Farrell & Clark Architects

Design & Access Statement

Thaikhun, Spinningfields, Manchester
For Design Tonic

Architects

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Contents

Introduction	Page 3
Brief	Page 3
Site Analysis	Page 4
Design Proposals	Page 5
Access	Page 5
Conclusion	Page 6

Introduction

This Design & Access Statement has been prepared in support of a Full Planning Application for enclosing the existing outdoor seating area at the Thaikhun restaurant within Spinningfields, Manchester. Providing a solid roof and glazed walls to ensure that external dining can be provided throughout the year. New signage will be installed externally, subject to a separate Advertising Consent application.

The Thaikhun restaurant is located on the North side of the 3 Hardman Street office building, accessed at Ground Floor level from The Avenue. The restaurant occupies a prominent position within Spinningfields, just off Crown Square and at the crossroads of The Avenue and The Avenue North, at the heart of a vibrant mix of restaurants and entertainment venues.

Brief

The brief is to refurbish and modernise the existing Thaikhun restaurant in Manchester, enhancing both the external appearance and internal customer experience while retaining the building's existing structural footprint and key architectural elements. Externally, the proposals focus on improving the restaurant's visibility, entrance presence, and street frontage through aesthetic upgrades, whilst maintaining the existing columns and enclosing the space to provide a year round external dining experience.

Internally, the refurbishment aims to upgrade the bar and front-of-house areas to provide a more engaging and dynamic guest experience, alongside improving the overall layout, comfort, and atmosphere of the venue. The design will deliver a refreshed and contemporary interior environment that aligns with Thaikhun's current brand identity while enhancing operational efficiency and customer appeal.

A key objective of the brief is to create a modern interpretation of the Thaikhun brand, preserving the vibrant and eclectic character for which the restaurant is recognised. The interior design concept draws inspiration from the energy and atmosphere of Bangkok street life, using colour, texture, layered materials, and authentic cultural references to create an immersive dining experience. The overall ambition is to revitalise the restaurant as a visually distinctive and memorable destination, strengthening its market presence while remaining faithful to the brand's unique identity.

Site Analysis

Thaikhun is located within Spinningfields, a prominent mixed-use commercial quarter situated immediately west of Manchester City Centre. Spinningfields has been comprehensively regenerated over the past two decades and now forms one of Manchester's principal business districts, characterised by high-quality contemporary architecture, active public spaces, and a dense urban grain.

The surrounding context comprises a mix of office buildings, retail units, food and beverage premises, hotels, and leisure uses, creating a vibrant destination throughout the day and evening. Building heights within the area vary, generally ranging from mid-rise blocks of six to ten storeys to taller landmark buildings, establishing a strongly urban character with defined street frontages and enclosed public realm.

The restaurant's location benefits from excellent connectivity and accessibility, with direct pedestrian links to Deansgate, Manchester city centre, and the wider transport network. Public transport accessibility is high, with nearby access to Deansgate Station, Salford Central Station, Metrolink stops, and multiple bus routes. Pedestrian movement is prioritised throughout Spinningfields, with generous footways, public squares, and landscaped routes contributing to a legible and permeable environment.

The public realm is of a high quality, with coordinated paving materials, street trees, lighting, and street furniture reinforcing the area's premium commercial identity. Adjacent spaces such as Crown Square provide focal points for public activity and events, increasing footfall and enhancing the vitality of the district.

Architecturally, the area's buildings are high specification employing materials such as glazed curtain walling, stone cladding, brickwork and metal detailing. Providing a character that is contemporary and cohesive, with active ground-floor frontages that animate the streetscape and support the mixed-use nature of the district.



Located on The Avenue, a main pedestrian route running through Spinningfields leading up to Crown Square from Deansgate, Thaikhun is one of several restaurants with external dining in this area. Thaikhun's external dining is currently designed for use in the warmer and drier months, with a corten steel frame and fabric awning canopy over two distinct seating areas either side of the main entrance. Low height timber planters and framing facing onto the Avenue separate diners from passing pedestrians.

In the challenging hospitality market, where better occupancy and improved guest experience are key to surviving, recently neighbouring restaurants have been refurbished and changed their outdoor dining areas to all year-round facilities. This includes the opposite Fazenda restaurant with its curtain wall enclosed external dining space and faced with loose planters, as the photos below. In addition to Ocasa's enclosed external dining area of rendered planter walls and curtain walling above.





Design Proposals

To provide a year-round dining experience for guests of Thaikhun restaurant we are proposing to utilise the existing corten steel column and beam frame, stripping these of the existing awnings and timber planters and screening. Then provide a new solid roof with composite insulated panels fixed onto the existing steel beams, to shelter guests from the Manchester weather.

External walls will wrap around the existing columns, utilising curtain walling and infill panels on both ends facing the neighbouring restaurants. Whilst the front main elevation onto The Avenue will have low level rainscreen cladding of fibre cement panels, reflecting the use of stone and brick within Spinningfields, and glazed curtain walling above, to maintain the active frontage. One section of the front elevation will also include a high level bi-folding screen for a bar seating area that will be opened up during warmer months. At low level all long the front elevation will be tiled planter boxes, maintaining some of the existing greenery.

The proposals include for forming three distinctive entrances to the restaurant, with repurposed Thai style shutters in various colours. These entrances will provide separate functions, with central one picking up the main restaurant trade, the Easterly one being used by delivery drivers picking up orders from the new external kitchen area, whilst the Westerly entrance will lead directly into the bar area, forming a link with The Avenue North.

This relates to the planned layout of the external dining area, with a small scale kitchen at the Western end, with restaurant dining between the kitchen and the main entrance. Then East of the main entrance, bar seating, including a high seating area overlooking The Avenue, and a DJ booth.

The palette of external materials are similar to the surrounding buildings with a contemporary feel through the curtain walling and metal roof cladding, but there are also elements that provide a nod to restaurant's Thai background, providing a Bangkok street life feel.

Access

The works to enclose the external dining area of Thaikhun restaurant will not affect the existing access arrangements of the restaurant, with level access maintained to both the exterior dining areas and the interior of the restaurant. Whilst the front elevation of the newly enclosed external dining area will provide a mix of low and high level glazing, allowing all guests to enjoy views out onto The Avenue.

Conclusion

The proposed refurbishment of Thaikhun Manchester Spinningfields represents a considered enhancement of the existing restaurant, delivering significant improvements to the building's external presence, operational functionality, and customer experience while respecting the established character of Spinningfields. By retaining the existing structural framework and footprint, the scheme adopts a sustainable and proportionate approach, modernising the venue without altering its fundamental relationship with the surrounding public realm.

The design proposals respond positively to the high-quality contemporary context of Spinningfields by introducing a refined palette of materials, maintaining active frontage, and creating an attractive year-round dining environment that supports the vitality of The Avenue. At the same time, the proposals reinforce Thaikhun's unique brand identity through carefully integrated design elements inspired by Bangkok street culture, creating a vibrant and immersive guest experience.

Overall, the development will enhance the appearance and functionality of the premises, strengthen the commercial offer within this key city-centre destination, and contribute positively to the ongoing vibrancy and economic resilience of the wider Spinningfields area.

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