

HOUSE
FREDDIE
BY STUDIO
BRIGHT



This adaptation of a midcentury suburban residence strikes a balance between retention and refinement, resulting in a contemporary home that is seriously joyful.

Words by Alexandra Brown
Photography by Gavin Green

Sitting low on its corner site, the 1960s home at the heart of House Freddie appears at first to be almost untouched. Located in the Naarm/Melbourne suburb of Glen Iris, on unceded Bunurong and Wurrundjeri Woi Wurrung Country, the single-storey brick dwelling is grounded, sharing its generous garden over the edge of a low brick fence with the neighbourhood. Behind the main house, however, lies a new breezeblock volume – a tall counterpoint to its horizontal precedent, which hints at the evolution of the suburban home. At the heart of this project is a set of questions about how to adapt the existing house to better support a young family of five now and into the future, without simply adding and duplicating floor area, and without accepting the demolition of large parts of the existing building as a given.

As Studio Bright has demonstrated through works including Mansard House (2022) and St Mary’s Coptic Church (2024), working carefully and sensitively with extant structures is – in the right hands – not necessarily incompatible with the design of bold new spaces and forms. In keeping with these earlier projects, House Freddie is seriously joyful. This duality, also understood through what design director Mel Bright and project architect Jaxon Webb from Studio Bright refer to as the “small space, big energy” of the home, relies on architectural fine-tuning: the ability to understand exactly where and how to turn the volume of the design up or down in order to honour and celebrate both the old and the new.

The character and street presence of the existing house have been carefully maintained and enhanced with low, textural planting and loose paving by landscape designer Peachy Green. The general form of the gardens and low brick fence to the boundary remain, with new plants already beginning to cascade over the edges. Facing the side street, the new blockwork addition plays with contrast and coherence: its unpainted

01 New spaces – a bedroom above and dining space below – are contained within a tower, wrapped in breezeblocks.

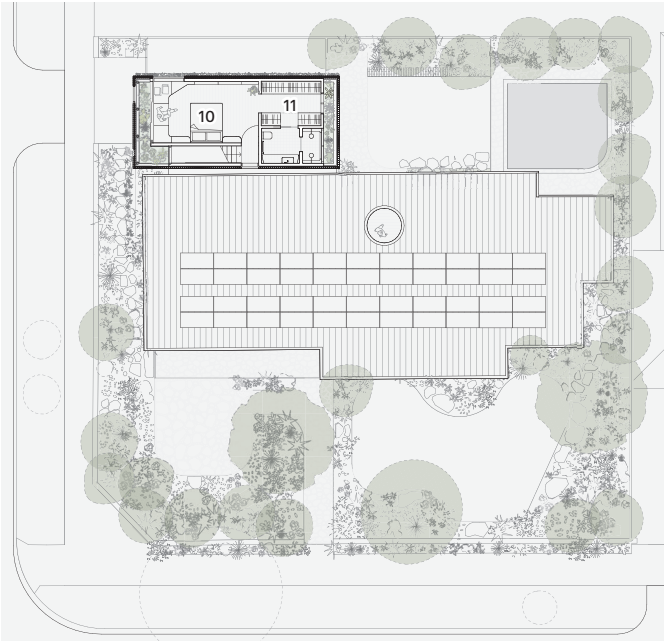
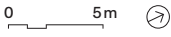
02 The low-slung brick dwelling is retained and enhanced by a garden designed by Peachy Green.



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|---------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1 Entry porch | 5 Dining | 9 Second lounge | 12 Pool |
| 2 Lounge | 6 Laundry | 10 Bedroom | 13 Spa |
| 3 Study | 7 Garage | 11 Robe | 14 Service area |
| 4 Kitchen | 8 Terrace | | |



Ground floor 1:400



First floor 1:400

House Freddie is built on the land of the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people.	 Naarm/Melbourne, Vic	 Alteration + addition	 5	 4	 3	 Site House Paved area, pool, patio	708 m² 280 m² 125 m²	 Design Build	21 m 20 m
			Family						

linear breeze blocks echo the rhythm and scale of the red brick, but oriented vertically. At the same time, the more stereotypically mid-century square profile of the breezeblock has been avoided, giving the home a contemporary polish.

Inside House Freddie, precise cuts to the existing fabric have transformed central spaces and enhanced its connection to the garden. A slight pinching of the existing plan creates a new terrace, opening the centre of the house up to the backyard, while tying together a series of lightly refreshed bedrooms to the north-east and the project’s reconfigured public spaces to the south. From here, it’s also possible to understand how the new breezeblock element unites the main level of the house with the lower ground at the back of the site. Four steps traverse the level change between kitchen and dining spaces, yet these family gathering spaces retain their close connection through a series of small spatial gestures that work collectively to provide a strong sense of continuity. The kitchen bench extends towards the stair to keep conversations open, while generous built-in seating around the dining table invites multiple modes of use. On the day of my visit, clients David and Angela reflected on the way that they and their three sons now tend to linger here before and after meals, often talking together across the space.

Behind the dining area, a single-car garage and laundry have replaced the property’s existing carport and shed. The decision to leave the breezeblock veil virtually uninterrupted through the careful detailing of a concealed automatic sliding door allows the striking form of the two-storey addition to be read from the street edge.

Tucked behind the kitchen, it’s almost possible to overlook where the lounge sideboard becomes a desk for a modest home office where David often works, closing pocket sliding doors for more privacy when needed. Beyond its use as a workspace, however, this area of the house also conceals the stair to a new first-floor bedroom and bathroom. Though these spaces retain the same interior palette of warm timbers and playful colours accentuated with well-placed curves, the mood shifts into that of a treetop retreat. Bedroom walls separate slightly from the block screen, creating window gardens that layer small plants and creepers in front of longer views. The beautifully framed view through established tree canopies to the west is a testament to the skill and care embedded in the design of the home through close collaboration between architects and clients. A daybed provides an opportunity to sit immersed in this view, but Angela and David have also decided to periodically swap sides of the bed, so that they can share the experience of waking up to one of House Freddie’s many memorable moments. ©

03 Kitchen and dining spaces step down the site’s slope, allowing the dining area to spill out to the backyard.

04 The previously cellular central section has been opened up, creating a clear path from the entry to the main social spaces.



03



04



Products

Roofing: Klip Lok from Lysaght in 'Jasper'; roof trims in Porters 'Jeep'; R6.0 Ecowool insulation

External walls: Linear Breeze concrete breezeblock from Austral Bricks in 'Nickel'; honed

Internal walls: Armourpanel from Big River Group in 'Blackbutt', oiled in Whittle Waxes Hardwax; Porters paint in 'Jeep' (general); Dulux paint in 'Oyster Linen Half' (general), and 'Tidal Thicket' and 'Flinder's Green' (second living)

Windows: Custom blackbutt windows by Elite Windows; Viridian double glazing; hardware from Halliday Baillie in 'Satin Brass'; Altair low-profile louvres from Breezway in 'Matt Black'

Doors: Custom glazed doors with blackbutt frames by Elite Windows; internal doors in Armourpanel from Big River Group in 'Blackbutt' oiled in Whittle Waxes Hardwax; hardware from Designer Doorware in 'Satin Brass'

Flooring: Split-face stone pavers from Yarrabee and Castlemaine Stone in clear seal; Armourpanel flooring from Big River Group in 'Blackbutt' oiled in Whittle Waxes Hardwax

Lighting: Dimple sconce external and internal lights by RBW; Dioscuri wall light (ensuite); Spot Surface Mount from In Common With in 'Brass'; Deltalight Entero Trimless spotlights (general) and Needle 1 ceiling lights in 'Flemish Gold' (dining); Grapho Bubble pendant from ISM Objects (main bedroom, dining)

Kitchen: Terrazzo splashback and benchtop from Tiento in 'Italia Ronuv'; concrete bench, island and steps by Keenan Harris; Armourpanel joinery from Big River Group in 'Blackbutt' and Resene 'Rangitoto'; Miele cooktop and ovens; Fisher and Paykel dishwasher and fridge; Qasair rangehood; Graffito Big cabinet handles from Linear Standard in 'Brushed Dark Brass'; Yokato mixer from Brodware in 'Nero Black'

Bathroom: D-Tile tiles in 'Fava'; Brodware tapware and fittings

Heating and cooling: Ecotherm heat pump system for hydronic floor heating and bulkhead airconditioning

External elements: Large loose stone pavers from Yarrabee and Castlemaine Stone

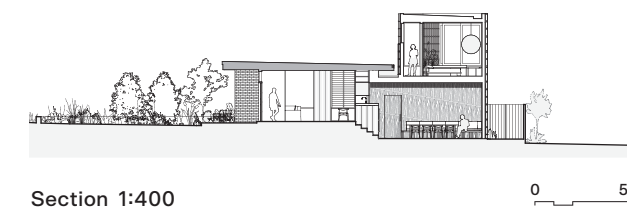


05 In the first-floor bedroom, a daybed looks out to the tree canopy.

06 Brass finishes and soft green tiles acknowledge the existing home's midcentury origins.

07 The breezeblock skin sits free from the first floor building edge, making space for pocket gardens.

08 The masonry skin of old and new shifts from brick to concrete, solid to permeable.



Section 1:400

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Project team Melissa Bright, Jaxon Webb, Tara Moore, Rob McIntyre **Builder** Frank Victoria **Structural and civil engineer** Meyer Consulting **Landscape architect** Peachy Green **Building surveyor** Metro Building Surveyors