieve the visions. The character of the villages will be presented in three themes social, environmental and economic. The plans apply urban planning and design principles at a whole of village scale. The plans will aim to:

1. Inspire active engagement with the village communities.
2. Help the village communities manage change.
3. Identify strategic vision for the villages reflected in planning strategies that are then implemented through the Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan.
4. Help community groups make their case when applying for grants and lobbying for funding.
5. Help Bathurst Regional Council prioritise investment in the villages.
6. Identify actions the community can itself achieve.

### 1.2.1 Community Consultation

Consultation for the village plan will follow Council's Community Participation Plan 2019. This outlines a two step process for strategic plans. Step one involves visioning and priority setting; step two the public exhibition of a draft village plan.

The consultation will be conducted village by village generally on the following timeline:

Rockley, October & November 2020; Sofala, December 2020 & January 2021; Peel & Hill End January 2021 & February 2021; Sunny Corner in February & March 2021; Trunkey Creek, March & April 2021; Wattle Flat, April & May 2021; Yetholme, May & June 2021; Perthville – Georges Plains, June & July 2021.

The community consultation process to be followed is outlined below. The process proposed has been developed in response to the limitations that COVID 19 places on face to face consultation. A drop in session (by appointment) is proposed at each village location to enable some face to face contact.

	Consultation Material	Process	Outcome
1.	<b>Visioning:</b> A placed based study of the village reflected in a discussion paper that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outlines existing village character in the themes social, environmental and economic.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Response period of 28 days.</li><li>• Mail out the residents of the village and surrounding community.</li></ul>	Community feedback on what they see as important character elements of the village social, environmental and economic.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drafts future character in the themes social, environmental and economic.</li> <li>• Draft planning strategies to maintain and enhance character.</li> </ul> <p>Survey in response to the above.  <b>A drop in session</b> at each village for individual face to face interviews with residents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on 'Bathurst Your Say' website</li> <li>• Information in the school newsletter.</li> <li>• Sign in the village park.</li> <li>• Flyer on notice board at hotel, general store and café.</li> <li>• Social media posts.</li> <li>• On-line appointment registration for drop in session.</li> </ul>	Community feedback on the approach to future character – is it to protect and maintain or enhance as it changes.
2.	<b>Public Exhibition:</b> Draft Village Plan & recommended changes to LEP and DCP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibition for 28 days.</li> <li>• Mail out the residents of the village and surrounding community.</li> <li>• Information on 'Bathurst Your Say' website</li> <li>• Information in the school newsletter.</li> <li>• Sign in the village park.</li> <li>• Flyer on notice board at hotel, general store and café.</li> <li>• Social media posts.</li> </ul>	Community feedback on the draft village plan. Community feedback on proposed changes to the LEP and DCP.
3.	<b>Adoption by Council:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of submissions on the draft village plan to Councillors.</li> <li>• Summary of submissions on draft changes to LEP and DCP to Councillors.</li> <li>• Alterations to final draft plans &amp; presentation to Council for adoption.</li> <li>• If COVID 19 conditions permit a submission hearing would be held if major concerns raised alternatively a working party will be held with Councillors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mail out to the residents of the village and surrounding community of adopted final plan.</li> </ul>	Community is reported back to on their feedback and changes.

### 1.2.2 A Vision for Sofala

This discussion paper has been prepared to seek feedback from the Sofala Community. The Discussion Paper outlines the existing village character and suggests a vision and a range of planning strategies to achieve that vision. A survey is included to provide an opportunity to provide feedback on the Discussion Paper. This can be filled out electronically at <https://yoursay.bathurst.nsw.gov.au/> or returned in hard copy form to Council. Please email [Maree.Neary@bathurst.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Maree.Neary@bathurst.nsw.gov.au) to book a one on one consultation meeting with Council Staff on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December at the Sofala Memorial Hall, 19 Denison Street, Sofala between 3pm and 7pm to further discuss your vision for the village of Sofala. Survey returns or any other submissions in relation to the background paper and draft vision should be received by Council by Friday, 22 January 2020.

## 2 Acknowledgement of First People's

The Bathurst Regional Council Local Government Area encompasses part of the Traditional Lands of the Wiradjuri people. The Wiradjuri people are the people of the three rivers – the Wambuul (Macquarie), the Calare/Kalari (Lachlan) and the Murrumbidgee.

Bathurst Regional Council would like to acknowledge and pay their respects to the Traditional Custodians of these lands, past, present and future.

In acknowledging the Aboriginal Community's deep and enduring connection to Country, it is also recognised that this Community is integral to the future of the special places and landscapes of the Bathurst region.

## 3 Sofala Village

Listed here is a draft community vision taken from the previous Village Plan for Sofala. It is offered here as a starting point for consultation.

### 3.1 A Community Vision

We are a diverse but cohesive village community where people can enjoy a peaceful rural lifestyle. We value the retention of the picturesque heritage that reflects the way Sofala would have looked in the 1850's, but with modern services and appropriate facilities. The river is an important asset and we want it to be clear and accessible with walkways and camping facilities. Community members continue to support each other and have an active social life including street fairs, community festivals, music performances, art galleries and interaction between children, adults and tourists.

### 3.2 A pathway forward

This village plan is a plan to empower and guide our community to a vibrant future. The plan includes a summary of actions to continue to strengthen our community.

### 3.3 Opportunities for sustainable growth

#### 3.3.1 Residential growth

The Sofala community relies on harvested tank water and on-site effluent treatment. The opportunities for new home development are mainly infill housing on lots of appropriate size to accommodate housing, water supply requirements and on-site effluent treatment.

The number of development approvals for homes in Sofala village from January 2011 to June 2020 was 3. There was also 2x alterations to commercial premises, 1 for refurbishment and 2 for the

erecting of sheds. Sofala has 45 allotments available for development but it is likely that only 34 would be suitable to support new housing after suitable amalgamations of allotments.

### 3.3.2 Economic development and tourism potential

Sofala is part of the Touring Route 'Villages to the North' and is on the drive between the Central West and the Hunter Valley. Sofala is a 40 minute drive north of Bathurst and Australia's oldest surviving gold rush town. The village has an authentic old-world charm. Sofala also has the Painted Horse Café, which has been recommended in the Good Food Guide two years running. In addition to this cafe it has a café and tourist shop, information, post office, 1 restaurant, 1 public hotel and 1 second hand bookshop.

Events are a major driver of visitation to the Bathurst region. The annual Rebellion on the Turon is held in March. It is a live re-enactment that tells the true story of a gold rush rebellion that occurred at Sofala in the 1800s between redcoats and miners over wage disputes.

Some of the regions villages support a corner store/ general store. Sofala's is currently closed and for sale.

### 3.3.3 Community Groups and Community Services

Villages are important in providing community services to their communities. Sofala's pub and community facilities provide for important gathering and social occasions as does the primary school. Shown below are some of the community groups from the village of Sofala and its surrounds.

Description
Sofala Progress Association
Sofala and District Agricultural and Horticultural Show Society

## 3.4 Character of Sofala

The character of Sofala is described below in line with the New South Wales Government Local Character and Place Guideline, February 2019. The guideline outlines how to produce a character assessment and set expectations for desired future character. Local character in this sense is what makes an area distinctive.

The toolkit within the guideline references character under three themes, social, environmental and economic. The social character of Sofala includes, Public Space, Safety, Access, Leisure, Housing, Education, Community facilities and Transport. The environmental character of Sofala includes both the natural and built environment and the villages heritage and culture. The economic character of Sofala includes the local economy, employment, road network, parking and retail.

### 3.4.1 The Social Character of Sofala

The village of Sofala sits in a valley of the Turon River. The village is Australia's oldest surviving gold town. The village came into existence in mid 1851 when gold was discovered on the Turon River.

#### 3.4.1.1 Community facilities

Sofala village provides important Community focus for its broader community. The community facilities of Sofala include; Sofala Showground, Joyce Pearce Memorial Park, the Royal Hotel, Sofala Community Park, Sofala Pioneer Park, Sofala Community Hall and Sofala Community Hall (former). They also include camping sites along the Turon River.

Sofala Showground provides important space for the Sofala and District Agriculture & Horticulture Annual Show. An annual event held on the last Sunday in February. It showcases the talent and industry of the area. It includes entertainment, free activities, pavilion showcasing Collectables, Art, Photography, Wool and much more.

The Joyce Pearce Memorial Park, is a linear park adjacent to the Turon River at the entrance to Sofala. It has picnic facilities and importantly parking for larger vehicles. Those in recreational vehicles, can park at Joyce Pearce Memorial Park and enter Sofala on foot.

The Royal Hotel Sofala has been important socially to Sofala for over 150 years. It opened in 1862 and was made two storied in 1901. It is a substantial two storey timber construction in relatively original and well maintained condition.

Sofala Community Park is a small pocket park adjacent to the Sofala Memorial Hall. It contains small children's play equipment, a swing set and picnic table. Sofala Pioneer Park sits adjacent to the original Sofala Community Hall. The public toilets of this hall are still utilised. It also contains the Sofala Pioneer memorial wall.



*Joyce Pearce Memorial Park*

#### *3.4.1.2 Events*

Sofala has a number of events that brings the community together these include the Sofala and District Agriculture and Horticulture Annual Show and the annual Rebellion on the Turon.

#### *3.4.2 The Environmental character of Sofala*

Sofala village is set in a picturesque landscape on the banks of the Turon river in the floor of a steep sided valley.

##### *3.4.2.1 Sofala Heritage Conservation Area*

Sofala is one of the few villages from the gold rush era to have stayed much as it was. The whole village is significant by virtue of its historical importance and its topographical position. The village

is covered by a conservation area in the Bathurst Regional Council Local Environmental plan known as Sofala Heritage Conservation Area. The area extends west of the village to cover the landscape of Wallaby Rocks. The Conservation Area acts to preserve the built form, significant landscapes and heritage that they embody as a group rather than as single items. No changes are proposed to this area.

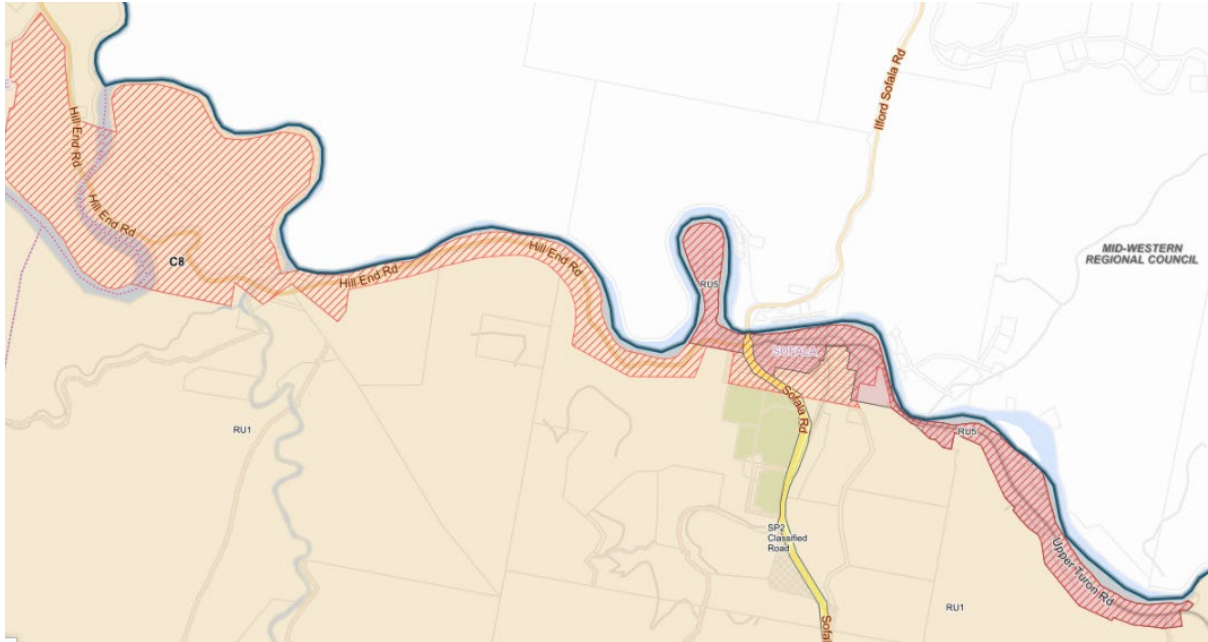


Figure 1: Sofala Heritage Conservation Area

### 3.4.2.2 Heritage items

Many of Sofala's rare and historic buildings remain unspoilt or have been restored. There are four buildings listed as heritage items in the current Local Environmental Plan. The Gold Commissioners House (Former) is possibly Sofala's oldest building still standing. The Royal Hotel, a very important built element in the street scape of Sofala with a high level of original integrity. The Courthouse (former) one of the most impressive buildings in Sofala built in 1874 and Lavender Cottage an attractive and well cared for cottage circa 1900.



The Royal Hotel



Court House (former)

There are a number of buildings that have significant contributions to Sofala's history and streetscapes that are not listed. It is proposed that these be listed. Letters have been sent to the property owners concerned for their consideration.



Figure 2: Heritage items listed in LEP and proposed to be added to LEP.

#### 3.4.2.3 Aboriginal heritage and culture

Sofala is part of Wiradjuri country. No specific investigations have been undertaken of the village's Aboriginal Cultural heritage values although Sofala was considered as part of the broader, Bathurst Region Aboriginal Heritage Study.

#### 3.4.2.4 Built form

The environmental character of Sofala village is divided around the 'village centre' and the remainder of the village. The area centred around Denison Street and Bowen Street is the village centre. This centre consists of predominantly timber but also some brick buildings which stand close together along narrow streets which have no formal kerbing. A number of street fronting buildings survive with verandas attached. Fencing, where it occurs is in keeping with the era of the building, with a mixture of low picket fencing, paling, post & rail, wire and corrugate iron.



Street fronting buildings



*Mixture of Fencing*



*Timber picket fencing*

Many significant buildings have survived, including the Royal Hotel (1862), the police station and gaol (1890s), the post office (1879) and the former Sofala hospital, originally built in 1874 as a courthouse.

The remainder of the village is made up of homes scattered in an informal pattern along the length of the central spine of what used to be Sofala's main street. These homes reflect a mixture of time periods.

#### *3.4.2.5 Streetscapes*

Access to and from Sofala is by car. The streets of Sofala are in an informal pattern hanging off a central spine of Hill End Road, Bowen Street and Upper Turon Road. The village heart has three streets roughly parallel with the river with pedestrian access between them. The carriage way on Denison Street is generally 6m wide with dish drain and informal verges. The carriage way on Bowen, Davis and Barkly Streets are generally 3-4m wide with informal grass or gravel verges. These streets generally operate as vehicle, pedestrian and cycle way in a reduced speed environment.

Denison Street, in the village centre, presents as an almost complete streetscape with many street fronting buildings and front gardens with low fencing. The streetscape was painted by Russell Drysdale in 1947, a painting that is considered an expression of the quintessential qualities of an inland Australian country town.



*Denison Streetscape*



Figure 3: Informal Pattern of Built environment and streetscape

#### 3.4.2.6 Natural Environment

Wallaby Rocks on the Turon river west of the village is an important scenic location identified in the Rural Strategy. It is also understood to have Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

The village sits in the Turon/Crudine Rivers sub-catchment. Flooding of the Turon river has inundated parts of Sofala village in the past. The 1 in 100 year flood area is shown below in blue. The flood study only looked at a limited area of Sofala.

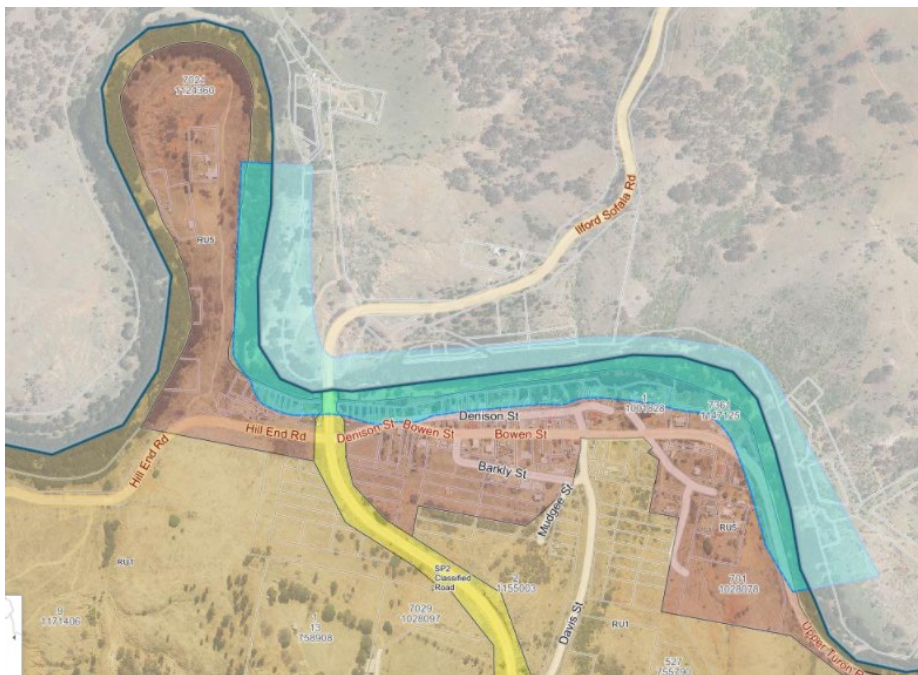


Figure 4: Flood study extents

The catchment has been categorised as having a high salinity hazard rating largely because of the very high salt source, high recharge potential and land uses not suited to the landscape. Past land uses have resulted in significant deforestation.

There is remanent vegetation along the banks of the Turon river that is classified a mixture of moderate (orange) to high (red) biodiversity sensitivity.

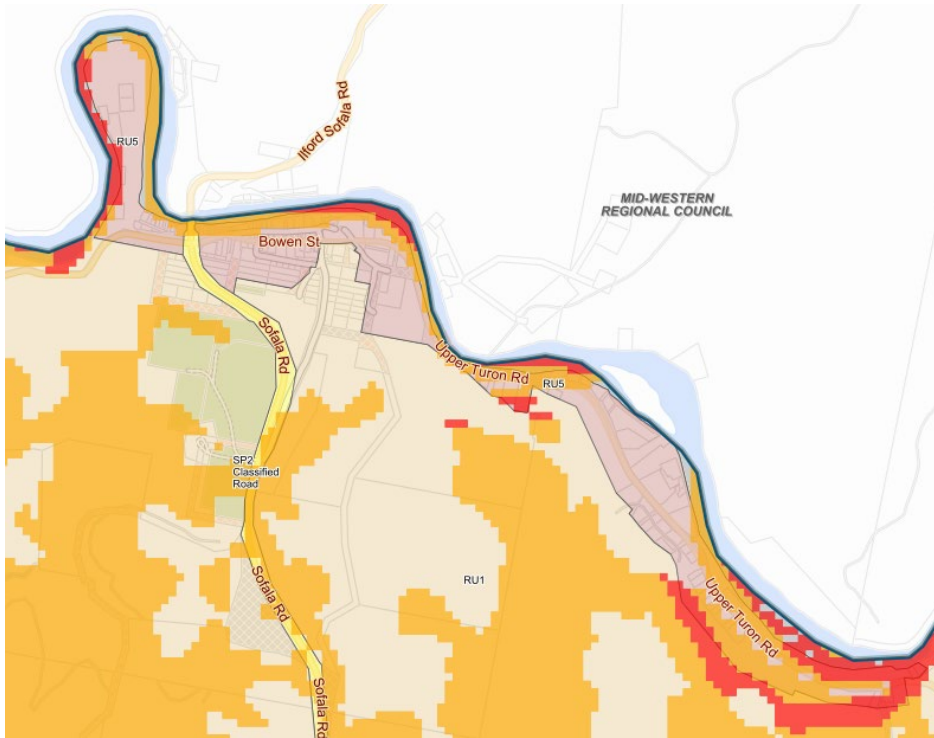


Figure 5: Natural Environment Biodiversity Sensitivity

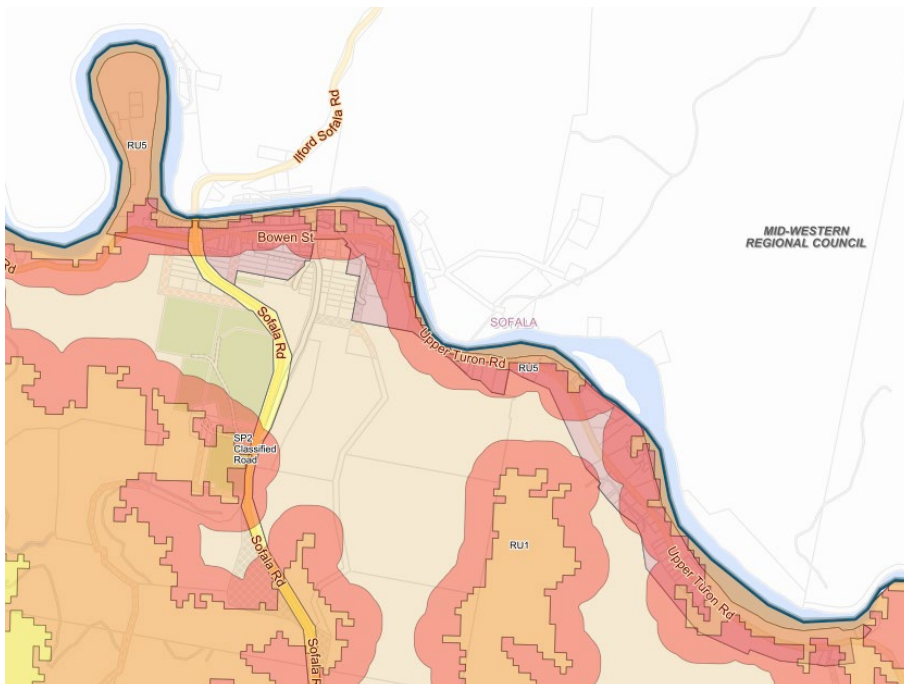


Figure 6: Bushfire threat

There is bushfire risk associated with the remnant vegetation. Category 1 Vegetation is shown in orange this is land considered to be the highest risk for bushfire. Shown in red is a 100m buffer vegetation which fringes category 1 land. Council is currently reviewing the region's bushfire prone map which is likely to classify additional lands in and around all of the regions villages as bushfire prone.

#### 3.4.3 The Economic character of Sofala

Sofala was the centre of a major goldfield during the 1850's and early 1860's, the field often led the colony in gold production and population. Additionally, the goldfield witnessed important political and technological development. In the early days the township is reputed to have had a population of 40,000. By 1868 there were 51 licenced hotels and numerous other businesses catering for the needs of the prospectors. The main street of Sofala extended to Wallaby Rocks, and a similar distance along the Turon River, in an easterly direction.

Today the village is a few streets. Economic activity is focused on the Royal Hotel, the Painted Horse Café and the Old Sofala Gaol Cafe. Sofala also has a Souvenir shop and take away and a recycled books store.

The village is well serviced by Mobile reception and has access to the National Broadband Network though Sky Muster satellite service.

The village has a landuse category of Zone RU5 Village that provides for a mixture of land uses. The zone objectives are;

- To provide for a range of land uses, services and facilities that are associated with a rural village.
- To provide a strong and viable village system that includes housing choice, business opportunities, adequate transport systems and a concentration of community services.
- To protect tourism assets and encourage the provision of services within villages that support tourism activities.
- To protect and conserve the historical significance and scenic quality of the village settings.
- To protect and conserve the rural atmosphere and amenity of the village areas.

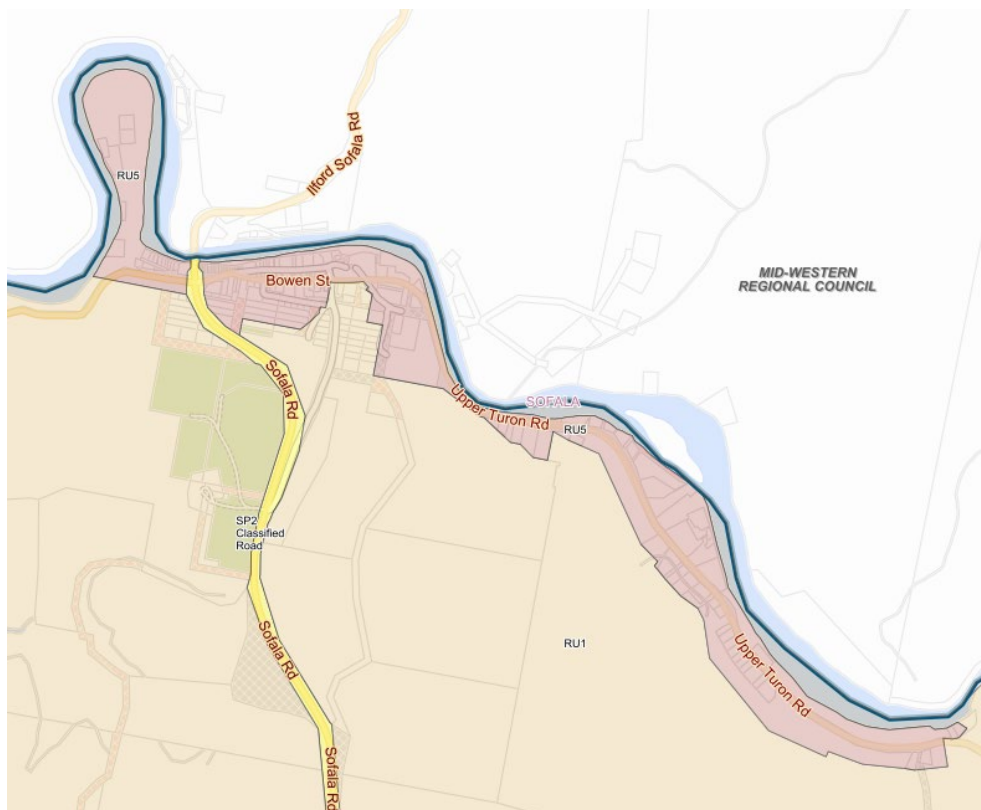


Figure 7: RU5 land use zoning

### 3.5 Future character of Sofala

#### 3.5.1 Desired future Social Character Statement

That Sofala maintain its community focus for the broader area by maintaining the character of the public space and community facilities of Sofala. This includes maintaining Sofala Showground, Joyce Pearce Memorial Park, the Royal Hotel, Sofala Community Park, Sofala Pioneer Park, Sofala Community Hall and Sofala Community Hall (former) and the primary school.

##### 3.5.1.1 Planning strategies

- Provide opportunities for interpretation of Aboriginal cultural heritage along the Turon River and Joyce Pearce Park.
- Provide opportunities for interpretation of European history in Pioneer Park.
- Preserve the existing community facilities located within the village.
- Encourage young families to migrate into Sofala and surrounds to maintain the viability of the primary school.
- Continue to support community events such as the Sofala and District Agriculture and Horticulture Annual Show and the annual Rebellion on the Turon
- Continue to advocate for outreach services to visit the village.
- Continue to advocate for public and community transport services to and from the village.

#### 3.5.2 Desired future Environmental Character Statement

That Sofala maintain the informal nature of the village defined by its irregular streetscapes with many heritage properties and gardens. That the 'village centre' be enhanced by new development in vacant properties. That the form and scale of existing housing development be reflected in new development.

That the rural streets with narrow carriage ways and informal verges be maintained. That the mix of fence types be maintained.

#### 3.5.2.1 *Planning strategies*

- Preserve the buildings and landscape elements that contribute to Sofala's Character.
- Maintain the Heritage conservation area and expand the number of listed heritage items.
- Provide for a harmonious unison between old and new structures that respects and integrates with what's already here.
- Provide for fencing in keeping with the character of the village.
- Provide opportunities for two storey street edge development in the village centre.
- Provide opportunities for one storey setback residential development in the remainder of the village.
- Address salinity hazard by adopting stormwater design that maximises the use of vegetated flow paths and riparian vegetation. Use drainage design that encourages a 'whole of corridor' drainage solution.
- Preserve and enhance biodiversity by protecting the remnant woodland and enhancing the environmental protection areas.
- Assist in management of water quality by effective management of drainage lines including revegetation and reconstruction.

#### 3.5.3 *Desired future Economic Character Statement*

That Sofala maintain its heritage as Australia's oldest surviving gold town. That the Royal Hotel, the Painted Horse Café, Old Sofala Gaol Café and various tourism related events including the Rebellion on the Turon be enhanced. That work from home and home business opportunities are embraced by the community.

##### 3.5.3.1 *Planning strategies*

- Maintain the RU5 Village Zone.
- Preserve the rural streets suitable for vehicles, walking and cycling.
- Enhance parking facilities.
- Introduce parking for larger vehicles, caravans, RVs and buses
- Encourage a convenience shop into the village centre.
- Establish an electric vehicle charging station in the village centre.
- Continue to support existing and new tourism related events.

## 4 Feedback

This discussion paper has been prepared to seek feedback from the Sofala Community. The Discussion Paper outlines the existing village character and suggests a vision and a range of planning strategies to achieve that vision. A survey is included to provide an opportunity to provide feedback on the Discussion Paper. This can be filled out electronically at <https://yoursay.bathurst.nsw.gov.au/> or returned in hard copy form to council. Please email [Maree.Neary@bathurst.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Maree.Neary@bathurst.nsw.gov.au) to book a one on one consultation meeting with Council Staff on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December at the Sofala Memorial Hall, 19 Denison Street, Sofala between 3pm and 7pm to further discuss your vision for the village of Sofala. Survey returns or any other submissions in relation to the background paper and draft vision should be received by Council by Friday, 22 January 2020.