

McLAREN 540C

PRE-PURCHASE PROTOCOL · BUYER CHECKS · SPECIALIST PPI · RED FLAGS

Compiled from public sources, the McLaren 540C, its Model File and specialist review · Personal use only · v2.1

WHAT THIS CHECKLIST IS, AND WHAT IT IS NOT

This checklist is written for enthusiasts who want a base of knowledge: enough context to follow what a PPI specialist tells them, to read an inspection report a dealer hands over, and to understand what is being discussed in videos and forums. It does not replace the diagnosis or judgement of a qualified specialist or workshop, and it is not a tool for saving the cost of one. If you are not deeply familiar with these cars technically and are unsure about a vehicle's condition, our standing recommendation is simple: commission and pay a qualified PPI specialist of your choice, whether an official dealership, a marque specialist, or an experienced supercar specialist who knows the brand. The checklist gives you context; the specialist gives you the verdict.

A · BUYER CHECK · PROVENANCE & PAPERWORK

- ☐ IMPORT LAYER FIRST: original market specification, import chain, software level against the correct market state — the 540C's gatekeeper question.
- ☐ Service-history continuity across countries: gapless McLaren records, whichever markets the car has lived in.
- ☐ Campaign matrix by VIN in the dealer system — Takata where the market applies, quality and brake/electronics actions by production window.
- ☐ Hydraulic system history: accumulator replacements, pump work, lift service invoiced.
- ☐ Battery regime documented: tender use, standing-time story told honestly.
- ☐ Aluminium panel history: any corrosion/warranty paintwork documented panel by panel.
- ☐ Door work invoiced where done: handle motors, struts, soft-close.
- ☐ Usage pattern: regularly driven beats low-mileage stander.
- ☐ Carbon structure: accident file read before paint is discussed.
- ☐ IRIS II software level and any updates on record.

B · BUYER CHECK · AT THE CAR

- ☐ Cold start filmed: clean idle, no smoke — the M838TE is the robust part, so anomalies count double.
- ☐ Hydraulic pump listened for; lift (where fitted) cycled cold and warm — slow function is the accumulator sign.
- ☐ SSG: cold manoeuvring, kickdown, shift quality warm; any gearbox whine or leak traces noted for deeper inspection.
- ☐ IRIS II exercised: boot, menus, Bluetooth, navigation, camera — small bugs documented, big ones priced.
- ☐ Doors: handle-motor response, soft-close, strut holding force both sides.
- ☐ Aluminium panels walked in low light: paint bubbles, edge corrosion, door areas, engine cover.
- ☐ Steel discs read: corrosion, lips, warping evidence on the drive — the standing story in metal.
- ☐ Coolant connections and clamps sighted; expansion tank condition.
- ☐ Battery voltage read; error memory before and after the drive.
- ☐ Suspension: damper leaks, joint play, honest age.
- ☐ Interior: seat adjustment, console, rattles, soft-touch state.
- ☐ Underbody and jacking points: the carbon tells its life.

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C · SPECIALIST PPI SCOPE (MINIMUM)

- ☐ Full scan before and after the drive: DME, SSG, hydraulics, IRIS, TPMS, body modules — fault history read, not cleared.
- ☐ Software audit against the CORRECT market state — the import angle built into the update check.
- ☐ Hydraulic pressure test, pump runtime, accumulator health.
- ☐ SSG adaptation values; oil history; case leak inspection on anomalies.
- ☐ Boost log both banks; wastegate function; charge-air leak check.
- ☐ MonoCell and underbody inspected by carbon-competent eyes.
- ☐ Aluminium corrosion inspection panel by panel; paint depth where suspicious.
- ☐ Battery and charging test; parasitic-drain measurement on doubt.
- ☐ Brake measurement: disc thickness and corrosion assessment.
- ☐ Cooling system pressure-checked; clamps and connectors aged-checked.
- ☐ Campaign closure verified by VIN — doubling as the import audit.
- ☐ Typical full specialist PPI cost, rounded orientation by market (2026): ≈€550–1,100 / ≈£450–950 / ≈\$600–1,200. Indications, not conversions; obtain current local quotes.

D · PRICE & INVESTIGATION ITEMS

The drivetrain is the quiet part: the price sits in the import papers, the hydraulics, the doors, the aluminium and the standing-time story.

- ☐ Unclear import specification: priced as risk until proven — the 540C's first negotiation block.
- ☐ Accumulators due: low-to-mid four figures per unit.
- ☐ Door handle motors/struts: low four figures — listed and settled.
- ☐ Aluminium corrosion findings: paint quotes per panel, warranty history checked first.
- ☐ Corroded discs on a stander: measured, then priced — cheaper than PCCB, but not free.
- ☐ Software backlog: dealer time, closed before delivery.
- ☐ Battery and tender setup: small money, mandatory.
- ☐ Negotiate from the documented file: never from the odometer alone.

E · RED FLAGS · WALK-AWAY OR ESCALATION

- Import history vague, or market specification unprovable.
- Hydraulic pump running constantly, explained away as character.
- Campaign status unverifiable by VIN.
- Long-standing car sold as "low mileage, like new".
- Aluminium bubbling dismissed as stone chips.
- Gearbox leak traces with no inspection offered.
- Fault memory cleared before viewing, or scan refused.
- Accident history without carbon-structure documentation.
- A car whose findings cannot be named, quantified and priced.

F · FIRST WEEK OF OWNERSHIP

- ☐ Baseline stored: full scan, software levels, hydraulic pressures, disc measurements.
- ☐ Import dossier completed and archived; campaign matrix closed at the dealer.
- ☐ Battery tender installed, driving cadence planned; purchase file and PPI report archived.

"The 540C is a 570S with different priorities: buy the import papers, the hydraulic pressures and the update state — the drivetrain was never the question."

Deep dive: Supercar Models Paper 51 · Model File 51 · Owner's Intelligence series.

FINDINGS & NOTES