



Alpine adventure

First look

The low-down on a star car of the future

Legendary French marque's comeback sports car in development. Alfa 4C targeted as rival

Words: Nick Trott Rendering: Jan Kamenistiak

THE REJUVENATION of Renault's Alpine brand is forging ahead, with the development of its new Alfa Romeo 4C-rivalling sports car ahead of schedule.

The new car, developed jointly by Alpine and Caterham, is expected to go on sale in 2016 (with a concept appearing before then) and will be built in the Dieppe factory in Seine-Maritime – birthplace of the Alpine brand. The design has been signed-off by Alpine COO Carlos Tavares and engineering work is underway.

Alpine's ambitions were laid bare in a recent conversation with *evo*. Alpine-Caterham CEO Bernard Ollivier claimed the car's styling will reference the 'Berlinette' (A110) but would be modern and 'not retro'. The Berlinette, built from 1961 to 1977, was one of the most famous French cars ever built and scored significant successes in world rallying.

The new car's look 'will be recognisably French with innovation and technical excellence at its core,' said Ollivier. The styling team, led by Renault design boss Laurens van den Acker, has looked closely at the modern interpretations of the Mini and the Fiat 500. It has also drawn references from the A110 – including the signature arrowhead shape at the front with four integrated headlights, and the scalloped flanks (see rendering). Ollivier was anxious to point out that the new car bears

little similarity to the A110-50 concept built to celebrate the A110's 50th anniversary last year.

There will be separate Alpine and Caterham versions of the new car, but unlike the Toyota GT86/Subaru BRZ, the two models will be markedly different visually, despite sharing a chassis and an engine. An insider told *evo* the differences in design were such that 'you would be unable to tell that they shared the same platform'.

evo understands the new car will employ the 1.6-litre turbocharged

much', according to Tavares, and so is unlikely to ever make production.

It's likely the Alpine would utilise the dual-clutch EDC transmission from the Clio Turbo for emissions reasons, meaning no manual version will be offered, which will probably disappoint enthusiasts. A version of the Renaultsport Monitor, a real-time data tool that includes G-force readings, a lap timer with memory and acceleration timer, will also be offered. An advanced version including specific racetrack data is also being considered.

Interestingly, while an alloy chassis is considered the most logical option, Caterham Composites has recently undertaken a design study to develop a 'cost-focused automotive survival cell' suitable for medium-volume production. The solution was a predominantly composite cell that Caterham believes can 'be delivered in a repeatable and reliable medium-volume production solution for 10,000 units per annum'.

A composite chassis would push the price of the new Alpine towards £50,000 rather than the '£35k upwards' figure mooted by Caterham boss Graham Macdonald in *evo* 178, and while there's no confirmation from either side of chassis type or pricing, Ollivier did say that Alpine will be 'looking very carefully' at the success of the composite 4C. 'One thing is clear: the new car must be profitable for Alpine and profitable for Caterham,' explained Ollivier,

'The new car must be profitable for Alpine and for Caterham'

Bernard Ollivier, CEO, Alpine-Caterham

four-cylinder engine from the new Renaultsport Clio 200 Turbo, but mid-mounted and driving the rear wheels. A target of at least 250bhp has been proposed, with weight at 'no more than 1000kg'. This would give a higher power-to-weight ratio than the 4C. Ollivier also told *evo* that the Lotus Elise is being benchmarked, but the Alpine will be higher quality – and more expensive. It is not thought to be as extreme as the Exige.

A roadster version was considered, but engineers predicted a 100kg increase over the coupe, which is 'too

adding that Alpine brand expansion, including further models, depends on the success of the 'new Berlinette'.

The dealer network is not formalised yet, although we hear that there will be specific Alpine dealers. The factory at Dieppe could also play a role as a car collection point for buyers. ❧

evo comment

The Alpine Berlinette and its Caterham sibling promise to be two of the most exciting cars to come over the next few years. Little is known about Caterham's plans, but Alpine is forging ahead with brand-building and aggressive marketing (the name is returning to Le Mans this year on a racing prototype named A450) and its bosses are bullish about the road car's success. We can't wait to drive it.



p19

911 TURBO: NOW EVEN FASTER

552bhp, 198mph,
four-wheel steering –
what's not to like?



p22

THERE'S A REVOLUTION AT THE RING

British-fettled
508bhp Impreza STI
breaks model record



p25

RACING ASTON GOES GREEN

Petrol/hydrogen
Rapide S set to run at
Nürburgring 24-hours

p27

F1 ENGINES SEEK RICHER SOUNDS

Fears that new V6
engines for 2014 may
lack audible sparkle

p30

FROM FOCUS ST TO BTCC WINNER

How independent
race teams build their
own Touring Cars

p32

RR SPORT HANDLES WITH CARE

Dynamics improved
for Range Rover's
second-gen Sport



Interview: Carlos Tavares, COO, Renault

evo: Will you build a faster 'RS' version of the new car?

CT: We will start with very limited options. We don't want to generate unnecessary investment and discover that the mix is 90 per cent this, 9 per cent this or 1 per cent this. There will not be three equipment levels – it will be one grade.

evo: Porsche is the master of stretching a model range, how closely have you looked at Porsche as a rival?

CT: The Lotus Elise and Alfa 4C are closer to our philosophy than the Cayman or Boxster, but I admire their business success. However, we won't lower the car 10mm, give it a new chip and call it a new car like Porsche, or introduce S, RS or SRS versions.

evo: How close are you on deciding a name for the new car?

CT: We have had many discussions and there are arguments for either continuing the 'A' theme, like A120 or A112. I think we can rule out A160, though...



evo: The Berlinette name is romantic and very French, what about that?

CT: We have started thinking about this too, but nothing is decided. Letters or a name, it is not decided. Some people are saying that it should be Berlinette, but to others it looks a little weak. It is also close to Ferrari and the Berlinetta, but we will see.

evo: Who is the customer?

CT: We have a big problem. There are two kinds of customer. The ones we know well are us, all the guys who are in their 50s and saw Alpine win the WRC [in 1973]. They will love this car and they have the money to buy it, but we need to target someone else.

evo: You mean younger customers?

CT: Yes – more like the 35s. Young executives who have some money, a passion for cars and want to be different. They don't want to buy a Porsche or Ferrari because that is very common. They want something a little bit less 'show-off' and a bit more authentic. That's what we are working on, but it is not easy. How to get both customers is the trick.

evo: Are you concerned that the business model will not have longevity unless you attract the younger buyer?

CT: The guys like us, the guys in the 50s, will definitely have the money, but the younger guys perhaps less. But if we only sell cars to guys like us, Alpine is not going to last long. We have to talk to both.

evo: Is this why you're going racing?

CT: Yes, but we have some other exciting marketing plans over the next couple of years that will make Alpine stand out.

The rivals

New Caterham

Identical chassis and engine, but will come with substantially different styling



Porsche Cayman S

321bhp, 273lb ft, less than £50k and the allure of the Porsche badge



Alfa Romeo 4C

Similar to Alpine's claimed price and power points, with gorgeous Italian looks

