

SEALE HAYNE SELL-OFF DEAL COLLAPSES

Question mark over campus as developers pull out



A MULTI-MILLION pound deal to sell the former Seale-Hayne College has fallen through — leaving the future of the listed building in doubt.

In a surprise move Buccleuch Property, which won a £10million bidding process to buy the 385-acre site last year, has withdrawn from the deal.

Site owners the University

By **PAUL GREAVES**

pgreaves@heraldexpress.co.uk

of Plymouth must now decide whether to start the whole bidding process again or renegotiate a new deal with Buccleuch.

It has blamed 'difficulties in the market' for the sale collapsing.

The deal was always subject to contracts being signed and a deadline to sign the papers passed last week.

Newton Abbot councillor and former mayor Keith Smith, pictured, said: "This has come as a bit of a surprise but I'm looking forward to working with the university

■ Turn to Page 2

Credit crunch takes toll on campus sale

■ From Page 1

for the future of Seale-Hayne and benefit of the community.

"We will ask Plymouth for feedback and the matter will be raised with the council at the earliest opportunity."

Gordon Isgrove, of agents GVA Grimley, said: "The sale hasn't happened but that doesn't mean to say Buccleuch won't be involved in the future.

"We are just reviewing our position at the moment. The deal is not completely dead but we are reviewing all options. It is a difficult and slow market and is a

reflection of what we are seeing across the country."

The Buccleuch Group, a large Scottish property company headed by the 10th Duke of Buccleuch, was chosen as the preferred buyer for the site in May last year.

At the time GVA Grimley said the plans were 'exciting and sustainable' and the future of Seale-Hayne was 'in safe hands'.

But detailed plans about the scheme were never made public, leading to fears the worsening economy had caused Buccleuch to re-think its involvement.

Seale-Hayne, on the outskirts of Newton Abbot, was one of the leading

agricultural colleges in the country and educated generations of farmers and farm managers.

Its sale caused controversy because former students and councillors wanted to keep its education element and did not want its fields sold to housing developers.

If the bidding process is re-started it could mean short-listed candidates who lost out last time bidding again.

Leighton King, who led a bid to turn the site into a climate change academy, said: "We would welcome the opportunity for further discussions. We will wait and see what the university decides to do."

Alan Connett, leader of Teignbridge District Council, said: "If there are re-negotiations going on it is a concern but understandable in the current economic climate.

"In the wider Newton Abbot community there will be concerns about the uncertainty and the future of Seale-Hayne. I very much hope the interested parties can reach an agreement to secure the future of this very important site."

Former student Martin Hall, a member of Seale-Hayne Futures Group, said campaigners will hold a meeting tonight to discuss developments.

New hope as Seale-Hayne deal collapses

by NIGEL CANHAM

THE collapse of the £10 million sale of the former Seale-Hayne Agricultural College has prompted calls for a deal that better serves local needs.

Bucclench Property, the Scottish company headed by the 10th Duke of Buccleuch, was selected as the preferred bidder by the University of Plymouth last May.

The firm's plans for the 385-acre college were expected to centre around an upmarket housing development.

At the time Ian Goodwin of the Seale-Hayne Futures Group described the tendering process as 'questionable' and called for the site to retain an educational role.

Bucclench beat off competition from a number of bidders, including Egregoria, a community-interest company based in Bristol that wanted to create a centre of excellence in sustainable technologies.

Also to lose out was the Dartington-based charity Lifeworks, which was planning to establish a college for disabled children.

Bovey Tracey's Leighton King, who had plans for a Climate Change Solution Centre and a £2million pledge from Devon County Council, was also overlooked.

Now the deal with Buccleuch has foundered.

The firm's agent, Gordon Isgrove, of GVA Grimley, said: 'Market conditions are very difficult, regardless of which sector you're in.'

'We haven't concluded a sale with Buc-

cleuch. Naturally we're disappointed and are exploring options and where we go with the University of Plymouth.

'I would hope we'd be in a position to announce something within the next couple of weeks.'

Mayor of Newton Abbot Cllr David Corney-Walker called for a scheme which better reflected local wishes.

'I hope that those who previously expressed interest will be allowed back into the process and that Seale-Hayne has a chance to retain something of its use as an educational establishment,' he said.

'What we need is somebody who has a better knowledge of what people in the area want.'

His thoughts were echoed by former mayor Cllr Keith Smith, who had represented the town council on the futures group.

'This is a golden opportunity for the University of Plymouth to put its money where its mouth is and reach an outcome that is better for the area, and better for Seale-Hayne, than the Buccleuch deal,' he said.

Mr King said he would be 'delighted' if offered another chance to acquire the site.

When his vision was first aired in 2007 Cllr Gordon Hook, Teignbridge Council's green champion, said: 'This is a concept for the century, not just the moment.'

£10m deal to sell former college site collapses

A MULTI-MILLION pound deal to sell the former Seale-Hayne College has fallen through - leaving the future of the listed building in doubt.

Bucclench Property, which won a bidding process to buy the 385-acre site in Newton Abbot last year, has withdrawn from the deal.

Site owners the University of Plymouth must now decide whether to start the whole bidding process again, or renegotiate a new deal with Bucclench.

It has blamed "difficulties in the market" for the sale collapsing.

The deal, thought to have cost about £10 million, was always subject to contracts being signed and a deadline to sign the papers passed last week.

Town councillor and former mayor Keith Smith said: "This has come as a bit of a surprise but I'm looking forward to working with the university for the future of Seale-Hayne and benefit of the community."

"We will ask Plymouth for feedback and the matter will be raised with the council at the earliest opportunity."

Gordon Isgrove, of agents GVA Grimley, said: "The sale hasn't happened but that doesn't mean to say Buccleuch won't be involved in the future."

"We are just reviewing our position at the moment. The deal is not completely dead but we are reviewing all options."

"It is a difficult and slow market and is a reflection of what we are seeing across the country."

"The property has still got a lot to offer, it is just a timing issue."

The Buccleuch Group, a large Scottish property company headed by the 10th Duke of Buccleuch, was chosen as the preferred buyer last May.

At the time GVA Grimley said the plans were "exciting and sustainable" and the future of Seale-Hayne was "in safe hands".