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Construction Intelligence

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Public-estate investment and London planning are moving into delivery, while strategic-road cuts sharpen the need to distinguish protected workload from cancelled pipeline.

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Executive reading. Cambridge has approved £89.4m for its Civic Quarter and GRAHAM has agreed the £55m Carlisle Citadels contract, although the university scheme retains final approval conditions. Havering's decision advances up to 900 build-to-rent homes at the Liberty Centre, with 492 in detailed first-phase consent. M Group's 21% half-year growth and £9.8bn secured order book show strength across essential infrastructure. Against that expansion, the £428m RIS3 reduction and cancellation of the A46 Newark and A38 Derby schemes require immediate pipeline correction. The common reading is selective demand: committed public-estate and utility work is strengthening while road enhancement capacity faces displacement.

Projects, Investment & Development Pipeline

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL | 26 NOVEMBER 2026

£89.4m Cambridge Civic Quarter programme receives final go-ahead

Reported facts. Cambridge City Council has approved the coordinated refurbishment of the Guildhall, Corn Exchange, Market Square and associated public realm. Sir Robert McAlpine is the main contractor and Cartwright Pickard is lead architect. Enabling works are scheduled to start in January 2027.

Client: Cambridge City Council | Programme: Cambridge Civic Quarter | Location: Cambridge | Approved investment: £89.38m | Stage: final council approval; January 2027 enabling start, with planning approval still relevant to some works | Completion sequence: Market Square March 2028; Corn Exchange summer 2028; Guildhall December 2028; wider public realm August 2029

Why it matters. This moves a long-developed public-estate programme into delivery and combines heritage conservation, commercial-income improvement and EnerPHit-aligned operational-energy reduction. It is a substantial adaptive-reuse workload rather than a conventional new-build project.

Suggested action. Specialists in heritage fabric, temporary works, public-realm logistics and low-energy retrofit should identify Sir Robert McAlpine package routes and evidence relevant live-city-centre delivery capability.

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING | 27 NOVEMBER 2026

Liberty Centre approval advances up to 900 build-to-rent homes in Romford

Reported facts. Havering Council has approved HUB and Redical's hybrid redevelopment of the Liberty Shopping Centre. The detailed first phase covers 492 homes across five buildings, while later outline phases take the masterplan to as many as 900 homes alongside commercial space, public realm and a potential health hub.

Developers: HUB and Redical | Architect: shedkm | Location: Romford, east London | Reported investment: up to £380m | Stage: committee approval subject to a Section 106 agreement and any direction from the Mayor of London | Phase 1: 492 homes in detailed consent | Later phases: outline only; no construction start or main contractor announced

Why it matters. The decision adds a large town-centre residential pipeline around an operating retail asset, creating future demand for phased logistics, demolition, structures, MEP and public-realm delivery. Approval is not yet a committed start, and the live shopping-centre interface is commercially important.

Suggested action. Track Section 106 and mayoral clearance, then approach HUB and Redical with phased-retail-interface, tall-residential and build-to-rent delivery evidence before the main procurement route is fixed.

Contract Awards & Market Movements

UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA | 26 NOVEMBER 2026

GRAHAM agrees £55m Carlisle Citadels construction deal

Reported facts. The University of Cumbria has agreed a construction contract with GRAHAM for its revised Carlisle Citadels campus. The first phase will provide about 8,000 sq m of teaching and support space plus an 800 sq m business exchange, while retaining the former Woolworths sandstone frontage.

Client: University of Cumbria | Contractor: GRAHAM | Location: Carlisle | Reported construction deal: £55m | Overall project funding: £85.2m | Stage: contract agreed; early-2027 start intended, subject to remaining legal, financial and governance approvals | Further decision: Cumbria Combined Authority to consider a £1.4m grant on 30 November 2026 | Target opening: 2029

Why it matters.	Suggested action.
This restarts a scheme delayed by cost pressure and a previous contractor withdrawal, but the conditions still matter. The package combines constrained city-centre logistics, façade retention and a publicly funded education programme.	GRAHAM-aligned specialists should confirm façade-retention, demolition, temporary-works and campus MEP packages; others should monitor the 30 November funding decision before treating the full programme as unconditional.

M GROUP | 26 NOVEMBER 2026

M Group reports 21% half-year growth and £9.8bn secured order book

Reported facts. M Group reported first-half turnover of £1.731bn, up 21% year on year and 10% like for like. EBITDA before exceptional and non-recurring items rose 28% to £124.4m; operating profit was £18.4m and period-end cash was £180.5m.

Organisation: M Group | Markets: water, technology and communications, transport and energy infrastructure | Secured order book: £9.8bn, covering 96% of FY27 budgeted revenue | Liquidity: £499.5m including undrawn facilities | Gearing: 3.1x pro forma EBITDA/net debt | Stage: reported half-year results; order-book value is not equivalent to addressable supplier revenue

Why it matters.	Suggested action.
Growth across essential-infrastructure markets, acquisition integration and cross-divisional delivery strengthen M Group’s competitive capacity. The 3.1x gearing measure and acquisition appetite make disciplined integration and cash conversion as important as headline growth.	Clients, partners and suppliers should map which M Group divisions are expanding fastest and review procurement, payment and integration changes as acquired capabilities are standardised across the group.

Business, Commercial & Supply-Chain Risk

DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT | 26 NOVEMBER 2026

RIS3 variation removes £428m and cancels A46 and A38 schemes

Reported facts. The Department for Transport has reduced capital funding for the first four years of Road Investment Strategy 3 by £428m. The change includes a £315m enhancements reduction linked to cancellation of the A46 Newark Bypass and A38 Derby Junctions, plus £113m from other capital funding.

Programme owner: Department for Transport / National Highways | Geography: England; schemes in Newark and Derby | Stage: formal RIS3 variation and cancellation, not postponement | Funding change: £428m reduction for 2026-27 to 2029-30 | Remaining RIS3 objectives and performance specification: stated as unchanged

Why it matters.	Suggested action.
The decision removes two schemes from the pipeline and reduces confidence for civils businesses that invested against the March 2026 strategy. It also sharpens competition for the remaining enhancement, renewal and future RIS4 development workload.	Road-sector leaders should remove A46/A38 assumptions from weighted pipelines, reallocate bid and design capacity to protected RIS3 work, and stress-test utilisation where these schemes supported regional workload forecasts.

Immediate leadership reading

1. Position for Cambridge heritage-retrofit packages before January mobilisation. 2. Track Romford’s Section 106 and mayoral clearance before treating planning as a start. 3. Confirm Carlisle’s final approvals and 30 November grant decision. 4. Map M Group’s fastest-growing divisions and integration changes. 5. Remove cancelled A46/A38 work from weighted road-sector pipelines now.

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