outlying farms; these probably date, at least in Roxby, from a decade or so before those of the main settlement, lacking the assured design and assertiveness of the others. At Appleby subtle variations occur in plan and appearance; there are few exact repetitions of pairs, and the cosmetic effect of the materials makes groups of the rebuilt houses very challenging visually. Roxby shows virtual uniformity in materials – hard, smoky red bricks, slate roofs and some details picked out in blue-black brick, with slight differences in designs for window arches and porches; Appleby offers a virtual riot of limestone, ironstone, yellow brick and red brick, the latter used with dramatic effect to emphasise vertical and horizontal lines, and as decoration in lozenges on what would otherwise have been plain walls of dressed stone. As much care was taken with the outbuildings as with the cottages themselves, each group being designed as a unit visually as well as practically. Brick decoration at corners – a local variant upon quoining, probably serving to reduce water penetration on exposed edges – was copied from earlier farm buildings, and repeated throughout the new houses, becoming more emphatic as Winn's designs matured.[18] A few older cottages appear to have been refurbished as part of this 'great rebuilding', and new outbuildings with a cow house provided for at least one unimproved pair, adding to the problems of the architectural historian, and to the visual impact of the village centre. Roxby appears staid, even puritan, in its 19th century rebuilding compared to the indulgent lusciousness of the Winn cotttages at Appleby.

The rebuilding of Appleby is understood to have been carried out over the period 1872 to 1880,[19] most inconveniently if the census enumerators' returns are to be of use; indeed, although the supposed dating may be wrong, nothing of immediate significance respecting the rebuilding appears from the returns for 1861, 1871 or 1881. Within the main settlement, there were 85 houses in 1861, 79 in 1871 and 66 in 1881; none were recorded as being in process of building when returns were made in any of the three census years. This must be sheer bad luck, but at least the reduction in the number of dwellings emerges decisively; few cottages were empty in census years, and it is reasonable to suppose that Winn did not have to rebuild because of population pressure within the village itself. In 1871 and 1881 the enumerator followed the same route from house to house, which reveals that about forty households stayed in the same place over the decade.[20] A surviving plan from before the rebuilding (Fig. 4), although unclear as to the number of houses in each block, by comparison with large-scale OS maps postdating the rebuilding, shows that new houses were erected mainly upon the sites of those demolished, without extension of plots or other alteration to the village plan; only along Pasture Lane (now Carr Lane) was there significant change, three pairs of new houses on the north side, built on an east–west axis, replacing two or more buildings which formerly stood in a north–south line east of the church (Fig. 7). There is no ready way of knowing whether the decline in population was caused by Winn's clearance and rebuilding, or vice-versa. Complaint of cottage demolition in this part of Lincolnshire seems to have been uncommon, although this is not to say that it did not occur, and growth of open townships such as Winterton suggests that building in closed villages, even if not accompanied by demolition, failed to keep pace with demand – a fact of which Winn himself must have been aware. In principle the Union Chargeability Act of 1866 spread the costs of pauperism across each Union, replacing the ancient practice of every village paying for its own poor; this should have made demolition of vacant cottages less likely.[21]

Appleby had become the centre of the Winn family's economic activities in Lincolnshire after the sale of their Thornton Curtis property in 1847. Appleby Hall had probably been begun late in the 18th century; it was enlarged more than once, the last time being about 1862.[22] A new vicarage and a school house were built about 1849, and the latter improved in 1855.[23] In the 1860s Charles Winn became increasingly involved in essential and often lavishly planned new building in Frodingham and Scunthorpe, associated with the creation of iron works and domestic provision for its labour force.[24] Rowland Winn was active in estate management from at least the 1850s, having complete charge during his father's absence abroad in 1859, at which time he privately announced his conviction that the estate enjoyed exploitable ironstone.[25] He dealt largely with the business associated with railway development across the ironfields in the 1860s.[26] He, not his father, gave evidence on cottage provision to the Sanitary Commissioners in 1868, the year in which he became MP for the first time.

Rowland Winn's evidence, published in the following year, suggests that rebuilding had been under way before 1870, since he already had much experience of what was involved – 'we do ourselves a good deal in cottage building on the property that I am connected with'. He put his faith in landlord action to achieve acceptable standards, and thought compulsion by central or local government unnecessary since there was already 'a great deal