# American influx reshapes Mildenhall into a ‘miniature USA’ with strained housing market



In the quaint town of Mildenhall, Suffolk, a notable demographic shift is quietly transforming the community into what some are calling a “miniature USA.” Nestled within the scenic, historic backdrop of Thetford Forest and roughly 70 miles northeast of London, Mildenhall has seen an increasing number of Americans moving in, drawn mostly by two US Air Force bases, RAF Mildenhall and RAF Lakenheath. Collectively, these bases accommodate around 8,500 active-duty military personnel and their families.

Local residents have observed the American influence take root, with the vibrant accents and cultural touchstones of the U.S. becoming commonplace. Mildenhall Mayor Russell Leaman remarked on this shift, stating, “We hear and see Americans every day. There's a very high concentration of Americans here.” The cross-cultural melting pot has embedded itself into the town's fabric, with an American presence so pronounced that local entrepreneur Shaz Begg launched a U.S.-style diner, Top G Wings, in late 2023. Reflecting on the diner’s focus on authenticity, Begg said, “I experimented with the recipe for six months. I knew I made it when a guy from Buffalo New York came in and said, this reminds me of home.”

Data underscores how the American influx is reshaping the local housing market. Robert Lewis, managing partner at Balmforth Estate Agents, noted that American tenants have significant budgets, often willing to spend between £1,500 and £1,600 for four-bedroom homes, a considerable increase compared to the £800 to £900 that British families typically pay. This disparity creates a competitive rental market, one that Lewis described as “strangled” due to high demand from U.S. personnel coupled with insufficient affordable housing options for local residents. Indeed, while roughly half of the American expatriates reside in dormitories on the airbase, those who seek off-base living are reshaping the town’s rental dynamics.

Mildenhall’s burgeoning “Little America” atmosphere is attractive not only to newcomers but also to those who’ve already settled. Krista Leigh, an American photographer who moved to Mildenhall in 2010, found an unexpected sense of belonging and quality of life that surpassed her experiences in Connecticut, Maine, and North Carolina. “The amount of money I make here and live comfortably here, I don’t think I would be able to live comfortably on in the U.S.,” she shared. The availability of affordable amenities and diverse dining options—including numerous American-style eateries—has been a big draw for many. “We now have places that are staying open late, which is good for people who work. The U.S. lifestyle is all about convenience,” she added.

The appeal of British living is also evident in the lives of those who’ve made Mildenhall their home for decades. Shona Holloway-Howard, who relocated as a child in 1983, expressed her appreciation for both the local British culture and the American customs she maintains. She noted that while the town has embraced American influences, it still preserves its historical charm. “I like seeing the old buildings. We like the British pubs and the beer,” she remarked.

However, this demographic shift does not come without complexity. The presence of American military personnel undoubtedly contributes to the local economy, estimated at a staggering $910 million due to their spending habits, particularly on housing and dining. Yet this impact is witnessed amid a broader context of rising demand for housing in the UK, reportedly exacerbated by shifts in the political landscape, including a notable increase in U.S. citizens seeking UK citizenship following Donald Trump's election. While Mildenhall stands apart in terms of attracting a specific American demographic, it is not immune to these broader trends.

Despite potential cultural and economic tensions, local leaders maintain that the British and American communities coexist amicably. Mayor Leaman encapsulated this sentiment, stating, “The British and Americans—it's very much a united town. They do receive a warm welcome, and I like to think they integrate into the community really well.” As Mildenhall continues to evolve, the blending of traditions and lifestyles reflects a unique reality that’s reshaping a once-sleepy English town into a vibrant, multicultural community.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14762951/americans-flock-mildenhall-england-rent-homes.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.stripes.com/news/2006-02-22/some-americans-serving-in-the-uk-prefer-owning-over-renting-2198214.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14762951/americans-flock-mildenhall-england-rent-homes.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/24077997.mildenhall-estate-agent-strangled-rental-market/), [[5]](https://fox5sandiego.com/business/press-releases/ein-presswire/735215386/falling-expat-mortgage-rates-boost-the-uk-housing-market/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.100fss.com/finding-a-home), [[6]](https://airshare.air-inc.com/global-expatriate-housing-trends-q3-2024-insights-and-updates)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14762951/americans-flock-mildenhall-england-rent-homes.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.100fss.com/finding-a-home), [[5]](https://fox5sandiego.com/business/press-releases/ein-presswire/735215386/falling-expat-mortgage-rates-boost-the-uk-housing-market/)
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* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14762951/americans-flock-mildenhall-england-rent-homes.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/24077997.mildenhall-estate-agent-strangled-rental-market/), [[3]](https://www.100fss.com/finding-a-home)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14762951/americans-flock-mildenhall-england-rent-homes.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/24077997.mildenhall-estate-agent-strangled-rental-market/), [[3]](https://www.100fss.com/finding-a-home)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14762951/americans-flock-mildenhall-england-rent-homes.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/24077997.mildenhall-estate-agent-strangled-rental-market/> - An estate agent in Mildenhall, Suffolk, has described the local rental market as 'strangled' due to high demand from U.S. Air Force personnel and a lack of affordable housing. Robert Lewis, managing partner at Balmforth Estate Agents, highlighted that American tenants often have higher allowances and make for good tenants, leading to increased competition for rental properties. He also noted that government policies and a shortage of new affordable housing have exacerbated the issue, resulting in a significant shortage of properties available for lower-income families.
3. <https://www.100fss.com/finding-a-home> - The RAF Mildenhall Housing Office provides guidance for U.S. Air Force personnel seeking off-base housing in the Mildenhall area. The process includes steps such as finding a house, signing a lease agreement, receiving household goods, and setting up utilities. Key considerations for viewing a home include verifying the available date, ensuring furniture fits, assessing safety, and proximity to main roads. The Housing Office also advises on signing leases, renter's insurance, and communication with landlords to ensure a smooth transition to off-base living.
4. <https://www.stripes.com/news/2006-02-22/some-americans-serving-in-the-uk-prefer-owning-over-renting-2198214.html> - Some U.S. military personnel stationed in the UK prefer owning homes over renting, despite the complexities of the British property market. The article provides insights into the home-buying process for Americans in the UK, including mortgage requirements, legal considerations, and the importance of choosing locations attractive to British buyers. It also highlights the challenges of buying older English homes, such as difficulties in obtaining insurance for properties like thatched-roof cottages, and the benefits of purchasing new homes with warranties.
5. <https://fox5sandiego.com/business/press-releases/ein-presswire/735215386/falling-expat-mortgage-rates-boost-the-uk-housing-market/> - Falling mortgage rates for expatriates and foreign national investors are boosting the UK housing market. Lenders are offering competitive deals for investors with smaller deposits, leading to increased demand. Searches from overseas buyers now account for 11% of all activity in the UK market, driven by good mortgage availability, a weaker pound, and the use of expert brokers. The article notes that 80% of expat lenders expect demand to grow in the coming months, with demand already up 27% compared to the same period last year.
6. <https://airshare.air-inc.com/global-expatriate-housing-trends-q3-2024-insights-and-updates> - The Q3 2024 Global Expatriate Housing Trends report provides insights into the rental markets in various cities worldwide. In the United States, while the rental market has stabilized, expats in Seattle face increasing rents, especially for high-end units. In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the rental market surged with notable price hikes at the lower end, affecting expats competing for fewer available properties. Nairobi, Kenya, saw high demand pushing rents higher for prime expatriate-quality homes, leading many expats to relocate to more suburban areas offering better value.
7. <https://www.propertyguides.com/usa/news/will-2024-be-the-opportune-year-to-get-on-the-us-property-ladder> - The article discusses the state of the U.S. property market as of November 2023, highlighting high interest rates and limited housing stock that have kept activity low and prices high. It notes that foreign buyers have been scarce, but signs point to a potential shift in the market in 2024. The chief economist at the National Association of Realtors predicts a decline in home sales volume by 18% year-on-year once all the numbers are in for 2023, with a lack of housing inventory and high mortgage rates contributing to the downturn.